LOUISE GLÜCK

AUTUMNAL

Public sorrow, the acquired
gold of the leaf, the falling off,
the prefigured burning of the yield:
which is accomplished. At the lake’s edge,
the metal pails are full vats of fire.
So waste is elevated
into beauty. And the scattered dead
unite in one consuming vision of order.
In the end, everything is bare.
Above the cold, receptive earth
the trees bend. Beyond,
the lake shines, placid, giving back
the established blue of heaven.
The word
is bear: you give and give, you empty yourself
into a child. And you survive
the automatic loss. Against inhuman landscape,
the tree remains a figure for grief; its form
is forced accommodation. At the grave,
it is the woman, isn’t it, who bends,
the spear useless beside her.