

## 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

\*

Though both are delicate-winged nymphs  
from a family that includes admirals,  
monarchs and emperors, the west coast  
painted lady and her California sister  
differ in aberrations of color, pattern,  
range, reproductive habits and diet —  
the one, for instance, has a taste for rotten fruit.

\*

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

\*

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 appear in 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 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.

\*

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'd 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

picturesque  
place names  
picaresque lives

Mt Tam  
Wikieup  
Black Mountain

washed up  
between between  
and nowhere

on the road

coast to coast  
pilgrimage

Shasta Kisco  
hokey holy  
side effects

pulled over  
for going too slow  
on the freeway

Futurama  
Belgian Waffles  
Mellon mansion

Möbius strip  
group think  
turnabout

turnpike tunnels  
corn belt  
the northern route

Omaha  
Ogallala  
Cheyenne

Angels and the Dead  
hard rock  
candy mountain

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  
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

wee folk and misty isles  
fantasy histories

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

\*

Black squares of windowpane  
turning transparent at dawn,  
things beginning 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

\*

You came in wearing a mask  
the color of invisible

Where your eyes should have been  
I saw 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 were of one

walking a while in Goodwill shoes  
someone dead walked miles in

me myself and you never  
after disambiguated

\*

Three scrungy-looking junkyard dogs  
snarl as I slip through the locked gate  
then down a path 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 with a touch 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

\*

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

\*

The best ever you said was on his Harley,  
head down behind the windshield, the signature  
73.73 cubic inch  
shovelhead engine with Electra-glide  
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

\*

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

laughing running for the old barn  
as the rain started clothes drying out  
as we lay there in the summer breeze  
or thumbing it back on 101  
north of Santa Margarita

rolling hills lush green

eyes aflame in Big Sur  
when the anyone Nepenthe  
refused to serve was us  
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  
exactly where we had planned to be  
while I rebuilt the brakes on the bus  
or pronking with lambs on the Scotia headlands  
Whitethorn to Eureka and back  
hitchhiking 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

pulling the chain across the road  
to stop the Sheriff and Dea  
in what would be known as the Briceland Standoff  
or Bluebird on the wing again  
heading in the opposite direction  
their way in our way out

high on a ridge at the end of a road  
facing the barren bedrock expanse  
of Desolation Wilderness  
or keeping watch for color and glitter  
on either side of the whitewater  
American River gorge

curls redhot as fiddle strings  
reels gigs hornpipes and polkas  
holding your own with the old timers  
or making me a charity case  
then back to your lover of choice  
at your feet drunk as usual

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

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

Then further, Dane-zaa land,  
magnetic pole a stone's throw  
the firmament to down to earth  
pastel lights undulating  
around us where we lay in wonder  
in love in Peace River country

\*

East of all that polaroid  
coastwise geography,  
morning espresso in a little café  
a red-checkered tablecloth  
internet conspirators  
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

surrounded by possibilities

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

\*

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

\*

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

\*

*Closer each time* you said.

\*

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 jeans 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 murmuration  
dark polymorphous fluid apparitions  
sometimes one sometimes more sometimes none

something like ectoplasm, superfine  
out-of-body bodily fluid, 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  
as precious as 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,  
glistening in our high beams,  
down the road ahead a myriad  
red lights 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 lights and the moon's  
liquid glow when the clouds parted,  
the next generation drifting west

\*

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  
*Walked away*  
*from another one*  
sd the brakeman

\*

*Not a tenderness but hope*  
sd Senator Creel

\*

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