



Two Puberties Too Many.

By Jamie Bilson

The controversy of puberty blockers and the effects of ignorance around the gender spectrum.

Puberty is a wonderful time in life; a sentiment anyone having experienced puberty would be loath to agree with. The truth of the matter is this; puberty was hell for us all. From here I offer you a question, would you want to go through it twice? Annoyingly that is the reality for me and my fellow breakers of the gender binary.

The last few years have thrown some unexpected curve balls; forest fires, murder hornets, and countless social injustices exposing the corruption within modern society. On top of a global pandemic, it has been a lot to take in. So, it is easy to see how many things have swept under the radar of media coverage – especially about a group of people so often erased from the social narrative. Trans and gender non-conforming people have been targeted massively in the past few years. In 2019 there was an 81% increase in reported hate crime towards transgender individuals in the UK and the media's twisted narrative has most definitely done more harm than help with this statistic in the following year.

I could write numerous essays on the deeply ingrained beliefs and stereotypes of trans people in society, but I have a word limit and would hate to lose your avid attention. Therefore, I would like to focus on one specific event. On the 10th December 2020, the government debated the issue of access to puberty blockers for under sixteens. These halt the hormones

which create secondary sex characteristics – for example, the development of breast tissue or growth of facial hair. This completely reversible treatment allows teenagers who are questioning their gender to explore all their options without the damage developing in the wrong body could cause their mental health. However, the verdict of this debate – in the whole twelve minutes allotted to the issue – was ultimately to prevent trans youths from accessing this service unless allowed by a court. A decision made by people who referred to a medical transition using terms like 'castration' and 'heavy unnatural drug use', also stating that 'no baby can be born in the wrong body and human sex cannot be changed post-birth' (Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne). Prejudiced interpretations like this are what allow negative perceptions of trans people to stew subconsciously.

I propose that one root of the problem is bias and discriminatory language being used frivolously and commonly by people who don't understand the struggles of trans folks. So, to better understand life outside the gender binary, literature can be a fantastic resource. *Burgerz*, a play by Travis Alabanza, explores the effects of transphobic violence after someone threw a burger at them with a transphobic slur. Their play offers an in-depth exploration of the transgender existence and how we reclaim ourselves in the wake of suffering.

Mimi Lemay's *What We Will Become* explores an alternate perspective: a mother raised in faith discovering how to accept her son through his transition and how acceptance can allow a person to live the life they choose. A warning to any who take my advice and read these

amazing pieces of literature: I openly admit, I cried rivers reading the latter.

Hearing more trans narratives – especially those written by transgender people – can not only normalise gender non-conformity but encourage cisgender people to understand the truth of our lives. We simply exist. There is, shockingly, no secret agenda. We just politely ask to be understood and not demonised. We go through puberty twice, haven't we suffered enough?

Figure 1 Photo by Ted Eytan

