LOUISE GLÜCK

PORTRAIT OF THE QUEEN IN TEARS

As my father, the late star, once told me,
Son, he told me, son, and all the while
That emerald fortune mewing on his pinky,
Satin wallowing about his shoulders
With his latest wife, fat
Misfit, so profoundly straight
She tried to own me in her Rolls
As Muriel, my mother, spread their staircase
With the surfeit of her dress
Before that party wound up in the garden.
Where—myself! myself!—O oven-
fresh and black from Mexico—they kept me
Soloing right into dawn
When the musicians quit as, far away,
The pool foamed with dim, lit chickies …
Past which, in that still grass
Beyond the canopies, my father's ex-
Producer drifted petals on her lifted mound
As Mama held the gauze body of some girl across
Her legs … I have not always lived like this,
You know. And yet my sequined, consequential past
Enables me to bear these shrieking nights
And disasters. I do not mean you. No, you, love,
Are as delightful as those coupled dancers strung
Like hand props down the back lawn
Of my former mansion,
Wherever that was, or as I was
When my mother's boys would rise and stir
Like dogs for me, make offers,
Women oozing from their stays
Go wild … I also was a hot property in those days.