

alike. Edited by a scholar who treats questions of gender with sensitivity and insight and appearing at a moment when renewed interest and controversy has begun to surround the figure of Louise Labé, the volume will enable her texts to reach a wider audience, as she extends her invitation across the centuries: “Oh, Women who read these words, / Come sigh with me, for the sorrows you have heard!” (155).

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**Susanne Hafner.**  
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pp. 209.

**M**askulinität in der höfischen Erzählliteratur [Masculinity in Courtly Narrative] is a study of the complex web of relationships that shape constructions of masculinity in medieval culture. Hafner studies four medieval German texts diachronically and synchronically. Instead of focusing on the “canonical” protagonists, such as Tristan, Siegfried, Parzival, and Erec, Hafner selected the title characters of Heinrich von Veldeke’s *Eneasroman*, Hartmann von Aue’s *Gregorius* and *Iwein*, the Gahmuret story in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* and *Titirel*, and marginally

in the introduction, Gottfried von Straßburg’s *Tristan*. Hafner chose her texts because of their “fehlgeleitete libido: die Liebe zum falschen Objekt [misdirected libido: the love for the wrong object]” (21, original emphasis). In her view, the protagonists’ choice of a love object defines their sexuality; it is whom he loves that makes a man a man (21). Hafner traces different constructions of masculinity through the lens of gender: Eneas supposedly desires men and is accused of sodomy; Gregorius desires close relatives and, like his parents, practices incest; Iwein desires the widow of the man he just murdered and goes insane when she rejects him as her husband; Gahmuret does not desire Herzloyde, a woman who is perfect for him while she displays fetishistic behavior in their marriage. In each case, Hafner argues, the woman is the perfect choice for the protagonist based on the criteria of courtly society for ideal marriage partners. Much scholarship ends with determining this political and social compatibility of the couple. Not so Hafner, who undercuts the perfect compatibility topos with her detailed analyses of why these characters’ libido is displaced onto the wrong object. Her interdisciplinary and comparative approach allows her to demonstrate powerfully how constructions of masculinity changed throughout a story’s transmission and that authors did not simply translate an original but adapted it to reflect their own cultural contexts.

Hafner’s analysis of the character of Aeneas places particular emphasis on

the questions: why sodomy? And, why was the accusation made? While Virgil reduces the protagonist to *semivir* and thus insults his fighting strength and ability, this accusation is void of sexual implications. Only during the Middle Ages does the sexual insult become part of the accusation. Hafner carefully compares the relevant textual passages in the many versions from Virgil to Veldecke and shows how the accusation of sodomy comes into play. Furthermore, she argues convincingly that the term “sodomy” did not have a fixed, unchanging meaning, but ranged in meaning from a homosexual relationship to a man’s rejection of the duty to secure his lineage through procreation. It is Hafner’s comparative approach that highlights the different constructions of Aeneas’ masculinity through the significant reworking of the accusation of his unsuitability to be Lavine’s husband.

With Gregorius, Hafner addresses the question of incest. Gregorius himself is the product of his parents’ incestuous relationship. The brother-sister incest primarily focuses on the weakness of the brother, Gregorius, who succumbs to his sister’s beauty, and both siblings consciously practice incest. In the second incest cycle, the mother/aunt-son incest, Gregorius unknowingly marries his mother. This story is formulated as a traditional bridal quest with the specific intent of securing the lineage. Both mother/aunt/wife and son fulfill their roles perfectly, as they are unaware of their incestuous relationship. While earlier versions emphasize the battle between

good and evil, God and the devil, Hartmann introduces the element of *minne* [courtly love] as a positive element into the legend and brings it into the realm of courtly society and the human. Gregorius can explain his inner battle as a natural human condition for a courtier who struggles with the courtly and the clerical models of masculinity. While there are many parallels in the two incest stories, Hafner brings out the differences in the intentions of the brother and the son as they pursue their incestuous relationships with their sister and mother/aunt/wife that bear on the constructions of their masculinity.

I found the chapter on *Iwein* the weakest overall in terms of a gender analysis of the text as it did not add significant new insights to understanding this text. Previous scholarship has shown that Iwein enters into marriage with Laudine motivated by love, not politics, as she does. Both fail to be for the other what s/he desires: Laudine fails to fulfill the role of wife as well as queen, whereas Iwein fails to be king as well as husband. Hafner draws an interesting parallel between the love that shoots into Iwein’s heart when he sees Laudine mourning and the madness that shoots into his brain when Laudine denies him this love when he fails to return to her in time, especially as the results of these emotional-physical outbursts are so radically different. However, the shifting constructions of Iwein’s masculinity are far more complex than Hafner makes them out to be, especially during his madness, where

the connection between magic and Iwein's masculinity is left entirely unexplored. At several key moments in Iwein's life, when he finds himself in life-threatening situations, women use magic to protect Iwein's life, namely the rings given to him by Lunete and Laudine and the ointment that heals Iwein's madness. The magic restores Iwein's manliness and allows him to develop his chivalric masculinity. Iwein can only be successful with the assistance of these ladies and their magic. Instead Hafner focuses on showing Hartmann's knowledge of contemporary medical texts, which is very insightful but does not add to an understanding of constructions of masculinity in *Iwein*.

The Gahmuret story, the focus of the final chapter, has not received enough scholarly attention. I was quite fascinated by Hafner's reading of Herzelojde as the aggressive maiden-queen who claims her man and who can and does force him into marriage with her when he clearly does not want to be married. Herzelojde asserts her will over others because she is a ruling queen. The character I remembered as the beautiful queen in need of a husband suddenly becomes a much more complex and richer character, a woman who knows her position and uses it effectively to rule in her own right. Gahmuret, whom I had thought of as the "typical courtly male" searching for a beautiful wife who will also establish him politically and socially, almost becomes a victim of Herzelojde's advances. Even though on the outside, they are perfectly matched to each other, Hafner's close readings of the text show that the two struggle for power over each

other. Herzelojde's unusual token of her love, her chemise, symbolizes her wish to control Gahmuret. She will not allow him to forget that she is his wife who sexually desires him. He seeks his freedom, displayed by wearing the chemise over his armor where his enemies can slash it to pieces, seeking repeatedly to regain his independence, albeit only always temporarily. He always returns to her after battle, until he is replaced by his own son, and Gahmuret dies in a far off-land.

Overall, Hafner's book is exceptionally well researched and provides new insights into all of these texts through her reading of the misplaced love of the protagonist onto the wrong love-object. In her conclusion, Hafner reminds the reader of the common thread running throughout her study, namely that it is whom a man loves that makes him a man. What makes that love misplaced provides insights into complex constructions of masculinities determined through and by these relationships. Hafner should have brought out the connections between the chapters more strongly as they get lost in the very fascinating interpretations of each text. I do hope that this book will be translated into English soon, so that it can reach a wider audience. It fills a gap in the scholarship of medieval German literature and culture in general and specifically those of gender studies of masculinities.

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