They throw the words at me like an order:

“You’re too young to be sick.”

“You don’t look disabled.”

They look at my four limbs and miss the TV static behind my eyes,

the razor-sharp teeth in my abdomen and skull,

and a brain wired differently for a world that is far too loud.

“You can’t be trans.”

“You can’t be queer.”

As if it were a phase or a joke,

or something I needed to prove,

attempting to smooth me out so I am digestible,

and dare to tell me it is not something in my flesh and soul.

I used to shrink into my hoodie,

hide behind a mask,

hold my breath at the bus stop,

letting strangers decide what space I could own,

what name I could hold,

and how much of myself I was allowed to keep.

That was then.

My body is not a debate.

My life is not up for discussion.

I am taking up space.

I am trans. I am queer. I am disabled –

and I am not apologising for it.