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In a literature so preoccupied with masculinity as the *Íslendingasögur*, it is surprising that relatively little attention has been awarded to the study of men and masculinities in this corpus. This is partly due to the three decades long shadow cast by Carol Clover's one gender model, which is the topic of frequent lively velitations in conferences, but with very few publications resulting from this. Gareth Lloyd Evans's book does not shy away from Clover's model. In fact, it spends many pages breaking apart the fallacies on which this model is based—most prominently its reliance of Thomas Laqueur's one-sex model—and offers a new, more flexible model instead; that of hegemonic masculinity. Under this model, in each society several kinds of masculinities are in simultaneous operation, with a dominant one subjugating the others. Hegemonic masculinity allows for more complex and intersectional interpretations compared with Clover's 'rainbow coalition', which flattens out the subtleties and differences between, for example, an underdeveloped young man and a Viking disabled in battle.

Evans's book is divided into four main chapters. The first—and most dense—chapter, "Modelling Saga Masculinities," offers Evans's take on how to approach gender and the study of masculinity in the Old Norse world. This chapter functions as the backbone to the rest of the book and alongside the

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book's introduction offers an updated discussion of matters of gender and masculinity. Evans frames the study of masculinity "as a feminist enterprise in its own right" (9). He convincingly argues that if we neglect to study men and masculinities, we set these as a societal standard from which women and femininities deviate. By studying masculinities, Evans promotes viewing these subjects as equally constructed and rejects an essentialist reading that would see these as the natural state of things.

The second chapter, "Homosocial Masculinities," presents an analysis of relationships between men as different manifestations of homosociality. Evans wishes to somewhat revise Sedgwick's model of homosociality's reliance on a woman as a triangulator for the men's desire, offering a dyadic alternative where one of the two men are subjugated and feminized; where this dynamic fails, homosocial relations become unstable and break down. Here Evans paints a harsh but familiar picture of male relationships that are mediated by the constant threat of *níð* (defamatory insults), and women whose function is as a substitute for skalds' homosocial desires.

In the third chapter, "Intersectional Masculinities," the biggest benefit of Evans's approach compared with the one-gender model is displayed. It reveals how different situations influence one's own perception and other's perception of one's masculinity. Evans goes through issues of youth and old age, race, disability, sexuality, religion and class and how they hinder one's status as masculine. Discussing *Egils saga* and Egill at his old age, Evans points out that "although he is no longer able to exhibit hegemonic masculinity, he is nevertheless invested in masculinity and his own masculine identity" (82). This key sentence is relevant to all the different intersections with masculinity discussed in the chapter; the fact that a youth, for example, is still too young to be considered a man does not mean that he does not take part in the masculinity game or in creating homosocial bonds. This chapter will most likely be used as a frame of reference in many studies to come as it creates a firm standing on which different kinds of masculinity can be discussed.

The fourth and final chapter, "The Limits of Socially Accepted Masculinity," consists of the book's only close reading of a saga, *Grettis saga*.

Evans describes Grettir and his anti-homosocial (sometimes confusingly stylized as “homo(anti)social” (e.g. page 130)) behaviour and reads the saga through this prism. Grettir’s hypermasculinity is used to show that in some cases, too much masculinity could be equally disruptive to the individual and society; the much-discussed lack of luck that characterizes Grettir is explained as his inability to create homosocial bonds, which is caused not by his lack of masculinity but rather by his excess of it.

As in all cases where a large corpus is dealt with, the texts are often read outside of their context, and some of the subtleties are therefore lost. For example, on the book’s very first page one finds the sentence “Burning flames engulf the house as repayment for the misjudged peace offering of a silken cloak” (1) in the context of problematic masculinity in *Brennu-Njáls saga*. This reading both does not take into account Ármann Jakobsson’s argument that there was nothing inherently feminine about the cloak, as well as recent debates questioning the innocence of the silk cloak gesture. In another case, Evans uses an example from *Ljósvetninga saga*’s C-redaction chapter 31 where Hárekr attempts to separate Skegg-Broddi’s hands, which are clinched to his head. When Hárekr fails this, Skegg-Broddi states: “[e]igi þykki mér þú maðr sterkr, en drengr góðr ertu’ (it does not seem to me that you are a strong man, but you are a good man)” (17). About this Evans states that “Hárekr is clearly not effeminized for his lacklustre physical abilities” (17). While this is possibly true, it misses the context in which this story is told; at the beginning of the very same chapter, Hárekr grapples Höskuldr of the *Ljósvetningar* in order to stop him from attacking the members of the opposing *Möðruvellingar*. The fact that Hárekr then cannot separate Skegg-Broddi’s hands means that if he is weak, Höskuldr is weaker. Skegg-Broddi’s quip is therefore against Höskuldr rather, who was either too weak to fight back, or did not actually want to engage in battle and let himself be stopped. Both physical weakness and cowardice could be seen as highlighting Höskuldr’s supposed ‘effeminacy.’ Nevertheless, Evans is correct in that Hárekr is not targeted by these words.

In other cases, it seems that the focus on masculinity at times overshadows other analyses of certain events and scenes. In some cases, like

with the reading of *Grettis saga*, this produces attractive interpretations that add much to our understanding of the sagas' workings. In a few cases, the readings are not convincing, such as with Evans' analysis of Egill's plan to rain silver over the attendants of the *alþing*: "Egill's intention betrays a desire to expose the rotten core of the homosociality upon which the social system is built: that the Alþing—the height of homosociality in action—might be so easily undercut suggests the fragility of its foundations" (53). Evans does not provide evidence to support this reading, and it seems that the concept of 'homosociality' does not contribute much to the understanding of this specific scene.

Evans's book is a significant and important step in the research of masculinities in the sagas and Old Norse gender and society in general. It is certainly a product of its own time; throughout the book the author rejects far-right and nationalistic readings of the text, which will sometimes weaponize Old Norse literature in support of their own causes. The personal background that Evans provides is also important; often scholars neglect to acknowledge—to themselves as well as others—the biases that they might be carrying when they approach the material (this would be a good opportunity to note that while Evans thanks me in the book's acknowledgements due to our very positive scholarly interactions, I have tried to treat this review as objectively as possible). One hopes that more scholars will practice this, especially when touching upon controversial topics such as sex, gender, disability, race and class. To lend an expression from Park,² Evans's book finally provides an antidote to Clover's one-gender model by offering a much more helpful framework from which to analyse Old Norse masculinities. As he himself points out, much work is left to be done by expanding the scope of the research to other Old Norse prose and poetic corpuses. It would be interesting to see how his framework could be used to understand attitudes towards masculine females, who are briefly discussed in his book, or non-binary people in the sagas.

² Park, Katherine. 1995. Review of *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* by Joan Cadden. *Journal of the History of Biology*, 28 (3): 551–3.