

EXPANSION AS RELIEF

for Fernando Pessoa

All it takes to make a mirror is sliding
a coat of silver nitrate down a pane of glass.
Then: there may be two of you.

How to replicate again?
Simply crack the mirror and
place a piece on either side of you.

Then the multitude
 which becomes you
will march single-file
 beside you.

Onward, tiny spines!
Seen from above
like a perfect pattern
shining itself around.

As with facsimiles, each copy grows hazier;
each edge puckers into a blur.

Soon even
the deepest nesting center
of yourself,
where these other selves
collide and recollect,
becomes thick and watery
like a delta, a rich threshold.

But hear this:

I know how achieving unison can
begin to feel like anxious swarming.

I know how easy it is
to knot up the listening with thought.

I know what it is to melt off the maddening lull
with the motion of reproduction,
the consolation of forward and backward time
being indistinguishable for even an instant.

I know what it is to have shadows of yourself
you'd rather not account for.

I know the faith and doubt to which catastrophes lead.

I, too, have tucked each experience away in an envelope, and then, when the
pocket of paper is outgrown, a trunk:
the sensation like
dropping pennies
down a well, hopeful and
wasteful at once.

I know the allure of saying,
“just one more,” and “again”...

I know the bare economy of loneliness.

As each heteronym is born,
a hiss sounds, like a train uncoupling.

I, too, have felt such lightness on my own engine.

To become singular again requires time and
patience while the mirrors fade and warp,
collect damage on their delicate backings.

However invisible the legend,
I promise you,
the power of the asymmetries
aligning into a gorgeous center
has been glowing steadily.

And I can tell you this:
 You will always have more eyes than mouths
 and there will always be more which goes unsaid.