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LOUISE GLÜCK

MOUNT ARARAT

Nothing’s sadder than my sister’s grave
unless it’s the grave of my cousin, next to her.
To this day, I can’t bring myself to watch
my aunt and my mother,
though the more I try to escape
seeing their suffering, the more it seems
the fate of our family:
each branch donates one girl child to the earth.
In my generation, we put off marrying, put off having children.
When we did have them, we each had one;
for the most part, we had sons, not daughters.
We don’t discuss this ever.
But it’s always a relief to bury an adult,
someone remote, like my father.
It’s a sign that maybe the debt’s finally been paid.
In fact, no one believes this.
Like the earth itself, every stone here
is dedicated to the Jewish god
who doesn’t hesitate to take
a son from a mother.