

**MASCULINITIES IN DRAG:
A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF FEMALE MASCULINITY**

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**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In the
Department of English
University of Adelaide
December 2007**

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ABSTRACT

Masculinities in Drag offers a largely speculative but theoretically engaged analysis of female masculinity as it is enacted through the forum of drag kinging. Drag kinging is the predominantly lesbian and queer female sub-cultural practice of female-to-male cross dressing, with most drag king performances promoting ‘the woman behind the man’. This emphasis on ‘femaleness’, even as it is ostensibly disguised in male drag, remains crucial to the many dynamics that arise through performing as a drag king and within drag king culture. This thesis promotes that emphasis by exploring and arguing for drag kinging as a performance of female identifications, erotic or otherwise, with masculinity within an exclusively queer female economy of desire. I employ various and *varying* theories on subjectivity, gender, desire, and fantasy to explore this, and further expand my analysis of female masculinity by focusing on the embodied and corporeal effects of performing as a drag king. This investigation reveals the refusal of drag kings to differentiate between traditional notions of mind/body, material/immaterial, and other adversarial boundaries in order to revel in new-found and provocative forms of embodiment and corporeality. Further, I develop the term ‘drag king embodiment’ to explain and expand on this, and to promote drag king embodiment as the corporeal ‘outcome’ of embodying desires for and fantasies of masculinity. This analysis extends to theoretically challenging accepted heteronormative models of gender, female desire, sexuality and subjectivity. However, such challenges reveal their dependency on these models, in so far as any perversion or subversion of them relies on acknowledging them as constraints – literally and figuratively. The ‘struggle’ against such models is not theorised as an inherently futile affair, but rather is viewed as a defining narrative that informs much of the erotic, sexual, and other dynamics of drag kinging and drag king culture. Exploration and analysis of female masculinity, in all its guises, calls into question the ‘natural’ socio-cultural position of women and their desires. By producing certain configurations of female identity, subjectivity, gender, sexuality and desire *outside* notions of ‘proper’ feminine identifications is to produce those identities fully *inside*. Effectively, drag king performances work this ‘weakness’ in the laws that govern ‘femaleness’ in order to promote, eroticise, and celebrate female masculinity.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this thesis would not have been possible without the generous input of many drag kings. The deeply personal and honest accounts of their female masculinities, desires, sexualities, and drag king personas, remain the biggest 'muse' behind this thesis's analysis of female masculinity. Without their contribution there simply wouldn't have been a thesis. I am also indebted to my supervisor, Dr Mandy Treagus, who has seen me through both my Honours thesis and the long drawn out affair that became this Doctoral thesis. Many thanks Mandy for your unfailing confidence in my research and writing, and your support over the years. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the encouragement and support of my partner Sylvia, and my children Courtenay and Liam. They have also seen me through many years of study, research, and writing, and have never floundered in their support of my goal to write this Doctoral thesis.