Contesting Masculinity: Editor's Preface

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manholes
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Chris Green writes, teaches, and reads poetry in central Kentucky to and for those community members who are working to recover their voices and sing about their realities. Recent poems have appeared in ACM (Another Chicago Magazine), Pudding, Artful Dodge, and Midwife Today.

Wayne Hogan bounced around the South China Sea on an aircraft carrier during the Korean War. He is a three-time nominee for a Pushcart Prize for poetry and resident-illustrator-in-absentia for Kings Estate Press. He and his wife Susan live in Cookeville, Tennessee.

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Andrew Schopp is an assistant professor of English at the University of Tennessee Martin where he teaches 20th-century literatures, film, and cultural studies. He is currently working on two book projects: one, a study of fear and narrative; the other, an examination of the absent father and its impact on masculinity in contemporary American culture.

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Christine Metzo
Contesting Masculinity
Editor’s Preface

... the excellent man, the admired man, is
not necessarily a ‘good’ man is some ab-
stract moral sense. Rather he is good at
being a man. (Gilmore 36)

... insofar as anyone continues to occupy
the category man it must be remade lest
it continue to be oppressive to all of us
who are not within that category, or who
are not centrally or solidly within that
category, whether we be women, men at
the margins, or something other than
women or men. (Hale 121)

On behalf of the editorial collective, I wel-
come you to manholes. As a journal dedicated to
presenting multi- and interdisciplinary engage-
ments with issues of social theory and cultural
concern, disclosure seeks, with this ninth vol-
ume, to tackle masculinity. I am excited to share
with you this look at masculinities in all their
complexity, diversity, and contradiction.

“Manholes” evokes numerous reactions, not
least among them a certain puzzlement. In select-
ing a title, as always, we wanted to stimulate and
provoke critical inquiry while capturing a
decentered reading of our topic, masculinity. The feigned “wholeness” of hegemonic modes of masculinity has a vast underbelly fragmented by its own contradictions. Masculinity, maleness, the male body are contested spaces; our attempts to give an account are incomplete and partial at best. The moments with which we concern ourselves in the pages which follow provide just a few points of entry into such an exploration. The work before us asks how the male body is a site of contested narrative, even in our naming it “male.” It asks how technologies recuperate phallic masculinities and compulsory heterosexuality. It asks how feminists and profeminists can reconfigure and transform our cultural expectations of boys and men.

We open with Andrew Schopp’s discussion of the heteronormative cultural investment in the mythology of the Absent Father. Perhaps counterintuitively, Schopp explores this mythical figure, and gay men’s relationship to it, for its potential to resist a hegemonic ideal of masculinity. He argues that in Daddy/Son roleplaying fantasy, a growing genre of gay male erotica, this mythical figure of heteronormative masculinity offers up a moment of self-critique, even while reinforcing its hegemonic power. The Absent Father is a conflicted and contradictory figure, which can help us understand the wounds inflicted by dominant ideals of masculinity.

Providing a different context for discussion of parents and sons, in *disClosure*’s first interview, bell hooks discusses feminism, popular culture, and her new visions of love and masculinity. She describes situations from her own experience which demonstrate the need for feminists to be not just active, but proactive in raising boys to cultivate identities outside the patriarchal masculine order which is so prevalent at the heart of much of our popular culture. Male violence sustains patriarchy, she claims. One must recognize this, and recognize it within these domains of pop culture, if patriarchal hierarchies are going to be dismantled and new masculinities are going to emerge.

One of the modes of transmission for patriarchal ideals of masculinity is medical literature discussing impotence treatment technology and how it can restore men’s sexual potency. Chris Weinke discusses the discourse of this medical literature and the implications of such treatment for men’s “naturally-occurring” sexual function. He notes the difficulty of a seeming contradiction in men’s need for assistance in the production of their phallic power. Weinke then advocates feminist theorists’ suggestion that we keep visible these contradictions in order to decenter the role of phallocentric sexuality in men’s and women’s lives.

We consume these discourses of phallic power and authority in so many ways. The second *disClosure* interview engages Peter Jackson and
Editor's preface

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**Works Cited**
