

Accounting

Deborah Golub

I didn't have that many, at least for the 1970s,
and I know that because Ruth, not her real name,
showed me her list, twice mine, except one
of her men showed up on both, and then we shared
what he'd done with each. And such an indecency—
not his doing but our sharing—in our twenties,
in the Seventies—seemed to me at the time
a necessity of the times. And not just the sharing,
but how—and it feels sad to say this now—
we hovered just above feeling. To be
like them, we thought. And yet what we kept
secret from ourselves and from each other,
Ruth and I, was how, with some, we'd had to
trick ourselves that we cared—at least a little—
before the body could proceed; then later,
with each other, swapping, pretend there'd been
nothing there at all. How much is lost when we add
things up? Except, after that, I just stopped
telling, and Ruth, by now, has forgotten it all.