

TORRIN A. GREATHOUSE

Double Sonnet for Transgender Dysphoria Blues

a golden shovel / after Against Me!

All I ever wanted to be—the summer
daydreamed of. Girl in the floral-print dress
& endless golden fields. I just wanted you
to future me, when so many people want
me past-tensed. I know I can't convince them
I deserve survival. A future to
grow up into. I know that they can't see
a girl's body beneath this dress, but you
zip me in like gently dressing a wound, like
I highlight my cheeks, paint my lips, so they
will mistake me for what I am. First see
the dazzle & not the jagged scruff every
morning erased. Woman & not the other
name given before I was ever named *girl*.

How do you survive the body that you've
been given? Boy's a name I barely got
through alive. Was called a son, but said *no*
'til I wasn't a daughter either. Called *cunt*
in the street. There's no language I'm safe in
-side of. I wear a pin that says NOT YOUR
NICE GIRL & men still try to claim this strut
is bait for their animal lust. Laugh &
show all their teeth. My mother tells me *You've*
made yourself a target. Thinks that I've got
a death wish. I don't tell her how the word *no*
buries girls like me. I just want to pass
like an arrow through the air. Just want to
speak & have no one notice how I shake.

In Praise of the Rim Job

We once drove 900 miles—from California to Idaho—in a borrowed car, the dead-drench of summer slicking our skin with its own salt, to witness an eclipse’s totality. The darkened sun, the sky punched through. We barely made it, but did on duct tape & faith. Bear with me. I know how easy it is to forget a journey for all its destinations. We—trans & crippled & visible as cross hairs—crossed five state lines to see the convenient mechanism of the day break down. Magnet passing over a TV screen. But what we could not have expected was the darkness. Jay blue deepened to false-dusk & nightjars split into song; how the moon remade the palace of the sky. The air still, but cold as autumn breeze. A corona is a crown but also the light that wreathes a punctured star. Each solar flare—frayed nerve endings of decaying brightness. A confession: Even as the heavens glimmered apocalyptic, my first thought was of a lover, thighs horizoned across a mattress. Body tongued as if it were the eucharist. Lips pressed to this fleshy crown that canonizes the saint of my tongue. Ring of fire, tiny halo, slot in the confessional door. I am inclined to call this holy: skin-muffled blasphemy, wet & near-silent prayer.