2. **The Several Selves Prompt**

Are you aware of divisions within yourself, several selves coexisting? Talk about them in a poem. If you are, by luck or enlightenment, a totally harmonious, unified being, write instead about, or from the voice of, someone who is divided into several distinct facets of self.

**In Mind**

There’s in my mind a woman of innocence, unadorned but

fair-featured, and smelling of apples or grass. She wears

a utopian smock or shift, her hair is light brown and smooth, and she

is kind and very clean without ostentation—

but she has no imagination.

And there’s a turbulent moon-ridden girl

or old woman or both, dressed in opals and rags, feathers

and torn taffeta, who knows strange songs—

but she is not kind.

Denise Levertov
from Denise Levertov: Poems 1960-1967
The Double

More and more I have come to wonder
about this stranger—
woman whose sweaters and coats resemble my own,
whose taste in breads and coffee
resembles my own,
who sleeps when I sleep, wakens when I awaken.

For her,
whose verb form takes the felicitous s at its close,
what happens is simply what happens.

I fret the most slender of errors—
the name forgotten, the borrowed book unreturned—

but never have found her holding a teacup
or coin between her fingers
as if its substance and purpose were something she did not comprehend.

How self-assured she seems,
who decides nothing,
whose insomnia is to my own what the shadow of a leaf is to a leaf.

I am tired, but she is not tired.
I am wordless;
she, who has never spoken a word of her own,
is full of thoughts as precise and impassioned
as the yellow and black exchanges of a wasp’s striped body.

For a long time I thought her impostor.
Then realized:
her jokes, even her puns, are only too subtle for me to follow.

And so we go on, mostly ignoring each other,
though what I cook, she eats with seeming gusto,
and letters intended for her alone I open with a curious ease,
as if I, not she, were the long-accomplished thief.

Jane Hirshfield
from After
The Poet Lady Again

I live in a hall of mirrors.  
They all tell lies.  
I steal because I’m simple.  
I lie to complicate things.  
They won’t let me out  
because I won’t stay dressed.  
I should be more ashamed of my deformity.

I howl on the Spanish balcony  
while the stuffy party goes on below.  
One by one I cast off my skirts;  
ballooning they float.  
No one can reach me with reason.  
I tip back their ladders and laugh.  
I spit down sparks to make them dance.

The mood passes.  
I wrap my shawl around me  
and retreat to the hall of mirrors  
where, twirling slowly, I unwind.  
My reflections come,  
a twittering flock,  
and eat from my outstretched hands.  
jch 1976?