

## THE DIALOGIC AND THE DIFFERENCE IN LOUISE GLÜCK'S GARDEN

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### Summary

A documentary research is presented based on the analysis of Louise Glück's lyrics from the concept of *the dialogic and the difference* from the approach of Anne Herrmann, (1989), in *The Dialogic and Difference* (1989), and the appearance of what Herrmann calls, "*another Woman*". It is proposed to define the concepts of dialogicity and difference according to Anne Herrmann, to analyze how the feminine is constituted as subject and object at the same time, and how this "*other woman*" appears in Glück's lyric, in Anne Herrmann's words: the woman's own otherness in a language proper to her and to other women. The dialogic and the difference in Louise Glück's poetry are defined; and selected poems from the works "The Wild Iris" and "Meadowlands" are analyzed from these concepts, where dialogues and monologues that represent other voices are observed, together with the voice of that other woman that rises up rebellious, disturbing, traumatic, the voice of "*An-Other Woman*", as *Herrmann defines it*. 167 words

**Keywords:** Dialogic; dialectic; difference; other woman; feminine being; lyric; feminine otherness.

### Abstract

This documentary investigation is based on the analysis of Louise Glück's poetry from the concept of the dialogic and difference from Anne Herrman's approach, in *The Dialogic and Difference* (1989), and the appearance of what Herrmann calls, "*An/Other Woman*." The concepts of the dialogic and the difference will be defined from Anne Herrmann's perspective; how is that "Other woman" presented in Glück's poetry, how the feminine is constructed as subject and object at the same time, and how is that other woman in Glück's lyric, as Herrmann says: woman's own alterity in woman's and other women's own language. The dialogic and the difference will be defined in Glück's poems, and from these concepts, selected poems, "The Wild Iris" and "Meadowlands," will be analyzed in the poetry of Louise Glück, where dialogues and monologues that represent other voices are observed, with the voice of that other woman

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that raises rebellious, disturbing, traumatic, the voice of *Another Woman* in Herrmann's words.  
159 words.

**Key words:** Dialogic; dialectic; difference; another woman; feminine self; lyrics; feminine alterity.  
161 words

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*I dwell in Possibility -  
A fairer House than Prose -  
More numerous of Windows -  
Superior - for Doors -  
I dwell in Possibility -  
A fairer House than Prose -  
More numerous of Windows -  
Superior - for Doors -*

Emily Dickinson

When we approach a text, an interesting gap opens up between what we appreciate as women's writing in general and, on the other hand, what we see as an often overlooked critique of what the literature of the Women's Movement of the 1960s-1980s was all about. Maria Lauret, in her book "Liberating Literature" (1994), traces the history of women's fiction. It emerged in the mid to late 1970s, at the peak of the second wave of the Women's Movement. At that time, women writers reversed the logic of a literary critical establishment that had seen the "lady-book" as a literary sub-genre or, to say the least, as a version of popular romance. In this way, women's fiction transformed the literary environment of fiction written by women and turned it into a political, sexual space where women's issues could be discussed and thus constitute a readership (p. 1). Several women authors emerged, among them the works of Marilyn French, Marge Piercy, Alice Walker, Kate Millet, Rita Mae Brown, Alix Kates Shulman, among others, linked to the political discourse of the women's movement and black feminism, where the condition of women in American society was discussed and reconstructed. Women's fiction of the 1970s and 1980s was a liberating literature, in the words of Lauret (1994. p.1).

Given the conditions prevailing at the time, and the communist ideas of the 1930s, it was difficult for women's writing to be appreciated as a political movement. Maria Lauret (1994) says that some critics of women's literature such as Rita Felski and Rosalind Coward, among them, have expressed that first-person narratives reflect a universal feminine identity; However, she notes that in her reading of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, French's *The Women's Room*, Millet's *Flying*, Maya Angelou's autobiographical work and Audre Lorde's *Zami*, she has found that in women's fiction there are much more complex and diverse elements in the field of the confessional than these critics have wanted to suggest (Lauret, Maria. *Liberating Literature*, 1994: 8). If we were to look for the origins of literature written by women, we would

have to go back to the literary and political practice in this field in the last century to establish its historical roots in the aesthetics of other social movements. This leads us to an analysis of personal politics located in the 1960s, where the old left converged with the new, the civil rights movement and the women's liberation movement; because according to Laird (1994: 46), the concept of the personal, as the political that underlies the ideas of women's fiction as a political way of writing, was not invented by the women's liberation movement, nor did it represent the awakening of the oppression of sex throughout history, which was an idea that women had.

Because of this new emphasis, and the introduction of new theoretical concepts that challenged the referentiality of language and the stability of sexual identity, textuality, and the role of the unconscious in subjectivity and meaning, women's fiction now presented the real conditions of women's lives in literature (op. cit. p.3).

Starting, in addition, from the studies in psychoanalysis, and post-structuralist feminist criticism, and trying to broaden the focus, the aim of the researcher in approaching the poetic work of Louise Glück, is to inquire more about the meaning and feminine subjectivity, which would build, a feminine aesthetic. The voices that emerge in Louise Glück's work will be analyzed as the search and affirmation of the self. How the feminine is constituted as subject and object at the same time, and how this "other woman" appears in Glück's lyric, in the words of Anne Herrmann (*The Dialogic and Difference* (1989), the woman's own otherness in a language proper to her and to other women. In the words of Lucy Irigaray, quoted by Herrmann, (1989), the "speculum" as the site of psychoanalytic and philosophical deconstruction of the subject represents the "curved" mirror as the site not of woman as visual object but as feminine representativity" (op. cit. p. 7).

Generally when we read poetic works, we see them as acts of revelation of the self, carried perhaps by the ideas of romanticism, which meant in the words of Victor Hugo "*liberalism in literature*" signifying the liberation of the artist and the writer from the rules and ties of the neoclassical period and the formal orthodoxy of the previous period, and suggesting that phase of individualism marked by the influence of the political revolutionary ideas of the moment (*A Handbook to Literature*, 1992, p.145). Perhaps the return to an intimate and autobiographical dimension was considered a characteristic of feminine writing, what we call confessional writing, a term that was attached to works written by women; but this interpretation goes beyond gender and sex. Feminine writing is more than a simple outburst of emotions, it is rather a subversive act where a conscious negotiation of autonomy is sought, a search for affirmation of the self.

This documentary research is based on the analysis of Louise Glück's lyric from the concept of *the dialogic and the difference* in the approach given by Anne Herrmann, in *The Dialogic and Difference* (1989), and the appearance of what Herrmann calls, "*Another woman*". The poems, "*The Wild Iris*" and "*Meadowlands*" in Glück's work have been mainly selected; in them we observe dialogues and monologues that represent other voices, alongside the voice of that other woman who rises up rebellious, disturbing, traumatic, consciously affirming and reaffirming an autonomous, singular and courageous voice, the voice of "*An-Other Woman*", in Herrmann's words.

The researcher proposes to define the concepts of dialogicity and difference according to Anne Herrmann; to define the dialogic and the difference in Louise Glück's poetry; and to analyze from these concepts selected poems from the works "The Wild iris" and "Meadowlands".

## Theoretical framework

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the dialogic is a feature of some literature (in Dostoyesvsky more than in Tolstoy) that allows for the polyphonic interaction of many voices rather than allowing for the dominance of one monological voice in discourse (A Handbook to Literature. 1992, p. 135).

Dialectic, on the contrary, is the art of argumentation or debate (op. cit. p. 134) where opposites are sought to be transcended through the analysis of a problem or an idea. In a dialectical process that describes the interaction and resolution between multiple paradigms and ideologies. The goal of a dialectical process is to merge point and counterpoint (thesis and antithesis) into a compromise or other state through conflict and tension (synthesis). Synthesis that develops from the opposition between thesis and antithesis. <https://hmong.es/wiki/Dialogic>

On the other hand, dialogic refers to the use of conversation or shared dialogue to explore the meaning of something. This is opposed to nomological discourse that refers to an entity with all information simply given to others without exploration and clarification of meaning through discussion. Dialogical works conduct an ongoing dialogue that includes interaction with the previous information presented. <https://hmong.es/wiki/Dialogic>

The dialogic represents the struggle between opposing discourses arising from different semantic or socio-historical contexts, insists on the reciprocity of two or more antagonistic voices, and tries to break the assimilation of differences sought by a monological discourse. In dialogue, the existence of the other is established.

In a dialogic analysis we ask questions such as: What does each participant think about themselves, the other, and what the other thinks of them? What do the given utterances and actions imply about the given activity or participants? Why was a given communicative act performed? Why was it necessary to say it? What was the alternative that the utterance was intended to dispel? People often borrow words, phrases, and ideas from other people and, consequently, dialogic analysis often asks: who is speaking? Specifically, what voices and echoes are evident in the given utterance? <https://hmong.es/wiki/Dialogic> (August 25, 2022).

The dialogic as the rewriting of difference in the words of Anne Herrmann, (The Dialogic and Difference (1989) "escapes the hierarchical binary opposition of sexual difference, which can be constructed and dislocated, thus leaving the feminine eternally deferred, or left in place, but revalorized to celebrate Woman". While the concept of difference implies the hierarchy between the masculine and the feminine, the dialogic breaks that hierarchy by positioning the other as another subject and not as an object. However, Herrmann (1989) adds, Bakhtin's dialogic represses sex by assuming two neutral genders, i.e. two male subjects. Then Herrmann, borrowing the term "Specularity" from Lucy Irigaray, gives the dialogic a notion of sex by imagining the constitution of the subject as feminine. Thus, the specular subject is constituted

as both subject and object, as woman and that other "*other woman*," that is, woman's own otherness in language and in the language of other women. In Irigaray's words, the "speculum" as the site of the psychoanalytic and philosophical deconstruction of the subject represents the "*curved*" mirror as the site not of woman as visual object but as feminine representativity" (quoted by Herrmann, 1989, p. 7).

When Anne Herrmann speaks about the dialogic, she expresses that "the dialogic imagines the discourse between two subjects; the specularity positions the subject as dialogized (op.cit. p. 27). For Bakhtin, the word has two voices, that is, each locution contains the two voices of the sender and the receiver, and language maintains the tension between the two expressions. Herrmann adds that for Irigaray the struggle for the feminine subject begins before entering the language that has previously closed the possibility of a feminine subjectivity. Hence, this subject cannot exist outside language. The (feminine) subject struggles to rewrite itself as subjectivity by representing itself as both subject and object. For Bakhtin this means responding to and anticipating the word of the other; for Irigaray it means being neither one nor the other, neither open nor closed, that is, never being the copy of any original (op. cit. p. 27). Hence both the dialogic as theory without a system, and specularity as the deconstruction of psychoanalytic theory are concerned with the perception of the "other", with epistemological and discursive representations of alterity. It is what Herrmann calls a feminine dialogic, not as synthesis but as struggle. This dialogic imagined as the dialogue between Bakhtin's more gender-blind theory, Irigaray's deconstruction of macho theory, and as the debate within feminist critical theory between the deconstruction of the subject, as expressed by Kristeva, and the reconstruction of the feminine subject, as proposed by Irigaray (Herrmann, op.cit. pp. 27-28).

Herrmann expresses in his thesis that the dialogic represents the struggle between opposing discourses arising from different contexts, semantic or socio-historical. He explains that, contrary to dialectics which seeks to transcend opposites by seeking a third synthetic term, the dialogic resists the reconciliation of opposites by insisting on the reciprocity of two or more antagonistic voices. Dialectics and the dialogic are both based on theories of conflict, but the former attempts to resolve antitheses in a utopian synthesis while the latter tries to break the assimilation of differences sought by monological discourse (1989, op.cit. p.15).

Why is it important to distinguish the dialogic from the discourse of "double voice coined by feminists when they refer to "double consciousness?" Elaine Showalter presents women as a silenced group whose cultural boundaries coincide with, but are not fully contained by, the dominant male group. Hence, says Showalter, women's writing is a double-voiced discourse, always involving the social, literary, and cultural inheritance of the silenced and the dominant (quoted in Herrmann, op. cit., p. 21). Herrmann adds that what is missing is the notion of language as "double voice", the other as the other of the divided subject, and the other as text (1989. op. cit.). That is, it would seem that what is shown in this analysis of female literary forms is the notion of language itself as "a double voice," the reappropriation of that other voice in female literary forms, in the construction of female characters, and in the very act of saying "I" (p. 21). Hence, the clearest approach for the thesis at hand is based on nurturing this feminine cultural perspective within a feminine tradition that at the same time coexists with the masculine tradition, but independent and unquestionable.



To reconstruct the female subject, Irigaray rewrites the figure of the mirror as the speculum. Irigaray refers to the instrument used in the gynecological examination, and uses it to represent the subject in discourse. The image of the speculum allows the woman to represent herself as a mirror image, that is, as a self-reflecting image, which represents the female subject as Self and Other, not as the self that exists in the Lacanian Order of language that has been previously appropriated by the male subject and represents the other as feminine (op.cit. p. 23). Irigaray offers a way to perceive the feminine, not as the other, the opposite of the masculine, but as the simultaneity of subject and object in a state of reciprocity (p. 24). Turning our gaze towards the dialogized subject mentioned by Herrmann, and the specular subject that presents itself as both subject and object in Irigaray, we observe the presence of that *“other woman”* that appears in the poetic discourse of the feminine voices, and that emerges in Louise Glück’s poetry showing her transformation through her own otherness. That otherness is nothing other than the representation of the feminine subject in the discourse, which allows the relation of the woman to herself. The speculum allows the female subject to represent herself as a mirror image, that is, as an image that reflects herself, and that represents the female subject as both self and other, that is, the female voice not as the language that has been appropriated by the male subject, but as a voice, subject and object at the same time that represents itself.

## **Louise Glück**

For a long time, feminine writing has been related to the confessional. The search for self, intimacy, sexuality, experience, resembles this type of writing. More than a century after there was talk of confessional writing, what was considered as such, emerges accompanied by modern psychoanalysis as the conscious revelation of personal thoughts and traumas. The revelation of the naked truth refers incessantly to an important sign of confessional literature, which is the presentation of the body, the unsatisfied sexuality, the pain of the female experience, themes treated in the poetic work of Louise Glück.

Louise Glück is a confessional poet. In her poetry, she traverses difficult paths, the pains of her family, both as a child and as an adult, the path to independence, the desire for authentic attachment, and her appreciation of life as loss, pain, and death. As she says in her poem *“If the others with whom I am in dialogue are merely projections of self, I am alone in this world, and, worse the world has been lost on me”*.

In *“The Wild Iris,”* Glück presents the moral and aesthetic dilemmas of solitude. In her garden she serves as a voice to make way for other voices, sometimes floral, sometimes human, transcendent, in a human thicket that cries out for love and sustenance, and challenges the creator god to join her. Conflicts and dilemmas arise, through a series of monologues and dramatic dialogues.

In Louise Glück’s work, the dialogic is observed, where there is a voice that recognizes the relationship between two or more subjects, understanding dialogue as a discursive relationship between two subjects, where the subject constitutes itself without annihilating or assimilating the other. The dialogic breaks the hierarchy between the masculine and the feminine and

positions the other as another subject and not as the object (op.cit. p. 7). This is what we see in her great work *"The Wild Iris"*, where the flowers participate in a dialogue that leads to that other voice. That other voice should not be considered as the expression of a single subject, but as the representation of the female subject as an image that reflects herself as being and other. That other voice suggests the elevation of the person who contemplates herself, observes her wounds, confronts herself and has the courage to accept and transcend herself, because it is in this sober and difficult reflection that the voice finds its otherness. In that dialogicity, in that specularity, that other voice transcends and transforms itself. The poetic discourse becomes the instrument to express the voice of the feminine subject that reflects itself in the dialogic specularity that Irigaray refers to, and that Herrmann names as that "other woman".

## The voice of Louise Glück.

*"Don't listen to me; my heart's been broken,"* so begins Louise Glück's poem, *"The Untrustworthy Speaker"*; addressing a flower in the title of her poem *"The Wild Iris"* (1992). *"whatever / returns from oblivion returns / to find a voice"*.<sup>1</sup> In her poetry, grave, restrained, sober, we find the intertwined voices of flowers, woman and Creator that transport us on the Edenic journey we travel in Louise Glück's garden.

From the beginning, the poet dares and commits herself to redefine her self through her paradoxical verse full of personal commitment, and she affirms it when she says *"she strives to be free of the imprisoning self"*: *"she strives to be free of the imprisoning self"*.

Glück is mainly confessional, in her inner inquiry, her research and her analysis to revise that self. In that transit, the poet revises religion, myth, and her own work. From her first work *Plathian Firstborn* (1968), and the works that follow *Descending Figure* (1980), *Ararat* (1990), *the Triumph of Achilles* (1985), *Meadowlands* (1996) and one of her most recent works, *Averno* (2006), Louise Glück calls us to find her. Glück writes poems that bear witness to psychological moments in a sober and concise language that conveys deep meanings of her life.

It is interesting to observe the different voices that appear in Louise Glück's poetic work, the dialogicity of the monologues in her garden, and the difference that appears in that other poetic voice, in this case the voice of another woman. The construction of a female subject reflects, as Anne Herrmann, (1989) says, modernist and postmodernist literary practices, but it also reflects the status of the individual subject within each culture, as the intersection of aesthetic and political practices in a particular historical moment (op.cit.p. 5).

## The Wild Iris

*The Wild Iris* offers in its dialogues, several perspectives, the poem moves between dawn and dusk, spring and summer, and in this back and forth, different questions arise about beauty,

love, suffering, desire, loss, life, death. It is a deep, sober rhythm that moves the thought towards what the contingency of life means.

From the very beginning we feel that strange combination of hope and fear. Glück shows the glory of eternity and the painful suffering of confused humanity simultaneously, and although he does not fully grasp this paradox, he does manage to expand his soul and walk the path to its transformation. Nature and God become entangled in a vigorous conversation, to answer the questions of the human being who interrogates. It seems that the poet constructs this Edenic scenario to elucidate her natural religion and confront those difficult issues related to faith. *The Wild Iris* moves through a year, beginning at the end of winter when the flowers begin their journey from the other world, “*passage from another world,*” to the end of winter of the same year. This movement reflects the themes of resurrection, renewal, and rebirth that embrace the voices of God, woman, and all the flowers that participate in this passionate colloquy in Louise Glück’s garden.

The different voices that appear in *The Wild Iris*, relate their dilemmas and conflicting feelings. The author presents suffering as the main idea, expressed by three voices, one human, another, a flower, and another space that opens up for the Creator. In this scenario, her garden, a dialogic relationship develops, reflecting the connection that exists between human beings and nature. The cycle of birth, growth, and death is presented, to then germinate again and produce more flowers. Through the personification of flowers, the reader intuits suffering as the challenge that the woman’s voice must embrace in order to achieve her spiritual transformation. Nature is cyclical, and thus spring gives way to summer, summer to autumn’s harvest, and then to winter’s exhaustion. Will it be so in human beings? the person in the poem seems to ask.

Iris, the flower, expresses her fear of dying, however, she knows that this is not the end; her transformation is cyclical like the seasons; she will be reborn in the spring. Although the three voices do not agree in their thoughts, they seem to coincide in the idea of suffering, the vicissitudes as a path to knowledge and inner presence. The acceptance of life manifests itself as an inevitable path to death.

*Hear me out: that which you call death  
I remember.  
Overhead, noises, branches of the pine tree shifting.  
Then nothing. The weak sun  
flickered over the dry surface.  
It is terrible to survive  
as consciousness  
buried in the dark earth.  
Then it was over: that which you fear, being  
a soul and unable  
to speak, ending abruptly, the stiff earth*

*bending a little. And what I took to be  
birds darting in low shrubs.  
You who do not remember  
passage from the other world  
I tell you I could speak again: whatever  
returns from oblivion returns  
to find a voice:  
from the center of my life came  
a great fountain, deep blue  
shadows on azure seawater.*

The iris shows the idea of “another world”, “another world” that we do not remember; it seems to point to the birth of a new flower, a new life, or perhaps to the reappearance of suffering and pain. And then this Iris that is reborn, finds a voice, which makes it pause, the iris returns from oblivion, our doubts are suspended, and it blooms in a great fountain that emerges from the center of its life. More than being a bulb and stem, the iris becomes a flower that blooms resembling the human being at the peak of his passions when our souls flow. The iris is reborn in all its splendor, energized with passion and language. However, it expresses that from the center of its life emerges a great fountain, “*deep blue shadows on azure seawater*” that seems to reflect the darkness of the sea water. His glory also manifests his decline, pointing to the contingency of life, the constant wobble of life and suffering. Just as nature is cyclical, spring gives way to summer, summer to autumn’s harvest, and then to the inevitable aridity of winter, so is the existential paradox, in accepting life, we also accept death.

In *El Iris salvaje* nature remains beautiful, insensitive and blasé in the face of the pain of that voice that expresses its loss, and that knows that at the end of that vital cycle what remains is the hope of creation, and the miracle of life, a life that transforms and survives in poetic creation, as Dickinson would say:

*I dwell in Possibility -  
A fairer House than Prose -  
More numerous of Windows -  
Superior - for Doors -*

Glück lives in possibility, the possibility of his poetic expression. a house larger than prose, it is his garden, as for Dickinson, the place where he contemplates his life, his being, and realizes everything, how he only needs its presence to find that “*companion spirit*,” that sublime transformation that allows him to transcend.

The sublimation of poetic experience artistically expressed in the tension and weight of her soul gives way to the declaration of her vulnerabilities, those wounds that cry out that love wounds and poisons, that fullness is contamination, and desire is a humiliating subjugation of the self. Glück could join her voice to that of Emily Dickinson when she expresses her preference for “*a banquet of abstinence.*”

Her dark night makes her consider several alternatives. On the one hand, it distances her from submission to goals and purposes that do not belong to her, and on the other hand, the gardener accepts and reflects on who she is and who she wants to be. From there, she comes out of the experience strengthened and reaffirms her own existence. This is what is intuited in the last lines of the poem when she expresses:

*At the end of my suffering /  
there was a door  
Hear me out / That what you call death  
I remember*

The Wild iris

[https://www.ststephensva.org/download\\_file/view/1826/](https://www.ststephensva.org/download_file/view/1826/)

That voice assumes its uniqueness, its divine reality, the life that has been destined for it, in Moore's words (*Thomas Moore, The Dark Nights of the Soul, 2004, p. 53*).

Louise Glück seeks in poetry : “*the sound of an authentic being, an “immediacy] “a volatility” that gives the poems that achieve it paradoxical durability.*” Such authenticity, she adds, is completely different from the honest openness of sincerity.” “The poems are autobiography, but naked, not mere chronology and anecdote, of personal conviction, in the lyrical task, the poet “*strives to be free of the imprisoning self*” (pp. 583, 584). (quoted by Daniel Morris in *The Poetry of Louis Glück: A Thematic Introduction. 2006*). This is how in this poem the voice of an/ other Woman emerges, which following Herrmann discovers the feminine representativeness in the lyrical text.

The richness of the images and the mysterious meaning they provoke reflect a series of subjectivities, most of them non-human, such as the flowers, sometimes the grass, the clover, the vine, which are addressed to the poet. We also hear the voice of the poet speaking to the creator, and the poems that emerge from the Creator, who usually addresses them to the poet. Several voices emerge that express that other voice referred to by Herrmann, the voice of another woman. All the voices add perspective and height to the metaphysical dissertation that unfolds in Glück's garden, among them we hear reflections on life in solitude, supplication, voices inquiring, resisting, in a challenging and submissive environment at the same time. The anguish of disillusionment and suffering expressed beautifully through different voices in a dialogue of dramatic monologues make up the transcendental meditation in Louise Glück's garden.

## The Creator

The book moves through the seasons, in the middle appears the poem *"Heaven and Earth"*. The wild iris circles back on itself in a rhythmic movement between withering, dying, returning to earth to germinate again. This theme of resurrection, renewal, and rebirth envelops the voices of God, of woman, and of all the flowers that participate in this paradisiacal and supernatural concert.

Death as the end of suffering is overshadowed when the wild Iris realizes the ephemerality of life. To surrender is to demonstrate the brevity of life. The act of faith, the recognition of the power, perhaps of ourselves, can offer us that "door" we seek. It is the liberation of the spirit, the moment of fulfillment.

The garden where the woman dialogues with the flowers could be likened to the earthly paradise from which we were initially excluded. The woman claims not to be able to communicate with that *"unreachable father"*. An absent and distant god, and in her desperate search she claims how can she love that which does not return love. If God does not answer her, she is lost in the darkness of her sorrow *"love only what returns love"*.

The gardener in the poem seeks transcendence, seeks to solve the mystery of God whom she first calls *"unreachable father"* and then, later, in *"Matins,"* observes him as *"unconceivable."* Glück expresses her frustration at not being able to reveal the mystery of God.

*Forgive me if I say I love you: the powerful  
are always lied to since the weak always  
driven by panic.  
I cannot love  
what I can't conceive, and you disclose  
virtually nothing:  
are you like the hawthorn tree,  
always the same thing in the same place,  
or are you more the foxglove, inconsistent, first springing up  
a pink spike on the slope behind the daisies,  
and the next year, purple in the rose garden? You must see  
it is useless to us, this silence that promotes belief  
you must be all things, the foxglove and the hawthorn tree,  
the vulnerable rose and tough daisy-we are left to think  
you couldn't possibly exist. Is this  
what you mean us to think, does this explain  
the silence of the morning,*

*the crickets not yet rubbing their wings, the cats  
not fighting in the yard?*

Matins

<https://voetica.com/voetica.php?collection=2&poet=659&poem=6943>

I cannot love what I do not understand, says the voice, and you are inconceivable, you must not exist, you are like an unconscious cloud,

*Unreachable father, when we were first  
exiled from heaven, you made  
a replica, a place in one sense  
different from heaven, being designed to teach a lesson otherwise.*

Matins

In his inquiry, he attacks the creator for his silence, for that tangle of opposites in which he believes: the survival of cats, the natural sound of crickets, hence he thinks it does not exist.

*You couldn't possibly exist  
what you mean us to think, does this explain  
the silence of the morning,  
the crickets not yet rubbing their wings, the cats  
not fighting in the yard?*

Matins

It is observed in the next verse, the voice of the creator when he tells her that what she expects will not be found in that garden. Flowers, he says, have circular lives, while humans are like the flight of birds that begin and end in "stillness", in rest, in silence.

*Whatever you hoped,  
you will not find yourselves in the garden,  
among the growing plants.  
your lives are not circular like theirs: Your lives are the bird's flight  
which begins and ends in stillness-  
which begins and ends in form echoing  
tis arc from the white birch  
to the apple tree.*

Retreating Wind

The Creator belittles the woman and reminds her of the ephemerality of life, her inevitable mortality. The woman responds at the end by observing and valuing her grief above all that of humanity when she says, "*No one's despair is like my despair.*" (April 20), and the creator instead of consoling her raises a cry for her to understand that grief is distributed among all humanity, that life brings it with it. Every person carries a burden as the "*deep blue/marks the wild scilla.*" The woman insists weeding the weeds, begging him to look at her emptiness, her nakedness. In her desperation, he still hesitates. Later, in "Matins," she languishes in her pain and asks, "*What is my heart to you / that you must break it over and over / like a plantsman testing / his new species?*"(26). The idea of tragic suffering as a path to the knowledge of the self emerges.

The contemplation of this garden, the voices that arise there, the interiority that produces this meditation links the soul and the spirit in the voice of that *other woman* who appears in the harmonic dialogicity of Louise Glück's garden. A liminal state, between the normal and the extraordinary, as Moore describes it (Thomas Moore. *The Dark Nights of the Soul*, 2004. Gotham Books. New York. p. 202).

## Meadowlands

In this poem, written 4 years after *The Wild Iris*, the poet expresses through what Stephen Burt relates to "depressive realism", a characteristic that, according to psychologists, as mentioned by Burt in "The Dark Garage with the garbage", (On Louise Glück, 2005, p. 74.), allows them, due to their hopelessness, to better perceive facts and emotions that others block or deny. This is a strength in Glück's poetry that makes it severe, direct, cruel, and sincere at the same time.

Family relationships, love, everything is vulnerable, nothing lies in the hands of human beings. Life is full of desires, of deceptions, of contained sadness, of absences that have come very early in his life, desires that have scorched his dreams from very early on. There are wounds that do not heal, the emptiness of his father, and the love of his mother and sister.

In "Meadowlands", the person in the poem assaults and suffers, exposes and is exposed, manifests the tragic and violent experiences that occur in everyday domestic life. The person is seen as a lonely onion smeared with grease, swimming like Ophelia, wrapped in passion? or rather, indifferent, apathetic. Weeks pass and are filed away like used and unread books. At the end in a bitter cry the person in the poem cries out that "*I pay with my life*", "*I pay with my life*".

*The weeks go by. I shelve them,  
They are all the same, like peeled soup cans...  
Beans sour in their pot. I watch the lone onion  
Floating like Ophelia, caked with grease:  
You listless, fidget with the spoon.  
What now? You miss my care? Your yard ripens*



*To a ward of roses, like a year ago when staff nuns  
Wheeled me down the aisle...  
You couldn't look. I saw  
Converted love, your son,  
Drooling under glass, starving...*

*We are eating well.  
Today my meatman turns his trained knife  
On veal, your favorite. I pay with my life.*

Firstborn

“She pays with her life”, a harsh phrase that reveals the suffering, the emptiness of that sterile everyday life, of that part of the self that has surrendered to the demands of the social life of a woman who feeds well but pays with her soul.

In *Penelope's song*, the voice addresses her soul, which has also been archived, but weaving and unweaving like Penelope, to await the moment. The voice addresses soul, which is “*little perpetually undressed one*” it is the voice who must manage the clamor of the soul, who must manage the will and control the desire, the encounter of the soul with another person, the soul resists and subjugates itself. The voices of Penelope and Odysseus mingle with the voices of a couple separating. Past and present come together in a dreamlike, tense journey, with tones both severe and humorous, where past and present constitute a continuum of consciousness. *You take my hand; then we're alone/ In the life-threatening forest. Almost Immediately / We're in a house*

Glück brings these two environments together to express his psychic experience, the voice of the mythical Odysseus intertwined with the breakdown of marriage, all artistically presented with a bitter and severe wit.

The self that is revealed in *The Wild iris* is contemplative and transcendent. The figurative language and the ambience of an ensemble of non-human voices offers a mysterious environment that gives rise to metaphysical meditation. Being in this garden exposes subjectivities that sway between the elevation and depth of life and its struggle to answer transcendent questions. In *Meadowlands*, the voice is distinctly social, exposing the falsity of marital romance.

*Penelope's Song  
Little soul, little perpetually undressed one,  
Do now as I bid you, climb  
The shelf-like branches of the spruce tree:  
Wait at the top, attentive, like  
A sentry or look-out. He will be home soon;  
It behooves you to be*

*Generous. You have not been completely  
Perfect either; with your troublesome body  
You have done things you shouldn't discuss in poems. Therefore  
Call out to him over the poem water, over the bright water  
With your dark song - passionate,  
Like Maria Callas. Who  
Wouldn't you want you? Whose most demonic appetite  
Could possibly fail to answer? Soon  
He will return from whatever he goes in the meantime,  
Suntanned from his time away, wanting  
His grilled chicken. Ah, you must greet him,  
You must shake the boughs of the tree  
To get his attention,  
But carefully, carefully, lest  
His beautiful face be marred  
By too many falling needles*

Penelope's Song

The ironic power of the poetic voice serves to perhaps express at the end the aggressiveness contained in the resentment felt to attract his attention, but *carefully, carefully, lest \_ His beautiful face be marred\_ By too many needles.*

In this poem, Glück dramatically presents a possibility of being through paradoxes that lead us to find the truth in the enigma. The allusion to Maria Callas indicates that the order of time is not important, we are in the middle of a path where it is not relevant. The contemporary is intertwined with the mythical to express the separation and the encounter, the departure and the return of a couple that falls apart.

Those afflicted with “depressive realism” in Burt’s words, seem to see beyond themselves and others (“The Dark Garage with the garbage”, (p. 88. On Louise Glück, 2005). By distancing herself from all those she mentions in her poems and from herself, she connects and observes herself in her sterile and empty everydayness, and moves towards the glorious transcendence of a being that stops, discovers, and evolves. In the words of Octavio Paz: “Religion and poetry tend to realize once and for all that possibility of being that we are and that constitutes our own way of being; both are attempts to embrace that ‘otherness’ that Machado called ‘the essential heterogeneity of being’ (p. 137). In this transcendental dialogue, Glück manages to unite different voices to achieve the voice of that other woman, subject and object at the same time, who emerges strengthened, serene, and courageous in that transforming otherness. It is the leap into the void that Glück takes in that ontological tumble that she admirably confesses in her acute and measured lyrical work.

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