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In France, Michelle is a Man's Name

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Abstract

This is a review of the short film, *In France, Michelle is a Man's Name* (2021), directed by Em Weinstein.

Keywords

Trans Identity

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Author Notes

John Lyden is Professor of Religious Studies and the Blizek Professor of Religion and Film at University of Nebraska-Omaha. He was been the Editor of the *Journal of Religion & Film* since 2011. He is the author of *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (NYU Press), and the editor of the *Routledge Companion to Religion and Film* and co-editor (with Eric Michael Mazur) of the *Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*. He also co-edited, with Ken Derry, *The Myth Awakens: Canon Conservatism, and Fan Reception of Star Wars* (Wipf and Stock 2018).



In France, Michelle is a Man's Name (2021), dir. Em Weinstein

Michael is a trans man, born Michelle, who returns home to his parents in the American Midwest. While his mother still calls him Michelle, his father calls him Michael and seems more accepting of his son's identity. And yet his father may have a different idea of what it means to be male than his son. He takes him to a strip club and gets him a lap dance, telling his son that his father did this for him when he was young. "I always knew you were a boy," he says. He gets points for acceptance, but ironically can only see masculinity through the lens of his own experience of what it means to be a man—and Michael is noticeably uncomfortable.

The title of the film comes from a remark of Michael's father, in which he seems to be encouraging him to live abroad. Michael does not fit well into his parents' world. And yet, together they sing in the pickup truck, "Angels in heaven know I love you." That may be the easiest way for them to say it together.