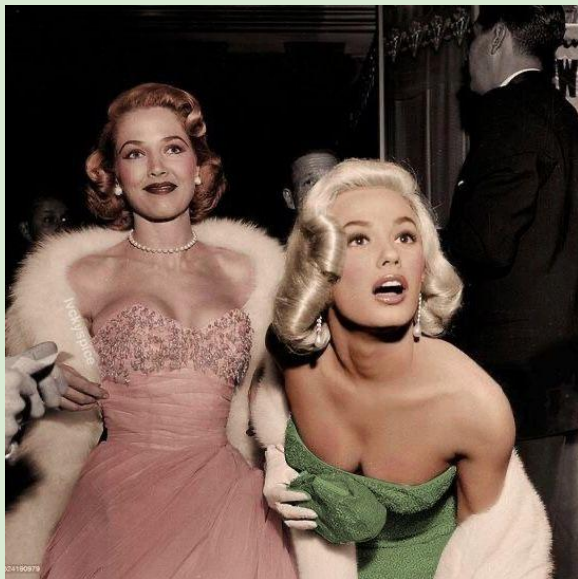


The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo

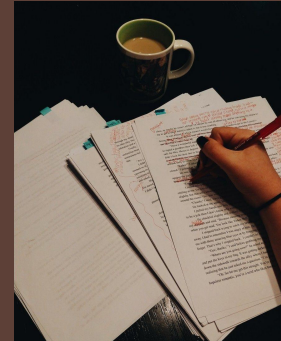


By Jace Grewal



Creative Writing

I am a creative writing student so naturally when I want to relate sexuality and gender to my subject, I thought I would choose a book that i've been reading. I thought I would review the book from a gender studies lense. The seven husbands of Evelyn Hugo is a good example of that because it's a historical fiction book based off the Actress Evelyn Hugo. Throughout the book she deals with coming to terms with her sexuality and how keeping it affects the people around her and well as her fans.



Summary of book

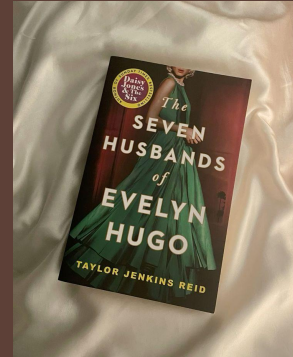
The 7 Husbands of Evelyn Hugo is a book about an actress from the 50s to the 80s who relies on her looks to get what she wants. She wants someone to write a memoir about her life and that's basically what the book is about.

The "real" Evelyn Hugo is actually based off the actress Elizabeth Taylor who was married 8 times. Elizabeth Taylor stood up for LGBTQ people during the aids crisis.



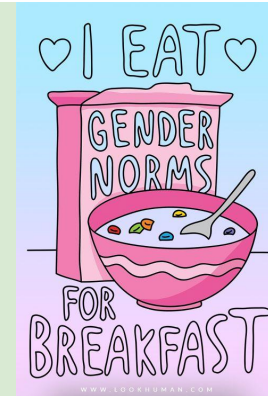
Sexuality

Even Hugo is a fictional character inspired by real actresses. She is bisexual and had 7 husbands, within every relationship we learn more about her sexuality. The book does a good job showcasing how fluid sexuality is and how you are still bisexual if you are with a man or a woman. Evelyn does a good job at not letting anyone defy her but herself, and she does a good job trying to protect her image and trying to show the world only what she wants the world to see.



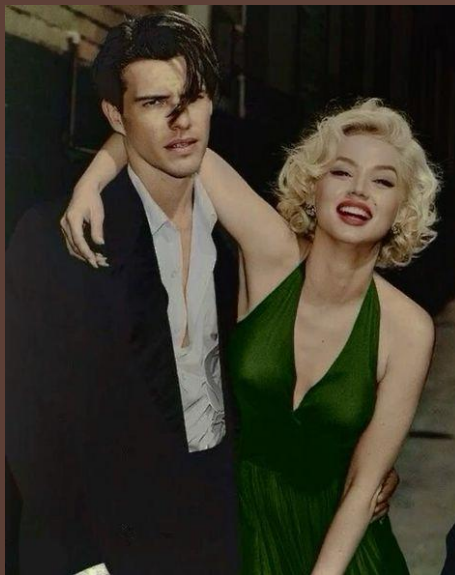
Gender

Throughout the book Evelyn is seen in a bunch of marvelous dresses but is seen wearing a suit later on in the book. She doesn't seem to explore her gender very much which is common for cis people. She does however feel like she has to use her sexuality and femininity to draw people in and make her famous. She knows that men view her as an object and uses it to her advantage. Her showcasing her body and using it to get what she wants does negatively impact her relationships at times.



The 7 Husbands

Here I am going to talk through every marriage she had and how each marriage showcased a different part of her sexuality



1 Ernie Diaz

Evelyn met Ernie when she was 16. She lived in a poor neighbourhood and wanted to become an actress because it was her late mother's dream. She "traded [her] virginity for a ride to hollywood" p.44. Evelyn hit puberty before other girls her age and was blessed with good looks and big breasts. Ernie was around 50 years old. Evelyn would pretend to be an innocent housemaid woman so he wouldn't underestimate her. The real issue with this marriage was that it was made off of lies. She pretended to be older than she was, and dumbbed herself down. She got tired of pretending that she wasn't born to be a star and would get upset when he wouldn't see that. He helped her get a deal with Sunset Studios, the company then wanted her to be seen on dates with more famous men so she left him.

2 Don Adler

Don Adler was the first man Evelyn truly fell in love with. She met him at a time in his life everything was going well and he would get his way, she was charmed by his personality and looks. They mostly got married because he wanted to sleep with her while being married. Eventually Don's movies started to flop and he turned bitter and mean, he was physically abusive towards Evelyn and she hid the bruises and scars out of fear. She didn't want to tell anyone. Fans and critics started criticizing Evelyn for not having children so she spread a rumour about having a miscarriage to save her image. During this time Evelyn met the love of her life Celia but they couldn't be together because she was scared of what the public would think. Don started publicly cheating on Evelyn and they divorced shortly after.

3 Mick Riva

Mick Riva was a mutual friend she met in the celebrity world. People started spreading rumors about Celia and Evelyn so Evelyn decided to go on a date with Mick to distract everyone. She made the plan with Celia to seduce Mick, make him want to marry her and then elope. She ended up sleeping with Mick and got pregnant, and had an abortion. Celia left her after that because they never discussed her having sex with him.

4 Rex North

Evelyn met Rex and they decided to get married just for the pr, they didn't actually like each other. They were married for 2 and a half. During this time Celia also got herself in fake marriage. Rex fell in love with another girl so they ended it. They told the press that they were each having affairs and decided to end things.



5 Harry Cameron

Harry is Evelyn's best friend since she first started at Sunset Studios. During this time, Harry was really with another man and Evelyn was with Celia but they were each married in heterosexual relationships so the world wouldn't suspect anything. They lived in this weird truth lie. Evelyn wanted a biological kid with Harry which broke Celia but they didn't break up. Then Evelyn wanted to do a movie where it looks like she has sex with her ex husband, Celia didn't want that but Evelyn did it anyways and they left each other again. Harry's partner died. "All i've ever wanted was for you to be truly mine. But you've never been mine. Not really. I always had to settle for one piece of you. The world get's the other half... I can't live with my heart half broken all the time." p.267. One thing about Evelyn is that she always has something to prove and she always wants more than what she has.

6 Max Girard

She met Max Girard who loved the idea of Evelyn, the movie star Evelyn who is larger than life but he didn't actually love who she was at her core. He was one of her producers who helped her film one of her hit movies. "I didn't know how to tell him that I loved her too, But I wasn't her." p.298 Celia and Evelyn found each other again and were sending each other letters. Max wanted to get rid of Evelyn's carefully curated image and tell the world that she's gay. She let him, and was made it so the pr focused on her hanging out with a younger guy to make it seem like Max is a jealous ex making up stuff about her.

7 Robert Jamison

Evelyn marries Celia's brother because she can't marry her, but wants to be near her while she is sick. Celia dies of some sort of disease and Evelyn gets to inherit some stuff. Harry died a few years back, then Celia and then Evelyn's daughter.

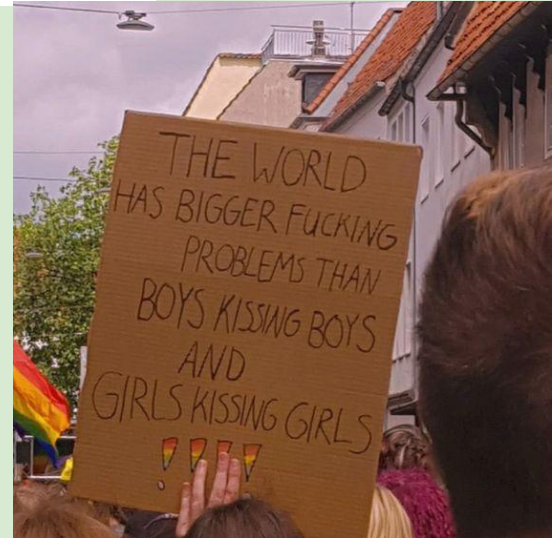


8 Celia St James

Celia died in Evelyn's arms. I think a part of Evelyn died then as well, with every close death she seemed to have less and less life in her. Once everyone close to her died she was diagnosed with breast cancer but took her on life because she wanted to decide how to go. Her breasts made her and almost broke her, I wonder if this is a metaphor to show that your karma catches up with you. She had it all through lying and cheating, and died alone. I would still say Evelyn is more good than bad, she truly loved her family. I think she just was really caught up in wanting to be loved by the world first. Celia and Evelyn didn't officially marry but had a fake wedding before Celia died.

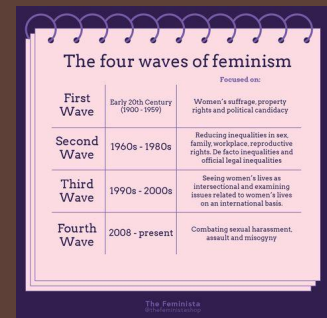
The world becomes more open

Throughout the book the world accepts homosexuality more. Evelyn always felt like she had to hide that part of herself so she and celia could be successful. The novel spans from the 1950's to the 2010s.



Feminism Waves

The First wave started with the suffragettes, this movement started with rich white women who wanted equality. The second wave which took place in the 1960's was more so focused on voting rights, sexuality and abortion rights. Roe V Wade in 1973 was passed as well as the Women's Educational Equity Act. The third wave took place from the 1970s-90s which focused on feminism, diversity and being your own person. The 4th wave deals with more contemporary times and deals with the issues that we are facing now which can be related to technology, hate crimes and harassment.

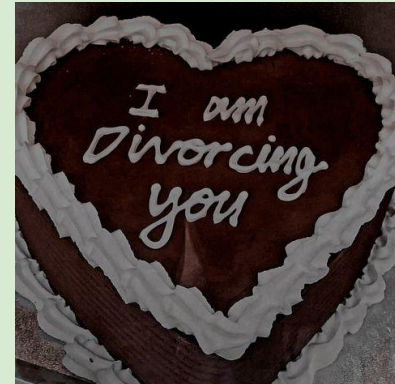


	Focused on:	
First Wave	Early 20th Century (1900 - 1950)	Women's suffrage, property rights and political candidacy
Second Wave	1960s - 1980s	Reducing inequalities in sex, family, workplace, reproductive rights. De facto inequalities and official legal inequalities
Third Wave	1990s - 2000s	Seeing women's lives as intersectional and examining issues related to women's lives on an international basis
Fourth Wave	2008 - present	Combating sexual harassment, assault and misogyny

The Feminists
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What we can learn from Evelyn Hugo

Evelyn always gets what she wants, at any cost. Monique who writes Evelyn Hugo's life story says she has to "Evelyn Hugo." To me that means to act like a cis white man and to feel entitled to every and any opportunity that comes your way. I like how she makes bad decisions, she's very much so a "bad women" and I love her for it. She defies all expectations.



Representation

I liked the bisexual representation in this book. I liked how morally grey of a character Evelyn is and how it shows a woman who will not stop to get what she wants.



*All my love,
~~Edward~~
Evelyn*

Michel Foucault

Evelyn is a bisexual woman who falls in love with her co-star Celia, but she keeps it a secret so they can both keep their power as actresses. The societal truth of this situation is that being LGBT is out of the norm so she must follow that if she wants to be an influential actress. The knowledge about LGBT people changes overtime but she still doesn't want to come out in fear of it ruining her career.



Simone De Beauvoir

"One is not born but becomes a woman" Evelyn knows that she is an object to the eyes of men so cheats the system to benefit her.



Judith Butler

Judith Butler talks about how gender is a performance



What do other people think about this book?

Don't just take my word for it. Let's see what other readers thought about this book and how it relates to gender and sexuality. One review says that the book deals with "Very real issues facing women both generally and within the context of Hollywood stardom are discussed in depth, offering a darker emotional perspective to the story. Sexual exploitation within the industry for career progression forms a harrowing backstory to Hugo's rise to fame" I would have to agree with how the book portrays gender stereotypes and as well as how the film industry exploits women.

Critiques of the book

My only critique would have to be that I wanted it to be longer. I really wanted to see the way Evelyn felt about her sexuality and gender presentation but I feel like we didn't really get that due to how fast paced the book was. It's a pretty small book for how big the story is. That being said the book is really unique specifically due to how us as readers learn about Evelyn. We learn about her through another character named Monique who writes a bibliography about Evelyn.



Queer Theory

Queer theory is heavily related to feminism and focuses on how all identities are a social construct. Queer theory also touched on how power imbalances are influenced by the binary and how you are either one thing or the opposite. Queer theory rejects oversimplifying genders to be based on certain stereotypes and characteristics. Queer theory doesn't just focus on queer people but is focused on everyone who has an identity, identifying as straight or cis is still an identity based on a social construct. The difference is that being queer means that you are considered to be an other. Queer theory is all about challenging the systems we have in place and the social constructs that support them.

Politics

The political decisions that we as a society think are impossible to make are actually very possible, they are just uncomfortable for the people that hold the most power. When dealing with gender and sexuality you are also dealing with politics at the same time. The laws we currently have in place serve cis and straight people so of course it's involved with queer theory. People may think that when queer people want liberation we assume that they want to get rid of the gender binary, instead they just want categorize that will make more people comfortable with their gender and or sexuality. We identity as things, we don't become them because gender is a social construct. It's all made up.

How This Relates to Evelyn Hugo

In terms of queer theory and politics, Evelyn saw people protesting for gay rights and instead of protesting with them she donated money. She didn't want the protest to be about her, but about the bigger picture, she also realized that having a lot of money puts her at a certain advantage that everyone outside protesting didn't have. She noticed that the people in the crowd are all anonymous and will face less public consequences compared to if she were to be out there protesting. She always gets married to maintain her social status and to get money. That is similar to the notion that capitalism and queer liberation don't mix. She knew that she could face severe economic repercussions if she were to be openly out.

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Thanks for reading!

