

Once, long ago, you lay
beside a stream, not sleeping.
Cells of light floated on the water;
they rocked gently,
held by white threads.

And in the deep grass your lover stirred,
as real as memory,
his mouth touching your cheek
so the skin
was marked when you turned away.

4.
It is as though they were still
waiting for you.
The light is on, the potted jade
covered with thin hairs of dust.

Soon for the first time
the house will be empty
where your parents lie
clinging to one another
with the same loneliness
that forced you to be born.

In their dreams they are safe:
it is summer, the lawn
in its green slipcover
gripping the street.

The Gift / Louise Gluck

Lord, You may not recognize me
speaking for someone else.
I have a son. He is
so little, so ignorant.
He likes to stand
at the screen door calling

oggie, oggie, entering
language, and sometimes
a dog will stop and come up
the walk, perhaps
accidentally. May he believe
this is not an accident?
At the screen
welcoming each beast in
love's name, Your emissary.

Rosy / Louise Gluck

for Sandra

When you walked in with your suitcase, leaving
the door open so the night showed
in a black square behind you, with its little stars
like nailheads, I wanted to tell you
you were like the dog that came to you by default,
on three legs: now that she is again no one's,
she pursues her more durable relationships
with traffic and cold nature, as though at pains
to wound herself so that she will not heal.
She is past being taken in by kindness,
preferring wet streets: what death claims
it does not abandon.
You understand, the animal means nothing to me.

Shrine / Leonard Nathan

I've waited for you
in this room, day by day
excluding what wasn't needed
until there's only this green cushion