

## Selective Service · *Carolyn Forché*

We rise from the snow where we've  
lain on our backs and flown like children,  
from the imprint of perfect wings and cold gowns,  
and we stagger together, wine-breathed into town  
where our people are building  
their armies again, short years after  
body bags, after burnings. There is a man  
I've come to love after thirty, and we have  
our rituals of coffee, of airports, regret.  
After love we smoke and sleep  
with magazines, two shot glasses  
and the black and white collapse of hours.  
In what time do we live that it is too late  
to have children? In what place  
that we consider the various ways to leave?  
There is no list long enough  
for a selective service card shrivelling  
under a match, the prison that comes of it,  
a flag in the wind eaten from its pole  
and boys sent back in trash bags.  
We'll tell you. You were at that time  
learning fractions. We'll tell you  
about fractions. Half of us are dead or quiet  
or lost. Let them speak for themselves.  
We lie down in the fields and leave behind  
the corpses of angels.