LOUISE GLÜCK

THE SLAVE SHIP

Sir: Cruising for profit
Close to Portsmouth we have not
Done well. All winds
Quarrel with our course it seems and daily the crew whines
For fresh woman-
flesh or blood again. No gain
Accumulates; this time I fear with reason. There’s no
Other news. A week ago
We charged a trader stocked with Africans
I knew for royal but their skin fixed terror in my men’s
Eyes—against my will they mounted her and in the slow
Dawn off Georgia stole her whole
Hold’s gold and slew that living cargo.