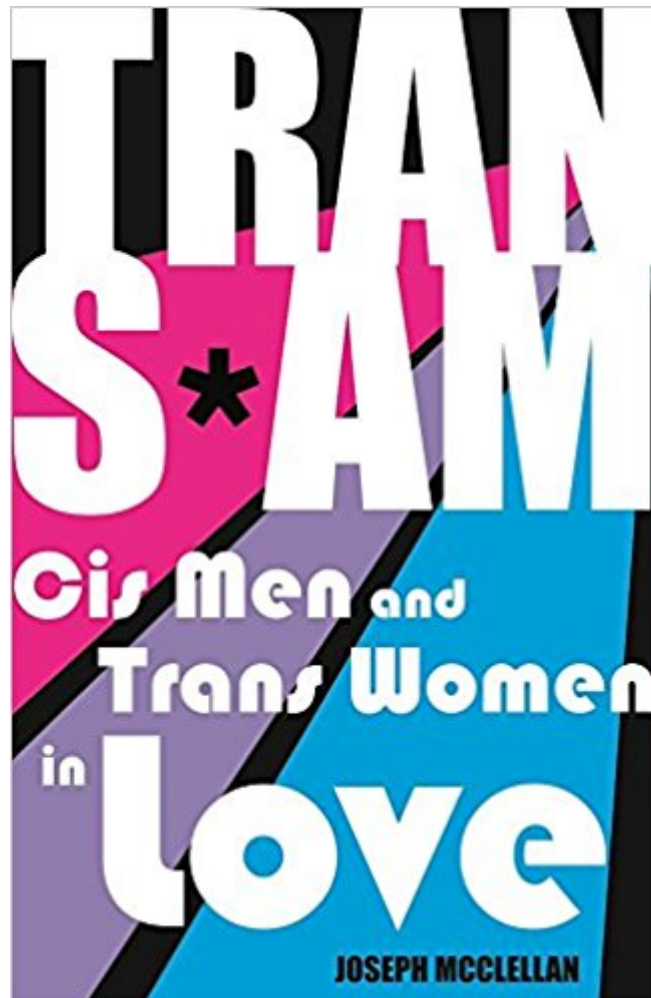




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# Trans\*Am: Cis Men And Trans Women In Love



## Synopsis

Trans women; assigned male at birth and later transitioned into a female gender; are recently in media because of celebrities and controversial legislation. Therefore cis men; who identify with a masculine gender they were assigned at birth; are now called upon to share their experiences as lovers of trans women. Using theory and personal anecdotes, the author questions the codes that cis men and trans women use to interpret their own and others' gendered and sexed bodies. Joseph McClellan, Assistant Professor, Department of Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh, has taught philosophy, Buddhism, and gender studies, and translated and introduced contemporary French philosopher Michel Onfray's *A Hedonist Manifesto: The Power to Exist*.

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## Customer Reviews

"As a trans woman who has dated almost exclusively cis straight identified men I have been frustrated with how their desire for trans women has existed largely in the shadows, deeply stigmatized. I have longed to see more men who are attracted to, date, have sex with and/or are in relationships with trans women to come forward and speak the truth of those attractions, encounters, experiences and relationships. Joe McClellan in *Trans\*Am* does just that and much more. He shares his lived experiences as a transman as part of a rigorous philosophical take down of essentialist notions of gender and sexuality and how we assign meaning."—Laverne Cox, actress co-starring in *Orange Is The New Black*; *Trans\*Am* offers a fresh look at worlds of

love, attraction, and bodies; challenges socially accepted notions of what is "right" and seeks to free unconventional genders and sexuality from destructive stigmas. The author courageously and critically contributes to a long-overdue conversation taking to task the social constructs that have proven too painful to too many for too long.

Trace Lysette, actress co-starring in *Transparent* "An important contribution to an important debate."

Jonathan Kemp, author of *The Penetrated Male* "I've always felt that I needed to "identify" with a particular sexual orientation. But McClellan's book explains why this isn't necessary by drawing on Buddhist philosophy. He even shows that the tendency to "identify" can get in the way of enjoying sex. Other animals enjoy it just fine without words, and so should I."

Michael Osofsky "As a trans woman who has dated almost exclusively cis straight identified men I have been frustrated with how their desire for trans women has existed largely in the shadows, deeply stigmatized. I have longed to see more men who are attracted to, date, have sex with and/or are in relationships with trans women to come forward and speak the truth of those attractions, encounters, experiences and relationships. Joe McClellan in *Trans\*Am* does just that and much more. He shares his lived experiences as a transman as part of a rigorous philosophical take down of essentialist notions of gender and sexuality and how we assign meaning."

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Michael Osofsky

Joseph McClellan, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor, Department of Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, Asian University for Women, Chittagong, Bangladesh. He has previously taught Western and Asian philosophies, as well as Gender Studies, at a number of U.S. colleges and universities. While drawing on his background in these fields, his book *Transman* is deeply personal. Trans women have played a major role in McClellan's adult life as friends and lovers. After years of

intimate discussions with friends and lovers about the unique issues confronting trans women and their partners, he was frustrated by the muddled state of the discourse and convinced that philosophy could contribute to its clarification. He believes that if the complexities of contemporary sex, gender, and sexuality are unpacked through philosophical reflection and discussion, trans people will suffer less as victims of society's misunderstanding and its ensuing wrong-headed legislation and institutional hostility. Columbia University Press published McClellan's translation of contemporary French philosopher Michel Onfray's book *A Hedonist Manifesto: The Power to Exist*, and he has published translations from Tibetan.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading *Trans\*Am*. McClellan not only shares his real life experiences being a transamorous Cis man, he also uses theory and philosophy to question gender and sexuality conventionalisms. McClellan's voice in this conversation is important and powerful.

I just finished this book. It is helpful to read it with a smartphone handy so you can look up words, as you will likely receive a thorough schooling in a vast realm of English (and Tibetan) words you didn't even know you knew. However, this is not all you will learn. Also within this book you will find thorough philosophical discourse on non essentialism along with perhaps one of the best synopses of the core of the Buddhist teachings I have ever encountered. In fact, you could read this book solely for that instruction. However, the central pillar of the book consists of the author's brave elucidation of "transamory" thereby tearing down the world of interpretations of how sex should be and what it should look like. If at times this book feels a little bit too academic for you, hang in there. The last chapter is an especially sublimely raw and personal account of one human sexuality, something that is just as unique and just as beautiful as each and every one of us is. This book is a brave reminder to see that beauty in ourselves and each and every human being we encounter no matter how we or they appear. Here are a list of some of my favorite quotes from the book: "the people who appear to us are not to be interpreted but seen with bright eyed wonder, reverence, and awe." "Cis, white, hetero, males, after all, have historically shown a pathological need to dominate every discourse." "Woman" that puzzling word that three-plus waves of feminist theory and genomic science have not been able to put their finger on. "The paths of our various experiences, the ones we feel when no one is looking, not even ourselves, those paths that are our very ground, get muddled and dusty when they intersect with the gigantic, anonymous thoroughfares of meaning. We spin and can't find our way; our trails are swallowed into the uniformity of the canonical

veneer slathered on the world." "But the body is the site where history carves its memory." "We cannot possibly avoid treating others as objects so long as we refer to our own selves, or anything, as essential." "We have all been to the same general school of our civilization. If our anxieties and others' intolerances are not natural but learned, they can be unlearned." "Metaphysical is not the opposite of physical." "The search for two real human sexes •Male and Female• has been misguided."

This is an excellent book and well worth the read, not just for those interested in transgender issues, but for anyone brave enough to question the underpinnings of some of our most basic suppositions on human relationships. While this topic itself is obviously not new, far too little has been written about it. As McClellan notes, the cisgendered hetero men who are the lovers, friends, or family of trans females are often silent in the discourse, even as their loved ones face heinous discrimination and persecution. Some, including mainstream media, have noted that we are at a "Transgender Tipping Point", which I am hopeful will ultimately lead to a more fair and open world for trans people. However, the reality is that this remains a distant goal. A large section of society (including many who consider themselves progressive) feels comfortable overtly discriminating against trans people or regarding them as a comedic novelty, even if they would view such behavior as embarrassing or unacceptable when directed at other groups. Honest and sympathetic contributions to the public discussion such as Mr. McClellan's are timely and should be welcomed. Importantly, they will both let the trans community know that they have some support and will also provide other straight, transamorous men an example of how to approach the conflicted feelings they may face in a manner that is compassionate, yet unabashed and true to one's self. And while this all sounds heavy, *Trans Am* is also very entertaining and well written book. Do yourself a favor and read it.

Having read this book, I found it to be an invaluable resource for straight cis men to be enlighten in the intricacies and complexities of dating transgender women. While the tone tends to be very academic, I personally was enthralled by his insights and of his personal journey. He does shatter stereotypes within straight men's own sexual desires and this book was freeing for breaking down such stigma. I have already recommended this to my straight male friends and hope it sheds light and understanding in their own journey in grappling this reality and maybe they will be awaken to lead their more authentic lives in general. It takes guts and bravery so I admire and respect the writer for eloquently giving us a peek into his world. This is an important book to have in trans literature from a very unique perspective. Definitely recommend this to all who are interested on this

fascinating topic.

Trans\*Am opened my eyes to a new perspective and helped me better understand these complex relationships. The author does a fantastic job deconstructing a subject previously unaddressed in modern day philosophical writings. Worth the read.

A thorough exploration of sexual identity, a deep dive into McClellan's personal life, and a massaged bit of Buddhist philosophy transport the reader to an incredibly liberating worldview, where all of what really matters is what is shared between lovers, societal norms be damned.

This book

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