

**Georgie's Blues:
To My Husband, William Butler Yeats**

I wanted to divide you for awhile
from your gloom,
I wanted to distract you,
I wanted that woman out of my house,

the actress you pressed
between pages, while I
glided flawlessly
from dusk to dawn,
darkness to sun.

The wedding cake still moist,
a vile mood spiraled you
beyond my reach.

And then
this soft, white hand
loosed a universe of ghosts
into our rooms,
to show you images
you loved so fiercely,
you didn't recognize them as your own.

Suffice it to say
I knew how to get your attention.

But when I tired
of dancing *grands jetes* between your brains,
the thoughts wouldn't stop,
the ghosts babbled on:
your words, your system, your
genius working into me -
a shovel.

My own thoughts were lost, dislodged,
circling, singing birds:

"I burned my translations
when I married you.
I knew
You'd throw them in a stew."

I wrote an order for a child,
and then another,
signed by the ghosts
(We got their signatures on everything).

I dropped my pen
and went to bed.
In sleep
I spoke your philosophy -
you stayed awake to write it down
and publish it.

When you slept
my hair caught fire
from your dream of her.
I woke
to a beating of wings,
inventing her again for you:
ghastly beak at my throat,
a horse full of soldiers
rolling up my thighs.

In the mirror, now,
I see your dark eye
inside my only face.
My other eye is winking;
there's something it still knows:
Your system is me,
and I am chaos.
When you die - surprise -
you're not coming back.

For Barbara T.

I lost you like a glove -
I was thinking of something else.
And now I can't stop retracing my steps...

October in New York.
A blind wind charges off the park
and pins you, giggling, to the wire fence.
Your red skirt flies up - a matador's cape -
face gone, purple panties to the world -
daughter on your right arm, stroller on your left.

I'm content
to be yet another appendage,
a big one.
I'll do anything - wipe the baby's butt -
just to sit in your kitchen while you make tea,
lulled by the bubbles and steam, whistling
'kiss my ass' to the concrete.

You want my stories from the trenches
now that Broadway seems so far
from your chic block on West Seventy-First.
But today I've been ripped inside out
by the mad Greek Nikos
and I barely set the scene
when I'm sobbing into my Constant Comment.

Your son, not to be outdone at his only sport,
lets out a howl from the porta-crib.
You dance between us on the linoleum, singing,
"I enjoy being a girl."

I envy you the world
you've whittled out of granite;
I want one like it,
someday: children's events at the Met,
bright but sweetly geeky husband.

Meanwhile, I leave town.
I fly to the end of the earth and forget you.

You show up eventually, though, kids in tow
with their ice-blue eyes and African middle names.
We sit on a foggy beach, resisting
the gray pull of the waves.
You're blowsy and white - I can barely see the showgirls.

Your dazzling daughter
swings her red pail into the air
and brings it down -
flag on a racetrack.
She stares right through me, seeing the future
just behind my back.
We cover our legs with sand.

We talk about Nancy as if
we're sisters and she our unlikely mom:
a glamorous blond
in a sable coat and white Seville,
driving across our late afternoons
like the horizon itself.
Your son craps in my lap.

Hollywood smirks at your husband's quirky songs.
One is about a nude girl on a road gig.
Your therapist's ravenous,
I hear. You meet him for lunch in a clown suit,
handing out flowers.

Party at your house.

Most of the faces have stepped off the stage
into living room screens
from here to Queens.

Now they hang at the edge
in cantilevered houses, counting sunsets.

Not you.

You drop your kids at a friend's
and drive your car into another world -
off the palisades,
into the sea.

Third Person Plural

Why do I do it and how do I stop
 diving into their skins
 into their juice blender bodies
 to watch myself -
 bulldozer at the blackboard,
 dirt chomper, word spitter -
 sinking into its square hole,

while before and somewhere behind me,
 adolescence blasts into something else?
 How did I grow up to be irrelevant?

One student looks like me.
 She has the knife-eyed pout
 I used to stab my mother with.

I dreamed I threw her against a wall
 and denied it to the fish-faced administrators.
Que barbara.

She had only the knife-look to accuse me
 (no bruises or English words).
 I woke as the fish-eyes followed
 her raised finger toward my face.

Now the dream hangs in our classroom
 and I won't touch any of the girls

but they yank at me, grab me, stroke me
 bray my name as they
 slash through my tangled language.
 I recede into stupid mantras -
 there, there, their, they're

writing their names on everything they touch -
book, desk, blackboard, scalp -
they sneeze their names into the palms of their hands.

Dirty spring in the parking lot.
Heads and limbs hang out the windows,
here and there an ear for me.

They understand little but they may
understand that they are my family
and the motors of my dreams
and they will take my rhythms.
They'll slip from me into the smog.