

The Possibility Witch

This convexed love a rearview mirror
fixed on negative space

stars turned inside out
subjects closer than they are

fish heads on the half shell
blind luck in the southcoast glare

roller coaster skeleton
carnival of old thrills

bodies hanging upside down
fast asleep until sunset

funhouse a vacant lot
where the midway was

mission viejo doves and swallows
soft lens on the pupil's black hole

tiled paths and whitewashed adobe
scorpions and tarantulas

no services rest stop
last chance before the border

quantum entanglement
right around the next bend

*

To see the nakedness of your eyes
blue-gray-green as translucent waves
catching the sun, to feel your hands
quiet as silhouettes of wings
nazgûl-thin above the palms,
dawn pastels teasing out
what was to be said without words

*

After sunrise mantra on Second Mesa

and finding Joe, my Russian Blue companion
at his own site-specific ritual
(four baby cottontails laid out
in parallel, heads toward the sun),
headed south on 87 until I saw
a dirt road heading off into a cornfield.
Leaving Joe in the pickup, I followed the road
to where an old Indian woman stood waiting.

You want corn she said. I nodded yes.
She went behind the cabin and came back
with three ears — red, white, yellow.
I gestured with open palms and puzzled shrug.
She handed me the corn, went behind the cabin,
came back this time with the blue one.
I accepted it with a thank you and bow,
walked back to the pickup and drove south.

*

A week after washing out of my orals,
family and career gone,
a dream high in the Sierra redwoods
woke me an hour before dawn.

I was climbing forever spiraling stairs
inside a medieval tower.
At the top, looking over the greensward,
I knew I was going to fall. Then

I was falling: faster by the second,
the courtyard pavement closer and closer,
until, at the last possible moment,
I realized I could fly:

swooping up like a falcon from a steep dive
I sailed through the glistening air. End dream.

Wide awake, I gathered my clothes
without waking you and slipped out of the tent
to wait for dawn by the campfire.
After stirring the embers and adding some deadfall,

settling into a folding chair

while watching trees come out of the forest,
I felt a tremor in the earth under my feet.
I looked down: nothing to see.

But then, another tremor. Still,
even in the flashlight beam, nothing.
Another pause, another tremor.
Then more, stronger and closer together.

Then muffled sounds, like stones underground
grinding against each other. *Earthquake!*

First thought: wake you but the trees
weren't swaying and the ground was still
except there at that one spot
where I could feel it, hear it then

see it: a trembling half-foot wide bulge,
an inch or so tall and growing,
particles of duff shaken down its slopes
a mini-volcano about to erupt.

Epicenter, I thought, but the trees
were still still and the bulge no larger
so I turned the chair toward it, the better
to see whatever was about to happen.

Then the center of the bulge slowly opened revealing
the terrible yellow claws and teeth of a pocket gopher.

Almost laughing out loud, I said hello
to my infernal demon who quickly drew back
into its tunnel. Feeling foolish
for my paranoia, turning back to the fire

I saw the bear on the other side
as close to the flames as I was.
Not a large bear or a cub,
not black or brown but a cinnamon bear

eyes not frightened or menacing
but looking calmly into mine.
After some time, the spell broke.

At a loss for what else to do I went

for the camera but by the time I got back
the bear was ambling off into the shadows.

Cursing myself for my Instamatic
inanity, the disrespectful
utter unmindfulness,
I pulled the chair up to the fire

And started trying to figure out
what all that meant, what
whatever it was was saying
if it or what was said was

anything but neurons firing
at random coming together
in auspicious permutations
as daylight filtered down through the trees:

gopher bear tower fall flight
you sound asleep in our nylon tent

*

After crossing in *la punta* from the embarcadero
where a scorpion had stung my ankle (for which
a young woman had prescribed lime juice
which did help take away some of the sting),
I followed her down the Isla Piedra beach
past scattered clothes and empty backpacks
strewn on the sand and distraught women in despair
weeping or keening softly to themselves
all the way down the long row of palapas
la policía had ransacked then single-filed
all the men back up the beach to jail.

In front of the palapa I had been sharing with other
dope-smoking, nude-bathing hippie types,
the same disruption of personal effects,
the same sense of personal violation,
except that my pack was exactly where I'd left it,
still inside leaning against the wall,
zipped up, intact, untouched.

Everyone agreed it was *un milagro*.
Later, still giving thanks, I opened my bag,
slept until sunrise, packed up in time
to catch *la punta* back to the mainland

*

Summer afternoon southwest of the Lavender Pit
I thought at first you were shivering
as we stood in the doorway holding one another

*

Yet Furthur
north of language
schools and Bolinas

a busload of heads
profiles
in tinted windows

odd hours
cuckoo clock
times of departure

gift of gab
behind the wheel
navigating

no hopalong
or butch but blarney
in a cowboy hat

Mt Tam
Black Mountain
Wy' east Ku'wohi

picturesque
place names
picaresque lives

washed up
between between
and nowhere

Kisco Shasta
hokey holy
side effects

Angels and the Dead
hard rock
candy mountain

pulled over
for going too slow
on the freeway

Möbius strip
Escher print
loop de loup

in the beginning
desire not instinct
but drive she sd

*

On the northern horizon
too far away to hear, flashes
at irregular intervals,
glimpses of cold light
from the Ice Queen's revolving palace

*

Beef-to-heel to Connemara curls
cloverleafs all over the map

mountaintop islands in a sea of clouds
vermilion memories of the sun

whistling swans and Uileann pipes
translucent air trembling

pixies nixies and the Pictish Beast
woad blues in the wemyss of Fife

footsteps on the threshold
dreams true all the way down

where all roads lead to *amor inanis*
calling on those in the land of the dead

*

Next stop
Here Now
On or Off

*

Delivered evenly, professionally, in person
in accord with your strict personal code of honor
and yes, in respect of me, your words were a kick in the stomach.
In what someone who didn't know me could have taken for bad acting,
I fell to my knees with a whimpering moan, then crumpled the rest of the way,
curled up on the floor an overgrown fetus begging not to be reborn

*

Offwhite writhing stucco ceiling
Chinese puzzles and Celtic knots
philodendra fractaling
across a bonewhite wall.
You someone else entirely
yet someone I'd somehow known
as in the mirror I wasn't.
Bach made it all reasonable

*

You came in wearing a mask
the color of invisible

Where your eyes should have been
all I saw was the open door behind you

When your voice without a mouth
said *Am I too late?*

I said *Are you out of your mind?*
then asked myself if we are of one

walking a while in Goodwill shoes
someone dead walked miles in

me myself and you never
after disambiguated

*

The dogs stop barking.
Pitch black silence.
A faint west wind.

From her otherwise empty eye
black hair hisses across
the bare-boned left half of her head,
the canine jaw the temple wing.

Pendants of blue flesh leech-like
in the vicinity of her lips.
Dressed for the hunt: heels, leather.
One breast exposed, the other gone
to her high priests of appetite,
the white growth inside her

Phosphorescent green, a waterfall leaves
her cheekbone, a slowmotion avalanche,
animals tumbling out from the eye socket,
the temporal crack, the void of the ear: wombat
and pachyderm, snail and omnivorous shrew,
the obelisk, the crab, the whole hyena pack
of fun and games gibbering past her long teeth

Conceived in joy, born into the world when light
has gone out of it, raised up in darkness
disguised as the sun and come to this: balding,
bent over, getting bound up, slow,
gaps in the nervous system, child-getting
done, general degeneration

An axe cleaves the skull
shattering the spine.
Clean-nailed hands scoop out the heart,
the bloody message of the brain.
Flames crack open the clavicles
Lips suck marrow from the glyphs,
giving tongue to each organ's

final interpretation

You may as well eat me now, Love,
starting with this still-beating heart,
breathing in my last exultations
inspiring your empty spaces.
Then take me to your dancing sisters
circling the moonlight laughing
as you pass the seed lip to lip
remembering source and sorcerer,
warm hearth, smoke in the chimney

Evening. I kiss your knees

*

The best ever you said was on his Harley,
head down behind the windshield, the signature
four-stroke *suck-squeeze-bang-and-blow*
between your thighs, the two of you leaning
together into hairpin curves coming down
the long grade from the high country

*

Black squares of windowpane
turning transparent at dawn,
things begin to define themselves
out of the animal darkness and you
as usual slip away in the light,
the only trace of dreams you vexed,
a phoebe outside the window
rehearsing his plaintive refrain

*

In your more sentimental moods
you liked to visit that old graveyard
inside a cast iron fence
to protect the living just in case,
too high on the bluff to hear
waves slapping the rocks below,
stones too weathered to read and one
with a six-or-so inch hole through the granite
and glass windows on either side
so you can see her heart

once loved and loving now shriveled and black

*

No, no, I take it all back,
that couldn't have been you with the bronze sickle
prowling the Navarro redwoods
or light as a feather in the Berkeley Hills
Mission Dolores Sunset
Land's End group grope

proving yourself to yourself on the floor
unmoving on top of that
jacked up junkie until he nodded out
or working the after-dinner shift
upstairs at that sleazy rub and tug
down Post in the Tenderloin

eyes aflame in Big Sur
when the anyone Nepenthe
refused to serve was us hippies
or skirting miles of sheer death-wish
at the edge of the old haul road
high above the lost coast

weeks at the A-1 Truck Stop
while I rebuilt the brakes on the bus
exactly where we had planned to be
or pronking with lambs on the Scotia headlands
hitchhiking Whitethorn to Eureka
and back to pick up the parts

smooth as a sylph between crossbow
William Tells on electric wine
and feckless boys with beercans on their heads
or under tanoaks on a redwood stump
a ways up Blue Glide Creek
eyes too ancient to bear looking into

curls redhot as fiddle strings
reels gigs hornpipes and polkas
holding your own with the old timers
or giving me a charity hug
then back to your lover of choice

at your feet drunk as usual

surrounded by goddess images
next to the Titan silo and tailings
in your townhouse neighborhood
or home by the hearth with cat and harp
plucked wires conjuring up
airs forlorn and melancholy

grocerycart bag lady
ensorcelling Kwikstop gas pumps
with blue streak logorrhea
or dancing solo in a beachtown bar
pretending to see only one eye
pinned on your every move

hand in hand walking the dunes
dark night winter squall
tracks dissolving in wet sand
or under the space needle umbrella
more than enough show and tell
masochism to go around

July sky severe clear
pebbles babbling in rocky beds
gold long since panned out
pterodactylan pelicans
single file skimming the surface
cobble and wave call and response

*

East of all that polaroid
coastwise geography,
morning espresso in a little café
a red-checkered tablecloth
internet confederates
a country neither of us called home

my mind focused on the afternoon panel
we were there to persuade to fund
projects of mutual interest
when out of the blue, deadpan eyes
fixed on mine, you said

I'm burning a hole in the seat of this chair

*

High on a windmill crow's nest
angle iron skeleton,
enticed by possibilities,

blades overhead mincing the moonlight,
wellpipe at the center between us,
air cooled down by propriety

*

Three scrungy-looking junkyard dogs
snarl as I slip through the locked gate
then down an aisle of shattered safety glass
between stacks of smashed-flat car bodies

At the end of the aisle a man in a welder's helmet
cutting something with an acetylene torch
He calls me closer with a gloved hand
I step over the hoses and glowing slag

Bound in chains and clamps you lay there
fixing me with wide open bluegreen eyes,
skin and hair incandescent as the torch
I reach out and release your bonds

You stand up, kiss both my eyes and of course
are gone with the whole scene when I open them
lucidly aware of adolescent
shining armor initiation rites

*

Closer each time you said.

*

Leaving the park, still giddy
from darshan and kirtan with Ram Dass
talking about his mother's death
(Sat Ananda Chitchat:
Oh look, I'm dying.
Isn't that interesting
bhakti, not money

the universal equivalent),
we laughed to see two lovebirds
on telephone wires overhead,
an exotic species that mates for life
escaped from their urban desert cages

*

While you play Debussy for me
on your 88-key Roland I see
a closed garden in temperate rain
a nymph in passionate reverie

Bells from a drowned cathedral
toll the afternoon office
for a nude congregation forever chaste,
still as stone in their sanctity

Shy but curious, pubescent,
born again from his labyrinth,
horns still in velvet, a faun
hides in the topiary, his eyes

unblinking green as rain-washed leaves
catching the last slant rays of the sun
searching for the source of the resonance
that seems to inform the pensive nymph

notes he can't reach on his syrx
phrases as lithe as her glistening limbs
tones that caress her fluent curves
where she plays among the fleurs-de-lys

What creature is this, he wonders, that fills
the green world's gathering darkness
with old ivory moonlight
in cultivated garden beds

And then, soft diminuendo
in lieu of resolution still
whispering between my ears,
to open my eyes you tell me

the Roland, for all its digital magic,

can't transmit as well as a grand
or sensitive lover the subtle touch,
the delicacy, of fingers on the keys

*

Looking again at the lights in the rearview mirror I said
The cop car that's been keeping a quarter mile behind us
is starting to close the gap. Are you holding? you asked.
One number I said. *Give it to me* you said.
You slipped it down the front of your pants then took it out
and gave it back to me after they'd gone around us.
Gross you said when I passed it slowly under my nose
before with a smile handing it back to you to light

*

Not just the state of mind called pleasure
that turns veneration into self-caressing
love into auto-eroticism,
wanting joy into joy itself,
bliss of faith in the unknown
devotion to hope yet to come,
but joy shared in being together
sublimating perceived distinctions
of wanting and having, desire and love

*

Though I thought we were alone
O god Omigod
you cried again and again and again

*

It won't be long now said the gray lady,
dustmop in one hand the other
under the hospital bedclothes
her feet, poor thing, already cold,
that's where it begins

*

Past present past future past perfectly you
immersed in an icterid murmur
dark polymorphous fluid apparitions
sometimes one sometimes more sometimes none

Something like ectoplasm, out of body
bodily fluid, superfine, subtle,
next to nothing at all, an afterimage
ghost of everything I am

*

Contact lens in too long:
eyeballs bloodshot
white matter in the tear ducts
— *as long as it's not green pus* said the eye-doc
but give it a rest, don't set your beams
too high, quit trying to tell what you see
with only one eye on the road
from what you're looking at or for

*

Shamrock Texas I-10
bitter cold blizzard night
hiking back east to try to make peace
between my mother and grandmother
while there was still time

A white fourdoor DeVille pulled up
under the truckstop arc lamps.
When I opened the door your hand said
to put my pack in the back seat,
sit up front in the heater's warmth

In the turquoise glow of the dash and headlights
reflected back in off the snow,
a striking woman of uncertain age,
high cheekbones, knowing eyes,
her very presence a radiance

a smile that said desperate
or crazy or both as I must be
hitchhiking in a whiteout
on the high plains in the dead of night,
I was a brother and welcome

After I explained where I was headed
and why, you nodded, smiled again,
and we settled into the thrum of the engine,

the easy rhythm of the windshield wipers,
the enormous silence of the snow outside

Hours and few words later
you stopped under an arc lamp
outside OK City,
smiled again as I closed the door
then watched your lights disappear in the snow

*

Between the two the Quakers say
is where love is. Between *yin* and *yang*
is *ch'i* says the *I Ching*

*

Milk-blue seas of the moon
spilling into a milk-blue sky

Black silver tarnish luster
more precious than polished sterling

*

We spoke then, our bodies still
unrecovered, of age of ageing
of playfulness of mischievousness

girlishness and boyishness
kittenish puppyish
a certain light still in our eyes

*

Midnight middle of nowhere
high desert backcountry blacktop
still wet from late afternoon showers,
down the road ahead a myriad
red dots dancing in the darkness
(*For sure nothing human* you said)
that when we stopped turned out to be
thousands of tiny newborn spiders
clinging to wisps of gossamer
suspended from darkness above,
their spectral red lunatic eyes
refracted by our head lights,

drifting west in the humid air

*

And there were deer in the old orchard
does and fawns and they came to you

and you gave them windfall apples,
stroked their foreheads with your fingertips

and they nuzzled your palm then we
walked back to the car without a word

*

Oedipus you may have noticed
has very little to do with this
despite your father figures
my sibling fantasies

the Sphinx even less, though
riddle-me-this love poems
with a vengeance do pose questions that forever
plague family romance

*

Speaking of love
tongue in cheek
a permanent wink
Walked away
from another one
sd the brakeman

*

Goodnight, sweet ladies
said blackballed Tom
Glad you could come.

Calling

Not an abstract fabricator god
in the *theos demiourgós* unmoved mover sense
the dark ages capitalized and adorned
with gender, timeline and personality;
and certainly not an unmoved lover — change
being maybe your main attribute —
but like that fabled artist creator you,
while maybe doing no more than painting your nails,
excite in others eros desire longing love,
moving them toward you, animating
the force they say makes the world go round.

All my life I've heard you calling —
in mountains, deserts, redrock canyons,
forests and fields, at work at play,
on backroads sidestreets freeways —
sights seen, ups and downs,
emotional exercises
intellectual acrobatics
authorial intents
somewhere in the back of my head
you singing with different words
the song I'd always thought mine,
the song I've known by heart forever.

Now, though I've lost the trail, looked back,
retraced my steps innumerable times
gone in circles given up
searched in impossible places
on wild goose shape-changes
snipe hunt reality shows
hounds run ragged bush to bush
all those perfect matches burned out,
now here I stand again
uninvited but called.