

## Parent Teacher Night I

If they're alive  
the mothers come  
and if not the fathers take notes  
and look bewildered  
as if there are two places  
they're supposed to be.

Otherwise, the father  
lets the mother  
do the talking  
and though I try  
to address both  
my gaze strays

to the mother  
unless the father  
takes over  
with a *let's cut*  
*to the straight talk*  
or *see here, my kid*

type of tone.  
Some divorced parents  
make two appointments  
so I repeat myself  
as each tries not  
to badmouth the other

or else tries to.  
The rest tune out  
the cacophony  
of surrounding tables,  
the comings and goings  
in the gym,

and lean forward to confirm  
that their child  
is wholly special  
and only I, his teacher,  
and they, his parents  
recognize this,

their paired faces  
creating a perfect  
blend of a person  
that they could not  
distinguish themselves from  
if they tried.