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LOUISE GLÜCK

SAINTS

In our family, there were two saints,
my aunt and my grandmother.
But their lives were different.
My grandmother’s was tranquil, even at the end.
She was like a person walking in calm water;
for some reason
the sea couldn’t bring itself to hurt her.
When my aunt took the same path,
the waves broke over her, they attacked her,
which is how the Fates respond
to a true spiritual nature.
My grandmother was cautious, conservative:
that’s why she escaped suffering.
My aunt’s escaped nothing;
each time the sea retreats, someone she loves is taken away.
Still, she won’t experience
the sea as evil. To her, it is what it is:
where it touches land, it must turn to violence.