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IRONY OF PLOT AND CHARACTERIZATION IN GOTTFRIED'S "TRISTAN"

Rice University

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IRONY OF PLOT AND CHARACTERIZATION
IN
GOTTFRIED'S TRISTAN

by
Rolph Carl Hornung

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
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ABSTRACT

IRONY OF PLOT AND CHARACTERIZATION
IN
GOTTFRIED'S TRISTAN

by
Rolph Carl Hornung

This study joins the scholarship on Gottfried's Tristan on the side that evaluates the lure of Tristan and Isolde positively. A second point of departure is that the scholarship has hitherto overlooked the substantial irony present in the plot development, as well as in the characterization of numerous secondary figures in Gottfried's romance.

Developments in the plot which would seem to doom the love affair of Tristan and Isolde quite ironically create situations in which the love affair can flourish. The scheming Cornish count, by sending Tristan to Ireland in an attempt to murder him, actually gives Tristan the opportunity to practice his highly individual talents in Ireland, resulting finally in his meeting Isolde. Conversely, the apparently benevolent and paternal intentions of Rual, Tristan's foster father, involves Tristan in a morally dubious, and almost fatal, war of revenge, and were also aimed at forcing Tristan into a kingly role to which he is not by his nature suited.

Characters in this romance which have in the scholarship been seen as figures of authority or even respectability
are revealed in the light of irony, to be the least authoritative and respectable characters. Two prime examples are King Mark and Queen Isolde, both monarchs of worldly stature, yet both also utterly powerless to carry out their dearest worldly intentions. An important contrast is established between characters of this sort and Brangaene, who stands in an uncannily sympathetic relationship to Tristan and Isolde that is not determined by any social role. She is the lovers' servant and their only confidant, at the Irish court and in Mark's bed, and also their teacher, in the episodes of the lovers' ruses. Brangaene performs vital service for the lovers by helping to conceal their love and also by enhancing it through her verbal instruction and the positive example of her actions.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: Curvenal and Rural</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: The Love Affair and Who Controls It</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV: Brangaene</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES, Chapter I</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES, Chapter II</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES, Chapter III</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES, Chapter IV</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Let us begin this study of irony in Gottfried's Tristan und Isold by examining part of Gottfried's description of one of the secondary characters in the romance. Morold, the bounty and ransom collector for King Gurmun and Queen Isolde of Ireland, has once again arrived in King Mark's Cornwall to carry off part of its treasure. Gottfried says of Morold:

\[
daz er an muote, an grouze, an craft
ze vollekomen ritterschaft
das lob in allen richen truoc.
hie si des lobes von ime genuoc.
\]

(11. 6511-6514)\(^1\)

We might think, looking at these lines only, that Gottfried is telling us that Morold is a paragon of courtly knighthood, the equal of which would be difficult to find. In spirit, stature, and strength he is the complete knight. The final line of the passage might be translated to mean that this is enough said of Morold for the time being; or perhaps that here in Cornwall, Morold's praises are being sung sufficiently (or, as one might interpret due to the ambiguity of genuoc, too much).

However, if we consider the context in which this seemingly glowing description of Morold is embedded, we soon see that we cannot be content with a literal reading of Gottfried's words. Even if Gottfried did write that Morold was perfectly knightly, we know from many other pieces of infor-
mation in the text, likewise furnished by Gottfried, that Morold is anything but a fine knight. Morold's opponent, Tristan, proves to be a far finer knight, as we soon find out when these two fighters battle each other. Furthermore, the final line of the cited passage will turn out, in fact, to be a denunciation, no matter how we read it in context. There is an implicitly negative judgment by Gottfried when he refuses to describe something in detail. He does not waste his time writing about something that he considers to be unimportant or, for that matter, reprehensible. Two examples in the text are Gottfried's description of Tristan's investiture (see esp. 4616-4620), which turns into the famous literary excursus; and Gottfried's refusal to dwell upon the grieving in Ireland over Morold's death (7196-7200). When Gottfried says that there has been enough praise of Morold, he is being ironic, and he is actually denouncing the Cornish nobility. Of course they praise Morold - they are, as Gottfried informs us readers a few lines later, too cowardly to do anything else. Der guote künig Marke (again an ironic description) quakes so in the presence of Morold that Gottfried compares Mark's fortitude to that of the world's most timid woman. (11. 6521-6525).

These few lines written by Gottfried -- describing the apparently mighty warrior whose strength actually derives from the cowardice of his would-be opponents, and of the good king who has no strength to assert himself, making his subjects
into the hostages of a bully -- can help us to arrive at the working definition of irony that forms much of the basis of the following study. Gottfried's words must not be read literally if we are to have any hope of understanding what they are meant to say. In fact, we must adopt the habit of turning the literal meaning of Gottfried's words on its head if we hope to know at all what Gottfried in fact intended to say.

Gottfried's description of Morold is ironic; the apparent paragon of knightliness turns out to be a crude robber with no higher morality to support him, or his actions. Using this example as a touchstone, we can say first of all that an ironic statement is one that means the opposite of what it appears to mean on a literal level. But a working definition of irony, one that would allow us to confidently identify irony in Gottfried, and perhaps also in the works of other writers, must include several further qualifications.

An ironic statement cannot always be fully understood by taking it to mean its opposite. We would not want to say that Morold has no spirit, stature, or strength at all, since then we would be left with a self-contradictory or even meaningless statement. But we could find it helpful to read Gottfried's words as a denial that Morold possesses the qualities of spirit, stature, and strength in like kind with a Parzifal, an Erec, or an Iwein, after these prototypical knights have passed the trials that separate the ordinary man from the
one who is destined to represent, uphold, and perpetuate courtly ideals. We note here a point to be discussed more fully shortly: the reader can only recognize Gottfried's irony, can only realise that Gottfried's description of Morold with words like muote, grouze, craft, and vollkommen ritterschaft cannot possibly be meant to be read on the naive literal level, if the reader possesses the knowledge that these words, often associated with the nature of true knightliness, are obviously not literally appropriate in the context in which Gottfried has located them. That is to say, it is the informed, and not the naive, reader who uncovers irony.

To return to the process of finding a working definition of irony: a definition of irony that, as D.H. Green has perceptively noted, goes no farther than to assert that an ironic statement means the opposite of what it appears to mean could also equally well be the definition of a lie. The same definition could also embrace statements that are factually wrong. It would be counterproductive for us to define irony at the expense of calling him a real or a potential liar, or someone who simply does not know whereof he writes. After all, our definition of irony should help to clarify our perspective on Gottfried, rather than befuddle it. The definition of irony as a statement, the meaning of which is different from its apparent meaning, would also be inadequate to fulfill the requirement of a working definition of irony because we cannot,
by such a definition, separate irony from, for example, allegory or metaphor.⁶

Heinrich Lausberg has set forth the following definition of irony:

Die Ironie ist der Ausdruck einer Sache durch einen Gegenteil bezeichnendes Wort. Sie ist eine Waffe der Parteilichkeit: der Redner ist sich der Überzeugungskraft seiner eigenen Partei sowie der Sympathie des Publikums so sicher, dass er (in einer reduzierten sermocinatio) die lexikalische Wortskaala des Gegners verwendet, und deren Wahrheit durch den (sprachlichen oder situationsmassigen) Kontext evident werden lässt.⁷

Some of the ideas in Lausberg's definition can help us to progress toward a working definition of irony. Lausberg's definition exhibits the same weaknesses of other definitions that would make irony the expression of something by means of stating its opposite. However, Lausberg's definition does lead us to recognize that the ironist states the opposite of what he actually intends to communicate not because he wants to deceive, or because he is ignorant, but because he wants to communicate his point of view, which he considers to be the true or even the truer one. Irony is not deception as such, at least not for the ironist's intended audience, which is, building on Lausberg's definition, not partial and sympathetic toward the ironist, but also
familiar with his ideas and his manner of expressing them. This is an audience of the initiated. Since the ironist uses irony to facilitate his with this initiated audience, the ironist cannot be called a deceiver. The initiated audience is not deceived by irony. Rather, it merely remains ignorant, at best temporarily and at worst permanently, of what the ironist wanted to make more clear through using irony. Furthermore, ironists need not take upon themselves the additional task of educating or initiating their audience. Some ironists may wish to try, while others will be content to direct their ironically enhanced message to a select, already existing group.

The idea that irony can exist because of the different interpretations that will be made of the same statement, by the initiated versus the uninitiated audience, also helps to refine the distinction between irony and allegory and/or metaphor. There can be no irony without an initiated audience in contrast to the uninitiated one, and vice versa. Irony could not exist if this distinction between audiences did not likewise exist. Whereas allegory and metaphor serve to underline the similarities between literal and apparent meanings, irony serves to keep these meanings distinct, or even to show that they can never be merged.  

Finally, we can make use of the fact that, in order to create irony, the ironist must be aware of the difference between his initiated and uninitiated audiences, and of their diverging readings of the face value of his ironic statements.
It follows that irony must be an intentional activity. Irony would be a dead end if the intention of the author were not included in a working definition of irony. There would then be no way to show, as the following study intends to show, that irony can be used to inform other aspects of literary works that presumably do result from the author's conscious effort and skill, for example the choices made by the author in the areas of theme, characterization, or plot development. An assertion that a certain literary text contains irony will be strengthened, and will be much harder to explain away, if it can be shown that the claimed irony helps us to make sense of the "facts" of the text, such as theme, characterization, and plot.

It is, after all, at least somewhat controversial to assert that medieval authors were aware of the possibility of an ironic point of view, or that they made use of it in their works. Some scholars have been criticized for trying to explain too much about a medieval work with quick references to the irony in it. But such objections can be avoided by being careful to show that each claimed example of irony in fact illuminates other aspects of the literary work. We also do not need to be held up by the suggestion that irony in medieval literature is so intangible that it cannot even be defined. Such quips are adequately set aside if we recall Erich Hellers statement that "Every attempt to define irony unambiguously is itself ironical."
One kind of objection to the idea that irony exists in medieval literature deserves a more thorough refutation here, namely the objection that irony is a foreign concept to the Middle Ages, having gained credibility among writers and scholars alike only in the twentieth century. Northrop Frye suggests that irony as a literary concept became established through the writings of a particular school of twentieth century literary critics. Similarly, Michael S. Batts has contended that a medieval writer would have never thought to use irony since, according to Batts, irony aims to show the "relativity of truth," and since there was no relativity of truth in the middle ages, we will not find any meaningful irony in medieval literature.

Yet this objection by Batts is yet another definition of irony as a device meant to conceal rather than to reveal. In our definition of irony, it is a device that supplies information to the initiated audience, rather than withholding information from them. Second, even if Batts' assertion that there was no "relativity of truth" in the middle ages is true, we are not obligated to conclude that a medieval writer was obligated to express the "truth" only in the most straightforward, indeed clinically objective, manner possible. The logical extension of Batts' thinking could force us to deny the existence of all manner of literary artifice in medieval literature.

With reference to the argument that irony in literature is a modern phenomenon, Edmund Reiss says:
... although it is clear that our sense of irony is greater than that of any previous age, it does not thereby follow that the irony found in our contemporary literature is greater than that of any previous age. Irony is millenia older than the consciousness of irony. Irony, though not the term, fills Homer and the Old Testament: in various forms it permeates Greek tragedy and comedy; Ovid's Metamorphoses is a handbook of irony as well as of mythology, and probably more meaningfully so; and the earliest Old English poems are replete with irony.  

The objection that irony is anachronistic in the context of medieval literature can also be countered by showing that medieval authors were aware of a classical rhetorical tradition that included irony, or that it is improbable that medieval authors were unaware of such a tradition. In the classical tradition of irony one might think first of the Greek word *eiron*, the one who dissembles, used to describe Socrates, who analyzed and refuted the arguments of his opponents on the highest intellectual level, while making himself appear to be an ignorant and foolish man.  

From the example of Socrates in the fifth century B.C. we can proceed to the later rhetorical and grammatical writings of Cicero, Quintilian, and Donatus. These classical writers are important to us here not only because each incorporated a concept of irony into a selfconsistent rhetorical
system, but also because their writings were familiar and available to rhetorically trained individuals in the Middle Ages, especially during the period of the apex of courtly literature in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These classical rhetorical writings, according to D.H. Green, constitute a direct channel for the transmission of the classical tradition into the Middle Ages. Green identifies three other channels of transmission as well, all of which are fundamentally tied to classical tradition and would have informed medieval writers of the potential uses of irony in literature: the early medieval summaries and compilations (e.g. Isidore of Seville, Julian of Toledo, and Bede); the oral channel of transmission via classroom teaching in monasteries (e.g. Notker of St. Gallen); and the later medieval tradition of extensive, and usually derivative, rhetorical handbooks (e.g. Hugh of St. Victor, Matthew of Vendome, and Geoffrey of Vinsauf). In support of the theory that classical literature was known and influential in the medieval period, one can refer to the work of a number of scholars. Ernst Robert Curtius has shown the importance of Latin literature for medieval vernacular works. In the scholarship of German medieval literature, it has for example been shown for Wolfram that their style and narrative technique conform to the prescriptions of classical rhetoric. The most extensive work relating Gottfried's Tristan to the classical rhetorical tradition is Sawicki's catalog of Gottfried's use of, and there-
fore familiarity with the classical artes.  

Classical rhetoric, including irony, is preserved in medieval literature not merely for its own sake. The nature of medieval society, and of the medieval author's place in it, made a classically influenced literature desirable and necessary. The use of classical rhetoric was seen as mark of sophistication:

What classical rhetoric sees as the hallmark of the cultured town dweller is often contrasted with the boorishness of country dwellers, so that urba-nitas and eloquentia are set up against rusticas and simplicitas. With the decline of Roman urban life the urbs as a center of political authority and literary culture is replaced by the individual court, the aula, so that the medieval contrast is now between those who speak the eloquent diction of the court and those who are still rustici or villani, whose speech is too simple to accommodate the subtleties and circuitousness of polite social language could be in poetic diction is most easily visible in the context of love, at once a private encounter and yet inseparable from society, especially when the poetry celebrating love is a public entertainment.

In Latin rhetorical handbooks the quality of urbani-tas is defined in terms of the use of indirect means of ex-
pression, such as irony. Such indirect means of expression would indicate a sophistication of both author and audience that elevated them with respect to those with more common educational backgrounds and less ability to comprehend cultured and courtly literature. The audience for courtly literature was an elite, in contrast to the early audience for heroic epic and chanson de geste. The audience for courtly literature is accordingly smaller than the audience for heroic epic; furthermore, while the latter audience is thought to have been homogeneous in its outlook, with many commonly shared points of view, the courtly audience is characterized by the sharing of values and conventions that were not shared by medieval society at large.

This kind of elite audience, conscious or even proud of its cultural and literary sophistication, would certainly be a prerequisite for a medieval writer's use of irony. Irony, as we said earlier, requires a select audience of initiates that will be able to draw out the intended meaning of irony from behind its apparent and literal meaning. In the example of Morold given at the beginning of this chapter, the uninitiated audience, perhaps the audience of medieval society in general, may see Morold as a shining example of knighthood because he appears so on the superficial level. A more courtly audience, familiar with the actual standards of knightly conduct, and with the obligation of true knighthood to withstand Morold, rather than to do his bidding, might as well see the irony in Gottfried's seeming
praise of the bounty collector.

At the same time, however, we must realize that the courtly audience for literature was probably not completely homogeneous within itself, and that not every member of the courtly audience was a potential interpreter of irony. Wolfram may be revealing that he knows he is speaking to both insightful and less insightful listeners when he says:

diz vliegende bispil
ist tumben liuten gar zu snel
sine mugens niht erdenken

(Parzifal, I, 15)

Gottfried makes an even clearer distinction between his possible audiences when he, in the prologue to Tristan and Isold, differentiates between edele herzen (l. 47) and ir aller werlt (l. 50). The former group is the one for whom Gottfried has put forth the effort of writing down the true story of Tristan and Isold. For the latter audience he holds no hope that it will ever be able, or even willing to understand the significance of his romance (ll. 45-66).

The fact that the courtly audience for literature was not universally an ironically initiated audience itself involves Gottfried, as well as the title character of his romance, in highly ironic situations. In the scholarship on Gottfried it seems that the initiated audience for his irony is assumed to have been so small that it was effectively non-existent, making Gottfried not an ironist, but rather the
author of a heretical tract.\textsuperscript{24} To a degree, Gottfried's literary skill has worked against his literary reputation. Similarly, Tristan finds himself an outcast at his ancestral court, whose ideals of courtly skills and behavior he quite thoroughly fulfills. In reply to his courtliness, he receives only the jealousy and hate of the officers of the court. Tristan must finally flee Mark's court, the place where he ought to be most highly honored, in order to escape from the scheming courtiers with his life intact.\textsuperscript{25}

Against the preceding words of background we now offer a working definition of irony to be used in the following study of Gottfried's Tristan. The main part of this definition has already been set down by D.G. Green in his book on irony in medieval literature:

Ironic is a statement, or presentation of an action or situation, in which the real or intended meaning conveyed to the initiated intentionally diverges from, and is incongruous with, the apparent or intended meaning presented to the uninitiated.\textsuperscript{26}

To this definition we add that the following study will show that irony is used by Gottfried to clarify and inform the major themes in his romance. The most important of these are: 1. the nature of the Love of Tristan and Isolde 2. the conflict between the Lovers and courtly society, and 3. the concept of "initiation" into a world of higher understanding in which the Love of Tristan and Isolde is the focal
Sowie nun Tristan und Isolde einerseits als
durchaus höfische Menschen in der höfischen
Welt leben und leben müssen, andererseits
kraft der Auszeichnung durch den Trank
in der Liebessphäre aufgenommen worden sind,
so gehört ihre minne zu zwei Bereichen,
dem des Teufels und dem Gottes, je nachdem
sie sich zur Verwirklichung ihrer Liebe
mit der höfischen Welt verbunden oder aber
nur auf ihre eigene Liebe angewiesen oder
gar zurückgeworfen sind. 28

Although this view seems to give a satisfying explanation
for aspects of the Love that might at first reading make a
very unpleasant impression (for example, the fact that the
Love can exist only in a state of concealment brought about
by the Lovers' ruses and deception), it presupposes that
the Love is an inherently weak thing, so feeble that society's
intrusions destroy it. On this view, society is the final
victor.

A second point of view tries to deal with certain
puzzling aspects of Gottfried's work (for example, the fact
that God intervenes in the ordeal of the hot iron to keep
Isolde's adulterous Love a secret) by asserting that Gott-
fried's intention was heretical. Gottfried Weber, the best
known proponent of this view, says:

Die Ideenstruktur des Dichters ist ganz und
gar christlich. Der Ideeninhalt dagegen
ist gänzlich unchristlich. 29

This opinion might carry some weight if it were not true
that other critics 30 ably refute it, and if it could be proven
point. Each of these themes is systematically developed by Gottfried by means of the irony with which he has invested the plot development and characterization in his romance.

Since each of these major themes is connected with the Love affair of Tristan and Isolde, it is appropriate at this point for us to clarify our scholarly position with respect to that love affair. This study approaches the Love affair of Tristan and Isolde on the basis of the three following basic tenets. First, the Love of Tristan and Isolde is viewed in a thoroughly positive fashion, as the model for perfect union between two individuals. Second, this Love is at odds with the society within which it exists, a society which is bent on destroying it. Third, the characters in the romance, each in his or her own particular way, are either representatives of society, and thus enemies of the Love, or representatives of points of view counter to the social norms, and thus supporters of or active participants in the Love.

A scholarly investigation of Gottfried's romance has to consider the relative merits of each side in the conflict of Love and society, and decide which of the two has precedence. Critics have generally opted for one of three outlooks on this problem. There is a compromise position, which holds that Tristan-Love is a perfect Love, in some higher or mystical sense, but that it is imperfect, even sinful or demonic, in its existence in the world. Petrus Tax says:
that the religious allusions in Gottfried's work were put there by him in order to argue for or against a certain theological cause or interest. As it is, Gottfried's Tristan must, as W.T.H. Jackson has pointed out, be seen as a work of literature first and foremost, and not as a dogmatic theological tract. The task of the critic is to see the work's religious allusions in a literary context.

A third point of view, which is the point of departure for this analysis, is that the Love of Tristan and Isolde is the model of perfect Love, and that Tristan and Isolde are fully entitled to practice their Love even though society is opposed to it. The Love is not flawed in and of itself, although it is prevented by society from unfolding in a free fashion. The opposition of society to Love is not an indictment of Love, but rather of society. As H.B. Willson has noted:

The undoubted villains of the piece are the merkaere and lügenaere, whose huote and laze springs from envy and jealousy and stands for a prohibitive law of which the constricting rigidity is in direct conflict with the flexibility and subtlety of love: minne is diu vrie (12,300), the queen of all hearts, yet is often made to pay tribute under the rule of men. In other words, the 'order' of love is perverted to
the extent that a queen, who should be
subject to now law but her own, is the
prisoner of a law alien to her. 33

In the prologue to the *Tristan*, Gottfried briefly
describes the nature of the Love of Tristan and Isolde:

Ich han mir eine unmüzekeit
der werlt ze liebe vür gelei
t und edelen herzen zeiner hage,
den herzen, den ich herze trage,
der werlde, in die min herze siht.
ine meine ir aller werlde niht
als die, von der ich hoere sagen,
diu keine swaere enmüge getragen
und niwan in vröuden welle sweben:
die laze ouch got mit vröuden leben!
Der werlde und diseme lebene
enkumt min rede niht ebene:
ir leben und minez zweient sich.
ein ander werlt die meine ich,
diu samet in eime herzen treit
ir züeze sur, ir liebez leit,
ir herzeliep, ir senede not,
ir liebez leben, ir leiden tot,
ir lieben tot, ir leidez leben;
dem lebene si min leben ergeben,
der werlt wil ich gewerldet wesent,
mir ir verderben oder genesen.
ich bin mit ir biz her beliben
und han mit ir die tage vertriben,
die mir uf nahe gendem leben
lere unde geleite solten geben:
der han ich mine unmüzekeit
ze kurzewile vür gelei,
daz si mit minem maere
ir nahe gende swaere
ze halber senfte bringe,
ir not da mite geringe.

(45-76)

The two-world hypothesis of the world of the Lovers and
the world of their enemy, society, is stated here by Gott-
fried himself. 34 He values most highly that world where
life is accepted in the fullest sense, and where sorrow and
joy are united in a single experience. To this world
gottfried commits himself, whether he be saved or damned
by it, and he wants nothing to do with the larger world
that seeks only constant joy, and cannot endure sorrow.
The joy of love necessarily includes sorrow:

War umbe enlité ein edeler muot
niht gerne ein übel durch tusent guot,
durch manege vröude ein ungemach?
swem nie von liebe leit geschach,
dem geschach ouch liep von liebe nit.
(201-205)

And, gottfried has written his romance in order to provide
diversion to those who live in the world of love (see 67-
76). The example of the lovers will be bread to the noble
hearts that seek loyalty and true honor:

von den diz senemaere seit,
und haeten die durch liebe leit,
durch herzewunne senedez clagen.
in einem herzen niht getragen,
son waere ir name und ir geschiht
so manegem edelen herzen niht
ze saelden noch ze liebe komen.
uns ist noch hiute liep vernomen,
süeze und iemer niuwe
ir inneclichiui triuwe
ir liep, ir leit, ir wunne, ir not;
al eine und sin si lange tot,
ir süezer name der lebet iedoch
und sol ir tot der werlde noch
ze guote lange und iemer leben,
den triuwe gernden triuwe geben,
den ere gernden ere:
ir tot muoz iemer mere
uns lebenden leben und niuwe wesen;
wan swa man noch hoeret lesen
ir triuwe, ir triuwen reinekeit,
ir herzeliep, ir herzeleit,
Deist aller edelen herzen brot.
Hit mite so lebet ir beider tot.
wir lesen ir leben, wir lesen ir tot
und ist uns daz süeze alse brot.
Ir leben, ir tot sint unser brot.
sus lebet ir leben, sus lebet ir tot.
sus lebent si noch und sint doch tot
und ist ir tot der lebenden brot.
Und swer nu ger, daz man im sage
ir leben, ir tot, ir vröude, ir clage,
der biete herze und oren her:
er vindet alle sine ger.
(211-244)

The romance is thus written not for the many of the world
at large, but for the few who either are Lovers or who
possess the disposition of the noble heart that makes them
potential Lovers. The purpose of this study is to show
which of the characters in Gottfried's Tristan belong to
the limited circle of Lovers, and it will be shown that there
are only three. They are the Lovers themselves, Tristan and
Isolde, and their servant Brangaene. While other characters
such as Curvenal, Rual, and Mark have their relationship
to the Lovers defined according to certain set social roles
-- such as those of servant, vassal, king, husband, or
cuckold -- Brangaene, it will be shown, is related to them
in an essentially different way unencumbered by the stric-
tures of society.

For the time being, it is necessary only to outline
the thorough-going nature of the opposition of Love and
society. In contrast to the elevating effects of Love
described by Gottfried in the opening lines of the romance
(see above), the court, as a functioning society, is the
seat of baseness and jealousy. Jackson says:

It will be noted that Gottfried never
describes a good man, knight or not, at Mark's court. A few subordinates, like the huntsman and the musician, are neutral figures whose purpose is merely to provide foils for Tristan. Everyone else may be assumed to belong to the envious majority who have no grace, skill, or courage of their own and who envy those who have these qualities.  

Any kind of perfection is out of place in this society. Society is a self-destructive organism that cannot tolerate the fulfillment of higher ideals, even if these ideals spring from within the society itself. Ingrid Hahn comments:

Die betörenden, sublim erotischen Schwingungen, die sich in Isoldes und Tristans Musik (Tristan trägt Liebesballaden an!) der Umgebung mitteilen, locken die Gesellschaft in Bereiche, denen sie nicht gewachsen ist. Und es ergibt sich das Paradoxon, dass dort, wo eine glanzvolle Erfüllung alles höfisch Angelegten vorzugehen scheint, die Gesellschaft in Wahrheit, von der daseinserschütternden Wirkung einer ausserhöfischen Macht berührt, ihrer eigenen Voraussetzungen beraubt wird.

Tristan, the man who fulfills the social ideal of the
consummate artist, was born outside of society, and is the child produced by a love affair not sanctioned by society. Born under the cloud of illegitimacy, Tristan achieves all the outer attributes and accomplishments of a knight in terms of chivalric art; yet, for the most part, he remains at the periphery of society, at odds with its rules and mores, always involved in pretense and deception to preserve his precarious social footing.

Society is materialistic. Walter Mersmann has described how Mark is anchored to his material possessions, while Tristan shuns being tied down in this way:

Ein anderes Verhältnis zum Besitz hat Marke. Er selbst ist sesshaft, gebunden an sein Land, das er nicht verlässt. Er handelt nach seinen Massstäben, wenn er Tristan durch Geschenke, besonders durch die Erbschaft seiner Länder, an sich binden mochte, aber er wird damit Tristan nicht gerecht. Tristan sucht seine Selbstverwirklichung im Handeln, Marke, darin König Artus vergleichbar, wirkt als ruhender Pol, seine Autorität beruht nicht zuletzt auf seinem Besitz. Der Gegensatz von Land und Meer, den Ingrid Hahn (S. 95ff.) der Exi-
stenzweise Markes und Tristans zuordnet, findet seine Entsprechung in den Besitzverhältnissen. Während Marke Besitz sucht, ist er Tristan eher eine Last, die er von sich wirft. Die von ihm gewählten Rollen des Spielmanns, Kaufmanns, Pilgers oder Söldners haben Landlosigkeit, d.h. Besitzlosigkeit gemeinsam; sie tragen das Gesetz der Bewegung zum ständigen Bewähren in neuen Situationen in sich; die höfische Gesellschaft verharrt dagegen in materieller Geborgenheit.

The traditional materialistically oriented ways of winning a woman are singularly inappropriate for those who try to use them to win Isolde. Mersmann emphasizes:

Der Weg zu Isolde führt nicht über die traditionellen Formen von Vertrag, Dienst, Lohn, oder Ehe. Die Pläne Gurmuns, der Barone, das Ansinnen des Truchsessen und Gaidins degradieren die Minne und Isolde zum Objekt, zum Mittel, so dass sie mit Käuflicher Ware verglichen werden können. Indem sie nicht um ihrer selbst willen gesucht werden, geschieht ihnen Unrecht; die Königin Minne wird so zur Bettlerin degradiert (12,300ff.).
And in the same way, as Jackson has noted, almost every episode in Tristan's courtly experience thwarts a coming together of the Lovers:

The development of their love is hindered and, in any conventional fashion, prevented by factors which are of the essence of courtly life: the need to avenge a kinsman (Morolt); Loyalty to an uncle (Mark); the need to marry the dragon-slayer, whoever he may be, provided he is "noble"; the need to take back Isolde to Mark, because honor demands it, even though Tristan could have married her and become the heir to Ireland.  

As a final guide to reflection, it can be stated that Gottfried leads the reader to view the Lovers in a positive light, and society in a negative one. Ingrid Hahn has summarized the relationship of the individual and the many in Gottfried's Tristan:

Und Gottfried stellt das Recht des grossen Einzelnen über das der Vielen und Schicksalslosen. Das zeigt gerade der Abschied von Parmenie, der so leidenschaftlich vor der Ritterschaft beklagt wird.  

See explains that Tristan is not bound to those who, as will be shown, are socially bound to him:
Hier kennzeichnet es nun die Situation, dass Tristan, mit Ausnahme seiner Entführung und der Trennung von Isolde, keinen Schmerz beim Abschied von vertrauten Menschen empfindet. Immer sind es nur die Zurückbleibenden, deren Klage die Szene füllt. Rual, Marke, Curvenal, die inländischen Gastfreunde werden ohne tieferes Leid verlassen, Tristan ist dort nicht gebunden, wo man sich doch an ihm gebunden fühlt.42

Distance from society is seen as a good thing that makes Love possible.43 As S.L. Clark and Julian N. Wasserman have pointed out in their discussion of the wooing adventure:

When representatives of Mark's court accompany Tristan on his second mission to Gurnun's court, one notes that the Cornish barons' fear and treachery, which result in their desire to flee homeward and hence abandon Tristan, not only present the concept of return to Cornwall in a negative light, since it is encouraged by men of less than loyal character, but also place a positive value on remaining away from Tintagel.44

Quite interestingly, Ruth Goldschmidt Kunzer even finds an
aesthetic corollary to the opposition of the few and the many in the very nature of Gottfried's romance:

The greatest contrast between Tristan and other epics arises from the uncourtliness of the Tristan minne, which, in its spontaneity and obsessive passion, is the very opposite of the ideal of courtly love. The decorous conduct of courtly love affairs as formalized by the minnesingers is placed in ironic relief, particularly in the many deception scenes. In the vision of a hero and heroine whose courtliness is ambiguous, since they are not able to conform to some of the basic tenets of courtly conduct, the poet significantly departs from the classical courtly romance as known heretofore.
CHAPTER II: CURVENAL AND RUAL

Curvenal and Rual are the first characters whose opposition to Tristan will be elucidated. On the face of it, both would seem to have a close, amicable, and even loving relationship to Tristan, since they both stand out in the reader’s mind as characters who have long standing commitments to him. But a detailed examination of these characters and their approach to Tristan reveals that they are characters with fundamentally limited points of view. They relate to Tristan on certain well-defined levels that are capable of encompassing only a part of his character and the problems he faces, and which do not allow for any understanding of Tristan’s existence as a Lover.

Curvenal’s limitations are most apparent in the dragon adventure, precisely the episode in which he has the greatest opportunity to be an important character who decisively influences events. One recalls that the ship’s company has heard the dragon’s dying bellow and a rumor about a half-destroyed horse lying somewhere ashore, and a decision is made to send Curvenal on a search (9627-9637). The focus of the search is on externals from the start, since Curvenal’s orders make no mention of finding Tristan himself, but only of looking for the remains of his mount (9639). In turn, it never occurs to Curvenal that he should make any but the most superficial kind of search for his master. As a result, he looks for objects associated with Tristan, but not for
Tristan himself (9640-9646), and even his inspection of these objects is not especially thorough. Curvenal indeed recognizes the horse and also finds the dead dragon, but it is significant that he pays little attention to either. Had he looked at the dragon more carefully, he would have seen that it was headless. The reader knows that the dragon's head has been removed by the steward as his false trophy. But the sight of the headless dragon would have allowed Curvenal to justifiably surmise that Tristan had slain the dragon and removed himself and the proof of his victory to a place of safety. None of this occurs to Curvenal, who gives up hope for Tristan after he fails to find any trace of Tristan's clothing or weapons (9644-9646). Curvenal extends his search no further and returns to the ship almost immediately.

One should note that Tristan has already been rescued from the pool of water by the time Curvenal's search begins. But even if Tristan had still been in the area, Curvenal would not have found him, for his character is such that he depends too much on evidence that can be quickly uncovered by sight. But, more importantly, he also does not have faith in Tristan. This in itself is odd, for he has seen Tristan turn apparently impossible situations to his own advantage, most pointedly in the battle with Morold and in Tristan's first Irish adventure as Tantris the minstrel, and one would think that Curvenal would nurture a belief in Tristan's ability to be successful no matter what the odds.
Yet in the search scene Curvenal gives up hope for Tristan as soon as the opportunity to do so presents itself. He takes Tristan for dead and later admits to his master that he, in common with the rest of the Cornish shipmates, had held no hope for Tristan's survival (10,723–10,725). One may deduce from this that Curvenal does not really understand Tristan. He does not know why Tristan acts, what Tristan is capable of, or in general what makes Tristan himself and not merely another hero. In this light it should prove valuable to examine the reasons for Curvenal's meager understanding, since virtually all of the characters who come into contact with Tristan portray a similar lack of perception.¹

It has already been asserted that Curvenal relies too much on visual evidence. When he cannot find Tristan's clothes, he assumes that Tristan is lost along with them. This is a telling assumption, insofar as Gottfried's intent is to present Tristan as an individual who can never be found, in any sense of the word, easily. The information that can be garnered about him without difficulty or finesse -- for example, by looking at him or listening to him -- is most often entirely misleading. Here is a man who, throughout his entire youth, was dead as far as the world was concerned. Tristan, the son of Riwalin and Blanscheflur, was unknown not only to the world, but also to himself, for a number of years.² Even after Tristan becomes aware of his identity, deception remains a way of
life for him, so that he is rarely what he appears to be. He is not a merchant's son, not Tantris the professional minstrel, not a merchant, not Mark's obedient servant, and not a pilgrim. The difficulty of "finding" Tristan extends even to the difficulty of finding his physical whereabouts. As a child he was hidden from Morgan; Rual has to search for years before he finds him; and Isolde Regina needed the supernatural assistance of a dream to guide her to where Tristan rested. Thus, it is not surprising that Curvenal's brief search is unsuccessful. Curvenal's failure to find the physical Tristan is emblematic of his failure to find, or to understand, Tristan as a person. The narrator emphasizes several times that the superficial approach will not do for finding Tristan. For example:

sus si Tristan geleitet
ze hove und ouch ze ringe,
mit allem sinem dingi
sinen gesellen ebengelich,
ebenziere un ebenezich:
ich meine aber an der waete,
die mannes hant da naete,
niht an der an gebornen wat,
diu von des herzen kamere gat,
die si da heizen edelen muot,
diu den man wolgemuoten tuot
und werdet lip unde leben:
diu wat wart den gesellen gebent
dem herren ungeliche.
(4986-4999)

Internal qualities not visible to the eye are what separate Tristan from other men. To a small degree the externals associated with Tristan reflect and complement his inner qualities, but the most important influence is from the inside out.}{3}
und sult ir doch wol wizzen daz:  
der man gezam dem rocke baz  
und truog in lobes und eren an  
vil mere danne der roc den man;  
swie guot, swie lobebaere  
der wafenroc doch waere,  
er was doch siner werdekeit,  
der in do haet an geleit,  
kume unde kumecliche wert.  
(6569-6577)

dar zuo swie wol gebaere  
gebraerdehald er waere,  
so was doch innerthalp der muot  
so reine gartet und so guot,  
daz edeler muot und reiner art  
under helme nie bedecket wart.  
(6715-6720)

Curvenal, by looking for Tristan's horse, or for his clothes and weapons, will never find him.

Not only Curvenal's actions, but also his words, indicate that his assessment of Tristan — and of Isolde as well — is mistaken. Despairing that he cannot find Tristan, Curvenal says:

'owi owi' sprach er 'Isot,  
owi, daz din lop und din nam  
ie hin ze Curnewale kaml  
was din schoene und edelkeit  
ze solhem schaden uf geleit  
einer der saeligsten art,  
diu ie mit sper versigelt wart,  
der du ze wol geviele?'  
(9650-9657)

He clearly sees Tristan as a traditional knight and hero figure, a man whose station in life is determined by his skill as a fighter:

einer der saeligsten art,  
diu ie mit sper versigelt wart  
(9655-9656)

This description applies well to Riwalin, always concerned
to meet force with force (272-274) and an "extremely physical type who can make love while at death's door." 4 Tristan, however, is different from his father, and Curvenal is one of those who should be most aware of the fact that Tristan is not first and foremost a physical type. Curvenal, as a long-time companion of Tristan and as one of his main tutors, must know that Tristan's education de-emphasized the skills of a warrior in favor of those of an artist. 5 It proves interesting that the narrator never specifically cites precisely what Tristan learned from Curvenal. The reader is told only that Curvenal improved Tristan generally (2266-2269), and Curvenal is never mentioned in the detailed description of Tristan's education (2056ff.). However, Curvenal's character dictates that the only things that he could have taught Tristan are intellectual and artistic things, for Curvenal, perhaps most vividly remembered by the reader as the weeping and helpless man cast off by Tristan's kidnappers, is not a fighter and could never teach someone else how to be one. One might then ask why he then values Tristan most highly as a man of the sword. One answer can be that Curvenal does not value what he himself knows. He has a few intellectual skills, but they count for little, in his own opinion. In other words, the skills of the fighter are what really make a difference in the world, for Curvenal, and it is understandable that he should value these skills most highly in Tristan. Curvenal sees little significance in Tristan's identity as an artist, and, in
fact, he does not even see it; thus an additional perspective is gained on the fact that Curvenal cannot "find" Tristan.

Curvenal's abovementioned speech (9650-9657) can reveal even more about his fundamental lack of understanding. Searching for where to place the blame for the tragedy he thinks has occurred, the despairing Curvenal indicts Isolde as the scapegoat. His condemnation of her makes him a unique character in Gottfried's Tristan, for, as Joan Ferrante has observed:

The only suggestion of disapproval of Isolt in Gottfried is voiced by Curvenal when he thinks Tristan has been killed by the dragon. He blames Isolt for something which has not yet occurred, but the question he asks anticipates the rest of the story.6

It is true that no other character in Gottfried's Tristan speaks as negatively of Isolde as does Curvenal here.7 Even the man who would seemingly be most in the position to condemn Isolde, that is, Mark, does not blame Isolde in precisely the way Curvenal does. This is not to say that Mark is not above taking steps to cause Isolde harm. After all, he alone is responsible for suggesting that she undergo the ordeal of the hot iron (15,518-15,526), and he also exiles the Lovers, a step that cannot have been meant to help them, since Mark does not know that the Lovers' Cave
exists. But Mark never decisively rejects Isolde or regrets her entrance into his life. Accordingly, he moves swiftly to return the Lovers to his court after he is reacquainted with Isolde's beauty, as he sees her lying in the Lovers' Cave. Since Isolde gives Mark sensual pleasure too great for him to want to do without her, he is happy as long as he can possess her physically, as he does when the Lovers return from exile:

Marke der was aber do vro.
ze vròuden haeter aber do
an sinem wibe Isolde,
swaz so sin herze wolde,
niht zeren, wan ze libe.

(17,723-17,727)

Thus, Mark's indicting actions are tempered by the dictates of his sensuality. The only other character who might be thought of as one who condemns Isolde is the Irish steward. He certainly has no kind words for her in his major speech (9866ff.), but closer examination reveals that his anger is really directed more toward womankind than toward Isolde as an individual. And, since the steward is such a foolish character (see, for example, the description of his mock fight with the dragon, 9093ff.), any ire that he might feel toward Isolde must cause the reader to look on her more positively.

Curvenal, however, while differing from Mark and the Irish steward as far as casting blame goes, nevertheless indicts the queen, and a satisfactory explanation for this can be found in the fact that what Curvenal says in his
speech (9650-9657) does in a certain sense anticipate the future. There is cause for some lamentation because the story of Tristan and Isolde is not one of unrestrained happiness. But one must ask if Curvenal is a character with genuine insight, or whether it is more likely that he is simply more likely that he is simply used here by Gottfried as an unwitting agent of foreshadowing. The latter alternative is more appropriate, especially if Curvenal's statement is examined once again. He calls Isolde beautiful (schoone, 9654), and it is reasonable to assume that the other qualities he ascribes to Isolde (her nobility in general, edelkei, 9654; and her renown and glory, lop und nam, 9651) depend for their existence on the fact that Isolde is beautiful. The cause of the whole travail, as Curvenal assesses it, is Isolde's beauty. Her beauty pleased Tristan too much (9657), seducing and finally destroying him. Curvenal here reveals a quite conservative view of woman's beauty, as a thing wicked in itself that brings about the downfall of men. Eve is the foremost example of such a woman; the allurement she exercised on Adam resulted in the Fall of Man.

But the idea of woman as evil in herself loses currency in the writings of twelfth century religious commentators, such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Abelard, Hugh of St. Victor, and Alanus de Insulis, and some time before Gottfried was occupied with writing his Tristan, a dual image of woman developed in the writings of these com-
mentators, as Joan Ferrante has described. Eve, for example, is inextricably involved in the Fall of Man. But she does not carry the entire blame for it. Adam was also guilty in that he sinned with Eve and did not correct her. The association of woman with the corporeal is not necessarily a negative one. The union of Adam and Eve symbolizes the union of the body, in the woman, and the spirit, in the man, which in turn is symbolic of the union of Christ and Man. Woman, then, can represent an avenue of being that transcends the corporeal. Woman was created by God from the middle of man, neither to dominate him nor to be his abject slave, but to associate with him as a companion. She is neither more nor less evil than he. Ferrante summarizes:

Perhaps the most important point made about Eve in these commentaries is that she was created out of Adam because she was meant to be a part of him. They are not two, but one; only together do they represent the human species. Biologically, this may seem obvious, but psychologically it is an important principle. Eve represents a part of Adam which he must learn to control and use properly, not to reject, if he is to achieve reintegration of the human being, and he must accomplish this before he can
achieve union with God, the reunion with his creator which is his ultimate goal. From this point of view, woman has a positive role to play in the moral development of man, a role given her by God; the responsibility is man's to see that she plays it. To blame her for leading him astray, to make her the scapegoat for his failure, is to abdicate his own role.\textsuperscript{13}

It is, of course, still a fact that men err, perverting themselves with a preoccupation with the flesh, and that, in the Middle Ages, feminine beauty was often a figure for the falseness of material things. However, the existence of this figure did not constitute a condemnation of woman as evil in herself. The evil thus does not reside in the object, but in the libido or cupidity of the man who gives himself to perversion and allows himself to be deceived. The blame for the abuse of a beautiful thing falls on the man who abuses it, but not on the beautiful thing itself.\textsuperscript{14}

In this light, Curvenal thinks that Isolde's beauty motivated Tristan to take on an impossible adventure that led to his destruction. But is there any truth to this judgment? Tristan's speech upon his return to Cornwall after his first Irish adventure (8253-8360) indicates that he noticed Isolde and thinks her very beautiful, but there is no hint that he therefore intends to return to Ireland.
The background to the wooing of Isolde will be dealt with later, but it can be mentioned here that the overt cause of the wooing expedition, one recalls, is not Tristan's desire for the beautiful Isolde, but rather the desire of Mark's barons to kill Tristan, by involving him in a highly dangerous adventure. The Cornish king must also assume part of the blame for involving Tristan in the dragon fight, because Mark lacks the sheer kingly power and the political intelligence to overrule the will of his court. Yet it never occurs to Curvenal that the blame for the tragedy he thinks has befallen his master -- and it must be remembered that the dragon adventure turns out quite well for Tristan -- belongs more soundly to the Cornish barons and to Mark than it does to Isolde.

Furthermore, one may question to what extent Tristan is ever motivated solely by Isolde's beauty. In addition, one must question the importance of the purely physical aspect of the Love of Tristan and Isolde. Note, for example, that even a careful reader would find it difficult to describe the appearance of either Lover in detail. Physical descriptions of the Lovers are few in number, and even then they do not have the function of merely describing the Lovers' beautiful bodies. Moreover, the Love does not depend on unhindered physical accessibility, and the fact that it does not puzzles Mark, who says just before he banishes the Lovers:
ich han iuch an dem libe  
so dicke gesundert  
daz mich es iemer wundert  
daz ir so lange und alle zit  
des herzen so gemeine sit.
(16,566-16,570)

Mark, as was mentioned earlier, is happy when he possesses
Isolde in body (17,723-17,727), since his idea of love does
not extend beyond its physical component. Accordingly, in
his commentary on the quality of Mark's love for Isolde, the
narrator states, after Isolde has returned from exile:

swie wirs verswigende sin,
ez ist doch war ein wortelin:
'schoene daz ist hoene.'
(17,801-17,803)

What is immediately apparent is that the narrator expresses
a point of view not dissimilar to Curwenal's. But the
context of the narrator's statement is all-important: it
occurs within the larger description of Mark's purely
sensual love for Isolde. A beautiful woman really is
dangerous for a man like Mark, because he sees in her nothing
more than the satisfaction of his own sensual appetite. He
willingly deceives himself into maintaining a relationship
with no mutual affection, that results only in mundane pain
unbalanced by any enjoyed higher experience. The narrator
discusses Mark's problem in some detail:

wem mac man nu die schulde geben
umbe daz erlose leben,
daz er sus mit ir haete?
wann zware er missetaehe,
der ez Isote seite
ze keiner trügeheite:
weder sin trouc in noch Tristan;
er sach ez doch mit ougen an
und wistes ungessehen genuoc,
dazs ime dekeine liebe truoc
und was sim doch liep über daz.
'war umbe, herre, und umbe waz
truoger ir inneclichen muot?'
dar umbez hiute maneger tuot:
geluste unde gelange
der lidet vil ange,
daz ime ze lidene geschiht.
Ahi, waz man (ir) noch hiute siht
der Marke und der Isolde,
ob manz bereden solde,
die blindner oder alse blint
ir herzen unde ir ougen sint!
(17,743-17,774)

swa man die schulde gesiht,
dan ist man von dem wiebe niht
weder überkerget noch betrogen;
da hat geluste gezogen
den nacken vür diu ougen;
gelange derst daz lougen,
daz al der werlde und alle zit
in wol gesehenden ougen lit.
swaz man von blinheit geseit,
son blendet dekein blinheit
als ancliich unde als ange
so geluste unde gelange.
(17,789-17,800)

Mark's life with Isolde is truly perverse, given direction
only by his own desire and appetite (geluste unde gelange,
17,767; 17,792; 17,794; 17,800). Mark deceives himself to
the point of blindness, an incapacitating state for a man
so dependent on his senses, especially upon the sense of
sight. Isolde, and Tristan as well, are blameless for what
has happened to Mark:

wan zware er missionte,
der ez Isote seite
ze keiner trugeheite:
weder sin trouc in noch Tristan
(17,756-17,759)

The deceived man has only himself to blame.
This superficial outlook toward Isolde and love finds echoes within the romance in Curvenal's conversation with Tristan at the Irish court:

nu Curvenal Tristanden
den vrouwen under handen
vrolichen unde gesunden sach,
in francoiser wise er sprach:
'ha bea duz sire,
durch gotes willen, waz tuot it,
daz ir sus wunnecliche
in disem himelriche
sus luzet verborgen
und lat uns in den sorgen?
wir wanden alle sin verlorn;
biz izeuo haetich wol gesworn,
daz ir niht lebende waeret.
wie habent ir uns beswaeret!
iuwer kiel und iuwer liute
die geswuoren wol noch hiute
und habent ez da vür, ir sit tot,
und sint mit micheler not
her unze an disse naht beliben
und haeten daz in ein getriben,
si wolten hinaht hinnen sin.'
(10,713-10,733)

As far as Curvenal is able to see, Tristan appears inconsiderately to have left the Cornish shipmates in a state of travail while delightedly concealing himself in the himelrich ("paradise" - 10,720) of the Irish court. Curvenal thinks that Tristan has perversely deceived the shipmates, and he goes so far as to chide Tristan for the distress he has caused them (10,726). Curvenal is so impressed by the outward glamor of Tristan's surroundings that he forgets to realize that Tristan must have passed exceptionally dangerous ordeals in order to obtain his present security.
The reader knows well what Tristan has been through, and Curvenal must necessarily make the impression of a supremely ignorant character. The reader's estimation of Curvenal must fall still lower as it becomes increasingly obvious that he has done effectively nothing to help Tristan in a meaningful way. The only news that Curvenal has to report when he sees Tristan again is that the Cornish shipmates have abandoned hope for Tristan and have decided to return home that night. The picture given, by contrasting the misconceptions imbedded in Curvenal's point of view with the actual facts of Tristan's situation, is one of Tristan bearing a huge burden entirely on his own, while his main servant Curvenal wanders about rather mindlessly, insofar as he does anything at all, and while the other shipmates dicker about what may have happened to Tristan, without taking any decisive action to find out what has actually befallen him. While it is true that Tristan, in his last reported speech to the shipmates before the dragon fight (8691-8728), does not ask for active assistance and recommends that the ship set sail if he does not return within a certain period of time, there is still no cause to justify, much less praise, the total failure of the shipmates, including Curvenal, to even think of doing something to give Tristan assistance. The final decision to leave is even made without a second search for Tristan, in spite of the fact that the first search was not a thorough one that gave conclusive information. It proves important here that Tristan has supporters
among the shipmates. It is a fact that these supporters are numerous to overrule, apparently by majority vote, the desire of twenty Cornish barons to pull anchor immediately after Curvenal gives the report of his search (9662ff.). But these supporters, numerous though they may be, never become truly active friends, and they remain always a faceless and anonymous group. By the time Curvenal sees Tristan again he and the others have all given up hope for him, and are ready to abandon him:

wir wanden alle sin verlorn;
biz iezuo haetich wol gesworn,
daz ir niht lebende waeret.
wie habet ir uns beswaeret:
iuwer kiel und iuwer liute
die geswuoren wol noch hiute
und habent ez da vür, ir sit tot,
und sint mit micheler not
her unze an disse naht beliben
und haeten daz in ein getriben,
si wolten hinaht binnen sin.

(10,723-10,733)

Thus, the Cornish shipmates do little to earn the esteem of either the reader or Tristan. And Curvenal, in his ignorance and general lack of understanding, is one of them. It is perhaps for this reason that Tristan remains quite free of emotion while Curvenal is at the Irish court and does not speak a single word of gratitude to him.16 If one holds to the interpretation that Tristan is not entirely satisfied with Curvenal, Tristan's speech in praise of Curvenal

vrouwe, swa vür irn geseht,
er ist ein ritter unde ein man;
dan habet dekeinen zwivel an,
daz disiu sunne nie beschein
tugenthafter herze kein.

(10,770-10,774)
might be read as an attempt by Tristan to save face. Brangaene has just asked Tristan to tell if his messenger is a knight or a page. He is not dressed as a knight (ern kam nicht als ein ritter dar - 10712), and his social status is not immediately obvious. Curvenal also perplexes Brangaene because he calls the Irish court a paradise; it seems to surprise her that anyone should describe it in this manner:

Brangaene sprach: 'wer ist der man?
in dunket waerliche
hier inne ein himelriche:
weder ist er ritter oder kneht?'
(10,766-10,769)

There is therefore danger that Curvenal's arrival will cast some suspicion on Tristan. Curvenal does not look like an impressive man and what he says does not make very much sense; he might well be judged an incongruous comrade for a man who has just promised to arrange a marriage between the younger Isolde and a rich and powerful king, and who also claims to have his land's highest nobles waiting nearby. It must also be remembered that Tristan, at this point, is truly intent on winning Isolde for Mark, the foreseen marriage being a purely political one. It is imperative that Tristan make a good impression on the Irish court, so that he can have the prestige and power usually given to the legitimate ambassador of an important ruler. To alleviate any doubts that may have arisen about him after Curvenal's entrance, Tristan assures the Isoldes and Brangaene that Curvenal is as fine a man as any.
The women of the Irish court, who would lose a great deal if the Irish steward married Isolde, eagerly accept Tristan’s defense of Curvenal and even add their own praise of Tristan’s servant to the conversation:

’a, saelic müezer iemer sin!’
sprach ietwederiu künigin
und min vrou Brangaene ouch dermite,
diu höfsche und diu wol gesite.
(10,775-10,778).

An important conclusion to be drawn from this exchange is that the luster of the Curvenal character emanates solely from Tristan. Who would pay attention to Curvenal if Tristan were not his master? An ironic detail to support this conclusion is that Tristan specifically points out that Curvenal is a knight (er ist ein ritter unde ein man - 10,771); yet Tristan himself if the man who knighted Curvenal,

nu was der zwelf gesellen ein
Curvenal der noveliche
(5740-5741),

and there is no indication whatsoever that anyone else would have bestowed the same honor on him.

It can be said that Curvenal has little if anything to do with any action or decision that will significantly affect Tristan. On the wooing adventure, Curvenal has no input into either the decision of the shipmates to stay on, and no input into their decision to leave. One wonders, even if he had spoken up, if anyone would have listened, for Curvenal is not a powerful or revered character in his own right. To be sure, Curvenal is, for example, told about
Tristan’s plan to sneak into Ireland to find the cure for his poisoned wound before Tristan actually sets sail:

nu disiu rede besetzet ists,
Curvenal wart ouch besant.
dem selben sagetens ouch zehant
ir beider willen unde ir muot.
diz duhte Curvenalen guot
und jach, er wolte mit im wesent,
mit ime ersterben oder genesen.
(7332-7338)

The narrator notes at this time that Curvenal gives his own approval of the plan (7336). But it is not as if anything depends on Curvenal’s approval. There is no indication that he has any kind of veto power, and indeed Tristan and Mark have already finalized the plan to go to Ireland on their own, without any help from Curvenal:

sus wurden si zwene under in zwein
ir dinges alles inein
(7323-7324).

Nothing hinges on Curvenal’s approval, and the best interpretation of the above cited passage (733207338) is that Curvenal, as a devoted servant, accedes to the plan as soon as he hearts about it. He is not made aware of the plan so that he can be drawn in to play a major part in making it succeed. Rather, he is informed of his master’s intent, and he concurs, so that while he accompanies Tristan to Ireland, he is sent away soon after the party arrives. The plans for the second Irish, or wooing, adventure, are made with no help whatsoever from Curvenal. Again he accompanies Tristan to Ireland, but remains offshore while Tristan’s adventures unfold and does not, as has already
been maintained, do anything to help Tristan. Curvenal continues in this pattern of non-involvement throughout the story. He is present in Cornwall when the Lovers are, but never once is even the fact of his presence mentioned. Moreover, he is called on to accompany the Lovers to the Minne-grotte, but is then sent away as soon as they arrive there.

Additional evidence of Curvenal's only peripheral involvement in Tristan's exploits is given by the quality of the lies that Tristan directs Curvenal to put out. In connection with the first Irish adventure, Tristan tells Curvenal to spread the story that Tristan has died on the way to see doctors in Salerno:

\[
\text{sag in den hof und in daz lant,}
\text{daz ich belibe in dirre not}
\text{under wegen uf der verte tot.}
\]
\[(7454-7456)\]

In addition, in the episode of the Lovers' Cave, Curvenal is sent back to tell the story that the Lovers have gone to Ireland to proclaim their innocence:

\[
\text{Nu daz si sich geliezen nider,}
\text{si sanden Curvenalen wider,}
\text{daz er in den hof jaehe}
\text{und swa es not geschaehe,}
\text{daz Tristan und diu schoene Isot}
\text{mit jamer und mit manegey not}
\text{hin wider zIrlande waeren,}
\text{ir unschulde offenbaeren}
\text{wider liut und wider lant.}
\]
\[(16,773-16,781)\]

Both of these deceptions are lies, and nothing more, the baldest untruths imaginable without a single bit of truth to them. Only people who are utterly ignorant of the truth could be deceived by them. Tristan is not on his way to
Salerno, he is not dead, and, most importantly, he never had a wound that could have been cured if only he had seen a good medical doctor in time. He is in fact on his way to Isolde Regina, the only person who can effect a cure; the fact that Tristan will rely on his own skill as a deceiver, especially his artistic skills, to win Isolde Regina's favor, bodes well for his cure. The reader knows that Tristan will be cured, because the narrator remarks shortly after Tristan's departure that the trip will ultimately result in happiness:

\[
\text{wan daz ez aber in beiden ze vröuden und ze liebe kam.}
\]

(7376-7377)

If the lie about Tristan's death was meant to win sympathy for him in Cornwall, or to dupe the Irish, it was a failure, since it is never mentioned that the word of Tristan's demise was widespread. It seems that the purpose of the lie can only be to cover up Tristan's whereabouts with an initial crude ruse. It is significant that Tristan selects Curvenal to do this blunt work for him, and that Curvenal has nothing to do with the ruse of Tantis the minstrel that really saves Tristan's life. Similar observations can be made about the second lie concerning the Lovers' flight to Ireland. Like the first, only those lacking information or understanding would ever believe it. There is no point to a demonstration of innocence in Ireland, because Isolde has already done as much in Cornwall, by passing the ordeal. The second lie is again a crude one, because it is ridiculous to cast Ireland as a genuine refuge
for the Lovers. A theme of this romance is that society is inimical to Love, and since Irish society is not absolutely different in kind from Cornish society, Ireland would become as unfriendly to the Lovers as Cornwall. Isolde, even in Ireland, is still Mark's wife. There is no haven for the Lovers, no place of escape where they can set up a new, happy life. Even lesser lovers, such as Riwalin and Blansche-flur, cannot find an idyllic escape. Parmenie was an enticing but deceptive and finally destructive refuge for them.

It may come as a surprise that a return to Parmenie should lead to such negative results. Where else can Riwalin and Tristan expect to find an unequivocally safe haven, if not in the land where they are considered king? In addition, one might tend to think positively of Parmenie because of its close association with Rual, its surrogate lord. The critical literature tends to evaluate Rual as an uncontroversially good character, and indeed Rual impresses one as a fine man. A lesser individual might have tried to usurp the throne that Rual tends so faithfully for so many years. But what contributes most of all to the positive assessment of Rual for many readers, to be sure, is his relationship with Tristan. It is easy to make a positive evaluation of the character who tends Tristan faithfully as his foster father. Rual undergoes great hardship while he acts as foster father, and even saves Tristan's life on two occasions. But the fact is that the
father and son relationship of Tristan and Rual is not permanent. If the reasons for why the relationship breaks down are examined, it becomes evident that the familial bond was spurious from the start, and that Rual and Tristan have fundamentally different ways of thinking and, thus, utterly different ideas of what Tristan should do. The antagonism between them never becomes overt, but they are truly characters at odds.

However faithful Rual may be in fulfilling the office of foster father, it is clear time and again that he is concerned to break off the relationship of fatherliness and substitute for it a relationship of vassalage. Not long after he arrives at Mark's court, Rual decides to relate the story of Tristan, beginning with the statement that Tristan is a "stranger" to him (swie vremede so mir Tristan si - 4138). He goes on to reveal that Tristan concerns him only in that he, Rual, is Tristan's vassal. A short time later, when Tristan laments that he has just lost two fathers, both the real father about whom he has only now been told, and the foster father whom he had for so long taken to be his real father, Rual tries to defuse Tristan's grief by telling him that he still has two fathers, namely Rual and Mark. Tristan will have two fathers just as he did before (und hast doch zwene veter als e - 4384); but this generous promise gives cause for reflection. Which of the two foster fathers of Tristan will do so little that he will be a match for Tristan's dead father Riwalin? Tristan
has known only one father, Rual, and he must continue to feel a closer bond to Rual than he does to Riwalin. Tristan is of course deeply saddened, and enraged, over his father's death, and does not rest until Riwalin's murder has been avenged. But nowhere is there an indication that Tristan wants to follow in Riwalin's footsteps.\textsuperscript{18} He does not try to find out everything that he can about Riwalin, so that he might understand himself in terms of the heritage passed on to him by Rowalin. Consequently, the focus of fatherhood comes back to Rual, who shirks it. Displaying a rather quantity-oriented outlook, Rual thinks that Tristan's problem can be smoothed out by giving him a number of fathers equal to the number he had before.\textsuperscript{19} What better solution to the distress of the man who has lost two fathers, than to give him two more?

There must be some conscious intention behind Rual's revelation of Tristan's heritage. If Rual does not have some purpose in mind, he is little more than insensitive and crude, for the manner in which he barges in to tell Tristan that his life up until now has not been what he thought it was. The truth must come out. Rual can be congratulated for making this happen. The truth must also come out if Tristan is to become king of Parmenie, and this in fact is the end toward which Rual is working from the moment he takes in the infant Tristan. He adopted the infant not merely out of the goodness of his heart, but also because he feared that Morgan would kill the child and thereby deprive Parmenie of its heir:
der getriuwe tet ez umbe daz:
er vorhte Morganez haz;
ob er daz kint da wiste,
daz er so mit list
so mit gewalt verdarppe,
daz lant an ime entarppe.
(2031-2036)

The faithful Rual (der getriuwe) is thus more faithful to
the kingly office than he is to the king as an individual. 20
His aim is to give Parmenie its king. As soon as Rual feels
he is no longer needed as a father, and that Tristan has
come to the time when he must be an adult and be king, Rual
withdraws his fatherhood to replace it with vassalage. He
gives Tristan another father of convenience, King Mark.
Giving Tristan Mark as a relative fits perfectly with Rual's
aim to bring Tristan back to Parmenie. Rual, penniless after
his years of searching, does not have the wherewithal to get
back to Parmenie, nor does Tristan, who has been living well
enough at Mark's court but is hardly a rich man. But Mark
can provide ships and money. Rual has all of this in mind
when he suggests to Tristan, naturally in a very fatherly
way:

laz alle rede und tuo nimer:
minen herren dinen oheim
den bite, daz er dir helfe heim
und dich hie ritter mache;
wan du maht diner sache
sus hin wol selbe nemen war.
ir herren sprechet alle dar,
daz ez min herre gerne tuo!
(4390-4397)

Rual even knows enough to use the influence of Mark's court
to aid his own plan (5395-4397). They are caught up in the
spirit of the moment and urge Mark to help Tristan as Rual
suggests:

herre, ez hat quote vuoge:
Tristan hat craft genuoge
und ist ein wol gewahsen man.
(4399–4401)

It proves significant that Rual is so involved with arranging Tristan’s return to Parmenie that he overlooks Tristan’s own reaction to the story he hears. Rual never realizes how deeply Tristan is affected, in the purely subjective sense, by the story of his heritage. No one, in fact, is sensitive to Tristan’s feelings, except for the reader. When Rual tells Tristan’s story, Rual himself weeps, Mark weeps, and the whole court weeps with them. But Tristan does not weep. The story is so shocking to him, and is forced upon him so suddenly, that he cannot comprehend it immediately. In effect, he is moved to the point where he cannot weep:

daz weinde Marke, daz weind er,
daz weindens al gemeine
niwan Tristan al eine,
der enmohtes niht beclagen,
swes er da gehorte sagen:
in kam diu rede ze gahes an.
(4264–4269)

In the contrast between Tristan’s deeply felt, and entirely internal, emotions, and the open weeping of others, there is a pointed reminder of who is really most affected by the story Rual tells.21 What the members of the court feel is of minor significance. They constitute an anonymous and easily swayed group. Similarly, Mark’s weeping cannot be taken too seriously. Scarcely has the general weeping subsided than does Mark, making his obtuseness if not sheer stupidity obvious, asks Rual if the story he has just told
is really true:

Marke zuo dem gaste sprach:
'nu herre, ist diser rede also?'
(4284-4285)

If Mark sees a reason to doubt Rual's story, one may well ask why he weeps so long and hard over it. Furthermore, Mark acts as if he is greatly distressed over the fate of his sister Blanscheflur (4294ff.). But if he truly cared about his sister, would he not, in all the years since she left Cornwall, have made even minimal efforts to find out what happened to her? But there is no indication that he ever made such an attempt, and the story of Blanscheflur's death is as unknown to him as it is to anyone else. It is not surprising, however, that the break between Mark and Blanscheflur was complete and permanent. She did, after all, flee Cornwall because she feared that Mark would kill or at least disinherit her in his anger over the Riwalin affair (1463ff.).

Rual makes a long search to find his lost "relative" Tristan, not, one must realize, for subjective reasons, but to retrieve Tristan so that he can begin his service as the king of Parmenie. For Rual Tristan can be seen to be a means to an end. When Tristan returns to Parmenie, the country will have its king, as would seem right and proper, and the nation will be better off for it. Tristan, however, has no enthusiasm for becoming a monarch. He appears to be much more concerned with furthering his own interests than he is with becoming a king, and thereby giving up what he can achieve for himself for the sake of becoming a regent. Tris-
tan's interest in himself is obvious in the speech he gives at Mark's court just after there is general agreement that Mark should help Tristan return to Parmenie:

"trut herre, ich sage iu minen muot:
haet ich so rilichez guot,
daz ich wol nach dem willen min
und also ritter möhte sin,
daz ich mich ritterliches namen
noch er sich min niht dörfte schamen
und ritterlichu werdekeit
an mir niht würde nider geleit,
so wolte ich gerne ritter sin,
die müezige jugende min
üeben unde keren
zer wertzlichen eren;
wann ritterschaft, also man seit,
diu muoz ie von der kinheit
nemen ir anegenge
oder si wirt selten strenge.
daz ich min unversuohte jugent
uf werdekeit unde uf tugent
so rehte selten gütet han,
daz ist vil sere missetan
und han es an mich selben haz.
nu weiz ich doch nu lange daz:
sefste und ritterlicher pris
diu missehellent alle wis
und mugen vil übele samet wesen.
ouch han ich selbe wol gelesen,
daz ere wil des libes not;
gemach daz ist der eren tot,
da mans ze lange und ochz ze vil
in der kintheite pflegen wil.
und wizzet wol zeware,
haet ich vor einem jare
oder e min dinc so wol gewist,
als ez mir hie gesaget ist,
ezn waere niht biz her gespart.
sit ez aber do gesumet wart,
sost reht, daz ich mich noch erhol,
wann min dinc stat billiche wol
an libe und an dem muote.
got rate mir zem guote,
daz ich dem muote vollevar!"

(4405-4445)

It proves amazing to note the number of times that Tristan refers to himself in this lengthy speech, without once
referring to any other specific person. He has relatively little experience of the world, and may be somewhat naive, but he has enough confidence to declare his own thoughts and desires openly, and to deny that he has recourse to anyone else for the way he feels. He says that he knows what he is talking about -- he has read about it himself. He knows what he wants and expresses these wants -- and it is significant that he does not say that he hopes to see the rest of his life unfold in the manner that Rual would like to have it.

Tristan's attitude is born out subsequently, for in his farewell speech to the Parmenians, Tristan makes it clear that he does not have, and in all likelihood never had, any intention of staying in Parmenie to be its king, much as the Parmenian populace would like him to. The tables are turned and Tristan sees them as means to an end:

'ir herren alle' sprach er zin
'den ich iemer gerne bin
mit triuwe(n) und mit durnehtekheit
an allem dienste bereit,
als verre alse ich iemer kan,
mine mage und mine liebe man,
von der genaden ich ez han,
swaz mir got eren hat getan,
von iuwer helfe han ich mich
verrihtet alles, des ich
in minem herzen gerte.'
(5755-5765)

He is thankful to his landsmen because they have helped him do what his heart desired (5765). The praise he lavishes on his countrymen is relativized, as Tristan first expands the perspective to include God among those to whom he owes his success (swie michs got gewerte – 5766), and then as he
explains that even though his Parmenian comrades have been
good to him, he still intends to return immediately to the
kingdom of his uncle Mark:

'Vriunt unde man und alle die,
die durch minen willen hie
oder durch ir selber rugende sin,
nu lazet iu die rede min
niht sere missevallen;
ich künde und sage iu allen,
as Rual min vater, der hie stat,
gesehen und ourch gehoeret hat:
daz mir min oeheim sin lant
gesetzt hat in mine hant
und wil ouch durch den willen min
eliches wibes ane sin,
durch daz ich sin erbe si,
und wil, daz ich im won bi,
swa er si oder swar er var.
nu han ich mich bewegen dar
und stat mir al min muot dar zuo,
daz ich al sinen willen tuo
und wider zuo zim kere.'
(5777-5795)

If his landsmen are greatly grieved, Tristan will not feel
guilty about it, since he plainly tells them that they ought
not to be too disappointed about his announcement of depa-
ture:

nu lazet iu die rede min
niht sere missevallen

(5780-5781)

One obtains a definite impression that Tristan wants to go
back to Cornwall because he would be a fool, under the
circumstances, to stay in Parmenie. Why should he refuse
Mark, who offers to remain a bachelor for Tristan's sake?
Indeed, the narrator, shortly before Tristan's farewell
speech, goes to considerable effort to convince the reader
that Tristan must, of course, return to Cornwall. The
alternatives are weighed:

Nu spreche ein saeliger man:
der saelige Tristan
wie gewirbet er nu hie zuo,
daz er in beiden rehte tuo
und lone ietwederem, alse er sol?
iuwer iegelich der weiz daz wol:
ern kan daz niemer bewarn,
ern müeze ir einen lazen varn
und bi dem andern bestan.
lat hoeren, wie sol ez ergan?
vert er ze Curnewale wider,
so leit er Parmenie nider
an aller siner werdekeit
und ist ouch Rual nider geleit
an vröuden unde an muote,
an allem dem quote,
von dem sin winne solte gan;
und wil er aber da bestan,
son wil er sich niht keren
ze hoehleren eren
und Übergat ouch Markes rat,
an dem al sin ere stat.
wie sol er sich hier an bewarn?

(5647-5669)

The conclusion is that it is in Tristan's better interests
to go back to Cornwall:

weiz got da muoz er wider varn:
daz sol man ime billichen.
er sol an eren richen
und stigen an dem muote,
wil ez sich ime ze quote
und och ze saelden keren;
er sol wol aller eren
billiche muoten unde gern.
wil och in saelde der gewern,
des hat si reht, daz si daz tuo,
wan al sin muot der stat dar zuo.

(5670-5680)

This rising young man will be better off there, and the
good fortune he is more likely to encounter in Cornwall is
exactly what his mind is set on obtaining (5680).

At this point what is meant by Tristan's "self-
interest" should be clarified. By his own admission, he
wants property, wants to become a knight, and wants to earn worldly honor:

haet ich so rilichez guot,  
daz ich wol nach dem willen min  
und also ritter möhnte sin,  
daz ich mich ritterliches namen  
noch er sich min niht dörfte schamen  
und ritterlichu werdekeit  
an mir niht würde nider geleit,  
so wolte ich gerne ritter sin,  
die müezige jugende min  
üeben unde keren  
ze werltlichen eren.  

(4406–4416)

Tristan wants, according to the judgment of the narrator, to return to Cornwall because this alternative holds greater promise for his overall fame and success (5670–5680). One should note that in all of these desires, and in all the decisions he makes because of them, Tristan is self-interested, without ever being self-serving. He does not want property, fame, and fortune as ends in themselves. Throughout the story, in fact, he makes hardly any effort to establish himself as a man of worldly wealth and might. Where are his hordes of treasure, his kingdoms, his armies? Even when he focuses his thoughts on accumulating worldly things, the narrator makes clear that Tristan has additional, mitigating motives for what he does, which forestall any conclusion that he is, after all, interested only in obtaining some sort of power on earth. Tristan says that he needs material wealth to become a knight (4409–4432). He needs money to be a proper knight, one who will not shame the name of knighthood, and he does not intend to use his wealth to become a man of
leisure. Such a life is exactly what he wants to avoid. With regard to Tristan's decision to leave Parmenie behind, it is to his worldly advantage to make Cornwall his home. But another reason for Tristan to return to Cornwall is that Mark has asked him to return, and it is in accord with Tristan's wishes that he should do what his uncle Mark asks. At least part of Tristan's motivation for returning to Cornwall is his devotion, by all indications genuine, to his uncle.

In the foregoing analysis of Tristan and Rual, and of what each of them has in mind for Tristan's future, one begins to see the tension that resides within the relationship between these two men. There appears to be unity between them, because their overt actions and desires coincide neatly. But the motivations that each man has for his actions are in conflict, and Tristan and Rual are, as stated earlier, truly characters at odds. In this light one may ask how the narrator's digression (4500-4546), which culminates with the conclusion that a thorough-going unity binds Tristan and Rual, should be read. At that point in the narrative, arrangements are being made for Tristan's return to Parmenie. Mark will shortly make Tristan a knight. He has also agreed to supply Tristan with wealth, and the narrator flippantly says that he must now "grapple" with the task of explaining how Tristan and Rual go about managing this wealth:

Nu strie ich umbe ir beider leben
beidiu des vater und des suns.
(4506-4507)
The potential for conflict between Tristan and Rual exists because Tristan, a young man, cares little about wealth, and Rual, an older man, is concerned with the active pursuit of wealth:

und jugent daz guot unruochet,
da ez daz alter suochet
(4511-4512)

But there is no open conflict, because each man has the same overt goal, and each cooperates with the other so that the goal may be realized:

Rual der tugende erkande
der geloubete Tristand
und sach die jugende an im an;
so entweich aber Tristan
den tugenden an Ruale.
diz truoc si zeinem male
und zeinem zil gemeiner ger,
daz dirre gerte alse der.
(4529-4536)

The common goal is that of setting up Tristan as a proper man in the world, but one must look toward each man's motivations for working toward that end. Rual tends the material goods. There is little else he can do, since he is not a high noble and cannot make a knight of Tristan. Instead he devotes his full attention to managing Tristan's worldly affairs; there is nothing else that he can do. Tristan must have the wherewithal to return to Parmenie in kingly fashion, and Rual's talents as an organizer will help provide Tristan with the maximum material clout that can be derived from the wealth given to Tristan by Mark.

Tristan needs to be a man of material means if he wants to be a knight, and he can have no objection to the
managerial assistance Rual gives him. But as soon as Tristan becomes a man of the world, a knight, the harmony of Tristan's and Rual's interests ends. Once Tristan has reached the point from which his adult life effectively begins, he is not interested in pursuing the path that Rual has set for him, the path that leads to the resident kingship of Parmenie. Tristan is more concerned with doing what he wants to do. He has his own plans. He returns to Parmenie, but not for the reason that Rual wants him to return. Tristan will become Parmenie's king, but only to turn the mundane duties of that office back to Rual almost as quickly as Morgan is defeated. The motivation for Tristan's return is entirely personal, and has nothing to do with any obligation felt by Tristan to assume the Parmenian throne. Put simply, Tristan is grieved over his father's death, and wants to take revenge on Morgan.

The narrator mentions Tristan's vengeful feelings often enough to make the reader see Tristan's return trip as a voyage bent on revenge. When Rual breaks off his speech for a moment so that he and all but one of the others present can fall into tears, the narrator notes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Tristande was daz maere} \\
\text{vil innecliche swaere} \\
\text{von anders nihte wan von dan,} \\
\text{daz er an dem getriuwen man} \\
\text{vater unde vaterwan} \\
\text{also verlorn solte han.} \\
\text{(4229-4232)}
\end{align*}
\]

This first description of Tristan's sorrow serves to call
attention to Tristan's deeply felt grief, and also draws notice to Rual, who is given the responsibility for bringing unhappiness to Tristan. The terrible news is in fact embodied in Rual. He is a "faithful" man, \(^{23}\) in that he is faithful to the idea that Tristan is to be the next ruler of Parmenie. He will do what must be done to bring Tristan back, including things that will not now, and will probably never, enhance Tristan's subjective well-being. Another example of Rual's single-minded devotion to his vassal's duties has already been mentioned. After Rual has finished his speech about Tristan's heritage, Tristan openly laments the loss of two fathers, Riwalin and Rual:

Tristan der sprach: 'ich hoere wol:
sich machent disiu maere also,
daz ich ir spate wirde vro.
ich bin, alse ich han vernomen,
ze wunderlichen maeren komen:
ich hoere minen vater sagen,
min vater der si lange erslagen.
hie mite verziehet er sich min;
sus muoz ich ane vater sin,
zweier vetere, die ich gewunnen han.
a vater unde vaterwan,
wie sit ir mir alsus benomen!
an den ich jach, mir waere komen
ein vater, an dem selben man
da verliusich zwene veter an:
in unde den ich nie gesach.!'
(4362-4377)

Rual's reply follows, in which he tries to convince Tristan that he has nothing to grieve about:

der quote marschalc aber do sprach:
'wie nu, geselle Tristan,
la dise rede, dan ist niht an.
ja bistu von der künfte min
werder, dan du wandest sin,
und bist ir geret iemer me
und hast doch zwene veter als e,
hie minen herren unde mich:
er ist din vater, also bin ich, 
volge et miner lere
und wis iemer mere
allen kűnegen ebenher;
laz alle rede und tuo nimer:
minen herren dinen oheim
den bite, daz er dire helfe heim
und dich hie ritter mache;
wane du maht diner sache
sus hin wol selbe nemen war.
ir herren, sprechet alle dar,
daz ez min herre gerne tuo!'
(4378–4398)

Rual says that his own appearance on the scene, which includes his revelation of Tristan's background, has made Tristan a man of more consequence than he was before (4384–4385). Rual then deftly shifts the conversation to the task in which he is really interested, that of making Tristan the Parmenian king. He thus urges Tristan to become a peer of kings (4389) and then gives voice to the suggestion that Mark should help Tristan get back to Parmenie (4390–4397). Thus, in everything he says Rual tries to direct Tristan's thoughts toward kingship. Rual does not try at all to encounter directly Tristan's personal reaction to the story that Rual has told. This interpretation does not berate Rual because he does not give sufficient attention to Tristan's feelings; but it does maintain that Rual and Tristan are not the happy duo that they might seem to be, and that Rual is, quite bluntly, interested in Tristan only for the service that Tristan can do to Parmenie.

The narrator reminds his audience several more times of the conflict between Tristan's increasing success in the
world, and his grief over his father's death. When Tristan is knighted, at the time when he has the greatest reason to be happy at his worldly success, the narrator points out that Tristan is still in a state of misery.

'so helle iu got, nu sprechet an:
Tristan der hat nu swert genomen
und ist ze richer linge kommen
mit ritterlicher werdekeit:
lat hoeren, welher hande leit
haet er bi dirre linge?'
weiz got an einem dinge,
daz iegelichem herzen ie
und ouch dem sinen nahe gie:
daz ime der vater was erslagen,
als er Rualen horte sagen,
daz qual in in dem muote.
alsus was Übel bi quote,
bi linge schade, bi liebe leit
eines herzen staetiu sicherheit.
Ir aller jehe lit dar an,
haz der lige ie dem jungen man
mit groezere theri ernest an
dan einem stündigen man.
Ob aller sinister werdekeit
so swebete Tristan ie daz leit
und daz verborgen ungemach,
daz nieman lebender an im sach,
daz im Riwalines tot
und Morganes leben bot:
daz leit lag ime mit sorgen an.
der sorcsame Tristan
und sin getriulicher rat,
der noch von triuwen namen hat,
der saelige Poitenant,
die bereiteten zehant
mit richem geraete,
des man den wunsch da haete,
eine riliche barken:
sus kamen si vür Marken.
Tristan sprach: 'lieber herre min,
ez sol mit iuwern hulden sin,
daz ich ze Parmenie var
und neme nach iuwerm rate war,
wie unser dinc da si gewant
umbe liut und umbe lant,
daz ir da sprechet, ez si min.'
(5084-5125)

Grief hovers over all of Tristan's werdekeit, ironically
exactly the same good fortune that Rual claimed to have brought with him:

'ja bistu von der künfte min werder, dan du wandest sin'
(4381–4382)

Tristan keeps his grief secret. He takes no one into his confidence, not even Rual. Rual is primarily concerned with getting his master back to Parmenie, and there is no indication that Tristan ever takes Rual aside to draw him into his personal confidence. An increasing dissonance between Tristan and Rual is reflected in the narrator's descriptions of each man. The opposition between young and old, resolved with such apparent ease earlier (4500–4546), is still very much alive in the anger that besets Tristan:

Ir aller jehe lit dar an,
haz der lige ie dem jungen man
mit groezerem ernest an
dan einem stündigen man.
(5099–5102)

Tristan is described in terms of the pain he feels. He is the care-laden (sorcsame – 5110). Rual, an older man not prone to domination by his anger, is described in more positive terms. For him, everything is proceeding exactly as he would like to see it. Tristan is a knight, ready to set sail for Parmenie, where he can make a well-backed entrance with Rual (with the richem geraete on their riliche barken – 5115, 5116). While Rual has done his work well -- and there is nothing to hold against him for it -- it should nevertheless be noted that his ability to do his work well does not depend at all on devotion to Tristan as an individual,
or on the ability to understand Tristan's inner state. As long as Rual accomplishes certain things in the world, and in particular as long as he brings Tristan back to Parmenie, he is held to be a successful man. He garners praise for what he can do, and is called _der saelige Poitenant_ (5113) for performing his work so well.

But so that the reader does not forget the importance of what is going on in Tristan's mind, as well as the comparative pettiness of Rual's plans, the narrator makes the following speech, by Tristan to Mark, come after the verses that speak of Rual's success in the tasks that he has so faithfully carried out:

_Tristan sprach: 'lieber herre min,\n  ez sol mit iuwern hulden sin,\n  daz ich ze Parmenie var\n  und neme nach iuwerm rate war,\n  wie unser dinc da si gewant\n  umbe liut und umbe lant,\n  daz ir da sprechet, ez si min.'\n(5119-5125)_

For the reader, Tristan's words point to his secret desire for revenge, and to the difference between Tristan and Rual. Tristan does not take Mark into his confidence, just as he has not taken Rual into his confidence. He asks for Mark's permission to leave, but this request has a belated quality to it, since the ship to take him back to Parmenie is already prepared to set sail (5114-5117). Moreover, the reader should recall that the matter of Riwalin's death weighs heavily on Tristan (5090-5095; 5103-5109). In this context, Tristan's subsequent statement to Mark that he is going to
Parmenie to see "how (their) affairs stand" (5123) proves to be enormously understated. Tristan's return to Parmenie can never be a trivial inspection visit. Finally, Tristan's concluding statement gives notice of the fact that he is not really concerned with becoming the king of Parmenie. The entire matter of kingship is of small importance to him. He does not proudly proclaim that he intends to follow in his father's footsteps, and does not aggressively assert, let alone reiterate, his right to the Parmenian throne. Tristan says only that he is going back to the land that Mark has told him is his. There is, significantly, no mention whatsoever of Rual in Tristan's speech, even though Rual is the character who most directly informs Tristan of his heritage and his right to the Parmenian throne.

When Tristan comes back to Parmenie he does indeed act like its king. The nobles of the land assemble to greet him (5267-5271), receive their fiefs from his hand, and declare their loyalty to him:

si empfiengen al besunder
ir lehen, ir liut unde ir lant
von herren Tristandes hant:
si swuoren hulde und wurden man.
(5284-5287)

Tristan is clearly considered king, and he does nothing to discourage his landsmen from treating him as such. He does not reject the kingship, but the reader knows that Tristan is not truly interested in being king. Revenge dominates his thoughts:
hier under haete ie Tristan
den tougenlichen smerzen
verborgen in dem herzen,
der da von Morgane gie.
der smerze der begab in nie
weder vruevo noch spate.
alsus gienger ze rate
mit magen und mit mannen
und jach, er wolte dannen
ze Britanje gahen,
sin lehen enpfahen
von sines viendes hant,
durch daz er sines vater lant
mit rehte haete deste baz.
diz sprach er unde tet ouch daz:
er vuor von Parmenie
er und sin cumpanie
bereitet unde gewarnet wol,
alse der man ze rehte sol,
der uf angestliche tat
ernestlichen willen hat.
(5288-5308)

Still tormented over his father's death, Tristan confers
with his landsmen, as he did earlier with Rual (5103-5125),
to decide on the best course of action (5294-5295). But
again Tristan takes no one into his confidence. He does
not reveal innermost thoughts to the Parmenians, and they
are not said to have any idea of Tristan's preoccupation.
They do, however, know that the encounter with Morgan will
be a desperate one. There is an inherent contradiction in
Tristan's stated intention to receive his "fief" from the
"hands of his enemy" (5298-5299). All must know that they
are headed for a fight; the Parmenian knights are prepared
for serious action (5303-5308). Yet no one will admit that
a fight with Morgan is inevitable. It is not surprising
that Tristan does not speak of his desire to encounter
Morgan in violent fashion, since Tristan has kept his desire
for vengeance secret all along, and continues to do so. But it is puzzling that no Parmenian should comment on the danger involved in meeting Morgan, and that Rual is in no way actively involved in helping Tristan to prepare for the confrontation with Morgan.

The fighters of Parmenie are perfect pawns. Their king, who has to settle an old conflict with Morgan, has returned, and they will now faithfully follow him into battle. Rual is a faithful fellow, too, but his only peripheral involvement in the battle preparations shows that he considers the limits of his faithfulness, at least in so far as it includes standing beside Tristan in any, even the most dangerous situation, to have been reached when Tristan again set foot on Parmenian soil. Rual has done the work of a faithful steward, by taking care of the realm in the king's absence, and then by bringing the king back as well. He has done his work, and he considers himself finished with it. He now steps back and expects Tristan to fulfill his own kingly obligations, and one of the king's obligations is that of dealing with rivals to his throne. The defeat of Morgan is an important matter of business, and Rual is perfectly willing to let Tristan take care of it.

Tristan has, of course, taken kingly responsibilities upon himself by assuming the Parmenian throne. But it is strange that Rual should allow Tristan to assume those responsibilities so quickly, and without offering the new monarch any word of advice, fatherly or otherwise. Rual
knows better than anyone that Tristan has had very little of the practical, managerial training given to princes and future kings, and that Tristan is not well prepared immediately to take the kingly office upon himself. It is quite unthinking of Rual that he allows Tristan to walk into the Parmenian kingship and take all of the king's duties upon himself, without a moment's pause for proper reflection and caution. And Rual is even more irresponsible in that he allows Tristan to walk into a military engagement with Morgan. Who but Rual knows better that Tristan is not schooled in the martial arts? The reader is even told that Tristan's education, supervised by Rual, places far more emphasis on intellectual than on physical skills (2056-2130). 25 If one tries to excuse Rual's irresponsibility by suggesting that Rual naively thinks that Tristan will be able to reach a peaceful accord with Morgan, then one must ask why Rual does not travel along with Tristan, to help him effect the reconciliation. Rual is, after all, the man who made a treaty with Morgan some years earlier (1869-1893), and therefore the Parmenian who best knows how to deal with Morgan on the political level.

The ominous pre-confrontation situation is further underscored by another detail. Assumably, Rual must be one of the group of important Parmenians that meets with Tristan after his return to Parmenie (5267-5271), but Rual's name is never mentioned, nor are there even oblique references to his presence at the meeting. Clearly, Rual has withdrawn
into the role of a passive observer. After the homecoming speech he makes to Tristan (5187-5200), Rual is never again given another word to say. In all of the deliberations that take place before Tristan sets off to meet Morgan, Rual gives not a word of counsel, nor does anyone turn to him for advice. In this important episode, in which decisions are made that place in danger the lives of Tristan and of many Parmenians, no one asks for Rual's help. His presence is superfluous.

A summary of what has been revealed here about Rual gives two reasons for the progressive withdrawal of the Rual character after Tristan returns to Parmenie. First, Rual, as an individual, wants to disengage himself from deep involvement in Tristan's affairs. He does not want to be Tristan's father or intimate friend, but only his vassal, and he is quite willing to allow Tristan to make all of his own decisions, and to fight all of his own battles, as soon as he, Rual, has completed his faithful servant's work of bringing home the Parmenian ruler. Second, Rual must become a background character because there is very little place left for him in the story's subsequent episodes. He has done what he is able to do; he cannot do any more. The longer someone remains Tristan's friend, the more he must participate in a personal bond with Tristan, the more he is drawn into the Love Tristan will share with Isolde, and the more he must be willing to make sacrifices for Tristan. Tristan's real friends -- and it will be argued that he has
only two: Isolde the Fair and Brangaene -- must be as concerned with his welfare as they are with their own. Their devotion must be total. They can never step back. There proves, however, to be another artistic reason for Rual's withdrawal. If Rual were kept on as a highly visible character, his continued presence would be at best an embarrassment, and at worst a deathly tragedy. There would necessarily have to be an open split between Tristan and Rual, because the latter's character does not give him what he would need to be a real friend and supporter of Tristan. He might as well, if he stayed in the foreground, become an overt enemy of Tristan. It may be well to have Rual about when certain affairs of state are in negotiation, but what part could Rual ever play in the series of intrigues that comprise Tristan's life, in particular the intrigues of Tristan the lover?

Rual's presence on the scene becomes progressively awkward after Tristan comes home to Parmenie. One remembers that both men wanted Tristan to return to his homeland, but for different reasons. Rual brought Tristan back to be the Parmenian king; Tristan came back to avenge his father's death. Yet, however their overt desires mesh, both men withhold information from each other; Tristan never reveals that anger, more than anything else, motivates him to return home, and Rual never tells Tristan about the danger that a meeting with Morgan entails. It is just as well, then, that Rual falls silent after Tristan comes home. If con-
versations continued, in which Tristan kept secret his true motivations, and in which Rual kept from Tristan certain facts, the relation of the two men would become very strained. It would no longer be possible to use descriptions such as "Tristan took no one into his confidence" or "Rual withheld facts." The two men would simply be lying to each other, and their behavior would become more distasteful with each successive conversation in which they never really say anything to each other. In other words, their relationship is one of essential distance and could not be maintained indefinitely. And, it is just as well that Rual does not openly try to keep Tristan in Parmenie. Tristan is destined for better things than the kingship of a pleasant, but hardly stupendous, little country. He does not want to stay on as king, and it is a foregone conclusion that he will in fact leave, since the story has only just begun. Rual must fail, and his character can keep some measure of dignity if he fails in silence.

Rual does not go along when Tristan rides out to meet Morgan. He simply does not want to accompany Tristan, and one should note that this is not a hard decision for Rual to make. If it were, Gottfried would have included a scene in which Rual deliberates whether or not he should stay at Tristan's side. From all indications, Rual's attitude is that Tristan, now back in his homeland, can start attending to his affairs by himself. Furthermore, Rual does
not accompany Tristan because there would be very little for him to do at the meeting of Tristan and Morgan. If the meeting were political in nature, and if Tristan had to strike some kind of shrewd bargain with Morgan, then it would be appropriate for Rual to come along. Rual has bargained with Morgan before (1879-1893), and he could help Tristan to do the same again. But the purpose of the meeting, as Gottfried sees it, is not primarily political. Tristan goes to Morgan for revenge; he goes for the subjective reason of obtaining repayment for his father's death. Rual has no place at the meeting. His presence there would give the proceedings a demeaning political emphasis, and would not deter Tristan's vengeance. Tristan must have his will: if he took the path that Rual would like to see him on, the story would end abruptly at the dead end of Tristan's Parmenian kingship. Tristan does not want to stay in Parmenie as king, and the subjective aspect of Tristan, of what he wants to do by his own personal decision, is exactly the aspect of which Rual is in ignorance. Rual can understand Tristan as the ruler of Parmenie, but not as a person who is more than the social role he can fulfill. Rual never understands, for example, how the story of Riwalin and Blanscheflur affects Tristan. He never realizes that Tristan is motivated far more by the desire to avenge his father's death than by a desire to become the Parmenian king. It is just as well that Rual falls mute after Tristan returns to Parmenie. There is
nothing more that he can do for his master, and more of the
dignity of the Rual character is preserved if his failure,
and his departure from the story, take place in silence.

Of course, Rual does perform one obviously important
service for Tristan after the latter's return to Parmenie,
in that he rescues Tristan from deathly battle with Morgan's
followers. But one must closely examine the circumstances
of Rual's intervention in order to see Gottfried's treatment
of the material. The narrator says:

Tristan do der von lande schiet,
als ime sin rat Rual geriet,
sin lehen da zenpfahene
und iesa wider ze gahene,
sit des lac zallem male
dem saeligen Ruale
der selbe wan ze herzen ie,
reht alse es ouch Tristande ergie.
iedoch geriet er die geschiht
umb Morganes schaden niht.
(5547-5556)

The narrator contradicts information he gave earlier,
for he says here that Rual did advise Tristan on the Morgan
affair, and recommended that Tristan receive his fief from
Morgan and then return home at once (5548-5550). Rual
furthermore did not, according to the narrator, advise
that harm should be done to Morgan (5555-5556). Outwardly
this is all fine advice, but it has a superficial ring if
examined more closely. Rual thinks of Tristan's safety,
so that he advises Tristan to return home as soon as he
obtains his fief. But how can Rual be so naive to think
that Tristan can indeed simply visit Morgan to pick up the
title to Parmenie? In addition, Rual does not counsel that Tristan should do harm to Morgan. But how could Rual overlook the fact that Tristan and his Parmenian supporters ride out fully armed and prepared for violence (5303-5308)? The apparent contradiction of the narrator's mention of the advice given to Tristan by Rual is resolved when the reader realizes that Rual's advice is hardly worthy of that description. Rual gives advice, but from the standpoint of a detached, and in fact ignorant, observer. If Rual had been truly involved in helping Tristan, surely Rual's name would be mentioned somewhere in the description of Tristan's preparations for meeting with Morgan. If Rual believes that the meeting can be as untroubled as his advice suggests it will be, one might wonder why Rual bothers to fear for Tristan's well-being, starting from the moment that Tristan rides out (5547-5554). And why does Rual then ride out to check up on Tristan with the backing of no less than one hundred armed knights (5557-5558)? If Rual thinks that Tristan may be in sufficient danger to require the assistance of one hundred warriors, why does he wait so long to give Tristan that assistance? 

The argument here stops short of claiming that Rual consciously acts against Tristan -- but it could easily be expanded to include such a conclusion. The summary finding to be emphasized here is one that applies both to Curvenal and Rual, namely that each is so locked into per-
ceiving the world from the point of view of the individual servant or vassal that neither is ever a fitting companion to Tristan, either in his understanding of him and his conflicts, or in the assistance that he gives him. The role of vassal is defined by society, and neither Curwenal nor Rual ever steps out of that role sufficiently to give Tristan any sort of attention that is not in some way socially approved. In the case of Rual it is particularly clear that his relationship with Tristan, his feeling of devotion toward him, breaks off at just the moment that Tristan becomes a socially recognized king with the social obligations of fighting his own battles. It quite fortuitously happens that Rual decides, at the very last moment, to perform a last act of service for his master by riding out with an army to help defeat Morgan's forces. The reasons for Rual's decision are never made clear.

A counterargument might be made, along the lines that the author did not intend Curwenal and Rual to be anything but minor characters. They have certain roles to fulfill in the plot and become superfluous once they have carried out their assignments. It is of course true that Gottfried must have meant Curwenal and Rual to be "minor" characters. Gottfried was a skilled artist and we must assume that he was well aware of what he was doing when he wrote the Tristan. At the same time, it is not enough to dispose of the analysis of Curwenal and Rual by simply saying that they are "minor" characters. Gottfried did not
draw them quite that simply. For example, the Curvenal character positively invites comparison with the Brangaene character. Both are effectively the main servants of their respective masters, whom they have served since childhood. The Curvenal character does not exist just because the plot requires that he must; he also furnishes a striking contrast to another character who by outward appearances is similar to him. It is perfectly well to say, in the case of Rual, that he just fulfills the role of a caretaker and vassal of Tristan. But Gottfried must have wanted to say more with the character of Rual, for why else would he have made Rual Tristan's foster father and thereby awakened the expectation in the reader that Rual will, after all, be more than just a vassal -- an expectation that is never gratified.
CHAPTER III:

THE LOVE AFFAIR AND WHO CONTROLS IT

Curvenal and Rual are always outsiders. They are not on the scene of Tristan's most important endeavors -- he acts alone -- and only Curvenal is even peripherally connected with the Lovers. These two servants could easily be replaced by any number of other possible characters who likewise draw their being from the position they fill in society. There is little uniqueness to them. Brangaene, on the other hand, is always an inimitable insider, a status given her starting with the overt facts of the plot. She is a relative of the Irish royalty with a heritage that, even though it is never described in detail, makes her the only possible Brangaene. She is a servant, but one with royal blood, and thus defies interpretation into a single social role. She is a servant, but can never, either by external circumstances (her status as a blood relative) or by internal motivation (her own will), fall into the distant, formal relationship maintained by Curvenal and Rual toward those they serve. The magnitude of Brangaene's agency derives ultimately from the qualities given to her as an individual; these qualities will be elicited in the final chapter of this study. In the present chapter the object is that of exposing Brangaene as the character who most represents Tristan-love, and is more in tune with it than any of the other characters, with the exception, of course, of the
Lovers themselves. Like Tristan and Isolde, Brangaene is an integral gear in the love affair even before anyone is aware of it.

Clarification of the last statement involves first of all taking a position on the controversy in Tristan scholarship surrounding the love potion. A review of all the opinions expressed on this subject is not needed here,¹ and the article by Hans Fürstner² can provide the appropriate background. Fürstner thinks that critical opinions on the love potion (in Gottfried's Tristan) fall into four groups. The potion is symbolic of the Love itself; symbolic of the Love become conscious; symbolic of the awakening of sensual Love; and finally that the potion is simply some kind of symbol, here divested of whatever import it may have elsewhere.³ He goes on to list a number of incidents in the story that have been cited as proofs of love between Tristan and Isolde before they drink the potion. Among these are Tristan's praise of Isolde after he returns from his first trip to Ireland (8253ff.); the fact that he returns to Ireland to win Isolde (8545ff.); Isolde's explicit rejection of the Irish steward's affections (9283ff.); and Isolde's appeal to God that Tantris be given a better life (9992ff.).⁴ Proofs such as these, based on the most obvious instances in which the Love between Tristan and Isolde might become prominent, must fall prey to the very criticism that engendered them. Obvious declarations of Love are sought, yet it is equally obvious, as Fürstner's own commentary well shows,⁵
that, before the potion is consumed, neither of the Lovers openly declares Love for the other. Nor do they after the potion is drunk, since they have no need to reassure each other of their love, and since one of the Lovers' greatest concerns is to keep their Love secret from the society that would destroy it.

The scholarship on the love potion, in seeking to pinpoint the moment at which the Love begins, seems to have overlooked the consistent background of dramatic irony provided by Gottfried. The reader knows from the very outset that Tristan and Isolde will fall in love. A single mention of their names in the Prologue (ll. 128-130) is enough to remind the audience, undoubtedly already familiar with the outline of the Tristan legend, of this fact. In addition, Gottfried furnishes numerous comments within the narrative that serve to remind the reader of the special relationship between Tristan and Isolde. Both, for example, are associated with minne. For Tristan:

\begin{quote}
  dar zuo was ime der lip getan,
  als ez diu Minne gebot
  \begin{flushright}
  (3332-3333)
  \end{flushright}
\end{quote}

For Isolde:

\begin{quote}
  man sach ez innen und uzen
  und innerthalben luzen
  daz bilde, daz diu Minne
  an libe und an dem sinne
  so schone haete gedraet
  \begin{flushright}
  (10949-10953)
  \end{flushright}
\end{quote}

There are comments that point ahead to the future of the Lovers:
daz ware insigel der minne,
mit dem sin herze sider wart
versigelte unde vor verspart
aller der werlt gemeiner
niwan ir al eiener
diu schoene Isot si kam ouch dar
(7812-7817)

Some of the comments appear to be tied on a thread.

Tristan's helmet shines like crystal and is inscribed with the dart of minne:

ein helm wart ouch besendet dar,
der was ein cristalle var
(6587-6588)

. . . . . . . . . . . . . .
dar uffe stuont diu strale,
der minnen wisaginne,
diu sit her mit der minne
an ime vil wol bewaeret wart,
swie langez würde dar gespart.
(6594-6598)6

When Isolde later discovers Tristan in the pond of water:

nu ergienez, alse ez solte
unde alse der billich wolte,
diu junge künigin Isot
daz si ir leben unde ir tot,
ir wunne unde ir ungemach
zallererste gesach.
von sinem helme gienc ein glast,
der vermeldet ir gen gast.
(9369-9376)

As far as the perceptive reader is concerned, the Love is always present. The question of determining its exact starting point becomes rather superfluous. The dramatic irony of the Love -- the fact that it is present for the reader before characters in the narrative are fully aware of it -- has wide implications. The reader is forced to be at work interpreting everything that happens in its relation to the Love, which becomes an absolute standard
of judgment to which the reader may never have been exposed before. Tristan-love is to be a supremely elevating experience, both for the Lovers and for those informed of it, and by it, by Gottfried's rendition of the story (see especially ll. 169-244) which, he emphasizes, is once and for all the true story (ll. 131-166).

The background of dramatic irony allows the reader to set up webs of association and opposition between the Lovers and the events and characters surrounding them. Information is given to allow evaluation of events and characters with relation to the Love long before the narrative clearly focuses on it. One web of opposition involves Mark. The insight given the reader through dramatic irony gives a means of determining Mark's antagonism toward Tristan-love long before he becomes an overt enemy of it. Tristan is a unique character in many ways, but what perhaps sets him apart most of all is his ability as an artist. The reader, having seen Tristan use his artistry to win favor at Mark's court, assumes it will be a major influence on what is going to happen to him in general, and most especially assumes that it will figure prominently in the love affair. It does, as Tantris the minstrel finds in Isolde another person -- the only other person -- who is capable of developing true artistic ability. The harmony of Tristan and Isolde as musicians reflects their later harmony as lovers. Music sets them apart from and above everyone else and creates a bond between them in which others cannot ultimately participate. What, then, is the
relative meaning of Mark's offer of friendship to Tristan, made shortly after the boy's arrival in Cornwall? Mark's speech, which occurs quite early in the narrative, reads:


(3721-3741)

It is definitely the speech of a man who recognizes his limitations, but also of a man who perversely glories in them. He speaks in figures of sybarition (schoeniu cleider, 3734), lust (pfert, 3734), and material might (swert, sporn, armbrust, guldin horn, 3737-3738). He is incapable of matching Tristan's artistry, and thinks of it as something he can gain possession of in exchange for worldly goods. He later shows no understanding of what Isolde has to offer -- see the explicit denunciation of Mark in the narrator's discourse on blindness, ll. 17,764ff) -- since he desires her only as an object of sensual pleasure, and he is finally content to possess her exclusively in terms of his own
worldly power, as his queen (ll. 17,723-17,734).

Why does Tristan, then, accept the challenge to return to Ireland? By the appearance of it, he is working for Mark in the relation of a servant to a master. Tristan's own feeling that he has an obligation to give Isolde to Mark becomes most clear shortly before the marriage takes place.

swie wol Tristande tae te
daz leben, daz er haete,
sin ere zoch in doch dervan.
sin triuwe lac im allez an,
daz er ir wol gedaeh he
und Marke sin wip braeh he.
(12,513-12,518)

Closer examination, however, of the episodes in question shows that Mark is not the master of Tristan, and that the underlying purpose of the wooing expedition cannot be the winning of Isolde for Mark. Tristan first of all finds it imperative to leave Cornwall in order to save his life. He is beset by the envy of certain barons at Mark's court (8318-8327) to the point that he must fear he will be murdered (8374). He turns to Mark for help, only to receive in reply a speech filled with the words haz ("hate") and nit ("envy"), words which by the volume of their occurrence must reveal the actual bases of the apparently good-willed Mark's thought. The trait, shown earlier to be characteristic of Curvenal, of using social norms to distance oneself from a person in need, surfaces in Mark's speech:

wis vor beden kend alle wis
dinen vrumen und din ere
und enr at mir niht mere,
daz dir ze schaden müge ergan l
swaz rede hier umbe wirt getan,
desn volge ich weder in noch dir.'
(8418-8423)
Verses 8420-8421 refer to Tristan's earlier plea to Mark that he bring to an end the wicked scheming of the barons and pay heed to Tristan's distress (8379-8385). This "advice" that Tristan gives to Mark could hardly "injure" Tristan if it were carried out. Tristan really does have reason to fear the barons, who soon congregate and announce a plan "niwan durch Tristandes tot" (8453). Mark does not want to assist Tristan, because doing so would require standing up to the barons. The reader sees Mark avoiding the embarrassment of admitting his weakness by trying to convince Tristan that his general reputation in the world (vrumen and ere, l. 8419) is more important than his life. He pushes Tristan away with a vague recommendation to become an exemplary man in society, and closes his speech by emphasizing that he intends to take no effective action.10

When Tristan then threatens to leave Cornwall, because he would rather be without a land than without his life, Mark agrees to help him. He wants Tristan to stay with him. But he still points out that he wants to remain at a distance from his nephew's adversity:

swaz so nu hier uz geschiht,  
da bin ich gar unschuldic an.  
(8438-8439)

He is eager for the advantage that Tristan may bring him, but does not want to accept the hardship that accompanies it. The assistance he effects is minor. At Tristan's suggestion he calls the barons together so that their plans can be discussed. They recommend that Mark obtain Isolde the Fair
as his wife. Mark does not want to marry (8361-8364) and tries to dissuade the barons by telling them that the Irish are mortal enemies (8481-8488). A marriage compact is out of the question. When this excuse for remaining a bachelor, and allowing Tristan to inherit the throne, leaves the barons unmoved, Mark uses his wits and tries to assuage the schemers by telling them that he has, after all, wanted to make Isolde his wife ever since he heard Tristan describe her. Thus, he hopes to stall the barons by showing that he is a good fellow, who does want to marry, but not right away, since Isolde is unobtainable. He thinks it safe to voice a desire for Isolde because it is inconceivable to him that the events which would lead to the marriage could ever come to pass (daz es ieier würde zende braht - 8522). Quite unwittingly, and by sheer lack of perception, Mark has made it possible for Tristan to take open control of the affair and begin the wooing of Isolde. Tristan is precisely the one most able to bring the matter "to its conclusion." He is successful at everything he tries. When Curvenal brings word of Tristan's success to the Cornish shipmates, they are moved to marvel at Tristan, naturally with considerable jealousy:

die nidegen barune
si griffen an ir rune
und an ir sprachen wider als e.
si zigen Tristanden aber do me
durch disse richen linge
zouberlicher dinge;
iegelicher sprach besunder:
'hie merket alle wunder,
waz dirre man wunders kan.
ja herre, waz kan dirre man,
daz er ez allez endet,
dar an er sich gewendet!

(10,791-10,802)
The repetition of *dirre man* (10,799-10,800) and *ex* (10,801-10,802) indicates that what disturbs the barons most is Tristan's individuality, a trait devalued by society. The barons are not individuals. They always function in a group, and while they may be separate physical beings, their minds are on the same plane, as the same words issue from each mouth (10,797). Tristan accomplishes what he does because he is Tristan and no other. The reaction to his success, by representatives of society, can only be malicious. It is fitting that Tristan should undertake alone the quest for the woman with whom he will finally fall into an anti-social love. He says that he is bolder and more ready, and a better questor, than any other (8547-8553), and that he himself will guide the ship's keel to Ireland (8548-8549). Interpreting the narrator's interpolation (8601-8628), Tristan is in control of the voyage, and what underlies it is more significant than the strand of hair that sets off the wooing expedition in other versions of the legend. The purpose of the wooing can only be the winning of Isolde for Tristan, and no other. The barons do not want her. Any scheme to put Tristan in mortal danger should satisfy them. It happens that the idea of finding a wife for Mark allows the barons to exploit one of his weaknesses, and they have calculated correctly, because Mark does help their plan along as he blunders in trying to talk his way out of it. The barons what Isolde as a queen, but there must be a number of other eligible noblewomen available for that office, and it is not as if the barons think that Isolde is particu-
larly suited for it, except that the wooing of Isolde is likely to destroy Tristan. Mark, who would rather remain single, does not want any woman, including Isolde. His voiced desire for her was a lie, and recall that he twice beforehand distances himself from whatever happens in Tristan's conflict with the barons. Jumping ahead a bit, there is a more refined indication of the wooing's purpose in a comparison of it with a traditional romance quest. In setting the foundation for his theory of romance, Joseph Campbell explains:

The standard path of mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation...initiation...return, which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. ¹³

The hero performs a service for his society in that he brings it something that it needs or would find beneficial. Tristan, on his trip to Ireland, undertakes a quest of the sort that Campbell describes, but the object he wins for his society is unwanted there. The circumstances of the
wooing are weighted to the conclusion that Tristan can only, once the outer levels of the plot become translucent, be winning Isolde for himself.

The sham of the external motivation of the wooing becomes clearer when it is realized that Tristan is sent out on the pretext of winning Isolde, the unwanted object. If the barons' plan had included, or originated from, a desire to bring back some truly wanted object, such as the youths taken by Morold over the years, their plan would be given a glint of legitimacy. But nowhere in the barons' scheming are the youths mentioned, and Mark also has forgotten about them. Tristan later arranges for their release, but the motif of the release of the captives is treated so lightly that it cannot be construed as even a partial purpose of Tristan's trip. Gurmun has no objection to letting them go, and Tristan does not have to fight for them (ll,403-11,416). There is rejoicing when the barons see their relations again at the Irish court (ll,167-ll,178), but the narrator refuses to describe it in detail — vröude unde clage der was da vil, der ich niht sunder rechen wil (ll,177-11,178) — and the reader must wonder if it is in the youths' best interests to be returned to their homeland, where never a finger was raised to protect them, until Tristan arrived. In Ireland, the captives spend their time at the court and they are not said to have been mistreated.

Campbell notes that there is a source of tension in the hero's adventure in that he may not return. A failure
to return entails a rejection and, hence, a negative evaluation of the society of departure. In the case of the wooing:

When representatives of Mark's court accompany Tristan on his second mission to Gurnun's court, one notes that the Cornish barons' fear and treachery, which result in their desire to flee homeward and hence abandon Tristan, not only present the concept of return to Cornwall in a negative light, since it is encouraged by men of less than loyal character, but also place a positive value on remaining away from Tintagel. 16 Tristan, who is influenced by considerations of ere (honor) in bringing Isolde to Mark, and who considers himself the servant of Mark and of society, does return to society at the conclusion of the wooing adventure. But, as a Lover, he does so quite unwillingly, and wishes, along with Isolde, that their voyage on the ocean might continue indefinitely (12,412-12,420). He drops his role as society's servant; however, the conflict between Love and honor remains and determines the final fate of Tristan-love in the world.

Up until now the emphasis has been on Tristan as one who works alone, but it cannot be overlooked that he receives assistance from others at critical moments. One important dimension of aid is Divine. Can there be any
doubt that Tristan will succeed in slaying the dragon and
gaining title to Isolde? Divine benevolence toward Tristan
is unmistakeably evident in his fight with Morold. Time
after time Tristan invokes God's name and claims his aid.
God is ubiquitous in the Morold episode. His name, in fact,
appears forty-four times within one thousand two hundred and
twenty-three lines (6007-7230). Morold enters the battle
with a force of four men, but Tristan is armed not only with
his own powers, but with vastly superior spiritual assistance,
including the help of God (6876-6888). There can be no doubt
that Tristan will win the battle proper. The chance of his
losing the dragon fight gives equally little concern. The
prelude to the fight runs smoothly. The Cornish barons,
well under control, dare not rebel (8659-8674), and the Irish
marshal is easily bribed.

Doubting Tristan would place one in league with the
doubting Cornish barons, and, for that matter, with the
doubting Curvenal. And one would be doubting God as well,
because of the connection drawn by the narrator between the
Morold and dragon battles. The dragon is likened to an army
(9016), a description applied to both Tristan and Morold
(6857-6858; 6895) and to the dying Morold (7001). Tristan
is an army in himself, making the odds in the dragon fight
at least equal. But, as in the Morold fight, Tristan's
odds are considerably better than equal, since the dragon
is described in association with the devil (8905, 8972, 9343),
as was Morold (6852, 6906). Having defeated the devil in
Morold, Tristan can be expected to defeat the devil in the
dragon. The opposition between Tristan and those of the devil, and its outcome in the former's favor, are clear enough. Other portents of Tristan's success include the introduction of the character of the foolish Irish steward even before Tristan encounters the dragon (8943ff.). This oaf can never be a real obstacle to Tristan. Whenever the steward appears, or his name is mentioned, the reader can await only that he will blunder, or that his case will be ridiculed and defeated. Isolde's true Lover-to-be never has any problem in maintaining his title to Isolde in public. He has, after all, won Isolde honestly, and the Irish court spontaneously accedes to the legitimacy of Tristan's claim as soon as the facts are revealed (11,315ff.). Even the mention that thousands have lost their lives to the dragon for the sake of winning Isolde (8916) augurs well for Tristan. One recalls that, in the Morold episode, thousands, who (like the Cornish shipmates) give Tristan no help against Morold, await his return on shore (7234).

To redefine the position somewhat, Tristan does need help in the world, to accomplish what he wants, but he does not need help that is of the world. Armed assistants, better weapons, craftier battle plans -- Tristan needs none of them, at least not when his success on the battlefield, though necessary, is rather overshadowed by some higher goal or purpose more important than the fighting in and of itself. God's assistance gives Tris-
tristan's victory over Morold a divine dimension, and then the Morold battle is only a prelude to Tristan's extended adventure in Ireland. The dragon fight is in the context of the wooing of Isolde, and is but a preliminary to the ultimate love affair.

In both of the Irish adventures, Tristan does not enter a truly dangerous situation, in which his life is truly at stake, until he is within the setting of the Irish royal family. In both cases the greatest danger to Tristan is portrayed by Isolde Regina. In the first adventure, he is saved by his harping, and in the second by the intervention of Brangaene. Isolde Regina is Tristan's major adversary in his Irish adventures. She is the queen, has overt control, and is the one who must first of all be won over to Tristan's side in order for him to succeed. But the fact that Isolde Regina's power is externalized diminishes it and leads one to look for where the deeper, real seat of power (in the episodes under consideration) is located. The unconcealed power of the Irish royal family is in the hands of Gurmun and Morold. The might of these men is spurious, its weak basis apparent first of all in their relationship not as brothers in blood, but brothers-in-law. Neither is powerful in his own right. Gurmun allies himself with the ancient Roman Empire (5892ff.), which, for Gottfried's audience and for the modern reader as well, can only serve as a model of a once great, but now fallen,
worldly glory. Not a warrior, Gurnun aligns himself with a strongman, Morold, through a politically fruitful marriage with the latter's sister (5931-5934). Morold would seem to depend on Gurnun for some amount of dignified security in the world, for without the alliance with Gurnun he would very likely be a disreputable roustabout fighter. He is not depicted as a man with talent as a ruler and politician. The might of his fists balances Gurnun's lack of the same strength. But Morold's power is also of limited duration, once he encounters a higher authority in Tristan.

Isolde Regina falls in with the transitory power of the Irish royal men and never dissociates herself from it. She has a hand in her brother's evil since she, being the only person who can cure the poisoned wound, is probably the person who provided Morold with the toxin. Both of the Isoldes are tainted by the Morold affair and are caught up in the admiration of worldly power, by their reaction to Morold's death. Their lamentation is excessive (7713-7716), especially in the light of an earlier comment by the narrator to the effect that mourning the dead in exhorbitant fashion is of no use to anyone (1676-1680). The narrator also says of the lamenting Isoldes that:

si sahen disen toten man
durch niht niwan durch jamer an,
durch daz ir herzeswaere
al deste groezer waere.

(7173-7176)
Isolde Regina, Morold's sister, is best thought of as Tristan's enemy. Many aspects of her character associate her more closely with the many who stand in opposition to the Love, than with the few who are truly associated with it. Shortly after Tristan and Isolde Regina meet for the first time, it is stated that she feels cause to hate him, and would have killed him if she had recognized him, no matter what the risk to herself (7911-7934). An interesting comparison is made in that

\[
\begin{align*}
si & \text{ hazzetin noch mere} \\
dan & \text{ si sich selben minnete} \\
& \text{(7918-7919)}
\end{align*}
\]

Her own self-love must be very great, if it is the only thing that can compare in intensity to her tremendous hate for Tristan. By way of contrast, when Isolde was mentioned a few verses earlier, she was not described in terms of her lingering hate for Tristan, but as:

\[
\begin{align*}
daz & \text{ ware insigel der minne,} \\
mit & \text{ dem sin herze sider wart} \\
versigelt & \text{ unde vor verspart} \\
aller & \text{ der werlt gemeiner} \\
niuan & \text{ ir al einer,} \\
diu & \text{ schoene Isot si kam ouch dar} \\
und & \text{ nam vil vlizecliche war,} \\
da & \text{ Tristan harpfende saz.} \\
& \text{(7812-7819)}
\end{align*}
\]

The Love mentioned here is shared, naturally, only between the Lovers, and Isolde is already being drawn into communion with Tristan through the medium of his music. While it is true that Isolde the Fair later tries to kill Tristan revealed, her innermost being as a woman (wilheit) wins out over the anger (zorn) that she feels toward him, and even
with all the means at her disposal she never would have been able to kill him.\textsuperscript{20} The emphasis here on Isolde's internal qualities as a woman, not open to view but yet the directors of her actions, sets the stage for her later being the first to give in to the Love. At that time she has to decide between dissuasion by another external quality, shame (\textit{scham}), and persuasion by her internal identity as a woman (as a \textit{maget}). She chooses the latter (11,824-11,840).\textsuperscript{21}

Like the other characters evaluated negatively thus far (Curwenal, Rual, and Mark), Isolde Regina is a character of limits, lacking in perception. Like the others, her blindness stems from a lack deep within her character that furnishes a yardstick whereby her entire character can be judged. She does not recognize Tantris, although she ought to, since she is presumably better informed about the poison and its effects than anyone else. When Tristan's disguise is revealed, so is her mistake, and she becomes deranged over the fact that she has been deceived. Her thoughts are occupied less with Morold than they are with reflections on the nature of her power, or the lack of it, in the situation at hand (10,337-10,357). After Brangaene enters, the queen's thoughts center on the embarrassing revelation of her having been duped, a fact that she goes to some effort to describe, or perhaps to cover up, with two similes and an alliterative phrase (10,372-10,382).

Returning to the theme of power, Isolde Regina would seem to be exceptionally powerful, as one who has
telling dreams and as an herbal doctor. But her dream does not tell her very much, only that the dragon slaying did not occur as it is rumored to have occurred (9303-9305). Rumor being what it is, an intelligent person would not depend on it anyway, and the range of possibilities over and above the rumor is quite large. The searchers ride off to the area where the dragon was slain (9327-9330), apparently only because this is the sensible thing to do, and not because the dream has pinpointed Tristan's whereabouts, much less identified him. There, Isolde the Fair finds him first (9369-9376). Isolde Regina's skill as a doctor is in several ways downplayed. One cannot demean her for curing Tristan twice, but both times she effected a cure only because she was deceived. She speaks of the first cure as Tristan's reward for teaching Isolde (7855-7857), which is a generous enough offer, except that its kindheartedness is immediately relativized by the queen's threat that she can just as easily see to the minstrel's death (7858-7859). As for the cure itself, the narrator refuses to detail it, and is no more specific than to say that Tristan was well on the way to recovery within twenty days (7935-7961). The cure for the dragon's poison is described in four verses (9436-9439). There is no description of what goes into the love potion, and once it is drunk, it disappears as an effective agent. Brangaene, far more than Isolde Regina, comes to be considered the agent that brought the Love about. And, one should not overlook the queen's reason for brewing the
potion. What really wins her over to Tristan's side is his revelation, as Mark's servant, of the marriage offer. Upon hearing that her daughter can be married to the king so highly praised by Tristan, Isolde Regina becomes positively docile and says she is willing to do literally anything to bring the marriage about (10,515-10,518). It is to the end of making the marriage a success that she brews the potion. It is quite ironic, then, and indicative of how much power Isolde Regina really has in the world, that the potion should come to serve a purpose exactly opposite the one for which it was brewed.23 Isolde Regina is not even aware of the effect that her potion will have, as shown by comparing the narrator's description of it with the queen's. When the narrator describes its effects (11,439-11,444), he gives a summary of Tristan-love not unlike the one provided in the Prologue (59-63; 129-130; 220-221). Isolde Regina, however, tells Brangaene: "der tranc der ist von minnen" (11,467).24

Comparing the descriptions of the potion given by the narrator and the queen, the narrator says:

> Die wile und sich ouch Tristan
> mit einen lantgesellen dan
> bereite unde berihtete,
> die wile so betihtete
> Isot diu wise künigin
> in ein glasevezzelin
> einen tranc von minnen,
> mit also kleinen sinnen
> uf geleit und vor bedaht,
> mit solher crefte vollebraht:
> mit sweme sin ieman getranc,
> den muoser ane sinen danc
While Tristan makes the sort of purely practical preparation for departure that he can make with his countrymen (and enemies), Isolde Regina readies her practical preparations as well. The nature of the potion as a blatantly physical thing (mixed and held in a glass vessel - 11,462-11,464) and its described ability to affect anyone (11,439) will have relevance in the coming discussion of Brangaene's role in the potion matter. It is ironic that this powerful potion, toward the brewing of which so much skill has been applied (11,436-11,438), should later serve an end exactly opposite the one intended by the seemingly "wise queen" (diu wise künigin - 11,433). Her power in the world is truly limited. The oxymoronic description of the potion's effects recalls earlier references to the future Love (58-63; 1290130; 220-221; esp. 9372-9374). The speech of Isolde Regina about the potion contains considerably less information. She concentrates on telling Brangaene how to hide and give the potion. It is to be given to Mark and Isolde as if it were wine (11,402). The queen seems to feel that the effect of the potion may be impaired if its consumers know what they are drinking. Her remarks on the potion are surprising if one assumes that she uses the term minne in a consistent fashion. Like the narrator (11,435), she says that "der tranc der ist von minnen" (11,467). But it is to be
given to Mark and Isolde only after they "in ein der minnen komen sin" (11,461). The drink of love is to be ingested only after a state of love exists, or at least after Mark and Isolde are already involved in some state of union. Perhaps, then, the queen does not expect the potion to produce a new state of affairs, but to abet an already extant relationship. In summary, Isolde the herbal doctor does fashion external circumstances that bring the Lovers together. But she does so unwittingly, and it is ironic that she should in any way contribute to the furtherance of the love affair. Her poison brings Tristan to Ireland for the first time; but it links her with the evil of Morold. The potion brings the Lovers together; but it was hardly intended to act on the Lovers, its purpose being to solidify a socially acceptable legal marriage.

What kind of assistance has the germinating love of Tristan and Isolde received from Mark, the Cornish barons, and Isolde Regina, all of them, it should be clear by now, representatives of worldly power and society? It is unwitting and unwilling assistance, and often assistance resulting from evil intentions miraculously defeated and inverted to benefit the Love. Mark blunders and gives his barons the opportunity to take control. They blunder in that they ironically fashion a situation over which Tristan can take control. Isolde Regina blunders and cures her enemy twice. She blunders again by providing the overt agent of the Love's inflammation. All of these are blunders for the characters who make them,
from the point of view of their intentions. Mark did not want a wife; the barons did not want Tristan to succeed; the Morold poison was meant to kill those who stood up to him; and the love potion was to have acted on Mark and Isolde. With respect to the Love, none of these actions are blunders in their effects, since they all help the Love along in some way. The actions in themselves, disregarding their effects, are condemnable from the reader's point of view because of the intentions behind them. The reader must be left with the impression that the Love, in order to survive the "assistance" given it, is under the direction and protection of some truly higher power. It is a marvel that events move ever closer to an overt Love, without conscious action on anybody's part, and that characters who in their conscious thoughts show no favor or understanding of the attitude of the Love should provide it any kind of assistance, at any time and in any way.

Once the Love becomes a fact of the overt plot, and exists in the world as something of which the characters can be conscious, the conflict between Love and society must likewise become overt. It becomes increasingly impossible for unwitting assistance of the Love to exist. Opposition to the Love is centered in Mark, since he is, as king, the personification of the society he governs. Not only as society's arch-representative, but also as an individual, must he oppose the Love. He does not, as has already been shown, understand Tristan, he will not comprehend Isolde
on any but the most mediocre sensual level, and the nature of the Love must remain foreign to him. Brangaene, once the lines of opposition between Love and society are drawn, becomes the Love’s major, and in fact only, assistant on earth. The many roles she fills, as relative, servant, and advisor and effective master, prevent her from being defined as a clearly classifiable social being, and hence as one who must naturally develop into an active enemy of the Love. Even before the potion, when Brangaene, like all of the Love’s early assistants, acts unwittingly, qualities in her character can be identified at that point ahead to her future actions as a true, witting, and willing helper of the Love.

At first glance it may seem as if her role in the bath scene is sufficiently straightforward to preclude the need for extensive interpretation. She gives prudent advice and a reconciliation results. W.T.H. Jackson sums up Brangaene’s role by saying:

She it is who provides the voice of reason when the two Isoldes discover Tristan’s true identity and who urges them to accept his offer of an honorable marriage with Mark. It is because of this common sense and loyalty that she is entrusted with the love potion and from this point she decisively influences the course of the action and
the fate of the lovers.27

These are accurate observations, except that Brangaene, by bringing the peace that saves Tristan's life, must be credited with having an important influence on the future Love some time before the potion is even brewed. Returning to Brangaene's agency as a "voice of reason," one finds that her cool approach is criticized by Emil Nickel in his reaction to Brangaene's recommendation to the Isoldes that they put aside their feelings and treat Tristan properly:

swie iu daz herze hin zim si,
sit ime doch höfschliche bi.
(10,453-10,454)

Nickel says:

Die ganze geistige Enge und Ver-
äusserlichung dieser höfischen Welt-
anschauung, deren klugfeige
Gesellschaftsmoral und Sittlichkeits-
bedenken sich anmassen, dem inneren
Leben Gesetze zu regeln und zu
sänften, ohne Rücksicht darauf, wie
es im Innern wirklich aussehen mag,
tritt an diesem Ort besonders hart
und grell an den Tag. Für die ganz
grosse leidenschaftliche Gebärde,
einer Kriemhild etwa, oder gar der
Eddagestalten, die eine ganze Welt
bedenklos in Trümmer schlagen, um ihrem
inneren Gefühl Lösung zu schaffen, ist hier kein Raum mehr.\textsuperscript{28}

His point of view on society's standards of judgment and behavior finds support in these pages, but one object of this study is to show that Brangaene does not fall in with these standards, and is not simply a representative of society in her association with the Lovers. Nickel's implication that Brangaene is not a character of insight will shortly, and again thereafter, be shown to have no basis in the text. At present it can be said in reply to Nickel that more objective, and perhaps more modern, readers than he must tend to approve of Brangaene's action in the bath scene, even if it saves only one life, Tristan's, and not the lives of thousands. The modern reader objects to violence, and it is fair to say that Gottfried wanted his contemporary reader to object to it. Reading the description of the horrible battle of Tristan's Parmenians against Morgan's men (5459ff.), for instance, clearly shows that Gottfried does not glorify murder and vengeance for its own sake.\textsuperscript{29} He never lauds Tristan's skill as a fighter to the point of encouraging the reader to revere Tristan for the slaughter he perpetrates. The really important conflicts in the poem do not take place on battlefields. Non-physical combats are far more danger-laden. Tristan almost loses his life in the bath, an episode in which no one can fight his or her way to victory, because worldly,
physical power has suddenly become powerless. The crucial
battles with Mark never come to blows. And, if Tristan
were a great and courtly fighter, he would have to function
automatically as a representative of that same society, and
that same worldly power, that is inimical to the Love. Tris-
tan does have to do some fighting, but he never loses, and
his merely physical combats do not hold up his progress for
long.  

Isolde Regina represents worldly power and with it
murder and vengeance. Her association with them places her
in far closer connection with the many of society and the
world who stood in opposition to the Love, than with the
few, necessarily distinct from society and the world, who
are truly involved on the Love's behalf. Initially, both
Isoldes are tainted by the world through their reaction to
Morold's death. Their grief is excessive and self-centered:

si sahen disen toten man
durch niht niwan durch jamer an,
durch daz ir herzeswaere
al deste groezer waere.

(7173-7176)

The Isoldes are preoccupied with whipping up their sorrow
to ever greater intensity. There is a queer sort of order-
liness to their excess, as the repetition of the preposition
durch emphasizes, but while the structure of rational
thought is present, the content is not. The narrator early
on states that mourning the dead in exorbitant fashion is
of no use to anyone. One of his comments on Riwalin's
death in his ill-fated fight for possession of Parmenie is:

an dirre veigen lantwer
wart der vil clagebaere erslagen,
den al diu werlt wol solte clagen,
ob clegelichiu swaere
nach tode nütze waere.
(1676-1680)

And of the laments of Riwalin’s landsmen he says:

daz ich nu vil von ungehabe
und von ir jamer sagete,
waz iegelicher clagete,
waz sikte daz? es waere unnot.
(1694-1697)

He says of the sorrowing Isoldes that:

daz houbet kustens und die hant,
diu in liute unde lant
haete gemachet undertan,
als ich hie vor gesaget han.
(7177-7180)

They are caught up in the admiration of worldly might, mourn its passing, and thereby show respect for something that is not worthy of it. Morgan was, after all, an evil man, his power in the world nothing compared to the assistance that Tristan had.

Isolde the Fair, in the bath scene, shows that she can become free of domination by the external world. At the moment when she can kill Tristan, an inner quality, her wipheit, determines that she puts down the sword. Isolde Regina never obtains a view that sees below the externals. Very aware of the fact that she is a queen who holds worldly power, she becomes completely confused, and in fact irrational, over the fact that her worldly power is of no use in dealing with the problem posed by Tristan. Morold will be
avenged if Tristan is put to death, but Tristan's death would allow the steward to have his way. At the instant when Brangaene enters the bath, the queen, having decided to give revenge the upper hand, is on the verge of using her power to have Tristan killed. She had earlier decided to spare Tristan in order to thwart the steward. She would rather let Morold be unavenged than oversee the loss of honor and happiness that would result to Gurnun, herself, and Isolde the Fair from the steward's success (10,285-10,309). But when the fact that Tristan is Morold's slayer becomes undeniably clear and Isolde Regina can no longer doubt, as she has up till now (10,342) that the real physical Tristan is before her (see 10,383: **sich, warte, er sitzet: deist Tristan**), she loses her grip on the situation and, amidst rambling reflections on the nature of her power (10,345-10,357), is about to judge against Tristan (10,357), as if to assert her authority no matter what the consequences.

A number of manifestations of the theme of power have already been mentioned in this discussion of the episodes of Tristan's winning of Isolde. Mark lacks power; his barons have to return to Tristan the power that they momentarily have over him; there are intimations of divine power that ensure Tristan's success in the dragon fight; Curvenal is unimportant and powerless; and Isolde Regana's power becomes ineffective in coping with Tristan. The shift of power in the bath scene is especially laden
with consequences. After the reconciliation, the queen never regains the power that she once had. Her power to give worldly commands is no longer up to the demands of the situation. In effect, Isolde Regina can no longer give commands, at least not commands that will bring about the fulfillment of her will. Tristan alive is Morold unavenged, and Tristan dead is the steward as son-in-law. The queen's power as an herbal doctor is also in decline. She has already cured Tristan and thereby deprived herself of the tactical advantage of winning concessions from him by threatening to withhold her medicines. She keeps her faith in herbs (just as she holds to her power to give commands, up to the point of readiness to order Tristan's death) and, as little more than a matter of course, tries to maintain control over her daughter's future by brewing the potion. But the circumstances have fundamentally changed, and Isolde Regina's witchcraft simply will no longer do. The potion turns into a colossal failure, at least with respect to the reasons for which the queen brewed it.

Bragaene is responsible for bringing about a new structure of power in the bath scene. Tristan is given control through the reconciliation that Bragaene effects. Furthermore, in fashioning the peace, it becomes clear that Bragaene is a powerful character in her own right. Bragaene has power, first of all, because she is unencumbered by the worship and seeking of false power in the world. Absent from the scene of mourning for Morold, Bragaene is
never closely associated with him, even though she makes a point of noting that Morold was related to her. She advises the Isoldes to ally themselves with Tristan and to reconcile their differences with him:

'da dunket mich sin rede guot
und rate ouch daz, daz ir ez tuot.
leget allen zwiwel hin
und stat uf beide und küsset in!
al si ich nıht ein künigin,
ich wil ouch an der suone sin:
er was min mac, swie arm ich si.'
(10,527-10,533)

She has as much apparent cause as anyone to harbor ill feeling against Tristan, but she does not, and is eager to be a party to the reconciliation. Brangaene's attitude is that the Morold affair is past, and that it is now time to attend to the present by putting aside doubt and indecision by giving kisses of peace to Tristan, in contrast to the kisses of frenzied idolatry earlier given the severed parts of Morold. Brangaene never explicitly denounces Morold; it may be that the same cool reason that keeps her from lamenting his death excessively also keeps her from making extreme judgments against him. But it is quite praiseworthy enough that Brangaene's attitude toward the Morold affair is sensible and moderate, an attitude which shows she can distinguish right from wrong.

In a similar fashion, Brangaene never condemns Tristan, nor does she become his wildly enthusiastic supporter. Instead, she realizes that he is the solution to the problem of the steward, and that he must be given the
freedom to effect that solution. Brangaene emphasizes that Tristan is an individual who must be accorded due respect. She says that he is equal in stature to the Isoldes,

\[
\text{Tristan der ist als edel als ir}
\]
\[
\text{unde ist höfisch unde wis,}
\]
\[
\text{vollekomen alle wis}
\]
\[
(10,450-10,452),
\]

and that he cannot be dismissed lightly, for it must be a serious matter that has brought him back to Ireland:

\[
\text{hinamen, swes er habe gedahht,}
\]
\[
\text{in hat ernest uz braht.}
\]
\[
(10,455-10,456)
\]

He is not forced to offer his aid, and would be fully within his rights if he suspected foul play and escaped:

\[
\text{habet niht ungebaerdde dar,}
\]
\[
\text{wan wirt er ihtes innen}
\]
\[
\text{und mag er danne entrinnen,}
\]
\[
\text{des hat er reht, daz er daz tuo.}
\]
\[
(10,442-10,445)
\]

There is an element of divine intervention in the fact that the women discover Tristan in the pool of water just in time to save his life. The situation would be considerably worse if he were dead, and the clear implication is that the Isoldes ought to be happy that Tristan is alive:

\[
\text{got der haet unser ruoche}
\]
\[
\text{an unserre suoch:}
\]
\[
\text{wan waerer an den stunden}
\]
\[
\text{niht kurzliche vunden,}
\]
\[
\text{weiz got, so waerer iesa tot.}
\]
\[
\text{wizze Crist, juncvrouwe Isot,}
\]
\[
\text{so vüerez wirs, dannez var.}
\]
\[
(10,435-10,441)^{34}
\]

And Tristan must remain alive because the possibility of defeating the steward depends solely upon Tristan:
hüetet sin ze dirre vrist
und lobet och eines iemer got:
daz dirre ungevüege spot
umb des truhsaezen valscheit
mit ime sol werden hin geleit.

Tristan is in the habit of singlehandedly laying burdensome
disgraces to rest. He has already offered to do as much
for the Isoldes in regard to the matter of the steward:

helfet mir ze libe wider,
ich gelegez alles eine nider.

Even though Tristan received help from God in the Morold
battle, that fight is also described as one undertaken on
Tristan's own initiative. Of the result of Tristan's
victory for the people of Mark's kingdom, the narrator says:

ir aller laster unde ir leit
daz haete er eine hin geleit.

In other words, Brangaene realizes that the women are depen-
dent on Tristan.

Isolde Regina has not wanted to recognize the fact
of her dependency on Tristan, and must be convinced of the
need for surrendering her power to him. The queen has, from
the start, seen the discovery of the true dragonslayer as
an auspicious event. She tells him, soon after he is
discovered in the pool:

du bist ze guoten dingen
dir selbem unde uns komen her.

The man whom the women have sought, the real dragonslayer
and the one who can negate the steward's claim, has been
found (see 9385-9387). However, Isolde Regina sees this man, Tantris, as her servant. He served her when he came to Ireland as a minstrel, and now he is to serve her again in his capacity as a dragonslayer. The queen wants to have control over Tantris and over the entire process of defeating the steward. She even wants to take credit for the victory over the false steward before it occurs. The queen comforts her perplexed husband by telling him:

'gehabet iuch wol' sprach aber Isot
wir suln uns wol hier an bewarn:
ich han ez allez undervarn.
(9730-9732)

Emphasis must be placed on the queen's claim that she has found the solution: what she cannot admit is that the solution is not hers. Tristan has been Isolde Regina's servant only in so far as he has deceived her; she must now give up her power to him. This she does, in her open dealings with Tristan. The queen is prepared to take orders from him, and asks for his permission to inform Gurmun of the reconciliation that has been made (10,580-10,583). Tristan makes a flamboyant entrance to the Irish court (11,074ff.). Whereas the queen was first to challenge the steward's claim (see 9771ff.), the final, decisive confrontation is between Tristan and the steward (see 11,271ff.). Tristan is the focus of everyone's admiration, as he dispenses with the lying suitor, becomes the vehicle of reconciliation between Ireland and Cornwall, and sees to the release of the Cornish captives. Tristan accomplishes all of this
singlehandedly, without the slightest hint of official opposition. Firstly, Isolde the Fair is literally handed over to his keeping (11,398-11,400). There is, however, considerable irony to the transfer of power. The changes in the power structure are far reaching, and an amount of time must pass before the characters become aware of their changed status, if they become aware of it at all. Isolde Regina, for example, has lost her power over both Tristan and Isolde the Fair. Tristan is no longer one whom she can control, and her daughter is about to leave her mother's sphere of immediate influence. Without Tristan and her daughter, Isolde Regina will have nothing over which she can have magnificent dominion, and she will be just another worldly queen, even as her husband is already a fairly average and lackluster king. The queen will have no authority outside of her country's political boundaries, nor will Gurmun, without the forceful hand of Morold, and Isolde Regina's attempts to extend her power by means of the potion will be pitifully unsuccessful. The irony is that Isolde Regina never realizes that her power is lost. She really has faith in her potion scheme. And, although she does give up her public glory to Tristan, it must be remembered that the terms of the reconciliation made with Tristan are quite palatable to the queen, sufficiently enticing and satisfying to allow her to think that she has, after all, brought the wooing of her daughter to the most successful conclusion possible. That is, peace with Tristan is acceptable to Isolde
Regina because she thinks it will lead to worldly honor for herself and her daughter. In exchange for giving up some of her public glory, the queen can ensure that her daughter will be married to a rich husband. Such a marriage gives a solution with which Isolde Regina can be very happy, and she does in fact adopt a cooperative, practically fawning attitude.

A basis of the analysis presented in this chapter is that the love affair provides a standard by which characters in Gottfried's Tristan can be judged. The attitude that a character holds toward the Love, whatever that attitude may be, gives important information about that character. Characters who do not participate in the Love, either as Lovers or as assistants to the Lovers, and characters who oppose the Love and the Lovers, either wittingly or unwittingly, are seen to represent ways of thinking and ways of action profoundly different from the ways of thinking and ways of action represented by the Lovers. Characters outside of the Love are characters completely of the world. Many of them -- for example, Mark, Isolde Regina, the Cornish barons, and even Rual -- are characters who exercise considerable power in the world. But they are also precisely the characters who have the least influence on the Love.

One suspects that a dimension of assistance given to the Love is divine. There are indications that the
endeavors of Tristan, the archetypal lover, succeed because he has divine sanction. The essence of the Love cannot, in any event, be material. If it were, the worldly characters who have no power over the Love would in fact control it completely. Those characters would be included in the love, since it would then be only another division of their worldly sphere of influence. And, if the Love were essentially material, it could not infiltrate and direct every facet of the plot, even before it is something that the Lovers themselves can be conscious of. The Love moves ahead with irresistible force; no one can stop it. Tristan undertakes the wooing of Isolde without any intent of winning her for himself. But if the facts of the story are examined closely, Tristan can only woo Isolde for himself. Only he is meant to be her lover. Characters who try to divert the process of the Love, to bring about other ends than the Love between Tristan and Isolde, must fail. The Cornish barons contrive a wooing plot in order to do harm to Tristan. But their evil intentions are thwarted, and they ironically contrive to produce circumstances in which Tristan can succeed and move closer to being the lover of Isolde. Mark, a king and representative of worldly might, tries to interfere with the wooing. His subsequent failure to exert any influence in the wooing affair shows how impotent his sort of power is in the face of the Love. Isolde Regina, devoted to enhancing her power in the world, thinks that she has power over her daughter's future. But the queen is an intrinsically
powerless character, too, and her potion, an attempt to
direct events that will happen in the future, and outside of
Ireland, fails. Only one Irish man, Morold, had power
outside of his country's boundaries -- and he was slain by
Tristan. The opponents of the Love discussed here share
something in common. They are all profoundly powerless
characters. It is true that they exercise a good deal of
power in the world. Mark and his barons run their country
and Isolde Reginald is an important person in Ireland. But
the power of these characters is relatively worthless, since
it does not at all help them to win control over Tristan.
They can exert physical power over Tristan, for example, by
placing him in dangerous situations or by separating him from
Isolde, but they cannot change Tristan himself, or change the
nature of his love for Isolde.

Characters excluded from the Love are not only
weak, but also confused. Their way of perceiving the world
is utterly mundane, and of such mediocre quality that they
cannot distinguish between objects even on the sensual level.
Mark never realizes that he spent his wedding night with
Brangaene and not Isolde. He is interested in the world
only for the physical pleasure it can give him. His view of
women is stereotyped to the point that all women are the same
to him. When Brangaene leaves the marriage bed and Isolde
takes her place, the narrator comments:

der greif an sine vrœude wider:
er twanc si nahe an sinen lip.
in duhte wip alse wip:
er vant ouch die vil schiere
von guoter maniere.
ime was ein als ander:
an ietwederre vander
golt unde messinc.
ouch leistens ime ir teidinc
also dan und also dar,
daz er nie nihtes wart gewar.

(12,664-12,674)35

He cannot distinguish between the two women because they
each provide him the same physical service. For Mark an
intellectual understanding of the Love of Tristan and Isolde,
an understanding above the purely physical level, is
impossible. When he banishes them, he marvels that their
Love continued even though he had often kept them physically
distant from each other (see 16,566-16,570). It is for the
same lack of intellectual insight that Mark cannot truly
believe in the love affair of Tristan and Isolde, and must
remain Mark the waverer (der zwivelære: 14,010; 15,265;
17,712) until he can actually see them lying embraced in the
orchard (18,193-18,224). But even here, Mark cannot abstract
from the most basic physical information given him by his
senses. The Lovers are so closely entwined that they might
be a statue cast of either base metal or gold (18,208-
18,209). Mark's indifference to metals here symbolizes his
inability to make higher judgments of value of any sort,
and recalls his earlier failure to tell one woman from
another. In that instance, he was unable to distinguish
brass from gold (12,669-12,671).

Isolde Regina too is a confused character submerged
in the world, yet unable to make accurate judgments about it.
Mark's inability to appreciate the difference between women has a counterpart in Isolde Regina's failure to recognize Tristan. A truly wise woman would recognize the effects of her own poison and would see through the little more than clever ruse of the name "Tantris." It shakes her deeply that she, in her own words, "blindly" healed the enemy who masqueraded as her friend (10,371-10,382). It is true that Tristan has deceived all three of the Irish royal women, but Isolde Regina is the most deceived. She is certainly deceived by Tristan, who tricks her into believing that he is someone else, but she is more profoundly deceived by herself. When she discovers Tristan's identity, she condemns him as her enemy, not realizing that he is in fact her friend, and must be treated as such, since any successful outcome to the wooing of Isolde depends upon Tristan. The balance of authority shifts away from Isolde Regina, a fact of which she is never conscious. To her, Tantris the minstrel was a servant who could give her daughter a fine knowledge of music. Although she cooperates with Tristan, she still considers him a servant. He can insure that Isolde the Fair will have a respectable husband. Isolde Regina will not have to lose face in front of her husband, to whom she had promised a solution to the problem of the steward (9730-9757), in front of the steward, whom she had publicly promised to defeat in his quest for Isolde (9965-9971), or in front of the world, where she would have to live in disgrace if the steward married her daughter (9587-9592).
CHAPTER FOUR: BRANGAENE

The preceding chapters have offered background information toward elucidation of the character of Brangaene and her function in the Tristan. Curvenal, Rual, Isolde Regina, and Mark represent points of view that exclude them from any positive association with the Lovers. Curvenal, Rual, and Isolde Regina are kept distant from the Lovers by the story's plot. Curvenal is barely given a chance to meet Isolde the Fair; Rual never knows about the love affair, and Isolde Regina is present up to, but not including, the time when the Lovers become conscious of the Love. But one can still speak of how these characters stand in a negative relation to the Love, because their attitudes tie them more closely to Mark, the Lovers' most overt opponent. Brangaene, however, is connected to the Lovers in a different way. One must ask what Curvenal, Rual, Isolde Regina, and Mark have in common, and how Brangaene differs from them. It will be shown that Brangaene is the only true servant of the Lovers, and that in her Gottfried has created a character who reflects the Love and helps to define its nature.

One thing that the four characters Curvenal, Rual, Isolde Regina, and Mark have in common is that they are all outsiders to the Love. Curvenal is a minor character who simply is not important enough to assist the Lovers in any extensive way. Why then does Gottfried completely ignore
Curvenal after the dragon adventure, and throughout the Lovers' trials in Cornwall, only to recall him when the exiled Lovers flee to the Minnegrotte? Perhaps the recalling of Curvenal for a brief period in one of the late episodes in the romance gives the reader an opportunity to make a final judgment about the significance of the Curvenal character. One recalls that Mark exiles the Lovers, who then quickly leave his court. They bid farewell to Brangaene:

Brangaenen ir gesellin
die hiezen si gesunde sin
und baten si, daz si belibe
und da ze hove die zit vertribe,
bizs aber von in vernaeme,
wie in zwein ir dinc kaeme:
daz bevulhen sir vil starke.

(16,631-16,637)

They give her no specific directives, but it seems as if the Lovers want Brangaene to join them after they have set up life elsewhere. Tristan has Curvenal alone accompany him and Isolde on their journey away from Mark's court:

sin gesinde bat er got bewarn
und hiez si wider ze lande varn
an siden vater Rualen
wan eine Curvenalen.
den behabeter an siner schar;
dem bot er ouch die harphen dar.
daz armbrust er selbe nam,
daz horn unde den hunt alsam,
Hiudanen, niht Petitcreiu.
sus riten si dan von hove si drie.

(16,651-16,660)

When the party of Curvenal, Isolde, and Tristan leaves, Brangaene's sorrow over the parting is described in some detail:
Thus, Brangaene is left behind, and Curvenal stays with the Lovers to reach the Minnegrotte with them.

Curvenal's presence at the Minnegrotte in no way implies that he is a better servant to the Lovers than Brangaene, nor does it represent any intimate bond between the Lovers and Curvenal. There is no indication that Curvenal ever steps inside the Minnegrotte; that precinct is for the Lovers alone. And Curvenal stays with the Lovers only briefly. He is sent back to Mark's court very soon after the Lovers arrive at their destination:

Nu daz si sich geliezen nider,
sie sanden Curvenalen wider
(16,773-16,774)

The instructions given to him reveal the Lovers' judgment of his proper status in their affair. He is sent back to Tintagel, where he is to do what Brangaene bids him:

und daz er sich ouch al zehant
da ze hove nider lieze,
swie in Brangaene hiez
(16,782-16,784)

He effectively becomes her servant. He is also told to assure Brangaene sincerely of the Lovers' friendship and affection for her:
Nowhere do the Lovers make similar attestations of concern and devotion toward Curvenal, and nowhere does Curvenal indicate that he is moved at all by the Lovers' plight. The reciprocity of feeling between the Lovers and Brangaene is completely absent from the relationship of the Lovers and Curvenal. The Lovers obviously trust him, for they allow him to find out the location of their haven. But they have no intention, and feel no obligation, to involve him in their love affair in the way they allowed Brangaene to become involved. They send him back to take orders from their genuine confidante, and give him only the most simple tasks to perform while he is away. He is to spread a lie about the Lovers' whereabouts:

\[
\begin{align*}
daz \text{ er in den hof jaehe} \\
daz swa es not geschaehe, \\
daz Tristan und diu schoene Isot \\
mit jamer und mit maneger not \\
hin wider zIrlande waeren, \\
ir unschulde offenbaeren \\
wider liut und wider lant. \\
\end{align*}
\]

(16,775-16,781)

The nature of this lie will be discussed later. Curvenal is also to listen to rumors at Mark's court to find out the king's intentions concerning the Lovers, and he should report back to the Lovers with this information every twenty days:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{und ervüere ouch, waz der maere} \\
\text{umb Markes willen waere:} \\
\text{ob er dekeinen argen rat} \\
\end{align*}
\]
These are easy tasks that can be performed almost mindlessly.

As the narrator remarks:

waz mac ich iu nu me gesagen?
er leiste, daz man ime gebot.

Like Curvenal, Rual is also an outsider. Rual never knows anything about the love affair, and therefore cannot be an insider to it. He also could never be made an insider, because the role given to him makes him a character who could never function as a true confidante of the Lovers. Rual represents Tristan's obligations as king of Parmenie, which makes of him a character whom Tristan must reject. This Tristan does when he turns the throne back to Rual after the defeat of Morgan. Tristan the Parmenian king cannot be Tristan the Lover, and Tristan the Lover cannot be Tristan the king of Parmenie. The roles of king and Lover are mutually exclusive. It is significant that Tristan sends his retinue to Rual when he and Isolde leave Mark's court for the Minnegrotte (16,651-16,653). Tristan's followers are anonymous individuals who are never even remotely associated with the love affair. Inconspicuous members of
the court in Cornwall, they can well go to Parmenie and have much the same life there. Parmenie is a refuge for them, but not for Tristan. For Tristan, the country Rual tends represents a set of obligations that Tristan does not want to take upon himself. What turmoil would result if the king Tristan returned home with the stolen wife of another monarch?

Isolde Regina is also an outsider to the Love. Again, she obviously remains outside because she never finds out about the affair. But isn't she irrevocably connected with the Love because she brews the potion? Hardly, because it was not her intention to brew a potion that Isolde and Tristan would drink. And to what degree is the potion responsible for the love of Tristan and Isolde? It does indeed have a powerful effect on them. The potion solidifies their Love, which becomes something of which Tristan and Isolde are forced to be conscious. But the potion is not the Love's sole basis. An identical love would not spring up between any two people who consumed the potion. Tristan and Isolde are fated to become Lovers. It is for this reason that, as has already been demonstrated, Tristan can woo Isolde only for himself. Tristan and Isolde are uniquely suited to become Lovers, by virtue of the artistic sensitivity that they share.

If the Love were nothing more than an effect of Isolde Regina's potion, certainly that potion would be
mentioned more often than it is after the Lovers have Consumed it. In fact, the instigation of the Love is attributed more emphatically to Brangaene than to the potion. Brangaene throws the vessel that held the love drink into the sea shortly after the Lovers have consumed its contents. Thereafter she metaphorically takes the potion's place, and she literally becomes the agent of continuing Love through the service she performs for Tristan and Isolde.

Isolde Regina represents witchcraft. She cures Tristan's poisoned wound, having been the person who also concocted that poison, and she brews the love potion. Her name is also connected with an example of witchcraft late in the story, just before the Lovers' banishment. When Petitcrieu, the magic dog won for Isolde the Fair by Tristan, is delivered to Isolde, she tells Mark that the dog is a gift from her mother, the Irish queen:

Nu seite Isot diu künigin
ir herren umb daz hundelin,
ir muoter haetez ir gesant,
diu wise künegin von Irlant
(16,333–16,336)

This is a clever ruse, since a magic dog is just the sort of gift that Isolde Regina would send. The link between Isolde Regina and the magic dog is even more important when one realizes that the mention of Isolde Regina's name in the Petitcrieu episode is the only time her name is mentioned after Tristan and Isolde leave Ireland. One would be denying Gottfried's artistic skill if one asserted that the
connection made between Isolde Regina and the magic dog is coincidental.

The power of the dog is that the sound of the bell chained around its neck makes the listener forget his sorrow:

   so süeze was der schellen clanc,
   daz si nieman gehorte,
   sin benaeme im und zestorte
   sine sorge und al sin ungemach.
(15,856-15,859)

Tristan obtains the dog so that the pain Isolde feels because of Tristan's absence can be eased:

   er möhte gewinnen
   siner vrouwen der künigin
   Petitcreiu daz hundelin,
   durch daz ir senede swaere
   al deste minner waere.
(15,900-15,904)

What use does Isolde the Fair make of Petitcrieu? None. She allows the ringing bell to make her happy once, but then immediately reflects that:

   daz ir vriunt Tristan waere
   durch si beladen mit swaere,
   und gedachte ouch iesa wider sich:
   'ohi ohi! und vröwe ich mich,
   wie tuon ich ungetriuwe so?
   war umbe wird ich iemer vro
   dekeine stunde und keine vrist,
   die wile er durch mich truric ist,
   der sine vröude und sin leben
   durch mich ze triure hat gegeben?'
(16,365-16,374)

She does not want to be happy when she knows that Tristan is suffering, and she destroys the dog's joy-giving power by breaking the bell from its chain (16,388-16,389). She is not bothered, and she would be if she were not a Lover, that she no longer has a magical means to happiness:
The Love of Tristan and Isolde, however, is based in the consciousness of the Lovers, and not in the effects of magic, whether it be the potion brewed by Isolde Regina or the magic dog that she might well have sent to her daughter as a gift.

Obviously, Mark is an outsider to the Love of Tristan and Isolde. Isolde the Fair is not in love with him. To be more exact, how are the relationships of Tristan and Isolde, and of Mark and Isolde, different? After Tristan and Isolde have drunk the love potion, the narrator says:

They have just begun to become conscious of their Love, and still hesitate to express their feelings. The two have
become one (11,716-11,717); their hearts are as one and can perceive what the other feels (11,720-11,729), and they have become united with both joy and sorrow (11,730-11,731), as the narrator earlier said noble spirits must:

War umbe enlite ein edeler muot
niht gerne ein Übel durch tusent guot,
durch manege vröude ein ungemach?
swem nie von liebe leit geschach,
dem geschach auch liep von liebe nie.
liep unde leit diu waren ie
an minnen ungescheiden.
(201-207)

The description of the beginning of the marriage of Isolde the Fair and Mark could not be more different. A mere forty-eight verses (12,527-12,575) cover the period of eighteen days (12,544-12,549) between Isolde's arrival and the consummation of the marriage in Mark's bedchamber. The marriage is described only in terms of its political results:

Nu si zir e bestatet wart
und an ir rehte bewart,
daz Curnewal und Engelant
so wart besetzt in ir hant,
ob si niht erben baere,
daz Tristan erbe waere,
unde ir hulde wart getan.
(12,569-12,575)

A description of the oneness of Isolde and Mark similar to the description of the unity of Isolde and Tristan is not given here, or anywhere else in the work. The marriage is consummated, and quite satisfactorily from Mark's point of view, as long as a certain physical test is met: the woman in his marriage bed must be a virgin.

Mark is also an outsider because the Lovers and their assistant Brangaene maintain the Love in Cornwall
and thereby undermine the influence that Mark can have on Isolde. The triad of Tristan, Isolde, and Brangaene, set up by Brangaene on the sea voyage from Ireland to Cornwall

\[
\text{lat diz laster under uns dren} \\
\text{verswigen unde beliben sin.} \\
\text{breitet irz iht mere,} \\
\text{ez gat an iuwer ere;} \\
\text{ervert ez ieman ane uns drieu,} \\
\text{ir sit verlorn und ich mit iu.} \\
(12,143-12,147),
\]

works in the marriage episode to deceive Mark for the first time and prevent him from possessing Isolde from the very first moment that he might be able to do so. The Lovers' triad excludes him from the start:

\[
\text{in Markes kemenaten} \\
\text{was nieman wan si vieriu,} \\
\text{der kūnic selbe und si drieu.} \\
(12,584-12,586)\]

Just as it is obvious that Curvenal, Rual, Isolde Regina, and Mark are outsiders to the Love, it is equally obvious that Brangaene is an insider. The Lovers take her completely into their confidence, and Brangaene participates in almost all of the ruses that protect the Love. How is she drawn into the role of Love's accomplice? It was mentioned earlier that the actions of a number of characters result in states of affairs that are ultimately favorable to the Lovers, even though those characters had no intention of fostering the Love of Tristan and Isolde. The Cornish barons, for example, formulate a plan to destroy Tristan, little realizing that they thereby create a situation in which he can flourish. Characters who openly assist Tristan
do so to ensure the success of their own endeavors. Mark takes Tristan into his court on the stipulation that there will be a symbiotic relationship between the two men. Tristan can give Mark the pleasure of having a sophisticated and artistic young man at his court, and in return Mark promises to provide Tristan with the material things he desires (3721-3741). Rual helps to establish Tristan as a man of the world, but only so that Tristan can return to Parmenie and assume the throne in the proper fashion. Isolde Regina saves Tristan's life twice, in the first instance so that he can become the teacher of her daughter, and in the second so that he can defeat the steward's claim to Isolde the Fair and then arrange her marriage to a rich king. Again, the actions taken by characters who have their own reasons for helping Tristan do result in good for him. There is nothing wrong with Tristan's living undercover for a few year's at Mark's court -- but one must realize that Tristan will have to abandon the lifestyle of the happy courtier, since he deserves an existence more elevated than that of Mark's pet.² There is nothing wrong with Tristan becoming a man of the world or even with his becoming a king -- but one must realize that worldly power is not an end in itself for Tristan and that the attainment of material might is just one step in his overall development. And there is nothing wrong with the fact that Tristan escapes death twice -- but one must realize that merely staying alive is not an end in itself for Tristan. After he almost literally comes back from the
dead, he cannot return to the kind of life he previously led, and he does not. Saved from Morold's poison, he goes on to become Isolde's Lover. In summary, Tristan's progress toward his identity as Tristan the Lover cannot be stopped, no matter what anyone does for him, or against him, and no matter what their motives are. Only one of the characters is instrumental in helping Tristan become Tristan the Lover. This is Brangaene's role.

The help that Brangaene gives Tristan in the bath scene is quite exceptional, when it is compared to the assistance given to him by others. As was noted in the previous chapter, Tristan is never in greater danger on his second visit to Ireland than when he is in the bath. Isolde Regina willingly nurses him over the effects of the dragon's venom, but she does so in the belief that Tristan is Tantris the minstrel. When she finds out that he is the killer of her brother, she becomes confused, not knowing whether to consider Tristan her friend or enemy, and she is on the verge of killing him when Brangaene enters. Brangaene effects a settlement, and the credit for saving Tristan's life must go to her.

How does Brangaene effect the settlement? Her attitude is always reasonable and positive. She has no ulterior motives, no selfish plan of her own that she wants to further, and she acts only out of a desire to fashion a reconciliation that will do justice to all concerned. She wants to do justice to her mistresses, the Isoldes. Bran-
gaene is disturbed at their frenzy:

'wie nu?' sprach diu gevüege do
'disen gebaerden wiest den so?
waz maere tribet ir dru?
disiu vrouwen ougen wie sint diu
alsus trüebe und also naz?
diz swert hie lit, waz tiutet daz?'
(10,365-10,370)

When she finds out that Tristan's life is at stake, she counsels against killing him:

'nein vrouwe, tuot die rede hin!
iuwer saelde und iuwer sin
diu sint hie zuo ze quot,
daz ir iemer keinen muot
uf solhe untat gewinnet
und iemer so gunsinnet,
daz ir ze manslahte
iemer gewinnet ahnte
unde ouch danne seinem man,
des ir iuch habet genomen an
ze vride und ze huote.
esn wart iu nie ze muote,
des ich gote wol getruwen sol.
ouch sult ir des gedenken wol,
waz rede iuch mit ime an gat,
diu niwan umb iuwer ere stat.
soltet ir iuwer ere geben
umb keinez iuwers vindes leben?'
(10,387-10,404)

She points out that the queen's nature is too good to allow her to become involved in a murder, especially the murder of a man whom she has taken under her protection. She reminds the queen that her honor is in the balance, and that it will not be served if she commits murder. Brangaene then brings order to the queen's deliberations by suggesting that she withdraw and discuss the matter of Tristan privately:

'vrouwe, da denket selbe zuo:
gat hinnen, lat in uz gan.
die wile muget ir rat han,
waz iu daz waegeste si.'
hir mite giengen si dan si dri
durch rat in ir heinliche.
(10410-10,411)

Thus the women go to another chamber to determine
their course of action. Brangaene's contribution to their
deliberations is noteworthy. She has high regard for
Tristan and declares that his coming to Ireland is a blessing:

Brangaene sprach: 'da rate ich,
daz in nieman innen bringe
dekeiner slahte undinge,
biz wir bevindn sehen muot.
sin muot ist lihte vil guot
hin ziuwer beider eren.
man sol den mantel keren,
als ie die winde sint gewant.
wer weiz, ob er in Irlant
durch iuwer ere komen ist.
hüetet sin ze dirre vrist
und lobet ouch eines iemer got:
daz dirre ungvüeg spot
umb des truhsaezen valsheit
mit ime sol werden hin geleit.
got der haet unser ruoche
an unserre suoch;
won waerer an den stunden
niht kurzliche vunden,
weiz got, so waerer iesa tot.
wizze Crist, juncvrouwe Isot,
so vüerez wirs, dannez var.
habet niht ungebaerde dar,
won wirt er ihites innen
und mag er danne entrinnen,
des hat er reht, daz er daz tuo.
von diu da denket beide zuo:
bietet ime ez alse wol,
alse man von rehte sol.
daz rate ich iu, des volget mir:
Tristan der ist als edel als ir
und ist höfisch unde wis,
vollekommen alle wis.
swie iu daz herze hin zim si,
sit ime doch höfischliche bi.
binamen, swes er habe gedacht,
in hat ernest uz braht.
sin gewerp und sin gerinc
der ist umb ernestlichiu dinc.'
(10,420-10,458)
Brangaene says that the Isoldes must reckon with the possibility that Tristan may well have come to Ireland with good intentions, and that he may have come for the sake of increasing their honor. Tristan's presence must be viewed positively, since he can lay to rest the challenge of the corrupt steward. The situation would be far worse if Tristan had not come. Tristan can help them, but he does not have to, and would be within his rights to escape if he suspected that he might be in danger. He is a noble man, a peer of the Isoldes in every respect, and as such he must be treated courteously, and as a man who is on an earnest mission.

What is the significance of Brangaene's statement that one ought to turn one's cloak according to the wind (10,420-10,427)? As Gisela Hollandt observes, it does not mean that Brangaene advocates crass opportunism. Rather, she is a flexible character who wants to make clear to the Isoldes that they must cooperate with Tristan if they are to bring the matter at hand to its best possible conclusion. The Isoldes still think that the wind blows in the direction of revenge for Morold's death. Brangaene realizes that the current has shifted, and that the paramount consideration now must be the defeat of the Irish steward. This can be done if the Isoldes will reach a settlement with Tristan.

Some critics have claimed that Brangaene represents a courtly point of view, and that she is less concerned with justice and respect for individual feelings than she is with
the preservation and enhancement of her mistresses' honor. She clearly realizes that cooperation with Tristan is the most honorable alternative and recommends that he be spared for this reason. This judgment, once again a judgment of Brangaene as an opportunist, would be justified only if Brangaene's attitude toward Tristan did not reflect an implicit trust in him. She never suggests that Tristan's intentions might be deceitful, and, indeed, the more she talks about him, the more praise she has for him. Brangaene has to effect a reconciliation between Tristan and the Isoldes, but not between Tristan and herself. She is a relative of Morold's, but never one of his supporters, and she is absent from the Isoldes' wild lamentation of his death. Thus, Brangaene's presence fashions a context in which a reconciliation in the fullest sense of the word can take place between Tristan and the Isoldes. It is a reconciliation without any qualifications. Brangaene does not suggest that the Isoldes continue to hate Tristan in their hearts, but cooperate with him in their actions, because he can perform useful services for them. Instead, she points out that Tristan is a noble, courtly, and wise man (10,450-10452), that his mission is one that cannot be taken lightly (10,455-10,458), that he ought not to lie in supplication before the Irish women (10,478-10479), and that the Isoldes should encourage Tristan by pledging him safety (10,492-10,495). Brangaene says all of this before Tristan makes an offer of marriage in Mark's name, before she would be able, in the
manner of a sly contract maker, to suggest that Tristan be spared in exchange for his performance of certain well-defined services. After Tristan discloses the purpose of his return visit (10,500-10,514; 10,519-10,524), the reconciliation can become complete. Again, Brangaene moves and motivates the action one step further, because the agreement reached with Tristan is not only a reconciliation, but also a veritable surrender of the Irish women to Tristan. Brangaene advises:

"da dunket mich sin rede guot
und rate ouch daz, daz ir ez tuot.
leget allen zwivel hin
und stat uf beide und küsset int
al si ich niht ein künigin,
ich wil ouch an der suone sin:
er was min mac, swie arm ich si."
(10,527-10,533)

The three women kiss Tristan. Isolde the Fair resists:

sus kusten sin do alle dri:
doch tetez Isot diu junge
mit langer widerunge.
(10,534-10,536)

It is understandable that she hesitates, since it is not yet time for her to become Tristan's Lover. But it is clear enough that she will not permanently remain distant from him: she is the first to discover Tristan after the dragon fight (9369-9374), and the first to discover his true identity as Tristan (10,057-10,136, esp. 10,057-10,061). When she has the opportunity to kill him, her nature as a woman prevents her from taking the final step (10.227-10,280). Isolde the Fair also spares Tristan's life for a reason over and above the reason that he will be able to perform useful services
for her.

The reconciliation which Brangaene oversees means that murder and revenge do not have their way, and that the worldly power, embodied here in Isolde Regina, has met its match. What kind of power does Brangaene have? She has power in the world that is not strictly of the world. She has influence over events in the world, and can for example save Tristan's life. But she does not succeed in doing so by exercising externalized, socially sanctioned power. Brangaene is closely related to the Irish royal women. She is a member of the celestial triad of the sun, dawn, and moon (Isolde the Fair, Isolde Regina, and Brangaene; see Tristan's description of the three women: 9450-9460), and she is also an actual member of the Irish royal family. Brangaene notes that Morold was a relative of hers (10,533), and Isolde Regina refers to Brangaene as niftel (942, 10,372, 10,386). Although Brangaene is closely related to the Irish royal family, she clearly does not enjoy the same social status as Gurmun, Isolde Regina, or Isolde the Fair. No royal title is ever affixed to Brangaene, and she is not in a position, socially speaking, to give orders. It is ironic that Brangaene truly is a powerful character who controls a number of individuals and events; yet she does so without ever needing to force her will. It is for this reason that her power is as great as it is, because those who can and do force their will on others, either by means
of their exalted social standing, or by means of brute strength, are precisely those who are most powerless in this romance, where the power of society and of the world is spurious.

Brangaene simply has power. She does not consciously seek it, and she is not formally given it by the other characters. Yet no one ever denies that she has power. She is a figure of authority. Her advice is requested and willingly accepted. Isolde Regina gives Brangaene effective control during the wooing episodes, in which she asks for Brangaene's help five times (9420-9421, 10,386, 10,405, 10,481, 10,525-10,526). She is in control of the love affair starting at quite an early stage., Tristan says that the Lovers' union depends upon Brangaene's approval, and he even says that she holds the death and life of the Lovers in her hand. She appeals for her help and is resigned to the fact that the Love cannot succeed without her:

'und sicherliche: sterben wir,
dast nieman schuldic an wan ir:
unser tot und unser leben
diu sint in iuwer hant gegeben.
hit mite ist iu genuoc gesaget.
Brangaene, saeligiu maget,
nu helfet unde genadet ir
iuwerre vrouwen unde mirt!
(12,115-12,122)

Brangaene is a remarkably self-contained character. She is a powerful character in her own right, in that her power is not externalized, and that she can exercise her
power from a concealed vantage point, and all of these characteristics make her an ideal servant of the Lovers, because the Love must be kept secret in order for it to be protected. Brangaene is a character of silence (10,358-10,362, 11,080-11,084, 12,078-12,081, 15,154-15,158). Both the Lovers and Brangaene are described in terms of concealment and quiet:

\[
\text{so si die state gewunnen ie,} \\
\text{so gie der wehsel under in} \\
\text{slichende her unde hin} \\
\text{vil tougenlichen unde also,} \\
\text{daz nieman in der werlde do} \\
\text{ir willen unde ir muot bevant} \\
\text{wan si, der er doch was bekant,} \\
\text{Brangaene diu wise.} \\
\text{diu blickete dicke lise} \\
\text{und vil tougenliche dar} \\
\text{und nam ir tougenheite war.} \\
\text{(12,044-12,054)}
\]

Brangaene and the Lovers work together to conceal the Love:

\[
\text{ze kamere kunde niht gesin,} \\
\text{Brangaene enmüessez wizzen.} \\
\text{ouch was si vervlizzen} \\
\text{ze dieneste Isolde:} \\
\text{si diende ir, swie si wolde,} \\
\text{an Tristande ir amise.} \\
\text{daz tribens alse lise,} \\
\text{daz nie nieman dervan} \\
\text{dekeinen arcwan gewan.} \\
\text{ir gebaerde, ir rede, ir maere} \\
\text{oder swaz ir dinges waere,} \\
\text{des nam in lützel ieman war:} \\
\text{nieman haete wan dar.} \\
\text{(12,956-12,968)}
\]

There are striking repetitions of the verb **sleichen** in the narrator's description of the Lovers in the **Minnegrotte**:

\[
\text{des morgens in dem touwe} \\
\text{so slichen si zer ouwe} \\
\text{da beide bluomen unde gras} \\
\text{mit dem touwe erküelet was.} \\
\text{(17,147-17,150)}
\]
so danne namens einen swanc
hin da der küele brunne clanc,
und loseten sinem clange,
sinem sliche und sinem gange.
(17,157-17,160)

Sos aber der maere denne
vergezzen wolten unde in,
so slichens in ir cluse hin
und namen aber ze handen,
dar ans ir lust erkanden,
und liezen danne clingen
ir harphen unde ir singen
senelichen unde suoze.
(17,200-17,207)

ouch gruozte si her unde hin
der tou mit seiner süeze,
der küelet in ir vueze
und was ir herzen gemach.
und alse des genuoc geschach,
si slichen wider in ir stein
und wurden under in ein,
wie si der zit getaeten;
wann si des angest haeten
und vorhten, alse ezouch ergie,
daiz eteswer und eteswie
dar von den hunden kaeme,
ir tougen da vernaeme.
(17,390-17,403)

In the context of this last quote it is interesting
to note that the intrusion of the outside world into the
silence and isolation of the Minnegrotte is represented by
noise. The Lovers fear that someone's tracking hounds will
find their hiding place, and indeed only a few verses earlier
the narrator had said:

nu haete ouch Tristan unde Isot
den tac allen wol vernomen
den schal, der in den walt was komen
von gehürne und ouch von hunden
und dahten an den stunden,
daz ez niuwan Marke waere.
des wart ir herze swaere;
ir beider angest was iesa,
si waeren ime vermaeret da.
(17,318-17,326)
They have heard the intruders from afar, and they fear that someone has betrayed them by telling their story. Throughout the work, dangers to one or both of the Lovers are symbolized by some kind of noise. Tristan kills Morgan to lay Morgan's slanderous words about Riwalin to rest. It is for this reason that his sword splits Morgan's skull down to the tongue:

er sluoc im obene ze tal
beidiu hirne und hirneschal,
daz ez im an der zungen want.
(5451-5453)

The dragon heaves a mighty roar when it dies:

nu lie der veige valant
einen doz und eine stimme
so griulich und so grime
uz sine reng giele,
als himel und erde viele
und daz der selbe mortschal
verre in daz lant erhal
und Tristan harte sere ershrac.
(9048-9055)

Tristan cuts out its tongue, which tobs him of his strength with its harmful fumes:

do lag er den tac und die naht;
wan ime benam al sine maht
diu leide zunge, die er truoc;
der rouch, der von der an in sluoc,  
der eine entworhtin garwe
an crefte und an der varwe,
daz er von dannen niht enkam,
unz in diu Künigin da nam.
(9085-9092)

When the Irish royal women rescue Tristan, Brangaene identifies the dragon's tongue (ez ist ein zunge, dunket mich - 9422). The tongue is preserved, and Tristan later uses it to defeat the steward's purely verbal claim to
Isolde. The dragon's tongue, in Tristan's possession, speaks for him and silences the steward:

Tristan hiez an den stunden
die zungen bringen: diu kam dar.
'ir herren' sprach er 'nemet war
und seht, ob si des trachen si.'
nu stuonden sis im alle bi
und jahens al gemeine
wan der truhsaeze al eine,
der woltez widerreden ie:
nun wister aber rehte wie:
der veige der begunde
mit zungen und mit munde,
mit rede und mit gedanken
schranken unde wanken,
erne kunde sprechen noch gelan,
erne wiste, waz gebaerde han.
(11,242-11,256)

The Lovers' haven in the Minnegrotte is intruded upon by barking dogs. The secrecy of their Love in society is first destroyed by Marjodoc, who tells Mark that disgraceful rumors have sprung up about Tristan and Isolde at the court:

Der nidege Marjodo
der nam den künec verholne do
und seitim, daz ein maere
da ze hove ensprungten waere
von Isolde und Tristande,
daz liute unde lande
harte sere missezaeme.
(13,637-13,642)

Tristan later refers to Marjodoc as a dog (15,098-15,108).

Isolde the Fair fears that Brangaene will betray the Lovers and cause their Love to become a topic of general conversation: While Brangaene lies in Mark's bed, Isolde thinks:

'got herre, nu bewar mich
und hilf mir, daz min niftelin
wider mich getriuwe müeze sint
tribet si diz bettespil
iht ze lange und iht ze vil,
ich würhtez ir so wol behage,
daz si vil lihte da betage:
so werde wir alle
ze spotte und ze schalle.'
(12,620-12,628)

For this reason, she instructs her hired killers not only to sever Brangaene's head, but also to cut out her tongue (12,732-12,735) so as to rule out permanently the possibility that slander against the Lovers might emanate from her. What Isolde does not realize is that Brangaene has already become irrevocably associated with the Lovers as their assistant, and that there is, if Brangaene's actions are interpreted on the symbolic level accessible to the reader, no likelihood that Brangaene will betray the Lovers. The narrator specifically points out that Brangaene bears her ordeal in complete silence:

Tristan vuorte Brangaenen hin
die marter liden und die not.
diu lieht diu laschte ir vrouwe Isot.
Marke Brangaen zuo zim twanc.
ine weiz, wie ir der anevanc
geviele dirre sache:
si dolte so gemache,
daz ez gar ane braht beleip:
(12,592-12,599)

In claiming that he does not know how Brangaene reacted at first to Mark's demands, the narrator emphasizes that the experience is indeed a marter and a not for Brangaene.6 As his reply to Isolde's initial suspicions that Brangaene might betray the Lovers, the narrator says:

nein, ir gedanke unde ir muot
die waren luter unde guot:
do si vür Isolde
geleiste, daz si solde,
unde ir teidinc ergie
von dem bette si sich lie.
(12,629-12,634)

Later, the narrator lets the reader know that the story
Brangaene tells her would-be murderers really does keep the
marriage bed deception secret from those who would harm the
Lovers if they found out about it. The hired killers bring
back a tongue that they have cut from one of their dogs
(12,869-12,871). So that wolves, the more vicious relatives
of dogs, do not take Brangaene in their absence, the men tie
her high up in a tree (12,865-12,868). A final condemnation
of Isolde's murderous intentions is found in the assassins'
description of her after she breaks into fury over their
feigned report of Brangaene's death:

'Entriuwen' sprachen jene zehant
'verouwe, iuwer herze und iuwer muot
diun sint niht luter unde guot,
iuwer zunge ist harte manicvalt.'
(12,906-12,909)

Immediately after the deeds in the marriage bed are
completed, the narrator describes the more important result
of Brangaene's substitution for Isolde in this way:

Isot diu was do starke
von ir herren Marke
geminnet unde geheret,
gepriset unde geret
von liute und von lande.
(12,675-12,679)

Much later in the story, the result of Isolde's successful
completion of the ordeal of the hot iron is described in
almost exactly the same words:
dazs an ir eren genas;
und wart aber do starke
von ir herren Marke
geminnet unde geret,
gepriset unde geheret
von liute und von lande.
(15,750-15,755)

The passages differ only in the transposition of the words geheret and geret. Two of the Lovers' ruses yield exactly the same results, but the circumstances of each ruse are completely different. In the first, the deception depended entirely on Brangaene. Mark had to be given a virgin, and Brangaene needed to be physically present so that the ruse might succeed. In the second case, Isolde perpetrates the ruse alone. Brangaene has already begun to assume a much more limited role in the plot; the assistance she gives the Lovers in the scene of their assignation under the olive tree, not long before Isolde's ordeal, marks her last major appearance. Tristan has a part to play in the ruse that lets Isolde pass her ordeal. But he is never informed of the details of her ruse, and his appearance in the ordeal episode is perfunctory. Isolde does have an ally who helps her through the ordeal, however. She appeals to God, who intervenes to allow her to hold the hot iron without injury. Thus, in the wedding night ruse, the Lovers deceive Mark, and everyone else in the land, through the services of Brangaene. In the ruse contrived by Isolde to master the test of the ordeal, the Lovers are again able to deceive Mark and all of Cornwall -- but this time with the help of God.
A definite progression can be shown to take place in the Lovers' ruses. The first ruse takes place in the marriage bed, and subsequent deceptions increase in sophistication and appeal to ever higher authorities, until they reach a high point in the episode of Isolde's ordeal. Brangaelne has a role to play as teacher of the Lovers in each of the deceptions that precedes the deception Isolde practices at her ordeal. She is able to carry out that deception successfully only because she has received instructions from Brangaelne. Brangaelne also imparts qualities to Isolde that make her a more mature Lover. She is a living example of faithfulness to both lovers, and she teaches them that one must be willing to endure sorrow for the sake of those to whom one is truly devoted.

The initial ruse of the counterfeit bedmate works perfectly well to preserve the Lovers' freedom until the time Marjodoc spies on one of their trysts. One reason that no single ruse can protect the Lovers for very long is that the opponents of the Love (Mark, Marjodoc, and Melot) are evilly disposed and vicious. Marjodoc, the dog, is denounced in even more explicit language when the narrator says:

```
in reizete haz unde leit
uf die grozen unhöfscheit,
daz er ir ding lutbaerete
und ez al da vermaerete;
so zoch in aber Tristan
und diu vorhte dervan,
die er hin zime haete,
ob erm iht leides taete.
```

(13609-13,616)
den truhsaezen Marjodo
den haete er aber mitalle do
zeinem lügenaere
(14,229-14,231)

jener slange, dirre hunt.
(15,103)

als hunt und slange,
(15,108)

nu hüetet iuch genote
vor dem slangen Melote
und vor dem hunde Marjodo!
(15,099-15,101)

His cowardice makes him all the more despicable. The narrator has nothing positive to say about Melot either:

daz vertane getwerc,
des valandes antwerc
(14,511-14,512)

The combination of Mark and Melot against the Lovers is described as:

si waren Tristande do
dicke und ze manegen ziten
valschlichen an der siten:
si truogen in geliche
mit valsche und mit aswiche
ir dienest und ir heinlich an.
(15,075-15,079)

The ruses also do not succeed because there is no ruse that can lay to rest Mark's suspicions for very long. It is not that Mark is too intelligent to be duped, but that suspicion, doubt, and indecision form the essence of his character:

The narrator emphasizes this in discussing Mark's state of mind by the repeated use of these words in clusters: 'zwivel' 17 times, and 'arcwan,' varied by 'wan,' eight times within 130 lines
Mark practically asks to be deceived, and it seems almost insignificant that his suspicions were set off by the report of Marjodoc, who had information that the love affair did in fact exist. One can recall that Marjodoc gives Mark no proof of the love affair; he fears that Tristan might harm him if he told all that he knew, and so Marjodoc tells Mark nothing more than that a certain tumor has sprung up about Tristan and Isolde (13,637-13,651).

Mark begins to set verbal traps for Isolde in four consecutive boudoir conversations (13,676-13,698; 13,809-14,009; 14,027-14,138; 14,156-14,228). The deceptions practiced by Isolde here are comparatively primitive, and it is appropriate that they should be so. They are, after all, only the first in a series of the Lovers' ruses. And Isolde is not yet capable of sophisticated deception. Tristan is a far more skilled dissembler than his Lover, who makes a distinctly naive impression before Brangaene instructs her on how to speak with Mark:

Diu betrogen Isot diu was do vro:
si seite Brangaenen do
vil vroliche lachende
und michel vröude machende
von ir herren betevart,
und ouch wie si gevraget wart,
in wes pflege si wolte sin.
(13,723-13,729)

The narrator relates Brangaene's reply and her advice:

Brangaene sprach do: 'vrouwe min,
lieget mir niht und saget mir,
so helfe iu got, wen ieschet ir?
Isot seit ir die warheit,
reht alse ez da wart uf geleit.
'a tumber' sprach Brangaene do
'war umbe sprachet ir also?
swaz so hier an geredet ist,
daz hoere ich wol, daz ist ein list,
und weiz vür war, daz disen rat
der truhsaeze uf geleget hat.
hie mite so wellents iuch ervarn.
ir sult iuch her nach baz bewarn.
gewehene ers iu iht mere,
so tuot, als ich iuch lere:
sprechet sus unde so.'
ir vrouwen lerte si do,
waz antwürte ir gebaere
ze disen listen waere.
(13,730-13,748)

Again the childish image of Isolde is emphasized as Brangaene, in the manner of a parent, insists that Isolde tell the truth. This Isolde does. Brangaene sees clearly that Mark and Marjodoc are setting traps for Isolde, and she gives Isolde instructions on how to comport herself in future conversations with the king.

Before the second boudoir conversation Mark also receives instructions on how to behave, from Marjodoc, the jealous steward (13,853-13,868). Mark begins the verbal battle by saying:

'schoene' sprach er 'nun ist mir
niht herzecliche liep wan ir;
und ich von iu nu scheiden sol,
daz wizze got von himele wol,
daz nimet mir mine sinne.'
(13,873-13,877)

With these words he unwittingly introduces a third point of view into the narrative, that of an all-knowing observer who sits in judgment of all the characters. God judges the characters and their actions from this elevated
point of view, as does the reader, who is better informed than any one of the characters. Since the Lovers later on depend on God to conceal their affair from the world, it is important to see the context in which Mark calls upon him. In the example just noted (13,873-13,877), Mark's evocation of God's name is trivial and, most importantly, it occurs in the context of a statement made by someone who has no proper claim to do so. Perhaps Isolde is very dear to Mark, but the reader must stop short of sympathizing with the king because Mark's attachment to Isolde is of a quality far inferior to Tristan's love for her. Of this there can be no question.

As much as Mark may claim to care for Isolde, for whom does he really care the most? After the Lovers have again temporally shaken off their spies in the ruse of their meeting under the olive tree, the narrator says:

Marke unde Melot beide
si haeten zweier hande leit:
Melot durch die trügeheit,
die er begangen solte han;
Marke durch den arcwan,
daz er den neven und daz wip
und allermeist sin selbes lip
so haete beswaeret
und zübele vermaeret
über hof und über lant.
(14,932-14,940)

Though concerned to a certain degree with the welfare of Tristan and Isolde, Mark is far more concerned with his own well being. The reader can have little sympathy for selfish Mark. Where is there any indication, at the time
of the above statement by the narrator, that any rumor about Isolde’s adulterous conduct has in fact injured Mark’s reputation across the land? The adulterous love does in fact remain a secret until Mark makes it a topic of public discussion by telling his nobles that a rumor has sprung up at court, and across the realm (15.280-15.294). It is strange that the supposed carries of a rumor should have to be informed about it by the man who is trying to quell it. The idea of putting Isolde on trial is also called into question by the Bishop of the Thames, a member of the council called to pass judgment on Isolde. He is, significantly, the only member of that council who stands up to speak. Of Mark’s suspicions he says:

min vrouwe und min her Tristan,
die waenet man zungingen an
und sint an keiner warheit
noch überekomen noch überseit,
als ich die rede vernomen han.
wie muget ir nu den argen wan
mit arge beslihten?
wie muget ir gerihten
über iuwen neven und iuwer wip
an ir ere oder an ir lip,
sit man si iht ervunden hat
an keiner slahte missetat
noch niemer lihte ervinden kan?
etswer seit Tristanden an
disse schulde und disse inziht:
ern beredet es hin zim niht,
als er ze rehte solde.
so bringet och Isolde
lihte eteswer ze maeren:
erm mag es niht bewaeren.
(15.367-15.386)

The Bishop points out that there is no hard evidence of any wrongdoing by either Tristan or Isolde, and he is not at
all eager to put them through any kind of trial. He unwittingly condemns Mark and Marjodoc by adopting a critical attitude toward those who make charges against Tristan and Isolde without presenting any proof to substantiate those charges.

The Bishop does, however, agree that some action must be taken, since gossip excites the baser feelings in people, and since king and court consider themselves injured and scandalized:

```plaintext
ez si war oder gelogen,
swaz in den liument wirt gezogen
der inziht da heizet,
der quicket unde reizet
ie zer ergeren hant.
swie soz hier umbe si gewant,
ez si war oder niht.
(15,399-15,405)
```

He goes ahead to recommend a completely fair course of action, advising that Isolde be called to answer the charges made against her:

```plaintext
nu rate ich, herre, und ist min rat,
min vrouwe diu künigin
sit si besprochen sol sin
umb solhe missewende,
daz man si her besende
zunser aller gegenwürte,
iuwer ansprache, ir antwürte
daz man diu beide also verneme,
als ez dem hove wol gezeme.
(15,410-15,418)
```

But the Bishop still is not truly in favor of testing Isolde. When she arrives to hear the indictment, the Bishop distances himself from the entire affair:

```plaintext
nu daz si nider gesezzen was,
der bischof, der grise,
```
der wise von Thamise,
er tet als ime der künec gebot;
er stuont uf und sprach: 'vrouwe Isot,
tugenthaftiu künigin,
min rede sol iiu niht swaere sin:
der künec min herre heizet mich
sin wort hie sprechen, nu muoz ich
hin ziu leisten sin gebot.
nu bekennez aber got:
swar iuwer wie die missezimet
und iuwer reine lob benimet,
daz ich daz vil ungerne trage
beidiu ze liehtes und ouch ze tage:
möhtich es erlazen sin!
saeligiu, guotiu künigin,
iuwer herre und iuwer man
der heizet mich iuch sprechen an
umb ein offentliche inziht.
ie weiz noch er enweiz ez niht,
wa von ez si gerochen,
waz daz ir sit besprochen
von hove und von lande
mit sinem neuen Tristande.
ob got wil, vrouwe künigin,
der untaete der sult ir sin
unschuldig und aue.
iederh hat erz in wane
da von daz es der hof giht.  
(15,424-15,453)

He is following the rules of the king, whom he is obliged
to obey. If God wills it, Isolde shall be found innocent
(15,449-15,451). That is, if she is innocent, God will
recognize it, and Isolde need have no fear. She has been
called to answer for herself only because the court has
encouraged Mark to be suspicious.9 Perhaps the Bishop
tries to defend Mark when he says that the king has found
nothing but good in Isolde, and that he is suspicious of her
only because the court is (15,454-15,457). But this defense
of Mark is relativized by the opening lines of the Bishops
speech to Isolde (15,431-15,434), by the narrator's emphasis
that there is no evidence of Isolde's guilt (15,458), and by his suggestion that the whole matter might be someone's attempt to wreak revenge on Isolde (15,444-15,448). This last statement is completely true, since Tristan and Isolde were first betrayed by Marjodoc who wanted to avenge the wrongs he imagined they had caused him. It is also true, as the Bishop says, that Mark does not know that Marjodoc is motivated by jealousy. Mark thinks that Marjodoc is his friend. There is a supreme irony in the fact that Mark tries to thwart his wife's adulterous love with the assistance from a man who himself had an illicit, although unrequited affection for her.

The Bishop ends his speech to Isolde by suggesting that she answer the charges made against her:

\[\text{nu dunket mich daz guot getan,}
\text{daz ir im umbe den arcwan}
\text{rede gebet unde antwürte}
\text{zunser aller gegenwürte.}
\]

(15,465-15,468)

This wise man and representative of God never suggests that Isolde is in fact guilty, nor does he demand that she be put through a specific kind of test. Once again it seems as if she will be able to vindicate herself by passing a purely verbal test. But a demand for a more vigorous test comes from an unexpected quarter -- Mark himself. With brutal and unusual decisiveness he asks her to prove her innocence by the
ordeal of the hot iron. He has thus moved the examination of Isolde to a new plane. She is no longer called upon to explain her conduct but to place the question of innocence or guilt in the hands of God.\textsuperscript{10}

God will have to intervene in this test of Isolde because it is a test of physical evidence. The words of Isolde are in and of themselves no match for the red-hot iron: she will need help from a higher authority, who can provide physical evidence of her innocence, in order to pass the test. One recalls that the first Lovers' ruse perpetrated on Mark, in his marriage bed, also demanded that physical evidence of Isolde's innocence be provided. In that case, Brangaene was called upon to supply the physical proof. Another link becomes clear between the ruse affected via Brangaene and the ruse affected via the agency of God. It has already been noted that both of these ruses have exactly the same result (12,675-12,679; 15,750-15,755).

In calling for Isolde's ordeal, Mark has again introduced into the narrative the perspective of an omniscient judge. But with what sincerity does he call on God? After demanding that Isolde undergo an ordeal, Mark withdraws from the scene with a number of other people, his country followers:

\begin{quote}
kùneč unde lantbaruné, 
al daz concilje schiet sich sa. 
\end{quote}

(15,532-15,533)
He remains in the worldly sphere, within the group that gives him his power and their respect because he is the king. Isolde, however, is alone:

Isot beleip al eine da
mit sorgen und mit leide;
sorge unde leit diu beide
twungen si harte sere:
sie sorgete umbe ir ere;
so twanc si daz verholne leit,
dazz ir unwarheit
solte warbaeren.
mit disen zwein swaeren
enwiste si, waz ane gan:
si begunde ir swaere beide lan
an den genaedigen Crist,
der gehulfic in den noeten ist;
dem bevalch si harte vaste
mit gebete und mit vaste
alle ir angest unde ir not.
in disen dingen haete Isot
einen list ir herzen vür geleit
vil verre uf gotes höfscheit:
si schreip unde sande
einen brief Tristande
und enbot im, daz er kaeme,
swa er die vuoge naeme,
ze Carliun des tages vruo,
so si da solte stozen zuo,
und naeme ir an dem stade war.

(15,534–15,558)

She does not have a group of courtly followers, and so it is important to see with whom she associates herself. She turns to God, and to Tristan (15,534015,564).

What is the meaning of the narrator's comment that Isolde has devised a ruse that presumes greatly upon God's "courtliness?" In the light of this analysis, the presumptuous aspect of Isolde's plan is not that she devises a plan whereby God can help her, but that she asks him to intervene upon her behalf within a particular courtly context.
Mark is the one who is really presuming on God, and not Isolde. The comments of God's representative on earth make Mark's demands upon Isolde appear of doubtful integrity. As the Bishop rightly points out, Isolde is being put to the test not because there is evidence against her, but only because rumors have been circulated about her. Thus a rather presumptuous demand is made upon God to render a visible judgment that will assuage certain people who have been offended, even though those people never step forward to give proof of their offense. Just before Isolde gives her oath the narrator says:

Nu waren da genuoge
so grozer unvuoge,
daz si der küniginne ir eit
ze schaden und ze valle.
diu bitter nitgalle,
der truhsaeze Marjodo
der treibeze sus unde so
und manege wis zur schaden an.
da wider was aber da manic man
der sich an ir erte
und ez ir ze Quote kerte.
sus gie daz criege under in
umbe ir eit her unde hin:
der was ir Übel und dirre guot,
als man ze solhen dingen tuot.
(15,681–15,696)

The moral legitimacy of Isolde's ordeal becomes even more clearly dubious because it is obvious that Mark, and his steward Marjodoc, try to use the occasion of Isolde's testing to their own advantage. Isolde is subjected to the ordeal so that jealousy can have its way and so that injury can be done to her, not so that justice and a higher truth can be served.
Isolde passes the ordeal because, unlike those who set the test for her, she believes in God's power and turns to him for assistance in a sincere fashion. It is interesting that Tristan appears at Carleon in the uniquely appropriate garb of a pilgrim, even though Isolde had not specifically told him to adopt that disguise (15,553-15,564). The fall of the disguised Tristan (15,586-15,597), which leaves him lying in Isolde's lap and arms, symbolizes the fall of Isolde's reputation due to her love for Tristan. But it is important to remember that the fall is a feigned one, staged for the benefit of the crowd that attends the ordeal, and to enable Isolde to later give her ambiguous oath. Tristan could have easily carried her; the fall provides the appearance of guilt without any substance of guilt.

Isolde goes to church and prays with deep devotion:

hie mite was si zem münster komen
und haete ir ambet vernomen
mit inneclichem muote.
diu wise, diu guote,
ir andaht diu was gotelich:
(15,651-15,655)

The quality of her actions is in direct contrast to the earlier behavior of Mark and Melot. Mark invokes God's name in the context of a lie:

'schoene' sprach er 'nun ist mir
niht herzecliche liep wan ir;
und ich von iu nu scheiden sol,
daz wizze got von himele wol,
daz nimet mir mine sinne.'
(13,873-13,873)

He has claimed that he is about to go on a pilgrimage
(13,685-13,687), but the reader -- and God as well -- knows that Mark has no intention of doing so. If he is being robbed of his senses, it is not because he is preparing to reach some state of union with God. A pilgrimage would not have such an effect on a genuine pilgrim. Later, in the episode of the trap of the floured floor, Mark and Melot leave to attend church services when the matins are sounded:

nu man zer mettinstunde
liuten begunde,
Marke, der verdahte man,
der leite sich al swigend an
und hiez Meloten uf stan
und mit im hin zer mettin gan.
(15,139-15,144)

The floor is treated and the two conspirators Mark and Melot really do go to church. But the narrator comments:

hie mite giengen si zwene hin.
ir andaht diu was under in
vil cleine an kein gebet gewant.
nu wart ouch Brangaene al zehant
der lage bi dem mel gewar:
si sleich ze Tristande dar,
si warnet in und kerte wider
und leite sich do wider nider.
(15,151-15,158)

Isolde, like Tristan, dresses as a pilgrim (15,656-15,667). Of course the pilgrims' clothing fits in well with the plan she devises in order to pass the ordeal, and the pain she causes herself arouses a good deal of sympathy on her behalf. But there is no reason to say that Isolde is not also, with prayer and with the adoption of a pilgrim's way of life, honestly showing respect for the fact that God will decide her fate in the ordeal.
What is the meaning of the following verses:

diu quote küniginne Isolt
diu haete ir silber unde ir golt,
ir zierde und swaz si haete
an pferden unde an waete
gegeben durch gotes hulde,
daz got ir waren schulde
an ir niht gedaehne
und si zir eren braehnte.
(15,643-15,650)

Why does Isolde think that she has very real sins (15,648)?
A similar idea was reported to have been in her thoughts
earlier (15,534-15,541), when she feared that she would no
longer be able to conceal her infidelity. According to the
law of men, Isolde is a sinner. She is married but has a
lover who is not her husband. But, as the outcome of the
ordeal shows, she is not a sinner to the degree that God
wants to allow her to be presented to the world as a sinner.
God does not suspend judgment: rather, He refuses to
surrender his power of judgment over the Lovers to the
world. The divine standard of judgment supercedes the
worldly one, and the love this thereby allowed to continue.

It has now been established that there is a connec-
tion between the Divine (God) and the Lovers. God is
involved in Gottfried's Tristan even before the love affair
becomes part of the story. One recalls, for example, that
there are strong indications that Tristan receives divine
assistance in his battles with Morold and the dragon. The
association of the Divine with the love affair continues
after God's intervention into the episode just discussed,
the episode of Isolde's ordeal, as Friedrich Ranke has shown
in his analysis of the allegory of the Minnegrotte. 11 The
nature and identity of God, and the question of Gottfried's possibly non-traditional concept of the Divine, are not relevant to the present discussion.\textsuperscript{12} It is more pertinent here to establish the link between the Lovers and the Divine and in particular to identify the mediary—Brangaene—through whom the linkage of Love and Divinity is founded, as well as the means by which Brangaene carries out her important mediary function.

Brangaene participates either directly or indirectly in all of the Love's ruses, i.e., the ruse of the marriage bed, the collective ruses of the royal bedroom, the ruse of the observed meeting under the olive tree, and the ruse of the ordeal of the hot iron. In the last of these ruses, God enters the plot as an assistant of the Lovers. He effectively assumes the role played up until then by Brangaene, and this is possible because Brangaene has, over the course of the ruses, shown the Lovers how to conceal their Love in a progressively more sophisticated fashion. The Lovers learn to conceal their Love and to remove it even farther from the intrusion of society, without having to destroy or abandon their Love in the process. Brangaene fosters the development of a kind of communication between the Lovers that becomes, with each successive ruse, more opaque to those who are not initiated into the immediate Lovers' circle. The audience for the Lovers' communication becomes increasingly exclusive, until finally the Lovers address, in addition to themselves, only God.\textsuperscript{13}
The ruses begin on a comparatively base level. Brangaene is brought into the service of the Love as the physical substitute for Isolde in the marriage bed (12,565-12,671). This same episode soon takes on a different, more allegorical note, however, when Brangaene, facing the two men who have been ordered to murder her by Isolde, refuses to divulge Isolde's guilt to the world at large. Instead she tells a tale of the two white shirts, a tale that describes the loss of Isolde's virginity, and the fact that Brangaene was Isolde's substitute in the marriage bed quite vividly -- but only for someone who is already familiar with the facts and who knows that the tale of the shirts cannot be interpreted on the literal level alone (12,791-12,848).

It is interesting to note that God is, figuratively, rather close to the action in this scene. Tristan knows nothing of Isolde's murder plot, Isolde has betrayed Brangaene, and Brangaene is left with only one possible assistant, God Himself. She declares that she has not done wrong to Isolde in God's eyes (12,836-12,839) and surrenders her soul to God (12,847), leaving only her physical body to the murderers hired by her mistress (12,848). She shows no vengeance or anger toward Isolde, however, and shows full mercy to the woman who has ordered her to be killed:

nu tuot ez beide samet durch got, 
grüezet si von mir also wol, 
als ein juncvrouwe ir vrouwen sol; 
und got durch sine güete 
der bewar ir unde behüete 
ir ere und ir lip unde ir leben!
und min tot der si ir vergeben.  
(12,840-12,846)

The consummate faithfulness displayed by Brangaene in the attempted murder episode gives her character a sheen that is not soon forgotten by Isolde or, for that matter, by the reader. Isolde is reconciled with Brangaene and fully accepts her as her loyal assistant. Isolde does not try to deceive Brangaene again. When Brangaene, near the beginning of the bedroom ruses, says to Isolde,

...'vrouwe min,  
lieget mir niht und saget mir,  
so helfe iu got, wen ieschet ir?'  
(13,730-13,732)

her words do not indicate that Isolde has been lying to her. Rather, they emphasize that Isolde has accepted Brangaene as her main advisor and does in fact tell her the truth.

In her analysis of the Brangaene character C.B. Caples has said:

When Mark next attempts to entrap Isolde into an admission of adultery, Brangaene shows Isold how to protect her love by employing the art of ambiguous speech; Brangaene introduced this trick into the story by concealing Isold's guilt in her plea to her potential assassins. The association of Isold's new deceptive powers with a crucial episode of loyalty robs them of their potentially invidious character and instead reminds us of earlier demonstra-
tions of selfless faith. 16

This observation points out one of the many ways in which Gottfried fashions his Tristan so as to cast a positive light on the love affair, even though the Lovers must practice deception in order to protect their Love. Brangaene's response to the assassins entirely transcends the sphere of everyday morality. This woman forgives her would-be murderess and throws herself upon God's mercy. All mention of revenge and hatred is spurned in favor of creating an image of perfect devotion made real and expressed by Brangaene. In future episodes, the concealment of the Lovers' secret recalls in the reader's mind first and foremost the images of truthworthiness and devotion embodied in Brangaene. Brangaene thus gives the Lovers' ruses a positive aspect that would otherwise be less pronounced.

In the four ruses in the bedroom, Isolde receives instruction from Brangaene at two critical junctures. The deception practiced by Isolde in these bedroom conversations is, quite appropriately relatively primitive in comparison to her deceptive skills in the episodes of the meeting in the orchard and of the ordeal of the hot iron. In the bedroom ruses Isolde is, after all, only beginning to learn how to conceal her love affair with Tristan. The bedroom ruses nevertheless have an extremely important effect in that they bring about an inversion of appearance and reality that becomes increasingly pointed in the following ruses.

In the first ruse (13,676-13,698), Isolde clearly
blunders and states quite openly that she would prefer to be in the care of Tristan while Mark is absent from the court. Isolde soon tells Brangaene about the incident, and Brangaene immediately realizes that Mark had intentionally set a trap. She suggests some answers that Isolde might give to Mark to counter his scheming in the future (13,723-13,748).

In the second ruse (13,809-14,009) Isolde uses tears as part of her deception and successfully disarms Mark with them (13,887-13,899). She follows her weeping with a lengthy verbal deception more sophisticated than any she has practiced before. Isolde's lies have a grain of truth in them, and in two instances they defend the Love on a higher level than that of the mere lie by involving the name of God and effectively asking him to observe the cover up. Isolde says:

'ver selbe losaere,
der ist mir zallen ziten
gelichsend an der siten
und allez smeichende bi
und giht, wie liep ich im si.
iodoch weiz got wol sinen muot,
in welhen triuwen er ez tuot.'
(13,952-13,958)

On the face of it she condemns Tristan as a flatterer, but she immediately takes back this denunciation, without Mark ever realizing it, when she says that God knows whether or not Tristan's displays of affection are genuine. The love affair is not what it appears to be from the limited perspective of Mark. The truth of the Love, that it is a sincere and genuine Love, is obvious only to an observer on a more
omniscient and in fact divine plane. On this level the Lovers are vindicated.

In her second mention of God, Isolde says:

'und weizgot wan ir eine
daz ich durch iuch noch mere
dan durch min selbes ere
vriuntliche dar gebare,
son gesaehe ich in zeware
mit vriundes ougen niemer an:'

(13,970-13,975)

Again Isolde admits to the spurious nature of what she says (in this case, that she is friendly toward Tristan only for Mark's sake, and that she is, in other words, devoted to Mark) when she invokes the name of God, who does in fact know where he affections lie. Isolde is not lying to Mark, but rather telling him the truth in a way that he cannot understand.17

But since Isolde is, after all, lying to Mark, because she is not being completely forthright with him, can it not be argued that she is in fact mistreating or taking advantage of him, and that the love affair is necessarily an evil thing, since its cover up requires that outsiders be duped or, at the very least, be kept ignorant of its existence? The answer to this question must be in the negative, because Gottfried goes to noticeable effort to relativize the sin of Isolde's refusal to tell the literal truth. For example, he offers a lengthy discourse on the nature of doubt and suspicion in love18 and that each has a certain proper function in Love, up to but not including the point at which a Lover pursues them as ends in themselves with no goal in
mind other than producing sorrow in himself. It is precisely this habit to which Mark has devoted himself, and Gottfried describes it as a senseless habit:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dem selben sinelosen site} \\
\text{dem gieng auch Marke vaste mit:} \\
\text{er wante spate unde vruo} \\
\text{allen sinen sin dar zuo,} \\
\text{daz er den zwivel unde den wan} \\
\text{gerne haete hin getan} \\
\text{und daz er mit der warheit} \\
\text{uf sin herzeclichez leit} \\
\text{vil gerne komen waere:} \\
\text{des was er gevaere.}
\end{align*}
\]

(13,843-13,852)

Thus, Mark’s attempts to expose Isolde are placed in a very negative light by Gottfried, and one can say little more than that Mark is responsible for his own distress.

Isolde deceives Mark with her tears. Here is a woman who perverts an otherwise sincere expression of emotion to her own selfish ends, one could argue. But Gottfried has a different opinion, and he says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wan an den vrouwen allen} \\
\text{enist nimere galle,} \\
\text{also man uz ir munde giht,} \\
\text{noch enhabent dekeiner truge niht} \\
\text{noch aller valsche keinen,} \\
\text{wan daz si kunnen weinen} \\
\text{ane meine und ane muot,} \\
\text{als ofte so si dunket guot.}
\end{align*}
\]

(13,895-13,902)

Women have no greater gall than their words, and no greater guile than their tears. However skillfully Isolde may use her womanly weapons of words and tears, they must be considered relatively harmless weapons on any absolute scale of comparison. They can hurt only those who want to be hurt by them.
Gottfried makes yet another comment on the ruses when he says:

\[ \begin{align*}
den stric, den er ir rihtete 
und uf ir schaden tihtete, 
da vie diu küniginne 
den kńec ir herren inne 
mit ir Brangaenen lere. 
da half Brangaene sere; 
da vrumetin beiden samet, daz list 
wider list gesetzet ist. 
\end{align*} \]

(13,861-13,868)

He deems it thoroughly appropriate that Isolde should guard herself against the traps that Mark sets for her, and that Mark's cunning should receive an equally cunning reply. It is, furthermore, Brangaene, and no one else, who directs the reply of cunning to Mark. And, as was explained earlier,\(^\text{19}\) the connection of Brangaene with a deception does not awaken a negative reaction in the reader's mind. One is reminded instead of an extremely positive example of complete devotion, the positive import of which is here transferred to Isolde's deceptions practiced against Mark for the sake of protecting her Love for Tristan. In this regard the third of the bedroom ruses (14,027-14,138) offers an interesting contrast to the second. Isolde does not succeed in putting up a convincing front, and Mark has little difficulty in identifying the ruse:

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{Der kńec enstuont sich al zehant,} 
daz al ir herze was gewant 
ze Tristaned es eren 
\end{align*} \]

(14,139-14,141)

The implication is clear that the third ruse fails specifically because Isolde did not call on Brangaene's advice in
it. The text says:

Isot tet ouch Brangaenen kunt
ir beider rede unz uf den grunt
und seite ir wider diz unde dantz,
daz si nie wortes vergaz.
diz was Brangaenen sere leit,
dazs also haete geset
und daz diu rede ergangen was.
einen niuwen brief sir aber do las,
waz aber ir rede solte sin.
(14,147-14,155)

Since Isolde has been newly instructed by Brangaene, the fourth bedroom ruse (14,156-14,228) is a success, although it represents no advance in sophistication over the second ruse, and indeed calls to mind the ruse of the substitution of Brangaene in the marriage bed. That is to say, Isolde satisfies Mark's physical desires:

Des nahtes, do diu konigin
zir herren aber slafen kam,
der ir arme si in nam:
si halseten, si kusten,
zir senften linden brusten
twanc sin vil harte nahen
(14,156-14,161)

Isolde is not at all argumentative and instead directs her efforts toward pleasing Mark and falling into line with his will:

'Über daz allez so tuot ir
mit den landen und mit mir,
reht als iuch selbe dunke guot;
daz ist min wille und min tuot:'
(14,213-14,216)

The deception is accomplished through avoidance of confrontation.

The result of the bedroom ruses is described by Gottfried:
Sss gies ir herren losend an,
biz daz sim aber an gewan,
daz er den zwivel aber lie
und aber von dem wane gie
ir muotes unde ir minne
und aber die küniginne
mitalle unschuldic haete
vor aller slahte untaete.
den truhsaezen Marjodo
den haete er aber mitalle do
zeinem lügenaere,
doch erm diu waren maere
und die rehten warheit
von ir haete geseit.

(14,221-14,234)

Isolde deceives Mark and for the time being induces him to
give up his doubts. The mechanism by which this deception
comes about involves an adroit inversion of appearance and
reality. Marjodoc has informed Mark about the truth, or
reality, of the affair of Tristan and Isolde. They are in
love, and Isolde is an adulteress. The ruses succeed in
concealing this reality and in making Marjodoc's tale appear
to be a false story, not, it is important to realize, by
out and out denial, but by expressing the real facts in a
form that is not accessible to Mark. The ruses are lies
only from the point of view of Mark, who is an uninformed
listener. The listener who has a full overview of the
Love, namely God, is not deceived in any way since he is
able to understand the veritable private language that
Isolde begins to use in the bedroom ruses. The teacher of
Isolde in these ruses who trains her in the adept use of
a private language understandable only to those initiated
into the Love is Brangaene.
Each dynamic mentioned above -- the inversion of appearance and reality, the use of a private means of expression that can be understood only by a select group of listeners, and the indispensable guidance by Brangaene -- is amplified in the ruse of the Lovers' meeting under the olive tree. Dissatisfied with the apparently false guidance he received from Marjodoc, Mark calls on the dwarf Melot to help him ensnare Isolde. With Melot's entrance into the plot the battle of wits between the Lovers, and their assistant Brangaene, and Mark, with his selected cohorts, moves onto the next highest level of sophistication, because Melot, Gottfried says, is supposed to be an astrologer of some fame:

Melot petit von Aquitan
und kunde ein teib, also man giht,
umbe verholne geschiht
an dem gestirne nahtes sehen.
(14,240-14,243)

Thus, the reader knows that the language of Love, directed toward God, will face a more informed opponent than ever before, now that the astrologer Melot has appeared on the scene. Significantly, however, Gottfried relativizes his statement about Melot's skill immediately after her makes it:

ine wil aber nihtes von im jehen,
wan als ichz von dem buoche nim.
nun vinde ich aber niht von im
an dem waren maere,
wan daz er küntic waere,
listic unde rederich.
(14,244-14,249)

The informed reader knows long before the fact that the ruse
under the olive tree, although it will be more complex to meet the challenge of a slightly better informed enemy, will be just as successful as the less involved ruses that preceded it.

From the very start the ruse of the meeting under the olive tree is steeped in religious imagery. The most thorough investigation of this aspect of the olive tree ruse is that of Heinz Klingenberg. Having been forbidden entrance to any place where the ladies of the court gather, Tristan is denied easy access to Isolde and turned to Brangaene for assistance, since the enforced separation from his Lover is quite painful for him (see 14,376-14,397). Brangaene now devises a plan whereby the Lovers can signal each other to meet at a secret place: Tristan is to carve each of their initials, a "T" and an "I," on a piece of wood, drop it into the stream that flows past Isolde's apartments, and then wait for her to meet him in the shade of an olive tree near the fountain from which the stream springs (see 14,421-14,449). In the carved chip of wood Klingenberg sees considerable symbolic meaning. He claims that the initials must in all likelihood be thought of as carved in the same side of the wood chip, and that they coincidentally form not only a secretive design, the meaning of which can be known only to those who are properly initiated into the ruse, but also the outline of a crucifix. Klingenberg points out that it is quite possible to the function of the carved cross in Gottfried's Tristan with the function of the
similar, although five-pointed, *Drudenfuss* in Eilhart's version of the story. The *Drudenfuss* was a means of warding off evil spirits, and Gottfried gives a similar function to making the sign of the Christian cross. In addition to its religious import, the cross figure can also represent the oneness of Tristan and Isolde in their Love, since both of their initials are combined into a single figure on the wood chip. The idea of the unity of the Lovers is expressed often in the text, both literally and figuratively, by the repetition of words or phrases and by the juxtaposition of the Lovers' names. One notes, for example:

bleichen unde blichen
begunde ir varwe unde ir lip:
der man bleichete durch daz wip,
daz wip bleichete durch den man;
durch Isote Tristan,
durch Tristanden Isot:
......
ezn was ouch an in beiden
nieme wan ein herze und ein muot:
(14,318-14,323; 14,328-14,329)

The most obvious references to the Divine are the Lovers' frequent invocation of God's name during their observed meeting under the olive tree. The name of God is mentioned eighteen times during the Lovers' meeting and in the scenes that immediately precede and follow it. In several instances the name of God is used in a straightforward context, as when Tristan and Isolde, just before their meeting, call upon God to give them protection (14,637-14,638; 14,644-14,645; 14,653-14,654; 14,706: 14,709). The context is straightforward in these instances because
each Lover is addressing God directly, and there is no third eavesdropping listener. The face value of their statements here contains the entire meaning: they want God to watch over them. The context of the other invocations, those that occur during the Lovers' observed meeting, in the presence of the peeping Mark and Melot, is less lucid, but not at all untransparent in the light of the similar ruses already perpetrated by Brangaene and Isolde. Once again expression is given to the truth, but in a form that only an insider to the Love, in this case God, is able to understand.

The climax of the observed meeting is the following two-edged statement by Isolde, which looks ahead to the oath that she will swear during her ordeal:

```
nu weiz ez aber got selbe wol,
wi min herze hin ziu ste;
und wil ein lützel sprechen me:
des si got min urkünde
und enmünde och miner sünde
niemer anders komen ahe,
wun alse ich iuch gemeinet habe,
im welhem herzen unde wie;
und gihes ze gote, daz ich nie
ze keinem manne muot gewan
und hiute und iemer alle man
vor minem herzen sint verspart
niwan der eine, dem da wart
der erste rosebluome
von minem magetuome.
daz mich min herre Marke
bewaenet also starke
durch iuerner willen, her Tristan,
weiz got da missetuot er an,
so gar als er erkanne hat,
wie min herze hin ziu stat.
die mich ze maere habent braht,
weiz got, die sint vil unbedaht:
in ist min herze vil unkunt.
(14,752-14,775)
```
These words are calculated to deceive only Mark and Melot, the listeners in the tree. Neither Lover is confused by them nor can God be misled, since He is omniscient. And the Lovers' intention is not to deceive God, because here He is being told the complete truth, even if the name of Isolde's Lover is not explicitly mentioned. Isolde's statement that God knows those who have gossiped about her are very rash contains an implicit admission that God is aware of the Love and that Isolde fully realizes this when she addresses God here. 32

The aftermath of these Lovers' ruses is once again the inversion of appearance and reality:

Marke unde Melot beide
si haeten zweier hande leit:
Melot durch die trügeheit,
die er begangen solte han:
Marke durch den arcwans,
daz er den neven und daz wip
und allermeist sin selbes lip
so haete beesdaeret
und zübele vermaeret
über hof und über lant.
(14,932-14,941)

Mark considers Melot to be a liar, even though Melot had in fact informed him of the literal truth about Tristan's and Isolde's relationship. 33 At this point it is useful to examine the background of these inversions of appearance and reality more closely. Discussion of this point will help to reveal and summarize some of the most important functions of the Brangaene character. For the moment, it can be said that in order for appearance and reality to be exchanged, or in other words for the ruses of the Lovers to
succeed, Brangaene must be present and must take an active role in the deception. The presence of Brangaene is not, however, in and of itself sufficient to insure the success of a ruse. The Lovers themselves must also participate, and they cannot, if they wish to keep their Love a secret, merely hand over the work of covering it up to Brangaene.

In the ruse of the wedding night, Brangaene's willingness to substitute for Isolde is clearly a prerequisite for the success of the ruse. Mark receives a virgin in his marriage bed, and it does not occur to him to question the identity of that woman. Afterwards, Isolde herself must become Mark's bedmate. Brangaene has contributed as much to the ruse as she can, and it now behooves the Lover to carry on the deception. In a similar way, Brangaene's instructions enable Isolde to escape the verbal traps that Mark sets for her in the bedroom scenes. But Isolde herself must take up the responsibility of actually perpetrating the ruse. Brangaene is also present in the episode of the observed meeting under the olive tree, and indeed she is more present than might be apparent at first sight. She is obviously involved in helping to set up the ruse because it is she who sets up the secret means of communication via the carved chips of wood. And, she is also present during the observed meeting, not physically, of course, but symbolically, as the moon:

Tristan gieng über den brunnen sa, da beidiu schate unde gras von dem öleboume was.
aldas gewunden trahtende,
in sinem herzen ahtende
sin tougenlichez ungemach.
sus kam, daz er den schate gesach
von Marke und von Melote,
wun der mane ie genote
durch den boum hin nider schein.
nu er des schates von in zwine
bescheidenliche wart gewar,
uh haeter michel angest dar,
wun er erkande sich iesa
der vare unde der lage da:
(14,622-14,636)

si begunde ir houbet nider lan
und vorhtliche gegen im gan.
der verte si groz angest nam.
nus also lise gende kam
dem boume ein lützel naher bi,
nu gesach si mannes schate dri
und wiste niwan einen da.
hie bi verstuont si sich iesa
der lage unde der vare
und ouch an dem gebare,
den Tristan hin zir haete.
(14,689-14,699)

An explicit identification of Brangaene with the moon need
not be provided by the narrator here, since he had already,
some time earlier, tied the image of the moon to the Bran-
gaene character (see 9460, 11,082, 11,509). Brangaene, as
the symbolic moon, watches over the Lovers and reveals the
trap to them. This having been accomplished, it is up to the
Lovers to assume the task of carrying on with the deception.
The ruse is in turn successful because Isolde has become
capable of using on her own the protective cloak of language
that Brangaene taught her about in the episode of the bedroom
ruses.

 Appropriately enough, the two episodes in which
the Lovers are discovered, in which the reality of their
affair becomes manifest to an outside observer, have two circumstances in common. First, Brangaene either errs, or assumes relatively inactive roles in the deception. Second, the Lovers do not perform their part of the ruse. The first of these episodes is that of the tryst in the secret bed-chamber, observed by Marjodoc. The setting is described as follows:

180

Isolde, Brangaene's foremost charge, is hardly mentioned at all here. Tristan is overly confident of his privacy, and he makes no effort to conceal this meeting with Isolde. Brangaene, too, is less careful than she ought to be. She covers up the candle light that illuminates the chamber but fails to close the chamber door. A short time later,
Marjodoc enters (13,561ff.).

A disturbing fact in this scene is that the light of the moon -- which has been identified with Brangaene -- lights up the area and allows Marjodoc to find his way to the chamber door. Twice, once in the passage quoted above (13,498-13,499), and shortly thereafter, when Marjodoc's motions toward the bedchamber are described (13,566-13,569), the bright light of the moon is mentioned. It would seem that Brangaene is contributing to the discovery of the Lovers. A different interpretation emerges, however, if the idea of the cooperation needed to perpetrate a Lovers' ruse is kept in mind. The moon's light, which exposes the Love's enemies Mark and Melot in the olive tree, here exposes the Love's enemy Marjodoc. Marjodoc succeeds in finding the Lovers' meeting place only because the Lovers fail to maintain their part of the ruse, by keeping a lookout to watch for intruders, who would certainly be revealed in the moonlight. Significantly, when Marjodoc enters the chamber, Gottfried states:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ze jungeste genante er} \\
\text{und gie vil lise dar in} \\
\text{und envant da lieht noch manen schin;} \\
\text{wan von der kerzen, diu da bran,} \\
\text{da gesach er lützel van;} \\
\text{da leinde ein schahzabel vor.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[(13,584-13,589)\]

Inside, where Brangaene had covered up the candle's shine, Marjodoc finds no light at all and the bedchamber, in this sense, is secure. The second episode of discovery is that of the communal bleeding attended by Mark, Isolde, Tristan,
Melot, and Brangaene. Brangaene sees the trap of the flour spread on the floor and warns Tristan about it:

nu wart ouch Brangaene al zehant
der lage bi dem mel gewar;
si sleich ze Tristande dar,
und warnet in und kerte wider
und leite sich do wider nider.

(15,154-15,158)

It would seem that it is now Tristan's responsibility to avoid being entrapped.

In both of these episodes of discovery, the blame falls most squarely on Tristan's shoulders. Isolde's name is clearly kept out of both episodes. Her name is mentioned at most to indicate that she was in fact present, but nowhere in either episode is there a report of any of her actions, words, or thoughts. Isolde, the pupil of Brangaene, becomes too wise to fall into Mark's snares, and in the episode of her ordeal, her ability as a deceiver and concealer of the Love is fully matured. She no longer needs Brangaene's instruction, having become sufficiently learned in what Brangaene teaches her to carry out her ambiguous oath unaided. Even the assistance she receives from Tristan is almost entirely perfunctory. She requires only that he be present for a short time, so that she can include a reference to him in her oath. As soon as he has fulfilled his function of carrying Isolde and falling with her, he immediately departs (see 17,705-17,771).

Brangaene gives Isolde a living example of what a Lover must be. In her perceptive study of the Brangaene
character, C.B. Caples states:

Gottfried portrays Brangaene as an exemplary character within her increasingly limited role in the story. We have already remarked that Gottfried himself, who openly criticizes Mark and others for their conduct in love, and who makes fun of characters like Gandin who are not on the side of the lovers, never criticizes Brangaene. He continually draws attention to her loyalty and unselfishness. Isold does not possess these qualities in the early part of the story; as the plot progresses, she receives a practical education from Brangaene which furthers her love affair, and she assumes Brangaene's virtues which she had previously lacked....Brangaene fades as Isold acquires her virtues....Brangaene functions as a surrogate for the virtues Isold does not possess until love has completed her moral education, and, conversely, until she has matured spiritually to readiness for idyllic love. Brangaene is an aspect of Isold, an inchoate side of her character, and an example of what she may, must, and will become.34

The more she matures as a Lover, the less Isolde needs Brangaene as a guide and instructor. Brangaene fades from
the story -- she is not present at Isolde's ordeal and does not stay at the Minnegrotte -- not because the lovers "are no longer bound by the morality which Brangaene represents" or because she "would be unable to grasp the ideals which they are seeking in their new and idyllic existence," but because the Lovers have reached the state of perfection of which Brangaene was an example. The idea of the changing role of Brangaene deserves more investigation than can be included in this study, which is essentially a comparison of the Brangaene character with several other characters in Gottfried's Tristan. The symbol of the moon, closely associated with Brangaene, quite beautifully reflects her function. The moon governs all kinds of plant and animal growth, and the mild light of the moon is even more conducive to the development of growing things. These qualities reflect the manner in which Brangaene nurtures the Love, not by interfering with it, but by presenting a positive example and by fashioning an environment conducive to Love. In the writings of the Church Fathers, the moon is a path lighter that illuminates the mysteries of the Holy Scripture. The moon sacrifices itself in order to give fullness to other things. For Dante, the moon was the "first star," close to earth and inseparable from it but nonetheless already heavenly and eternal. The moon functions as an intermediary between the earthly and the Divine; Brangaene fulfills a similar function in that she makes it possible for the Lovers to practice their Love in the world.
The moon forever waxes and wanes; Brangaene's involvement in the story changes in a similar fashion. She is a supremely flexible character. In this regard, two passages in the text gain enormous significance:

\begin{quote}
und al der werlt bewaeret,
daz der vil tugenthafte Crist
wintschaffen alse ein ermel ist:
er vüeget unde suochet an,
da manz an in gesuochen kan,
alse gevuoge und alse wol,
als er von allem rehte sol.
\(15,734-15,740\)
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
man sol den mantel keren,
amel die iuvel sint gewant.
\(10,426-10,427\)
\end{quote}

The first passage is part of Gottfried's commentary on the role of the Divine in Isolde's ordeal; the second is part of the argumentation used by Brangaene to effect a reconciliation between the Isoldes and Tristan. God is supremely flexible; he is not bound to conventions and will even participate in apparent self-contradictions -- in this case by allowing an appearance to pass for a reality -- for a cause that he feels is a just one.\(^{41}\) Brangaene is equally not bound to conventions. She willingly assists the Love and even sacrifices herself to its service. More than any other character, except for the Lovers themselves, she is able to adapt to the requirements of the affair.

In this study, the Brangaene character has been compared to several other characters in Gottfried's \textit{Tristan} --
Curvenal, Rual, Isolde Regina, and Mark — in order to show that Brangaene is the only one of these characters who stands in a positive, understanding relationship toward the Love of Tristan and Isolde, and the only character who serves that Love and actively participates in protecting and enhancing it.

Curvenal, Rual, and Isolde Regina are never associated with the Love on the level of the story's plot. Gottfried excludes them from the action before Tristan and Isolde become Lovers. Nonetheless, these characters do serve a function with regard to the Love, in that they represent, each in his or her own particular fashion, ways of thinking and acting that are fundamentally inimical to Love. These characters represent society, and they, in contrast to Brangaene, relate to the other characters in a purely social way. Curvenal and Rual can understand Tristan, and have dealings with him, only within the narrow bounds of a societally regulated relationship of master and servant. Isolde Regina can relate to the world, and to Tristan, only in the societally sanctioned role of a would-be powerful queen. The character of Mark, the selfish materialist and maker of base love, was drawn into the discussion because he, as the most overt opponent of the Love, represents the most obvious counterpole to Brangaene.

Brangaene, analyzed as a character in her own right, is shown to represent a consistently sympathetic attitude toward the love affair, starting with her influence
in effecting a reconciliation between Tristan and the Isoldes. A character of intrinsic power and knowledge, she is given the function of concealing their Love by showing her unswerving devotion to it in the episode of the murder plot against her. The Brangaene character continues in this function of the Love's protector and helps to devise ruses that keep the Love free from society's intrusion. Closer investigation of these ruses shows that through them, and through the example she sets for Isolde as her teacher, Brangaene brings about not only mediation between the Lovers and society, but also between the Lovers and God. As the Love matures, the Lovers need less and less to call in Brangaene as their servant and teacher, until finally, when the Love reaches its greatest perfection in the Minnegrotte, the Lovers do not require Brangaene -- or anyone else -- to realize their Love in the fullest sense.
1 All line numbers in parentheses refer to the following edition: Gottfried von Strassburg, Tristan und Isold, ed. Friedrich Ranke (Berlin: Weidmann, 1969). In my own reading of the Tristan, the translation of A. T. Hatto (Baltimore: Penguin, 1960) was of great assistance. The word index of Melvin E. Valk (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1958) was also instrumental to my understanding of the text and allowed me to formulate certain arguments with greater facility than would have been possible otherwise.


on the need to separate irony from allegory and metaphor, see Green, Ibid., pp. 4-5.


16 Green, Irony, p. 15.

17 Ibid., pp. 15-17.

18 Ernst Robert Curtius, Europäische Literatur und lateinisches Mittelalter. (Bern: Francke, 1948).


for Hartmann, see Rainer Gruenter, "Über den Einfluss des Genus indicale auf den höfischen Redestil," DUJS 26, pp. 49-50.

20 Stanislaus Sawicki, Gottfried von Strassburg
und die Poetik des Mittelalters. (Berlin: Verlag Dr. Emil Ebering, 1932).


27 The word "Love" is capitalized here and throughout the study when it refers to the Love of Tristan and Isolde, because theirs is a specific, unique kind of relationship shared by none of the other characters.

28 Petrus Tax, *Wort, Sinnbild, Zahl im Tristan-


32 See Jackson, Anatomy, p. 56: "Gottfried is prepared to show the complete dedication of his hero and heroine to the cause of love by using a terminology which to his audience would indicate complete dedication to the mystic love of God."

33 Willson, "Old Law," p. 221.

34 See Jackson, Anatomy, p. 99.


39 Ibid., p. 191.

40 Jackson, Anatomy, p. 141.

41 Hahn, pp. 98-99.

42 Ibid., p. 95.

43 See Jackson, Anatomy, pp. 121-131.


45 Kunzer, p. 200.
CHAPTER II

1 Recall, for example, that Marjodoc identifies Tristan in an extremely negative way with a boar (13,511-13,536). Tax, p. 84, agrees with this view. However, the same opinion is ably refuted by Clark and Wasserman, Poetics, pp. 65-66; by Kunzer, pp. 62-3; and by Mersmann, 286.

2 See Ingrid Hahn, Raum und Landschaft, p. 89: "Tristan entstammt einer gesellschaftswidrigen Verbindung; gezeugt in der Entrücktheit höchster, leiderfüllter Liebesgemeinschaft, wurde er mit dem fingierten Kindbett der Floraetie der Gesellschaft nur 'untergeschoben,' gleichsam künstlich in sie hineingeboren."

See also note 15 below.

4 Clark and Wasserman, "Riwalin and Blansche-
flur," p. 32.


6 Ferrante, *Conflict*, p. 94.

7 Ibid.

8 Jackson, *Anatomy*, p. 225, points out that banishment from a court was a grave punishment.


10 Ibid., pp. 33-34 (Bernard of Clairvaux's view).

11 Ibid., p. 31.

12 Ibid., p. 32 (Hugh of St. Victor's view).

13 Ibid., pp. 34-35. Also note in this context the discussion by Jackson, *Anatomy*, pp. 243-245, on Gottfried's critique of the surveillance of women and his idea of the equality of the sexes.

14 See Robertson, Preface to Chaucer, pp. 71, 65-113, for a complete discussion of medieval concepts of the use and abuse of beauty.


16 See Jackson, *Anatomy*, pp. 89 and 273, note 35, who notes that Tristan generally seems to feel no need to give thanks.

17 See Weber, *Krise*, p. 52; Kunzer, p. 94;

18 Mersmann, p. 179, points out that Tristan has no interest in being a king bound to his possessions: "Während Marke Besitz sucht, ist er Tristan eher eine Last, die er von sich wirft. Die von Tristan gewählten Rollen des Spielmanns, Kaufmanns, Pilgers oder Söldners haben Landlosigkeit, d.h. Besitzlosigkeit gemeinsam: sie tragen das Gesetz der Bewegung zum ständiger Bewähren in neuen Situationen in sich; die höfische Gesellschaft verharrt dagegen in materiellen Geborgenheit."

19 See the following page.

20 The example of Rual goes to show that the reader must approach Gottfried's use of value-loaded words such as loyalty (*triuwe*) or honor (*ere*) with caution, since Gottfried does not use them in a completely consistent fashion and in fact plays with a range of (often ironic) meanings.

21 Again, in Gottfried appearance usually does not reflect reality. See notes 3 and 15 above for additional references to this dynamic. Also see Jackson, *Anatomy*, pp. 167-168, who points out that deception, and with it the concealment of his true nature, is a way of life for Tristan.

22 Only in this sense can Rual be judged a successful man.

23 See note 20 above.
24 The same conflict of young and old may have been present in the relationship of Rual and Riwalin. The narrator points out that Riwalin is a comparative child (der jare ein kint - 246) and that he was prized for sin süeziu jugent (1151). The young, carefree days of both Riwalin and Tristan are cut short. Riwalin dies young; Tristan's youth is stunted by the rigors of the education he receives (see 311-318 and 2068-2086, respectively).

25 See Jackson, Anatomy, pp. 173-175.

26 The reader is invited to draw his own conclusions, and in particular to compare Rual's involvement in the battles fought against Morgan by Riwalin and Tristan. He encouraged Riwalin to fight Morgan (see the importance Rual attaches to the fight in his speech to the returned Riwalin, 1612-1637) and, perhaps because of the disastrous results of that battle, he is reluctant to give Tristan any advice about how to deal with Morgan. Tristan rides out blindly and is almost killed: it seems that Rual's success as an advisor to kings is rather limited, regardless of whether he becomes involved in their affairs or tries to keep distant from them.
NOTES

CHAPTER III

1 See Kunzer, pp. 111-112, for bibliography; Ferrante, Conflict, pp. 40-42, for a comparison of the potion motif in Hilhart, Beroul, Thomas, Gottfried, and the Tavola Ritonda.


3 Ibid., pp. 25-26.

4 Ibid., pp. 27-38.

5 Ibid.

6 See also 4929-4946; Mersmann, p. 115, says of Tristan's helmet: "Die Hûterheit des Helmes und der darauf befestigste Minnepfeil verweisen Tristan in den Bereich der Minne, zu Isolde und zum Ruhen auf dem kristallnen Bett in der Minnegrotte. Isoldes Hûterheit ist wesenhaft, innerlich, bei Tristan ist sie stets etwas 'an' ihm, also etwas Verlierbares, Aufgenbares (vgl. 8144 ff.)."

7 For a discussion of the implications of Tristan's instruction of Isolde, see Jackson, Anatomy, pp. 71-78.

8 See Robertson, Preface, pp. 253-255, on the image of the horse in medieval literature.

9 See 8386-8423; haz 8393, 8395, 8402, 8403, 8406, 8410, 1412, 84115. nit 8393, 8395, 8402. See also
Jackson's analysis that comes to a similar conclusion for Mark's speech (16,501-16,534) in Anatomy, pp. 223-224.

10 See Clark and Wasserman, pp. 44-45, for a closer description of the exemplary social qualities that Mark would like Tristan to display.

11 He is in control of the barons, too, for "it is Tristan's skill which involves them in the expedition against their will, not Mark's authority as king." Jackson, Anatomy, p. 211.

12 See Ferrante, Conflict, 245; Kunzer, p. 102; and Jackson, Anatomy, pp. 38-39, for versions of the Tristan story in which the wooing of Isolde is touched off by a sparrow's dropping of a blond hair.

13 Campbell, Hero, p. 30.

14 Nor is there any hint that the barons urgently desire peace with Ireland. There is no honest purpose behind their plotting.

15 Campbell, Hero, pp. 36-37, 193-196.

16 Clark and Wasserman, p. 27.

17 Kunzer, p. 59.

18 For further discussion of the Morold episode, see Spahr, "Tristan vs. Morold"; and Clark and Wasserman, pp. 73-76, 97-98.

19 See, for example, the brief history of chivalry
at the beginning of Chretien's *Cligés*, which begins by telling
the reader: "...but of the Greeks and Romans no more is
heard, their fame is passed, and their glowing ash is dead." 
Chretien de Troyes, trans. W.W. Comfort (New York: Dutton,
1914), p. 91.

20 See 10,233-10,236. Also cf. note 5 above.

21 Clark and Wasserman, p. 45.

22 Perhaps the wound itself, described in detail
in 7268-7278, 7842, and 7835-7838, is of more importance than
the cure. See Kunzer, pp. 62, 100.

23 Kunzer, p. 121, says in reference to the
potion: "The design of the wise queen ("Isot diu wise
künigin" v. 11,433) to further her daughter's happiness
in her future life is undone when the instrument of her plan
for the good of the couple is turned into the very agent
that brings about their unhappy estrangement." A more
telling comment is found in Clark and Wasserman, p. 46, who
contrast Love and honor. "The love potion was intended by
Isolde's mother to make Isolde love Mark and thereby make
the individual conform to the social role which is its
lot. The ironic inversion occurs when the potion serves to
negate the barrier of honor between Tristan and Isolde and
thereby brings about the triumph of the individual and love
over the fulfillment of societal role which is, after all,
the definition of honor."
That is, the narrator knows much more about the effects of the potion than Isolde Regina does. She produces it, but she gives no indication that she really understands it.

Isolde Regina is never heard from again after her daughter leaves Ireland, but it is quite reasonable to assume that she would disapprove of the love affair. She stands on Tristan's side only because he can arrange an advantageous marriage of her daughter to the rich King Mark.

There are three exceptions. In the episode of Gandin, the lack of courage of Mark and his court allows Tristan to assert a claim to Isolde that is of a higher nature than Mark's. Tristan will defend her, whereas Mark will not. Clark and Wasserman, p. 46, say that Mark, in the Gandin episode, chooses worldly honor (the honor of keeping his pledge to Gandin) over love (for Isolde): "The moment of Mark's decision to let Gandin leave with Isolde, thereby upholding honor at the expense of love, is the moment when the moral scales tip, and the spiritual keeping of Isolde is rightly given to Tristan...." The second exception is the episode of Isolde's ordeal. Mark tries to unmask and destroy the Love but instead only fashions a circumstance in which it can continue to flourish, and indeed to flourish with divine protection. In the episode of the discovery of the Lovers in the garden, Mark's barons advise him to stop
badgering the queen, since there has never been any hard
evidence of wrong doing on her part (18,377-18,400). Mark
hardly intended to help conceal the affair, but his action
of trying to expose it in the garden does in fact have this
result. Mark has become quite powerless and perhaps Tristan
is rash when he leaves Cornwall. D.G. Mowatt, p. 25, states:
"Isolde is now officially blameless (Tristan 18,355-18,359),
Mark has lost his hold on her and anything could happen.
What actually happens is that Tristan, on his own initiative
and quite unnecessarily, runs away."

28 Nickel, p. 50.
29 For example, there is considerable irony
in the Morgan episode which, like many incidents in the poem,
allows for multivalent interpretation. The actions of
Riwalin and Tristan are not entirely praiseworthy. Kunzer,
pp. 44-58, and Combridge, pp. 16-31, examine the complex
background of the struggle for lordship over Parmenie. Also
see Mersmann, p. 176, who comments on Gottfried's attitude
about war: "Das eroberte Schwert erweist sich als zwei-
schneidig; der heute Besiegte steht morgen an der Seite
eines mächtigen Verbundeten oder in einem für den Sieger
unglücklichen Augenblick wieder auf und holt sich das
Verlorene zurück. Gottfried charakterisiert den Krieg als
ein ständiges Hin und Her."
Jackson, *Anatomy*, p. 155, draws a line between love and battle: "Of two of the fights which occur in this work, it may be said that the victory gained is less significant in the long run than the injuries inflicted. The wound received from Morolt is more important for Tristan than his victory, the dragon's poisoned tongue more important than its slaying, for each brings Tristan to Isolde. Only the fight with Urgan achieves its purpose, although the winning of Petitcreiu proves useless, since Isolde refuses the animal's solace....It is hard to escape the conclusion that Gottfried rejects the connection between success in combat and success in love, for the relationship between Tristan and Isolde is not only independent of such success but affected rather by events in the combat which might be regarded as harmful. Furthermore, the combats themselves are of a kind far removed from the idealized 'clean' encounters of courtly romance. They are either realistic, cruel fights or parodies on the romance variety -- and it is more often Tristan's quick wit that saves him than the strength of his arm. Tristan is a brave man, braver in fact than any person we encounter in the poem, but his character emphasizes the feeble nature of most courtiers and the insignificance of fighting in any study of love."

See Jackson, *Anatomy*, pp. 143-144; Kunzer, pp. 34-39; and Clark and Wasserman, pp. 47-48, for comparisons
of the warrior aspect in Tristan and medieval romance in
general.

32 Characters are, once dead, rarely mentioned
again, though they do leave legacies that burden future
generations. See Gottfried's comment on the death of
Morgan:

\begin{verbatim}
do wart diu warheit wol schin
des sprichwortes, daz da giht,
daz schulde ligen und vulen niht.
\end{verbatim}
(5456-5458)

Also see Rolf, pp. 196-197, on Gottfried's refusal to
lament deaths excessively: "Vor allem ordnet sich die
Totenschlage nicht in das Anliegen der Dichtung ein; sie
hält, den Leser unnötig belastend oder -- als unangemessene
Aufschwellung -- ihm missfallend, dem Gang der Handlung auf,
ohne zu einem tieferen Verständnis beizutragen."

33 Clark and Wasserman, p. 45.

34 Isolde Regina herself opined that God is
concerned for the success of the search for the dragonslayer
\textit{(got der wil unser ruochen} - 9385). Tristan also sees divine
intervention in the successful search, for when he sees the
women after they have discovered him, he says: \textit{a herre got
der quote, da hast min unvergeze} (9450-9451).

35 Caples, p. 169, says: "When Gottfried later
comments that rarely does such fine brass substitute for
gold (12,606-12,608), and contemptuously says that Mark found
both women gold and brass (12,670-12,671), the poet is not
comparing the fine lady to gold and Brangaene to the inferior
brass. Rather, he means that the lady should seem worth
gold or brass to the man according to the degree of his love
for her -- a dreadful censure on Mark, who in the dark makes
no distinction between precious metal (or eroticism) and
base.

36 For an opposing, positive evaluation of
the Isolde Regina character, see Marjorie D. Wade, "Gottfried
von Strassburg's Elder Isolde: Das Wîze Wîp." Tristania, 3,
17-31.
NOTES

CHAPTER IV

1 See Clark and Wasserman, Poetics, pp. 71-98, on the significance of triads in Gottfried.

2 On Tristan's existence at court, see Rainer Gruenter, "Der Favorit. Das Motiv der höfischen Intrige in Gottfrieds Tristan und Isolde," Euphorion, 58, 113-128.


7 The two most important articles on the attempted murder of Brangaene are C.B. Caples, "Brangaene and Isold in Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan," Colloquia Germanica, 1975, 167-176; and C. Stephen Jaeger, "The

8 See Kunzer, pp. 126-127.

9 See Hatto's translation of 15,452-15,453 (p. 244); 15,452 can only refer to Mark, and not to God.


12 See Weber and Tax.

13 Of course the reader, fully informed by the narrator, is also able to understand the Lovers' veiled words, even though the artistic illusion of the narrative is never broken by the Lovers to address the reader directly.

14 Jaeger, pp. 205-206.

15 See 12,935-12,959: Gottfried's "excuse" for Isolde's actions is that she, by the narrator's implication, was trying to test Brangaene and purify her like gold in a crucible.

16 Caples, p. 171.

17 A third example of a lie that actually tells the truth is Isolde's statement,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ich han, daz ist unlougen,} \\
\text{mit herzeloisen ougen,} \\
\text{mit lügelichem munde} \\
\text{dicke und ze manege stunde} \\
\text{an in gewendet minen vliz} \\
\text{niuwan durch den itewiz:} \\
(13,931-13,986)
\end{align*}
\]
which gives a thoroughly accurate description of how she goes about concealing her Love for Tristan from public view.

18 zwivel and arcwan: see 13,777-13,842.

19 See note 16.

20 See 12,665 (er twanc si nahe an sinen lip) and 14,161 (er twanc si harte nahen).

21 Again, it should be emphasized that the reader has an overview every bit as full as that of God.


23 See 14,274-14,289.

24 Klingenberg, p. 155.


26 Ibid., p. 150.

27 Klingenberg, p. 151, cites Gottfried 15,186-15,197, where the sign of the cross is recommended as a defense against false friends, an undeniable reference
to Marjodoc and Melot. Note also the explicit reference
to Melot and the Devil:

\[
\text{do wart sin Melot, ine weiz wie,}
daz vertane getwerc,
des valandes antwerc
\]

\((14,510-14,512)\)

28 Klingenberg, p. 155.

29 See Klingenberg, pp. 159-160, for a discussion of the acrostic in the Prologue of Gottfried's Tristan in this connection. For an interpretation that emphasizes the negative aspects of the carved wood chips, and the entire ruse of the meeting under the olive tree, see Tax, pp. 90-100.

30 The symbolic similarities between the garden in which the Lovers meet and the Biblical Gethsemene should also be considered; see Klingenberg, pp. 156-158.

31 14,583-15,035: see Kunzer, p. 130.

32 The remaining mentions of God in this episode are pedestrian in nature. The character of the individual deceptive statements into which they are embedded is not nearly as striking as Isolde's statement about her virginity. Tristan twice uses the name of God to affirm the innocence of the Lovers (14,798-14,803; 14,902-14,906). The affirmation takes place in an ironic way. The use of God's name ensures that the two onlookers Mark and Melot will consider the Lovers to be innocent,
because the name of God gives a nimbus of authority to Tristan's statements. By using God's name Tristan at the same time affirms the Love's innocence before an authority far higher than that of the onlookers, namely the authority of God. Tristan addresses God and declares to Him the innocence of the Lovers. The proof that God concurs with this judgment soon follows in the episode of Isolde's ordeal, when her hand is not injured. In the other instances when God's name is invoked, all of them made by Isolde (14,861-14,864; 14,876; 14,988-14,990), she hopes to God, or asks in His name, that Tristan's distress might be mitigated.

In keeping with his selfish character, Mark is aggrieved most of all because the olive tree incident causes him annoyance, and only secondarily because Tristan and Isolde experienced distress because of it:

Marke durch den arcwan,
daz er den neven und daz wip
und allermeist sin selbes lip
so haete beswaeret

(14,936-14,939)

33 Caples, pp. 172-173.

34 Jackson, "The Role of Brangaene," p. 293.


37 Compare the comportment of the Lovers under
under the cloak of Brangaene (moonlight) to their behavior in the final scene of their discovery by Mark, in the sun-drenched garden (18,115-18,214).

38 Rahner, pp. 124-125.

39 Ibid., p. 128.

40 Ibid., p. 161.

41 See the argumentation of Willson, "Old Law."
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