LOUISE GLÜCK

EPITHALAMIUM

There were others; their bodies
were a preparation.
I have come to see it as that.
As a stream of cries.
So much pain in the world—the formless
grief of the body, whose language
is hunger—
And in the hall, the boxed roses:
what they mean
is chaos. Then begins
the terrible charity of marriage,
husband and wife
climbing the green hill in gold light
until there is no hill,
only a flat plain stopped by the sky.
Here is my hand, he said.
But that was long ago.
Here is my hand that will not harm you.