

LOUISE GLUCK

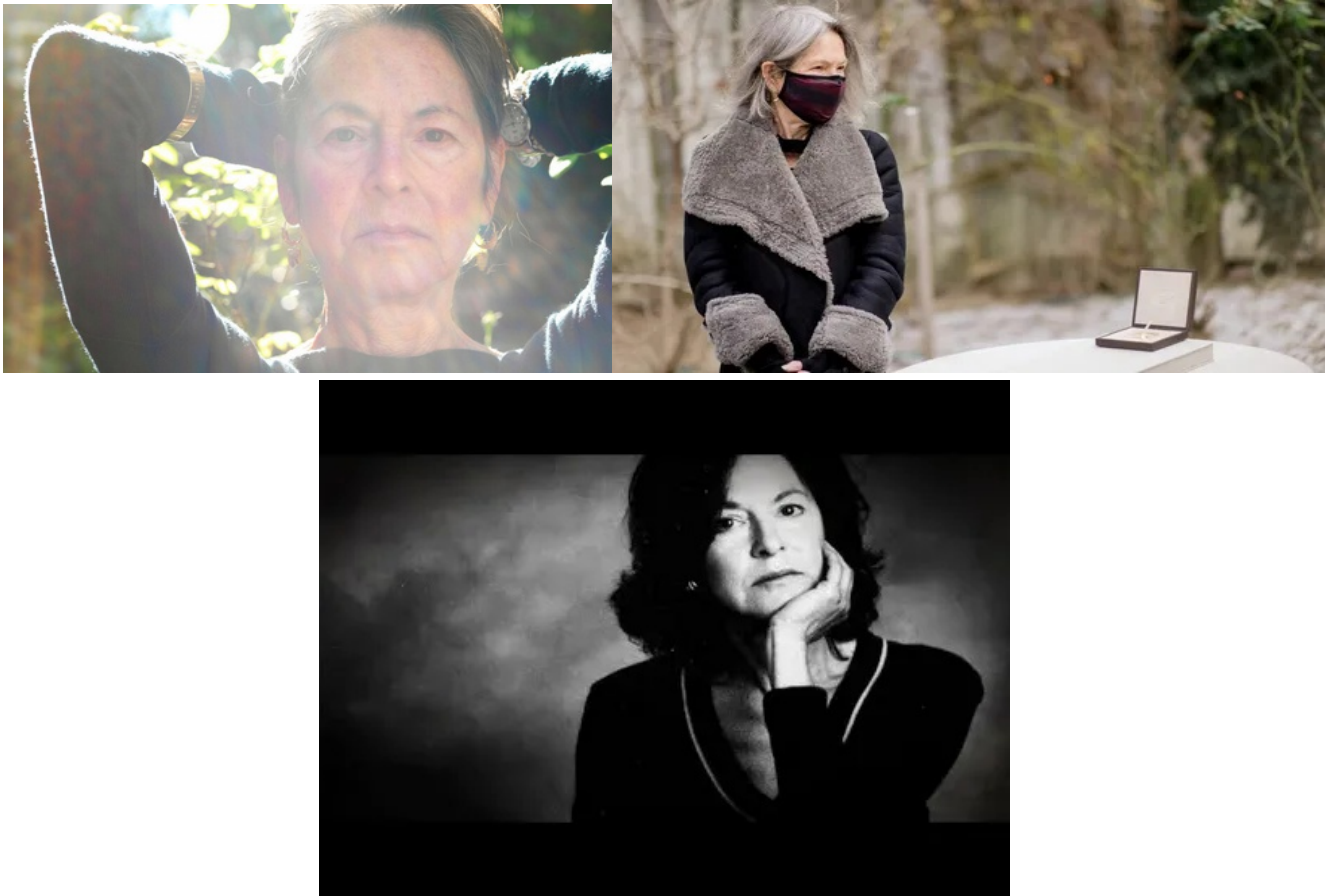
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First published October 10, 2024

I am a little behind the times in most ways, as you know. I didn't realize that “poet” Louise Gluck died recently, or even that she had won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2020. But since I am critiquing prize winners this week, it seems like a good time to tell you what I think of Gluck.

In short, I think she may be the worst famous poet of all time. Worst both in the sense of most obnoxious, and in the sense of worst craftsman or wordsmith. She is technically remedial and her content is awful in almost every conceivable way. I say that not to defame the dead, but as a necessary salvo in my housecleaning of all things Modern, and especially of all Men-are-Pigs propaganda and fake feminism.

First, a few pictures she chose of herself, to get us started:



If you are as sensitive as I am, you may already be getting the picture. If not, let's start with her most famous poem, one she liked to lead with in readings since the feminists have rabidly promoted it.

Mock Orange

It is not the moon, I tell you.

It is these flowers
lighting the yard.

I hate them.

I hate them as I hate sex,
the man's mouth
sealing my mouth, the man's
paralyzing body—

and the cry that always escapes,
the low, humiliating
premise of union—

In my mind tonight

I hear the question and pursuing answer
fused in one sound
that mounts and mounts and then
is split into the old selves,
the tired antagonisms. Do you see?
We were made fools of.
And the scent of mock orange
drifts through the window.

How can I rest?

How can I be content
when there is still
that odor in the world?

Yeah, now you see why I am here. She has just libeled my friend the Moon. This isn't equality feminism, which few of us have any quarrel with, this is man-hating nastiness posing as feminism. Almost all of Gluck's poems drip with nastiness of one sort or another, and—as with her photos—you can tell she was a pill in the first few moments. So why was she so famous, winning all the top prizes? In the beginning it was because she was a rich Jewish girl with lots of contacts, but later it was *because* she was so extravagantly nasty and talentless. That is pretty much the definition of Modernism. See sculptor Louise Bourgeois as the ultimate example that, next to whom Louise Gluck looks like Little Bo Peep. The most nasty and talentless people have been chosen on purpose for at least a century now, in order to bomb art and literature down to bare ground and to grind those with talent.

As I have shown in hundreds of papers over the past 35 years, at first this was a somewhat organic outcome of the Wasteland these old peerage families had created, starting in the late 19th century. After centuries of creating (or hiring others to create) magnificent art, music, sculpture, poetry, architecture, and literature, Europe became oversaturated with all this art. The artists got dejected, thinking it had all been done, or got lazy, thinking they could produce equal product with a lot less effort, or simply fell headlong into a pit of corruption—a fall they are still falling. They became bored with the past and didn't believe in religion anymore, so they had no subject matter left except their own petty and pinched lives. But pretty soon they embraced this corruption and emptiness, selling it back to themselves as more authentic. Whatever tawdry, banal, corrupted thing they happened to produce that day was more authentic than the Sistine Chapel. And since you don't need any technique to do that, all

technique went out the window as well. Why put yourself out to learn how to paint or write when you are being bad on purpose?

This is why Gluck's poetry, and all Modern poetry, looks and sounds like it does. No use wasting any time trying to do something interesting with words, sounds, meter, vocabulary, or emotions, when all you get credit for as a Modern is shallow political posing and exhibit-your-symptom whining.

Plus, this is what rich Jewish girls and boys are capable of in the new era, so the field has to be built around them. A demand for high art now, in any field, could not be met by those who inhabit it, and they are not going to step aside for anyone. Art is now defined as whatever these social register kids happen to excrete this week, and whatever it is the media their daddies own will promote it as rife with hidden depths, shaded meanings, and brutal truths.

But let's study another poem of Louise Gluck, Nobel prize winner.

The Untrustworthy Speaker

Don't listen to me; my heart's been broken.

I don't see anything objectively.

I know myself; I've learned to hear like a psychiatrist.
When I speak passionately,
that's when I'm least to be trusted.

It's very sad, really: all my life, I've been praised
for my intelligence, my powers of language, of insight.
In the end, they're wasted—

When I'm quiet, that's when the truth emerges.

A clear sky, the clouds like white fibers.
Underneath, a little gray house, the azaleas
red and bright pink.

If you want the truth, you have to close yourself
to the older daughter, block her out:
when a living thing is hurt like that,
in its deepest workings,
all function is altered.

That's why I'm not to be trusted.
Because a wound to the heart
is also a wound to the mind.

There's no poetry there that I can see, but she does tell you what to think of her. She seems to agree with me, doesn't she? But is admitting your poetry is a waste of time poetry? Does she get credit as a poet for such honesty? Not with me, she doesn't. I just take her word as confirmation of what I already know.

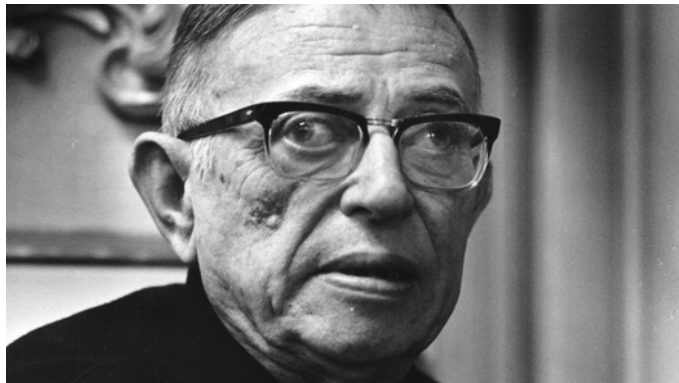
Here's another famous one:

Elms

All day I tried to distinguish
need from desire. Now, in the dark,
I feel only bitter sadness for us,
the builders, the planers of wood,
because I have been looking
steadily at these elms
and seen the process that creates
the writhing, stationary tree
is torment, and have understood
it will make no forms but twisted forms.

The process that creates a tree is torment? Is that what you see when you look at a healthy tree? Not me. If you like to plant sick and twisted trees under your window, that is up to you. If you like to get your poetry from people like Gluck. . . well, you may want to look into it. You may want to flush the bennies, for a start.

But that is what Modernism is. Following the Existentialism of those such as Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, this blasted nihilism has been sold as more authentic, though it isn't.



In the same way, this stripped-down “poetic” technique, which is actually just flat bare droning prose, is also supposed to be more authentic. You aren't allowed anything interesting in the poem at all: no rhymes, meter, expressive words, beautiful or subtle turns, evocative references or—least of all—positive feeling of any kind. That would be inauthentic, because nothing is authentic but death, loss, ugliness, and despair.

Visitors from abroad

Sometime after I had entered
that time of life
people prefer to allude to in others
but not in themselves, in the middle of the night
the phone rang. It rang and rang
as though the world needed me,
though really it was the reverse.

I lay in bed, trying to analyze
the ring. It had
my mother's persistence and my father's

pained embarrassment.

When I picked it up, the line was dead.
Or was the phone working and the caller dead?
Or was it not the phone, but the door perhaps?

That's just the first half, but it is enough to go on. The rest is about how she hates her family. Charming to the last. But I republished it so that you can see once again what a screaming void her "poetry" is. Analyzing the ring of a telephone. Trying to be clever but utterly failing. 14 lines of nothing. Give this woman a Nobel Prize! Hell, make her queen of the world!

Some of my readers no doubt think all poetry is a screaming void, so let me show you the difference between minimalism in poetry and maximalism. Gluck starts this poem with all the brilliance of someone reading from the phonebook on Xanax. After the third word you already know you aren't in a poem meant for artists, aesthetes, or the sensitive of either sex. This is poetry for damaged big-city females of limited intellect, feeling and perception, in short an audience of nightmare Charlotte Hazes. So compare this

Sometime after I had entered
that time of life
people prefer to allude to in others
but not in themselves, in the middle of the night
the phone rang. It rang and rang
as though the world needed me,
though really it was the reverse.

To this

Anubis-black, the breathless sky blinked its jackal eye

above the field of darnel, foxglove and rye.

Along the lane dark cloudberry loomed

lit only by an antimony Moon

broomed by wisps of damson-dye.

Another world in every way, isn't it? The Moon is there, but she isn't dripping hatred down upon you. You don't know what it is evoking yet, but you know it is evoking something. It isn't someone telling you about her day in bed in a low-lidded drone, listening to the phone ringing. Start by reading it outloud, noticing the sound and meter. Then study the way the words *look* on the page. They are tasty, aren't they, even if you don't know what they all mean. Most of them you can figure out by context, I daresay, and your first guess would probably be right. Next, notice a lot is going on here besides end rhymes and meter. The whole thing is musical, even beyond a normal fixed meter, and that's because it has triplets mixed in, as with cloudberry and antimony. It is a complex meter, like Gerard Manley Hopkins. But there's more, since it also contains a lot of internal rhymes, alliteration, and sound reflections. Moon, loomed, and broomed all have that oo pronounced the same, for instance, and broomed rhymes with loomed, but it is in the first place, not the last. All this is going on without being too obvious: if you are aware of it at all, it is almost subliminally, since it doesn't affect the flow or meaning. On a first reading it flows off your lips and into your head completely naturally, as if it

contains not a single poetic turn.

That's because nothing is a stretch here, a clumsy trying to be clever and failing. Anubis really is black and the sky does blink like a jackal eye, with its stars. The Moon really is the color of antimony, and the clouds that pass in front of it at night do look the color of damson, though you haven't seen that in a million previous poems. There *is* something new under the Sun after all, or Moon.

The overall effect being that you are pulled immediately into a richly imagined world, one in which anything can happen, and if you are hoping for something out of the ordinary, you won't be disappointed. It is a dreamworld rather than a nightmare world, and though not everything that happens there is sunny and sweet, it is far from a pit of despair. Whatever happens there, you will see it through the eyes of an artist, not a clipped mental patient.

If you have only read Modern poetry, as in the *New Yorker* or somewhere, I can't blame you for hating it. But if you think you might learn to like this wordsmith kind of poetry, I can give you some recommendations. Other than Hopkins, try Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, Christina Rossetti, and early Edna St. Vincent Millay. That will get you started. It is actually pretty rare, which is why the claim everything has been done is so ridiculous.