LOUISE GLÜCK

THE INLET

Words fail me. The ocean traveling stone
Returns turquoise; small animals twinkle in a haze
Of weed as this or that sequence
Of pod rattles with complete delicacy on the rotten vine.
I know what’s slipping through my fingers.
In Hatteras the stones were oiled with mud.
The sunset leaked like steak blood,
Sank, and my companion weaved his fingers
Through my fingers. Wood’s Hole,
Edgartown, the Vineyard in the rain,
The Vineyard not in the rain, the rain
Fuming like snow in Worcester, like gas in the coal
Country. Grass and goldenrod come to me,
Milkweed covers me over, and reed. But this riddle
Has no name: I saw a blind baby try
To fix its fists in tendrils
Of its mother’s hair, and get air. The air burns,
The seaweed hisses in its cistern …
Waveside, beside earth’s edge,
Before the toward-death cartwheel of the sun,
I dreamed I was afraid and through the din
Of birds, the din, the hurricane of parting sedge
Came to the danger lull.
The white weeds, white waves’ white
Scalps dissolve in the obliterating light.
And only I, Shadrach, come back alive and well.