Lyn Lifshin

Jeanne Marie Plouffe

(after reading Carolyn Forche)

Small and dark behind your mother’s full skirts as she cleaned other people’s houses. Florence and I imagined worms slithered thru you when you ate lumps of sugar in my grandmother’s bathroom, still stayed thin. Eyes like cloves under huge lashes in classes you wouldn’t say a word in. Canuck the boys called out over Otter Creek Bridge as your legs got less spindly and the girls from college professors’ homes didn’t invite you. People said your last name with the tone they’d say tramp. Your skin creamy, your hair curled with night. There wasn’t a boy who didn’t think he could put his hand inside your dress. You never said anything, as if a part of you was already gone, as if there was some place to go. Once, singing of Quebec, your eyes gleamed like the gold cross boys yanked from your neck and tossed in the snow. I hear the trailer burned down, the survivors headed north. Jeanne Marie, if you read this please write me