

Reviews

Gottfried von Strassburg. *Tristan*. Walter Haug and Manfred Günther Scholz, eds. and trans. Bibliothek des Mittelalters, Vol. 11. Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2011. 2 vols, 1089 + 939 pp. € 168.00. ISBN 978-3-618-66100-9.

Gottfried von Straßburg's *Tristan* is one of the best-known literary works from medieval Germany; among the most popular texts of its own time, it has – like Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and the *Nibelungenlied*, but unlike most other medieval German works – also enjoyed a significant modern reception in various media, most prominently in the operas of Richard Wagner. A new edition of *Tristan* is therefore something of an event in the world of Altgermanistik.

Despite the eleven complete and seventeen fragmentary witnesses, modern scholars are in agreement that the manuscript transmission of *Tristan* presents a text that is relatively “fixed.” This makes it all the more disconcerting to note that despite all the scholarly energy expended on this text, like *Parzival*, *Tristan* too has yet to be presented in a modern critical edition. The two volumes under review provide a new edition of *Tristan*; this is coupled with an edition of the fragment of Gottfried's source, Thomas's *Tristran et Ysolt*, line-by-line (but prose) translations of both, extensive commentaries and bibliography, subject and name indices, and brief introductions to both works.

Tristan has a complicated editorial history. The oldest text still considered usable is that of Reinhold Bechstein, first published in 1869/70 and revised and reissued by Peter Ganz in 1978; this is no longer in print. Bechstein/Ganz has no translation but does provide extensive linguistic notes and a glossary and is thus still a very useful edition for didactic purposes. Bechstein's text had, however, already been superseded by that of Friedrich Ranke, first published in 1930 and still in print along with a translation and commentary by Rüdiger Krohn (from 1980; last updated in 2002); Ranke's *Tristan* has generally been the edition cited by the scholarship of the past several decades. Ranke published it simply as a text, however, with no apparatus, nor even proper discussion of the editorial principles by which he had arrived at his text. His edition was rapidly accepted, in large part because Ranke had earlier published an extensive critique (still fundamental for work on *Tristan*'s manuscript tradition), along with collations of the major manuscript witnesses, of a third edition, that of Karl Marold (1906). Because of the relative uniformity of the tradition, Ranke's own edition resulted in a text not very different from Marold's, a fact reflected in the reissuing of Marold's edition in 1969, in which the apparatus was thoroughly revamped by Werner Schröder on the basis of Ranke's critique and collations. This has since been further revised and reprinted in two volumes in 2004, along with a

translation by Peter Knecht, an updated afterword by Schröder, and a new introduction by Tomas Tomasek. The competition for Haug and Scholz's edition is, therefore, Ranke/Krohn (Reclam paperback; lacking an apparatus but with a commentary), and Marold/Schröder (de Gruyter paperback; provided with an apparatus, albeit a flawed one, and no commentary).

Haug/Scholz is based on a thorough reassessment of the manuscript evidence; the text, however, is by the editors' admission essentially identical to that of Ranke, with only twenty-nine divergences from his text (many of which were already present in Marold/Schröder). None of these will have particularly significant consequences for the way we read *Tristan*; the only differences of note, in my view, occur at line 1: *Gedenket* for *Gedæhte*; line 2: *den* for *dem*; line 458: *niuwe* for *niuwān*; line 1,652: *gewerdet* for *gewerldet*; line 6,444: *breche* for *en-breche*; and the dispatching of the irritating and incomprehensible *danne Setmunt* of line 12,216, to be replaced by *dan ie seite munt*. In addition, the word *wilde-nære* has consistently been banished in favour of *wilderære*. The new edition also provides accent markings (lacking in Ranke but provided by Krohn and Schröder) and punctuation that occasionally diverges from that of Ranke; more significantly, Haug and Scholz sometimes expand contractions and more frequently indicate their presence by an apostrophe, procedures also carried out, though somewhat differently, by Krohn and Marold/Schröder.

The result of the most recent consideration of all currently known manuscript witnesses, Haug/Scholz will now be the standard text; on the whole, however, one could just as well work with Ranke: there are no revelations to be gained from the *text* of this "new" edition. Nor do the editors provide a full elaboration of their editorial principles, which differ from Ranke's. Haug and Scholz depend on the stemma of René Wetzel (1992), which diverges somewhat from that of Ranke; indeed, given that this edition lacks a properly argued justification of the practices that produced it and a full exposition of the editors' understanding of the relationships between the manuscripts, for such matters, in order fully to comprehend the logic behind Haug and Scholz's decisions, one must turn to Wetzel's work and to other recent studies of the manuscript tradition on which the current editors have drawn. The format of the series in which this text is published does not allow for a critical apparatus, so that we are once more dependent on Marold/Schröder in this respect. (Some manuscript variants are given in the commentary but only where the editors feel discussion is required, and this does not in any case allow for a quick overview.)

Caveats notwithstanding, the present two volumes will doubtless deservedly become the standard edition to work with, not least because of the many other things offered beyond just the text. No other edition of *Tristan* in print also presents the text and a translation of Thomas's fragment (which fortuitously begins just about where Gottfried's incomplete text stops). The glory of this edition, however, is the commentary: comprehensive (521 pages on Gottfried's 19,548 lines; about 70 pages on Thomas's approximately 3,200 lines) and synthesizing decades of scholarship with clarity and insight (and twice as long as Krohn's

commentary), this will – along with the approximately hundred-page bibliography – be an indispensable research tool for years to come. It is a pity that the name indices list only those names and places discussed in the commentary (and normally only those referred to there on multiple occasions); readers will still find the fuller indices in Marold/Schröder (and to a lesser extent Krohn) very useful. The translation aims for accuracy rather than any particular literary qualities, and it generally succeeds in this, even though Gottfried's text is often so difficult as to be virtually untranslatable. Knecht's translation is printed in running prose in a separate volume rather than as a parallel text (though line numbers are provided in parentheses at intervals of ten lines); to my mind, it is somewhat more readable as an independent text than the one under review or that of Krohn, but it is also often freer than both of these (though this is by no means intended as a criticism of Knecht's fine work). Like Haug and Scholz, Krohn intends his translation to be an aid to the Middle High German text rather than something to be read independently; he often sticks more closely to the line sequence of the original than Haug/Scholz, who are occasionally slightly freer than Krohn. On the whole, however, I find little difference in quality between the two translations.

At its present price, while this edition will doubtless soon be used by all scholars who can persuade their libraries to buy a copy, it will certainly not supersede Krohn's Reclam in teaching; we must hope fervently that the publishers will choose to reprint these volumes in their affordable paperback series, as indeed they have done for many (though unfortunately not all) of the volumes of the Bibliothek des Mittelalters.

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Walter Hinderer. *Vom Gesetz des Widerspruchs. Über Heinrich von Kleist.*

Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011. 198 pp. € 29.80 (Paperback).
ISBN 978-3-8260-4580-6.

Certainly one of the highlights of this past year filled with Kleist events was listening to Walter Hinderer's lecture “Ökonomie des Opfers. Literatur im Zeichen des Selbstmords” in Berlin in November 2011. Although in his seventies, Hinderer shows no signs of slowing down. His lecture, based on his chapter on *Penthesilea*, was compelling and thought-provoking.

In this interesting book, Hinderer focuses on the contradictions inherent not only in Kleist's texts but also within the man himself. He gives the reader biographical details that he has gleaned not only from Kleist's own letters but also from the letters of many of Kleist's contemporaries. He situates Kleist's ideas and texts in the context of the thinkers, philosophers and authors of his time. In doing so, Hinderer demonstrates how Kleist differentiated himself from both the classical and Romantic periods. He notes, “Nicht nur in der Radikalität solcher