



Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History

Michelle Ann Abate

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Starting with the figure of the bold, boisterous girl in the mid-19th century and ending with the “girl power” movement of the 1990’s, *Tomboys* is the first full-length critical study of this gender-bending code of female conduct. Michelle Abate uncovers the origins, charts the trajectory, and traces the literary and cultural transformations that the concept of “tomboy” has undergone in the United States.

Abate focuses on literature including Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and Carson McCullers's *The Member of the Wedding* and films such as Peter Bogdanovich's *Paper Moon* and **Jon Avnet's** *Fried Green Tomatoes*. She also draws on lesser-known texts like E.D.E.N. Southworth's once wildly popular 1859 novel *The Hidden Hand*, Cold War lesbian pulp fiction, and New Queer Cinema from the 1990s.

Tomboys also explores the gender and sexual dynamics of tomboyism, and offers intriguing discussions of race and ethnicity's role in the construction of the enduring cultural archetype. Abate’s insightful analysis provides useful, thought-provoking connections between different literary works and eras. The result demystifies this cultural phenomenon and challenges readers to consider tomboys in a whole new light.

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