



Male Matters: Masculinity, Anxiety, and the Male Body on the Line

Calvin Thomas

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The contemporary straight white male finds himself, if he finds himself at all, in dilemmas too numerous to mention. Torn between the just charges of feminism, made keenly aware of his heterosexism and his privilege, feeling psycho-analyzed and pilloried and scrutinized to a fare-thee-well, how should he handle his anxiety? According to Calvin Thomas, maybe he shouldn't. Maybe he should embrace his abjection - his cast-off, humiliated, and discounted status - as a way of renegotiating his identity and of interrupting the historical displacement of that status onto the feminine, or the marginalized other. This embrace of abjection, says Thomas, begins as a confrontation with the issue of the male body. The straight man, unfamiliar and unfriendly and uncomfortable with his body - the excretory, urinary, and seminal aspects of his body in particular - will find that Thomas's *Male Matters* explores the complicated relationships between masculinity and the male body, revealing the act and production of writing as a bodily, material process that transgresses the boundaries of gender. *Male Matters* is not only theory but theory out of and as literature and philosophy. This wise and quirky, sophisticated and coarse, serious and hilarious look at male identity and creativity and dislocation at the end of the twentieth century will not assuage male anxiety and may, in fact, produce more. But therein lies the way of the productive male, yielding to (rather than attempting to master) language as a bodily function.

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