

You

I feel so I know  
But do I know what I feel?

It feels like a choke hold,  
A noose ever tightening

The words of Sylvia  
Of it isn't your room that's a prison, it's yourself

I feel it, every day,  
Not because of me,  
But because of you

Lockdown to me has been synonymous with thinking,  
over and over and over.

In this covid prison I haven't or can do nothing,  
Nothing but to think,  
think of the past,  
and hope to the future,  
knowing that ultimately I have to let you go.  
I think of how you started,  
when I was a child of four  
How to everyone,  
gradually, more and more was different, something at odds.

All I was being  
was me.

It grew. First cat calls,  
the "err are you a batty boy, chichi man, backs to the wall,  
Threats,  
The odd punch here and there,  
The why do you have to be

like that?  
Pushing, the spitting,  
Constant cries of  
Why So feminine?  
the are you a man or a woman,

Over and over  
ringing in my ears  
I became afraid of words,  
a fear that words instilled in me.  
A fear that mutated  
denial,  
the self hate, the shame.  
things I have had to unlearn,  
to deal with, to let go of ,  
one at a time.

Because of you there is pain.

When I do liberate myself, I feel free, like a bird unshackled from a  
far too small cage,  
Wings free  
Wings extended  
soaring, happy and content with who I am.

Yet, it isn't that easy, you always find a way to entrap me, to make  
me question my existence, my hopes and dreams.

I can say that I've now found me,  
Authentic and true,  
Woman,  
Happy in my skin  
But the taunts have just evolved  
I'm now manly  
I'm now tranny  
A lost case,  
A slur on the street,

A constant fear of being attacked,  
Will I be safe going out?  
Can I pee in peace?

Me, whatever me is,  
Constantly at the mercy of spectators  
Spectators without consent  
Bullies with agendas

I know you as an oppressor,  
A social conditioner  
Attempting to mould  
To control  
To diminish  
But no more.

This is my manifesto,  
my pledge,  
my mission.

Maya tells me that I am woman  
and by god I want you to hear me roar.  
I'm ready to live without fear  
Without shame.  
I know that after you,  
the pain will dull,  
ultimately fade.  
Without you,  
I am free.

Claudia Lahore/ 2020