

Shapeshifter

an ode to Dissociative Identity Disorder
by Aron Ryan

I

I am a birthmark.

Lift
the hem
of my hoodie.
See this comma,
this raindrop dripping
down my rib, eclipsed with
your thumb. Press down. Feel
the bone caging this song. My heart
doesn't belong to me. I share this pulse
with him, with her, with these alters living
rent free in my head. We're squatters. We're
shapeshifters, changing gender as easily as
light changes colors. My body can't hold
its shape, any more than clouds can
hold the shape of rain.

II

I am

a prism.

Run

your fingers
through my hair

so the light
bends, breaks,
changes shape.

Reach

into his fire

flickering
gold curls

except her hair's
violet like a bruise

like wisteria
branches blooming
down my
waist.

Rest

my chin
in your hands.

Do you know
who I am when we
all wear the same face?

Am I transgender if my body
never settles on its shape? Boy?
Girl? Depends how light shines
through the prism of my mind

am I out of my mind?

Do you believe I'm real
as the shape of my birthmark,
real as the color of my

eyes: kaleidoscopes
reflecting
light.

III

I am

slipping,
so slip your fingers through mine.

Trace the lines in my palms.
Is there a future worth telling?

Kiss my soft-boned knuckles.
Are these fists just for fighting?

Press your thumb to my wrist.
Is my heart beating? I am as real

as my pulse. Beneath the skin
we are motion, we are commotion,

we exist by shifting our shape.
What's my name? I'll tell you. I am

alter: to change.