



# What Becomes You

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“Being a man, like being a woman, is something you have to learn,” Aaron Raz Link remarks. Few would know this better than the coauthor of *What Becomes You*, who began life as a girl named Sarah and twenty-nine years later began life anew as a gay man. Turning from female to male and from teaching scientist to theatre performer, Link documents the extraordinary medical, social, legal, and personal process involved in a complete identity change. Hilda Raz, a well-known feminist writer and teacher, observes the process as both an “astonished” parent and as a professor who has studied gender issues. All these perspectives come into play in this collaborative memoir, which travels between women’s experience and men’s lives, explores the art and science of changing sex, maps uncharted family values, and journeys through a world transformed by surgery, hormones, love, and . . . clown school. Combining personal experience and critical analysis, the book is an unusual—and unusually fascinating—reflection on gender, sex, and the art of living.

## What Becomes You Details

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# From Reader Review What Becomes You for online ebook

## Cyd says

The authors are a transgender man and his mother. Compelling, beautiful, fierce.

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## ken says

At times this books gets a bit too self-indulgent, too tedious, and at other times it seems that mother and son are speaking in code to each other and not supplying the necessary clues to allow the reader in.. BUT somewhere along the way I found a really tender story about someone labeled transexual who just wants to share his perspective and give his mother the chance to do the same.

Also.. as the story happens primarily in Portland I get to feel a different sense of connection as this isn't just about my queer community but my local community too. I know it's silly but it's nice to have that connection.

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## Theodora says

It's by Aaron Raz Link and Hilda Raz. And that's what I love about this book. It's written by Aaron (who used to be Sarah) and his mom, a professor of women's studies. Right now, it's a really powerful book for me and I can gloss over some of the blather because of the important story.

--- After reading: probably one of the best books about gender identity I have read. It is funny and it is a story, not a book of theory. Aaron deftly deals with identity politics, therapy, isolation, racism in the queer movement, women-only spaces, male identity, and masculinity with wonderful tone and humor. Hilda's essays are touching and it's nice to see the voice of someone coming to terms with her daughter becoming her son.

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## Mitch says

90% of what I know about gender identity, transsexuals and sexual reassignment book.

Not only that, but I also learned so much about humanity and our modern society in general from reading this book.

Definitely an eye-opener. A good, quick read by two amazing authors.

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## Deb says

This book is unlike anything else I've read. A mother and her transsexual son (who was born female) tell the

story of his gender transformation from each of their perspectives with much honesty, compassion and intelligent commentary. Highly recommended.

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### **Alice says**

A little bit more literature than memoir, so you had to be paying quite a bit of attention to follow along. It was... fine.

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### **mr. kate says**

I have to admit that I only skimmed/half read the portion of this book written by Hilda Link...mostly because the book was overdue at the library, but also because I felt supremely disconnected from her grieving for her daughter after spending two hundred pages getting to know her son. I enjoyed Aaron Raz Link's prose, though I sometimes became confused in the loose essay structure of the book.

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### **Mirrordance says**

Tre stellina e mezza per questo libro particolare ed a tratti impegnativo. La lettura ha assunto per me la forma di una gaussiana; un inizio in salita e la difficoltà di andare avanti tanto è vero che è rimasto più di un anno in quiescenza e l'ho ripreso in mano ricominciando tutto dall'inizio con maggiore piglio, complice anche una "sfida" di lettura. Superata la prima impasse il libro si fa interessante e decolla appieno nella seconda parte per poi calare nuovamente. Una specie di memoriale a quattro mani scritto da Aaron e Hilda Raz, in realtà due memoriali, non paralleli ma associati. Due storie e memorie diverse che si intrecciano nella relazione madre figli\*.

Il racconto di Aaron si distingue da tante altre narrazioni autobiografiche di transizione ed una volta ancora ci dimostra che ciascun individuo ha la sua storia, il suo percorso il suo vissuto. Dall'altra parte abbiamo Hilda, una donna forte, una poetessa, una femminista con una forte consapevolezza del femminile e il suo tentativo di rivedere le sue "aspettative" e di rinunciare a quel rapporto madre/figlia che credeva di avere. Un reset mentale sui rapporti personali, sul femminile, sulla tradizione familiare. La parte emotiva di Hilda è la parte più interessante del libro, il suo mettersi a nudo e mettersi in discussione. Non c'è mai la non accettazione della transizione del figlio ma c'è la lunga elaborazione del lutto per una figlia che non c'è mai stata e che credeva di avere.

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### **Alison says**

Decent book, I like the approach. It seemed, at times, repetitive and toward the end I was lost as space and time seemed to escape the author. Enjoyed the mothers section, havnt heard that story before. I wish there were photos- I expect them in autobiographies, help me stay engaged.

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## **Devin says**

This book gives a great multi-perspective of gender from the eyes of a mother and child. A must read for a well rounded insight into how people perceive gender and gender roles in western society. Also and interesting look at how medical procedures have changed over time regarding transsexual/transgender care.

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## **Ray says**

i liked what a nerdy weirdo aaron was as a kid. i like the concept (mother and child co-authoring autobiography) better than the book itself. definitely a worthy trans autobio--a little different with great anecdotes and honesty.

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## **Monica says**

the author (who i consider to be aaron, with his mom writing a kind of afterward) seems to live in a way that focuses on other people's treatment of himself, or at least describes this treatment/reaction in critical detail and then analyzes the hell out of it. this kind of analysis seems like such a depressing exercise and a horribly exhausting way to live. (i guess this is when s and g's 'i am a rock' starts to kick in)

the part written by his mother was more appealing to me because she seems generous and open-hearted. she also seems just genuinely pleased that her child is more confident and less depressed and surly then before surgery. so that's nice to hear, because it was kind of frightening for me to lose empathy/compassion for the writer in the course of reading a memoir. i was expecting the opposite.

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## **Andrew says**

Aaron and Hilda both have done me a great service in their writing. They breathe literature and science, creating meaning from chaos with poetry and (obviously) prose. They ask questions with words where I only had guttural instincts - now I know both the questions and (a few of) the (possible) answers.

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## **marmix says**

I had hoped this memoir would be more insightful somehow, less disjointed. I did appreciate having a mother's perspective represented, but her writing also felt a bit repressed.

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## **Alex says**

## **Overall**

While this book has an interesting concept, the writing and length kept me from really enjoying it. Some parts felt overly repetitious and went on too long, while other parts felt like they were barely explained. The language and grammar seems more poetic than prose, which sometimes makes it difficult to understand what is being said--or what is trying to be said. However, this is balanced out by some sections that are beautifully written (when the style clicks with what's being said) and express important and powerful messages. I wish I could read an abridged version.

### **Strengths**

I think the thing that saved this book from being a terrible read was that the sections that I enjoyed, I really loved. I loved the ideas Aaron shares and his story. I wanted to know more, see more, learn more. He had sections that seemed almost enlightened in both their concepts and their writing. I loved those sections. Sadly, they were not all that often.

Topic. Obviously people don't pick this book up (most likely) unless they have an interest in transsexuals or concepts of gender and sexuality. It's why I picked it up and those elements were completely satisfied by the end. The book also does an excellent job of looking at perception: how we perceive ourselves, how others perceive us and how that perception can change.

### **Weaknesses**

Lack of linear story telling. While I can respect that this isn't an autobiography in the traditional sense, I found the amount of skipping around difficult to follow. Aaron's story is especially bad at this as his early adult life (mainly his 20s) are shown in such brief and random glimpses that it's hard to tell what's happening in his life. While obviously the events aren't meant to be the central focus of the book, it made it hard for me to understand his emotions and his mental standing when he turned 30.

Hilda's section. While Hilda's section had some interesting parts, for the majority I wasn't interested. Perhaps it's because my own perspective aligns more with Aaron's, but I think it's more a matter of not feeling particularly compassionate toward her story and her telling of it. While she stresses that Aaron wanted her to write about herself, I still felt like her story was more selfish in its attempt to share the same story Aaron told from the opposite side.

Writing. The writing wasn't necessarily bad, but it had a certain poetic style that was sometimes difficult to understand. It felt like a prose poem rather than straight prose, which didn't lend itself to expressing the story these two individuals were trying to tell.

Be sure to check out my other reviews on my blog.

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