

COSMOQUEER

Issue #1

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011

For the fabulous and feisty



the *Femme* issue



Femme came to be a concept through the queer community. "Femme" and "butch" were terms to signify that a person had traditionally feminine (femme) or masculine (butch) traits. However, the terms have advanced recently and they are used as self-identifiers for a wide range of people and a lot of people don't consider them to mean feminine and masculine anymore.

Butch is said to mean "tough kid", it supposedly came from Butch Cassidy.

Femme comes from the French word "femme" literally translated to mean "woman" (it's probably important to note that not all people who identify as femme identify as women, including myself).

I'm not sure I have a specific definition of femme, even for myself, I just know the term fits me well (most of the time, anyway). I know people across the gender spectrum who i.d. as femme so it's really varied.

-Stacey

Here are some definitions of femme:

n.) A gender identity in which someone (female, male or other) has an awareness of cultural standards of femininity and actively embodies a feminine appearance, role, or archetype. It is usually—but not always – associated with a gay or queer sexual identity/sexuality. It is usually more accentuated and intentional than a straight female gender identity or gender presentation and often challenges standards of femininity through exaggeration, parody or transgression of gender norms.

[-urban dictionary](#)

Femme is being able to win an arm wrestle while wearing a floral print tea dress ;)

[- Rosemary](#)

I've always known "femme" to also be relevant to trans* people who identify that way as a description of their gender expression, and those people may or may not be heterosexual. I might totally have the definition wrong but as a trans* person who identifies as femme, for me personally it has everything to do with my gender expression and nothing to do with my sexuality. Again, I may identify myself this way because I've totally misinterpreted connotations to femme as an identity but hey, it works for me.

[-Vikki](#)

femme is wearing glittery brass knuckles ;)

[-Gee](#)

To me, being femme is a performance. It's swaying my hips walking in high heels. It's covering myself in glitter and make up. It's dyeing my hair every colour possible. It's indulging my weaknesses for Cosmo and short skirts and fishnet stockings. It's Rihanna and Nicki and Beyonce and Britney and Kelis. It's giggling and flirting and teasing. It's fighting back. It's smoking. It's accepting myself. It's seduction. It's passion. It's lipstick. It's steel wrapped in velvet. It's lace and leather. It's being feisty and fabulous and stubborn and silly and clumsy and sexy and strong. It's femme and it's me.

[-Stacey](#)

to me, being femme is an expression. it's treading daintily walking in 80's skechers. it's pressing my hands together childishly in nervousness. it's mentally beating myself up for the slightest "flaw". it's indulging my weaknesses for genre fiction and polka dots and marshmallow pastels. it's aqua and britney and metallica and abba and silence. it's blushing and looking away and hiding my face. it's giving in from fright. it's snuggling and nuzzling and cuddling. it's desperately searching for validation. it's puppy-like overeager affection. it's sweetness in return for the slightest kindness. it's milkshakes. it's root beer floats in frosty parfait glasses. it's stars and hearts and puffy bows. it's being angry and scared and anxious and sweet and flirty and hurt and needy and wistful and verbose. it's me, and i'm femme.

[-Amber Nong](#)

I'm not interested in makeup, or stockings or short skirts or smoking. I want to be cute, sometimes I want to be a little scary and have an edge but I don't think I want to be sexy. I want to be gentle. I am forest-girl and lake-girl and sky-girl and dreamer, magical girl and winged girl and fantasy strange creature, soft and nervous and warm and hopeful, cold and dark and swan and shutting out sometimes... So, I guess I am femme.

[-Tsu](#)



[-Ayumi Moore](#)

My Relationship with Femmeness Thus Far

[trigger warning: cissexism, dysphoria]

I haven't considered myself femme for all that long. For most of my life I saw femininity as some awful thing, a sign of weakness. Being introduced to feminism sorted that out pretty quickly and I finally felt able to embrace my feminine side. My feminine side turned out to be a pretty large part of me. I suddenly realised how fond I am of glitter and pink and make up and high heels and various other things. I heard the term "femme" within the queer community and at this stage it fit. I adopted it after a while and it was just a part of my gender presentation and queer identity.

Then I realised I'm non-binary. I noticed that my gender changes. It became a whole lot more complicated to be femme. I felt like if I were femme then I wasn't *really* non-binary, I couldn't *really* be trans* yet be comfortable presenting as femme. There's also the additional problem that on my male days my usual femmeness gives me dysphoria. While any other gender feels comfortable to me and I can be as femme as I like, if I try to be femme, even unconsciously, on my male days, then I feel shitty about myself.

So although I always identify as femme, I don't always present as such. Sometimes because I'm scared people won't take my gender seriously, sometimes because I can't handle it, sometimes for other reasons.

I wish I could always present as femme. Being femme makes me feel powerful.

-Stacey

femme hate

[trigger warning: cissexism]

There's a tendency to privilege butch presentations over their femme counterparts: femmehate.

Femmehate is everywhere, basically. It's in the general "I'm not like those *other* girls" special snowflake rants and it's in feminism's calling shaving "mutilation" and thereby demeaning the choices of certain femme identified people (not to mention the ciscentric aspect).

It can be pretty hard coming to terms with femininity because of all the internalised misogyny. No-one needs femmehate thrown at them from anyone, let alone within their own communities.

Another common suggestion seems to be that being femme somehow always affects your gender identity e.g. the cissexist idea that femme men aren't "real men". Being femme does not affect how someone identifies unless they say it does. You do not get to decide what their gender is just because they choose to present a certain way. They are that gender because they say they are, not because you do.

Some people claim that femmeness is superficial. I think that could be to do with the fact that people seem to associate femmeness with being about objects and very material. Though I personally find certain objects do make me feel more femme, I do not think that is necessarily what femme is about. I'm not sure if it's even a bad thing to be superficial, but more to the point, that isn't what femmeness is about for everyone. There is no one way to be femme so it's almost impossible to claim that femmeness is entirely this one thing.

There are many ways in which femmehate is problematic and inherently flawed. Femme identities, on the other hand, are no more flawed than any other identity.

Let's just stop with the femme hate.

-**Stacey**

Some Femme Haikus

i appreciate
when you wear stilettos and
glitter and kick ass

-[Meridian](#)

Femme as fuck but not
anywhere close to being
a woman. Confused?

-**Stacey**

I bent words as well
as rules; for glamour knows no
hostile gender roles.

- [Rachel](#)

GET YOUR ANTIFEMININITY OUT OF MY FEMINISM

[trigger warning: sexist slur, cissexism]

It's sometimes said that the voices within a movement can be the movement's worst enemy, and that certainly holds true of feminism, where there are all kinds of structural problems with the way that feminists, particularly prominent ones, engage (or rather don't engage) with issues like disability, race, and class. There's been an uptick of late in antifemininity in feminist spaces, and, people, I cannot even begin to comprehend why some people seem to think this is a good idea, let alone keep engaging in it.

Feminism has its roots in a lot of complicated things, and there seems to be a tendency among some feminists to prove themselves 'one of the boys' by making snide, nasty comments about expressions of femininity. Skirts, makeup, heels, all are verboten under this metric because they are 'too girlie' and it does not escape me that a lot of the language about how to be a good feminist involves telling people to act less feminine, like being feminine is a bad thing.

Feminist women who do things like wearing heels are told they are 'choice feminists,' in as derisive a way as possible. And while it's true that claiming that every choice a feminist makes is feminist by default is flawed, it's also true that attacking people on the grounds of behaving or dressing in a femme way is a really big problem. Feminism is, at its core, about equal rights for women, about a level playing field, about a society where women have the same chances and opportunities as someone else. It should not be about suppressing femininity like it is something dirty and wrong.

There are plenty of women who are not feminine. And I am glad that one of the things feminism has done for them is create a space where they do not experience pressure to behave in a feminine way, to create artificial personas to satisfy social demands. Some women aren't interested in performing femininity and I think it is excellent and very

important to have a world in which they are not constantly under attack for not doing what women are 'supposed' to do, for liking sports and not being shy about it, for not owning a single tube of lipstick, for not wearing skirts to work. Earlier generations of feminists pushed back against feminine roles and tried to create a world where women didn't have to meet impossible and ridiculous appearance standards just to go to the mailbox. That was a good thing.

But somehow, there has been a shift from 'women should not have to perform femininity if they do not want to' to 'femininity is bad, and people should be punished for behaving in a feminine way.' Femme women are viewed as less-than and people say things like 'I can't take a woman in heels seriously because clearly her commitment to feminism is lacking.' Several high profile feminist websites have dedicated *multiple* posts to shaming women who wear heels and suggesting that heel wearers should be drummed out of the movement because they are clearly capitulating to the patriarchy and their footwear is antifeminist.

I want to live in a world where little girls are not pinkified, but where little girls who like pink are not punished for it, either. We can certainly talk about the social pressures surrounding gender roles, and the concerns that people have when they see girls and young women who appear to be forced into performances of femininity by the society around them, but let's stop acting like they have no agency and free will. Let's stop acting like women who choose to be feminine are somehow colluders, betraying the movement, bamboozled into *thinking* that they want to be feminine. Let's stop denying women their own autonomy by telling them that their expressions of femininity are bad and wrong.

Antifemininity is misogynist. What you are saying when you engage in this type of rhetoric is that you think things traditionally associated with women are wrong. Which is misogynist. By telling feminine women that they don't belong in the feminist movement, you are reinforcing the idea that to be feminine and a woman is wrong, that women who want to be

taken seriously need to be more masculine, because most people view gender presentation in binary ways. This rewards the 'one of the boys' type rhetoric I encounter all over the place from self-avowed feminists who seem to think that bashing on women is a good way to prove how serious they are when it comes to caring about women and bringing men into the feminist movement.

People talk about slutshaming and how it does not belong in feminism. They talk about victim blaming and how it does not belong in feminism. And then they turn around and penalise feminine women. When they happen to be people with high profiles who are respected and viewed as valuable sources of information, people take away the message that antifemininity is a feminist act, that telling women how to dress and behave is a good, appropriate, even revolutionary thing to do.

And that tells people with a femme orientation that they do not belong, and it contributes *significantly* to gender dysphoria for a lot of trans people who want to be part of the movement. Some trans women are femme, and experience conflicting pressures between being told by 'feminists' on the one hand that they can't be feminine, and being informed by society that they must femme up in order to 'pass,' in addition to navigating their own relationship with their gender. Nonbinary people like me who are femme-leaning are *constantly* reminded that we can't be femme if we want to be taken seriously, that we are fakers if our bodies don't look sufficiently 'neutral,' by which people mean 'masculine,' enough.

People, I spent years convinced that I could not be genderqueer because I liked to wear skirts. And the antifemininity in feminism is directly responsible for that. Antifemininity has no place in this movement, and I'm tired of seeing people engaging in it and acting like they are doing something revolutionary when all they are doing is enforcing the status quo.

[-s.e. smith](#)



[-Meridian](#)

For Stacey, because ey asked me and I was honored ey did.

Femme for me has been a slow coming. While I've never felt forced to identify as femme, as I've seen some others say, I have went through internalized misogyny when I was younger. I was 'tough' because I pretended I hated most feminine or "girly" things. I could hang with the guys cuz' I didn't wear dresses anymore, or didn't fawn over heels.

Now i'm all fuck that and fuck all types of misogyny. I still hop over fences and roll around in the dirt like I'm a big kid but that's fun even when you're wearing a nice outfit. Tree climbing had to go once I found out I was scared of heights.

The first time I actively said I was femme, I think I was eighteen. Because I was sure I wasn't butch, or a stud. I don't identify with any masculine identity really. But the femmes I was seeing I didn't really fit in with them, and I didn't really look like them. So I sort of backed away, because the people I was seeing looked like they should be on the Suicide Girls website. And I didn't wear a lot of makeup. I like lipstick occasionally, lip-gloss. And they were very made-up, and they wore clothes that didn't really fit my style or were expensive.

I thought maybe this isn't for me. This can't be for me.

Only I had to make it mine because while for some there is a rigid femme protocol, I don't fit it. But I started to realize, knew without a doubt I was femme. I like doing with femininity what I will. I like nail polish, and heels, and corsets, and sometimes lipstick. I can rock out in sweats and a tank-top and strut around thinking, in the words of Will Smith, "*I make this look good*". But I don't have to wear those things to be femme. I know femme isn't in the aesthetics.

I don't fit standards of beauty and I'm continually teaching myself not to give a fuck. My front gapped-teeth, my freshly locking hair, my dark brown skin; it's all beautiful.

I chose my femininity. Being femme doesn't mean I'm weak, that I need to be taken care of, or that I'm not in anyway dominant. Personally, sexually I like to switch.

It's annoying to be seen as a straight woman, and I'm sure for some femmes to even be seen as a woman. It's annoying that if I was dating another femme we'd be seen as friends. As a femme I'm saying fuck invisibility and to pay attention. We're here and we're queer. And just because some of us might wear a dress to the march does not make us less valuable.

Femme for me is teaching myself to be confident. To be seen. To take up space. To be comfortable in my own body. To say I can still wear heels and kick ass and take names while I'm doing it. That anything feminine I do is for *me*. It's to know that I don't *have* to do these things. I do what pleases me. It's dancing around in my underwear and having a blast.

My femininity is not for the cis-male gaze. It's not for their pleasure. I'm not a damsel that a butch queer needs to rescue.

No one has to be femme. No one should feel that *have* to be femme.

I like being badass while being femme.

I hate being associated with heteronormativity. My femmeness has nothing to do with perpetuating heteronormative views. I see being femme as defining your gender presentation & identity on your own terms.

I like that we can look so many different ways and that femme means so many different things to us.

I'm a femme

I am a femme of color

And I love it.

-Gee



-Charlie

insolence

[trigger warning: misgendering]

it must be nice (i think silently of him) to *fit right*. to not be described, ascribed as being strange, placeless. to walk neat, clipped steps, on smooth paths, and not be tarried by strangers and speculation. to be - what is it? normal? no - to be at ease in a world that's just the right size for you, and just the right colors, and not see constantly through a veil of *what should be* because for you, the way it all is right now *is* what it should be.

too easy.

too easy not to bleed outside the lines. too easy, to fit so neatly inside society's expectations. too easy not to be stereotyped; bullied. too easy not to be told you don't exist. too easy to be you, and too *difficult* to be me, and to be seen as what you are (and not what others *believe* you are), not to be a victim of silent assumptions, not to have to live with the weight of other's beliefs pressing down on your shoulders. their assumptions--

are as simple and effortless as the way they unflinchingly say *she*, and the way they call me daughter and sister instead of sibling, child. and the way i have learned to expect hurt from people who don't mean it, and the way i have learned to expect hurt from - worst of all - you. and why do they call me *girl*, woman, lady, and what gives them the right, i wonder? foreign words, foreign voices shrill in my ears, always skulking nearby, out of sight and yet so close i can feel the pain of their assumptions.

people have strange ideas about me. they think me a girl (and i've no idea what the word even means) because of - the slightness of my frame, and the pitch of my voice, and clothes i wear (the swish of genderless fabric, glittering tulle, the jewelry), and the way i behave - *like a girl*, they say, and i don't understand what they could possibly mean? but the worst of it is the way their assumptions follow me everywhere. on the papers, the standardized exams, there is that cruel inked-in circle next to a tiny sans-serif F. f for female, f for girl, f for woman, f for lady, f for sister, f for daughter, f for *i think i know what your gender is and whatever you say, i refuse to believe you*.

oh. and what they don't know is that what they call "femininity" on me is not femininity at all. it is *me*, just me. it is just - the weight of a hundred strikingly wrong assumptions pressing down on a single spine. and it is also - it is also not just the pain of being shadowed by the word *girl*, repeated over and over in my head and at me; it is my soul. my fate, to be this - this *everythingyouthinkfeminityisandyetit isnot*, and yet no. i am not "feminine" simply because i have no other choice. i am "feminine" because i choose to be - *idemand* it of you, my right to be person, genderless, intergender, me, and not, never "girl". and i will not pay for this right by sacrificing what you call "femininity". and i will not give up my colors or my words or my mannerisms - pink, pretty, adorable, sweet, scared, kind, creative, caring, skirt-wearing, dressmaking, cake-baking, flirty, boy-loving, emotive, needy, wishful, me.

- in the vain, vain hope that then they would understand i am not the girl they think i am. for even were they then to understand - it would be no victory, and no fair trade, to sacrifice half of one's being in the wish to regain the other half. it would only be the birth of a new and, if possible, more brutal and awful series of assumptions than before. i will give up nothing, i will not compromise, and even if i must stand still in a rain of fire, bathe everyday in their inability to understand until hopelessness seeps into my bones, i will, becoz i am *proud*.

i am not a girl, you see. i am not. and possibly never was, and most likely will never again be, if ever i were. how lucky you are, that at least the assumptions people make about you are *correct*. too easy, to be called boy and agree and not have to explain, and never to have to see that look of blank incomprehension that hits a person's face when you try to explain that you are not what they think you are, and worst of all, you are free to make assumptions of your own - about me! - and oh. i see it in your eyes, and read it between your words, the weight of the girl you think of me as, the burden you force me to bear.

i am not a girl, i am only me. scared, pale, pretty me.

-[Amber Nong](#)



"as i've grown older it's become a lot harder to just... be in the world how i want to be in the world, because the way people react and perceive my gender as femme meaning pretty or innocent or hitonable or weak just sets me off"

-[Meridian](#)

Stepping into the Hourglass: On my Femme Identity

I'm not coming out as femme. I'm not coming out as anything anymore. I'm sick of having to reincarnate myself into different spaces with different people several different ways to Sunday, for those who don't understand what queer or femme means on any level or on multiple different levels. From this day forward coming out as a concept no longer applies to my life. I am coming into myself, creating the person with the politics, friends, and universe I desires to live in. Being femme is no longer about proving my queerness, my "girlyness", or my radicalness. But instead being femme is about being comfortable in my own skin, my clothes, my hair, and most importantly the eyes i use to see this world.

Had i came up with these guiding principles ages ago, i would have spared myself a lot of heart ache and pain. I guess this is true for anybody who has a realization that identity is for the sole benefit of their own livelihood and person-hood, but again I stress figuring this out ages ago would make life less of a bumpy sail across a never ending ocean.

Because I started this journey as a femme in all the wrong ways and for all the wrong reasons. I came out femme because i had butch/stud partners who wanted a "wife", a "woman" to tote around on their arm for the benefit of emulating what i find to be a ratchet conception of heteronormity. I adapted to long fake hair, long nails, tight fitting clothing, push up bras and uncomfortable shoes in order to support this image of "us: the butch femme WOC couple" which made my partners happy. I learned how to cook, clean, serve, and sexually please the "man" in this get up with a smile on my face, meanwhile the song in my heart sounded more like Rage Against the Machine. Suffice to say, i wasn't happy with who i was.

Several breakups and a break from womynfolk later, I slowly began the journey which would help me come into being femme. Ironically, i did it with men. I resented this turn in my life at first, because i thought i was

betraying some secret queer femme oath that says "YES WE ARE GAY, NO WE DON'T CONSORT WITH MEN, AT ALL!!" I felt dirty for bouncing around the bedroom with "the enemy", even though i was getting the satisfaction i had yet to feel in my past relationships, without the binding title of "relationship". Even though therein lay an emotional honesty between me and my casual sex partner which hadn't existed in previous relationships. For once, I was being asked what i wanted in bed, how i wanted it. Everything i had read about in tantric sex books aimed at the lack luster hetero couple was coming full circle. I had a choice, the space and time to get in touch with my choices, and a casual sex partner who was willing to be patient with me through the long haul.

And what i chose frightened me at first, but i grew into it. I liked aggression on both ends, mixed with the sultry dance of sensuality yet balanced control play. I liked body weight pressed firmly against mine, and pressing my own wide hour glass hips against another person. I liked having my hands pinned above my head as lips or a tongue ran the gambit of my body, and i also liked channeling Nala from the Lion King where she gets Simba and says "pinned ya again!"

I like sex which empowers me and forces me to submit at the right times, that wasn't about reinforcing the "man who is the provider of the woman's pleasure" dynamic. I like the organic dynamic created by two head strong people who are used to being in control of situations, but loose control to be with one other in that sexual space.

But most importantly, when it was all over, i enjoyed throwing on my black spaghetti strap tank top and boy short panties to go get myself something to drink. I enjoyed being in the kitchen for my own benefit, and not to make my butch partner food that somehow they became incapable of making themselves once sex had occurred. The physical spaces i resented while in relationships returned to me reshaped, out of newly awakened desire to engage with them again, and not because i was play acting at a flawed relationship dynamic to make a person happy.

Cooking and cleaning stopped being a romantic chore and the kitchen became a safe space once again.

Most importantly, my own sense of style came back with a vengeance. Back to black i went, but the type of black/dark colored clothes that were my comfort zone. Tank tops, scoop neck t- shirts, graphic print tees, black off the shoulder sweaters or v-neck sweaters. Dark rinse jeans, pencil and mini skirts, leggings and yoga pants. The braids became a natural hair style which is always too shrunken to show its real length, and i kept the long nails for my own pleasure.

It took me a long time to realize the femme identity i had espoused as truth in some senses had been imposed on me, and i had accepted it without question. I had altered myself "in the name of love", and in the process wound up hating who i saw in the mirror. And there is no going back to that old person. Time stops for no mouse. But instead there is going forward while trying to take some things of my past into the future with me.

It took me even longer to realize that queer femme culture as a whole is not made for the fat queer woman of color. That everything from the makeup tips to the sense of style is geared towards a euro-centric understanding of femme in America. Genres of style are pulled from history books without so much as a nod to its POC counterparts. 1950s vintage is almost always discussed absent of black femmes and the presence of Motown. Radical femme culture, riot grrl, well don't get me started on how POC bodies only ever seem to be members of a crowd and not the ones inciting riot in the first place.

So for me to talk about femme means discussing visibility/invisibility beyond "who can read me as queer today?" It means talking about how i spent years searching for brown bodies in places where they weren't

mentioned just to feel counted. Using my imagination as a product of lusting after inclusion i may never live to see come full circle. Years spent rethinking fashion tips that would suit my tall yet curvy hourglass body, and searching for makeup alternatives that would suit my skin color.

Femme also means emotional honesty with oneself and one's desires, being able to step outside a perceived comfort zone in order to reach a new plane of understanding. Not narrowing my fluidity to a rigid model meant to rage against a perceived threat to "queer femme-ness" that in my mind is barely a code orange. Enjoying casual sex, committed sex, passion play, so long as its consensual and safe.

And being a femme woman of color means repping Angela Davis on my t-shirts instead of Marilyn Monroe not because one is better than the other but because sometimes you need that brown skin womyn power to stay lifted on the daily. Sending bright blessing to the queer mammas of color who have passed on to better things such as Sylvia Rivera and Audre Lorde. And giving an endless nod to the women of color who influenced my childhood: Josephine Baker, Katherine Dunham, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald, Dorothy Dandridge, Debbie Allen, Etta James, and so many more. They taught me the grit and the daily grind that is just being a woman of color in this world. Queer or not, its because of them i knew what being a "brown femme" meant before i knew it was another closet to come out of and an identity to come into.

[-ari](#)

today i have my hair in princess curls.

i am girl through and through,
and wouldn't trade for anything.

i love pretty in myself
i love pretty in my house
i love pretty in my women
i love pretty in my men
where i go, you will find pretty.

softly i sit on my petals
with afternoon tea

seeing through your translucent grab-bag
of ideas. so nice

to look at, so not fooled
by you.

girly & competent,

worthy & lovely,

pretty. clever. classy. femme.

you had better take me seriously.
the fact that my gender is best
expressed through pastel doilies
is no excuse to diminutise

this lace is intricate
this flower unbroken
this personhood real:

but no less sweet
and dainty and girly
because i'm a person
with wisdom, clarity, depth:

this is not an advertisement

to be high femme
all indian eyebrows and indian feet, these curves judged
just strange enough to be a norm

how do i synthesize

all bedhead and wiry leg hair,
sweaty face, sweaty thighs, sweaty arms
sex i can't penetrate,

how do i emphasize

arches and angles, rounds and moustached symmetry
these lips were not made to caress
these hands so jarring, what a disarray of
bones and flesh, a skirt to puff
rather than fluff

how do i proselytize

this un/wanted body
fingers and chapped-shed toes,
these bushy armpits, this scraggly crotch
this mess of question and rhyme
taut nipple softened to dull,
scars of creaky fluids, creaky bones,
lift and fly

how do i mesmerize

cursorily, feet stagger to climb,
grips slackening, fade into stars, you & i,
i was everything and yet

how do you fantasize

these moles, this lump, this cellulite
words found through teen novels and hotness
stolen-- i stole through that book again
"soft porn" my father calls them
"indian english writers trying to prove"
(where am i)
no neat grids to grab me
fashion me a nice steel smile

how do I colloquialize

this face too long, this chin too--
never enough and i
am femme

[-Areiyana](#)

[trigger warning: heterosexist slur]

hard, as I feel like I can't broadly define femme. I can define what it means to me, and I can tell you who can be femme (people of any race, age, gender, body size, body type, abledness, sexual orientation, subculture, identity... basically anyone who feels femme is femme) but I really can't think of a way to write about anything but my personal experience.

I know that I'm femme, I certainly have all the aesthetic trappings traditionally associated with femmeness. I have long hair, long finger nails, I wear makeup and skirts and dresses more than pants, and rarely wear flat shoes, my preferences for these things have often made the rest of my identity feel invisible. I get read as a heterosexual cis woman by almost everyone.

I am... none of the above. I'm a feminine oriented genderfluid femme. Being femme is something I've felt a lot of tension around in my life. I grew up in an era when straight cis women were bad feminists if they were femme, and when I realized I was a dyke that added a whole layer of complication to my identity, because I didn't want to date butches, and yet I was femme and yet I didn't want to be masturbatory fodder for men. I worried no one would take my orientation seriously. As I grew older I realized two things 1. I wasn't exclusively attracted to women, just exclusively attracted to femininity, and 2. Although I was sometimes a woman I wasn't one all the time. Right now, as I write this I'm having a female day, and my identity despite my long hot pink acrylic nails rests firmly in the realm of dyke. I felt my femmeess invalidated those parts of me and it took a really long time for me to reconcile the internal with the external.

I have never been able to regard femininity as weakness, to me femininity is aggressive, spike heels, bright colors, long nails and hair that takes up space in a world where we're generally not allowed to take up space.

Being a high femme, being femme to the point of looking like a drag queen is my way of rebelling against cultural beauty norms. We prize soft natural carefree white girls dancing in a field of sun flowers in a soft cotton dress. I am not that image, I am a white person, and right now I am a girl, but I wear bright blue eyeshadow, hot pink lipstick, aggressive eyeliner, I scribble all over your beauty standards and I do it by being motherfucking fabulous. I am aggressively feminine. I am a queer sometimes woman, I have PTSD, and I am pissed off. The world doesn't want to see me as I am because I look how a pretty woman is supposed to look, because the way I really am is *troubling*, because I am *damaged*, and I am damaged because the world is unjust and refuses to protect people like me. Refuses to protect me and people like me from rape, abuse and invisibility. When I put on my red as blood dress, and my sky high heels, when I paint on my dark winged eyeliner, I am not just stating my femmeness, I am forcing everyone to acknowledge my presence. I am here, and because I am covered in sequins I cannot be ignored.

For me personally, natural can go fuck itself, I will create myself as the person I will be, I will wear the costume I choose, and I will play the role I want.

Socially we seem to privilege natural exteriors and interiors that are plastic or worse hollow. Taylor Swift comes to mind. My shell is plastic, my inch thick makeup, my coiffed hair, my breasts pushed and my waist nipped in, but inside I am real, and my voice is real. I am not hollow, and I am too loud for society's comfort, and I think we as femmes all do that to one extent or another, challenging social norms about femininity, about who is feminine and what feminine means.

[-Madeira](#)

Femme Playlist

tw: ableism, sexist slurs, racial slurs, heteronormative, cis-centric songs

1. Lemuria - Lipstick
2. Ludacris - My Chick Bad Remix
3. Kid Sister - Pro Nails
4. Me'Shell - Love You Down
5. Maluca - El Tigraso
6. Kelis - Milkshake
7. Jonte' - Make Up
8. Remy Ma - Conceited
9. Kelis - Bossy
10. Otis Redding - Try A Little Tenderness
11. Marina & the Diamonds - I Am Not A Robot
12. Lil Kim - No Matter What They Say
13. Ciara - Ride
14. Ciara - Like A Boy [femme/butch swag in video]
15. Nina Simone - Feeling Good
16. Nina Simone - Four Women

-Gee

Put together and all that by Stacey, with contributions from lots of wonderful people.

A huge thanks to everyone who contributed, and a special thanks to [Tom](#) for starting this whole thing.

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