

ONE WHO

A friend asks me to write about who I am,
a few words or poem to share with others
in our small group of women newly met.
I want to believe I can do that, can select
the details that define me, allow me
to be seen and known.

I could say my parents knew me, and those
who've worked with me, some of my neighbors.
Perhaps my husband knows me best, but anyone's
view of me is only a partial picture.

I've lived with myself nearly seventy years,
but when I look at myself in the mirror,
it doesn't ever tell me.

I am one who journeys, who has climbed
through a deep cave in the Saudi desert to find
a hidden stream, one who swims through sea tunnels
wrapped in the ocean's blue silk, one who loved to sing
“*O sole mio*” while peddling across the Deccan Plateau
strewn with yellow mustard. I am one who clambered up
Metemora's rocky inclines to inhale the incense of fragrant
foreign words spilling from inside their stony temples.

I'm one who climbed down from Mt. Kinabalu for hours
in a torrential storm, who walked once across amethyst fields
at Thunder Bay, who listened to the legs of a million flamingo
moving through Lake Magadi near Tanzania's Ngorongoro crater,
who encountered a cobra standing upright in a path
beside the Zambezi River.

I'm the one who digs in the earth, reveling at how seeds
grow into peppers and roses, who lived through years
inhaling the world's worst smoke, who watched my father
lying on his death bed, mouth opening to the darkest deep,
and who felt my mother's spirit leave her—how the room
filled with quiet light.

I'm one who hopes to learn a foreign language, who wants
to give something beautiful as food to one who is hungry,
who yearns to inhale Japan's ancient cedar forest
while walking the Basho trail, and who believes
to sing like Aretha would be a superpower.

I am the reflection of all that has touched me,
and the truest thing I know about myself is
it is a wonder
to be alive.

—Anna Citrino