**After the Bombs Fall**

Shannon Huffman Polson

new mothers exhausted from hours

of labor cradling new babies disappeared

from the hospital in ruins

after the tanks

move through

and secure

the perimeters

of the towns

the buildings collapse

the bullet goes astray

misses its target and takes

another

a grandmother

cannot get her medicine

her heart stops

in the bomb shelter

without food

the father never wakes

what happens to what and who

had once been possible?

symphonies unwritten music

unplayed

Another tale of two cities or many towns

words and potential

decimated

pulverized

who might have been? Another Gandhi

Rosa Parks or Dorothy Day?

Someone to lead a nation through a crisis,

save a butterfly,

or someone who smiles to each passerby

each morning on the way

to buy a loaf of bread?

And to be fair, there might have been evil too—

life doesn’t come one sided.

Lives that were and still might have been

snuffed out and extinguished

like cigarettes

ground into dirt.

life is what is and what can be and what could be

the reason babies are like little gods

the what might have been

what might be

even more sacred

than the what is here

the reason we hold a bud

even one that’s plucked

with such careful wondering fingers

wonder at the stickiness that one day

will let go

all possibility what comes

to pass and

what does not

what is realized and

what is strangled all

that good that loveliness

it lives it lives on still it lives on

believe it