

Like a Boy but Not a Boy: Navigating Life, Mental Health, and Parenthood outside the Gender Binary

andrea bennett

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andrea bennett's essays concern growing up, pregnancy, parenting, and mental health—topics that are addressed from a nonbinary perspective.

Growing up in small town Canada as a queer, nonbinary individual was a complicated and layered experience, bennett notes. Their thirteen essays begin with childhood accounts, as of when they were labeled a tomboy and grappled with being gendered a girl, though they felt a sense of masculinity. Subsequent essays examine childhood gender expectations, living with anxiety and mental illness, class and employment, and the importance of finding one's home.

Some of the book's most valuable entries concern how bennett experienced pregnancy, breastfeeding, and parenthood as a gender nonconforming individual. Language is vital to these discussions: what is a parent called, if not "Mom" or "Dad," bennett asks? What is the label for a nonbinary, butch-presenting parent who is breastfeeding? bennett's straightforward evaluations are important, and her essays validate concerns that are often invisible to those outside of queer parenting.

"Everyone is Sober and No One Can Drive," written in sixteen parts, is interspersed throughout other essays. It consists of bennett's interviews with queer millennials from small Canadian communities, each piece highlighting singular, relatable experiences. Each speaks, in straightforward terms, about struggles with small-town life, coming out, bullying, and their family relationships.

In addition to their occasional critical analyses of gender roles and embodiment, the pieces are tender, witty, and reflective. Not only has bennett studied queer and feminist theory, they have lived a queer life, and their essays are both credible and compelling because of this. *Like A Boy but Not a Boy* is a distinctive, appealing, and candid essay collection about nonbinary life.

KARLA STRAND (September / October 2020)

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