Josiah Majetich

During my time abroad we went the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum in Poland. In one of the buildings there was a mound of human hair piled behind the glass. The far away statistical and historical nature of the Holocaust took on an emotional proximity—climbing up my spine, this sight forced me to mourn with newfound urgency. Hair—braided hair—weaved together like a million times before, but this time with unrecognized irrevocability. The following poem is the product of those mounds of hair:

**death braids**

over, under, over, under

his beloved comes alive with familiar muscle memory

over, under, over, under

shaking hands parting a tangled sea

i would say like moses did the red sea

if there still existed color

over, under, over, under

parting—pulling to the left, to the right

with finality unrecognized by familiar muscle memory

over, under, over, under

with a slow tug the two converged or ceased to be two

i would say the two became one

if there still existed marriage, love, or color

no, the tug was as the tightening of a noose

made of ashen strands weaved

over, under, over, under