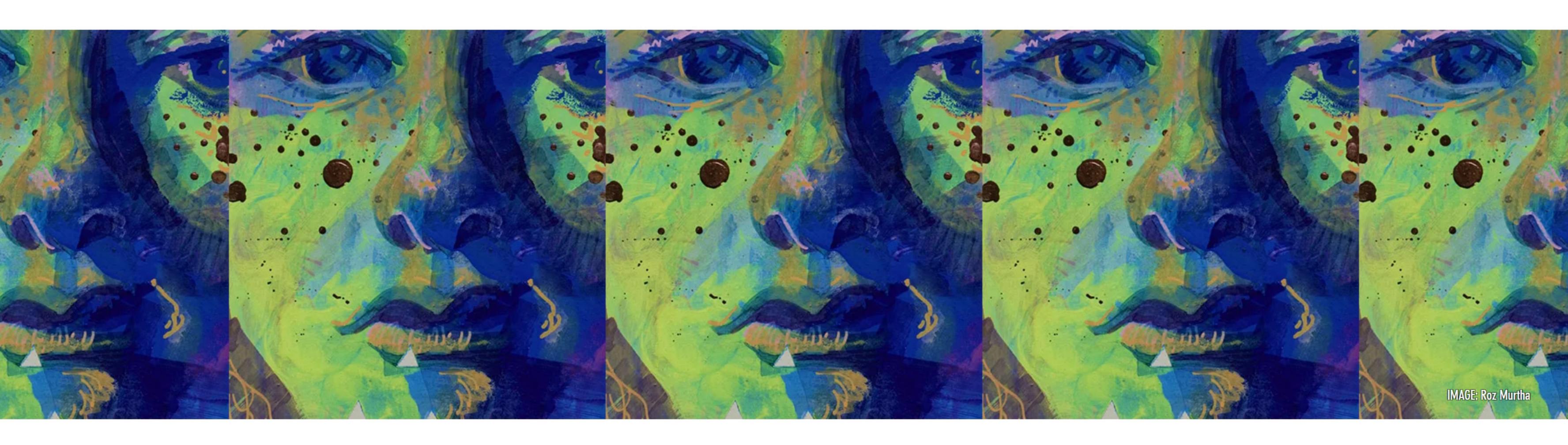
IN WHICH YOU DREAM OF YOURSELF AS OTHER

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.

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.

