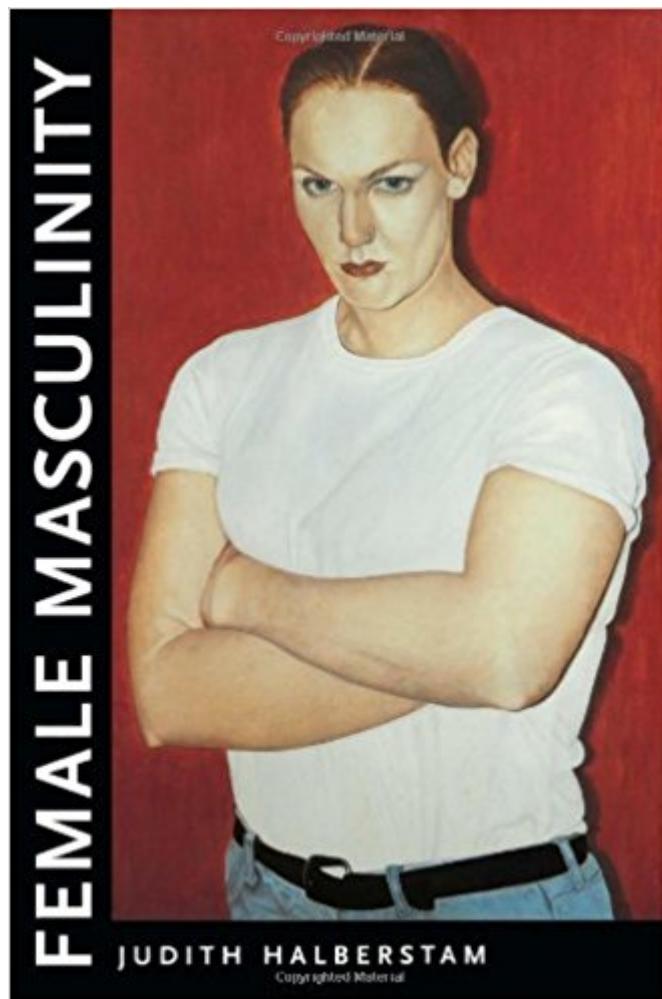


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# Female Masculinity



## Synopsis

Masculinity without men. In *Female Masculinity* Judith Halberstam takes aim at the protected status of male masculinity and shows that female masculinity has offered a distinct alternative to it for well over two hundred years. Providing the first full-length study on this subject, Halberstam catalogs the diversity of gender expressions among masculine women from nineteenth-century pre-lesbian practices to contemporary drag king performances. Through detailed textual readings as well as empirical research, Halberstam uncovers a hidden history of female masculinities while arguing for a more nuanced understanding of gender categories that would incorporate rather than pathologize them. She rereads Anne Lister's diaries and Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* as foundational assertions of female masculine identity. She considers the enigma of the stone butch and the politics surrounding butch/femme roles within lesbian communities. She also explores issues of transsexuality among transgender dykes • "lesbians who pass as men" and female-to-male transsexuals who may find the label of "lesbian" a temporary refuge. Halberstam also tackles such topics as women and boxing, butches in Hollywood and independent cinema, and the phenomenon of male impersonators. *Female Masculinity* signals a new understanding of masculine behaviors and identities, and a new direction in interdisciplinary queer scholarship. Illustrated with nearly forty photographs, including portraits, film stills, and drag king performance shots, this book provides an extensive record of the wide range of female masculinities. And as Halberstam clearly demonstrates, female masculinity is not some bad imitation of virility, but a lively and dramatic staging of hybrid and minority genders.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Readers who have followed the postmodern gender debate in the university presses (ranging from Thais Morgan's sedately twisted analyses of Victorian male lesbianism to Judith Butler's acclaimed *Gender Trouble*) will delight in the latest little earthquake: Judith Halberstam's deft separation of masculinity from the male body in *Female Masculinity*. If what we call "masculinity" is taken to be "a naturalized relation between maleness and power," Halberstam argues, "then it makes little sense to examine men for the contours of that masculinity's social construction." We can learn more from other embodiments of masculinity, like those found in drag-king performances, in the sexual stance of the stone butch, and in female-to-male transgenderism. Halberstam's subject is so new to critical discourse that her approach can be somewhat scattershot--there is simply too much to say--but her prose is lucid and deliberate, and her attitude refreshingly relaxed. Essential reading for gender studies and a lively contribution to cultural studies in general. --Regina Marler

Halberstam (literature, Univ. of California, San Diego; *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Duke Univ., 1995) presents a unique offering in queer studies: a study of the masculine lesbian woman. Halberstam makes a compelling argument for a more flexible taxonomy of masculinity, including not only men, who have historically held the power in society, but also women who embody qualities that are usually associated with maleness, such as strength, authority, and independence. Fleshing out her argument by drawing on a variety of sources?fiction, films, court documents, and diaries?Halberstam calls for society to acknowledge masculine lesbian women and value them. A dense work that requires some knowledge of gay studies, this is recommended for academic libraries and will appeal to scholars in gay studies, gender studies, women's studies, film studies, and sociology.?Kimberly L. Clarke, Univ. of Minnesota Lib., Minneapolis

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It was the thinking I needed to help me write my own book on women's bands and performing gender.

Fantastic book. Has relevance to so much and I am able to use it in many of my women's studies classes.

Essential reading for anyone studying gender theory, cultural studies, or LGBT studies. Halberstam's writing is very clear and easy to understand while being incredibly insightful and

brilliant. Book is filled with really insightful cultural analysis (films, books, etc) as well as related images. A valuable resource for further study. Undoubtedly theoretical in nature, but very readable, I would highly recommend this text.

Brilliant important work.

This is a ground-breaking academic book. When I purchased this book at .com, I was worried that it would not reach me before my departure from the USA. Fortunately, it reached me as scheduled. I love this book, for it enables me to know more about American culture, which, by the way, to be frank, is sometimes confusing.

Excellent treatise on an invisible subject. A little outdated, but still a seminal work.

Though it is part of a larger assortment of resources now, when this book of critical thought was released very little work had been done in the arena of analyzing the masculine female. The collected articles draw on a range of popular culture sources- books, film, tv, and art. It can be a dense read at times, but anyone with a background in gender or queer theory should recognize some of her reference material. I also found that occasionally Halberstam drifted into the realm of sweeping generalization about masculine females that seemed unsupported. All in all, a thought-provoking read on the masculine female as depicted in popular culture and what it means to society when a female has male privilege.

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