



illustration by Lynn Bremner

All Ages

Yves Rees found that their gender transition also introduced an unexpected (and occasionally baffling) new phenomenon: a second adolescence.

Until a few years ago, I knew exactly how my life would pan out. After my first bloodied undies launched me into womanhood, I'd enjoy a window of youth and fertility, get pregnant and pop out some children. I would slowly and then suddenly lose my sexual currency, joining the ranks of invisible older women. It was all laid out before me. I was a feminist, a gender historian. I knew what it was to age as a woman under patriarchy: the menstruation-motherhood-menopause-mortality pipeline. Then something happened. At 30, I realised I wasn't a woman at all. I came out as trans, changed my name, my pronouns, my wardrobe, lopped off my boobs – and wrote a whole book about it for good measure.

I expected that this transition would change my relationship to gender, to bodies, even to sexuality. But what I didn't see coming was that naming myself as trans would transform my relationship to age and time. Stepping off the "woman" track, I also stepped off the linear path laid out before me.

Time started playing tricks. I grew simultaneously older and younger, inhabiting multiples ages at once. There was no longer an orderly route through life. I was living in queer temporality now. Let me explain.

Queer theorists have long argued that time and age work differently for queers. Straight people live in chrononormativity – the notion of human life as a straight line from childhood to reproduction to death. You know, the "normal" vision of what a life looks like.

Over in the queer world, things are all skew-whiff. After coming out, we often have a second adolescence. We have more complicated routes to procreation and, until recently, couldn't get married. We might keep doing "youthful" things like clubbing and travelling, well into middle age.

Rockstar theorist Jack Halberstam argues that disrupting chrononormativity by "queering" time is foundational to queerness itself. Halberstam says that, at its heart, to be queer is to experience "strange temporalities" and "imaginative life schedules". As a result, we queers don't quite fit into conventional paradigms of aging.

I first realised that time was becoming a bit queer when I found myself, in my thirties, buying a new wardrobe in the Kmart boys' section. Next, I started to get asked for ID for the first time in years. As the clock ticked onwards, I seemed to be falling backwards in time. But that was only the beginning.

Now four years into my gender transition, time doesn't just move forwards and back – it spirals like an ouroboros, with

multiple timelines all happening at once. On any given day, I am living many different ages, a nesting doll of selves.

First, there's the age according to my birth certificate.

By the calendar, I'm 34, a millennial fast leaving youth behind. Like a good millennial, I'm an over-educated workaholic with a wardrobe of skinny jeans, an excessive number of house plants and a kink for edging burnout. I feel every single one of those 34 years whenever I have more than one glass of wine.

Thanks to my daily dose of testosterone, I'm also a 15-year-old boy in the throes of puberty, with all the indignities that entails. Pimples colonise my back and thighs, my voice breaks at the worst possible moments, hairs sprout on my chin. I cut myself while relearning to use a razor. (And that's just the PG content.)

Then, just for kicks, I'm also a 50-something woman, as the testosterone has induced early menopause. I'm transforming from an object of straight men's sexual desire into something largely invisible to their gaze. My periods have dried up, and I have fun symptoms like hot flushes and night sweats. You haven't lived until you've soaked through several pairs of pyjamas in one night. If it weren't for the endless laundry, I'd almost be impressed by my body's capacity to turn a bed into a swimming pool. But wait, there's more!

I'm also a baby – a baby trans, a newbie on the queer scene, a clumsy kid who makes mistakes and steps on toes in their youthful enthusiasm. Having lived most of my life in the straight world, I'm a novice still when it comes to the kind of knowledge you get from being in community.

Yet I'm also a geriatric of sorts. Because there are so few out and vocal trans adults in our community, because trans people older than me often fell victim to violence and prejudice and died too young, because queer generations are only five years or so, because Gen Z are worlds apart from millennials when it comes to sex and gender, I am an old fogey in many queer and trans spaces. When teens tell me about all the pansexual and non-binary kids at their school, I feel ancient, in the best possible way.

So there you have it. I am 34, I am 15, I am 59, I am 8, I am 18, I am 80. For me, age is no one thing and aging will never be a straight line. My strange trans self will continue to spiral in time until death takes me somewhere else. I may get dizzy, but it's sure to be an interesting ride. ■

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