

IN WHICH YOU DREAM OF YOURSELF AS OTHER

Charlotte O'Brien



IMAGE: Roz Murtha

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.

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.

