

In Which You Dream of Yourself as Other

By Charlotte O'Brien

Charlotte O'Brien is a queer writer with an MFA from Pacific University. Her poems recently appeared in *The Midnight Oil* and *Epiphany* literary journals. She has essays in *The Rumpus*, *Mutha Magazine*, and *The Manifest-Station*. She is a finalist of *The Midnight Oil* and *Tennessee Williams* poetry contests.

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All night, you are split
 in two / parts / facsimiles / identical
 twins / matching fingerprints
 like making eye contact with a stranger
 then recognizing your reflection
 in the mirror / your

skin / peeled back
 as if looking through a microscope / into the core of a thing
 not / the women / you've lived in

or, the man / you become when you're holding
 the hard / cock of yourself. not the self of possession:

your mother's girl / father's / daughter
 mother / sister / wife / animating
 whatever comes / first—
 a prick or a ladle,
 red lips or laundry
 diamond fingers,
 stockinged thighs,
 aproned lap. tit in a mouth,
 finger in the geyser, head in the oven,

the carefully taped-up doors to your children's bedrooms—.

not the illusion. / like using the wrong tools for the job
 or building your home with sticks,
 then fortifying it with fire.
 instead, you are solved / a cracked code / a puzzle
 game / essence /
 essential / plural / an other / self

the way ghosts become themselves / after death—
 pushed through / identical / but / new/ly
 minted / as if they were just born /

into their true self

the way bamboo will push through /
any thing / even, cement—
propagating itself / even as you're pulling it up /

leaves like knives / creaking and whispering /
a subterranean murmur. like, *yeah, whatever, bitch,*
I'll be back. just watch me.

and you're watching yourself / in a sweater
and jeans. as if you were just born /
into adulthood /
just standing there / dying open.