

Introduction

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Self-Organizing Men draws its title from the work of Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, who, in 1973, used the term *autopoiesis* to describe biological systems. Literally meaning auto self-creation, an affinity for the term grew in me. I felt that the term, self-organizing, described my evolution as a transsexual white man. My “self” – that collection of stories I tell about myself in my mind – shifts and changes with input from all my interactions within my chosen worlds.

With new information, my stories about myself have and do change over time. I am always self-organizing and reorganizing. Changing genders is altering both the arc and meaning of my life and providing me with contradictory experiences. I am a man without a penis; a man who used to be a lesbian, girl, female.

These histories and facts did not resolve into neat theories. I transitioned to settle my life, not make it more difficult. A part of me hoped for a place and time where I would stop being sucked further into the vulnerability that exists at the heart of conscious masculinity and conscious living. I wanted to continue to objectify myself as a man the way I had objectified men before hormones.

After starting hormones, I struggled with all the incoming information from my body, family, friends, the world. My opinion suddenly mattered. Women, those humans who most arouse me, flirted more but drew me in less. What was worse is that they had become very, very, very wary of me.

Of course, they would be afraid of me, I told myself at the time: a straight, white dude – everything that was wrong with the world. Despite my work around transsexual activism, sex with women proved to be my Everest. Having sex as a “transsexual man” or “a man who used to be a woman” did not work for me. I wanted to have sex as a man with a woman.

But The Feminist Questions ravaged my psyche: how could I have sex as The Objectifier? Can a woman truly make an consenting decision to sex with a man within patriarchy? If I were straight, how could I be queer? Is all sex between men and women rape?

In early 2002, I began dating the woman who would become my wife. Ms. H. is a very passionate, intelligent woman who, quite simply and by her own

admission, “likes fucking guys.” Her openness to me as a man – unqualified and unapologetic – astonished me. With her, I felt like the teen-aged boy I had never been, the one who thinks he has discovered sex for the very first time. I fell very hard and fast.

One night we were out at a very crowded club queued up at the bar. I people-watched to pass some time and soon saw a very football-player sized white man about three heads over. If there ever was a man who was The Man, he was it. He had his face turned away from me with his arm around a white woman, a Barbie. I'm sure I thought something mean-spirited in my head: breeder, airhead, dickhead, fill in the blank.

But then he turned back to face the woman and so turned his face to me as well. I still remember the line of his jaw, his softened mouth, relaxed, open face, someone shouting “I’ll have two Buds,” – Mr. Football Man looked as lovestruck as I felt. Passion and tenderness dripped off his face like melting ice cream. For reasons I still cannot explain, my sense of self radically reorganized in that moment. I became the subject of my life. The passionate hard-on I felt for Ms. H. as a man was mirrored in Mr. Football Man’s face. I was him. He was me.

After six years on hormones, I had finally stepped into the center of my masculinity. Sexual love was my rite of manhood.

Since then, I have scoured bookstores looking for books where I might find myself – books that discussed masculine vulnerability, penises, white privilege, living with all of our internal oppositions, childhood, and how to hold all of our paradoxes deep within our hearts.

I didn't find that book, so I decided to create one.

The authors in *Self-Organizing Men* have exceeded my expectations. An anthology is like a jazz-ensemble, and I am thrilled at the concert you have in your hands.

Listen to each author as they describe what conscious masculinity means for them. They may riff off each other or may explore directions that seem out-of-step with the tempo of this book. That is fine. Men – broadly defined to include anyone willing to assume use of the term as meaningful to them – are a varied, contrary lot. I say this mostly for me, since I was the one who tried to goosestep to a kind of bizarre groupthink around notions of purity, and believed I had failed the feminist movement because I had become a man.

I created this book for me, so that I might continue to see myself, or at least try, in the eyes of all men, to continue to say yes to masculinity in all its forms. The authors have each given me a gift, not only through their words, but also for taking a chance on me, a first-time anthologist and publisher.

Self-Organizing Men represents the first book published by Homofactus Press, a collaborative, community-driven publishing company making history one book at a time. I started it because I believe we deserve more than three books a year about our experiences. Others have believed in the merits of this mission as well.

In addition to the authors, I want to thank Jon Allen and Martin Kay and Sheila and Bob King, for their spiritual and financial support. That they are also my parents makes their gifts more serendipitous. I also want to thank Anna Camilleri, for her early and staunch support of my work; Eli Clare, for his vast mind and friendship; Sherrill Morris, for being my very own personal sun; and to Ms. H., for her abiding love, support, and strength of spirit.

Self-Organizing Men has been raised up in an online blogging (web logging) community of evangelists, who have taken time out of their busy lives to review earlier drafts of this book. To Isabella Mori, Kerrick Adrian, Nels P. Highberg, Catherine Chin, Johanna Keller-Fahy, Noah Van Dyke, and Jamie Ward, I offer my gratitude and thanks.

English, like masculinity, is varied and contrary. Rather than attempt to quell the living entity that is the English language, I have chosen to keep spelling and slang variations in the texts that follow. With authors from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, and

the United States, you may get some sense of how varied English really is.

After reading this book, should you have something you want to share with us, a conversation you need to have, or just general feedback, we look forward to conversing with you at www.homofactuspress.com.