

Nostos

by Louise Gluck

There was an apple tree in the yard —
this would have been
forty years ago — behind,
only meadows. Drifts
off crocus in the damp grass.
I stood at that window:
late April. Spring
flowers in the neighbor's yard.
How many times, really, did the tree
flower on my birthday,
the exact day, not
before, not after? Substitution
of the immutable
for the shifting, the evolving.
Substitution of the image
for relentless earth. What
do I know of this place,
the role of the tree for decades
taken by a bonsai, voices
rising from tennis courts —
Fields. Smell of the tall grass, new cut.
As one expects of a lyric poet.
We look at the world once