

Speculations about “I”

*... a certain doubleness, by which I can stand
as remote from myself as from another.*

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

I.

I didn't choose the word—
It came pouring out of my throat
Like the water inside a drowned man.
I didn't even push on my stomach.
I just lay there, dead (like he told me)

& “I” came out.
(I'm sorry, Father.
“I” wasn't my fault.)

II.

(How did “I” feel?)

Felt almost alive
When I'd get in, like the Trojan horse.

I'd sit on the bench
(I didn't look out of the eyeholes
So I wouldn't see the carnage).

III.

(Is “I” speaking another language?)

I said, “I” is dangerous.
But at the time I couldn’t tell
Which one of us was speaking.

IV.

(Why “I”?)

“I” was the closest I could get to the
One I loved (who I believe was
Smothered in her playpen).

Perhaps she gave birth
To “I” before she died.

V.

I deny “I,”
& the closer
I get, the more
“I” keeps receding.

VI.

I found “I”
In the bulrushes
Raised by a dirtiness
Beyond imagination.

I loved “I” like a stinky bed,

While I hid in a sentence
With a bunch of other words.

VII.

(What is “I”?)

A transmission through space?
A dismemberment of the spirit?

More like opening the chest &
Throwing the heart out with the gizzards.

VIII.

(Translation)

Years later “I” came back
Wanting to be known.

Like the unspeakable
Name of God, I tried

My 2 letters, leaving
The “O” for breath,

Like in the Bible,
Missing.

IX.

I am not the “I”
In my poems. “I”
Is the net I try to pull me in with.

X.

I try to talk
With “I,” but “I” doesn’t trust
Me. “I” says I am
Slippery by nature.

XI.

I made “I” do
What I wasn’t supposed to do,
What I didn’t want to do—
Defend me,
Stand as an example,
Stand in for what I was hiding.

I treated “I” as if
“I” wasn’t human.

XII.

They say that what I write
Belongs to me, that it is my true
Experience. They think it validates
My endurance.
But why pretend?
“I” is a kind of a terminal survival.

XIII.

I didn't promise
"I" anything & in that way
"I" is the one I was most
True to.