

BEFORE A POET KNOWS WHAT SHE IS

Eyes wild with light like a puma's,
blossoming breasts up-tilted to summer,
topaz-haired Erato in faded jeans.

Marriage pleas began early, hoarse voices
caressing her ear with promises--
a good life, children, a car of her own.

Arms and mouths she liked, dances,
corsages, tuxedos and bottled forest scents,
new sums to sift at the deep waking.

She ran alone to wrap night around her.

Too unsure to say how warlock winds
hurried her blood, how river tongues rhymed
with hers and promised more. Too new

to tell how strings and reeds in minor keys
metered her steps, leaned her on shoulders
of granite, closed her eyes with pine breath.

And her unnamed babies
already lay in a secret box
pressing blue gentians from ditches.