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## OPONENT's REVIEW

of

Kristýna Solomon: Tristan-Romane: Zur spätmittelalterlichen Rezeption von Gottfrieds Tristan in den böhmischen Ländern

First I would like to thank the committee for the habilitation proceedings for its confidence in my scientific expertise in asking me to write an opponent review of Mrs. Kristýna Solomon's habilitation thesis. I willingly follow Your kind request and structure my review according to the criteria, which You gave.

### I. Content

#### 1. How relevant is the topic within the given academic field?

Mrs. Solomon's investigation concerns the tradition of European Tristan-romance in the later 13<sup>th</sup> and in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, precisely those texts which follow or complete the unfinished classical romance written by Gottfried von Straßburg (about 1205/10), and which influenced the reception of the Tristan-narrative in the Bohemian countries or where written in this region. These texts are in particular the first middle high German (MHG) continuation of Gottfried's version by Ulrich von Türrheim (ca. 1250), which influenced the Bohemian reception, the second, much more elaborated version by Heinrich von Freiberg, an author who also wrote in MHG and worked in the context of the Bohemian court or courtly elite at about 1280, finally the anonymous old Czech version of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, which in a unique way within European tradition combines the classical high courtly tradition represented by Gottfried and his French predecessor Thomas with the so called "version commune", represented in the MHG Tristan-tradition by the more archaic romance written by Eilhart von Oberg at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup>

century. It is in general astonishing, that Eilhart's version was never surpassed by the Gottfried-version, neither in the history of German nor in the history of Czech reception of the Tristan-subject. One simple reason therefore is surely the fragmentary status of Gottfried's romance and the fact that his MHG continuators orientated themselves to Eilhart and not to Gottfried's source, the French courtly version of Thomas d'Angleterre. In short: The history of the Tristan-tradition is of the highest relevance in the field of comparative medieval literary studies as what concerns the ways of transmission, the methods of translation and adaption, the material basis of these processes, which we can locate in the manuscripts and the specific manuscript culture, furthermore as what concerns poetic standards of courtly romance as a whole and the cultural imaginations and ideology which is formed and communicated by the texts. Mrs. Solomon's study thereby stands in a central and most prominent section of our academic field. The importance of her investigation results particularly from the research desiderata, which it resolves in various aspects, as I will show within the following categories. The treated texts are not simply conceived as secondary and inferior, as it often has been done in former German literary studies, but they are clearly analysed in their specific poetological value. Furthermore Mrs. Solomon's approach to consider the texts in their regional tradition and in their regional connections is highly innovative and contributes to a correct historic placement of the texts in their original literary field. Thirdly, according to her linguistic competence in MHG and old Czech language, Mrs. Solomon opens for a broader international scientific public, especially for scholars in the field of German studies and comparatists, a very clear access to the Czech Tristan-version, which is very widely neglected by studies in the medieval European Tristan-Tradition.

## 2. How precisely, clearly and understandably is the topic formulated?

Mrs. Solomon formulates her topic very clearly and structures her study very logically. This concerns the theoretical and methodological framing (cap. 1, see below) as well as the following chapters with their analyses of the texts. Solomon starts convincingly with the paratexts (prologues) of Gottfried's basic text and his successors Ulrich and Heinrich. In the subsequent chapters, she deals with exemplary episodes, initially with the German continuations, which are not simply underestimated as epigonic but taken serious in their poetic strategies and in their value concerning medieval processes and phenomena of literary reception. In particular in Heinrich von Freiberg Solomon can fix innovative potentials of the "secondary" text through her theoretical access. She speaks here (with reference to Genette) of phenomena of architextuality that result from hybrid combinations of different models developed by the tradition of medieval romance (esp. Tristan- and Arthurian romance). Furthermore Solomon's considerations do not remain purely in the area of literature, but also ask about possible sociocultural reference and relevance of the texts. As already mentioned, Solomon's remarks on the old Czech Tristan, which German-spoken research has largely ignored, are of particular high value. As Solomon shows, the text is already in its source reference (it alternates between the Gottfried- and the Eilhart-tradition) a highly interesting *solitaire* within the European Tristan-tradition as a whole. Solomon

knows how to separate the intertextual layers of the text and asks in an impressively careful and precise way about specific methods of appropriation that the text carries out structurally and conceptually. The key terms that she chooses – “Verknappung und Aussparung” (shortening and recess), “Dehnung” (stretching), and “Präzisierung” (making ‘things’ precise) are proving to be very fruitful.

### 3. Contribution to the field?

As already said above, Solomon’s study is highly innovative in dealing with the later Tristan romances under the aspect of region and interlingual references between German and Czech literary tradition. In this approach and in the detailed analysis of the old Czech version, the study is as far as I can see, unique and of great importance for German speaking scholarship as well as for Medieval comparative literary studies. I also want to stress, that the first printed version of the study was published in a series (“Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik”), that is very widely spread and widely-used, at least in German speaking scholarship.

## II. Methodology and Formal Standards

### 1. How appropriate and relevant is the chosen methodological approach?

The study is theoretically based on paradigms of intertextuality and narratology, which represent approved, actual and widely used theoretical and methodological framings in recent literary studies. Solomon reflects on her theoretical framework up to date and knows how to span a good, critical theoretical-historical arc from Bakhtin to Kristeva, Riffaterre to Genette. In this context, the independent considerations on the materialization of intertextuality in the manuscripts are very informative and innovative, and correspond to the ‘material turn’ in medieval philology, i. e. a new awareness of the material manuscript-basis of medieval literary tradition. The modern literary theoretical paradigm is historicised precisely and plausibly.

### 2. What is the level of the analysis?

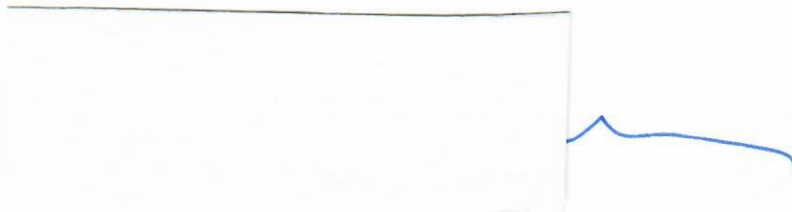
Solomon’s analyses are located on a very high level. They are always aware of the state of research and discuss it clearly and critically. They apply a precise theoretical framework to the texts carefully and in considering their specific historical dimensions. There are to be found many innovative and surprising observations in detail, an aspect of the study which concerns also the heavily investigated prologue of Gottfried, where Solomon reflects the specific awareness of the author concerning his source, the romance of Thomas (cap. 2.3.1). Very impressive and surprising for myself was the clear and extensive analysis of the Czech romance, including the precise categories which Solomon applies (see above).

3. Are formal criteria of sufficiently high standard?

The study achieves all formal standard requested in our field of research. The bibliography and the discussion of preliminary research is extensive. Solomon's scientific language is clear and precise, the reader can follow the ways of presentation in its non-pretentious manner very well and willingly.

Because of its theoretical, methodological and philological qualities, and above all because of the high potential that it opens up to non-Czech-speaking scholars for the old Czech Tristan romance, I recommend the study by Kristýna Solomon to the committee with the greatest emphasis and finally want to stress with firm conviction that

**the habilitation thesis fully meets the standard requirements  
placed on habilitation thesis in the field.**



Univ. Prof. Dr. Manfred Kern