**Why *Poetry* is Synonymous with *War***

Melissa Perri Smith

The wreckage of my grandmother’s bed

is split like a spine, down the

middle, in symmetry, in sin, in

bullet-riddled bodies blessed in

holy matrimony, and the necessity of our

memory is painted in thin lines across

the battlefields nourished in fallen lust, in all

the nameless places we’ve sacrificed for

the sake of fucking. We are the

products of that, of military bases planted

in the place my ancestors lie, of flayed flesh

stripped ash white, fingertips clinking like

whiskey in dusted glasses toasted in premature

celebration. Somewhere in between the needing

and the fucking comes us. An unexpected assault, a

misinterpretation between “want” and

“war,” and we are the direct descendants of frantic love-

making while the cities outside our grandparent’s

windows shake with flame. We are bedposts now, a pistol

flossed between our teeth, and my

grandmother died in a country that “othered” her, in

the ground next to a man my father

never saw without a drink. The wreckage of her life

is split like mine, in delicate halves and

quarters, in a country and language that is faded to the

corners of our minds, and the violence of my father’s

birth rests in my body, now. A body that knows the quickness

of conflict, the days that await our reckoning, and I sit

up in bed and watch the way my boyfriend

worships the war-torn crevices of me,

and his tongue serves as an example for

the crippling nature of poetry, the way our

words cannot forget the bodies they were

born into.