

## INTRODUCTION

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### TREVOR HOPPE

I started dreaming of *Beyond Masculinity* as an undergraduate taking Women’s Studies classes that rarely featured men’s voices. Feminist anthologies like *Listen Up: Voices from the Next Generation* and *To Be Real: Telling the Truth and Challenging the Face of Feminism* dotted my bookshelf, but I was frustrated to discover that no similar anthology exists for and by men – let alone queer men.

This all began my senior year in college, a product of conversations with friend and fellow queer activist Nick Shepard at Chapel Hill. We had different politics – Nick was always much more of an anarchist-vegan-type, while my radicalism was mostly saved for sex politics – but we shared one desire: to produce smart feminist political analysis for men. When I moved to San Francisco the next year to start my Masters program, though, Nick and I lost touch. But I didn’t forget about this anthology, or our dream.

I began researching the various small publishing houses that might be interested in publishing such a project, and sent a proposal out to six or seven editors across the country. These were mostly traditionally women’s presses that had a history of publishing smart collections of feminist essays. The response was unanimous: no one was interested in my project. I had anticipated this; the publishing market of the 21st century is, to say the least, extremely unfriendly to projects like *Beyond Masculinity*. As a 23 year-old activist and academic, I didn’t have the caché to warrant their investment in my idea.

I wasn’t deterred. I had been designing websites since I was a teenager, and had recently begun blogging. I knew I had the skills to create something

unique – something unlike anything that existed on the market. The recent proliferation of podcasting distribution networks, open source blogging software, and more generally of online media content had created the perfect opportunity to try something new. Best of all, the final product would be: 1) free; and 2) available to millions of people across the world.

With the help of friends and colleagues, I whipped up a call for submissions and began circulating it via LGBT college group listservs and on feminist online networks. I settled on the title “Beyond Masculinity,” hoping to challenge potential contributors to provide accounts of our experiences as queer men that moved “beyond” masculinity as the sole framework for understanding maleness. It wasn’t that I thought masculinity had exhausted its usefulness as an analytic lens – but rather that I wanted to resist relying on it as an organizing principle.

Over the next six months, I was thrilled to receive over fifty fantastic essays that covered a wide range of topics and experiences. I spent several months huddled in the middle of my living room with the essays scattered around me, carefully reading each piece and making difficult decisions as I whittled the pool down to just over twenty essays.

A bit overzealous, I was confident that I could pump this collection out in a few short months. In hindsight, I’m grateful that I was wrong. I spent the next year working with my group of contributors to polish their essays to perfection. I can’t help but brag about this brilliant bunch of writers. I have been so inspired by their thoughts and tireless efforts throughout this process. A handful of them happily endured a year of repeated revisions. I must admit that I am a bit of a perfectionist, and this made for some tough head-butting at times. But, in the end, I think the final product that you see here has benefited tremendously from the hundreds of hours of work that we invested in these essays.

What you will find in this collection is a tremendously diverse group of queer men thoughtfully reflecting on their experiences – and using those experiences to build powerful analyses of their social worlds. There are beautiful, poetic essays that are as elegant as they are insightful, such as Qwo-

Li Driskill's "Shaking Our Shells: Cherokee Two-Spirits Rebalancing Our World." There are ridiculously funny stories that will make you laugh out loud while simultaneously challenging your ideas about gender and sexuality, like Brian Lobel's "Penis. Vagina. Penetration. The End." And then there are incredibly thought-provoking, incisive pieces that move our ways of thinking about maleness and queerness so far forward that, even after well over a dozen readings, I'm still finding new nuggets of wisdom along the way. Both Rob Day-Walker's brilliant and challenging piece, "Jesus of San Francisco: Can Jesus be a Resource for Queer Masculinities?" and Daniel Solís y Martínez's thoughtful and incredibly useful essay, "Mestiza/o Gender: Notes Towards a Transformative Masculinity", are representative here.

And this is just the beginning. Perhaps what I love most about this collection of essays – and what I hope you as readers will benefit from – is the variety of both perspective and form that are represented in this collection. While all of the essays here draw on personal experience to build (both implicitly and explicitly) powerful arguments about gender and sexuality, this collection is big enough to hold an 80 year-old gay man's reflections on living life "in between" maleness and femaleness (Autrey's "Somewhere in Between"); a gay man's first-person account of stripping for the first time (Jost's "Stripping Towards Equality"); and a transgender gay man's plea for bottoms to please (Macey's "From Top to Bottom"). There is so much good stuff here. I know that you're going to enjoy this collection.

Questions remain about the future for *Beyond Masculinity* – questions that I'm not yet prepared to answer. What happens, for instance, in ten years to this website? Or, for that matter, in two? Because of its nature as an online creature, adding new essays to this collection is entirely possible. Let me use this space here, then, to encourage savvy queer writers out there to contact me with ideas or drafts. I'm a willing audience. I recognize that there are holes to be filled (no pun intended, really) in this collection. Fill them. This is first and foremost a project in motion. With your continued investment, we can keep it moving.

Finally, I would be remiss or perhaps foolish to not end by soliciting your generous donations. *Beyond Masculinity* is a volunteer-run project, and fees associated with it come directly out of my pocket. No one involved has ever been paid for their work on this project. If you enjoy this collection, as I know you will, please log on to our website to make a small donation to keep this project moving in the coming years.

Don't forget to log onto our website to comment on the essays you read, or to download audio recordings of most of the essays included. Thanks for reading. Enjoy *Beyond Masculinity*!

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 Ann Arbor, MI