LOUISE GLÜCK

LAMENT

Suddenly, after you die, those friends
who never agreed about anything
agree about your character.
They're like a houseful of singers rehearsing
the same score:
you were just, you were kind, you lived a fortunate life.
No harmony. No counterpoint. Except
they're not performers;
real tears are shed.
Luckily, you're dead; otherwise
you'd be overcome with revulsion.
But when that's passed,
when the guests begin filing out, wiping their eyes
because, after a day like this,
shut in with orthodoxy,
the sun's amazingly bright,
though it's late afternoon, September—
when the exodus begins,
that's when you'd feel
pangs of envy.
Your friends the living embrace one another,
gossip a little on the sidewalk
as the sun sinks, and the evening breeze
ruffles the women's shawls—
this, this, is the meaning of
"a fortunate life": it means
to exist in the present.