

SPECULA

1

Out of one, two, it
really being a matter
of the chemistry
of thin silver films
and the physics
of angles of
reflection
equalling angles
of incidence; but maybe
(who knows)
there's really
three — the one
back there
beckoning, left
and right exchanged; you,
seeming free, and,
since it's about surfaces,
pretension,
maybe the one
caught
right on the mirror,
half-size.

2

If I tell you that molecules are left-
or right-handed, that a carbon bound
to four others can be crafted by your
hands in nonsuperimposable mirror
image forms, that we are built from
just one hand, and that sinister, that
we smell and taste and are numbed
by one, and not its image, you'll say,
in your sweet way: what's left or right
got to do with it, do molecules
hide turns, switch-hitters, the lovingly
taught match of small arms and sleeves?

3

There are people for dinner at home, but
I'm tired, go to the bedroom for a rest.

I sit down in front of the mirror, play
with the ground glass stopper of a perfume

bottle, reach for a comb. The light flickers,
the room seems darker. In the mirror I see

the bed cover is not a dhurrie but frilly
with lace. The paintings are in ornate

frames, there are real candles in a crystal
chandelier. I hear its glass drops jingle

in the draft of a door opening, and I don't
want to see in the mirror who is coming in.

4

I think this is what drove
Bishop Berkeley to notions
of the real; he, like me,
in the bathroom, the only
full-length mirror there,
asking, in a time-honored way:
Mirror, mirror on the wall,
who is the fairest...and the
mirror, privy to technologies
of future, at home in fairy
tales, flickers in a moment
of steamy hesitation, floods
with flesh tones, and there you
stand, love, drying your back
talking vigorously to yourself.

5

I am one. I
am two. Split.
Untied.
By the point
that is you.
By a stop. That
draws — one
in, one on. In
you I am two.
I am one. You.

6

In a pair
of mirrors joined
at a right angle

three likenesses
of you
stare. Two
straight, face on;
but they're not you,
as they are switched
left to right.
And in the corner
where the mirrors abut
stands a lone man
who has it all
right
as far as
sides go, except
for that unbecoming
crack
down the middle
where he seems to be missing
something.
If you were to move,
no matter how you move,
the two seamless men
respond, quicker
than you can follow. But
the image
in the corner
stays put
there,
like you.

7

Essential amino acids, dextrously
synthesized, are a mix of mirror-
image forms. The left nourishes,
the right is excreted unmetabolized.
How could one pry them apart?

Imagine...a musty storeroom crammed
full of mannequin parts, left and right
arms in rigidified plastic disarray.
And you, in the dark, have to sort
them out. It's a left-over Fellini set.

No problem. You enter, feel your way
to this scene of cool carnage, and
like the President, you begin shaking

hands. Maybe they're a little dusty,
and one surely felt warm. If the grip

feels good, well, it's off with them
to one side; the others, found out
in the dismal misfit of left on right,
over there. It's soon done, but why
is there one more right hand than left?

8

He seemed so gentle, knew everything.
We thought you were lucky; I remember
so clearly having coffee with the two
of you on the veranda, your bandaged
hand. You said it had gotten caught
in the garage door. Now you tell me
of scars that are worse, that make
you feel like a moth with one wing
torn off. You tell of how his body
froze away from your hug as he heard
his friend coming. And I was like
his twin; none knew him as well as I.

9

Tetrahedra, screws, bolts on car
wheels always tightened the wrong

way; in silver mirrors, in molecules
growing on handed clay surfaces, or

seeded, panspermia, into cauldron
atmospheres, chains growing, left

clasping left, sculpting double
helices, to be nicked in mutations,

building, building, to Alice's
passage, in cyclones and anti-,

born from nonconservation of parity,
the four-pronged, chiral universe

marches to an asymmetric tune: left,
right, left, left...Remember, o

explorers, to bring along a hand

when you rocket to the far stars.

10

In Manchu dialects
the word for mirror is
"the place where the soul-shade is held".
Deep behind copper mirrors
the Mongol shaman sees the world,
fixes spirits,
imprisons
the white horse
of his own, ecstatic, flight.