

Q+A

S. Bear Bergman

In *Butch Is a Noun*, S. Bear Bergman whittles down the often convoluted issues of gender identity through personal observations about gendered cultural norms like which bathroom and what clothing one chooses, and argues against the gender binary from the positive perspective of love and acceptance.

What were you trying to convey in your first chapter, “I Know What Butch Is”?

I really wanted to make the point that there is no one true way to be butch. I think that often butches get shamed or critiqued or disregarded because of some other person’s statement that they’re “not doing it right.” I’m saying: Listen, pay attention to good role models and then do it how it comes naturally to you.

What is it about gender that makes everyone so hardheaded?

It’s about how we live in the world every day, and it piles onto everyone, no matter where else they are privileged or disempowered. It grabs hold of us when we’re tiny—pink and blue blankets, dolls and trucks—and refuses to let us go. The culture never stops trying to police it.

Why are bathroom politics so important to examine?



Bathrooms are one of the places in public where you have to make an unequivocal statement about your sex. Many trans folks point to the first times they passed in “the other bathroom” as great moments of triumph in their gendered journeys.

Why do you translate transgender literally?

I translate it literally in the book because I want to make a point—that transgender is not about “the opposite gender.” There is no “opposite gender,” just some others. So I want to say, specifically, clearly, that being transgendered is about crossing—crossing out of boxes.

[LESLEY SEACRIST]

Transitive Words

Four years later, Jay Sennett is still surprised by the success of Homofactus Press, the digital publishing house he started in 2005. “Had you told me five years ago I would grow up to become a publisher,” he wrote, “I would have scoffed.” But publish he has. Homofactus Press publishes books by, for and about transgender men (and genderqueers like **curve** contributor Sassafras Lowrey), a niche group that has been neglected by other publishers. Homofactus Press is working hard to change things in the publishing industry. One percent of the profits are paid forward to Juliet Victor Mukasa’s nonprofit, Sexual Minority Uganda (SMUG), to fight the bigotry and discrimination in her home country, and all its books are available as both PDFs and audiobooks, absolutely free to download. Homofactus is shaking things up for good. [TERESA COATES]



Page Turners



Sex and Bacon, Sarah Katherine Lewis (Seal Press)

A 10-year veteran of the sex industry, Sarah Katherine Lewis compares the erotic association between food and sex in her new book. Moments of nostalgia for lost love get their wounds licked with bacon fat-infused corncakes as Lewis delivers a celebration of fucking, feasting and the insatiable human appetite. She recalls eating nuked Baby Ruths for a regular customer and discloses her own personal fetishes. (sealpress.com)

[COLLEEN MCCAFFREY]



The Elusive Orgasm, Vivienne Cass, Ph.D. (Marlowe and Company)

A clinical psychologist and sex therapist, Vivienne Cass demystifies the orgasm. Quizzes, questionnaires, full-color illustrations of female naughty bits and step-by-step guides that work both solo and à deux help identify common problems and give tangible solutions. Cass is refreshingly neutral about her audience’s sexual orientation, though there are a handful of helpful, girl-on-girl-only sections. (marlowepub.com)

[CATHERINE PLATO]



Choosing Single Motherhood, Mikki Morrisette (Houghton Mifflin)

Mikki Morrisette explores the difficult emotional, financial and ethical questions that arise when women consider having a child using nontraditional methods. A proud “choice mother” and longtime journalist, she consults up-to-date research, child experts and personal experience to give advice on how to alleviate fears and advance into motherhood with enthusiasm and an open mind. (choosingsinglemotherhood.com) [CM]



Demystifying Islam, Dr. Ali Shehata and Heather El Khiyari (Elysium River Press)

Written by a first-generation Egyptian immigrant (Ali Shehata) and a West Virginia-born Muslim who was formerly a Christian missionary (Heather El Khiyari), and edited by a former public health professor and Muslim convert (Julie Samia Mair), *Demystifying Islam* offers an insider, yet Western-friendly, perspective on Islam. This compassionate book debunks claims that it is an inherently sexist and violent religion. (amazon.com) [CP]

COREN MICHAEL RAU (BERGMAN), LAYNE KENNEDY (FAMILY)