

The President Cannot Define Me Out of Existence

Cody Tieman

First, I told my toothpaste-glazed mirror.
I'm gay, I'm gay, I'm gay,
each tear catching on my eyelashes' feather boa edges,

Then, I scraped slurry from my eyes
with a nail file, each swipe of the tool
sculpting a hardness, until I shaved

so deep I nicked my skull,
found the bone was cracking under pressure,

though the x-rays were inconclusive,
my bones rang clear. I'm trans,
made of terracotta but still of the earth.

Yesterday, the president tweeted
"the United States Government
will not accept or allow
Transgender individuals to serve."

His spit fire attacks target
bodies that already burn.
I swallow the flames.

Embers glow in my belly
but I am not his broken pottery,
no ash will gather beneath me.