



I Am You

Anne Tardos

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Opening the Self to a host of others through intuitive linguistic associations, these excerpts from the long poems “Letting Go” and “The Letter: A Bloodbath” explore the limits of language, meaning, and the human subject. They record personal feelings, while permitting sounds and reflections not traditionally found in the genres of elegy or autobiography to enter.

In this work, letting go of the ego does not mean purging the personal from poetry or submitting the writing process to chance, but representing the Self in liminal and permeated states. Subjectivity is plural and unstable, constituted by contact with words, objects, animals, and lovers. There exists an “I,” but its borders are transparent and interpenetrating.

Following the ego to the egg and the eagle, these pages evoke moments of transition, whether the “Thoughts that create sounds / Sounds that create words” or the girl “who will let go of herself and become something else.” The stages of transformation are painful, likened to a “great surgery” and a “bloodbath,” but also edifying. As the narrator notes, “You confirm and you build by repetition.” The comment applies equally to poetic method and daily life.

“A brilliant and disturbing masterpiece—an unpicking of elegy and its inevitable entanglements with 'autobiography.' Its expression is supra-active and fast paced. It scans form and implications of the living and the dead. It exhumes and lays to rest. It left me stunned.”

—John Kinsella

“I Am You reminds us of something we know but often forget: that identity is formed in relation to others. These poems are couched within the contexts of process-based, art-making practice and clear-headed philosophical inquiry. The result is a kind of philosophical investigation into the multiplicity of time.”

—Kit Robinson American Book Review

“I Am You is a powerful book, one that manages to be both a deeply realistic exploration and a send-up of grief and all its detritus. [H]ow refreshing it is to be able to appreciate a collection of smart, evasively direct, funny poems for the way they deal with deep emotion, rather than the way they avoid it.”

—Katie Degentesh Poetry Project Newsletter

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Christine Frazier:

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David Robinson:

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Miguel Sherman:

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