



She's Not the Man I Married: My Life with a Transgender Husband

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Helen Boyd's husband, who had long been open about being a cross-dresser, was considering living as a woman full time. Suddenly, Boyd was confronted with the reality of what it would mean if her husband were actually to become a woman — socially, legally, and medically. Would Boyd love and desire her partner the same way?

Boyd's first book, *My Husband Betty*, explored the relationships of cross-dressing men and their partners. Now, *She's Not the Man I Married* is both a sequel and a more expansive examination of gender in relationships. It's for couples who are homosexual or heterosexual, and for readers who fall anywhere along the gender continuum.

As Boyd struggles to understand the nature of marriage, passion, and love, she shares her confusion and anger, providing a fascinating observation of the ways in which relationships are gendered, and how we cope, or don't, with the emotional and sexual pressures that gender roles can bring to our marriages and relationships.

She's Not the Man I Married: My Life with a Transgender Husband Details

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From Reader Review She's Not the Man I Married: My Life with a Transgender Husband for online ebook

Shannon Wyss says

Great, easily-readable exploration of the issues faced by a white, heterosexual, masculine woman when her husband comes out as trans. Explores the often-blurry lines between different gender identities and expressions and sexual orientations, childhood and adulthood, and gender as something that reflects the self and something that others use to interact with you. Highly recommended. Accessible to readers of most levels.

Jamie says

Meh, probably not going to finish. This might be interesting/groundbreaking if you're wholly unfamiliar with transgenderism, but the writing is really lackluster and 50 pages in, I'm already completely over the author's woeful attitude towards her not knowing what it means to feel "like a woman" because she doesn't like wearing makeup the way her husband does. No me gusta.

Melvina says

This is Helen's follow-up to My Husband Betty. In this book, she reveals the strong possibility that Betty will decide to transition full-time to womanhood. This is more personal and intimate than her first book, but you are rewarded with a really intimate look at what it's like to be in a marriage like this, from the wife's point of view. Of course, Helen describes Betty's responses to things, so you do get a sense of what Betty is like as well. Helen is clearly a self-reflective and cogent writer. Highly recommend this to anyone who wants to know more about trans relationships.

Tilda says

More than anything, this is a great book about gender full stop. Boyd has such a simple but insightful writing style that goes straight to the heart of the issue: no mucking around. She is viscerally honest in reflecting on her own insecurities, fears and shortcomings. While a little dated in parts, it's a great read.

HeavyReader says

I think really highly of this book. It's one of the most thought provoking things I've read in a long time.

At first I was skeptical because the author was so unsure of how she felt about her husband transitioning. She's really attracted to her husband as a man, really digs her husband's penis. Throughout the book she is having to deal with her internalized homophobia, what would it mean for her to be a lesbian, which is a huge

shock to her, as she has had gay and lesbian, queer and bisexual friends her whole life. I guess I personally forget that some people AREN'T bisexual. Anyway, I like that the author is not shying away from admitting that the transition is a HUGE struggle for her.

The other thing I really like about the book is the author's critique, criticism, scrutiny of gender roles, especially gender roles within relationships between men and women. She asks a lot of questions about what it means to be a man or a woman.

This is necessary reading for any person who's not trans but is struggling to understand trans issues.

A says

I'm giving this 3 stars, because in context of a certain audience (partners of trans people in transition) it has some value. It has some insight too in terms of larger discussions on gender in feminism or queer theory. Boyd's viewpoint is unique, she's thoughtful, she's knowledgeable enough to be able offer differing perspectives, and she has a clear voice as a writer.

Even so, I hesitated on those 3 stars, as I often found this book quite rambling and repetitive, with a tendency for its thoughtful to coil in on itself and get nowhere. From what I can tell, this reflects the state of Betty and Helen's relationship at the time, with Betty exploring a sort of space in between and Helen sorting out her feelings on the possibility of a full transition. Since this book was published, Betty has transitioned and, while Helen in interviews voices some reservations, one feels that she has eased into the reality. In a way, this book could be treated as a record of a certain period in their shared lives, a way for readers to understand how such spaces can be navigated.

I also think that for partners who, for whatever reason, aren't going through the same kinds of crises, this book can feel a bit frustrating. Boyd has the advantage of not being a "typical" woman and the experience of being "into" her husband's cross-dressing queers her heterosexuality a bit, but this just makes the crisis of identity, gender, and sexuality more confusing. Some trans partners are going to find their relationship after transition, others are themselves going to have sexualities and gender identities that make them more open to transitioning. I agree with Boyd's point that the partner of a person transitioning transitions too. The kind of crisis Boyd writes through here is something those sorts of partners can understand but will experience very differently.

The other thing is, I can agree with GR user Imogen that Betty and Helen's relationship seems co-dependent. They seem to have created a world together and are both too scared to upset that world. I won't judge their decision to take it slow and consider every finer point of the process, particular if they seem content living in that reality, but it goes back to the frustration one feels while reading.

Where the book is strongest for me is when Boyd gets at the meat of gender and how we live it in the world, how the deep awareness transgender people have of that reality reveals an impact we (as in cis/heteronormative culture) can't always see. It's a shame one has to slog through so much rambling navel-gaze to get to these insights, but it is what it is.

Laurie says

Very interesting subject matter. Seems to be a lot of information around right now about the experience of the transgendered person, but what about their loved ones? What would you do if your spouse wanted to crossdress? Live as the opposite sex? Have gender reassignment surgery? Helen Boyd had experienced this first hand. Her candid account of her experiences as "the other spouse" are interesting and thought provoking. Her discussions on gender versus sexuality are very interesting. Her style is candid and very open - I found some information a little shocking, a little crazy and some of her stories funny. Come to this book with an open mind.

Jenny says

This book wasn't exactly what I expected. I hadn't read her first book called "My husband Betty" although it's sitting in my living room. This second book is more about relationships and the roles of male/female, husband/wife, and all the different hats that each of us wear in a relationship. It's not necessarily about having a trans husband, especially because her husband has been transitioning for years and is more fluid with gender than the act of moving from man to woman. A lot of the discussion is about what makes a certain characteristic female or feminine and male or masculine. It's definitely thought provoking and challenges the dichotomy of gender in our culture.

Sherri says

More than just a book about a couple who both approach gender in what may seem like novel ways to many, everyone can find a little of their own experience in Helen's story... not to mention the boundless notated additional information is wonderful. If you're looking for "just a love story" or some titillating "talk show" variety fodder, this book is not for you. But if you're hoping for something that will challenge you to think and maybe even rethink every kind of relationship you've ever had or will have, I highly recommend it!

Amy Kay says

I picked this up to help shed light on my own situation, but unfortunately didn't find much solace in this book. It's from 2007, which is a bit old for this topic, so I'll blame my dissatisfaction on that. It was very full of her worries and fears, making my own feel more overwhelming. I put this book aside for more current readings on the topic which was a good decision.

Laura says

Even if you don't happen to be married to a transgender husband, Helen Boyd has a lot of trenchant observations about gender roles in general. The very end of the book, written by her husband, made me cry a little -- a rather rare thing for me when I'm reading a book. I'd recommend this book to anyone who's struggled with gender-based expectations and frustration (that is, just about everyone in the world).

Sarah says

What I liked most about this book was her honesty about what it means to be in a long-term relationship with a Trans person during hir (no, that's not a typo) transition. I found wonderful messages about how to have a strong, long-lasting relationship that is applicable to all types of relationships. She says something about they both choose to live complicated lives together than simple lives separately. I found this especially telling because no relationship is simple and anytime you have 2 people (regardless of gender/sexuality) living their lives together there are bound to be changes, complexities, and compromise.

This also really expanded my understanding of the variations in gender that people identify with, and that there are far more variations than we have labels for.

Megan says

I agree with those who critique the book for being rambling and repetitive; it is. At first this bothered me a little, but then I decided, "Hey, we get repetitive reinforcement of all the gender nonsense she's trying to unravel, so perhaps having her points hit you again and again in slightly different ways is not such a bad thing." And really, I loved the personal account of trying to understand, from the perspective of a mostly straight adult tomboy, her own masculinity and what that means for her and her relationship.

Imogen says

Okay, my original review was really mean, so I am editing it. Basically, I think that Helen and Betty have a phenomenally codependent relationship. I think that they also spend a lot of time in a certain crossdresser/mtf transsexual scene, like at conferences and workshops and things like that. Both of which are completely fine, right?

But Helen feels comfortable saying lots of things about trans women, and lots of things about their partners, and the things that she says don't ring true at ALL about me or any partners I've got. It's kind of infuriating for her to talk about all the problems that partners of trans women have, when what she means is, people who date someone who comes out to them as trans over the course of a relationship, and then choose to stay in that relationship. (Maybe due to a codependent tendency to prioritize the relationship over the happiness of either of the people in it?)

Look, I tried not to be dating somebody while I sorted out my own coming out and transition. Then, when I accidentally found myself in a relationship, I ended it so that I could transition. I thought, hey, if the straight girl I'm dating pre-transition wants to date me when I'm a lady post-transition, that will be unlikely but nice-but first I am transitioning and getting that sorted.

I hate that there's no consideration that that could ever possibly happen- to Helen Boyd, her experience is everybody's experience, and no, writing an introduction where you say "this is just my experience, don't generalize from it" doesn't get you off the hook for generalizing for the rest of your book.

As for partners, whatever. I'm a trans woman and I'm a lezzie and my partner is a lezzie who's not a trans woman. I met her after transitioning and she does NOT have the same angst about me being trans that Ms Boyd has about her own partner, so whenever Ms Boyd says anything about "partners of trans women," we get invisiblized.

It feels kind of gross for me to write about my partner's experience, though- it's not really my place, you know? It's unlikely but for all I know, she does have all the same angst as Helen Boyd, she just hasn't told me about it.

Which brings us to another problem: here is the premise of the book. "My partner is trans, so let me tell you about trans people, and being partners with them." It doesn't work that way! You suck at talking about my life, Helen, and I am trans.

And finally, like this review, eventually it's just rambly. On and on and on about how gender is a construct and you can't pin it down. I wonder if I'd feel this way re-reading Gender Outlaw? Dunno. But jesus. Brevity! Brevity!

Margaret says

Most of the books on transgender issues are written from the perspective of people going through gender transition and/or from the viewpoint of professionals. This was a great way to learn about the experience of a person close to the one struggling with gender--and the way her view of gender (and relationships) has been transformed by the process.
