

"Per amore del mio lignaggio":
The Generational Relationships in the 'Tavola Ritonda',
with a Comparative Look at other Tristan Representations

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1 Introduction

The myth of Arthur and Tristan – for a medieval studies literary scholar or a medievalist, these two concepts and keywords will immediately evoke associations connected to their definition and their categorization. In this subject matter and area of research, it is absolutely essential for the newcomer – and even, from time to time, for the expert – to first establish what we commonly understand by the term 'myth'. Only then, without the need for prior clarification, is it possible to explain that both the myths of Tristan and of Arthur are inscribed into the literary work with the short title 'La Tavola Ritonda'.

In their introduction to 'Mittelalter-Mythen' ('medieval myths'), Ulrich Müller and Werner Wunderlich explain, by referencing the literary scholar Jürgen Kühnel, that there is no single universally applicable and accepted definition of the term 'myth', but instead several which are all connected to, in part, very different discourses.¹ Following this finding, they nevertheless strive to provide an adequate definition by means of a functionalist conception of the term:

“Mythen – in diesem Sinne – sind überlieferte oder neu aktualisierte Konkretisationen von Gestalten, Geschehen, Gegenständen und Gegenden, die erzählerisch – gewissermaßen modellhaft – ein Konzept bereitstellen für das Verhältnis des Menschen zu seinen Erfahrungen und zur Welt. Vorrationaler Mythen bewahren fundamentale Wahrheiten und archaisches Wissen auf, derer sich die Rationalität dann erinnert, wenn der wissenschaftlich-technische oder auch gesellschaftlich-ideologische Fortschritt ins Stolpern gerät und zu straucheln droht. Deshalb unterliegen Mythen Tradition und Wandel, und ihre symbolhafte oder auch lebenspraktische Bedeutung verändert sich und paßt sich den sich neu regelnden Bedingungen an.”²

However, with reference to the 'Mittelalter-Mythen', they add the following to this first, basic definition:

“[...] Die Geschichtlichkeit des Mythos liegt - wie auch der Philosoph Hans Blumenberg betont - in der Geschichte seiner produktiven Rezeption. Moderne und Postmoderne vergegenwärtigen und schaffen im Rahmen der Mittelalter-Rezeption jene »Medieval Myths«, um darin historische Existenzweisen und gegenwärtige Möglichkeiten unseres heutigen Daseins auszudrücken. So sind Mythen zugleich Darstellungsformen und Verstehensweisen für den Sinn und die Anwendung von Normen und Werten.”³

¹ Müller, Ulrich/ Wunderlich, Werner: Einleitung. In: Müller, Ulrich/ Wunderlich, Werner (Ed.): Herrscher, Helden, Heilige. Mitarbeit und Redaktion Lotte Gaebel. (Mittelalter-Mythen, Band 1). St. Gallen 1996, p. IXf.

² Ibid., p. X.

³ Ibid.

They further observe in regard to the academic understanding underlying myth research:

“Dasjenige Wissenschaftsverständnis, das einer solchen Konzeption zugrundeliegt, ist im weitesten Sinne ein kulturwissenschaftliches. Es geht um die Analyse und Beschreibung von Welt und Wirklichkeit in einem ganzheitlichen Verständnis. Ein weiter »Mythos-Begriff« [...] impliziert deshalb übergreifende Zusammenhänge, die das fachspezifische Erkennen, das interdisziplinäre Erklären und das interkulturelle Verstehen aus einem kulturwissenschaftlichen Verständnis von Mediävistik bedingen.”⁴

At the same time, this notion, based in cultural studies, and this approach to myth research displays a commonality with the field of generational research, which will be addressed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Before the intergenerational relationships in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ are extensively examined in Chapter 4, this study seeks first to explain the reason why this specific work has incited academic attention in this context and why it serves as a worthy matter of interest. In order to achieve this, however, it is necessary to explain, in all brevity and concisely, what ‘La Tavola Ritonda’ is about: briefly summarized in one sentence, the work with the short title ‘La Tavola Ritonda’ is a late medieval prose novel written in Italian, the narrative core of which contains a very unique processing of the Tristan myth and whose anonymous author skilfully interweaves it with Arthurian myth, including the quest for the Holy Grail.

Therefore, before this opus will be presented in greater detail, remaining undervalued in a significant part of works on literary history, it should first be discussed in which manner the text is of particular interest to researchers of the Tristan and Arthurian myth on the one hand, and genealogical research on the other.

So far, the different versions of the Tristan myth in European literature of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period were mostly analysed according to two particularly prominent aspects of this narrative tradition: that of chivalry, on the one hand, to be found in quite divergent versions, along with the related question of how great a significance chivalry has for the protagonist and what constitutes the ideal knight, and, on the other hand, the even more famous love theme and the connected inquiry into the uniqueness of this couple’s love relationship, one of the most famous in world literature. However, it was largely neglected by academics that a third aspect is of great importance in the analysis of this narrative tradition: generational relationships and generational conflict, specifically between uncle and nephew, and its varying emphasis in different literary versions.

⁴ Ibid., p. XI.

At the centre of this academic work, then, lies the question of which different forms of generational relationships, as well as generational conflict if applicable, are represented specifically in the 'Tavola Ritonda', serving as one of the representations of this myth and at the same time as a link between the medieval Tristan versions (the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tristan' Thomas' d'Angleterre may be briefly mentioned as a short selection of its source material) and those of the Early Modern era (Ariosto and Sir Thomas Malory as its successors, to name just a few here).

However, in order to examine this in more depth, it is worthwhile to briefly discuss the dissemination of the 'matière de Bretagne' in Italy, before dealing in greater detail with the core subject matter of this analysis, the 'Tavola Ritonda'. Following this, a compressed overview of the research in this field will be given, mainly focussing on the 'Tavola Ritonda'. In a next step, the 'generational research' and the 'concept of generations' will be presented in more detail in Chapter 3, after which Chapter 4 will deal with the main analysis.

Fundamentals

The great abundance of manuscripts relating to the 'matière de Bretagne', in the area we now know as the sovereign state of Italy, or the inventory of manuscripts possessed, copied and embellished by Italians in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, has only recently really been unearthed⁵. In short and generally speaking, the 'matière de Bretagne' mainly made its way from France and the insular Celtic region, predominantly via France, to Italy, where it appears that it was passed on in an oral tradition⁶. By all indications, it was only hereinafter that it passed over into writing and managed to fully flourish.

The Dissemination of the 'matière de Bretagne' in Italy: a Short Overview

The large amount of mentions by name in archival documents relating to the subject matter and additional, partly epigraphical, pictorial records are indicative of the predominantly oral

⁵ Cf. the data in the research overview in chapter 2, relating in particular to Gloria Allaire.

⁶ Cf. in regard to the Tristan myth and the extent of the circulation of its narrative: Thompson, Raymond H.: *Tristan and Isolde*. In: Lacy, Norris J. (Ed.): *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Volume 931. Associate Editors: Geoffrey Ashe, Sandra Ness Ihle, Marianne E. Kalinke and Raymond H. Thompson). New York/ London 1991, p. 463ff.

Please note: the 'New Arthurian Encyclopedia', abbr. as NAE, will subsequently be abbreviated, for citations and bibliographical details in the footnotes, as 'Lacy 1991' or for articles, which were published in the NAE, as 'In: Lacy 1991, p. ...'.

Cf. for the Arthurian myth and its extent of circulation: Zimmer, Stefan: *Die keltischen Wurzeln der Artussage. Mit einer vollständigen Übersetzung der ältesten Artuserzählung *Culhwch und Olwen*. (Beiträge zur Älteren Literaturgeschichte)*. Heidelberg 2006.

dissemination of the 'matière de Bretagne', beginning in the late 11th century and continuing in the early 12th century⁷. Accordingly, the following can be stated in this regard: "Arthurian material was widely diffused in Italy as early as the second quarter of the twelfth century."⁸

The transition to the – for the meantime only Latin – culture of writing then occurred towards the end of the 12th century: Gottfried of Viterbo, who was in Friedrich Barbarossa's service, had been the first well-known author to describe Arthur's supernatural birth and Merlin's prophecy of his great deeds to come, in a passage on the chronicles of the Anglo-Saxons in his "pantheon" created approximately 1185-1191. Following this, a first written mention of Tristan is to be found in Henricus da Settimello's 'Elegia de diversitate fortunae et philosophiae consolatione'.⁹ Boncompagno da Signa seems to have been the first to have alluded to the Round Table in 'Cedrus', composed roughly 1194-1203, since he gives an account therein of bands of young men in several Italian regions forming communities, whose names are directly reminiscent of the 'tabula rotunda' or at least of knights affiliated with it. In addition, Boncompagno da Signa may have been the first to have mentioned Isolde there in writing in his 'De Amicitia', around 1205.¹⁰ Following these first occurrences in Italian culture of writing, the subject matter of the 'matière de Bretagne' was used, either directly or by allusion, by poets of the 'scuola siciliana', the 'rimatori siculo-toscani' and the 'dolce stil n(u)ovo' from the early 13th century onwards¹¹. In addition to this observation, Gloria Allaire notes:

"Other scholars have discovered references to Arthurian legends in non-romance genres such as the early lyric, the Carolingian cycle poem, and encyclopedic-didactic texts of the Middle Ages [...]."¹²

In addition, this is complemented by the synoptic remarks of Christopher Kleinhenz, who in doing so also gives an indication of the rich golden age of the prose romances in this context:

"In Italian literature, the principal players in the Arthurian drama assumed a new, double life: a 'symbolic' existence as emblematic figures in superficial allusions, and a 'real' literary life as

⁷ For this purpose, refer to: Gardner, Edmund G.: *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature*. First published in 1930. Reprinted 1971. New York 1971, p. 2ff.; Falzon, Alex R.: *Re Artù in Toscana. Inchiesta sul ciclo arturiano in Toscana dal XII secolo a oggi*. Siena 1996, p. 10; Allaire, Gloria (Ed.): *Italian Literature Volume I. Il Tristano panciaticchiano*. Edited and translated by Gloria Allaire. (Arthurian Archives VII. General Editor: Norris J. Lacy). Cambridge 2002, p. 3; Zimmer 2006, p. 40-43.

⁸ Allaire 2002, p. 3.

⁹ Cf. therefore: Gardner 1971, p. 6ff.; Falzon 1996, p. 10; Zimmer 2006, p. 90f.

¹⁰ Cf. also: Gardner 1971, p. 9f.; Zimmer 2006, p. 90f.

¹¹ On this point, refer to: Gardner 1971, p. 11f. and p. 19-43; in addition: Schulze-Witzenrath, Elisabeth: *Literaturwissenschaft für Italianisten. Eine Einführung*. (Narr Studienbücher). Tübingen 1998, p. 103f.

¹² Allaire 2002, p. 3.

principal characters in a sustained narrative or sequence of episodes. On the one hand, lyric poets used these figures as standards of comparison against which they measured elements of their own experience: beauty, prowess, wisdom, and the like. On the other hand, other authors mined the rich (mainly French) Arthurian treasure trove and composed a number of prose romances, *novelle*, and *cantari*, thus creating a large and distinct body of Italian Arthurian literature.”¹³

As Christopher Kleinhenz suggests, the main route of transmission was in all likelihood mainly via France, although the courts and societies which cultivated Old French should not be forgotten.

First, the following applies to the tradition of Old French poetry concerning the ‘*matière de Bretagne*’ approximately from 1170 onwards:

“Die sagenhaften Erzählungen irischer, walisischer, kornischer und bretonischer Herkunft werden durch mehrsprachige Spielleute lange mündlich tradiert, bevor sie ›en romanz‹ verschriftlicht und an den Fürstenhöfen gezielt adaptiert und durch (Vor-)Lesen verbreitet werden. Ein erstes Zentrum ist der anglo-angevinische Königshof Heinrichs II. Plantagenet und seiner Frau Eleonore, der Enkelin des Trobadors Wilhelm IX. von Aquitanien: Hier schreibt Marie de France ihre *Lais*, Thomas d’Angleterre seinen *Tristan* und Chrétien de Troyes seinen ersten Roman *Érec et Enide*. Unmittelbar darauf erobern die Geschichten das Festland, zuerst den Hof von Troyes, an dem Marie de Champagne, die Tochter Eleonores, regiert, und jenen des Grafen Philipp von Flandern: Beide Mäzene fördern etwa die weiteren Werke Chrétiens, der seinen *Lancelot* Marie, seinen *Perceval* Philipp widmet. Von diesen frühen Zentren aus treten die Erzählungen der ›*matière de Bretagne*‹ schnell ihren Siegeszug durch das romanische und germanische Europa an.”¹⁴

Approximately in the first quarter of the 13th century, prose romances stood side by side with, or largely even superseded, poetry in France. Correspondingly, it may be stated in a concise manner according to Peter K. Stein:

“Frankreich ist die Wiege der ‘Tristan’-Literatur. Zwei Traditionen lösen einander ab. Die zweite Hälfte des 12. Jahrhunderts ist die Zeit der erzählenden Versdichtungen. Diese leben in Deutschland, West- und Nordeuropa weiter, nicht in Frankreich. Dort herrscht ab dem 2./3.

¹³ Kleinhenz, Christopher: Italian Arthurian Literature. In: Lacy 1991, p. 245.

¹⁴ Grimm, Jürgen (Ed.): Französische Literaturgeschichte. Unter Mitarbeit von Elisabeth Arend et al. 5., überarbeitete und aktualisierte Auflage mit 300 Abbildungen. Stuttgart/ Weimar 2006, p. 30.

Jahrzehnt des 13. Jahrhunderts ebenso wie in Ost- und Südeuropa und im spätmittelalterlichen England die Prosatradition. - Von den französischen Versdichtungen sind nur Reste erhalten.”¹⁵

In this manner, the Old French prose romances, written in the ‘*langue d’oïl*’, found their way to Italy shortly after their creation, such as – to mention only a few – the ‘*Lancelot*’, the ‘*Mort (le roi) Artu*’, the ‘*Queste del Saint Graal*’, the ‘*Palamède*’ and chiefly the ‘*Tristan en prose*’¹⁶.

“[Gleichwohl] [...] handelte es sich [bei den altfranzösischen Prosaromanen] nicht um ‘*Prosaauflösungen*’ (wie etwa im deutschen 15. Jahrhundert) oder gar ‘*Trivialisierungen*’, sondern um umfassende Neukonzeptionen vorwiegend der Sagenbereiche Artus/Lancelot, Gral und Tristan.”¹⁷

Yet it was not as a matter of course that Tristan is placed within the Arthurian sphere, as two completely distinct myths formed their places of origin. Only as a result of a continuous development, first and foremost promoted by the prose tradition, was Tristan ever more closely connected with the Arthurian community until he finally even became a knight of the Round Table.¹⁸ Consequently, he was portrayed as an important Arthurian knight, if not the best knight next to Lancelot, in the ‘*Tristan en prose*’. However, this development continued to progress, so that Tristan came so far, during the process of his ‘*incorporation*’ into Italian writing culture, as to have surpassed Lancelot and not having to shy away from a comparison with Galasso as the best worldly knight in the ‘*Tavola Ritonda*’. Fundamentally, the following can be stated in regard to the different, consecutive phases of remodelling:

¹⁵ Stein, Peter K.: *Tristan-Studien*. Ed. by Ingrid Bennewitz in collaboration with Beatrix Koll and Ruth Weichselbaumer. Stuttgart 2001, p. 28.

¹⁶ Cf. Donadello, Aulo (Cur.): *Il libro di messer Tristano («Tristano Veneto»)*. (Medioevo Veneto. Collana diretta da Furio Brugnolo e Lorenzo Renzi). Venezia 1994, p. 13-16.

¹⁷ Stein 2001, p. 251.

¹⁸ Cf. on this point the explication of Joan Tasker Grimbert, who notes: “[...] we turn now to an [...] phenomenon that also demonstrates the legend’s [The Tristan myth is meant] enduring popularity: its expansion—and dilution—in the long prose reworkings that began in the thirteenth century and continued up to the end of the Middle Ages in France, Italy, Spain and Britain. The legend’s development in these countries differs considerably from that seen in Germany and Scandinavia, as the lovers are drawn decisively into the Arthurian orbit, with Tristan eventually becoming a knight of the Round Table. In the earliest French and German verse redactions, Arthur and his knights either constitute a minimal presence (as in Bérout and Eilhart) or are wholly absent (as in Thomas and Gottfried).” Grimbert, Joan Tasker (Ed.): *Tristan and Isolde. A casebook*. Edited with an introduction by Joan Tasker Grimbert. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Volume 1514). (Arthurian characters and themes, Volume 2. Series Editor: Norris J. Lacy). New York/ London 1995, p. XXXIV.

“All these subsequent retellings of the legend distinguish themselves in part by the weight they accord chivalry, on the one hand, and love, on the other, and in the treatment of the parallel between Tristan and Lancelot as famous knights and lovers.”¹⁹

Especially Tristan and Lancelot quickly gained far-reaching recognition and great popularity in Italy. This is also revealed by the considerable dissemination of the ‘Tristan en prose’ and the ‘Lancelot en prose’:

“I due maggiori romanzi arturiani in prosa francese, *Lancelot e Tristan*, conobbero in Italia un immediato e durevole successo del quale abbondano le testimonianze letterarie, iconografiche, codicologiche. Fra Due e Trecento questi testi erano correntemente letti in francese e porli in mano a due personaggi della piccola corte dei Malatesta di Rimini costituisce la conferma di un costume diffuso.”²⁰

In contrast to the ‘Lancelot en prose’, the ‘Tristan en prose’ was met with even more pronounced acclaim according to written sources. Following the latter observation, Daniela Delcorno Branca readily adds a further gradation between the two:

“Tuttavia, fra i due romanzi, il *Tristan* conobbe una particolare fortuna presso i ceti di media cultura, testimoniata, a partire dalla fine del Duecento e lungo il secolo seguente, da numerose traduzioni in lingua italiana (soprattutto toscane e venete): Tristano Riccardiano, Tristano Panciatichiano, Tavola Ritonda, Tristano Corsiniano, Tristano Veneto, cantari, per citare solo le maggiori.”²¹

Comparatively, she was merely able to state in regard to the ‘Lancelot en prose’:

“La tradizione del Lancelot, analogamente a quella del diffusissimo *Guiron le Courtois*, o quella della *Queste*, della *Mort Artu*, dell’ *Estoire del Graal* (testi di cui abbiamo sporadiche e frammentarie versioni in lingua italiana) appare come la tradizione di un romanzo conosciuto quasi esclusivamente in lingua originale. È se mai il Tristan in prosa a scostarsi dalla norma e a convogliare l’attenzione e le energie di traduttori e rimaneggiatori: e le ragioni di tale successo

¹⁹ Ibid., p. XXXVIII f.

²⁰ Delcorno Branca, Daniela: *Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia*. Studi di letteratura arturiana. (Memoria del tempo, 11. Collana di studi medievali e rinascimentali. Diretta da Michelangelo Picone). Ravenna 1998, p. 144.

²¹ Ibid.

risulteranno in parte comprensibili proprio a partire dal *Lancelot* e dal dialettico rapporto fra questi due romanzi e i loro protagonisti.”²²

The ‘Tristan en prose’, which may well be viewed as a true ‘bestseller’ of the Middle Ages, possessed a great attractive power not only in Old French but also retained it in its Italian transmissions:

“Questo *bestseller* medievale si leggeva nella sua veste linguistica originale alle corte feudali, mentre le traduzioni circolavano soprattutto negli ambienti cittadini della Toscana, dell’Umbria e del Veneto.”²³

Conspicuously, the predominant dissemination of the ‘Tristan en prose’ in Italy related almost entirely to the ‘shorter’ – ‘short’ would indeed be an understatement – version V I, which is less interpolated by the episodes of the Vulgat-version and is most likely older (though this could lead to contemporary academic discussions). This stands in contrast to the otherwise predominant long version V II, which is also more popular in France.²⁴ Moreover, a remarkable interest in the ‘Tristan en prose’ can be attested to in Italy, as at least 18 of the 82 surviving manuscripts originated in Italy²⁵. As a result, one may indisputably assert in regard to the ‘Tristan en prose’:

“Fra i romanzi in prosa, la cui popolarità e la cui espansione in Italia è dimostrata dalla presenza nelle biblioteche dei Signori di numerosi manoscritti, spesso copiati e illustrati in questo paese, il romanzo di Tristano fu senza dubbio quello che ebbe maggior fortuna.”²⁶

²² Ibid., p. 18.

Cf. as an addition the assessment of Marie-José Heijkant, who notes in this regard: “Il fatto che del *Lancelot* non esista nessuna traduzione italiana potrebbe essere un indizio della preferenza in Italia per il *Tristan*.”. Heijkant, Marie-José (Cur.): *Tristano Riccardiano*. Testo critico di E. G. Parodi. (Biblioteca Medievale, 16. Collana diretta da Mario Mancini, Luigi Milone e Francesco Zambon). Parma 1991, p. 33.

²³ Heijkant, Marie-José (Cur.): *La Tavola Ritonda*. (Biblioteca Medievale, 1. Collana diretta da Mario Mancini, Luigi Milone e Francesco Zambon). Milano/ Trento 1997, p. 7.

²⁴ Cf. Heijkant, Marie-José: *La tradizione del ‘Tristan’ in prosa in Italia e proposte di studio sul ‘Tristano Riccardiano’*. (Diss.) Nijmegen 1989, p. 14 and p. 26; Id. 1991, p. 9; Id. 1997, p. 8; Heijkant, Marie-José: *Tristano in prospettiva europea*. A proposito di un recente volume. In: *Lettere Italiane*, 57 (2005), p. 279f.; Delcorno Branca, Daniela: *Per la storia del ‘Roman de Tristan’ in Italia*. In: *Cultura Neolatina*, 40 (1980), p. 211-229; Id. 1998, p. 65f; Trevi, Emanuele (Cur.): *Tavola Ritonda*. (Classici Rizzoli). Milano 1999, p. 10f.

²⁵ Cf. Heijkant 1989, p. 26; Trevi 1999, p. 10f.

A note concerning the assertion made in the text: it is possible that the given numbers have changed due to new findings in this area of research and that they have to be revised upwards. However, the assertion primarily refers to the results of Marie-José Heijkant, Daniela Delcorno Branca and Emanuele Trevi. Additionally, it should be briefly noted that there are now estimations of a ‘mixed’ version V III, first termed by Emanuele Baumgartner and of which only very few manuscripts exist, as well as another, fourth version. For further reference, see Grimm 2006, p. 80 and critical editions concerning the ‘Tristan en prose’, as any further elucidation would digress too far from the given focus.

²⁶ Heijkant 1989, p. 30.

Furthermore, the connection with which the protagonist is completely linked to the Arthurian myth is effected by means of the narrative technique of ‘entrelacement’ in the ‘Tristan en prose’: In simplified terms, this was achieved through the joining of two narrative threads, or strands, in which the one, describing Tristan’s love and feat of arm, was combined with the other, depicting his adventures as an Arthurian knight²⁷. Thus, one may speak in this context of “[...] the complete Arthurianising, the linking up of the protagonists [Tristan and Isolde] with the main lines of the Arthurian legend [...]”²⁸. However, it should not be forgotten that, although the ‘Tristan en prose’ enjoyed great popularity in Old French and in its transmissions in Italy, further Arthurian texts exerted considerable influence there.

With his compilation, Rustichello/Rusticiano da Pisa was probably the first Italian author to have written an Arthurian novel in (Northern) French, at the behest of Edward I., most likely in the period of 1270-1273. Despite Rustichello’s claim in his prologue that he had used a book in the possession of Edward I. as his main inspiration, it has been established that the ‘Tristan en prose’ and the ‘Palamède’ were actually the primary sources. Rustichello’s work, which allegedly had ‘le livre du roy Meliadus du Leonnois’ as its original title, is of particular interest because it tells of the adventures surrounding the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ under the leadership of Uther Pendragon up until his son King Arthur and the ‘Tavola Nuova’.²⁹ Donald L. Hoffman judges the division in two Round Tables, an old and a new one, by an Italian writer as follows:

“Although he wrote in French, Rusticiano was the first Italian to invent rather than echo legends of Arthur’s knights. His work was the source of the tale in the *Conti dei antichi cavalieri* that relates the custom of the Castle Pleur.”³⁰

²⁷ Daniela Delcorno Branca describes the technique of ‘entrelacement’ in more detail in the following: “Le numerose avventure che s’intrecciano, interrompendosi di continuo, sembrano impedire il dominio della vicenda: in realtà tale ordine frantumato e apparentemente capriccioso costituisce un vero e proprio sistema di espliciti richiami, non meno che di calcolate simmetrie e di sottili risposdenze. Questa tecnica ad *entrelacement*, a lungo considerata come ipertrofia e degenerazione del racconto, viene rivelandosi sempre più [...] non come puro mezzo tecnico, usato più o meno giudiziosamente, ma come procedimento ricco di possibilità poetiche ed espressive e di molteplici applicazioni.”. Delcorno Branca, Daniela: *L’Orlando Furioso e il Romanzo Cavalleresco Medievale*. (Saggi di «Lettere Italiane», XVII). Firenze 1973, p. 8f.

Marie-José Heijkant’s assessment is worth adding here: “Il *Tristan en prose*, fonte della storia di Tristano, è una delle più significative manifestazioni dell’estetica compilatoria. Adoperando la cronologia sinottica per creare l’illusione della giustapposizione nel tempo e nello spazio del mondo tristaniano e di quello arturiano, i compilatori francesi hanno connesso definitivamente la storia di Tristano con quella dei cavalieri della Tavola Rotonda.”. Heijkant 1997, p. 12f.

²⁸ Gardner 1971, p. 22.

²⁹ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 44-47; Trevi 1999, p. 14-17.

³⁰ Hoffman, Donald L.: *The Arthurian Tradition in Italy*. In: Lagorio, Valerie M./ Leake Day, Mildred (Ed.): *King Arthur through the ages*. Volume I. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Vol. 1269). New York/ London 1990, p. 171.

Emanuele Trevi also shares this opinion and emphasises in regard to the originality and the author's choice of division in the 'Tavola Vecchia' and the 'Tavola Nuova':

“L'originalità della sua compilazione risiede soprattutto nella scelta dei temi. Con Rustichello, si afferma nella narrativa arturiana d'origine italiana un'attenzione particolare rivolta ai cavalieri della Tavola Vecchia di Uter Pendragon, padre di Artù, attenzione nella quale già il Gardner riconosceva «una caratteristica peculiare al trattamento della legenda arturiana in Italia». Come dimostra la prima sezione (2-39) del romanzo (di probabile invenzione rustichelliana), il confronto fra le due Tavole, risolto a favore di quella più antica, si gioca sul terreno del valore cavalleresco, la cui manifestazione più compiuta viene spostata ulteriormente indietro nel tempo, dai giorni di Artù a quelli di Uter.”³¹

As Rustichello's original title suggests, it is a certain Meliadus, King of Leonois, who plays no insignificant role in large parts of the 'Compilazione', which recounts the adventures of the 'Tavola Vecchia'. In connection with the latter figure, it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that he is Tristan's father according to a majority of the prose tradition. In this respect, it is significant what Emanuele Trevi has to point out, albeit put forward in a slightly different context, as is discussed in the following:

“[...] le scelte operate da Rustichello all'interno del patrimonio narrativo arturiano, le quali privilegiano decisamente, per buona parte dell'opera, il valore guerriero e la nobiltà del comportamento degli eroi della Tavola Rotonda, a scapito degli altri elementi costitutivi del genere, amori e magie.”³²

In addition, the fact that Rustichello's original version of the 'Compilazione' was divided in the 16th century into two parts, of which only fragments remain today, complicates matters when considering it in a scholarly fashion:

“This Franco-Italian compilation of Rusticiano has come down to us only in a fragmentary form. It mainly consists of a large excerpt from the *Palamède*, which became divided (probably at an early date) into two portions of which printed editions appeared at Paris in the first half of the sixteenth century: *Gyron le Courtoys* (Verard, undated, but probably 1501) and *Meliadus de Leonnoys* (Galliot du Pré, 1528, and Denis Janot, 1532). These two romances are closely interlaced, with frequent references from one to the other for elucidation of the matter, or for epi-

³¹ Trevi 1999, p. 16.

This is also taken up by Marie-José Heijkant, who emphasises: “La divisione fra la Tavola Vecchia di Uter e la Tavola Nuova di Artù sembra un'invenzione tipicamente italiana, propagata anche dalla Compilazione di Rustichello da Pisa e dal Tristano Veneto.”. Heijkant 1997, p. 10.

³² Trevi 1999, p. 15.

sodes omitted. They were translated into Italian as *Girone il Cortese* and *Il gran Re Meliadus* [...].”³³

Next to Rustichello’s opus, a further text should be mentioned, one which surely should be located at the very beginning of the writing tradition in Italy concerning Merlin, as it was probably written by a Venetian author, or at least someone shaped by Venetian culture, in Old French between 1274 and 1279: ‘*Les Prophecies de Merlin*’. According to the available information, it was written by ‘*Maistre Richart d’Irlande*’ at the behest of Frederick II.³⁴

During the late 13th century, only a few years after Rustichello’s ‘*Compilazione*’, the first Arthurian tale and concomitantly the first Tristan novel in Italian – and therefore in the vernacular – were composed: in all likelihood, a work entitled ‘*Tristano Riccardiano*’. The reason for this rather careful wording lies in the fact that it is precisely the dating of the individual Tristan texts, and therefore also the question of the oldest document, which has been subject to much academic debate in the present due to an increase in the (re)discovery of manuscripts.³⁵ It may be safely stated in regard to the ‘*Tristano Riccardiano*’, however, that it received its title from its first critical editor, Ernesto Giacomo Parodi. One version exists today as manuscript 2543, written in a Tuscan dialect, in the Biblioteca Riccardiana in Florence, which also provides an explanation for its title.³⁶ Although the manuscript contains 180 pages of parchment³⁷, it is by all indications a fragmentary tale, “[...] che comincia con la nascita di Tristano e s’interrompe dopo la liberazione di Artù nel deserto di Darnantes.”³⁸ Therein, the preeminent position of Tristan in regard to Lancelot is primarily instigated, in the typical Italian tradition³⁹. In addition, a distinctive feature should be noted according to a considerable part of academic opinion on the ‘*Tristano Riccardiano*’, “[...] che documenta uno stadio piuttosto antico dell’elaborazione testuale del Tristan scomparsa nella tradizione francese.”⁴⁰. This assessment, however, brings us back to the contemporary discussions in academia con-

³³ Gardner 1971, p. 47f.

³⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 45f.; Delcorno Branca, Daniela: *Il romanzo cavalleresco medievale*. (Scuola aperta). Firenze 1974, p. 8.

³⁵ In regard to this subject, refer to: Allaire, Gloria: *Un nuovo frammento del Tristano in prosa*. (Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, ms. Nuovi Acquisti 1329, maculatura 44). In: *Lettere Italiane*, 53 (2001), p. 261ff.; Heijkant 2005, p. 280.

³⁶ Cf.: Delcorno Branca 1974, p. 9; Scolari, Antonio (Cur.): *Il romanzo di Tristano*. Presentazione di Alfredo Giuliani. (Testi della cultura italiana, 17. Collana diretta da Edoardo Sanguineti). Genova 1990, p. 1f. and p. 22-28; Heijkant 1989, p. 35f.; *Id.* 1991, p. 7f. and p. 41; Psaki, F. Regina: *Chivalry and medieval Italian romance*. In: Krueger, Roberta L. (Ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*. Cambridge 2000, p. 209; Allaire 2002, p. 16.

³⁷ Cf. Heijkant 1991, p. 41.

³⁸ Heijkant 2005, p. 280.

³⁹ Cf. Heijkant 1991, p. 19f.

⁴⁰ Heijkant 1997, p. 13.

cerning the ways in which the manuscripts were spread, especially in regard to version V I, in Italy and Spain.⁴¹

The correct dating of the 'Tristano Panciaticiano' proves to be even more complicated than the 'Tristano Riccardiano'. The utmost which may be said in this regard is: "Il testo del ms. Panciaticiano 33 (P) è più recente (il manoscritto risale al Trecento), ma rivela una parentela molto stretta con R [= Riccardiano]."⁴² Similar to the 'Tristano Riccardiano', the 'Tristano Panciaticiano' received its name from the location in which it was stored, in this case the place of its previous location. It survived in a single manuscript, which initially belonged to the library of the Florentine family Panciatichi, but was later kept in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence. Next to its more famous title 'Tristano Panciaticiano', it also goes by its manuscript title of 'Panciaticiano 33'. Its length is approximately between 282 and 284 pages of parchment.⁴³ Concerning the location in which it was produced, the following may be stated: "Provenance or original site of production cannot be precisely determined, although the text displays western Tuscan (Pisan-Luccan) linguistic traits."⁴⁴ In terms of content, the 'Tristano Panciaticiano' shows more similarities with a compilation, as it consists of six narrative parts, of which three explicitly deal with Tristan. Two parts serve as a prelude, before the text concerns itself with Tristan. Part one has the 'Inchiesta del San Gradale' as its topic, which corresponds in an abridged fashion with the first quarter of its referential template the 'Queste del Saint Graal'. In the following part, two love letters are featured, presenting the principles of the 'ars dictaminis'. Only thereafter, in part three, does Tristan's narrative, from his birth to the incorrect rumours of his death, unfold. Here, the text shows great similarities to the 'Tristano Riccardiano', but deviates at the end and uses, by all appearances, its own material. Following this, part four leads away from the Tristan narrative and depicts various episodes from the Arthurian court, with 'La mort le roi Artu' as its template. Part five returns to Tristan and relates of his stay in Joyeuse Garde und the tourney of Loverzep, although the 'Tristan en prose' in accordance with V I is likely to have served as a source for this episode. Finally, while still using the 'Tristan en prose' as a template, part six deals with Tristan's last adventures and leads up to the death of the lovers, including the epilogue in accordance with

⁴¹ Regarding this, see: Irigui, Sebastian: The Southern Version of the Prose Tristan. The Italo-Iberian Translations and their French Source. In: *Tristania*, 17 (1996), p. 39-54; Ros Domingo, Enrique Andrés: *Arthurische Literatur der Romania: Die iberoromanischen Fassungen des Tristanromans und ihre Beziehungen zu den französischen und italienischen Versionen*. (Habil. 1999). Bern 2001; Heijkant 2005, p. 279ff.

⁴² Allaire 2001, p. 261.

⁴³ Cf. Allaire 2002, p. 1 (Abstract) and p. 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Hélie de Boron.⁴⁵ The following is striking when considering the depiction of the death of the lovers:

“Like Malory, the *Tristano Panciatichiano* [sic!] refuses to acknowledge the lovers’ power over death. The tombs are elaborately decorated, but there are no vines, and the lovers are interred richly, but permanently.”⁴⁶

When comparing the ‘*Tristano Riccardiano*’ with the ‘*Tristano Panciatichiano*’, it is notable that the superiority of Tristan in regard to Lancelot is not clearly shown in the latter narrative, but is skilfully left (for the time being) ambiguous⁴⁷. A further Italian Tristan version survives as ‘*Tristano Veneto*’. In this case, the title is in all likelihood to be ascribed to its original, linguistically Venetian variant⁴⁸. As with the two aforementioned Tristan texts, an exact dating is difficult:

“È veneta, e più precisamente veneziana, la prima insigne testimonianza della fortuna del romanzo di Rustichello: il *Libro de miser Tristan*, meglio conosciuto come *Tristano Veneto*, conservato nel codice Palatino 3325 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Vienna, copia tarda (datata 1487) di un testo che sicuramente risale ai primissimi anni del Trecento o addirittura agli ultimi del Duecento.”⁴⁹

The length of the surviving manuscript comprises of 166 pages⁵⁰. In terms of contents, it is divided into two – if not three (when adding the end) – parts. The first primarily relies on the ‘*Tristan en prose*’ as a reference and remains true to it, narrating the history of Tristan’s ancestors, his birth and up until his rescue of the incarcerated King Arthur⁵¹. The following is quite revealing in regard to the first part of the ‘*Tristano Veneto*’:

“Inoltre nella prima parte del romanzo non figurano, se non come realtà favolose, lontane, irraggiungibili, né Artù né Lancillotto: Tristano vi è impegnato soprattutto a vivere il più intensa-

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 6f.; Delcorno Branca 1980, p. 223; Hoffman, Donald L.: *Tristano Panciatichiano*. In: Lacy 1991, p. 473.

⁴⁶ Hoffman 1990, p. 176.

⁴⁷ Cf. in regard to this finding in Gloria Allaire’s edition chapters 243, 409-412 and 474-481: Allaire 2002, p. 434-437, 612-615 and 662-669.

⁴⁸ Cf. Donadello 1994, p. 41-46.

⁴⁹ Trevi 1999, p. 17.

⁵⁰ Cf. Donadello 1994, p. 18f.; Allaire 2002, p. 25.

⁵¹ Cf. for this Donadello 1994, p. 20-26; also in Donadello’s edition: part 1 – chapters 1-392, part 2 – chapters 393-558 and the last part – chapters 559-611.

Cf. in addition: Heijkant 1997, p. 51; Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 58; Trevi 1999, p. 17.

mente possibile l'amore di Isotta, in una dimensione del tutto amorale, anticortese, volta solo a garantire l'esclusiva centralità del privato."⁵²

The second part of the 'Tristano Veneto' features tourneys and fights at the Arthurian court, although Tristan fades somewhat into the background at this point, and Rustichello's 'Compilazione' serves as a source⁵³. The following may be observed in regard to this section:

“Questo mondo, questa ideologia non è più quella del romanzo primitivo di Tristano, e questa è la ragione per cui gli 'ingenui' personaggi che ne facevano parte vengono spazzati via: scompaiono dalla scena Marco, Isotta, Governale, Brechaina, Audret. Questo mondo segna pesantemente l'immagine e la personalità di Tristano: egli ora è solo e adulto, non è più il bello, dolce, forte e insieme delicato cavaliere, il musico, l'artista, che era il fiore della corte di Cornovaglia: cade l'amore, subentra la forza.”⁵⁴

Moreover, both Tristan and Lancelot are presented as outstanding knights, who fight a full three times with each other during the course of the narrative. At the decisive moment, however, they are aborted and therefore end in a draw. Despite Lancelot's utterance concerning Tristan's fighting prowess, it remains ambiguous whether the author of the 'Tristano Veneto' intended Tristan to be superior.⁵⁵

Following this, the text returns in its final part to the template provided by the 'Tristan en prose' and describes the events leading up to the death of the lovers, as well as the subsequent retribution enacted upon King Marc by Lancelot. This is first identifiable in the 'Tristano Veneto' among the Italian Tristan texts, with the exception of the 'Tavola Ritonda', which is, however, a cohesive Arthurian and Tristan novel, and is therefore in a different league.⁵⁶ Marc

⁵² Donadello 1994, p. 21.

⁵³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 22-26.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Aulo Donadello, meanwhile, comes to a definite conclusion in the following: “[...] il Tristano Veneto vuol essere in qualche modo un romanzo 'totale', che veda la compresenza della dimensione privata, individuale, e di quella storica e politica del protagonista, ed è per questo, anche, che il romanzo di Tristano, iniziatosi con le avventure e con l'amore, deve ritornare, attraverso la presa di coscienza etico-politica dell'eroe, alla dimensione sentimentale, deve circolarmente chiudersi con l'amore e con l'ultima delle avventure, la morte.” *Ibid.*, p. 24f.

Regina F. Psaki disagrees and corrects Aulo Donadello's assessment by saying: „This romance's editor points out the »coexistence of the protagonist's private, individual dimension and his historical, political one.« In fact however the two dimensions are kept forcibly apart in the romance's two-part structure: the first section follows Tristano the lone knight-errant, and the second integrates him into the whole cast of Arthurian knights. Only in the general grief at his death do they come together.” Psaki 2000, p. 212f.

⁵⁵ Cf. regarding the three duels between Tristano and Lancillotto in Donadello's edition: chapter 397-400 – p. 360-365, chapter 492-501 – p. 455-467 and chapter 512-523 – p. 475-487. Cf. for Lancillotto's statement Donadello's edition: chapter 480 – p. 441ff.

⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25f.; additionally in Donadello's edition cf. chapter 559-611 – p. 524-558.

finally dies a horrible death at the hands of Lancelot's forces during the revenge campaign⁵⁷. Moreover, the death of the lovers is noteworthy in the 'Tristano Veneto'; the author speaks of two abundantly adorned tombs and even of two lifelike statues of Tristan and Isold made of white marble, but not of vines, which may have otherwise sprouted from their graves and thereby hinted at some form of life after death⁵⁸.

In addition to these three Tristan versions, there is another Italian Tristan text which has survived, albeit in a fragmentary manner, entitled 'Tristano Corsiniano'. The manuscript 2593 of the Biblioteca Corsiniana, meanwhile in possession of the Accademia dei Lincei, contains 114 pages and has been determined to be from the mid-14th century.⁵⁹ Gloria Allaire was able to determine, in reference to Fabrizio Cigni, the "[...] Pavian/Veneto/Vicentine linguistic traits (Cigni 1995)."⁶⁰ Contentwise, the 'Tristano Corsiniano' remains very close to its source, the 'Tristan en prose', and describes Tristan's and Dinadan's adventure at Joyeuse Garde und the tourney of Loverzep⁶¹.

Next to this, the fragment in the 'Zibaldone Da Canal' deserves a brief mention: In a "[...] venezianischen Sammelhandschrift kaufmännischer [...] Texte (Ende 14. Jahrhundert) findet sich folio 44r-45v ein 'Tristan'-Bruchstück, das stark raffend von Tristans Geburt, seiner Stiefmutter und der Ermordung seines Vaters erzählt."⁶² The episodes which were left out as a result of the cuts are noteworthy:

"Viene saltato completamente l'incontro alla fontana e l'invito della donzella incantatrice, confusa qui con la damigella dell'Acqua della Spina, che compare invece in tutt'altra parte del romanzo. In quest'opera di abbreviazione sono stati anche tralasciati gli episodi dell'uccisione di Pernam per mano di Marco [...]. Inoltre le insidie della matrigna sono state ridotte ad una sola: manca la morte del fratellastro di Tristano [...]."⁶³

Apart from these conspicuous Italian Tristan novels, a few other works of note have dealt with various episodes of the 'matière de Bretagne' or have alluded to it through intertextual references, and will be addressed in the following before the 'Tavola Ritonda' is introduced in more detail.

⁵⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 558.

⁵⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 552f. (chapter 601-605).

⁵⁹ Cf.: Branca, Daniela: I romanzi italiani di Tristano e la Tavola Ritonda. (Università di Padova. Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia, Vol. XLV). Firenze 1968, p. 28; Heijkant 1991, p. 8; Allaire 2002, p. 22.

⁶⁰ Allaire 2002, p. 22.

⁶¹ Cf. Branca 1968, p. 28; Stein 2001, p. 272.

⁶² Stein 2001, p. 272.

⁶³ Branca 1968, p. 29.

One of these texts, which has transmitted multiple episodes of the Arthurian and Tristan narrative for us, is the 'Novellino', which carries the additional title of 'Le ciento novelle antike' or is also called 'Libro di novelle e di bel parlar gentile'. It has been dated around the late 13th and early 14th centuries. The anonymous author relates in at least five of the hundred novella episodes of the 'matière de Bretagne'.⁶⁴ According to Daniela Delcorno Branca, who adds another sub-category, these are as follows:

"All'interno del *Novellino*, la materia arturiana richiede subito una preliminare distinzione: da un lato i testi provenienti dalle *Prophécies de Merlin*, attinenti al ricco filone profetico-esemplare della figura di Merlino [...], dall'altro cinque racconti che rinviano alla tradizione narrativa dei romanzi arturiani [...]. Si tratta di Lancillotto e la carretta (Nov 28); Lancillotto alla fontana (Nov 45); Meliadus e il Cavaliere senza paura (Nov 63); Tristano e Isotta sotto il pino (Nov 65); la damigella di Scalot (Nov 82)."⁶⁵

The 'eavesdropped tryst' is of particular interest for research concerned with Tristan, especially as a means of comparison with other versions⁶⁶.

Further texts which relate to individual or even a string of episodes of the 'matière de Bretagne' in Italy are the 'Cantari', which will at least briefly be introduced at this point. They are a textualisation of originally orally presented narratives or, more precisely, narrative segments, which Donald L. Hoffman characterises as follows:

"From the courtly (Chrétien) or clerical (Geoffrey of Monmouth) ambience of their literary origins, Arthurian tales in fourteenth-century Italy descend to the urban and extend to the populus in the performances of the *cantastorie*, who entertained in the piazzas of northern Italy from the second half of the thirteenth century to the fifteenth, by which time their popularity had extended as far south as Naples. Generally composed in *ottava rima* and divided into *giornate* (the length of a day's performance), the *cantari* are action-packed retellings of the most dramatic adventures of Arthurian (and other) heroes."⁶⁷

In the 'Cantare dei Cantari', probably produced during the late 14th or early 15th century, the anonymous poet processed a large amount of individual 'Cantari' similar to a repertoire-regis-

⁶⁴ For further observations, see: Delcorno Branca, Daniela: I racconti arturiani del Novellino. In: *Lettere Italiane*, 48 (1996), p. 177-205; Riesz, János (Ed.): *Il Novellino. Das Buch der hundert alten Novellen. Italienisch/Deutsch. Übersetzt und herausgegeben von János Riesz.* (Reclam Universal-Bibliothek Nr. 8511[4]). Stuttgart 1988, p. 223-230 and 307-342; Kapp, Volker (Ed.): *Italienische Literaturgeschichte. Unter Mitarbeit von Hans Felten et al. Zweite, verbesserte Auflage.* Stuttgart/ Weimar 1994, p. 25ff.; Grewe, Andrea: *Einführung in die italienische Literaturwissenschaft.* Stuttgart/ Weimar 2009, p. 147.

⁶⁵ Delcorno Branca 1996, p. 178.

⁶⁶ Cf. also: *Ibid.*, p. 179f.

⁶⁷ Hoffman 1990, p. 172.

ter of his skill in lyrical form, structured according to topics and his target audience and their preferences. Donald L. Hoffman appends to this point on the 'Cantare dei Cantari':

“The ‘omnibus *cantare*,’ the *Cantare dei Cantari*, includes Arthurian material in its celebration of world events since the Creation. Stanzas 39-47 recall Lancelot and Tristan, the founding of the Round Table, Uther and the Knights of the Old Table, Arthur, Tristan and Iseult, Blioberis, Agravaine, Lamorak, Perceval, the tournament at Lonezep, the jousts of Brunor, Gareth, Ban, Breus, Hector de Maris, Bors, Dinadan, the treachery of Gawain, and Galahad and the Grail.”⁶⁸

Apart from the 'Cantare dei Cantari', which has regrettably survived only in the form of the repertoire-register, there are a considerable amount of 'Cantari' containing their entire narrative contents relating to the 'matière de Bretagne'. Their textualisation, which mostly occurred relatively late, has been the main difficulty for academia when trying to make reliable and definite judgments. Daniela Delcorno Branca attempts to alleviate this by using subcategorisations:

“A un puro «décor» arturiano si limitano, per esempio, il *Gismirante*, il *Brito di Brettagna* e il *Carduino*, dove sullo sfondo prestigioso ed evocativo della corte di Camellotto si svolgono avventure sostanzialmente estranee ai romanzi bretoni, sia pure sfruttandone in parte temi e situazioni. Un'altra serie di cantari costruisce invece veri e propri «pastiche» arturiani, deformando personaggi e vicende secondo le esigenze e i gusti di una narrativa elementare: così Galaad, il mistico e perfetto cavaliere chiamato a compiere l'impresa del Santo Graal, diventa nel *Cavaliere del Falso Scudo* e in *Galasso dalla Scura Valle* un pio eremita pronto a vincere con la spada incantesimi e giganti [...]. Infine, qualche testo assegna addirittura la parte di protagonisti a figure del tutto secondarie e probabilmente introdotte nel ciclo bretone dai volgarizzamenti italiani: è il caso del *Lasancis* e della *Ponzela Gaia*. Non sempre, tuttavia, si davano esiti così deformati o periferici: i cantari di *Febus-el-forte*, le *Ultime imprese e morte di Tristano*, la *Vendetta di Tristano*, *Tristano e Lancielotto al Petrone di Merlino*, la *Struzione della Tavola Ritonda* sono vere e proprie riduzioni in ottave di episodi tratti da romanzi arturiani.”⁶⁹

Consequently, she adds the following observation:

„Se, tralasciando i più tardi *Tristano e Lancielotto al Petrone* e la *Struzione della Tavola Ritonda*, ci si pone a confrontare sistematicamente i cantari di Tristano con le varie traduzioni e rielab-

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Delcorno Branca, Daniela: I cantari di Tristano. In: *Lettere Italiane*, 23 (1971), p. 289f.

borazioni in prosa che circolavano in Italia fra Tre e Quattrocento, i risultati non mancano di interesse.”⁷⁰

In addition to the ‘Cantari’, the ‘Conti’, not to be mistaken with each other, should also be briefly mentioned: the ‘Conti’ denote a collection of short narratives, or in its singular form ‘Conto’, which is literally translated as ‘narrative’, individual narratives similar to novellas. The ‘Conti di antichi cavalieri’ and the ‘Conto di Brunor e di Galeotto suo figlio’, which dates back to the 13th century, are of particular note in connection with the ‘matière de Bretagne’.⁷¹

The profound dissemination of the ‘matière de Bretagne’ in Italy is also discernible from the clear marks left by the three authors known as the ‘Tre corone’. It may be said, therefore, in equivalence with Donald L. Hoffman:

“Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio are all acquainted with Arthurian tradition. Petrarch, in the *Trionfo d’Amore* identifies Cupid’s slaves, Lancelot, Tristan, and ‘gli altri erranti’ (II.80), Iseult, Guinevere and ‘la coppia d’Arimino’ (II.83). Boccaccio subtitles the *Decameron* the ‘Principe Galeotto’ in a morally ambiguous reference that is perhaps clarified by his view in other works of the Arthurian corpus as a repository of primarily negative moral examples. Boccaccio’s revisionism is itself evidence of the legend’s popularity, but it is Dante who most compellingly evokes the seductive power of the Tristan legend in the voice of Francesca, who, in lamenting ‘Amor condusse noi ad una morte’ (*Inf.* V.106), recognizes that Tristan and Iseult are the archetype [sic] of her doomed love. Although it is the reading of the first kiss exchanged by Lancelot and Guinevere that evokes that love, it is Tristan and Iseult who define it.”⁷²

Due to the fact that academia has extensively dealt with these three authors, who are without a doubt classics of the Italian literary canon, and still today continue to do so in a fruitful manner – including their textual references to the ‘matière de Bretagne’ – the following observation by Antonio Scolari shall suffice: “Già nel tempo di Dante e di Petrarca, bastava il nome di Tristano per renderlo presente alla memoria dei lettori.”⁷³

An additional indication for the considerable and wide dissemination of the Arthurian and Tristan narratives in Italy can be seen in findings on the intensely active production of texts, to which the four Italian Tristan versions and the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ also belong. This phenomenon took the shape of a true ‘silk road’ in Northern Italy, and especially connected Veneto with

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 290f.

⁷¹ Cf.: Gardner 1971, p. 85-88; Hoffman, Donald L.: *Conti dei Antichi Cavalieri*. In: Lacy 1991, p. 99.

⁷² Hoffman 1990, p. 171.

⁷³ Scolari 1990, p. VII.

Tuscany, as recent academic endeavours have shown. Emanuele Trevi speaks in this regard of the following routes used in their distribution:

“[...] che congiunge Pisa e la Toscana occidentale alla Padania [sic] e al Veneto: una vera e propria ‘via della seta’ nelle vicende della circolazione italiana delle storie della Tavola Rotonda, percorsa da moltissimi testi, sicuramente più di quanti ne conosciamo oggi, a partire dal romanzo di Rustichello.”⁷⁴

As a result of this line of academic inquiry, Pisa was ascertained to have been a centre for an influential writing workshop⁷⁵. In addition to this, the inventories of the libraries of Italian Aristocratic courts with substantial amounts of texts should be mentioned, specifically the Este in Modena and Ferrara, the Visconti-Sforza in Milan and Pavia, the Gonzaga in Mantua and the Anjou in Naples⁷⁶.

The ‘Tavola Ritonda’, which shall be presented in the following, is also a testament to this successful production of texts in the form of manuscripts. Principally, it may be said in regard to its importance – in general and not only concerning the surviving manuscripts – in Donald L. Hoffman’s words: “It is the Tavola Ritonda, however, that is the undoubted Arthurian masterpiece of the age.”⁷⁷

‘La Tavola Ritonda’

Although we usually only refer to ‘*La Tavola Ritonda*’ by this abbreviated name, its complete title was introduced in favour of its original title in 1864 by its first editor, Filippo-Luigi Polidori, most likely in order to accentuate the anonymous author’s contentual alignment: ‘La Tavola Ritonda o L’Istoria di Tristano’⁷⁸. The first part shows that the narrative deals with the Round Table and all those persons affiliated with it, the second part emphasises that Tristano

⁷⁴ Trevi 1999, p. 24.

⁷⁵ In regard to this, see: Cigni, Fabrizio: *Manoscritti di prose cortesi compilati in Italia (secc. XIII-XIV). Stato della questione e prospettive di ricerca*. In: Guida, Saverio/ Latella, Fortunata (Cur.): *La Filologia Romanza e i codici*, Vol. II. Atti del convegno Messina - Università degli studi - Facoltà di lettere e filosofia 19-22 Dicembre 1991. Messina 1993, p. 435-441; Donadello 1994, p. 18; Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 11-77; Trevi 1999, p. 13f., p. 16 and p. 23.

⁷⁶ Regarding this finding, refer to: Delcorno Branca 1980, p. 228f.; Heijkant 1989, p. 29-32; Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 11-49; Allaire 2002, p. 13-25.

⁷⁷ Hoffman 1990, p. 177.

⁷⁸ Cf. Polidori, Filippo-Luigi (Cur.): *La Tavola Ritonda o L’Istoria di Tristano*. Per cura e con illustrazioni di Filippo-Luigi Polidori. Testo di lingua. Citato dagli Accademici della Crusca ed ora per la prima volta pubblicato secondo il codice della Mediceo-Laurenziana. Parte Prima: Prefazione – Testo dell’Opera. (Collezione di opere inedite o rare. Dei primi tre secoli della lingua. Pubblicata per cura della R. Commissione pe’ testi di lingua nelle provincie dell’Emilia). Bologna 1864.

is the protagonist of the entire narrative. In accordance with manuscript I.VII.13 of the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati di Siena, which has thankfully also preserved the beginning of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and which dates back to the 15th century⁷⁹, the original title which had been replaced by Polidori could have been: “Al nome di Dio, amen. Questo ène el libro delle storie della Tavola Ritonda, e di missere Tristano e di missere Lancilotto e di molti altri cavalieri [...]”⁸⁰. It seems that Polidori uses the original title as a sort of preface in his edition, before the actual textual part begins. A partition into three to four parts is discernible in this longer formulation, which primarily prefixes the narrative and contains an additional expression involving God: first, it is emphasised that tales of the Round Table will be presented, then Tristano is highlighted as the main agent in the story, after which Lancilotto is singled out as an important figure in the narrative and finally all knights are encapsulated in one formula, which could be of additional interest to the target audience.

It is also apparent from this original title that every surviving manuscript can provide vital insights into this subject matter: Without the conscientious passing on of manuscript I.VII.13 of the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati di Siena, we would possibly never have been able to comprehend the original narrative as accurately as we do. Unfortunately, this is true for all fragmentary records, for which the prominent author Thomas d’Angleterre may serve as an example. It is precisely in these situations that we all the more hope for (re)discoveries of new material. It is fortunate, therefore, that the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ has been preserved in its entirety in ten known manuscripts and three additional fragments.

The Manuscripts attributed to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and their Age

Initially, five manuscripts were undoubtedly known to Polidori at the time of the first edition in 1864. For one, he used the three manuscripts Plut. 44,27 of the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana in Florence, Magliab. II.II.68 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale also in Florence, and I.VII.13 of the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena as a basis for his first critical edition. He also knew of two further manuscripts, Pal. 564 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale and Ricc. 2283 of the Biblioteca Riccardiana, both once more located in Florence. Apart from these five manuscripts, Polidori used Pal. 556, which is also kept at the Florentine Bib-

⁷⁹ Cf. Allaire 2002, p. 22.

⁸⁰ Polidori 1864, p. 1.

Please note: The first edition of ‘La Tavola Ritonda’ will in the following always be indicated as ‘Polidori 1864’; this also applies to citations which are taken from this edition for the purposes of this work.

lioteca Nazionale Centrale, in the second volume of his edition.⁸¹ In all likelihood, he did not fully recognize it as a manuscript belonging to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ without doubts, as Daniela Branca has correctly pointed out:

“Il Polidori conobbe anche il ms. Pal. 556, [...] ma non ne parla nell’*Introduzione* e probabilmente non lo considerò neppure un codice della *Tavola Ritonda*, date le sue notevoli divergenze anche di carattere narrativo.”⁸²

Furthermore, during the course of the next 140 years of academic research into this subject matter, the five to six previously known manuscripts were conjoined by Plut. 43,10 of the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana in Florence, Vat. lat. 6789 and Urb. Lat. 953 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana⁸³. Moreover, Plut. 89, inf. 62 of the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana is judged by Gloria Allaire to be a late copy of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’⁸⁴. In addition to these manuscripts there are approximately three surviving fragments: for one, the two related fragments 609 of the Biblioteca Universitaria in Padua and 86 of the Biblioteca Arcivescovile in Udine, “[...] [u]sed as guard leaves in two codices once belonging to Udinese convent of San Francesco della Vigna.”⁸⁵. Aside from this, the fragment *Maculatura 44*, *Nuovi Acquisti 1329* of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence is said to be the most recent, internationally known rediscovery and was positioned at the very least in close proximity to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ by Gloria Allaire in 2001⁸⁶.

⁸¹ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. L-LXIX; Branca 1968, p. 29f.; Heijkant 1997, p. 49f.; Punzi, Ariana: Per una nuova edizione della *Tavola Ritonda*. In: Ruffino, Giovanni (Cur.): *Atti del XXI Congresso Internazionale di Linguistica e Filologia Romanza*. Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani: Università di Palermo 18-24 settembre 1995. Volume VI, Sezione 7: Edizione e analisi linguistica dei testi letterari e documentari del medioevo, Sezione 8: Paradigmi interpretativi della cultura medievale. Tübingen 1998, p. 727f.; Allaire 2002, p. 15-25. Addendum: Ariana Punzi points out a characteristic in connection with Pal. 564, which may mark the distinctiveness of this manuscript of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ – a passage in the text which is largely in word-for-word accordance with the ‘*Tristrams Saga ok Isondar*’, as well as Gottfried’s ‘*Tristan*’ and therefore traceable to Thomas d’Angleterre: “Tra le peculiarità del codice perugino, merita senz’altro di essere sottolineata la presenza di due coincidenze con la *Saga norrena* e con il *Tristan* di Goffredo di Strasburgo, la cui origine dovrebbe dunque essere rintracciata nel *Tristan* di Thomas. Nel solo Pal. lat. 564 *Tristano* domanda al duca di Bramante il cagnetto incantato: *il petito Crenuto* per donarlo a Isotta, e lo descrive in maniera conforme alla *Saga* e a Goffredo di Strasburgo e solo questo codice riporta l’allusione di Urganio al Moroldo (cap. LXV).”. Punzi 1998, p. 730.

⁸² Branca 1968, p. 30.

⁸³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 34 and p. 36; Delcorno Branca 1971, p. 294 footnote 14; Heijkant 1997, p. 49f.; Punzi 1998, p. 727f.; Allaire 2002, p. 15-25.

⁸⁴ Cf. regarding this: Allaire 2002, p. 15.

Although Polidori describes the manuscript in his introduction, he erroneously cites it as Plut. 89, inf. 69, and attributes it as a manuscript of the ‘*Tristano Panciatichiano*’ instead of the ‘*Tavola Ritonda*’. Cf. Polidori 1864, p. LXVII-LXIX.

⁸⁵ Allaire 2002, p. 17.

Cf. additionally: Heijkant 1997, p. 50; Punzi 1998, p. 727f.

⁸⁶ Cf. Allaire 2001, p. 257f.; *Id.* 2002, p. 15.

This fragment, along with manuscript Pal. 556, is a very particular, one may almost say ‘custom’ version of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, both of which are subject to intense debates in academia. Hence, Daniela Delcorno Branca notes in regard to Pal. 556: “Il manoscritto Palatino 556 della Nazionale di Firenze presenta, fra i *Tristani* in lingua italiana, una situazione molto complessa e ancora in gran parte da chiarire.”⁸⁷. Similarly, Gloria Allaire classifies Pal. 556 by succinctly remarking: “Unique version of *Tristan* combined with *Tavola Ritonda* material. Called the ‘*Tristano Palatino*’ or *Storia di Lancilotto* [...]”⁸⁸. Pal. 556 could also represent a distinct branch in regard to Polidori’s edition and the manuscripts he intentionally utilised, as Daniela Delcorno Branca theorised in 1996 and 1998. In this respect, she elaborates:

“In altre parole Pal 556 dipende da un testo diverso dalla *Tav. Rit.* edita dal Polidori, rispetto alla quale si pone non come derivato, ma come collaterale, dipendente al pari di quella da una *Tav. Rit. X*, contenente l’intera storia di Tristano, già elaborata rispetto alla redazione R che pure ne costituisce, almeno per la prima parte, la base indubitabile (e questo spiega le strette coincidenze con Ricc. [= Tristano Riccardiano]).”⁸⁹

Gloria Allaire also takes up Daniela Delcorno Branca’s hypothesis when assessing the fragments Maculatura 44, Nuovi Acquisti 1329, by stating:

⁸⁷ Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 99.

⁸⁸ Allaire 2002, p. 16.

⁸⁹ Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 104.

One should note for further clarification: Daniela Delcorno Branca conceives of “redazione R” as “[...] quell’antica redazione tristaniana diffusa in Italia (R), che costituisce appunto la base della più tarda *Tav. Rit.* ed è rappresentata da Ricc. [...]”. Ibid., p. 100f.

In accordance with this partition and differentiation by Daniela Delcorno Branca, both the Paduan-Venetian and the ‘Tavola Polidori’ branches go back to ‘Tav. Rit. X’, but only the ‘Tavola Polidori’ depicts the specific Tristan episodes which can be traced back to Thomas d’Angleterre and Bérout. Cf. for this: Ibid., p. 109f.

However, one should keep the ‘Tristano Veneto’ in mind when considering this theory. Herein, the protagonist also embarks upon a campaign of revenge against Marc, and it shows at least in this point certain similarities with the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and with the peculiarities of the ‘Tavola Ritonda (Polidori)’, which become apparent in the details and especially through the independently made changes.

Ariana Punzi also emphasises the specific traits of Pal. 556 in connection with two further manuscripts, which she also highlights: “[...] così come il gruppo toscano sembra risalire ad un medesimo antecedente e presenta una sostanziale unità testuale, la redazione perugina (Pal. Lat. 564) e quella veneta (Pal. Lat. 556) rappresentano vere e proprie riscritture. Lo stesso discorso vale per il codice, sempre di colorito linguistico veneto, di Ventura da Cerrutis [= Vat. lat. 6789] che, per quanto è possibile giudicare dalla sezione conservata (relativa alla morte degli amanti), presenta delle peculiarità che lo distinguono da quelle di tutti gli altri testimoni.”. Punzi 1998, p. 729. Particularly in regard to Pal. 556 and Polidori’s knowledge of it, she adds the following point of view as an explanation: „Se il Vat. lat. 6789 era ignoto al Polidori, diverso è il caso del Pal. lat. 556. Non sarà casuale che Polidori, pur conoscendolo, non lo consideri un testimone della *Tavola ritonda*, e certo non per sua ignoranza o trascuratezza, ma per le particolarissime caratteristiche del testo che si presenta come una singolare contaminazione fra le redazioni della *Tavola ritonda* e quella del *Tristano Riccardiano*. Nel Pal. lat. 556 le due redazioni non vengono semplicemente giustapposte, ma abilmente fuse attraverso tagli e aggiunte che modificano sostanzialmente la narrazione.”. Ibid.

“Date le somiglianze tra R[iccardiano], P[anciatichiano] e N[uovi] A[cquisti 1329], e i passi originali di T[avola] R[itonda], pare che il frammento sia una versione della *Tavola ritonda*, anteriore a quella edita modernamente, o un testo che conteneva la prima parte del *Tristano* e che fu interpolato nella cosiddetta *Tavola*.”⁹⁰

Moreover, Gloria Allaire adds in regard to the appraisal of fragment Maculatura 44, Nuovi Acquisti 1329:

“R[iccardiano] e P[anciatichiano] paiono rappresentare la prima tradizione del *Tristano* in toscano, mentre N[uovi] A[cquisti 1329] testimonia un secondo ramo – amplificato e variato – che fece parte della compilazione *Tavola ritonda*. Potrebbe essere una nuova testimonianza delle varietà redazionali di questo testo, di cui l’edizione Polidori rappresenta soltanto un ramo. Il testo del frammento N[uovi] A[cquisti 1329] si inserisce nettamente tra le versioni più antiche del *Tristano* in Toscana e gli esemplari finora conosciuti della *Tavola ritonda* e dimostra ancora una volta la complessità e la continuità della trasmissione testuale del *Tristano* in prosa in Italia.”⁹¹

At best, this short glimpse at the academic discussions surrounding the manuscripts connected to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and the closely related processes of historical transmission merely hint at the complexity of this discourse. As a result, Polidori’s creation of a critical first edition is all the more noteworthy, since we may fruitfully work with this relatively homogenous textual foundation, with Plut. 44,27 as its basis, and thereby supported by one of the oldest surviving complete manuscripts of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’⁹². With this ‘base’ of the ‘Tavola Polidori’ as a starting point, a comparison with the manuscripts which deviate from it, but are also ascribed to the historical transmission of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, may also turn out to be very worthwhile.

With this in mind, it is also necessary to address the chronological order and therefore also the estimated age of the aforementioned manuscripts. Accordingly, both the fragments 609 from Padua and 86 from Udine date back to the middle of the 14th century and have passed on a partial episode of the Grail experience in Corbenic⁹³. The fragment Maculatura 44, Nuovi Acquisti 1329 is also estimated to date back to the 14th century and contains episodes at the court of King Faramons/ Feramont(e), in particular Morholt’s/Amoroldo’s visit, who is also called

⁹⁰ Allaire 2001, p. 262.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 263.

⁹² For his critical first edition, Polidori relied as a basis on Plut. 44,27, the age of which will be addressed later on, and juxtaposes it with Magliab. II.II.68 for comparison. Due to the fact that the first eleven chapters are missing in Plut. 44,27 and also only survived in very fragmentary form in Magliab. II.II.68, he used for the novel’s beginning I.VII.13 di Siena, the only surviving source for these chapters. Cf. Polidori 1864, p. L-LVII.

⁹³ Cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 50; Punzi 1998, p. 728; Allaire 2002, p. 17.

"Amoroso d'Irlanda" there⁹⁴. Plut. 44,27 is deemed to be the oldest manuscript, going back to the second half of the 14th century. Therein, almost the entire narrative has survived, with merely the initial eleven chapters missing.⁹⁵ Magliab. II.II.68 has been set at 1391, as we have an exact date concerning its production. This relatively early manuscript was used by Polidori for his edition and was also utilised by the Accademia della Crusca in excerpts. However, from the very first pages of parchment onwards, it proves to be very incomplete, especially in regard to those manuscripts which have provided the bulk of the 'Tavola Ritonda'.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the majority of surviving manuscripts originate in the 15th century: Pal. 564 is located in this time frame, Vat. lat. 6789 has been set at 1422, the much discussed 'Tristano Palatino', Pal. 556, dates back to 1446, Plut. 43,10 to 1447 and the third manuscript used by Polidori because of its surviving early chapters, I.VII.13 di Siena, dates back to 1478⁹⁷. After that, we may locate Ricc. 2283 in the 16th century and Urb. lat. 953 somewhere on the threshold between the 16th and 17th centuries⁹⁸. Only Plut. 89, inf. 62, which Polidori had erroneously specified, goes back to the 18th century⁹⁹. Indeed, this provides us with a time period of historical transmission spanning from the 14th to the 18th century. This is proof of the continuous popularity the 'Tavola Ritonda' enjoyed over a long period of time. Moreover, it was critically edited for the first time by Polidori in the 19th century, only a hundred years after its last historical transmission in Plut. 89, inf. 62.¹⁰⁰

Pertaining to the date of creation of the 'Tavola Ritonda', there is largely a consensus within academia that it was in the second quarter of the 14th century, more specifically between 1330

⁹⁴ Cf. Allaire 2001, p. 257-277; Id. 2002, p. 15.

Gloria Allaire attempts to date it more precisely in her description of *Maculatura 44*, Nuovi Acquisti 1329 by saying: "Il *Tristano* cui apparteneva il foglio appare copiato nel tardo Trecento o nel primo Quattrocento a Firenze, a giudicare dal ductus." Allaire 2001, p. 259.

⁹⁵ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. Lff.; Branca 1968, p. 34; Heijkant 1997, p. 50; Punzi 1998, p. 727; Allaire 2002, p. 15.

⁹⁶ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. LIff.; Branca 1968, p. 32; Heijkant 1997, p. 49; Punzi 1998, p. 727; Allaire 2002, p. 15.

⁹⁷ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. LIVff. and p. LVIIff.; Branca 1968, p. 33-35 (Footnote 2 on p. 35 deserves particular attention!); Heijkant 1997, p. 49f.; Punzi 1998, p. 727f.; Allaire 2002, p. 15f. and p. 22ff.

⁹⁸ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. LVII; Branca 1968, p. 34ff.; Heijkant 1997, p. 50; Punzi 1998, p. 727f.; Allaire 2002, p. 16 and p. 24.

⁹⁹ Cf. Allaire 2002, p. 15.

For a precise linguistic localisation of the manuscripts by means of their distinctive features, see the succinct overviews provided in the sources immediately above, especially Allaire 2002, p. 15-25.

¹⁰⁰ Emanuele Trevi notes in regard to the wide range of written records and the continuous appreciation into the present of the *Tavola Ritonda*: "La *Tavola Ritonda* è un libro che *regge al tempo*, tanto da non sparire nemmeno – fatto davvero stupefacente – nel gran mare della cultura letteraria cinquecentesca, dove è ancora possibile riconoscere qualche sua importante traccia. Si tratta in primo luogo di una vera e propria 'consacrazione': finita l'epoca avventurosa dei copisti – professionali o 'per passione' – saranno gli studiosi di lingua [Note: With that especially the Accademia della Crusca is meant] a garantire il nostro testo dall'oblio, includendolo finalmente in un canone di opere in grado di rappresentare la tradizione del volgare italiano." Trevi 1999, p. 30f.

and 1335¹⁰¹. This is in part due to written records, but especially due to the numerous allusions to Dante Alighieri's 'Divina Commedia', which will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4. Older antecedents to this work cannot be ruled out, though¹⁰². Accordingly, Daniela Delcorno Branca's hypothesis, developed in 1996 and 1998, points in this direction by presupposing a forerunner phase, 'Tavola Ritonda X', and a second phase which included another set of changes, resulting in the 'Tavola Ritonda' known from Polidori's collection of manuscripts¹⁰³.

The Anonymous Author of the 'Tavola Ritonda'

As with so many medieval works, the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' remains anonymous, despite the abundance of manuscripts, of which none give his name and who is also not mentioned by his contemporaries, according to present research. Nevertheless, we can at least assume a single author for the 'Tavola Ritonda' in keeping with Polidori's edition, due to the consistently structured intrusions, the complexity and craftsmanship of the text, which will be addressed in more detail in chapter 4. In this regard, Daniela Branca notes:

“Non abbiamo la fortuna di conoscere chi sia l'autore della *Tavola Ritonda*: la grande popolarità della materia che egli seppe con tanto appassionato gusto rimaneggiare e rinnovare contribuì certo a far dimenticare il suo nome.”¹⁰⁴

The only direct statement which the author provides in the 'Tavola Ritonda' is his reference to a certain book which served as a template according to his own account:

“[...] la fontana di tutti libri e romanzi che si leggano; il quale libro fu in principio di messer Piero conte di Savoia, ritratto del primerano de' re di Francia; ed al presente, di messer Gaddo de' Lanfranchi da Pisa.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 7; Trevi 1999, p. 9.

Regarding the previous academic discussions on age determination, see Guida, Saverio: *Sulle 'fonti' della Tavola Ritonda*. In: *Umanità e storia. Scritti in onore di Adelchi Attisani*, Vol. II, Letteratura e storia. Comitato promotore: Raffaele Franchini. Napoli 1971, p. 137 footnote 12. Concerning the consensus established in modern research, cf. for a short overview Psaki 2000, p. 208 and p. 213.

For the references of the 'Tavola Ritonda' to Dante Alighieri's 'Divina Commedia' and its reminiscences, refer to: Gardner 1971, p. 153; Trevi 1999, p. 47-62.

¹⁰² Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 153f.; Stein 2001, p. 272.

¹⁰³ Cf. Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 104ff.

¹⁰⁴ Branca 1968, p. 173.

¹⁰⁵ Polidori 1864, p. 501.

In another instance, he once more comments on his cited source:

“[...] nel buono libro, cioè nella fontana di tutte l’ altre storie che della Tavola si leggono; lo quale libro si è di messer Viero di Guascogna, dello lignaggio di Carlo Magno di Francia; e il detto libro si è al presente di messer Garo, o vero Gaddo de’ Lanfranchi di Pisa.”¹⁰⁶

All in all, he references the said book nine times¹⁰⁷, which he also calls “[...] il maestro libro di tutte altre storie e leggende [...]”¹⁰⁸. For this reason, academic research has been considering for a quite a while whether a real template actually existed or if the author invented this fictitious source in order to better support and secure his narrative, a practice which was not uncommon amongst medieval writers. In an article published in 1971, Saverio Guida concisely summarised the findings on this topic, which had been established up to that point, after which he propounded his own approach:

“Il Polidori, nella prefazione alla sua edizione, identificava il testo citato dal compilatore della *Tavola Ritonda* con lo stesso *Roman de Tristan* e riteneva che «Viero di Guascogna» fosse stato il primo possessore del manoscritto del romanzo francese utilizzato dal nostro scrittore. Il Gardner avanzava l’ipotesi che la fonte ricordata dall’anonimo rifacitore fosse «le livre monseigneur Edouart, le roi d’Engleterre», il medesimo libro, cioè, da cui Rustichello da Pisa afferma d’aver ‘tradotto’ la propria opera. La Branca, infine, non trovando alcuna soluzione al non facile problema, si è posta questo interrogativo: «Saremmo per caso di fronte ad un pur espediente dell’anonimo per meglio legittimare le proprie invenzioni, usando appunto il famoso nome dei Lanfranchi di Pisa, che verosimilmente potevano possedere un libro del genere?».”¹⁰⁹

Concerning Saverio Guida’s stated personal opinion, it is notable that he was able to find quite convincing evidence pertaining to contacts to England via Guascogne and an identifiable and historically verifiable person for “Piero conte di Savoia”. However, he assumes the mysterious “libro” to be a commentary rather than an entire narrative:

“Nel XIII secolo la Guascogna fu sotto il dominio inglese e proprio alla corte di Enrico III (1216-1272), di cui era zio, dimorò per oltre un ventennio il conte Pietro di Savoia. È lecito per-

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 46, p. 57, p. 105, p. 115, p. 117, p. 431, p. 442, p. 495 and p. 501.

In regard to this, a clustering of references at the beginning and end of his *Tristan* narrative within the ‘*Tavola Ritonda*’ is noticeable. Daniela Branca adds to this: “Colpisce inoltre che questo «celebre» libro venga sempre citato a confronto di passi della *Tavola Ritonda* che si discostano in maniera decisa dalla tradizionale versione del *Tristan*.” Branca 1968, p. 173.

For further reference, see Heijkant 1997, p. 7f.; Trevi 1999, p. 11ff.

¹⁰⁸ Polidori 1864, p. 442.

¹⁰⁹ Guida 1971, p. 146.

tanto ritenere che il principe savoiaro abbia avuto modo di procurarsi, durante la sua permanenza in Inghilterra o durante i suoi viaggi in Francia e in Guascogna per incarico di Enrico III, il commento [...] composto dal nobile chierico guascone «Viero» e una volta ritornato nelle proprie terre, abbia portato con sé l'opera [...].”¹¹⁰

With Peter II., the count of Savoy, we have a thoroughly convincing link between England, France, specifically Gascogne, and Italy, due to his family ties with Henry III. of England, the grandson of Eleanor of Aquitaine, and his travels. In addition, Saverio Guida showcases a further link to the Lanfranchi, because he was able to identify Guido dei Lanfranchi Pellai as the ambassador of Pisa and who stayed multiple times at the court of Charles I. of Anjou, the nephew-in-law of Peter II. of Savoy.¹¹¹ From there, it is only a small step towards a “Gaddo de’ Lanfranchi” and Saverio Guida additionally notes:

“È presumibile che questi [Guido dei Lanfranchi Pellai] sia riuscito ad ottenere in una delle sue missioni l'erudito manuale, poi trasmesso ad un altro illustre membro della sua stessa famiglia, Gherardo (Gaddo), ricordato dal compilatore della *Tavola Ritonda* come possessore del manoscritto da lui utilizzato.”¹¹²

However, a single person has so far not been connected to this “Gaddo de’ Lanfranchi” without any doubts, although there are multiple candidates. Also, the question of whether we are dealing with a real-life or a fictitious source utilised by the author remains an open one.¹¹³ When considering the first aforementioned option, the only clue pertaining to the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ is the great likelihood of his having been in connection with Pisan social circles or at least with the Lanfranchi Pellai from Pisa. In this respect, the only option left for us to learn more of the author than his designation of ‘Anonymus’ is merely the following, as Daniela Branca indicates: “Per conoscere meglio il suo autore, oltre la vaga definizione di «anonimo toscano della prima metà del Trecento», non resta che rivolgersi alla sua opera [...]”¹¹⁴. Thereupon, Daniela Branca poses the following hypothesis:

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 150f.

¹¹¹ Cf. Ibid., p. 150ff.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 152.

¹¹³ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. CIX-CXV; Gardner 1971, p. 154; Branca 1968, p. 173ff.; Guida 1971, p. 152; Heijkant 1997, p. 7f.; Trevi 1999, p. 11ff.

A further, not insignificant connection due to the allusions in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ to Dante’s ‘Divina Commedia’ becomes apparent when following Daniela Branca’s reference to Gaddo de’ Lanfranchi Pellai, who appears in a historical source in 1319 (Cf. Branca 1968, p. 174), and connects it with the following assessment by Edmund G. Gardner: “Lines from the third and fifth cantos of the *Inferno* have been found copied in the register of a notary at Bologna in 1317.” Gardner 1971, p. 153. This remains speculative, however, due to the amount of available sources.

¹¹⁴ Branca 1968, p. 175.

“L’anonimo autore della *Tavola Ritonda* mostra una certa predilezione per gli sviluppi di tipo giuridico: tanto che, se è il caso di formulare un’ipotesi, quasi naturalmente lo immaginiamo legato a quella classe di uomini di legge cui appartennero non pochi nostri letterati del Due e Trecento.”¹¹⁵

In connection with this, she then breaks down his observable main features:

“Questa tendenza ora si rivela in rapide notazioni ed aggiunte, derivate dal consueto gusto della precisazione, ora sembra condurre ad una vera rielaborazione di interi episodi. Così alcune scene del *Tristan*, uscendo da un mondo vago e primitivo dominato dalla giustizia sommaria, vengono configurandosi quasi regolari processi.”¹¹⁶

It is indeed unmistakable that the anonymous author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ places a lot of emphasis on the concept of justice, which Tristano shares in particular. In this regard, Daniela Branca remarks:

“[È sviluppata] nella *Tavola Ritonda* essenzialmente l’antitesi tra una legge antica, di cui è campione l’Amoroldo, dominata dal diritto del più forte, e la legge di Dio difesa da Tristano e fondata sulla giustizia. Ma per farsi efficace difensore dei Cornovagliesi ingiustamente tassati, il nostro eroe ha bisogno di riceverne in qualche modo il mandato: e questo diritto-dovere gli è conferito dall’investitura cavalleresca ch’egli chiede a Marco in quell’occasione. Il motivo della connessione tra giustizia e cavalleria, che emerge chiaramente in tutto l’episodio, si rivela ben presto a chi consideri la *Tavola Ritonda* nel suo complesso, un’importante idea-guida per comprendere con quale sguardo il nostro anonimo si volgesse a considerare la società arturiana.”¹¹⁷

Furthermore, by reducing the subject matter to the essential components as far as possible, through clarifications, by identifying logical connections through backward and forward references, through comments, through excursions and short interpolations the anonymous author conspicuously, and successfully, attempts to give the text its ‘sens’ back, “[...] che in molti ro-

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 179.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

For a complementary note by Franco Cardini on this issue: see footnote 305.

manzi in prosa era andato perduto sotto il sovrappeso della *matière* [...]”¹¹⁸. He succeeds in this endeavour by changing many details and thereby dissociating himself from his source material¹¹⁹.

Source Material and the Content Structure of the 'Tavola Ritonda'

For his distinctive processing and interpretation of the 'matière de Bretagne', the anonymous author utilises a variety of source material, including the 'Tristan en prose'¹²⁰, the 'Palamédés', the 'Tristano Riccardiano', the 'Lancelot', the 'Tristan' by Thomas d'Angleterre, the 'Conte du Graal ou Perceval' by Chrétien de Troyes, the 'Trist(r)an' Bérouls, the 'Queste del Saint Graal' and the 'Mort Artu'¹²¹. Through his own opus, he influenced many well-known successors in his own right, such as the 'Orlando Innamorato' Maria Matteo Boiardos and the 'Orlando Furioso' Ludovico Ariostos¹²². Also, he is often placed in close proximity to the later Thomas Malory¹²³. Donald L. Hoffman notes in this regard:

“The *Tavola*, like Malory's *Morte Darthur*, attempts to provide a *summa* of the Arthurian cycle but chooses Tristano rather than Lancilotto as the exemplar of its ethic. While preserving the Italian textual tradition of distinguishing between the *Tavola Vecchia* ('Old Table') presided over by Uther Pendragon and Arthur's *Tavola Nuova* ('New Table'), the *Tavola* quickly dispenses with this formality to concentrate on the contrasting careers of Tristano and Lancilotto. Both Malory and the *Tavola* are concerned with Lancilotto's 'instability,' his wavering from fi-

¹¹⁸ Heijkant 1997, p. 9.

Cf. to this end: Branca 1968, p. 107-154, especially p. 123-141; Guida 1971, p. 138.

The following comment by Daniela Branca may principally serve to bolster this assessment: “Si direbbe che l'autore abbia non solo ridotto le possibilità di confusione sfrondando la materia da molte sovrastrutture narrative, ma, ad impedire ulteriori equivoci a se stesso e al lettore, l'abbia circondata di una sottile rete di riferimenti, di richiami, di anticipazioni.” Branca 1968, p. 128. One should not forget to stress the following when considering Saverio Guida's evaluation: “Dando prova di grande padronanza della materia trattata, l'autore della *Tavola Ritonda* riuscì, invero, a districarsi abilmente fra gli eterogenei testi a sua disposizione e a richiamare, avvicinare e connettere passi assai lontani tra loro per contenuto e per stile. Si può dire che egli in genere accentuò le notazioni di carattere e l'introspezione psicologica dei protagonisti della legenda e ricercò nel romanzo francese quei convenienti particolari e quelle opportune precisazioni mancanti nel *Tristano Riccardiano*; preferì, invece, accrocchiare e riassumere i troppo lunghi dialoghi che si incontrano nella versione in lingua d'oïl, conservando solo gli elementi utili al racconto, strettamente necessari all'intelligenza degli avvenimenti.” Guida 1971, p. 144f.

Short comment: Because of all these aforementioned reasons the author of this work disagrees with all those, who would call the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' merely 'compilatore'.

¹¹⁹ Cf. also the remarks made on this by Emanuele Trevi: Trevi 1999, p. 60.

¹²⁰ For the 'Tristan en prose' the following holds true: according to V I.

¹²¹ Cf. in this regard: Gardner 1971, p. 155-190; Branca 1968, p. 65f.; Hoffman 1990, p. 177; Heijkant 1997, p. 13-33 and p. 36-39; Trevi 1999, p. 9-70.

¹²² Cf. Hoffman 1990, p. 177f.; Punzi 1998, p. 728; Trevi 1999, p. 31f.

¹²³ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 156; Branca 1968, p. 66; Zambon, Francesco: *Dinadan en Italie*. In: Busby, Keith/ Dalrymple, Roger (Ed.): *Arthurian Literature XIX. Comedy in Arthurian Literature*. Cambridge 2003, p. 153.

delity to Guenevere when called to the Grail quest. Malory, however, finds this wavering the essence of his strength and profundity; the *Tavola* condemns it and finds Tristano's refusal to join the quest proof of his fidelity to Isotta and the love that defines him. For this fidelity until death [...], Tristano achieves deification of a kind at the end of the *Tavola* when the vines issuing from his grave are allegorized and symbolically associated with both the wine of Dionysos and the wine of the communion. The *Tavola* reinvests the Tristan legend with the passion of the verse redactions, a passion considerably reduced in the French prose versions."¹²⁴

However, the anonymous author masterfully inserts self-contained episodes, which can either be attributed to the Italian narrative tradition or even his own ingenuity¹²⁵. All in all, the 'Tavola Ritonda' (at least in accordance with Polidori's edition) encompasses 145 chapters and its contentual structure is, in simplified and concise terms, as follows¹²⁶: the narrative begins in chapters 1 and 2 with a portrayal of the 'Tavola Vecchia', wherein Meliadus of Leonis, Tristano's future father, already features in the storyline as an important figure and tourney participant with Uter Pandragon. In chapters 3 and 4, the ancestral history of the kings of Cornwall and Leonis, as well as their ties to the royal family of Ireland, unfolds. They will be analysed in more detail in 4.1.1.1. It is especially Meliadus who stands in the narrative focus at this point, next to his brother Marco, and subsequently becomes one of the main characters in the story. From chapter 5 onwards, the focal point leads over to King Artù and the 'Tavola Nuova', joined by Lancialotto in chapter 6. With the beginning of chapter 7, the narratives of Meliadus, Artù – including the 'Tavola Nuova' – and Lancialotto are interwoven, until these major characters finally encounter each other in chapter 9 and become kinsfolk through Elia-bella, Meliadus' bride, in chapter 10. This will also be addressed in more detail in 4.1.1.1. With Tristano's birth in chapter 12, the storyline of the actual protagonist begins and henceforth dominates the action until his death – orchestrated by his uncle Marco – which occurs alongside Isotta's in chapter 129. After the descriptions of sorrow for their loss, their elaborate funeral, the fructiferous and prospering vine tendrils which arise from their hearts; chapters 134 to 138 follow, encompassing Artù's revenge, and that of his knights of the 'Tavola Nuova' and the kings who had been on very friendly terms with Tristano, enacted upon Marco of Cornwall for the murder of his nephew. Subsequently, the decay and downfall of the

¹²⁴ Hoffman, Donald L.: *Tavola Ritonda*. In: Lacy 1991, p. 444.

¹²⁵ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 159-162, p. 164ff. and p. 174f.; Branca 1968, p. 175ff.; Heijkant 1997, p. 33-36.

¹²⁶ Please note: arabic numerals are intentionally used in the upcoming section in order to ensure a more straightforward reading experience. In the actual analysis, roman numerals are used for chapters, however, because Polidori's edition also uses them, thereby making a direct comparison easier.

In addition, proper nouns are used in accordance with the most common variant used in Polidori's edition or, if rare, in the glossary. This will be stringently applied to the discussion on the 'Tavola Ritonda', also in chapters 4 and partially 5 of this work, if it is deemed prudent. The reference to another work may involve an exception, though.

'Tavola Nuova' sets in, primarily due to the loss of Tristano, in chapter 138. As a consequence, Artù's death occurs in chapter 144 and the final downfall of the Round Table in chapter 145. It appears that the otherwise dominant Tristan narrative is only temporarily superposed by the depiction of the quest for the Holy Grail during chapters 108 through 122, but even this proves to be a 'queste' tailored specifically to the protagonist and merely interrupts it for the adventures and Grail experience of the 'chevalerie celestielle' for a brief five chapters, from 117 to 122.

With the 'caveat' of the anonymous author's individual approach and disengagement when it seems opportune and necessary to him in mind, the 'Tavola Ritonda' respectively utilises the following sources for its narrative parts: The 'Palamedés' most likely serves as the source for his depiction of the 'Tavola Vecchia' in chapters 1 and 2¹²⁷. The 'Tristan en prose' was used, "[...] with considerable variations [...]"¹²⁸, for the portrayal of the ancestral history of the kings of Cornwall and Leonis in chapter 3. Chapter 4 relies on the 'Tristano Riccardiano', as soon as Meliadus and Marco shift even more into the story's focal point¹²⁹. The 'Lancelot' is likely to be the main source for chapter 5 right up until the Ferragunze episode in chapter 10¹³⁰, although the 'Conte du Graal' most probably served as a source for certain descriptions in chapter 6¹³¹. The Ferragunze episode in chapters 10 and 11 appears to be a largely independent creation. Edmund G. Gardner was able to detect a similarity to the Middle English verse romance 'The Avowing of King Arthur, Sir Gawain, Sir Kay and Sir Baldwin of Britain'¹³². This prompted him to make the following assumption: "A common French source for the Italian 'vaunt' and the English 'avowing' seems probable, but it has not yet been traced."¹³³ By all indications, the 'Tristano Riccardiano' and the 'Tristan en prose' are the anonymous author's main sources beginning with Tristan's narrative in chapter 12 up until the protagonist's adventures in the wilderness of A(n)dernantes and his second duel with Prezzivalle in chapter 63¹³⁴. He did not use these without interruptions, however, as Edmund G. Gardner was able to identify as further sources the 'Mort Artu' for chapter 50 and Thomas' d'Angle-

¹²⁷ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 156; Branca 1968, p. 74.

¹²⁸ Gardner 1971, p. 157.

¹²⁹ Cf. Ibid.

¹³⁰ Cf. Ibid., p. 157ff.; Branca 1968, p. 74.

¹³¹ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 157; Branca 1968, p. 74 footnote 23.

¹³² Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 159ff.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 161f.

¹³⁴ Cf. Ibid., p. 162ff.; Guida 1971, p. 129-145; Branca 1980, p. 219-224; Heijkant 2005, p. 282.

Saverio Guida was already able to demonstrate in 1971 that this section not only has the 'Tristano Riccardiano' as its source but also the 'Tristan en prose'. He noted in this regard: "Inoltre, anche seguendo per lunghi tratti nella stesura del proprio lavoro la narrazione del *Tristano Riccardiano*, l'autore della *Tavola Ritonda* utilizzò sempre il *Roman de Tristan* come raffronto e sicura guida per correggere, integrare, perfezionare la redazione del precedente volgarizzamento.". Guida 1971, p. 138.

terre's 'Tristan' for the allusion to the 'Salle aux images' episode in chapter 54. In addition, the description of the 'Palagio del Grande Disio' in chapter 59 is seemingly a result of the author's own ingenuity, because no precisely determinable source has been located and Gardner has only been able to trace references of names to the 'Prophecies de Merlin'.¹³⁵ The author relies on the 'Tristan' by Thomas d'Angleterre for a continuous sequel of episodes in chapter 63 up to chapter 68, though he also uses Bérout as a secondary source, as Ernesto G. Parodi has been able to demonstrate and which was further verified by Marie-José Heijkant¹³⁶. Subsequently, the following can be said of the text passage from chapters 68 to 105: "The author now returns to the prose *Tristan*, portions of which he freely rehandles."¹³⁷ This 'free rehandling' manifests itself in the character of Dinadano, who shifts more into the foreground in chapters 73 to 78 and 93 to 94, and who is portrayed by the author as Tristano's friend, but also as a sceptic of love and chivalry. In this regard, Marie-José Heijkant notes:

"Un caro compagno è lo scettico Dinadano, creazione originale dell'autore del *Tristan en prose*, il quale proprio come l'*opponens* nella *disputatio* medievale espone i lati negativi dei costumi cavallereschi e dell'amor cortese, astenendosi però da ogni giudizio finale. Spiritosi sono i dibattiti da lui promossi, che moltiplicano oltre ai punti di vista anche gli effetti del tempo reale e della vita quotidiana, fatta più di conversazioni che di racconto. [...] Pieno di contraddizioni, l'impetuoso Dinadano è anche un personaggio molto umoristico, inesauribile fonte di divertimento per Tristano e consorti, che inventano delle beffe per mettere alla prova le sue vantorie."¹³⁸

In similar fashion, Francesco Zambon states in regard to the character of Dinadano:

"Ennemi de la grossièreté et de la force brute, Dinadan s'oppose plutôt aux excès et aux caricatures de l'idéal chevaleresque, se réclamant de la *raison* contre la folie, de la *mesure* et de l'*équilibre* contre la *démésure* qui menace l'univers arthurien et risque constamment de le détruire."¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 163f.; Branca 1968, p. 55; Heijkant 1997, p. 27 and p. 38.

¹³⁶ Cf. Parodi, Ernesto G. (Cur.): *Tristano Riccardiano*. Edito e illustrato di E. G. Parodi. Testo di lingua. Citato dagli Accademici della Crusca ed ora per la prima volta pubblicato secondo il codice della Mediceo-Laurenziana. Parte Prima: Prefazione – Testo dell'Opera. (Collezione di opere inedite o rare. Dei primi tre secoli della lingua. Di scrittori italiani dal XIII al XVI secolo. Pubblicata per cura della R. Commissione pe' testi di lingua nelle provincie dell'Emilia. Diretta da Giosuè Carducci). Bologna 1896, p. LXXXIV-CIV; Gardner 1971, p. 164f.; Branca 1968, p. 69 footnote 13, p. 74, p. 98 footnote 72; p. 126 footnote 48 and p. 132 footnote 59; Heijkant 1997, p. 21-25; Heijkant 2005, p. 282.

¹³⁷ Gardner 1971, p. 166.

¹³⁸ Heijkant 1997, p. 16f.

¹³⁹ Zambon 2003, p. 154.

In an extension of his interpretation, he then adds: “La conviction fondamentale de Dinadan est en effet que l’amour excessif, la folle amour, conduit inéluctablement à la souffrance et à la mort [...]”¹⁴⁰. Predominantly in agreement with Marie-José Heijkant’s perception of the figure of Dinadano, Edmund G. Gardner already saw this well beforehand:

“The Italian writer takes a special delight in the humours of Dinadan, ‘il savio disamorato’; the scene of the debate between him and his companions on the subject of love is excellent, and there is a comic episode, in which he is dismayed by a damsel who pretends to be enamoured of him, which is in the spirit of Boccaccio and evidently a fresh invention (lxxiii-lxxv).”¹⁴¹

There are several more examples for his free approach to his main source, the ‘Tristan en prose’, in the narrative passage of chapters 68 to 105, such as, to name just one amongst many, the Gaia Pulcella, who arises solely from Italian narrative tradition and at least in part from the author’s own ingenuity¹⁴². Following this, one may principally affirm in regard to the next episodes in chapter 105 until the beginning of the quest for the Holy Grail in chapter 108: “The text now leaves the *Tristan* and introduces episodes from unknown sources.”¹⁴³ In this manner, the author weaves an encounter between Tristano and a knight of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ into chapter 105, and also into further episodes as shall be discussed in more detail in 4.2. Edmund G. Gardner summarily remarks in this regard:

“It is impossible to reconcile this version of Segurant’s end with what we learn of him in the Palamède and the Prophecies de Merlin, and it would seem that the writer invented the episode in order to represent the best knight of the Old Table finding at last his match in Tristan.”¹⁴⁴

In the immediate aftermath, the author incorporates the special episode concerning the enchanted pavilion of the Dama del Lago from the end of chapter 105 onwards until the beginning of chapter 108, which most likely is completely ascribable to the author’s own ingenuity,

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 155.

Concerning the notion of the ‘folle amore’, particularly in regard to the ‘liale amore’, in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ cf. also the following analysis in 4.1.3.1 and 4.1.3.3.1.

¹⁴¹ Gardner 1971, p. 166.

¹⁴² Cf. Ibid., p. 167; Branca 1968, p. 75; Heijkant 1997, p.33f.

Noteworthy is also Marie-José Heijkant’s remark concerning the Gaia Pulcella’s mother, the Fata Morgana: “Il testo italiano [= La Tavola Ritonda] fa confessare a Morgana che immune alle sue lusinghe è proprio Tristano, altro indizio della rivalutazione positiva del filtro amoroso.” Heijkant 1997, p. 34.

Addendum: Marie-José Heijkant was even able to demonstrate that the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ was influenced by Chrétien de Troyes’ ‘Cligès’ in regard to the great tourney of Verzepe in chapters 95 through 100: Cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 18f.

¹⁴³ Gardner 1971, p. 174.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

although he may have especially been inspired by the Breton Lais and possibly Chrétien's 'Cligès'¹⁴⁵. Beginning with chapter 108, the search for the Holy Grail is introduced, for which the 'Queste del Saint Graal' presumably served as the source¹⁴⁶. Marie-José Heijkant notes in this regard:

“[...] per la quale [l'Inchiesta del Graal] l'anonimo toscano ha attinto direttamente alla *Queste del Saint Graal*, attribuita a Gautier Map. Non ha voluto basarsi sulla *Queste* inserita nel *Tristan en prose* che, sia nella forma sommaria di VI che in quella completa di VII, presenta l'influsso della *Post-Vulgate Queste del Saint Graal*, attribuita a Roberto di Boron. Probabilmente non gli piaceva la trasformazione che l'Alta Impresa vi ha subito. Banalizzata dalla continua alternanza con il materiale tristaniano laico e ridotta a ulteriore *errance* - i 108 partecipanti sono tutti chiamati per nome - vi è considerata soprattutto come un avvenimento negativo e maledetto, poiché rende possibile il rapimento di Isotta da parte di Marco e la morte degli amanti, disgrazie situate nel quadro dell'Inchiesta. Nella *Tavola Ritonda* questa lettura mondana viene rifiutata e il Graal è rivalutato nel suo originale significato mistico-religioso. Attraverso un'abile rielaborazione della fonte Tristano viene subito inserito nella nuova atmosfera spirituale, senza che egli perda la sua alta posizione nella gerarchia arturiana. L'eroe è presente alla corte sin dall'inizio, quando arriva il cavaliere eletto, il cui nome viene solennemente rivelato da una voce del cielo e non dall'iscrizione sul seggio pericoloso.”¹⁴⁷

The following is applicable to the entire search for the Grail in chapters 108 to 122, in Edmund G. Gardner's words: “It is naturally a 'Tristan form' of the Grail story that we are given [...]”¹⁴⁸. This special search for the Grail, which is tailored to Tristano in particular, will be discussed in more detail in 4.1.2.3.6. With the end of the 'queste', from chapter 122 onwards, the author once more turns towards the 'Tristan en prose' as his main source for the next narrative section, which leads up and includes Tristano's death. In this regard, Edmund G. Gardner accordingly notes:

“The quest of the Grail having been achieved, our text turns to the end of the story of Tristan—the portion omitted by Malory. It corresponds with sections of the prose Tristan, but with welcome omission of adventitious matter, and with modifications and motives that heighten the dramatic effect.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 175; Branca 1968, p. 76f.; Heijkant 1997, p. 33-36.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 175-181; Branca 1968, p. 74 and p. 77; Heijkant 1997, p. 28-31.

¹⁴⁷ Heijkant 1997, p. 28.

¹⁴⁸ Gardner 1971, p. 175.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 181.

The author also makes a backward reference with his treatment of the weapon with which Tristano is mortally wounded by his uncle in chapter 127. Previously, in an episode in chapter 80, the Fata Morgana had sworn vengeance upon Tristano for his killing of her lover, Onesun, and had created a short spear from the fatal lance, to be used in turn on Tristano himself. After having been sent to the court of Cornwall, it finally fulfils its function. On this point, Marie-José Heijkant remarks:

“Unica è Morgana come personificazione della cupa fatalità del destino di Tristano, perché preannuncia sia l’amore che la morte dell’eroe per mezzo delle icone degli amanti sullo scudo spaccato e l’epitaffio sulla tomba di Huneson.”¹⁵⁰

Once more, a detailed analysis of this passage reveals the author’s proclivity towards a free interpretation of his sources, for which the episode involving the young lady Rima being rescued from the snake before Tristano’s return to Cornwall in chapter 126 may well be seen as emblematic¹⁵¹. From chapters 134 to 138, after Tristano’s and Isotta’s death, in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ then follows the revenge campaign against Marco for the murder of his nephew by Artù, the knights of the Round Table and the kings who had been friendly with Tristano, and which is presumed to be based on the author’s ingenuity alone¹⁵². Daniela Delcorno Branca writes in this regard:

“La *Tavola Ritonda* fornisce una versione, probabilmente dovuta al suo autore, dove la fine di Marco si carica di toni comico-realistici ed è comunque quella di un vigliacco, contrariamente alla *Vendetta* in ottave [= il cantare] che lo fa morire in battaglia per mano di Lancilotto, sconosciuto ai suoi nemici, nel disperato tentativo di difendere il suo regno. Assai simile a quello del cantare è il racconto del *Tristano Veneto* [...]”¹⁵³

This is also confirmed by Marie-José Heijkant, who insightfully states:

“Mentre il ms. Parigi, B.N. fr. 24400 fa menzione di un tentativo di vendetta di Dinadano, del resto fallito, e il *Tristano Veneto* e il *Cantare della vendetta per la morte di Tristano* attribuiscono l’iniziativa a Lancillotto, nella *Tavola Ritonda* l’intera *societas* arturiana si muove per vendicare la perdita dell’illustre membro, conforme alle usanze medievali di ripagare il danno recato al lignaggio o al *compagnonnage* in base alla legge del taglione.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Heijkant 1997, p. 33.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Branca 1968, p. 61 and directly in Polidori’s edition: Polidori 1864, p. 493 (chapter CXXVI).

¹⁵² Cf. Branca 1968, p. 61; Heijkant 1997, p. 19f.

¹⁵³ Branca 1971, p. 298.

¹⁵⁴ Heijkant 1997, p. 19f.

Principally, it becomes clear that, although the anonymous author adeptly utilises several sources, mainly the ‘Tristan en prose’ and the ‘Tristano Riccardiano’, for his general orientation in large parts of the story, he also purposefully dares to deviate from them at any time in order to shape the narrative in an individualistic manner. For the last section from chapters 138 to 145, the ‘Mort Artu’ probably is the main source for the downfall of Artù and his knights of the ‘Tavola Nuova’¹⁵⁵. In this regard, Marie-José Heijkant notes:

“Il racconto segue le vicende principali dell’ultima parte della *Mort Artu* in modo tale da far nascere la catastrofe unicamente dai mutui scontri fra i cavalieri della Tavola Rotonda [...]. Come nella *Mort Artù* e nel *Tristan en prose*, il carattere del nipote di Artù peggiora per il suo ossessionante spirito di vendetta [...].”¹⁵⁶

In this manner, the author closes with an epilogue, which begins with the words: “E qui pone fine il nostro libro e a tutte storie e cavallerie ed avventure e battaglie e torneamenti che fatte furono per li cavalieri erranti.”¹⁵⁷.

2 Research Overview

As briefly mentioned before, a first critical edition of ‘La Tavola Ritonda’ was published in 1864. It was created by Filippo-Luigi Polidori and additionally equipped with a comprehensive introduction by him. Within, he extensively described three manuscripts which he had primarily used, after careful consideration, for his edition, and added his rationale for these sources taking preference over others. As already stated in the last chapter, the selected manuscripts are 44,27 of the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, Magliab. II.II.68 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, both in Florence, and I.VII.13 of the Biblioteca Comunale degli Intronati in Siena. Polidori summarised his decision concerning these three manuscripts as follows: “Sono questi i Manoscritti al vero archetipo più somiglianti, di cui credemmo necessario e insieme sufficiente il valerci per la nostra edizione.”¹⁵⁸. However, he also specifically explained the reason for not wanting to use two further sources, Ricc. 2283 and Pal. 564, for his edition.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 187-190; Branca 1968, p. 61 and p. 74; Heijkant 1997, p. 31ff.

¹⁵⁶ Heijkant 1997, p. 31f.

¹⁵⁷ Polidori 1864, p. 544 (chapter CXXXXV).

¹⁵⁸ Polidori 1864, p. LVIf.

He then added a brief characterisation of the, until that time unpublished, ‘Tristano Riccardiano’, the ‘Tristano Panciatichiano’ and the manuscripts Plut. 89, inf. 62, which he erroneously listed as Plut. 89, inf. 69 and as pertaining to the ‘Tristano Panciatichiano’ instead of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’.¹⁵⁹ In addition to his text edition, Polidori also published a second, supplementary volume in 1865, including an extensive lexicographical glossary and an index of names, together with a list of themes including excerpts from the text and short explanations, which has proven helpful for scholars until this day. Furthermore, he also added an excerpt from the ‘Tristano Riccardiano’, from the ‘Tristano Panciatichiano’, from the manuscript Pal. 564 which he had discarded for his text edition, from the manuscript Pal. 556, from the manuscript he calls Plut. 78,23 of the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana, and from the manuscript entitled Ambrosiano N.95.¹⁶⁰ Although research has since then unearthed a larger amount of manuscripts which are ascribed to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Filippo-Luigi Polidori’s foundational first edition has so far not lost importance. Instead, an additional new edition is being sought after, one that can consider the newly-gained research findings in regard to the manuscripts and can competently evaluate them. A hypothesis resulting from this is the future possibility of having to differentiate between an ‘Edition Polidori’, as it is currently called, and an ‘Edition Tavola Ritonda X’; though this is merely as an aside.¹⁶¹

Still in the 19th century, 1896 to be exact, a further Italian Tristan text was edited by Ernesto G. Parodi: The ‘Tristano Riccardiano’. Herein, Ernesto G. Parodi specifically responded to Polidori’s edition of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and in accordance with this saw the manuscript Pal. 556, which is sometimes also referred to as ‘Tristano Palatino’ in academic circles, as a special version of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’.¹⁶²

After a comparative 34-year lull in research on the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Edmund G. Gardner provided new impulses with a monography entitled ‘The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature’,

¹⁵⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. VII-CXVII for the complete introduction and the manuscripts in particular, as well as Filippo-Luigi Polidori’s findings, classification and edition’s principle: *Ibid.*, p. L-LXIX. Concerning this, see also Daniela Branca’s and Gloria Allaire’s studies: Branca 1968, p. 29f.; Allaire 2002, p. 13-25.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. for this Polidori, Filippo-Luigi (Cur.): *La Tavola Ritonda o L’Istoria di Tristano*. Per cura e con illustrazioni di Filippo-Luigi Polidori. Testo di lingua. Citato dagli Accademici della Crusca ed ora per la prima volta pubblicato secondo il codice della Mediceo-Laurenziana. Parte Seconda: Illustrazioni. (Collezione di opere inedite o rare. Dei primi tre secoli della lingua. Pubblicata per cura della R. Commissione pe’ testi di lingua nelle provincie dell’Emilia). Bologna 1865 and further Branca 1968, p. 29f.; Allaire 2002, p. 13-25. Cf. for the lexicographical glossary also Marie-José Heijkant, who assesses this as “[...] un ampio spoglio lessicografico, che include osservazioni di tipo linguistico.” Heijkant 1997, p. 50.

¹⁶¹ Cf.: Heijkant 1997, p. 40 footnote 1 and p. 49ff.; Trevi 1999, p. 88; Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 99-104; Allaire 2001, p. 257-277; Allaire 2002, p. 13-25.

¹⁶² Cf. Parodi 1896, p. LXV-CVIII.

This evaluation concerning the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ in Ernesto Giacomo Parodi’s introduction to ‘Tristano Riccardiano’ is assessed by Marie-José Heijkant as follows: “Interessanti osservazioni a proposito degli elementi particolari della Tavola Ritonda si trovano nell’introduzione di E. G. Parodi al Tristano Riccardiano [...]”. Heijkant 1997, p. 50. Cf. also: Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 100f.

which to this day is viewed as a significant contribution and serves as a basis for further endeavours, in 1930. In 1998, Daniela Delcorno Branca still noted in regard to his work:

“Chiunque si sia occupato di letteratura arturiana in Italia ha adoperato un libro dalla rigida copertina blu, di inconfondibile stile anglosassone anni Trenta: Edmund G. Gardner, *The Arthurian Legend in Italian Literature*. Questo volume ha costituito un punto di partenza imprescindibile per moltissime ricerche, e ancora adesso presenta suggerimenti che attendono ulteriori sviluppi. Sobrio e preciso nell’informazione, con belle e appropriate illustrazioni, raccoglieva quanto di meglio era stato scritto fino allora sull’argomento. [...] Eppure questo antiquato, ma funzionale, volume di settant’anni fa conferma che «poca favilla gran fiamma seconda».”¹⁶³

In 2006, Christopher Kleinhenz evaluated his contribution in a similar manner by stating:

“In his magisterial work, [...], Edmund G. Gardner provided an extensive survey with textual and visual examples of the subject from the late twelfth century through the Renaissance (Boiardo and Ariosto) up to Leopardi, Carducci and a couple of early twentieth-century playwrights [...]. Fully two-thirds of the volume are devoted to medieval manifestations of the Arthurian legends. In many ways, despite its age Gardner’s work remains a valid starting point for students and scholars interested in gaining both a general and a specific understanding of the many aspects of these themes and their appearances in a variety of works of Italian literature.”¹⁶⁴

Nevertheless, one should note F. Regina Psaki’s justified claim from the year 2000:

“A new study needs to be written on the entire corpus of Italian romance, [...]. The last such survey, Edmund Gardner’s 1930 work *The Arthurian Tradition in Italian Literature*, urgently needs updating.”¹⁶⁵

Although there are by now a multitude of overviews on medieval Arthurian literature, especially in the English-speaking world, there is still no solid study solely on Italian Arthurian literature or the ‘*matière de Bretagne*’ in Italy, which could update and partially replace Edmund G. Gardner’s contribution. On the one hand, this would require a qualified incorporation of contemporary research findings. On the other hand, it would also need a balanced eva-

¹⁶³ Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ Kleinhenz, Christopher: Italian Arthurian Literature. In: Lacy J. Norris (Ed.): *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*. (Arthurian Studies LXXV. General editor: Norris J. Lacy). Cambridge 2006, p. 194.

¹⁶⁵ Psaki 2000, p. 206.

uation between the so called classics, such as 'Tre corone', and the remaining important Arthurian literature in the Italian-speaking world, as well as connecting it to other European Arthurian and Tristan literature and their inter-connected relations. So far, this unfortunately remains a mere wish and quite a substantial task for academia, not least because a consensus still needs to be reached on many highly disputed topics in this field before this endeavour can succeed.

With less focus on the 'Tavola Ritonda' and more on Arthurian themes in Italian literature from the 13th until the 16th century in general, one should mention Antonio Viscardi, who published his article entitled 'Arthurian Influences on Italian Literature from 1220 to 1500' in the fruitful volume 'Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages' with Roger Sherman Loomis as its editor in 1959¹⁶⁶.

Specifically in regard to research on the 'Tavola Ritonda', almost 40 years lay in between Edmund G. Gardner's momentary impulse and Daniela Branca's groundbreaking study: in 1968, her 'I romanzi italiani di Tristano e La Tavola Ritonda' was published, an extensive study which remains useful for researchers to this day. Herein, she provides a conducive overview of the subject matter and then focusses on the 'Tavola Ritonda' in the next three parts. First, she investigates its structure and narrative action situated between tradition and creation, then its narrative techniques and the literary consciousness it reveals, and subsequently potential textual references, which could point toward a historical socio-cultural context.¹⁶⁷ In this regard, Marie-José Heijkant appraised Daniela Branca's foundational contribution in 1997 and noted:

"Fondamentale è il volume citato di D. Branca, che offre un ampio quadro della tradizione tristaniana in Italia e fornisce un'analisi articolata della *Tavola Ritonda*, inquadrandola nella società Toscana della prima metà del XIV secolo."¹⁶⁸

In 1971, only three years after Daniela Branca had provided the field with a new academic stimulus, Saverio Guida published his essay 'Sulle ›fonti‹ della *Tavola Ritonda*' and critically observed in regard to the research situation up to that point, as well as Daniela Branca's fresh impulse:

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Viscardi, Antonio: Arthurian Influences on Italian Literature from 1200 to 1500. In: Loomis, Roger Sherman (Ed.): Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages. A collaborative history. Oxford 1959, p. 419-429.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. Branca 1968.

For a concise evaluation of Daniela Delcorno Branca's academic efforts, see Kleinhenz 2006, p. 195.

¹⁶⁸ Heijkant 1997, p. 51.

“Nel generale interesse manifestato dalla moderna filologia per le opere del [...] Trecento, la *Tavola Ritonda* [...] non ha ottenuto, per singolari circostanze, quel favore e quell’ampiezza di indagini di cui sarebbe stata meritevole. Solo di recente è apparso un pregevole saggio di D. Branca che offrendo un’equilibrata valutazione artistica del romanzo, ha richiamato su di esso l’attenzione degli studiosi [...]”¹⁶⁹

Equally, Christopher Kleinhenz had little alternative in 1975, four years later, but to say the following concerning the research situation at the time: “Many critics state that there is still much work to be done in this area, but few have undertaken it.”¹⁷⁰

It took another four years until Mario Eusebi published his detailed essay ‘Reliquie del *Tristano* di Thomas nella *Tavola Ritonda*’ in 1979 and thereby directed a little more academic attention toward this topic¹⁷¹. Moreover, Daniela Delcorno Branca was conducive in ensuring that the subject matter did not slip all too much into obscurity since the publication of her first study on the ‘*Tavola Ritonda*’¹⁷².

Anne Shaver’s translation of the ‘*Tavola Ritonda*’, entitled ‘*Tristan and the Round Table*’, based on Polidori’s edition and published in 1983, also proved to be predominantly advantageous, because it made the text more accessible to other researchers worldwide¹⁷³. One point of criticism, however, is the fact that the translation is not directly juxtaposed with Polidori’s original textual edition, a practice we are otherwise accustomed to in other, newly published translations of Italian Tristan versions¹⁷⁴.

Six years later, Marie-José Heijkant – who has presently become a recognised authority on the subject in her own right – was able to provide a further academic stimulus with her decisive study ‘*La tradizione del ‘Tristan’ in prosa in Italia e proposte di studio sul ‘Tristano Riccardiano’*’ in 1989. Therein, she predominantly delves into the dissemination of the, shorter, version

¹⁶⁹ Guida 1971, p. 129.

¹⁷⁰ Kleinhenz, Christopher: *Tristan in Italy: The Death or Rebirth of a Legend*. In: *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 5 (1975), p. 145.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Eusebi, Mario: *Reliquie del Tristano di Thomas nella Tavola Ritonda*. In: *Cultura Neolatina*, 39 (1979), p. 39-62.

In regard to Mario Eusebi’s essay, Marie-José Heijkant summarily notes: “Del brano compatto degli episodi presi dalla versione metrica sono analizzate le varianti nei manoscritti della *Tavola Ritonda* [...]”. Heijkant 1997, p. 51.

¹⁷² In connection with this assessment, see the following monographies and essays: Delcorno Branca 1971; Id. 1973; Id. 1974; Id. 1980, p. 211-229. For further information, see Christopher Kleinhenz’s bibliographical compilation: Kleinhenz 2006, p. 190-197.

¹⁷³ Cf. Shaver, Anne: *Tristan and the Round Table. A translation of La Tavola Ritonda. With introduction and notes by Anne Shaver. Editorial assistance by Annette Cash. Illustrations by Catherine M. Hiller. (Medieval & Renaissance texts & studies, Volume 28)*. Binghampton/ New York 1983.

¹⁷⁴ For examples of well-crafted editions of translation with a juxtaposition of the critical text edition in the original language and the translation into a foreign language for Italian Tristan versions, see: Allaire 2002; Psaki, F. Regina (Ed.): *Italian Literature Volume II. Tristano Riccardiano*. Volume Editor: F. Regina Psaki. (Arthurian Archives XII. General Editor: Norris J. Lacy). Cambridge 2006.

I of the 'Tristan en prose' in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, as well as the Italian reworkings based on it. She paid particular attention to the 'Tristano Riccardiano', though she did not leave the 'Tavola Ritonda' out of consideration.¹⁷⁵

Indeed, there was still room for, partially justified, criticism concerning the academic interest at the time, which tended to be focussed on other areas, and therefore also the state of research itself, as Donald L. Hoffman correspondingly noted in his essay 'The Arthurian Tradition in Italy' in 1990: "The most remarkable fact of the history of Italian Arthurian literature is how neglected it is."¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, a promising change in the academic developments was already in view, so that Donald L. Hoffman added in this regard: "The climate of neglect is beginning to change, however [...]"¹⁷⁷.

Subsequently, the 1990s really did see an upsurge and an increased concentration in this subject area. Thus, two new editions of the 'Tavola Ritonda' were published in short order, both of which used Filippo-Luigi Polidori's critical edition as their foundation but brought it up to date in accordance with the newest research and annotated it with comments and bibliographies: 'La Tavola Ritonda' was published in 1997, with Marie-José Heijkant as its editor, and 'Tavola Ritonda' followed in 1999, with Emanuele Trevi as editor.¹⁷⁸ Also, the 'Tristano Riccardiano' was published in new editions, in 1990 by Antonio Scolari and 1991 by Marie-José Heijkant¹⁷⁹. In accordance with popular demand, the first complete edition of the 'Tristano Veneto' was published by Aulo Donadello in 1994¹⁸⁰. Increasingly, articles and essays joined these editions in the academic field. To name only a few from an extensive selection, Marie-José Heijkant, Daniela Delcorno Branca, Joan Tasker Grimbert, Cecilia Pietropoli and Fabri-

¹⁷⁵ Cf. Heijkant 1989.

¹⁷⁶ Hoffman 1990, p. 180.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 181.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Heijkant 1997 and Trevi 1999.

For the assessment of this new edition, cf.: Kleinhenz 2006, p. 192.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. Scolari 1990; Heijkant 1991.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Donadello 1994.

zio Cigni were among them.¹⁸¹ Moreover, the ‘New Arthurian Encyclopedia’, abbreviated as NAE, was published for the first time in 1991, and has since provided a concise and fundamental source of information. It acts as a reference work for all important themes connected to the ‘*matière de Bretagne*’, although an updated new edition would not perhaps be unjustified considering that its second edition was published in 1996¹⁸². In 1995, ‘Tristan and Isolde. A casebook’ was added, edited by Joan Tasker Grimbert, with several conducive contributions to research on Tristan, including an article by Donald L. Hoffman on the ‘Tavola Ritonda’¹⁸³. Furthermore, another accomplished study by Daniela Delcorno Branca appeared in 1998, entitled ‘Tristano e Lancillotto in Italia’, in which she predominantly compared these two outstanding knights, who were highly esteemed in medieval and early modern times, in accordance with literary tradition. She devoted one section of her study to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’.¹⁸⁴ Due to this positive development, Christopher Kleinhenz was able to say the following about the research situation in his article ‘Italy’ in 1996, thereby partially revising his judgment from 1975:

“At one time, with the exception of the work done on Dante, much of the modern criticism on Arthurian material in Italy remained either at a broad descriptive and informative level or at a very technical, philological one. This was to be expected, given the lack of general critical awareness of Italian Arthurian literature, even among Italian specialists. In more recent years, however, the scholarly pace in Italian Arthuriana has increased, although it has not, nor will it perhaps ever, come close to approximating that produced in France or England. One promising sign of the increased interest in this area is that several theses and doctoral dissertations have been or are being written on these subjects in Italy and North America.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Cf. Heijkant, Marie-José: Iseut aux Blanchés Mains dans le *Tristano Riccardiano*. Le motif de *l’homme entre deux femmes* et le motif de la *femme abandonnée*. In: *Tristania*, 16 (1995), p. 63-76; Heijkant, Marie-José: «E’ ti saluto con amore». Messaggi amorosi epistolari nella letteratura arturiana in Italia. In: *Medioevo romanzo*, 23 (1999), p. 277-298; Heijkant, Marie-José: The Role of the Father of Iseut in the Italian Versions of the Prose Tristan. Translation: Thea Summerfield. In: *Tristania*, 20 (2000), p. 31-40; Delcorno Branca 1996; Grimbert, Joan Tasker: Translating Tristan-love from the Prose Tristan to the Tavola Ritonda. In: *Romance languages annual*, 6 (1994), p. 92-97; Pietropoli, Cecilia: Le peregrinazioni di un mito. Interpretazioni e riscritture tardo medievali della vicenda di Tristano e Isotta. In: Sertoli, Giuseppe/ Miglietta, Goffredo (Cur.): *Transiti letterari e culturali*, Volume 1. (Atti del XVIII Convegno AIA. Anglistica e...: metodi e percorsi comparatistica nelle lingue, culture e letterature di origine europea. Genova, 30 settembre – 2 ottobre 1996). Trieste 1999, p. 129-140; Cigni, Fabrizio: Un nuovo testimone del cantare *Ultime Imprese e Morte di Tristano*. In: *Studi Mediolatini e Volgari*, 43 (1997), p. 131-191. Apologies to the many distinguished researchers who could not be specially mentioned at this point in this fairly short selection. For this reason, see the more detailed information in the works of Marie-José Heijkant, Emanuele Trevi and Christopher Kleinhenz: Heijkant 1997; Trevi 1999; Kleinhenz 2006, p. 192-197.

¹⁸² Cf. Lacy 1991.

¹⁸³ Cf. Grimbert 1995.

¹⁸⁴ Cf. Delcorno Branca 1998.

¹⁸⁵ Kleinhenz, Christopher: Italy. In: Lacy, Norris J. (Ed.): *Medieval Arthurian Literature. A guide to recent research*. (Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, Volume 1955). New York/ London 1996, p. 332.

Subsequently, he highlighted three particularly worthwhile areas of potential future research. In view of the future, he concludes by pointing out the following: “All in all, the field of Arthurian studies in Italy has made great strides forward in the past two decades and offers many possibilities for future research.”¹⁸⁶.

Fortunately, the new decade and the year 2000 did not see a standstill in developments, since the subject matter saw a continuous string of publications. For instance, F. Regina Psaki published in the ‘Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance’ in 2000 her all in all conducive contribution ‘Chivalry and medieval Italian romance’: even therein, though, the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ did not quite receive the literary-historical attention it deserved, specifically as a highly complex and self-sufficient, cyclical Arthurian and Tristan novel in comparison to other Italian Tristan versions¹⁸⁷. This publication was followed by Gloria Allaire’s remarkable article ‘Un nuovo frammento del Tristano in prosa’ in 2001¹⁸⁸. Marie-José Heijkant added her study ‘La mésaventure érotique de Burletta della Diserta et le motif de la pucelle esforcée dans la *Tavola Ritonda*’ in 2002¹⁸⁹. These were joined by Francesco Zambon’s article on ‘Dinadan en Italie’ in 2003¹⁹⁰. In 2005, Joan Tasker Grimbert contributed ‘*Changing the Equation: The Impact of Tristan-Love on Arthur’s Court in the Prose Tristan and La Tavola Ritonda*’¹⁹¹. Marie-José Heijkant’s article ‘Tristano in prospettiva europea. A proposito di un recente volume’ was published in the same year¹⁹². The newest research overview on Italian Arthurian literature was presented in Christopher Kleinhenz’s ‘Italian Arthurian Literature’ in 2006¹⁹³. With a focus on the ‘Tristano Veneto’, Patrizia Mazzadi published her article ‘Jenseits des Höfischen: der Artushof im Tristano veneto’ in 2010¹⁹⁴. In addition to these studies, the editions and English translations of Gloria Allaire’s ‘Tristano panciatichiano’ and F. Regina Psaki’s ‘Tristano Riccardiano’ came out in 2002 and 2006, respectively. Consequently, these Italian Tristan versions were made more accessible to the international academic community, in combination with the possibility of being able, with the respective knowledge, to compare the

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 333.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Psaki 2000.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Allaire 2001.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Heijkant, Marie-José: La mésaventure érotique de Burletta della Diserta et le motif de la pucelle esforcée dans la *Tavola Ritonda*. In: Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, 118 (2002), Heft 2, p. 182-194.

¹⁹⁰ Cf. Zambon 2003, p. 153-163.

¹⁹¹ Cf. Grimbert, Joan Tasker: *Changing the Equation: The Impact of Tristan-Love on Arthur’s Court in the Prose Tristan and La Tavola Ritonda*. In: Lacy, Norris J. (Ed.): The Fortunes of King Arthur. (Arthurian Studies, Volume LXIV). General Editor: Norris J. Lacy). Cambridge 2005, p. 104-115.

¹⁹² Cf. Heijkant 2005, p. 272-286.

¹⁹³ Cf. Kleinhenz 2006.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. Mazzadi, Patrizia: Jenseits des Höfischen: der Artushof im Tristano veneto. In: Däumer, Matthias/ Dietl, Cora/ Wolfzettel, Friedrich (Ed.): Artushof und Artusliteratur. (Schriften der Internationalen Artusgesellschaft. Sektion Deutschland/ Österreich, Band 7. Ed. by Cora Dietl et al.). Berlin/ New York 2010, p. 309-324.

translation with the original edition.¹⁹⁵ Gloria Allaire's list and compilation of manuscripts possessed, copied or embellished by Italians in her introduction has proven to be extremely useful and deserves a commendation.¹⁹⁶ Thereby, she accommodated parts of Christopher Kleinhenz's criticism of academic endeavours in the field from 1996 and noted in this regard in her introduction:

“Italian libraries and archives are indeed rich with material awaiting rediscovery and proper identification, and the bibliography at the end of this volume demonstrates the already fruitful efforts of scholarship in that direction. In partial answer to his [Christopher Kleinhenz'] call for an inventory, the list of manuscripts that I have assembled for this volume summarizes many recent discoveries of fragments and pastedowns as well as previously known exemplars of Arthurian texts in French that can now be identified as having been produced, illuminated or owned by Italians. Only when such written evidence is arrayed alongside the secondary evidence noted above can one begin to realize the vast importance of this literature, its wide circulation, avid readership, and deep penetration into medieval and early Renaissance Italian culture.”¹⁹⁷

Thus, almost all academics who have grappled with this subject matter for some time have highlighted the fact that there are still large areas of research waiting to be investigated and how, once fully explored, profitable it would be for the entire European research on Arthurian and Tristan literature. Unfortunately, one cannot help but notice a slight decrease in research efforts in this area since 2006, despite a considerable need for it. In addition, there are probably two reasons why there is still no acceptable classification of some important Italian works in this field and their significance within literary history.¹⁹⁸: For one, international research is hampered by a comparative lack of translations and, on the other hand, by an overreliance on older assessments instead of attempting to come to one's own, thorough conclusions. One may say, therefore, that academia has made some considerable headway in regard to the 'matière de Bretagne' in Italy after a long 'start-up phase', though this is by far not enough. To summarise, the following can be said when assessing the research situation, in Christopher Kleinhenz's words from 2006, and which still is valid today:

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Allaire 2002; Psaki 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Allaire 2002, p. 13-25.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Emanuele Trevi's assessment in his introduction to a new edition of his work regarding the 'Tavola Ritonda': “Di questa impresa collettiva, di cui si fornirà qualche lineamento, il testo che pubblichiamo è la punta di diamante, sia dal punto di vista della tecnica narrativa, sia da quelli della complessità intellettuale e dell'energia fantastica. Se il nostro Anonimo non può pretendere al titolo di 'Malory toscano' [personal note: under closer scrutiny and detailed analysis, one is not so sure whether this is not the case after all], è comunque uno scrittore degno di ogni attenzione, il cui profilo merita più considerazione di quella che fino ad oggi gli hanno riservato le storie letterarie.”. Trevi 1999, p. 11.

“If Arthurian scholarship in Italy has not been as extensive or as ‘literarily-oriented’ as that in France or England, this is, at least in part, a reflection of the fact that there are fewer texts to work with [One should note, however, Gloria Allaire’s assessment in this regard!], and of these not all have been edited. The important philological work first done in the nineteenth century is only now being reviewed, updated, corrected and expanded upon, and thus the corpus of literary works for which we now possess reliable editions is growing. However, more should be done in this area. Another consideration is that the prevailing scholarly opinion for many years was that the Italian works were almost exclusively derivative from the French tradition; and therefore, either there was little point in dealing with it, or whatever commentary was necessary had already been done. In other words, benign neglect has characterized much of the attitude toward Arthurian literary works in Italy. In the past thirty years, however, these texts have been increasingly appreciated by scholars for their distinctive features and substantive additions to the tradition. This increased critical awareness has been, in large part, the direct result of the greater availability of texts and the more philologically sophisticated ways in which scholars have viewed the process of textual transmission. Much has been accomplished over the past hundred and forty years of scholarship on Arthurian literature in Italy, and more, much more remains to be done.”¹⁹⁹

One can only agree with this prompt and this wish, in order to achieve even more progress in European and International Arthurian and Tristan research. In this regard, it is also essential to point out the necessity of tapping Ibero-Roman works and accordingly to make a request for (new) critical editions including an English translation, so that there are no more notable links of investigation missing in Europe for international research concerning the ‘*matière de Bretagne*’, and thereby not slowing down progress²⁰⁰.

First, though, the next chapter will briefly present a further contemporary area of research, which has proven to be very productive and which, as this study hopefully shows, may be connected to Arthurian and Tristan research.

3 Generations and Genealogy

At present, it is difficult to avoid terms which are in any way related to the word ‘generation’, the ‘inter-generational contract’ and the ‘fair compensation between the generations’ in politi-

¹⁹⁹ Kleinhenz 2006, p. 197.

²⁰⁰ Cf. also Heijkant 2005, p. 280ff.

cal speeches and debates, future-oriented discussions and the media. For quite some time, the ‘inter-generational contract’ in the Federal Republic of Germany has been called into question, and it is being investigated how it could even be replaced in the case of its cessation. Similarly, this concept has gained importance in various academic, especially interdisciplinary areas due to the, by necessity, increased involvement of politics, economy, and society with the ‘generation’ topic.²⁰¹ To name just a few of the liberal arts next to the (social) sciences, archaeology, history, theology and literary studies all deal with this complex topic. According to a heuristic approach, the concept of generation is detectable “[...] for cultural-, mentality- and socio-historical[...]“ research questions, although this was challenged for quite some time, and can be assigned to premodern times according to predominant consensus²⁰².

To begin with, a principal distinction must be made in regard to the term ‘generation’ between a diachronic (= vertical) and a synchronic (= horizontal) usage²⁰³. The diachronic concept of generation is primarily related to the shift in meaning of the Latin word ‘generatio’ as well as the Greek words ‘genos’, ‘genesis’ and ‘genea’ and may essentially be ascribed to it, as Ohad Parnes, Ulrike Vedder and Stefan Willer were able to show in their volume ‘Das Konzept der Generation’²⁰⁴.

“Während die Antike in ihr [der ‘generatio’] vor allem den Akt des Erzeugens sah, legte man später mehr Wert auf das Produkt der *generatio*: Generation als das Erzeugte oder die Abstammung. Es ist jedoch häufig schwer, diese beiden Kategorien zu unterscheiden.“²⁰⁵

These concepts of procreation and of descent yield a further, direct link to ‘genealogy’ in close connection with the diachronic semantic level:

²⁰¹ As a literary reference to these elucidations, which shows that the generation topic and question are not limited to the Federal Republic of Germany alone and have seen increased attention since the end of the 20th at the latest, see, for just one example, François Höpflinger’s monography: Höpflinger, François: *Generationenfrage. Konzepte, theoretische Ansätze und Beobachtungen zu Generationenbeziehungen in späteren Lebensphasen.* (AG Universitäres Institut *Alter und Generationen*). (Réalités sociales). Lausanne 1999.

²⁰² Trans. from Nagengast, Ulrike/ Schuh, Maximilian: *Natur vs. Kultur? Zu den Konzepten der Generationenforschung.* In: Brandt, Hartwin/ Schuh, Maximilian/ Siewert, Ulrike (Ed.): *Familie – Generation – Institution. Generationenkonzepte in der Vormoderne.* (Bamberger Historische Studien, Band 2. Ed. vom Institut für Geschichte der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg. Bamberg 2008, p. 11.

In addition, see Ulrike Jureit’s following academic contribution: Jureit, Ulrike: *Generation und Moderne. Kritische Anmerkungen zu einer begrifflichen Inanspruchnahme.* In: Brandt, Hartwin/ Schuh, Maximilian/ Siewert, Ulrike (Ed.): *Familie – Generation – Institution. Generationenkonzepte in der Vormoderne.* (Bamberger Historische Studien, Band 2. Ed. Institut für Geschichte der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg. Bamberg 2008, p. 31-47.

²⁰³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 11f.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Parnes, Ohad/ Vedder, Ulrike/ Willer, Stefan: *Das Konzept der Generation. Eine Wissenschafts- und Kulturgeschichte.* (Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 1855). Frankfurt a. M. 2008, p. 10-39.

²⁰⁵ Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 12.

“[...] Es gibt keine Genealogie, ohne daß [sic] aus der ›natürlichen‹ Reproduktion soziale Strukturen der Verwandtschaft gebildet werden. Und es gibt keine Genealogie, ohne daß [sic] kulturelle Formen die Art und Weise regeln, in der Fortzeugung und Abfolge der Generationen geschehen. Sie bedarf der Zeugung ebenso wie der Sorge um Vorfahren und Nachkommen und der Überlieferung des Vermögens – Vermögen im doppelten Wortsinn von Gütern und Wissen. Damit berührt die Genealogie die Geschichte in einem elementar materialen Sinne, damit ist sie die Matrix der Geschichte. Denn sie beschreibt Wege der Überlieferung und Fortzeugung, die durch die Leiber hindurchgehen; sie beschreibt das Schicksal von Körpern und Körperschaften in der Dimension der Zeit. Insofern ist es von existenzieller Bedeutung, was wir von der ›Genealogie‹ wissen.“²⁰⁶

In addition to these explanations of ‘genealogy’, Beate Kellner appends particularly in regard to the “Stellung des einzelnen innerhalb der Gemeinschaft” and “seine Einbindung in Familie und Verwandtschaft”, which already provides a distinct point of intersection with the later analysis of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, the following:

“Zunächst und vor allem präsentieren Genealogien Antworten auf die Fragen nach der Stellung des einzelnen innerhalb der Gemeinschaft, denn besonders in sogenannten traditionellen Gesellschaften ist die Identität des einzelnen in ganz erheblichem Maße durch sein Wissen um seine Eltern und Vorfahren, durch seine Einbindung in Familie und Verwandtschaft bestimmt: Wie der Name garantiert seine Herkunft die Unverwechselbarkeit des Menschen. Qua Genealogie läßt [sic] sich sodann die Vielheit der Welt und des Daseins über die Vorstellung einer Kette von Zeugungen auf die Einheit eines in aller Regel göttlich gedachten Ursprungs zurückführen.“²⁰⁷

Thus, a very close connection exists between the diachronic concept of generation, as well as genealogy, and the generational relationships within family and kinfolk²⁰⁸. Within this nexus, one may even speak of a genealogical concept of generation, which is particularly distinguishable by its focus on the diachronic perspective, thus “[...] Konstellationen der Herkunft, Generierung oder Erbschaft [...]“²⁰⁹. In other words, the genealogical concept of generation,

²⁰⁶ Weigel, Sigrid: *Genea-Logik. Generation, Tradition und Evolution zwischen Kultur- und Naturwissenschaften*. München 2006, p. 9.

²⁰⁷ Kellner, Beate: *Ursprung und Kontinuität. Studien zum genealogischen Wissen im Mittelalter*. München 2004, p. 15.

²⁰⁸ Please note: the terminology and the conceptual fields surrounding ‘family’ and ‘kinship’ will be analysed in more detail in chapter 4.1.1.

²⁰⁹ Weigel, Sigrid et al. (Ed.): *Generation. Zur Genealogie des Konzepts – Konzepte der Genealogie*. (Trajekte. Eine Reihe des Zentrums für Literaturforschung Berlin. Ed. by Sigrid Weigel und Karlheinz Barck). München 2005, p. 7.

conceived as a temporal dimension, refers to “[...] das Verhältnis zwischen den Generationen oder die Abfolge von Generationen [...]”²¹⁰.

Beate Kellner examines these genealogical relationships between the generations in great detail, mainly from a medieval studies perspective. Concerning the problems of kinship by common blood and the ‘biological line’, she emphasises:

“Demgegenüber scheint eine Genealogie, die stringent auf der biologischen Linie des Blutes aufbaut, gerade nicht von einer transpersonalen Instanz auszugehen, sondern von einem unmittelbaren, quasi naturgegebenen Konnex der einzelnen Personen. Um den Unterschied zwischen der Abstammung im Blut und der Korporation nach der *surrogatio* noch einmal auf den Punkt zu bringen: Das gleiche Blut stiftet eine somatische Verbindung zwischen den individuellen Körpern eines Verwandtschaftsverbandes, während die überzeitliche Organisation der *universitas* gerade von der Konstitution und Zeitlichkeit der einzelnen Menschen absehen kann.”²¹¹

However, for further clarification of this aspect she adds the following:

“Bei näherer Betrachtung zeigt sich allerdings, daß [sic] auch in der Vorstellung von einer besonderen Qualität des Blutes ein Konzept von Überzeitlichkeit, ja Transpersonalität verborgen liegt. Die Idee von der Potenz des Blutes, in dem und durch das nach der mittelalterlichen Genealogie personale Eigenschaften von Vorfahren auf die Erben übertragen werden können, ist eine letztlich kulturelle Konstruktion, die auch mit der Anschauung zusammenhängt, daß [sic] *virtus* und *nobilitas* grundsätzlich zusammengehören. Die genealogische Linienführung, wie sie uns in den Überlieferungen entgegentritt, ‚ergibt‘ sich nicht aus einer als natürlich zu betrachtenden Linie des Blutes, sondern sie wird durch die Akzentuierung und Umakzentuierung der Verwandtschaftsverhältnisse, den Wechsel zwischen verschiedenen Verwandtschaftsbegriffen sowie deren divergierenden Legitimierungsgründen und auch durch unterschiedliche Ein- und Abgrenzungen von Verwandtschaft allererst entworfen.”²¹²

With a broader perspective, increasingly encompassing literary as well as chronicle sources, Ulrike Jureit observes in regard to ‘genealogy’ and the affiliated concept of generation:

“Genealogie ist ein Abstammungs- und Herkunftsbegriff, mit dem sich Individuen und Gruppen durch Bezugnahme auf generationell periodisierte Vergangenheiten selbst verorten oder veror-

²¹⁰ Weigel, Sigrid: Generation, Genealogie, Geschlecht. Zur Geschichte des Generationenkonzepts und seiner wissenschaftlichen Konzeptualisierung seit Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts. In: Kulturwissenschaften. Forschung – Praxis – Positionen. Ed. by Lutz Musner und Gotthart Wunberg. Wien 2002, p. 163.

²¹¹ Kellner 2004, p. 123.

²¹² Ibid., p. 123f.

ten lassen. Generation als genealogischer Begriff steht für Abfolge, Abstammung und Kontinuität.²¹³

The fact that this succession and the relationship between the generations were not always smooth is beyond question. We speak of ‘generational conflicts’ in this context. One should note in regard to the ‘premodern’ era:

“Während die moderne Generationenforschung auf empirische Methoden zurückgreifen kann, sind die Untersuchungen der Historiker sowie der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaftler, die sich mit der Vormoderne beschäftigen, meist textbasiert. Die dargestellten Elemente des Generationenkonflikts wurden also bereits einer Vorauswahl unterzogen und auch die Darstellung selbst ist von der Intention des Autors geprägt sowie von seiner eigenen Weltsicht und seinen eigenen Vorstellungen von Moral, Ordnung und Recht.²¹⁴

It is both a challenge and a necessary task to identify this as best as possible next to the generational relationships and, if applicable, the generational conflicts. In contrast and in distinction to the diachronic usage of ‘generation’ outlined above, the briefly aforementioned synchronic concept of generation comes into play.

“[...] [Dieser wird] als Bezeichnung für soziale Gruppierungen verwendet, die aufgrund ihres Alterszusammenhangs eine imaginierte kollektive Identität ausbilden und sich dadurch von anderen Gruppierungen absetzen. Der oft zitierte Gewährsmann dieser Auffassung ist der Soziologe Karl Mannheim, der in seinem 1928 erschienenen, essayistisch anmutenden Aufsatz ‚Das Problem der Generationen‘ solche Gruppenbildungen als Motor kulturellen Wandels identifiziert.²¹⁵

For this reason, the synchronic term is also referred to as the sociocultural-historical concept of generation. In generational theory, this is primarily attributable to Karl Mannheim who, “[...] in Auseinandersetzung mit dem Philosophen Wilhelm Dilthey und dem Kunsthistoriker Wilhelm Pinder [...]”²¹⁶, shaped and distinguished between “[...] die differenzierte typologi-

²¹³ Jureit, Ulrike: Generationenforschung. (Grundkurs Neue Geschichte, UTB 2856. Ed. by Manfred Hettling, Martin Sabrow und Hans-Ulrich Thamer). Göttingen 2006, p. 30f.

²¹⁴ Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 20.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 20f.

For Karl Mannheim’s fundamental text, cf. also: Mannheim, Karl: Das Problem der Generationen. In: Kölner Vierteljahrshefte für Soziologie 7 (1928), p. 157-185 and p. 309-330. In academia, however, one quotes mostly from the following edition: Mannheim, Karl: Wissenssoziologie. Auswahl aus dem Werk. Eingeleitet und herausgegeben von Kurt H. Wolff. (Soziologische Texte, Band 28. Ed. by Heinz Maus and Friedrich Fürstenberg). Berlin/ Neuwied 1964, p. 509-565.

²¹⁶ Jureit 2006, p. 20f.

sche Trias von Generationenlagerung, Generationenzusammenhang und Generationseinheit [...]“²¹⁷. In Karl Mannheim’s own words, this means:

“Während verwandte *Generationslagerung* nur etwas Potentielles ist, konstituiert sich ein Generationenzusammenhang durch eine Partizipation der derselben Generationslagerung angehörenden Individuen am gemeinsamen Schicksal und an den dazugehörenden, irgendwie zusammenhängenden Gehalten. Innerhalb dieser Schicksalsgemeinschaft können dann die besonderen *Generationseinheiten* entstehen. Diese sind dadurch charakterisiert, daß sie nicht nur eine lose Partizipation verschiedener Individuen am gemeinsam erlebten, aber verschieden sich gebenden Ereigniszusammenhang bedeuten, sondern daß sie ein einheitliches Reagieren, ein im verwandten Sinne geformtes Mitschwingen und Gestalten der gerade insofern verbundenen Individuen einer bestimmten Generationslagerung bedeuten.“²¹⁸

As an explanatory note in contemporary academic language, thereby adjusting and elaborating on the original conceptualisation, Karl Mannheim notes in regard to generational locations and generational links:

“Generationenlagerung beschreibt [...] allein die Tatsache, dass Menschen in ähnlichen Geburtsjahrgängen und in einem gemeinsamen historisch-sozialen Bezugsrahmen leben und so ein mögliches Merkmal zur kollektiven Identitätsstiftung bzw. ein Moment zur Lokalisierung im sozialen Raum vorhanden ist. Innerhalb der Generationenlagerung konkretisieren sich dann Generationenzusammenhänge, deren Mitglieder durch die Partizipation an gemeinsamen Schicksalen verbunden sind. Sie haben also an denselben intellektuellen und sozialen Strömungen teil, wobei räumliche und schichtspezifische Grenzen die Ausbildung eines Generationenzusammenhangs verhindern können.“²¹⁹

In this respect, the reality of a *generational location* offers the possibility of a *generational link*, if these appropriate conditions are met. In turn, a further step can subsequently bring about the *generational unit*, under the right circumstances:

“Erst innerhalb dieses Generationenzusammenhangs formen sich in Mannheims Typologie einzelne Generationseinheiten. Sie gehen aus konkreten Gruppen hervor, die ähnlich auf bestimmte Lebenssituationen und Ereignisse reagieren und daher eine imaginierte kollektive Identität ausbilden, die in der Folge auch für Personen außerhalb der Kerngruppe anschlussfähig wird.“²²⁰

²¹⁷ Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 21.

²¹⁸ Mannheim 1964, p. 547.

²¹⁹ Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 21.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Parallel to this, the English-speaking world has used and conceived of the term ‘imagined communities’. By means of the “imagined collective identity” in the sense of a construction, the ‘generational unit’ and the ‘imagined communities’ indicate the formation of a ‘generational consciousness’: This is also termed ‘generation building’.²²¹ In regard to ‘generation building’, Ulrike Jureit remarks:

“Generation building ist also ein Vergemeinschaftungsprozess, und es gehört zum Kerngeschäft der Generationenforschung herauszuarbeiten, wann und unter welchen Bedingungen gemeinschaftsbildende Potentiale zur Imagination generationeller Einheiten führen (und wann nicht), denn offensichtlich muss doch mehr dazu kommen, als die Entschlossenheit einer Kohorte, sich als Generation zu formieren.“²²²

In accordance with Karl Mannheim, it is not necessarily imperative that there is only one generational unit:

“Innerhalb eines Generationenzusammenhangs können sich [...] verschiedene Generationseinheiten ausbilden, die unterschiedlich auf dieselben Anreize reagieren und daher in Konflikt miteinander geraten.“²²³

Next to and based on the term ‘generational link’, we may also speak of ‘age cohorts’:

“In einer Alterskohorte können also verschiedene Generationseinheiten auftreten. Diese Vorstellung von generationally bestimmten Gruppierungen steht im Widerspruch zu geläufigen diachronen Vorstellungen von unterschiedlichen Altersgruppen zurechenbaren Generationen. Generationally aufgeladene Konflikte treten also auch innerhalb derselben Alterskohorte auf, wenn sich die Generationseinheiten in ihren politischen, kulturellen und sozialen Stellungnahmen polar gegenüber stehen. Grund hierfür ist nicht die altersabhängige Perspektive, sondern unterschiedliche Antworten auf die Fragen und Probleme, mit denen sich Mitglieder desselben Generationenzusammenhangs konfrontiert sehen. Selten wird in diesem Kontext allerdings beachtet, dass die Ausbildung von Generationseinheiten keine Notwendigkeit, sondern eher die Ausnahme ist. Mannheim setzt mal alle dreißig, mal alle hundert Jahre die Ausbildung von Generationseinheit an, da nicht der biologische Generationenwechsel, sondern die gesellschaftliche Dynamik für ihre Formierung entscheidend ist.“²²⁴

²²¹ Cf. in this regard: Ibid., p. 21f.

²²² Jureit 2006, p. 41f.

²²³ Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 22.

²²⁴ Ibid., p. 22f.

Although Karl Mannheim is considered to be a ‘classic’, who has shaped the foundations for the concept of the sociocultural-historical, as well as the synchronic concept of generation, his model has been criticised multiple times since publication. However, this was also necessary since academia has been able to develop new approaches and terms in a productive manner as a result.²²⁵ His original reason for dealing with the ‘Problem der Generationen’ ought also not to be forgotten: “Es dient in erster Linie als Erklärungsansatz für den kulturellen Wandel an markanten historischen Wendepunkten durch ‚das Neueinsetzen neuer Kulturträger‘.”²²⁶

Apart from the distinction between the diachronic and the synchronic concept of generation, the diachronic can also be viewed, next to understanding it as a major category for the genealogical concept of generation, as being connected to the pedagogic, spiritual and poetological concept of generation in its sub-categories for the premodern era. Meanwhile, it is not ruled out that this is also applicable to modernity. However, this is only a side note, since those generational concepts are not relevant to this work of research²²⁷.

4 Generational Relationships and Generational Conflicts in the 'Tavola Ritonda'

As previously mentioned in some detail in chapter 3, a fundamental distinction must be made between the diachronic concept of generation, which mainly includes the genealogical succession and genealogy itself, and the synchronic concept. It is rather rare, though, that both cases can be detected in the same text. First, the analysis in chapter 4.1 will concentrate on the diachronic concept of generation and will attempt to delineate whether it exists, and if so to which degree, in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. For this reason, the focus is placed on the genealogical succession within the family and relatives, and specifically on the relationship between the narrative’s protagonist and his uncle, who has been assigned the role of antagonist. In this manner, the genealogical relationships and, most especially, the main conflict between the aforementioned is to be examined and highlighted. Subsequently, it is to be analysed in a

²²⁵ Cf. also: Jureit 2006, p. 20-30; Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 23f.

²²⁶ Nagengast/ Schuh 2008, p. 23.

²²⁷ For further bibliographical references, the following volumes are recommended regarding the topic of the chapter: Brandt, Hartwin/ Köhler, Katrin/ Siewert, Ulrike (Ed.): *Genealogisches Bewusstsein als Legitimation. Inter- und intragenerationelle Auseinandersetzung sowie die Bedeutung von Verwandtschaft bei Amtswechseln.* (Bamberger Historische Studien, Band 4. Ed. vom Institut für Geschichte der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg). Bamberg 2009; Brandt, Hartwin et al. (Ed.): *Genus & generatio. Rollenerwartungen und Rollenerfüllungen im Spannungsfeld der Geschlechter und Generationen in Antike und Mittelalter.* (Bamberger Historische Studien, Band 6. Ed. vom Institut für Geschichte der Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg). Bamberg 2011.

shorter section in chapter 4.2 whether, and to what extent, the synchronic concept of generation has additionally found its way into the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ by its distinction between the ‘Tavola Vecchia’, an ‘old Round Table’, and a ‘Tavola Nuova’, a ‘new Round Table’. First, however, the following chapter is devoted to the analysis of the genealogical relationships and conflicts in the sense of the diachronic concept of generation in this selected text.

4.1 The ‘Tristano-Marco’ Relationship

In order to provide a clear and understandable structure for this chapter, the three main topics and areas of tension, which are already laid out in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ in approximately this manner, will be considered. One after the other, they will be analyzed and examined by means of a hermeneutic approach and an exact textual comparison in regard to the existence of generational relationships and generational conflicts in accordance with the diachronic concept of generation²²⁸. Following this, a brief conclusion will be drawn as a preliminary result.

²²⁸ Please note: The term ‘author’ is also utilised in its equivalent in German medieval studies, though ‘Verfasser’ is more common. In the following, it is used as an entity which influences the text from outside and thereby aims at a certain ‘sens’, if it appears indispensable to give it a label.

4.1.1 Family and Relationship - Genealogical Relationships and Conflicts - in the 'Tavola Ritonda'

The relational and family relationships constitute an important part in the 'Tavola Ritonda' from the very beginning²²⁹. In this regard, the anonymous author initially and explicitly introduces the kings Bordo of Gaules and Bando of Benoich as a pair of brothers in chapter I of the narrative²³⁰. Thereafter, in almost the first fifth of his cyclical Tristan and Arthurian work comprising of 145 chapters, he presents the relational and family relationships surrounding and centred on the protagonist Tristano, who only first appears from chapter XII onwards.

²²⁹ In the recent research on medieval history, the subject areas surrounding 'family' and especially 'kinship' are being vigorously discussed. It mainly concerns itself with the importance of agnatic and cognatic kinship as well as the precise distinction between the topic areas of 'family' and 'kindredship' in terms of terminology and societal functions. Cf. for this: Goetz, Hans-Werner: *Verwandtschaft im früheren Mittelalter (I): Terminologie und Funktionen*. In: Gerhard Krieger (Ed.): *Verwandtschaft, Freundschaft, Bruderschaft. Soziale Lebens- und Kommunikationsformen im Mittelalter*. Berlin 2009, p. 15-36; Goetz, Hans-Werner: *Verwandtschaft im frühen Mittelalter (II) zwischen Zusammenhalt und Spannungen*. In: *Nomen et Fraternitas. Festschrift Dieter Geuenich zum 65. Geburtstag*. Ed. by Uwe Ludwig and Thomas Schilp. (Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde, Bd. 62. Ed. by Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer). Berlin, New York 2008, p. 547-573; Jussen, Bernhard: *Perspektiven der Verwandtschaftsforschung zwanzig Jahre nach Jack Goodys "Entwicklung von Ehe und Familie in Europa"*. In: *Die Familie in der Gesellschaft des Mittelalters*. Ed. by Karl-Heinz Spieß. (Vorträge und Forschungen/ Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für Mittelalterliche Geschichte, 71). Ostfildern 2009, p. 275-325.

The listed selection is merely intended as an introduction to this topic and should not be treated as a concise collection for a more in-depth consideration of this much discussed subject of research.

The 'Lexikon des Mittelalters' provides a terminological definition for 'family' in the following: "Familie ist (bis heute) ein mehrdeutiger Begriff. Grundsätzlich ist zwischen zwei Familienformen zu unterscheiden, die sich überlagerten, aber kaum je identisch wurden und deren Verhältnis zueinander ein Problem mittelalterlicher Familiengeschichte bildet: 1. der Haushalts-Familie als Wohngemeinschaft aller im Hause lebenden Personen [...] und 2. der Verwandtschafts-Familie. Der Begriff »Familie« im modernen Sinn ist erst seit dem 16. Jahrhundert belegt und seit dem 18. Jahrhundert verbreitet. Im Mittelalter bezog sich familia, in antiker Tradition, selten auf die Verwandtschaft, sondern auf das Haus und alles, was sich unter der Gewalt des Hausherrn befand [...]. Bei der Verwandtschafts-Familie sind wiederum zwei, in ihrer Bedeutung ebenfalls umstrittene Formen zu unterscheiden: a) im engeren Sinn die auf der Ehe beruhende Kern-Familie [...] als Lebens- oder Wohngemeinschaft von Eltern und Kindern, evtl. unter Einschluss weiterer Familienmitglieder [...]; b) im weiteren Sinn der aus vielen Kern-Familien zusammengesetzte Verwandtschaftsverband [...] entweder der Blutsverwandten – in agnatischer Folge (Abstammungs-Familie, Geschlecht) oder unter Einschluss der Seitenlinien – oder als kognatischer Verband der Blutsverwandten und Verschwägerten [...]; die Ehe schloss jeweils zwei Blutsverwandten-Familien zusammen. Im Mittelalter selbst hat man die verschiedenen Formen allerdings nur unvollkommen geschieden [...]." Goetz, Hans-Werner: *Familie. A. Bedeutung und Begriff*. *LexMa*, col. 257.

In the following, the term 'family' will be equated with the form, which Hans-Werner Goetz has termed 'nuclear family' ('Kern-Familie'). Also in accordance with Hans-Werner Goetz, who has illustrated this in a short, compressed and schematic manner, 'kinship' ('Verwandtschaft') will be used for members of the *consanguineitas* as well as the *affinitas*. Cf. Goetz 2009, p. 36.

To raise awareness for the complex and broad term 'kinship' in the middle ages, refer to the following article, including a definition, in the 'Lexikon des Mittelalters'. Cf. Jussen, Bernhard: *Verwandtschaft*. *LexMa*, col. 1596-1599.

²³⁰ Cf. Polidori 1864, p.3 (chapter I).

4.1.1.1 Kinship, Genealogy and Succession Disputes – the Royal Families Surrounding Tristano are Connected to Each Other

The actual introduction to this subject matter takes place as early as chapters III and IV, in which the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ specifies in great detail the ancestral history of the kings of Cornwall and Leonis and, simultaneously, the gradually emerging connections between the initially disconnected royal families, including the succession disputes²³¹. In the process, the relational and family relationships in this work are often closely linked with questions surrounding supremacy and genealogical succession, including the conflicts which may arise as a consequence. Next to the peaceable variety of exerting power, the inherent propensity towards violence, in order to secure one’s rule and to gain power, manifests itself in a bipolar manner. Thus, as the conflicts unfold, the first murders occur in chapters III and IV: first between the Cornish heir Anzilere and the first king of Leonis, as well as subsequently in the third generation between Marco, then ruler over Cornwall, and his younger brother Perna. The genealogical succession is, as yet, immaterial in the previous case in chapter III and rather deals with the joining of both ruling dynasties. There, the heir of Cornwall ‘causelessly’ kills the ruler of Leonis from behind, according to the author’s exact wording²³². However, the king’s son is in return promptly sentenced by his own father to suffer decapitation for justice’s sake. As further compensation for the crime, the ruler of Cornwall marries his sole surviving daughter to the now fatherless heir of Leonis, thereby transferring his own kingdom as an administrative domain: the joining of the two royal dynasties is thereby skillfully achieved. Three generations after the royal dynasties of Leonis and Cornwall have grown together, still in chapter IV, the second murder occurs²³³. This time, the genealogical succession plays a decisive part because the then ruling king of Cornwall insidiously murders

²³¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 8-12 (chapters III and IV).

One should note at this point: “La *Tavola Ritonda* è l’unico testo italiano che riproduce la genealogia del protagonista con modificazioni per renderla più nobile e funzionale.” Heijkant 1997, p. 25. For a more in-depth view on the beginnings of Tristano’s ancestral line, see once more Marie-José Heijkant’s clarifications: Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25f.

²³² Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 8 (chapter III): The anonymous author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ himself uses the term “[...] senza nissuna ragione[...]” here. *Ibid.*

²³³ Concerning the term ‘generation’, Ulrike Jureit fundamentally distinguishes the following in her introduction to generational research, despite simultaneously stressing that it constitutes a social model of order: “Sowohl im familialen als auch im gesellschaftlichen Kontext dient der Generationenansatz als Raster, um soziale Bezüge zu ordnen. In dem einen Fall wird unter Generation eine horizontal gelagerte Gemeinschaftsstruktur verstanden, im anderen Fall geht es um die lineare Generationenfolge innerhalb von Familien.“ Jureit 2006, p. 64.

Note: The conceptual generational term ‘diachronic’ which will be continuously used in this work because of the fundamental principle of homogeneity, and which is even used here in chapter 4.1, is used in conjunction and in accordance with Ulrike Jureit’s last-mentioned context, whereas the conceptual generational term ‘synchronic’ or ‘synchronous’, which will become especially of interest in chapter 4.2, will be used in conjunction with Ulrike Jureit’s first-mentioned context.

one of his brothers, who is deemed to be a threat to his throne²³⁴. It is the later protagonist's uncle, Marco of Cornwall. His brother Perna had, as a third-born, remained empty-handed when his father's inheritance had been bequeathed. He challenged Marco as the country's regent and criticised his rule, which was tied to tributary obligations to Ireland, and was then deviously murdered by Marco at the Fontana del Leone²³⁵. The author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' merely comments on this deed in one sentence, but refrains from providing a moral judgment and leaves it to the recipient to classify and evaluate it.

Directly following this, in chapter V and especially chapter VI of the 'Tavola Ritonda', disturbances in the line of succession of another dynasty are depicted, namely that of Benoich, further kinsfolk of the later protagonist Tristano²³⁶. At that point, the heir's birth and his parents' deaths are simultaneously depicted. Thereupon, it is described how the orphan is received by the Dama del Lago, the 'Lady of the Lake', baptised as Lancialotto and raised by her, as the relatives who should have been responsible show no interest in the heir's well-being: "Et lo re Artù et lo re di Gaules et gli altri di suo lignaggio, morto o vivo che si fusse, poco se ne curavano, perchè a lui succedeva el reame."²³⁷. Here, it is conspicuous that King Artù is outrightly characterised as a ruler and simultaneously as a coldly calculating relative. A similar line and continuation of the problem can be seen after the birth of the true protagonist in the 'Tavola Ritonda', albeit with King Artù in a different role.

Previously, however, the text pursues a further goal: beginning with the depiction of the genealogical succession of the rulers of Cornwall and Leonis up until Tristano's birth in chapter XII, a centred connection is created between the royal families which had formerly been inde-

²³⁴ For further elaboration on the use of the term 'genealogical succession', see the preceding chapter 3.

²³⁵ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 11 (chapter IV).

²³⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 12ff. (chapter V and half of VI).

At the beginning of chapter V, one should additionally consider that the author explicitly and by calling upon King Meliadus, the later protagonist's father, declares that he is unwilling to link up with a woman, despite already acting as a king, and even provides reasons for his decision in this regard "Tutte le storie pongano et a ciò s'accordano, e 'l vero è che lo re Meliadus fu pro et liale cavaliere, et non aveva mai auta donna nè pensava d' avere; et ciò faceva per piacere a Dio et per meglio conservare sua forza.". Ibid., p. 12 (chapter V). It appears that the focus on chivalry plays no insignificant role in this matter.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 14 (chapter VI).

Before the recognition as the heir of King Benoich and the admission to the Arthurian court, the author further adds the scene in which Lancialotto reverent beholds the three knights, almost certainly based on the 'Conte du Graal'. Cf. Ibid., p. 14f. (chapter VI) and, regard this, Gardner 1971, p. 157; Branca 1968, p. 74 footnote 23.

In turn, this scene strengthens and focusses on the splendour and the strong emphasis which is being placed on chivalry within the narrative. This is true not only at the Arthurian court, but also of Meliadus of Leonis, with whom Lancialotto and Tristano are already confronted at a very early age.

pendent from one another²³⁸. In this regard, chapters III and IV first describe in which manner the royal families of Cornwall-Leonis are joined. In a second step, the marriage of the first-born, Meliadus of Leonis, connects it to two further important ruling dynasties, since Meliadus' bride Eliabella is related on the one hand to the royal family of Britannia, i.e. with King Artù, and on the other with the royal dynasty of Benoich, from which Lancialotto is a descendant²³⁹. At this point in the narrative, it specifically transpires that Eliabella's deceased mother was King Artù's sister as well as the cousin of King Bando of Benoich²⁴⁰. Then, the first-born son and the main protagonist of the entire tale, Tristano, arises from this connection between Meliadus and Eliabella, having been skilfully orchestrated by King Artù²⁴¹.

4.1.1.2 Genealogical Rules of Succession and the Risk for the First-Born Heir to the Throne - The Protagonist Tristano enters into the Narrative

After the author's successful attempts at outlining the main character's relational ties to the various important royal families, however, the structure of his depiction returns to the previously foreshadowed – with Lancialotto's entry into the narrative – problem of the danger for the (unprotected) heir and with that his true goal. Even being endangered by one's own rela-

²³⁸ In the regal art of war, the author presents neither Artù nor Meliadus as merciless, but rather as collected tacticians who spur on their knights to greater heights of achievements. Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 20f. (chapter VII). Furthermore, it is conspicuous that Meliadus' brother, Marco of Cornwall, as well as Amoroldo of Ireland to whom he is a tributary, are listed as allies fighting on Meliadus' side against Artù. There are several ways of explaining the author's choice: on the one hand, he may have intentionally done so in order to show that both rulers were obliged to provide help as allies, though Marco was subordinated to Amoroldo as a tributary. Hence, the author was able to highlight in more detail the independence and power position of Meliadus in contrast to his brother Marco. The consecutive sequence of names listed appear to speak for this idea. On the other hand, the list may just have been an arbitrary moment of negligence on the part of the author. It is difficult to arrive at a definite explanation. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 20 (chapter VII).

²³⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 31ff. (chapter X).

Before Meliadus' marriage, the author lets him once more highlight the following in response to Artù: "Sire, sappiate che io ero fermo di non prendere mai donna et di conservare mia virginità per infino alla mia fine [and only then does the author have Meliadus give in]: ma, da poi che a voi piace et ella è di vostro lignaggio, io ne so' assai contento." *Ibid.*, p. 32 (chapter X). This may indicate an intentional comparison between perfect chivalry and the duties of genealogical continuation of the lineage put into Meliadus' mouth in an abbreviated manner by the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda'.

²⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 31f. (chapter IX and chapter X).

²⁴¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 39-43 (chapter XII).

For the principle of primogeniture, see for an initial overview Lett, Didier: *Famille et parenté dans l'Occident médiéval Ve-XVe siècle*. (Carré Histoire, 49. Sous la direction de Michel Balard, Professeur à l'Université Paris I-Sorbonne). Paris 2000, p. 23. In this regard, Didier Lett further observed in more detail: "[...] on remarque au cours des XI^e-XII^e siècles que presque partout, dans les pays « égalitaires » comme dans les régions « préciputaires », la peur d'une trop grande dispersion du patrimoine foncier ou mobilier encourage la tendance à avantager l'aîné. Celle-ci se perçoit en Provence, dans le Biterrois ou en Italie à partir de la seconde moitié du XII^e siècle et domine nettement dans les coutumiers français du XIII^e siècle ou dans la Common law anglaise. L'instauration de la primogéniture est plus précoce dans l'aristocratie. Dès la seconde moitié du X^e siècle, les familles impériales et royales [...] prennent l'habitude d'associer le fils aîné au trône et de lui transmettre l'intégralité de leur empire ou de leur royaume." *Ibid.*, p. 29.

tives cannot be excluded in the competitive struggle for the succession, as the author shows in particular with the brotherly rivalry between Marco and Perna. At the time of Tristano's birth, in chapter XII, his begetter, Meliadus of Leonis, is deemed to be missing, whereas Queen Eliabella has embarked upon a search for him with only a single lady-in-waiting accompanying her and gives birth to the future heir of the kingdom in the wilderness of Medilontas, of all places. After having arranged for the naming of her son, Eliabella dies immediately after giving birth²⁴². As a result, the lady-in-waiting roams around the remote area by herself in the next chapter, XIII, with the new-born Tristano, until she meets two 'cavalieri fratelli', as the author himself phrases it, who are described as being most closely allied to Meliadus and as having been in search of the very same²⁴³. Instead of safely leading the lady-in-waiting and the heir back to court, the author has both knights, after having been informed about the current situation by the lady-in-waiting who is in hope of help, reach the following decision: "Noi veggiamo veramente la reina morta, e lo re non si ritruova. Facciamo così: uccidiamo il fanciullo, e lo reame succederà a noi di tutto Leonis."²⁴⁴. Only the lady-in-waiting's pleading for the child's life and her promise to quietly leave the country are able to save the heir at this point. Once more, the author provides an example for the unbridled unscrupulousness and ruthlessness of people who should in principal be obliged to protect, as soon as the possibility of attaining control and power is present. Merely the appearance of a *deus ex machina*, namely of Merlin, who is marked with the supplementary 'lo profeta', ensures a positive outcome for the new-born heir in this dangerous situation²⁴⁵: accordingly, the knowledgeable Merlin informs the dignitaries gathered at court of all the important developments as soon as he arrives there and gives all who are present the necessary instructions, until finally Tristano and the lady-in-waiting are rescued and brought back to the palace. Equally, King Meliadus, who had previously disappeared, is very pleased about the birth of his son despite his sorrow for his wife's death. He has him baptised and assigns as a special protector and educator, chosen by Merlin, the Governale of Gaules, who carries the attribute of 'lo Pensoso'²⁴⁶.

Now, nothing should really stand in the way of Tristano's happy upbringing. Having just escaped the first dangerous situation, however, the description of the next threat for the heir – still in chapter XIII - follows. This time, though, it is one posed directly from within the circle

²⁴² Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 39-43 (chapter XII).

It should not be forgotten that Meliadus has disappeared in the meantime, primarily because he cannot resist the challenges of great chivalric deeds, including the service for a noblewoman, even after his marriage. Cf. Ibid.

²⁴³ Cf. Ibid., p. 43f. (chapter XIII).

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 44 (chapter XIII).

²⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 44-48 (chapter XIII).

²⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid. (chapter XIII).

of relatives, albeit by in-laws: according to the author, Tristano's father, Meliadus, decides after a while to marry once more in order to beget further offspring, a practice which was definitely conceivable and common at the time. He chose Queen Agia, the daughter of King Bramos and the niece of the Duke of Bramante²⁴⁷. Following this, another typical example unfolds, which may under certain circumstances be transferred to the historical realities of the Middle Ages, under the precondition that the principle of primogeniture was valid in the given situation: at this point, the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' develops a typical conflict, which arose from the right of primogeniture among kinsfolk²⁴⁸. Accordingly, it is narrated in chapter XIII:

“E la reina Agia essendo nella corte, e veggendo il fanciullo Tristano tanto bello, leggiadro e avvenente, e tanto bene intagliato di sue membra, sie l' odiava molto molto; e avea in sé gulosia d' avere uno figliuolo o più, acciò che lo re portasse quello amore a' suoi, ch' ella vedeva portarlo a Tristano. E dimorando corto tempo, ella sie ingravidòe; e quando fue tempo di partorire, si fece uno bello figliuolo, al quale lo re fece pôr nome Allegreno, perchè la reina Agia era la più allegra dama del mondo per lo suo bel figlio ch' era nato. Ma nondimeno molto odiava

²⁴⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 48 (chapter XIII).

²⁴⁸ In regard to family practices, concerning primogeniture, in Italy, illuminated from a general, synoptic perspective, yet with an eye for the Tuscan region, at the time of Dante and Petrarch, John Larner notes: “The normal practice of inheritance might seem, at first sight, to have favoured a prevalence of ‘extended’ households. In Italy rights of primogeniture were rarely acknowledged.” Larner, John: *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch 1216-1380*. (A Longman History of Italy, Volume II. General Editor: Denis Hay). London, New York 1980, p. 60. However, he does not go into more detail concerning the nobility's situation and adds soon after: “It should be added that though upper-class families sought lineage-unity, it was a condition very difficult to maintain. Inheritance *pro indiviso*, it has been seen, could provide an opportunity for maintaining the cohesion of the family, but it could also have the reverse effect, particularly if several generations passed without some simple division of the properties held jointly. The common administration of properties [...] presented particular difficulties, both in initiating policies for the property's development and in the equitable division of profits which came from it. Herein lay fertile grounds for suspicion and dispute. And the ultimate simple division of such unitary properties could also give rise to profound discontent. Hence rivalries within families were frequent, and caused deep political splits and much blood-letting between kinsmen.” *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Meanwhile, Didier Lett argues for the tendency to observe the right of primogeniture from the second half of the 12th century onwards in Italy, in his more contemporary contribution to research. He emphasises the fact that the nobility was particularly affected by it and that this principle was adhered to especially due to fear of overly fragmenting the estate. Regarding Didier Lett's opinion, see the previous footnote 241. Didier Lett also points out the potential for conflict which the principle of primogeniture entails. He notes in this regard: “L'instauration d'un héritier unique entretient parfois un climat de jalousie, de mésentente et de haine entre les frères, entraînant de violents conflits. Dans les régions où la primogéniture s'impose, les cadets ont conscience d'être les laissés-pour-compte du système.” Lett 2000, p. 30.

The author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' seems to have been aware of the problems of his time, resulting from one of these systems of succession. Equally, the impression arises that he wanted to specifically address this in his work: his first example of brotherly conflict is between the second and third born, namely Marco of Cornwall and his brother Perna, due to the succession laws by birthright. Following this, he describes a typical example of a conflict, which is caused by the first born, although the brothers themselves do not face each other in an antagonistic manner. Instead, the peace is disrupted by the queen, who is also the second born's mother. Only in a further step does the author have the first born son of the first born heir clash with the second born, his father's brother: the protagonist, Tristano, and his uncle, Marco of Cornwall. At this point, it may be sufficient to hint at the fact that the author has the second born all the more react with envy and fear of losing the throne during the course of the narrative of the 'Tavola Ritonda'.

Tristano, solamente perch' egli era il primogenito, perchè soccedeva a lui lo reame, che era primo genito. Sie gli avea tanto odio messo incontro, e sie diceva in fra sè: — Io sono la più dolente dama del mondo, però che Tristano sarà re e porterà corona, e mio figlio sarà suo soggetto —. E per tale cagion pensava giorno e notte com' ella potesse trovare modo o via che Tristano morisse, perchè lo suo figlio fosse poi signore.”²⁴⁹

In the following, the queen undertakes two surreptitious attempts on Tristano's life by means of a poisonous potion, so that King Meliadus might not become suspicious. When she is exposed despite her precautions after the first attempt, only Tristano is able to save his stepmother Agia from certain death through his selfless and magnanimous advocacy before his father²⁵⁰. The author comments on this with the sentence “— Quanto l' uomo più serve e piace al traditore, più disserva e più dispiace allo leale —. E ciò dimostra che difendendo Tristano la reina, offendeva a sè medesimo [...]”²⁵¹. Ultimately, both attempts at murder fail, although Agia's own son, who is named Allegreno in contrast to Tristano, is even inadvertently killed by her²⁵². From then on, however, Tristano, the heir, is entrusted with particular vigour to the care of his mentor Governale, from whom he is to solely accept food and drink. The life-long punishment for the queen, meanwhile, is to be confronted daily with the self-inflicted death of her son and to have to witness her stepson thrive and grow at the same time²⁵³. Although the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' has several years quickly pass in terms of narrated time, so that Tristano is already twelve in his next chapter, XIV, he also adds, still in chapter XIII, a further variant of a murder plot by relatives²⁵⁴. This time, Meliadus, the sovereign, is affected and in his case the attempt succeeds, as is described in the following:

“E così cacciando lo re per lo deserto, egli fue assalito da dodici cavalieri tutti armati, i quali erano tutti suoi propri nemici, e alquanto suoi parenti; ma erano stati allora in nimistade per uno castello, il quale eglino tenevano contro a ragione. E trovando li detti cavalieri lo re così senza

²⁴⁹ Polidori 1864, p. 48 (chapter XIII).

²⁵⁰ Cf. Ibid., p. 48ff. (chapter XIII).

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 50 (chapter XIII).

²⁵² Cf. Ibid., p. 50f. (chapter XIII).

In comparison, this passage featuring the queen's assassination attempts of Tristano perfectly illustrates that the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' has not merely copied the narrative structure from the 'Tristan en prose'. For example, the author has changed the order of the people affected by the queen's poison plot. First (in the 'Tristan en prose'), Tristan's stepmother, who is introduced as the daughter of King Hoel de la Petite Bretagne, inadvertently causes the death of her own son by means of the fatal potion, after which Meliadus is himself affected in her second attempt. Also, Tristan's stepmother is not caught during her first attempt, despite the loss of her child: the king and Gorvenal, Tristan's protector, both merely become suspicious and the safety measures for the heir are increased. Only after the second attempt with the poisonous potion is the protagonist allowed to advocate for his stepmother in the 'Tristan en Prose'. Cf. Curtis, Renée L. (Ed.): *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*. Tome I. München 1963, p. 131-135 (§ 244-256).

²⁵³ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 51f. (chapter XIII).

²⁵⁴ Cf. Ibid., p. 52 (chapters XIII and XIV).

compagnia e disarmato e di lungi dalli suoi compagni e baroni, trasserlo a ferire e sì lo uccisoro.”²⁵⁵

From this moment onwards, the queen is once more a threat to the future heir. Tristano's protector, Governale, sees cause for action and has him sent abroad to complete his education and training²⁵⁶.

Thereby, the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' includes in a single chapter of his work, meaning XIII, and shortly after the protagonist's entry into the narrative – at the end of chapter XII – three conflicts and, at the same time, four attempts at murder, undertaken by close allies or even relatives²⁵⁷.

4.1.1.3 The Delaying Moment before the Elaboration of the Main Conflict between Tristano and Marco – Tristano Is Torn between the Genealogical Obligation to Continue the Lineage of his Family and Perfect Chivalry

In order to protect Tristano from his stepmother and to continue the heir's training as a knight, Tristano and his mentor Governale travel to King Fieramonte's court in Gaules, France, in chapters XIV through XVI²⁵⁸.

Only after this does the author have his protagonist, from the end of chapter XVI onwards, encounter the most important and close relative in terms of the narrative, his uncle Marco, the King of Cornwall. At the same time, he once more takes up, step by step and steadily increasing, the previously prepared theme of the danger constituted by one's own relatives, especially due to the genealogical rivalries²⁵⁹.

However, before going into more detail in this matter, the author underlines for the first time Tristano's dedication for becoming the perfect knight, which he mainly considers as a duty of his heritage and absolutely wishes to attain in the footsteps of his father, who had himself in-

²⁵⁵ Ibid. (chapter XIII).

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 52f. (chapter XIV).

At this point, one may detect a further alteration which the author has made with respect to his source material. In the 'Tristan en prose', Melyadus is deviously murdered by the vassals of the noble house of the Cornish Counts of Norholt, instead of being killed by his own relatives and fellow countrymen. The assassins also have contacts to King Marc of Cornwall, though in the 'Tristan en prose' Marc 'only' appears in the form of the brother of Tristan's mother. Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 135f. (§ 257/258). For the protagonist's genealogy in the 'Tristan en prose', cf. *ibid.*, p. 37.

Meanwhile, the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' illustrates once more the potential for conflict and danger arising from one's kinsmen by characterising the assassins of Meliadus as "alquanto suoi parenti", a new addition which had not been present in the 'Tristan en Prose'. Polidori 1864, p. 52 (chapter XIII).

²⁵⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 43-52 (chapter XIII).

²⁵⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 52-63 (chapters XIV-XVI).

²⁵⁹ Cf. for the first encounter between Tristano and Marco: *ibid.*, p. 63 (chapter XVI).

initially dedicated solely to perfect chivalry, before his marriage to Eliabella²⁶⁰. In this episode, which is basically self-contained and takes place in Gaules with King Fieramonte and his daughter Bellices present, Tristano also meets a character essential to the narrative – the author portends to future events in doing so – for the first time: a man named Amoroldo of Ireland²⁶¹. In connection with Marco of Cornwall, he is assigned an even more important role after the ›Fieramonte-Bellices-episode‹ has been concluded.

Furthermore, it may be noted at this point: Tristano's encounter with the king's daughter Bellices constitutes the first, prefiguring variant employed by the author to show the protagonist's predominant and intrinsic defensive attitude, due to the wish to advance his knighthood, towards marriage with a young noblewoman over a long period of time.²⁶² Perfecting one's knighthood is used by the protector Governale as the 'main bait' for Tristano, in order to induce his pupil to leave the country and therefore also the danger posed by his stepmother in the first place. Next to this, however, Governale introduces a further point, closely linked to knightly strength, by saying the following:

“[...] chè altri paesi vi conviene trovare, acciò che voi imprendiate di bene schermire e armeggiare, e di fare tutto quello che si appartiene a onor di cavalleria, acciò che in questo mondo siate sicuro e abbiate nominanza di prodezza e di cortesia.”²⁶³.

After the various threats to the heir's life since his birth by close relatives and allies, Governale is ascribed an interest in the development of his charge's knighthood for security reasons at this point.

4.1.1.4 The Main Conflict: the Rivalry between Uncle and Nephew, King and Heir to the Throne

During the course of his training to become a knight, Tristano eventually comes to the court of his uncle – on his father's side – King Marco of Cornwall, after the ›Fieramonte-Bellices-episode‹ is concluded by the suicide of the king's daughter, who had loved to no avail. In accordance with the succession practices of his generation, Marco of Cornwall had received ter-

²⁶⁰ Cf. for this: *ibid.*, p. 59f. (chapter XVI).

²⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 54-56 (chapter XV).

²⁶² Cf. *ibid.*, p. 54-63 (chapters XV-XVI). Tristano is also initially unwilling to tie himself to his later great love Isotta, although he develops feelings of jealousy during his first stay in Ireland, as soon as the knight Palamides falls in love with Isotta.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 52 (chapter XIV).

ritory in connection with a tributary agreement with Ireland²⁶⁴. It will not escape the attentive recipient of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ that Marco is introduced with the negative mark of a fratricide from the narrative’s very beginning onward, despite other in part positive attributes. Meanwhile, Tristano, who is only 15 years old and does not immediately reveal himself to be the ruler’s nephew, is very warmly received by Marco²⁶⁵. By the time the king is in desperate straits because of the tributary demands, due to the fact that the country’s knights and barons are too cowardly to oppose them, Tristano evokes – the author leaves it to his reader’s interpretation whether this is a conscious or unconscious decision – a steadily rising conflict with Marco: his first act as a knight is to free precisely the same lands owned by his uncle of tributary obligations. In doing so, Tristano, the heir, intentionally places himself in the line of his ancestors by affirming: “[...] io mi sono fermato di volermi fare cavaliere, e di volere contare lo detto trebuto; non per amore della vile gente di questo reame, ma per amore del mio lignaggio —.”²⁶⁶. This marks the starting point of the rivalry between the young and capable heir Tristano and his outclassed uncle, a conflict which is to permeate almost the entire work. After the successful attempt at freeing the country from tributary obligations, Tristano elicits more and more feelings of distrust and envy in his uncle, although he had initially been anxious about his newly found nephew’s safety and gladdened at his return free from harm. Marco begins to fear for the sanctity of his throne²⁶⁷. This is also intensified by Tristano’s greater success with the high-ranking ladies, due to his exemplary knightly nature, although

²⁶⁴ Two generations prior, it is remarkable that the author has the succession arranged as follows: “Et Gandaries et Trasfilas vissero insieme gran tempo, et ebbero dodici figliuoli maschi; e ’l primo genito, al quale succedeva la reità, ebbe nome Zersides. Et passato Gandaries di questa vita, li dodici loro figliuoli furono in concordia et fecero il loro fratello maggiore re di Cornovaglia [mind you, there still without the tributary agreement with Ireland]; et Baralissi, altro loro fratello, fecero re di Lionis; et gli altri dieci fratelli che rimasero, si misseno in aventura per li lontani paesi, per conquistare onore si come pro’ et liali cavalieri [...]. Et essendo Cresides re di Cornovaglia et Baralis re di Lionis, et Cresides morì da ivi a poco tempo, e ’l suo reame rimase a Baralis suo fratello.” *Ibid.*, p. 9 (chapter III). After this and one generation prior to Meliadus, Marco and Perna, the author has the two kingdoms of Cornwall and Leonis fall to their father Felis and later become a tributary to Ireland, until the division of the kingdom through Meliadus and Marco: “Et Baralis ebbe due figliuoli, e l’ uno ebbe nome Feriando et l’ altro Felissi; et Feriando morì donzello, et appresso morì Baralis suo padre; sicchè Feliss fu incoronato delli due reami, cioè di Lionis et di Cornovaglia. Et dimorando el re Felis in tale maniera, gli venne addosso lo re Dilianfer d’ Irlanda [...] alla fine, lo re Dilianfer passò nel reame di Cornovaglia con grande moltitudine di cavalieri et pedoni, e pose l’assedio alla città di Tintale; e tanto vi dimorò a oste, che la prese e sottomissela ad sé per trebuto, e pose lo’ allora certo censo, lo quale dovessero pagare ciascuno anno.” *Ibid.*, p. 9f. (chapter III). In the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, this also points to the fact that it was quite possible for the rightful heir to inherit not only one, but both kingdoms, after the childless death of a close relative.

²⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 63f. (chapter XVII). The following is literally stated in regard to Tristano’s age at this stage: “E allora era Tristano di quindici anni [...]”. *Ibid.*, p. 63 (chapter XVII).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66 (chapter XVII).

²⁶⁷ Regarding Marco’s friendly reception of Tristano: Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 66f. (chapter XVII), p. 69 (chapter XVIII) and p. 72f. (chapter XIX).

It should be added at this point in the narrative of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, though, that his uncle, who is also king, cannot possibly see his nephew as a rival since the heavily-injured Tristano is in a situation in which he is preoccupied with surviving until his return from Ireland. However, as soon as Tristano returns to Cornwall, fully recovered, Marco’s attitude towards his nephew changes.

Regarding Marco’s burgeoning distrust and envy: cf. *Ibid.*, p. 92 (chapter XXV) and p. 96 (chapter XXVI).

he never promises them marriage. The conflict reaches its climax with the rivalry surrounding the person of Isotta. Invariably, Tristano emerges as the more potent and suitable of the two. Thus, a first encounter between Tristano and the Irish king's daughter already takes place in chapter XX: here, the protagonist, unrecognised and as yet without any involvement from Marco, has his poisoned wound healed by Isotta at the paternal court, a wound which had been caused by her uncle when Cornwall was in the process of being freed from tributary obligations²⁶⁸. During this stay, in chapter XXI, Tristano develops feelings for Isotta, although they only become apparent when his jealousy is sparked by one of his rivals – and at the time a tourney winner – Palamides lo Pagano, who seeks to gain the affection of the Irish princess. Thus, Tristano unhesitatingly enters into competition with Palamides, in chapters XXI and XXII, declares him to be his ‘mortal enemy’ and subsequently defeats him in a great tourney²⁶⁹. After this sequence of episodes and Tristano's first stay in Ireland, at the beginning of chapter XXIV, the author emphasises the following in regard to Tristano's and Isotta's feelings for each other: “E con molti sospiri, l'uno si diparte da l'altro; imperò che di liale amore l'uno amava l'altro.”²⁷⁰. The author conceives of ‘liale amore’ not as sexual love aimed at bodily gratification, but as ‘love of the soul’, as is once more clarified in chapter XXXIII, immediately before the love potion episode²⁷¹. Only after his return from Ireland to the royal court of Cornwall, in chapters XXIV and XXV, does Tristano allow himself a – successful and reciprocal – sexual interest in a young noblewoman, who he knows will be married in future, though, and thus poses no threat to the completion of his knighthood. The lady's name is Dama dell' Aigua della Spina. However, she is also very much sought after by his uncle, the King of Cornwall. As a result of this sudden development, Marco and Tristano face each other for the first time in the episode of the Dama del Aigua della Spina²⁷². In the process, the jealous king seeks to confront his nephew incognito, having not been recognised by the latter and so the following happens: “[...] ma Tristano forte innaveròe lo re e misselo in terra del ca-

²⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 74f. (chapter XX).

²⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 76-83 (chapters XXI and XXII). Next to the emerging hostility between Palamides and Tristano, it is noteworthy that the author also addresses the slight age difference between them and intentionally describes them as coevals: “[...] Palamides molto molto odiava Tristano e Tristano odiava lui, e volentieri l'uno arebbe tratto a fine l'altro; e cominciòssi in sì forte punto quello odio e quel mal talento, che poi furono sempre mortali nemici. E ciascuno era giovane cavaliere, salvo che Palamides avea pur alquanti anni più di tempo che Tristano.”. *Ibid.*, p. 78 (chapter XXI).

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88 (chapter XXIV).

²⁷¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 117ff. (chapter XXXIII). Immediately from the outset of chapter XXXIII, the author stresses this once again, although it would be too short-sighted to equate ›agape‹ with ›eros‹: “[...] e Tristano onestamente e di buono talento serviva Isotta di tutte quelle cose ch'egli pensava che a lei fosse in talento. Si come liale e cortese cavaliere, studiava Isotta avesse piacere e sollazzo, acciò ch'ella non si desse alcuna malanconia; e 'nverso di lei non gli tiròe ancora niuno folle pensiero nè reo, se non com' ella fosse stata sua sirocchia.”. *Ibid.*, p. 117 (chapter XXXIII).

²⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 90-95 (chapter XXV).

vallo, e lo re a grande pena tornò verso Tintoille.”²⁷³. Once more, Tristano emerges as more potent and suitable in this depiction. In addition, the author uses this episode as a first precursor and foreshadowing of later problems connected to the triangle of Tristano, Isotta, and Marco. Still in the same chapter in which Marco does not openly show his defeat, his humiliation, and his resentment towards his nephew, the blood drops episode takes place during a trip by the court society to the beach, an occasion at which the Dama dell’ Aigua della Spina and her husband are also present²⁷⁴.

Thus, Tristano sinks for the first time into an absorbed state of mind, which has been termed ›Minnetrance‹ (‘the minstrel’s trance’) in academia, after perusing three drops of blood which have fallen into the snow. Marco reacts to Tristano’s contemplative behaviour as follows:

“E allora lo re lo domanda quello che egli pensava; e Tristano disse: — Certo, sire, questo proprio colore porta in suo viso la bella pulcella Isotta, figliuola dello re Languis d’Irlanda, la quale passa tutte l’altre di bellezze; la quale mi scampò da mala morte — .”²⁷⁵

With this remark, Tristano unintentionally reveals a vulnerable spot to his uncle, who is still resentful from his defeat concerning the Dama dell’ Aigua della Spina. Furthermore, he later saves the life of the Dama dell’ Aigua della Spina, who is lost due to the king’s rash accom-

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 92 (chapter XXV).

²⁷⁴ This episode is primarily known to us featuring a different protagonist, namely Perceval, especially in Chrétien de Troyes’ ‘Le roman de Perceval ou Le conte du Graal’ (V. 4164-4461). The author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ has markedly shortened this episode, transformed and tailored it towards his protagonist Tristano. In addition, he uses the minstrel’s trance, into which Tristano lapses for the first time after seeing the drops of blood, as a recurring element in the further course of the novel: Cf. for this Polidori 1864, p. 175 (chapter XLIX), p. 195 (chapter LII), p. 280f. (chapter LXXVII) and p. 483 (chapter CXXIV). Next to Chrétien’s ‘Perceval’, the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ may have also been alluding to Lancelot’s ›minstrel’s trance‹, in his ‘Lancelot ou Le chevalier de la charrette’. Concerning Tristano’s ›minstrel’s trance‹ in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Marie-José Heijkant notes: “L’attitudine pensosa, che denota l’*amor de lonh*, diventa una caratteristica di Tristano, a cui era stata prima attribuita la contemplazione delle tre gocce di sangue nella neve propria di Prezzivalle nel *Conte du Graal*. Si capovolge la situazione tradizionale, poiché il tipico cavaliere pensoso Lancillotto – in Rustichello arriva al Petrone «mout pensant»- disturba scortesemente la concentrazione psichica altrui.” Heijkant 1997, p. 14f. Next to this, there is another passage in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ that strengthens the suspicion that the author is alluding to Chrétien’s ‘Le roman de Perceval ou Le conte du Graal’ (V. 95-404) in these passages: Here it is Lancialotto, having laid eyes on knights for the first time. Although Lancialotto, not Tristano who does not appear yet in the narrative in this early chapter of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, is used for the reference, Lancialotto’s reaction to seeing the knights undoubtedly reminds one of Chrétien’s ‘Perceval’, even if in an abridged form: Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 14f. (chapter VI). Without determining a specific Perceval version, Edmund G. Gardner has also come to this conclusion. Cf. Gardner 1971, p. 157. In ‘Tristano Riccardiano’, however, deemed to be one of the main sources for the Tristan narrative in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ next to the ‘Tristan en prose’, there are strong deviations in the details within the entire narrative passage and the blood drop episode is also not present: Cf. Heijkant 1991, p. 118-128 (chapter XLVI-LI).

Note: The ‘Tristan en prose’ shows through multiple dialogues the king’s negative emotions directed towards his nephew in this situation. In addition, Tristan remarks upon Yselt in his uncle’s company directly after his (first) return from Ireland to the court of Marc and before his meeting with another lady. Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 177-197 (§ 354-395).

²⁷⁵ Polidori 1864, p. 94 (chapter XXV).

modation of a free wish, in a smaller episode and returns her to her husband²⁷⁶. In this way, Marco's growing jealousy and the rivalry between uncle and nephew in the 'Tavola Ritonda' are increasingly highlighted, until it is said at the beginning of chapter XXVI:

“A tanto dice lo conto, che vedendo lo re Marco la prodezza di Tristano, ciascuno giorno entrava in maggiore sospetto, e faceva la ragione che fanno gli paurosi e gli misleali, che non àno fede in loro e non credono che altri l' abbia incontro di loro; e diceva in fra sè: — Se Tristano dimora in questo paese, egli, per la sua prodezza, vorrà esser signore e mantener corona per sé stesso —. Allora pensa o di farlo morire, o di mandarlo in tale contrada, ch' egli in quello reame mai non torni.”²⁷⁷

Thus, the errand with dire consequences is conceived of, for which Marco sends Tristano to the royal court of Ireland in order to have him bring back as a bride the Irish princess Isotta, of all people, and all the while hoping that his nephew should perish during the attempt. As king, Marco even insists on it:

“[...] e io già, per mia voglia, non ne prenderei già mai niuna, se io non ne prendessi una la quale per voi, e ancora per altrui, m' è stata lodata di bellezze e di nobilitadi. Questa si è la figliuola dello re Languis d'Irlanda, la quale m' à tanto innamorato lo cuore, che io per lei non posso trovar luogo nè posa.”²⁷⁸

Furthermore, Marco adds the following requirement, after having given Tristano his orders: “[...] e di quie a tre giorni voi vi dipartiate, e mai in questo reame non tornate, se voi la bella Isotta non ne menate —.”²⁷⁹. Once more, however, Tristano turns out to be successful during this mission by representing King Languis of Ireland in a trial by combat and thus securing a free wish as a reward²⁸⁰. It is notable that the author has Tristano always introduce himself as “[...] Tristano di Cornovaglia [...]” from this moment onwards in the narrative²⁸¹. With this in mind, the author explains it in the following manner:

“Ma chie mi domandasse perchè Tristano non diceva che fosse di Lionis, essendovi nato, io dirò che per due ragioni poteva l'uomo a quel tempo approvare suo titolo: la prima, dov' egli na-

²⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 94f. (chapter XXV). This is also a foreshadowing of Isotta being kidnapped in chapters XLI and XLII.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 96 (chapter XXVI).

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 96f. (chapter XXVI).

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97 (chapter XXVI).

²⁸⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 97-113 (chapter XXVI-XXXII).

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109 (chapter XXX).

scea; la seconda, dov' egli si faceva cavaliere. E però Tristano amava tanto sua cavalleria, ch' egli s' appellava di Cornovaglia, perchè quivi egli era statovi fatto cavaliere.”²⁸²

When Tristano wants to make use of his wish and ask for Isotta's hand in marriage on his uncle's behalf, after having reached the royal court of Ireland and Languis, the king initially misunderstands him and declares the following:

“— Tristano, molto mi contento e assai mi piace di donarvi mia figlia a dama, perch' io non soe niuno re al mondo che di voi non dovesse troppo bene esser appagato; e voglio vi donare la metade del mio reame, e sarò assai di voi più allegro, che di niuno altro re del mondo —.”²⁸³

After Tristano subsequently explains that he intends on obtaining Isotta as his uncle's future wife, Languis shows himself displeased and asserts:

“— In cortesia, v' addomando che voi prendiate Isotta a vostra dama per voi; e ancor più, io liberamente vi dono la corona del mio reame; e ciò fo io perchè in voi regnano quattro cose le quali fanno l'uomo perfetto in questo mondo, e specialmente in cavalleria: che voi siete gentile e di grande lignaggio; cortese; e siete savio, colli begli costumi, colla molta prodezza; oltre misura bello e meglio fatto che altro cavaliere —.”²⁸⁴

Although Tristano insists on his uncle having Isotta as his bride, he at least acknowledges the king's attachment to him and his equally generous offer and provides an explanation for his behaviour: “[...] io la domando per lo mio zio Marco; chè ancora io non sono acconcio a torre dama, però che io non potrei essere cavaliere errante, e non mi potrei tanto inobrigare.”²⁸⁵. With this, Tristano reveals the obstacles which stand in-between the Irish princess and himself, namely his wish to perfect his knighthood on the one hand and the point in time chosen by his uncle concerning Isotta's marriage on the other. Nevertheless, Languis still shows himself to be displeased about the matter:

“E lo re, vedendo che altro non potea fare, sie prende Isotta per la mano, e si la dona a Tristano, dicendo: — Io ve la raccomando, però che allo re Marco è ella male investita; chè, per la mia

²⁸² Ibid., p. 111 (chapter XXX).

As a side note: shortly after this, the Irish princess carries the name of 'Isotta di Cornovaglia', although she is mostly only referred to as 'Isotta' or 'Isotta la bionda'.

²⁸³ Ibid., p. 113 (chapter XXXII).

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 114 (chapter XXXII).

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

fè, ello no' è degno d' avere sie fatta derrata. E priega Iddio ch' ella di lui tosto rimanga disciolta —.”²⁸⁶

In this way, it is emphasised that even outsiders, such as the King of Ireland, regard Tristano to be more potent and suitable in every aspect compared to Marco²⁸⁷.

After Tristano decides to hold true to his promise, however, the fateful ›love potion-episode‹ occurs before the bride is handed over to Marco, during the trip back to Cornwall in the course of which the physical love between Tristano and Isotta also begins²⁸⁸. During the crossing, the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ has incorporated a remarkable feature as a delaying moment before the Irish princess is brought to Marco: the wedding of Tristano and Isotta, albeit in secret and on an island due to external forces²⁸⁹. This happens to be a very distinctive feature of the Italian Tristan-version since the wedding is not even mentioned in the ‘Tristan en prose’²⁹⁰, one of the main sources for the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, nor explicitly in the subsequent Spanish version entitled ‘Libro del esforzado caballero Don Tristan de Leonis y de sus grandes hechos en armas’²⁹¹, which has in parts a great propinquity to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. In the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, this method ensures a greater legitimacy for the lovers through the secret connection already existent before Isotta’s marriage to Marco – greater indeed than in almost any other Tristan version from this time period – meanwhile also providing Tristano’s justified claim to Isotta. Over the course of the narrative, the author continues to reinforce Tristano’s right to Isotta, and not only this, in opposition to Marco by showing the greater ability of the young knight and heir until his final death in chapter CXXX. Soon after, he depicts the king as being dominated by feelings of jealousy upon his nephew’s return to Cornwall in chapter XL:

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Cf. also: Grimberty 1994, p. 95. In the ‘Tristano Riccardiano’, a very short dialogue between Languis and Tristano admittedly reveals the king’s wish to have Tristano, and not someone else, marry his daughter. However, the Irish king does not completely insist on this and also does not promise Tristano his kingdom in exchange. The reasons for his utterances are hardly mentioned. Thus, Languis is content with just a promise made by Tristano and his declaration: “«Io la voglio pur per lo ree Marco, inpercioe ch’io igli l’òe promessa».” Heijkant 1991, p. 137 (chapter LVI). The motives are dealt with much more thoroughly and deliberately in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, though.

²⁸⁸ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 119-123 (chapter XXXIV).

²⁸⁹ Cf. Ibid., p. 123-133 (chapters XXXV-XXXVII). After the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ has portrayed this as a special custom on the island, it is concisely stated in the same passage: “Allora messer Tristano [...] e appresso sposa a sua dama Isotta. [...] Allora stava bene Tristano con grande diletto e a suo modo colla bella Isotta; e niuna cosa mancava loro, se non che non si potevano dell’ isola partire.” Ibid., p. 133 (chapter XXXVII).

For additional evidence of this, see Joan Tasker Grimberty’s evaluation: Grimberty 1994, p. 95.

²⁹⁰ Cf. Curtis, Renée L. (Ed.): *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*. Tome II. Leiden 1976, p. 78f. (§ 464-465).

²⁹¹ Cf. Bonilla y San Martín, Adolfo: *Libros de Caballerías*. Primera Parte: *Ciclo arturico & ciclo carolingio*. Libro del esforzado caballero Don Tristan de Leonis y de sus grandes hechos en armas. (Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 6). Madrid 1907, p. 368 (chapter XXIII).

“Allora Tristano fae assapere allo re Marco di sua ritornata. Di ciòe lo re Marco fue assai tristo e dolente; chè non arebbe voluto che Tristano fosse mai ritornato al paese: tant’ era già la ’nvidia ch’ egli gli avea messa e posta adosso, veggendolo tanto valoroso e tanto cortese e da bene. Ma pure gli fue fatto incontro, sentendo egli menava la dama: onde, vedendo Isotta tanta bella e onesta e piacente, con quegli costumi gentileschi e avvenenti, fue allegro molto molto più ch’ altro che viva. E allora egli pregia Tristano sopra ogn’ altro cavaliere, di leanza e di sapere e di prodezza [...]”²⁹²

It is merely the obtainment of Isotta that is able to make Marco forget his jealousy, at least for the time being. Elated by the wedding night and envy temporarily forgotten, Marco then transfers power over one half of his kingdom to Isotta and the other – and this is remarkable – to Tristano²⁹³. In doing so, his nephew possesses ›de nomine‹ an even greater claim to these domains. In accordance with the author’s description, one half of the kingdom of Cornwall is subsequently given to the newly-crowned Queen Isotta, while the other is transferred to Tristano. ›De facto‹, there is no further mention of the consequences of this allegedly public transference of power to Tristano in the following parts of the narrative.

Shortly after Marco’s marriage with Isotta, in chapter XLII Tristano once more turns out to be the more potent and suitable of the two by being the only one capable of saving Isotta from the clutches of the knight Palamides, to whom Marco had foolishly lost her in chapter XLI, and even scolds the king for his behaviour, leaving the latter no other possibility but to accept it²⁹⁴. By doing so, the reader is shown over and over again that Tristano is superior to his uncle. Next to this, the author reveals a further peculiarity in the structure of the narrative’s content up to Tristano’s death: Marco never again faces his exceptional nephew alone in a duel, but instead always attempts to reach him with the help of his inferiors and other people with a grudge, especially by means of his powers as the king and by stealth. Over time, however, Tristano also gains more and more powerful allies, who stand by his side on multiple occasions as strong aides. In a first step, he finally convinces Lancialotto to join him in chapter XLIX²⁹⁵. He is also able to win over his uncle on his mother’s side, King Artù, who had already been made aware of Tristano in the latter’s trial by combat for Languis of Ireland and also had him inscribed in the book of the Round Table in chapter XXXI, they join forces at

²⁹² Polidori 1864, p. 142 (chapter XL).

²⁹³ Cf. Ibid., p. 144 (chapter XL).

²⁹⁴ Cf. Ibid., p. 148-154 (chapter XLI-XLII).

²⁹⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 175-182 (chapter XLIX). It should be noted at this point that Lancialotto already decides in chapter XL to leave for Cornwall due to his strong wish of meeting Tristano. Cf. Ibid., p. 142 (chapter XL).

the very latest from chapter LXI onwards – after he rescues Artù from captivity²⁹⁶. This alliance between Artù und Tristano is strengthened at the tourney at the castle of Verzeppe, in chapters XCIV to C, when they publicly meet each other for the first time in person. The author clearly shows that Artù – also in his capacity as king – unreservedly accepts Tristano as Isotta’s partner²⁹⁷. Besides this, Tristano is also able to win over the knights of the Round Table²⁹⁸.

There are two further relevant characteristics in the narrative concerning the rivalry between uncle and nephew: for one, Tristano, as a traveling knight and nephew of the King of Cornwall, does not permanently tie himself to the part of Leonis he inherited. Instead, he has it administered – on Governale’s advice – by one of his father’s friends, the knight Palmoano, while he is finishing his training as a knight abroad, after he had been endangered by his step-mother and his father’s death. After his return from his first stay in Cornwall and Ireland, he seeks his father’s murderers and takes vengeance, subsequently giving Leonis as a feudal tenure to the brothers of Brandina – Isotta’s lady-in-waiting – for five years. However, he himself leaves Leonis immediately after this and travels to Cornwall. In order to appease Marco’s distrust, for the kingdom of Petita Bretagna had previously come into Tristano’s possession through his alleged marriage to Isotta of the White Hands although he transferred actual governance of it to the old king, Tristano also decides to transfer Leonis to Governale’s charge in chapter LXIII in a final move. Additionally, as previously mentioned, it may be assumed that Tristano’s claim to half of the kingdom of Cornwall is not unjustified. Due to the fact that Tristano has, in particular, followed his father in the traditions of the ‘cavalieri erranti’ code of behaviour, which will be dealt with in more depth in 4.1.2.3, Tristano endeavours to avoid a direct takeover of royal domains.

Second, it is conspicuous that Marco loses his wife, the Queen of Cornwall, for a longer period of time within the space of this domain because she has followed Tristano to his territory. Isotta had asked Tristano in chapter LXXXIX – after they had both been rescued by the knight called Prezzivalle from Marco’s custody – to take her from Cornwall to his own castle Gioiosa Guardia, in order to stay with him there. Only in chapter CXXII is Marco able to retrieve the Queen of Cornwall due to King Artù’s weakened position and the absence of Tristano and many other knights of the Round Table, who are attempting to find the Holy Grail. Moreover, Marco only succeeds in kidnapping Isotta by employing diversionary tactics.

²⁹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 111f. (chapter XXXI) and p. 220-227 (chapters LIX-LXI).

²⁹⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 362-392 (chapters XCIV-C).

²⁹⁸ Short note: according to the author, the King of Cornwall is also thoroughly beaten in combat by Prezzivalle, an important knight of the Round Table, after Prezzivalle arrives to rescue Tristano from captivity. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 338f. (chapter LXXXIX).

Therefore, Marco de facto loses his queen for a considerable part of the narrative time in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. Even after this, however, Marco can still not be sure of his hold on Isotta, since Tristano begins to secretly seek out his great love in Cornwall, after his discontinuation of the Grail search because of his yearning for Isotta. Thus, the conflict between uncle and nephew permeates the entire novel and increases in vehemence until Tristano, having been caught red-handed in Isotta’s chambers in chapter CXXVII, is indeed ambushed and killed by Marco. The way in which Tristano dies at the hand of the King of Cornwall may remind the reader of the murder of other relatives by Marco – namely Perna – and also of his inability to directly face his nephew as an equal:

“[...] e mirando per una finestra ferrata, e vedendo Tristano ch’ era i’ giubba di seta, ed era inchinato al giuoco ch’ egli facea con Isotta, lo quale molto gli dilettaua; allora lo re, per mal talento, si gli lanciò la lancia e ferillo nel fianco dal lato manco; e, per paura che Tristano nol vedesse, tantosto fuggì via.”²⁹⁹

Even after the treacherous attack, Marco still fears his closest relative so much that, according to the author, he immediately flees the scene of the crime. Thus, Tristano is revealed to be the more qualified and talented heir and husband for Isotta in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, not only by Marco’s actions but also by almost all other outsiders. Also, Marco’s murder of the protagonist is not without consequence for the King of Cornwall: Tristano, pretender to the throne and perfect knight, is avenged by all notable kings and allies, a circumstance which is particular to the Italian strand of the Tristan tales. First, Amoroldo of Ireland – Isotta’s cousin and Tristano’s friend – and Governale of Leonis, Tristano’s former teacher and protector join forces in order to avenge Tristano in Cornwall³⁰⁰. Within a short period of time, they are joined by King Artù and his remaining knights of the Round Table in Tintoille, better known as Tintagel, intending to enact vengeance upon Marco³⁰¹. Marco’s life ends only a few years after Tristano’s death in this manner:

“...e in cima della torre fanno fare una gabbia di ferro, e dentro vi missono lo re Marco in prigione; dicendogli che, perch’ egli none avea guardato Tristano vivo, ch’ egli lo guardasse morto... e che, mentre ch’ egli vivea, ciascuno di dovesse avere di tre maniere carne a grande abbondanza, e di fini vini e potenti, senza niuna acqua, e ciascuno mese gli mutassono due volte

²⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 496 (chapter CXXVII).

³⁰⁰ Cf. Ibid., p. 515f. (chapter CXXXIV).

³⁰¹ Cf. Ibid., p. 516-524 (chapter CXXXV- CXXXVIII).

roba di lana e di lino; e comandarono che pane nè altra minestra nè altra vivanda non gli desso-
no; e che mai neuno, nè morto nè vivo, none lo cavassono. E così fue fatto. In tale maniera vi-
vette lo re Marco XXXII mesi, e ingrassò tanto forte, che mai neuno uomo non si vidde sì gras-
so; e morì di grassezza. Ed è openione per alcuno che l' à veduta, che ancora quella torre è in
piede, è l' ossa dello re sono entro la gabbia.”³⁰²

4.1.2 The Concept of Chivalry in the Case of Tristano

As was hinted at in the last chapter in 4.1.1.3, the perfecting of knighthood has a special sig-
nificance for Meliadus of Leonis and also his son and heir Tristano in the narrative. Thus,
King Meliadus of Leonis is depicted in the first chapter of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ – still in con-
nection with the knights of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ under King Artù’s father Uter – as an excel-
lent knight who takes part in a tourney:

“Ed a tanto, ecco per lo campo venire lo re Meliadus, a guisa di dragone, e portava le ’nsegne
ad azzurro e ’l liono ad auro in mezzo; e si venía gridando: — Chi vuole la giostra de lo re Me-
liadus di Leonis, aver la puote —. Ed allora si traie innanzi el pro cavalier e viene a la rincontra
co’ le insegne nere: ciò era lo re Scalabrone, lo quale si portava a lo re Meliadus grande odio,
solo per invidia di cavallaria [...]. E’ cavallieri molto si confortano, imperò che ciascuno avaría
dato una città per esser vincitore di quella giostra; et erano tenuti abendoro e’ miglior cavalieri
del mondo, et onne altra giostra era rimasta per la loro.”³⁰³

4.1.2.1 The Term ‘Chivalry’ and the Difficulties Connected to a More Precise Definition

The term ‘chivalry’ or ‘cavalleria’, which is used so naturally here, turns out to be difficult to
define even in the most general sense, mainly due to the great distance to our own times: Wer-
ner Hechberger notes in this regard:

“Rittertum ist ein komplexes soziales und kulturelles Phänomen. Trotz beträchtlicher regionaler
Unterschiede einerseits und in mancher Hinsicht vergleichbarer Entwicklungen in anderen Kul-
turen andererseits wird es in der Forschung gewöhnlich als eine gesamteuropäische Erschei-
nung betrachtet. Die einzelnen Wurzeln können unterschiedlich weit zurückverfolgt werden.
Von der Frage, welche dieser Traditionen man als konstitutiv einschätzt, hängt es ab, ob man

³⁰² Ibid., p. 523 (chapter CXXXVII).

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 4 (chapter I).

das Rittertum als ein in Frankreich entstandenes Phänomen oder als Produkt aller Nachfolgereiche des Karolingerreiches versteht. Bestimmte Elemente kann man sogar bis in die Spätantike zurückführen. Demnach wird Rittertum in der Forschung unterschiedlich definiert.“³⁰⁴

In addition, Maurice Keen’s assertion may be added to an approximate definition of the term ‘chivalry’:

“It is a word that was used in the middle ages with different meanings and shades of meaning by different writers and in different contexts. Sometimes, especially in early texts, it means no more than a body of heavily armed horsemen, a collective of *chevaliers*. Sometimes chivalry is spoken of as an order, as if knighthood ought to be compared to an order of religion: sometimes it is spoken of as an estate, a social class – the warrior class whose martial function, according to medieval writers, was to defend the *patria* and the Church. Sometimes it is used to encapsulate a code of values apposite to this order or estate.”³⁰⁵

It is important, therefore, to pay attention to the factors contributing to the term of ‘chivalry’ used by the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and which may serve to better localise it. First, the temporal classification is relevant, as the following may be said in principle:

“If a genuine age of chivalry is to be sought, it is surely in the middle ages, and not the early modern age, that most would locate it, somewhere between, say, the year 1100 and the beginning of the sixteenth century: somewhere, that is to say, between the launching of the first crusade and the Reformation; between the composition of the Song of Roland and the death of Bayart; between the time when the triumph of the Norman horsemen at Hastings was recorded in the Bayeux tapestry and the triumph of the artillery.”³⁰⁶

³⁰⁴ Hechberger, Werner: Adel, Ministerialität und Rittertum im Mittelalter. (Enzyklopädie Deutscher Geschichte, Band 72. Ed. by Lothar Gall). München 2004, p. 34.

³⁰⁵ Keen, Maurice: Chivalry. New Haven/ London 1984, p. 2.

In addition, see also Franco Cardini’s commentary for a more detailed discussion on this term or, more precisely, for the conceptual field: Cardini, Franco: Alle radici della cavalleria medievale. (Strumenti. Ristampe anastatiche, 90). 1^a ristampa. Firenze 1991, p. 315-333.

Also, a final note by Franco Cardini may be of particular interest in regard to the following account and may already provide a hint regarding a possible, though not too specialised, terminological direction: “Da allora [= from the 11th century onwards], il *miles* che non avesse accettato il nuovo programma, sarebbe stato non più cavaliere, bensì «anticavaliere»: ché ad esser cavaliere non bastavano più le armi, il cavallo, la forza, l’addestramento, il coraggio, ma occorreva una volontà, l’adesione a una norma morale la cui accettazione era segnata da un rito iniziatico. Fu l’unione d’un genere di vita e d’una specializzazione professionale con una missione etica e un programma sociale, a fare il cavaliere medievale: unione di prodezza e di saggezza, di esercizio della forza e di culto della giustizia. Certo, nella realtà le cose andarono spesso diversamente: le vicende di gran parte della cavalleria restano assai poco esemplari. Ma l’autocoscienza rimase salda, e valicò il medioevo a giungere, per le vie oscure dell’inconscio e per quelle tortuose della semantica, a codici di valori che a tutt’oggi sono lungi dall’estinguersi. Ed è appunto questa, in fondo, la ragione principale per cui il cavaliere medievale, anche per noialtri *homines oeconomici* e cittadini d’un mondo desacralizzato, è più «bello» d’un agente di cambio.”. Cardini 1991, p. 332f.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 1.

4.1.2.2 Contextual Factors

The author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ wrote his work in the first half of the 14th century, according to a, by now predominant, academic consensus, even more precisely in all probability between 1330 and 1335³⁰⁷. In addition, he is already well acquainted with the only recently published ‘(Divina) Commedia’ by Dante Alighieri, as several textual allusions in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ undoubtedly attest to, especially in the famous Paolo-Francesca-passage to canto V of the ‘Commedia’³⁰⁸. Therefore, he uses the term ‘chivalry’ in a temporal context, which may in general be called the late Middle Ages, and also with a profound knowledge of the outstanding Italian author, Dante, who himself came from a family of knights³⁰⁹. Tuscany is considered to be the region in which the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ of our anonymous author was created, when using Polidori’s text version as a basis³¹⁰. There were, however, special conditions and developments in the Middle Ages and late Middle Ages - including for ‘chivalry’ – in the territory we know as Italy today and which should not be ignored:

“Italy’s social makeup was unique in that it had a comparatively weak feudal nobility facing a predominant merchant class who operated from extraordinarily vibrant bases of teeming communes. We must not, however, underestimate the ideological power of the nobility. Not only did the burghers of the communes adopt many of the cultural ideals of the knightly caste, as would be the case throughout European society for centuries to come, but even in practical terms the nobility dominated the communes through the end of the twelfth century. Although cities were not enfeoffed and had no lords within the feudal order, it was not until the end of the thirteenth century that the *popolo*, to wit, the organized class of wealthy merchants and entrepreneurs, managed to take control of most communes. Even so, the *popolo*’s almost complete triumph in such city-states as Florence and Bologna was exceptional... Even in Florence, though less than in most communes, the presence of noblemen was real and conspicuous, with

³⁰⁷ Cf. in this work footnote 101.

³⁰⁸ Cf. Trevi 1999, p. 52f., 59 and 62; Hoffman, Donald L.: *Radix Amoris: The Tavola Ritonda and its response to Dante’s Paolo and Francesca*. In: *Tristan and Isolde. A casebook*. Edited with an introduction by Joan Tasker Grimbert. (Garland reference library of the humanities, Vol. 1514). (Arthurian characters and themes, Vol. 2. Series Editor Norris J. Lacy). New York/London 1995, p. 207-222; Guida 1971, p. 137 footnote 12; Gardner 1971, p. 153.

³⁰⁹ Cf. Petrocchi, Giorgio: *Vita di Dante*. (Collezione storica). Roma/Bari² 1984, p. 5ff.; Dante Alighieri: *Die Göttliche Komödie*. Italienisch und deutsch. Übertragung und Erläuterung von August Vezin. Einführung von Manfred Hardt. Mit Holzschnitten der ersten venezianischen Inkunabel 1491. (Sammlung Weisheit und Überlieferung). Basel/Rom 1989, p. XI f. (Introduction by Manfred Hardt); Dante Alighieri: *Die Göttliche Komödie*. Translated by Hermann Gmelin. Kommentar III. Teil: Das Paradies. Zweite, unveränderte Auflage. Stuttgart 1970, p. 283ff. and p. 301.

³¹⁰ Cf. Delcorno Branca 1998, p. 106.

the difference that they were highly urbanized, hence closely tied to business activities. They did keep their landed bases, but joined the merchants within the cities.”³¹¹

These exterior indicators should also be considered in order to gain an approximate understanding of the importance which the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ places on the term of ‘chivalry’ in his literary work and in which way he shapes it – especially in regard to his protagonist, Tristano. A further clue, which should not go unnoticed, is Daniela Branca’s hypothesis, to be found in her foundational dissertation and study from 1968, indicating that the anonymous author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ may have been close, or even belonging, to the juridical professions in a different area of activity³¹². Still, this would not reveal a great contradiction or even incompatibility in regard to the author’s interest in chivalry, as soon as one takes into account the previous assertions concerning the special development and situation in Italy in the Middle Ages and late Middle Ages. As previously mentioned, another example, which is in parts at least similar, is the famous author Dante Alighieri, who grew up in Florence – and therefore also in the region of Tuscany – and whose knowledge of and interest in adapting chivalric culture to a literary context is well known. A further hint that the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ did not consider the up-and-coming middle classes in the Italian cities and ‘chivalry’, as one of his major models, to be incompatible may precisely be found in the fact that he very often places an emphasis on towns and their populations belonging to their respective ruler³¹³. Also, he often locates the rulers’ palaces within the respective towns³¹⁴ and integrates, in brief additions, the townspeople into his narrative³¹⁵. Next to this, he is the only one who, as far as this may be discerned from a first comparison, depicts during Trista-

³¹¹ Scaglione, Aldo: *Knights at court. Courtliness, chivalry & courtesy from Ottonian Germany to the Italian Renaissance*. Berkley/Los Angeles 1991, p. 33f.

As a supplement to this remark, Aldo Scaglione’s monography may serve to underline this: “Italian noblemen eagerly joined the merchants within the free communes both practically and formally by becoming members of the guilds — a juridical requirement in Florence for any nobleman aspiring to a political career after Giano della Bella’s 1282 Ordinances of Justice. In Siena the largest bank of the time, the Gran Tavola, was founded and run by the prominent landed gentry of the Bonsignori family, reaching a peak of prosperity around 1260.”. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³¹² Cf. Branca 1968, p. 179; Heijkant 1997, p. 9.

³¹³ Cf. for this, to name just one particularly succinct example from a plethora of evidence: Polidori 1864, p. 39 (chapter XII), p. 89f. (chapter XXIV), p. 175 (chapters XLVIII and XLIX), p. 228 (chapter LXII): (It is remarkable here that Camelot is mainly brought in connection with a city); *Ibid.*, p. 231 (chapter LXIII) and p. 256 (chapter LXII): (In these passages, it is noteworthy that the king’s palace is also situated in the town of Tintagel).

Regarding these accentuations by the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Daniela Branca noted in her important study from 1968: “Nel tradizionale mondo arturiano circola un’atmosfera più reale e attorno alle fatali e splendide vicende dei protagonisti sentiamo spesso muoversi la sfera della vita quotidiana. Foreste, campagne, città, non solo hanno tutte un proprio nome, come luoghi esistenti veramente, ma si popolano di un umile gente [...]. La vita dei cavalieri conosce non solo fatiche ed avventure, ma anche parentesi spensierate di burle e di allegri banchetti in compagnia [...]”. Branca 1968, p. 176.

³¹⁴ Cf. as an example for this: Polidori 1864, p. 47 (chapter XIII).

³¹⁵ Cf. also: *Ibid.*, p. 45 (chapter XIII) and p. 90 (chapter XXIV).

no's stay in the Bretagne the alternating siege of two towns under the command of their respective ruler and even names them: Solon(i)a und Gippia³¹⁶. The conception of chivalry, which is represented by those belonging to this circle in the 'Tavola Ritonda', also has a direct impact on the towns' inhabitants and serves them as a guideline in some aspects.

4.1.2.3 The Concept of 'Chivalry' in the 'Tavola Ritonda' in General and Relating to Tristano in Particular

The concept of chivalry, which Tristano adheres to – as already mentioned in part in 4.1.1.3 – is represented by his father Meliadus before him. The codex of chivalry in the 'Tavola Ritonda' is described as follows:

“E di ciascuno paese veníano quivi a provare ciascuno a sua persona in fatti d'arme; e provavansi più e più volte; e potea esser trovato tanto pro', ch' era ricevuto per cavaliere errante; e alcuno che non si trovava tanto pro', sì si metteva in avventura sì come cavaliere straniero, però che cavaliere errante non poteva egli già essere. S' egli aveva cura di reame o di città o di castello, non poteva ancora essere ligittima mente, acciò che la sollecitudine della avarizia nollo traesse della prodezza. E anche cavaliere errante non poteva essere s' egli aveva mogliera, acciò che la cura e la pigrizia nollo traesse della prodezza. E da sé egli dovea cessare ogni altro pensiero, di non avere cura nè a rendite nè a ricchezze nè a tesoro nè a cosa che 'n sua cavalleria lo potesse impedimentire.”³¹⁷

4.1.2.3.1 Tristano in the Footsteps of his Father and his Training as a Knight

These guidelines, especially of the 'traveling knight' and accordingly the 'cavaliere errante', may help understand why Tristano's father Meliadus for so long refused to be married, until King Artù was finally able to prompt him to do so during the peace agreement. Originally, Meliadus was not to have a lady at his side, as long as he had the capacity to perfect his knighthood. In the main, the genealogical succession stands in the background for a 'cavaliere

³¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 188-195 (chapters LI and LII). In the 'Tristan en prose', the siege and liberation of the town of Alinge by King Hoel, a friend of Tristan, is retained: Cf. Curtis 1976, p. 156-161 (§ 560-566). Closely based on the 'Tristan en prose', the 'Tristano Panciatichiano' also mentions a town, unnamed however, defended by Tristan and King Hoel, with whom he is on good terms: Cf. Allaire 2002, p. 275ff. (chapter 151). Similarly, Tristan helps King Hoel defend the town of Lingnes against a siege in the 'Tristano Veneto': Cf. Donadello 1994, p. 300-308 (chapter 335-343). Only the 'Tristano Riccardiano' describes the subsequent siege of the town by the unnamed king of the Bretagne and later of the town of Egippi/Agippi(a) by Tristano and the king, though in an episodic fashion and in great detail regarding the battles but also more closely linked to the 'Tavola Ritonda': Cf. Heijkant 1991, p. 230-253 (chapter CVIII-CXXXVIII).

³¹⁷ Polidori 1864, p. 230f. (chapter LXII).

errante’, as is explained in their codex.³¹⁸ In return, he belongs to the form of knighthood considered to be the best, even more so when belonging to the chosen knights of the Round Table. Under the reign of Uter Pandragon, the king of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ or the ‘Old Round Table’, Meliadus is already considered to be one of the “[...] miglior cavalieri del mondo [...]”³¹⁹. Furthermore, Meliadus refuses to submit himself to King Artù, Uter’s successor:

“In buona fè, sire, io farei in prima árdare tutte mie terre e tutta mia gente far morire, che io mi sottomettesse a nissuna persona per temenzia o paura: ma per proprio amore, servirò a voi et a ogni persona; chè io so’ fermo et disposto di vivare e morire líbaro, [...]”³²⁰

Instead, Artù accepts him “[...] per amico e per compagno [...]” afterwards³²¹. His son Tristano strives towards the same. Especially after his father’s death, Tristano turns towards his chivalric heritage by first traveling to the friendly King Fieramonte in France – following Governale’s advice – and thereby fulfilling the first step of his training as a knight. There, he declines the offer of marrying the king’s daughter in accordance with the codex of the ‘cavaliere errante’ in the following words:

“— Sire, grande vostra mercè, che tanto onore e di cortesia mi mostrate. In neuna manera io riceverei vostro parentado, solo perch’ io sono giovane, e non sono usato ancora in fatti d’arme; sicchè non farebbe ancora per me impaccio di dama, nè d’altra sollecitudine che mi constringesse fuori dell’ uso che conduce altrui a cavalleria —.”³²²

With this, he directly follows in his father’s footsteps, to whom a similar rejection of marriage in his youth is ascribed. Tristano completely devotes himself to the completion of his knighthood in accordance with the principles laid down for it. After all, he is not the successor to an average ruler, but “[...] figlio dello re Meliadus, dello piú cortese e dello piú pro’ re del mondo [...]”³²³. During his next stay at Marco’s court in Cornwall, having meanwhile reached the prerequisite age for a knightly accolade, this is once more underlined:

“E allora era Tristano di quindici anni, e schermiva e armeggiava; e in altro non si adopera che in fatti d’arme e in cavalcare, acciò ch’ egli potesse venire di prodezza, e ch’ egli si facesse ca-

³¹⁸ Regarding the use of the term ‘genealogical succession’, see also the explanations in chapter 3.

³¹⁹ Polidori 1864, p. 4 (chapter I).

³²⁰ Ibid., p. 30 (chapter IX).

³²¹ Ibid., p. 31 (chapter IX).

³²² Ibid., p. 59f. (chapter XVI).

³²³ Ibid., p.59 (chapter XVI).

valiere, e che egli si somigliasse allo suo padre ed al suo legnaggio, lo quale era stato fiore degli cavalieri.”³²⁴

It is equally remarkable at this point that not only Tristano’s connectedness to his father’s legacy is highlighted, but also the one to his ancestral line in regard to the perfecting of his knighthood. The strong bond with his entire ancestral heritage is then convincingly confirmed by Tristano in the following chapter during his decision to defend Cornwall against the Irish tributary demands and initiates the lasting rivalry between uncle and nephew³²⁵.

4.1.2.3.2 Tristano's Beginnings as a Knight and his Progressive Integration into the Round Table

The author expressly shows his high esteem for chivalry in the careful arrangement of Tristano’s accolade during the conclusion of his formal training in Cornwall:

“E tutta quella notte vegghiò Tristano nella grande chiesa, sì come era usanza di fare, e di pregare Iddio che gli desse grazia di portare sua cavalleria con giustizia e con leanza e con prodezza; e fue in quella notte accompagnato da molti baroni e cavalieri. E venendo al mattino, e Tristano se ne vae nella grande piazza della città, e quivi lo re lo bagna, e quivi Tristano prese lo giuogo e lo nome della cavalleria; cioè, ch’ egli s’ innóbriga d’ essere pro’, ardito e sicuro, liale e cortese e giusto, e difendere ogni persona meni possente, allo quale fosse fatto alcuna cosa contra ragione; e rinunzia a ogni mercatanzia e arte, o vero sollecitudine la quale appartenesse ad avanzare mondano; e di ciò giura e fanne sacramento, sì come faceva ogni novello cavaliere. E appresso, lo re gli cinse la spada, e diègli la gotata, pregando Iddio che gli donasse ardire e prodezza e cortesia, acciò ch’ egli visse con ragione, con cortesia e con giustizia, che difendesse il dritto dal torto.”³²⁶

On closer examination of this passage, it becomes clearer why Tristano is being called ‘Tristano di Cornovaglia’ later in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, as mentioned in chapter 4.1.1.4. In addition, the passage highlights once more how important the turning away from all worldly obligations, which could hinder practicing his chivalry, is to a true knight.

As his next great success, Tristano is entered into the book of the Round Table due to his abilities as a knight, although King Artù had not yet met him personally at that point. A single trustworthy message about his deeds is sufficient for Artù:

³²⁴ Ibid., p. 63 (chapter XVI).

³²⁵ Cf. also chapter 4.1.1.4

³²⁶ Ibid., p. 66f. (chapter XVII).

“E letta che fue la lettera e solenne mente ascoltata, lo re Artus dimostra grande allegrezza; e fassi avanti a sè portare lo confermamento della Tavola, cioè uno libro ove erano scritti gli cavalieri erranti, e l’ ordine e l’ modo ch’ eglino doveano tenere. E lo re Artus vi fae suso scrivere lo nome di Tristano, e appresso poi lo risuggella. Il quale libro non fue mai più disuggellato, se non se per lo re Amoroldo e per messer Galasso.”³²⁷

After this, Tristano gains, by merit of his knightly prowess, attention early on from Lancialotto, who is considered to be the best knight at that point³²⁸. Another very prestigious knight, Galeotto, already calls him the following at this stage of the narrative: “[...] imperò ch’ egli è pure lo più ardito e lo più fine combattante che sia al mondo; e per la sua prodezza io gli rendei pace.”³²⁹. At the same time, Tristano underpins his chivalric attitude by responding to Galeotto’s remark that he would be calling him ‘Perdiventura’ if he did not explore Isotta’s love more thoroughly instead of handing the bride over to Marco as fast as possible: “— È meglio ch’ io perda tale ventura, che essere tenuto misleale di tanta cosa —.”³³⁰. In a further step, Lancialotto seeks out Tristano to declare his sympathy “[...] per amore di cavalleria [...]”³³¹. It also materialises in a duel, arising from a misunderstanding between them, that Tristano is his equal in combat. In the following, they immediately declare their friendship and Lancialotto directly shows his merit as an ally.³³² Tristano can quickly return the favour, however, after Lancialotto has incurred the wrath of King Artù in chapter L due to his involvement with Ginevara, and is being besieged by Artù and his troops in his castle Gioiosa Guardia. Tristano immediately comes to Lancialotto’s aid and is even able to negotiate a peace with King Artù. Among the reasons Tristano gives in order to persuade him to relent from attacking Lancialotto any further is the following: “[...] la terza, per render pace a tutti gli cavalieri erranti; chè vedete che la Tavola si è in grande discordia. E anche voi priego lo facciate per lo mio amore; [...]”³³³. Artù is very pleased about this most welcome meeting with Tristano and greets him in the subsequent way: “— Bene istía e vegna l’ onore di tutta cavalleria, e lo fiore di tutti gli erranti cavalieri, lo quale io ò disiato tanto di vedere!”³³⁴. Furthermore, Artù is also willing to forgive Lancialotto for Tristano’s sake and gives Tristano Gioiosa Guardia as a gift, with Lan-

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 112 (chapter XXXI).

³²⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 142 (chapter XL).

³²⁹ Ibid., p. 141f. (chapter XL).

³³⁰ Ibid., p. 140 (chapter XXXIX).

³³¹ Ibid., p. 178 (chapter XLIX).

³³² Cf. Ibid., p. 175-182 (chapter XLIX).

³³³ Ibid., p. 186 (chapter L).

³³⁴ Ibid.

cialotto's permission³³⁵. After approximately a third of the 'Tavola Ritonda', the author leaves, with his use of emphasis, no doubt concerning the status Tristano has gained so early on due to his outstanding chivalry.

4.1.2.3.3 *Tristano and King Artù - Tristano as a Member of the Round Table*

In the following parts of the 'Tavola Ritonda', Tristano's commitment to chivalry is unshaken, and he is able to show his gratitude for Artù's generosity by saving him from the clutches of the Dama Elergia, who is equipped with magical powers, without ever revealing his own true identity³³⁶. As soon as it becomes known that Tristano has saved the king, Artù and the knights of the Round Table in attendance celebrate him³³⁷. From chapter LXXIII onwards, Tristano persists in various adventures and fights due to his excellence as a knight, until he wins a great tourney in chapter LXXXII and is even challenged by King Artù to a duel, having not recognised him without any announcement of his name and vice versa. During this noteworthy confrontation, Tristano is presented as the clear winner and is subsequently also immediately able to beat Ivanoe, a respected knight of the Round Table.³³⁸ The Arthurian community is only able to breathe freely again after it transpires that Tristano is the unknown, victorious knight:

“E lo re, intendendo sì come quegli era stato messer Tristano, fue lo più allegro re del mondo; e sì lo pregia di bontà, di bellezze, di prodezze, sopra di tutti gli altri cavalieri del mondo; ed era assai contento che male glie n' era preso quando giostrò con lui al deserto. E allora fece bandire per tutta la sembraglia, sì come lo cavaliere che vinto avea lo torneo, sì era stato lo gentile messer Tristano, figliuolo dello re Meliadus di Leonis. E di ciò ciascuno cavaliere si racconsolava, imperò ch' eglino nollo aveano a disinore d' essere abbattuti per le mani dello più pro' cavaliere del mondo.”³³⁹

Thus, Artù, who is the much more powerful ruler through his influence, is depicted very differently from Marco of Cornwall despite a similar situation. After his defeat, Artù honours Tristano and acknowledges his defeat at the hands of the respected and outstanding knight without a loss of dignity. Merely five chapters later, the graciousness of Artù and his knights of the Round Table is repaid – in a self-contained episode in chapter LXXXVII – by Tristano,

³³⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 186f. (chapter L).

³³⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 224ff. (chapter LX).

³³⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 227. (chapter LXI).

³³⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p.304-309 (chapter LXXXII).

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 310f. (chapter LXXXII).

who once more rescues Artù and also all of his knights from captivity. In this instance, the mother of the lady who had held Artù captive in chapter LIX and LX, before Tristano was able to free him, attempts to take revenge for the death of her daughter and four sons by sending a knight.³⁴⁰ With this reference, the author is skilfully able to combine both incidents in which Artù is saved by Tristano and even augments it in the second case by including the knights of the Round Table:

“Manifesta la vera storia, che una dama di lontano paese, la quale molto sapeva delle sette arti e dimorava nella isola di Vallone, cioè nel mare di Soriano, era per nome appellata Escorducarla. E sappiendo ella, per alcuno messaggio, sì come uno cavaliere errante, in servizio dello re Artus, avea tratti a fine quattro suo’ figli, e lo re Artus avea tagliata la testa a sua figliuola Elergia davanti al meraviglioso palagio del Grande Disio (di che ella era la più trista dama del mondo); nè giorno nè notte in altro ella non pensava e non adoperava, se non come ella potesse prendere alta vendetta sopra dello re Artù e sopra gli cavalieri erranti, e condurli a tale, che mai cavaliere errante non si ricordasse.”³⁴¹

At the very latest, Tristano can be seen as fully integrated into the Arthurian community at this point. Thus, he himself is rescued from captivity and Marco’s clutches during his next stay in Cornwall – in chapter LXXXIX – by Prezzivalle, a knight of the Round Table who is also of the first rank.³⁴² The duty to fulfil this task was already decided upon by King Artù and the members of the Round Table, as the author brings to our attention:

“E sacciate che già era corsa la novella per le province, sì come Tristano era imprigionato; e lo re Artus e tutti cavalieri erranti in altro non pensavano, se non come lui potessero diliberare e trarlo di prigione.”³⁴³

Eventually, Prezzivalle is able to accomplish this by tempting Marco to a duel, wounding him and then bringing forward the following conditions:

“— Re Marco, degli due partiti pigliate uno: o voi cavate tantosto messer Tristano di prigione, o voi pensate al presente morire. Imperò io vi faccio manifesto, che io sono Prezzivalle di Gualles; e quegli che voi vedete là oltra, sono quattro gli migliori cavalieri che abbia lo re Artus in

³⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 324-336 (chapter LXXXVII).

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 324 (chapter LXXXVII).

³⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 338ff. (chapter LXXXIX).

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 338 (chapter LXXXVIII).

su' ostello: e per altro non ci à inviati monsignor lo re Artus in queste parti, che per diliberare
messer Tristano —.”³⁴⁴

In accordance with the narrative intention, it is apparent that Tristano is able to profit from his increasing connection with the Arthurian community, earned by his outstanding chivalry and commitment. Tristano's perfecting of his knighthood thus pays off, whereas Marco is presented once more as the loser in a duel. This is showcased in an amplified form later, when Isotta decides, by her own free will, to leave Marco and depart from the kingdom of Cornwall together with Tristano. On the way to Tristano's domain, Lancialotto, who had been making his way to free Tristano, joins them.³⁴⁵ At the beginning of the following chapter, further great deeds are ascribed to Tristano, who, unrecognised by any, is able to defeat several knights at Artù's temporary residence, including Calvano and Mordarette, King Artù's son, before riding onwards to Gioiosa Guardia with Lancialotto and Isotta. It is only after Lancialotto's return to Camelot that Artù discovers who the victorious knight and the lady in Lancialotto's company had been.³⁴⁶ Artù's interest in meeting Isotta in person, in order to verify “[...] s' ella era tanto bella come gli era contato; e per poterla vedere [...]”³⁴⁷, leads to the most elaborate event of the Arthurian community before the quest for the Holy Grail, the tournament of Verzeppe³⁴⁸.

4.1.2.3.4 *Tristano's Apex as an Arthurian Knight - The Tournament of Verzeppe*

Artù justifies announcing the tournament three months after it had been decided upon in the following to Lancialotto:

“— Cavaliere, a me pare che noi siamo troppo impigriti; imperò ched egli è più di sedici mesi che per noi non fue fatto alcuno torneamento: e ciò mi pare grande viltade e abbassamento di cavalleria —.”³⁴⁹

Thus, the king explains his declaration of the tournament with his duties of preserving the standards of chivalry. In this regard, the descriptions of chivalric standards and codexes, espe-

³⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 339 (chapter LXXXIX).

³⁴⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 340-345 (chapter LXXXIX).

³⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 345ff. (chapter XC).

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 346 (chapter XC).

³⁴⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 346f. (chapter XC).

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 347 (chapter XCI).

cially that of the outstanding knights of the Round Table, are very influential at this point, as it had also been important in previous chapters to the portrayal of knighthood in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’³⁵⁰. In addition to the tournament of Verzeppe and the significance it holds within the narrative, the author explains:

“E in tale maniera, ordinò lo re Artù lo detto torneamento davanti al bel ciastel del Verzeppe, solo per vedere la bella reina Isotta la bionda: e per tale conveniente, molti prodi cavalieri saranno morti; però ch’ ella fia la maggiore sembraglia che mai fosse fatta da poi che lo re Artus portòe corona.”³⁵¹

In chapter XCIV, the tournament is introduced with the arrival of Tristano and Isotta, as well as other relevant characters³⁵². The tournament itself is described in great detail after this from chapters XCV to C. The author mainly uses these details of the tournament to present Tristano as the perfect knight and overall victor, as well as strengthening the impression made by Isotta’s beauty and Tristano’s deeds in her honour.³⁵³ The position that the tournament of Verzeppe has within the narrative is specifically addressed in chapter XCV by a knight called Agroval(e) and his statement:

„Signor, — disse Agroval, — certo el c’ è assembrata la maggior gente del mondo, e maggior baronia e di maggior nominanza che fosse assembrata dipoi che la Tavola fue edificata [...]”³⁵⁴

Following this, the author also explains the characteristics which distinguish a truly good knight:

“E sappiate che lunga persona e lungo tempo non fae però pro’ cavaliere, ma il buono coraggio e ’l fervente cuore vuole avere gentilezza di cuore e cortesia, però che fae l’ uomo pro’ e ardito e franco e sicuro. Imperò, quando l’ uomo i’ neuno grado àe aiuto e fervore di cuore con superbia, perchè ’l sangue gli strigne al cuore, il quale conforta e dàe cuore, forza e possanza alla natura.”³⁵⁵

³⁵⁰ Cf. for a particularly succinct example: *Ibid.*, p. 229ff. (chapter LXII).

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 348 (chapter XCI).

³⁵² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 362-369 (chapter XCIV).

³⁵³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 369-393 (chapter XCV-C).

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 370 (chapter XCV).

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 370f. (chapter XCV).

Thus, Tristano is even able to send Lancialotto, who is also described as an outstanding knight in the 'Tavola Ritonda', to the ground twice in combat during the tournament, in which Tristano distinguishes himself as the dominant knight³⁵⁶. In connection with Lancialotto, Tristano's chivalric attitudes are more strongly emphasised by his critical view of Lancialotto's lack of chivalry during an important point in the narrative:

“E tale conveniente molto dispiacque a messer Tristano, solo perchè Lancialotto mostrò quivi certo uno poco di villania, a prendere arme incontro a cavaliere lasso e affannato: e nondimeno, la maggior parte della gente sie s' accordava che Palamides ne portava l' onore.”³⁵⁷

Furthermore, Tristano only enters the tournament on day three (out of four) with unknown insignia purely for his own honour and those affiliated with him, due to his consideration for other knights and especially his friend Palamides³⁵⁸. This causes King Artù so many difficulties that he feels obliged to take the following action:

“[...] e fece allora, per grande dottaanza, serrare la porta del castello, acciò che messer Tristano non vi potesse intrare; chè troppo l' arebbe avuto a grande disinore, solo per le dame che v' erano dentro.”³⁵⁹

Tristano reacts to the king's subterfuge by placing his shield on the locked gate and thereby preserves the honour of Isotta's relatives and ensures the victory of the day. After Artù's discovery of the true identity of the outstanding knight, namely Tristano, revealed to him by Lancialotto in return for a gift, he calls upon both Tristano and especially Isotta, whom the king is very much looking forward to meet, in their pavillon while displaying great graciousness and honouring them.³⁶⁰ At this point of the king's meeting with Tristano and Isotta, it becomes apparent for the first time that Artù takes no offence at the affiliation between the best knight of his Round Table and the Queen of Cornwall, at least in private, and even respects it. Next to this, however, Artù utters another reason for his visit:

“E voglio che sappiate, che mai la Tavola Ritonda non ricevette tanto disinore mai, quant' ella à ricevuto per lo giorno d' oggi; e per altri non si puote amendar, se non per voi solo. E la cagione perchè noi siamo venuti qui, si è per parlare a voi, e per vedere la bella Isotta, e per ricordarvi

³⁵⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 376f. (chapter XCVI) and p. 385f. (chapter XCVIII).

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 375 (chapter XCVI).

³⁵⁸ Regarding the length of the tourney and Tristano's insignia, refer for further explanations to the detailed and thorough analysis provided by Marie-José Heijkant: Cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 18f.

³⁵⁹ Polidori 1864, p. 377f. (chapter XCVI).

³⁶⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 378-384 (chapters XCVI and XCVII).

che lo onore e lo disinore della Tavola a voi ne procede la maggior parte; però che voi siete quello per cui ella è stata più difesa e onorata. E sappiate, come egli è andati questi tre giorni, che s' egli andasse così al quarto giorno, mai la Tavola non avrebbe onore. E però vi priego e comando, che al mattino voi dobbiate intrare dalla parte degli cavalieri erranti, acciò che tanto disinore per voi sia amendato —.”³⁶¹

Tristano immediately declares himself ready to fight for Artù and the ‘cavalieri erranti’ the following afternoon, as he still wishes to fight for Isotta in the morning. In addition, he asks Artù to make Amorotto, Isotta’s cousin and up to then leader of the ‘cavalieri stranieri’, a ‘cavaliere errante’ and thus an Arthurian knight. Furthermore, Tristano declares the victory of the third day in honour of Amorotto and the ‘cavalieri stranieri’, as he is to fight for King Artù the following day. The difference between the specially chosen knights of the Round Table and those other knights who, although honoured, do not belong to this exclusive group is particularly emphasised in this passage. Artù heeds Tristano’s wish and has Amorotto entered into the ‘book of the Round Table’ as the second to last knight.³⁶² Through this depiction in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Tristano’s outstanding chivalry is once more stressed: on the one hand, Tristano also supports other knights he respects; on the other, he is vital to the honour of the Round Table, as Artù himself admits, and can even cause difficulties for the king. Thus, Tristano has evolved to become a crucial pillar of the Arthurian community due to his chivalry, as the author has Artù later emphasise during the quest for the Holy Grail and the protagonist’s death. Artù comes up with the following contrivance to win the day without lessening the honour of the Round Table:

“— Se domane Tristano fae due battaglie, e l’una mi dia vinta e l’ altra perduta, egli non mi sarà onore; imperò che lo re Amaroldo dirà che quella giornata sia stata comunale a vincita e a perdita —. E allora pensa che al mattino sia una battaglia che duri tutto lo giorno; e a qualunque parte rimarrà la sera il campo, quegli abbia ’l pregio di tutta la sembraglia: — sicchè, per me, si potrà dire una sembraglia vinta; e non due battaglie, l’ una vinta e l’ altra perduta —
.”³⁶³

³⁶¹ Ibid., p. 381 (chapter XCVII).

³⁶² Cf. Ibid., p. 382 (chapter XCVII).

Regarding Amorotto/Amoroldo and an overview of his history, which would lead to far away from the topic at hand, refer in particular to: Polidori 1865, p. 288.

A further note: the skilful connections made by the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ are once more exemplified at this point by the brief mention of the ‘book of the Round Table’ and the two knights to be inscribed in it. These two knights are already mentioned in an anticipatory move in chapter XXXI, when Tristano is added to the book of the Round Table. In a further anticipation of events, the still to be undertaken quest for the Holy Grail is alluded to at this point in chapter XCVII by naming Galasso, the emblematic Grail knight. He is the last knight of the Round Table to be added to the book, as is indicated in this chapter. However, Galasso only enters the narrative from chapter CVIII onwards, with the transition to the quest for the Holy Grail.

³⁶³ Polidori 1864, p. 383 (chapter XCVII).

The king's plan does not come to full fruition, however, as the appointed seneschal, King Ansalerino, declares Tristano to be the undoubted victor of the day and leaves the choice of the victorious party up to him, after he had accomplished, next to other great deeds, the storming of Verzepe in the morning – after repeated efforts – and had received a garland of flowers from Queen Ginevara, as well as successfully fighting for Artù's side after this.³⁶⁴ Tristano conducts himself in diplomatic fashion by presenting the victor's standard to the onlookers, then passing it on first to Queen Isotta and then to Artù's Queen Ginevara. The standard is then set up for all to see by Ginevara. Following this, King Artù, Ansalerino, Lancialotto and twelve other high-ranking barons honour Tristano's lover Isotta by personally escorting her to Verzepe and Queen Ginevara. Moreover, they acquiesce to Isotta's wish of meeting Ginevara.³⁶⁵ By employing this plot, along with the honourable reception of Isotta and Tristano by Artù and Ginevara in Verzepe described in the following, the author demonstrates once more the unambiguous acceptance by the Arthurian community of Tristano's and Isotta's association with each other:

“Ed essendo al palagio, la reina Ginevra si la abbraccia e baciála strettamente; e stettono in tale maniera per grande pezza, e appresso s' andarono a riposare in due ricche sedie di bello avorio e di fine cristallo. E a tanto, nel palagio venne messer Tristano; e mangiato che egli ebbero, s' andarono a riposare in una camera, cioè lo re Artus e Tristano; e in un' altra camera, la reina Isotta e la reina Ginevra. [...] ed essendo tutta gente assembrata al grande palagio, le tavole furono messe e assentarono a mangiare in cotale maniera. Lo re Artus e lo re Amoroldo in capo di tavola; e appresso Tristano e Lancialotto; e dopo loro, tutti altri re e cavalieri arranti e stranieri di legnaggio di re: e dinanzi da loro, a un' altra tavola, sedeva la reina Isotta e la reina Ginevra; e appresso poi, tutte altre reine e dame di gesta di re [...].”³⁶⁶

By merit of Tristano's outstanding chivalry and their knowledge of his person, the Arthurian community accepts, therefore, his association with Isotta more than the one between the Queen and Marco, as is shown on multiple occasions in this passage.

After the feast, another tribute to the tournament's victors is made by Ivano, a knight of the Round Table. The first day's victory goes to Lionello, the second to Palamides, the third to Tristano in the service of the 'cavalieri stranieri', the fourth to Tristano in honour of Isotta due to the victory arising from the day's division, and the fifth, also due to the division, once more

³⁶⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 385-388 (chapter XCVIII).

³⁶⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 388f. (chapters XCVIII and XCIX).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 389 (chapters XCVIII and XCIX).

to Tristano, this time in honour of the ‘cavalieri erranti’³⁶⁷: “[...] la quale messer Tristano si diede vinta e perduta sì come a lui piacque e si fue al suo piacere.”³⁶⁸.

A five day long celebration follows, at the end of which all those who survived the tournament – according to the information presented a total of no less than 770 knights died – return to their estates³⁶⁹. Before their departure, however, there is a further impression left by Tristano’s prowess as a knight:

“E lo re Amoroldo e quello di Scozia e tutti altri re stranieri giurano di non entrare giammai in torneamento là dove Tristano prendesse arme; imperciò ch’ egli faceva del vinto perduto e del perduto vinto alla sua volontà.”³⁷⁰

In addition, the royal couple’s attachment to the Isotta and Tristano is for the last time emphasised during their farewells:

“E la reina Isotta s’ allincenzia da la reina Ginevra con molte lagrime; e per maggiore amore, cambiano manto e corona, l’ una a l’ altra. E lo re Artus dona alla reina Isotta lo castello del Verzeppe, con tutta la prateria là dove l’ assembraglia era stata fatta, dicendo a lei: — Sì come per voi era stato ordinato questo torneamento, e per lo vostro amore Tristano ne porta l’ onore; cosie, per lo suo amore, io vi dono il castello e lo cerchiòvito d’ intorno —.”³⁷¹

As a final honour and remembrance, Artù has four metal statues made of Lancialotto, Palamides, Amoroldo and Tristano with the victor’s standard in hand as a permanent reminder before the tournament’s participants depart. At a later date, the figure of the Grail knight Galasso is the last to be added to these statues, as the author adds in a brief foreshadowing of the future. In an excursionary conclusion, the knights’ swords, their names and meanings are explained. In a revelation beyond the specific occurrences within the narrative’s timeline, it is further described in whose possessions they later are supposed to have been during the time of Charlemagne.³⁷²

Thus, the tournament of Verzeppe is emphasised as one of the great highlights of Tristano’s endeavours to perfect his knighthood, if not the most important one, in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’.

³⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 389f. (chapter XCIX).

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 390 (chapter XCIX).

³⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 390f. (chapter XCIX).

³⁷² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 391f. (chapter XCIX).

4.1.2.3.5 *Tristano as the Best Arthurian Knight in the Interval between Verzeppa and the Quest for the Holy Grail*

Before the last important milestone, the participation in the quest for the Holy Grail, two confrontations caused by misunderstandings between Tristano and Lancialotto are inserted, leading to upfront fights between both of these outstanding Arthurian knights³⁷³. These are only separated by a short interval in the form of a peaceful retreat to Gioiosa Guardia and Camelot by both men who eventually remain friends³⁷⁴. They occur directly after the tournament of Verzeppa and serve as an arc of suspense, as well as once again accentuating Tristano's superiority even in regard to Lancialotto. There is an escalation between the first confrontation, which occurs in a smaller context, and the second, which takes place during a battle and is additionally instigated by the devil. In this regard, it is explained:

“[...] anzi fue in fra loro la maggior battaglia e la più mortale, che mai fosse in tra due cavalieri. E ciò intervenne perché a messer Tristano era stato detto da più persone, che per invidia si moveano, che Lancialotto s' andava vantando sì com' egli l' aveva assalito alla Gioiosa Guardia, e sì com' egli aveva avuto il meglio della battaglia, e solo per lo onore di sua cavalleria si avea egli lasciato che nollo aveva tratto a fine. [...] Ed essendo tanto apportato a Tristano, Tristano non si parlava con Lancialotto; e Lancialotto vedendo che Tristano era schifato e non gli parlava, ed egli non parlava a lui. E sappiate che una delle maggiori volontadi ched egli avesse, si era di provarsi con Lancialotto, per sapere quale era più sofficiente a fare villania l' uno a l' altro; e tutto di andava cercando la via e 'l modo per provarsi contro a lui, e ched e' lo potesse trovare in campo a solo a solo.”³⁷⁵

This upfront duel does indeed take place, although the two fierce combatants proclaim during the hostilities: “E tutta fiata, diceva l' uno a l' altro: — Tu se' Tristano e io sono Lancialotto. Ora, per certo, si parràe chi sarà o vero chi è migliore cavaliere —.”³⁷⁶. Thus, it is literarily pointed out in this point in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ that the best knight is now being determined. Finally, Tristano is able to accomplish the following: “E sì lo fería arditamente, e avealo già a tale condotto, che Lancialotto già non si poteva più veramente quasi difendere incontro a Tristano; e credesi certano, ch' egli l' arebbe per certo morto [...]”³⁷⁷. It is shown through this depiction and Lancialotto's subsequent behaviour that Tristano is the best knight. Ultimately,

³⁷³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 393-413 (chapter C-CIV).

³⁷⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 401f. (chapter CI).

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 402f. (chapter CII).

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 406 (chapter CII).

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 407 (chapter CII).

help is only found by notifying the “[...] *mantenitore di cavalleria* [...]”³⁷⁸, King Artù, who receives the following message spelling disaster:

“[...] di qui a diece giorni, debbe essere distruzione di tutta cavalleria. Egli è stata una grande battaglia in fra Tristano e Lancialotto, e quasi si sono condotti a morte; e àno tanto loro cuore indurato, che vogliono loro battaglia trarre a fine.”³⁷⁹

Owing solely to Artù’s intervention, having ordered both parties to come to him and, after little initial success, even inviting Isotta with Tristano’s permission in order to influence the latter and have her at his side as a supporter, along with Ginevara, for a reconciliation with Lancialotto, does Tristano finally acquiesce to a peaceful settlement:

“E Tristano, intendendo il priego delle due reine, e udendo sì come Lancialotto si scusava che mai quelle parole non aveva dette, e anche per amore dello re Artus e di cavalleria, Tristano si gli rendè pace; e di ciò tutta la corte fue in grande allegrezza.”³⁸⁰

It is conspicuous how often the author uses the term ‘cavalleria’ during these fights between Tristano and Lancialotto, especially on the protagonist’s side but also in connection with King Artù who is representative of the preservation of chivalric values. A further reason for Tristano’s relenting is given in this regard as “[...] per amore dello re Artus e di cavalleria [...]”³⁸¹. In this manner, this passage once more underlines Tristano’s importance for the Arthurian community and also the significance chivalry has for Tristano. It should be retained before the quest for the Holy Grail beginning in chapter CVIII, therefore, that Tristano is the best Arthurian knight, indispensable to King Artù, and that he is fully integrated into the community along with Isotta, so that Marco is merely a marginal figure from chapters LXXXIX to CXXII and possesses little relevance.

Amidst the two confrontations between Tristano and Lancialotto and the quest for the Holy Grail, there is only one task for the two Arthurian knights against a renowned knight of the ‘old Round Table’, which only Tristano is able to accomplish and is dealt with in more detail in chapter 4.2. Following this, the episode in the magical pavillon of the Dama del Lago occurs in chapters CVI and CVII, in which the love between Tristano and Isotta as well as Lancialotto and Ginevara is explicitly celebrated.

³⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 411 (chapter CIV).

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 413 (chapter CIV).

³⁸¹ Ibid.

4.1.2.3.6 *Tristano during the Quest for the Holy Grail*

Beginning with chapter CVIII, the last great, unfolding climax is then introduced within the successful development of Tristano's chivalry: the quest for the Holy Grail and his participation in it. With this important and drastic event for the Arthurian community, Tristano is faced by, for the very first time, a knight who is by God's grace in part superior to him: it is Lancelotto's son, the Grail knight Galasso³⁸². The quest for the Holy Grail special to the 'Tavola Ritonda' is mainly tailored towards the main protagonist Tristano. The Grail story is highly compressed in five main chapters and surrounds Galasso, Prezivalle, Bordo, and Lionello³⁸³. Next to this, the two Arthurian knights Galasso and Tristano face each other, whereby it is explicitly stressed:

“Imperò vediamo che Galasso ricevette e vennegli la grazia di Dio: chè sapere dobbiamo, ch' elle sono due grazie principali; e l' una si è grazia gratis data, e l' altra si è grazia remunerata. La grazia remunerata riceve ogni persona; ma Iddio diede a Galasso una grazia la quale s' appella grazia data, per la quale grazia trasse la spada del petrone; e innanzi che suo scudo ricevesse colpo, fue appellato lo migliore cavaliere del mondo, in grazia e in opera data da Dio. E Tristano fue lo più pro' cavaliere mondano che nascesse in questo mondo, lo più gentile e lo più cortese.”³⁸⁴

With this, the author precisely separates outstanding chivalry given by God and excellent chivalry of a worldly nature, independently acquired. This division somewhat favours the protagonist Tristano, as he did not receive anything “for free” but had to fight for any glory and ability himself, and thus stands independently as the best worldly knight next to Galasso, whereas the latter has merely gained his entire power from another, namely from God's supernatural power. Through this device, the author is able to confine Galasso to the role of the Grail knight, whereas Tristano is able to cover the entire remaining field of the worldly sphere as the best knight. The positive emphasis on the merits of a self-acquired knighthood may indeed allow for an inference regarding the author's general view on chivalry: self-acquired achievements, then, hold at least the same weight as ability transferred from other sources. This would also comply with the interests of the up-and-coming Italian middle classes of the late Middle Ages in this regard and also concerning the function of chivalry as an example to others.

³⁸² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 426-430 (chapter CVIII).

³⁸³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 459-476 (chapters CXVII-CXXI).

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 131 (chapter CIX).

In addition, certain analogies may be drawn to insights provided by Joan Tasker Grimbert in her 1994 essay ‘Translating Tristan-love from the Prose Tristan to the Tavola Ritonda’, although this was also brought into direct connection with the theme of love, to be dealt with in more detail in chapter 4.1.3:

“With the birth of Galasso (Galahad), Tristano is confronted with a second, more problematic foil, one with whom he has complex ties. Galasso, as Lancilotto’s son, can be seen as redeeming his father’s lust, but he is also linked by blood to Tristano, who is seen in a curious way to share in that redemption. It is here that we have decisive confirmation of the *Tavola*’s refusal to condemn the Cornish lovers’ passion: if the intention were to express outright disapproval of that love, we would expect the narrator to vaunt unequivocally Galasso’s superiority. But in fact he takes care to specify that if Galasso was the most noble knight, it was because he was touched by God’s grace, whereas Tristano was the best secular knight, the source and foundation of all chivalry, of which the cornerstone is a heart in love.”³⁸⁵

With Galasso’s entry to the Round Table and the subsequent quest for the Holy Grail, Tristano does not lose his self-acquired status as the best worldly knight³⁸⁶. Furthermore, we hardly learn of Galasso’s character and personality next to his attributes and deeds, as even his irreproachable abstention is merely a prerequisite for a Grail knight. As a result, Joan Tasker Grimbert fittingly identifies Galasso as “[...] virtuous — and colorless [...]”³⁸⁷. After Galasso’s introduction and initiation to the quest for the Holy Grail, the focus accordingly returns to the protagonist Tristano from chapters CVIII to CX and deals with his and Lancialotto’s quest for the Grail. Both Lancialotto and especially Tristano are able to prove themselves in a series of adventures in the Valle Bruna, Selvaggia and Franca in chapter CXI, and also in chapter CXII in the Valle Pericolosa, “[...] della quale non tornò mai cavaliere che v’ entrassi: tanto le avventure vi sono pericolose; e niuno cavaliere della Tavola Vecchia, per dottanza, non vi volle mai andare [...]”³⁸⁸. However, Lancialotto is wounded in the process, so that Tristano must

³⁸⁵ Grimbert 1994, p. 95.

³⁸⁶ This is also confirmed by Emanuele Trevi in the introduction to his edition of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ by stating: “L’ambito di operazione dell’eccellenza di Tristano è quello puramente *mondano*. Il coraggio e la lealtà, la munificenza e la cortesia sono gli attributi di una perfezione cavalleresca integralmente, e senza possibilità d’equivoco, secolare. [...] L’inserimento della storia del Graal nell’ordito narrativo non genera equivoci: anzi permette all’Anonimo di approfondire in direzione originale il suo atteggiamento ideologico, proprio affrontando il simbolo più denso di connotazioni religiose e salvifiche di tutta la narrativa arturiana. Come accade anche nel Roman de Tristan, Tristano, impianato nell’amore per Isotta, è necessariamente escluso dalla mirabile opera di redenzione della cavalleria terrestre impegnata nella ricerca del Graal. [...] Il paragone fra Tristano e Galasso, sovrapposto a quello fra Tristano e Lancillotto, pone all’Anonimo un problema non più affrontabile sul piano esclusivo delle virtù mondane del cavaliere perfetto. Il nuovo confronto esige una distinzione di prerogative, e il ricorso originale, da parte dello scrittore, a una nozione teologica assente dal resto della tradizione arturiana.”. Trevi 1999, p. 62f.

³⁸⁷ Grimbert 1994, p. 96.

³⁸⁸ Polidori 1864, p. 439 (chapter CXII).

initially ride alone to the next valley, called the ‘Valle Ombrosa’³⁸⁹. In this way, the last duel between Tristano and Lancialotto takes place through another instance of mistaken identity, an event in which Tristano’s former rival and one of the best Arthurian knights, Palamidesso, is involved. The fight itself is only briefly described, though, and the main point of this passage is rather to depict the reasons for Tristano’s jealousy which led to the conflict, in a dialogue between the two temporary opponents³⁹⁰. In the process, a hint is given concerning Tristano’s continuous and inescapable feelings for Isotta in preparation for his decision made in the next valley.

After the mistaken identities have been untangled, Tristano and Lancialotto leave together for the last valley on their continued search for the Grail in the same chapter. A pillar at the valley’s entrance warns them in the following words:

“E fovvi certi, che voi ora entrate nella Valle Scura, della quale none uscì mai cavaliere che armato fosse nè a cavallo passasse: imperò che la detta Valle signoreggia uno cavaliere pagano, lo quale à forza e ardire per tutti gli cavalieri della Valle Bruna e della Valle Franca —.”³⁹¹

Although Tristano and Lancialotto had been able to convert large swathes of the previous five valleys’ populations to Christianity, becoming increasingly challenging as they progressed, the aspect of Christianity versus diabolical powers, or in other words good against evil, is most pronounced in the sixth and final valley, the Valle Scura. In the process, they meet the knight and lord called Fellone: “[...] lo quale sapeva le sette arti, e aveva forza per cinque cavalieri, quanta era quella del cavaliere con cui si combatteva [...]”³⁹². It is noteworthy here that Fellone is described as being highly educated, by mentioning the seven liberal arts, although they are more connected to his magical powers in this context. Through the use of his powers and the element of surprise, Fellone is initially able to knock Tristano out cold without prior warning, after riding out of his castle, thereby causing a prolonged comatose state. In this manner, the protagonist is first shown to be in a vulnerable position, as Lancialotto is also defeated and captured. We also learn of 160 further knights who are held captive by Fellone³⁹³. With this description, the author brings back to mind the episode of the knight equipped with magical weapons from chapter LXXXVII, although Artù is not held captive this time and Fellone himself possesses the overwhelming fighting powers. In both cases,

³⁸⁹ The names of the valleys are naturally aptronyms.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 442ff. (chapter CXIII).

³⁹¹ Ibid., p. 445 (chapter CXIII).

³⁹² Ibid., p. 445f. (chapter CXIII).

³⁹³ Cf. Ibid., p. 446 (chapter CXIII).

however, Tristano is in need of a pious advisor, either a hermit or Lancialotto's daughter living a secluded life in the woods, in order to deal with foes possessing supernatural powers, as the best worldly knight. In the latter episode in the context of the quest for the Holy Grail, the magical powers of his opponent have far stronger negative connotations and the diabolical nature comes more and more to light. Thus, the decisive advice given by Lancialotto's daughter, after Tristano awakens in front of the rock castle and has been warned by her regarding Fellone's five-fold power, is to pray to God in the adjacent chapel and promise that he will never again commit sin with Isotta. If compliant, he would have the following prospects of success:

“[...] e a ogni colpo che lo cavaliere fedirà sopra di te, e tu di' incontante: — Cristo crocifisso, aiutatemi —; e per ogni volta che tue lo dirai, egli perderà la forza per uno cavaliere.”³⁹⁴

Without divine help, Tristano would be lost in the face of his opponent and the latter's supernatural powers. The source of these adversarial powers, which Tristano is confronted by, is not specifically mentioned, but it is rather gradually revealed, through descriptions, that it is the Antichrist, or devil³⁹⁵.

In fact, Tristano does put into action the prayer in the chapel, as well as the promise³⁹⁶. In this way, he is able to repeat, during the subsequent duel with his adversary, the words “[...] Cristo crocifisso, aiutami [...]” and therewith defeat Fellone, who had lost his supernatural powers as a result, at least for the time being³⁹⁷. However, Tristano makes a grave mistake by taking Fellone, whom he believes to be powerless, captive and transporting him to the rock castle in order to hold him there for the night. Having arrived there, Tristano is subsequently led into temptation by these adversarial forces through a false apparition of Isotta. He

³⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 447 (chapter CXIV).

³⁹⁵ Marie-José Heijkant remarks in regard to this episode and the figure Fellones: “Questa figura chiaramente diabolica per il fisico difforme, la forza magica, il cavallo nero e la subitanea risurrezione, può essere sconfitta solo se l'eroe si raccomanda a Cristo crocifisso.”. Heijkant 1997, p. 30.

³⁹⁶ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 448 (chapter CXIV).

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

promptly falls for the illusion, against his promise³⁹⁸. Thus, he lands himself in dire straits and opens up a possibility for Fellone to strike back.³⁹⁹ Although Tristano had evidently broken his promise to God, “[...] di non peccare mai colla reina Isotta [...]”⁴⁰⁰, the following event occurs during Fellone’s renewed attack against him in the narrative:

“[...] e Tristano vedendo ciò, si à grande paura, e rendesi molto pentuto e raccomandosi a Cristo crocefisso, e mette mano alla spada; e quando lo Fellone porse oltre la mano per prendere Tristano, e Tristano mena uno colpo per traverso, e tagliògli la mano diritta; e quel punto lo voleva trarre a fine. E lo cavaliere, vedendosi in tale maniera ferito, si addomanda a Tristano perdonanza, e si gli giura di prendere battesimo e di lasciare i pregioni e di mantenere la rôcca pello re Artù.”⁴⁰¹

In this passage, the author undoubtedly confirms that God forgives Tristano for his love of Isotta and has him triumph in this decisive conflict during his quest for the holy grail despite his human weakness.

Only the final Grail experience remains elusive to Tristano. However, before the author has him fail, as is the case with Lancelotto, he ensures by means of a skilful turn of events that Tristano decides against a continuation of his quest for the Holy Grail and in favour of his

³⁹⁸ Regarding Tristano’s abandonment of his promise, Marie-José Heijkant observes: “Nello stesso episodio si dimostra la fragilità della conversione di Tristano, tentato dalla voce di Isotta a entrare in un letto che all’improvviso prende fuoco. L’antico motivo del letto pericoloso, che nel *Chevalier de la Charrette* è una prova di castità qualificante il cavaliere cortese e nel *Lancelot-Graal* fa parte delle meraviglie del Castello di Corbenic, squalifica Tristano come cavaliere del Graal. Rassegnatosi a questa sconfitta, colui che è, secondo Köhler, l’incarnazione stessa del verbo agostiniano «non posse non peccare», abbandona l’Inquieta per tornare da Isotta.” Heijkant 1997, p. 30.

It should also be noted in regard to this observation, however: in the ‘*Chevalier de la Charrette*’, the test of the ‘lit périlleux’ also serves to underline Lancelot’s fidelity towards his Queen and lover, as he not only shoulders the cart but also all other ordeals to reach her and save her from captivity. Lancelot is not at all fazed by the ‘lit périlleux’ and the cart’s flaw, but instead overcomes both of them. Cf. Jaus-Meyer, Helga: *Chrestien de Troyes. Lancelot. (Klassische Texte des romanischen Mittelalters in zweisprachigen Ausgaben, Band 13. Ed. by Hans Robert Jaus and Erich Köhler). München 1974, (p. 34-40) V. 458-594.*

Also, Tristano is de facto not penalised with failure during this Grail adventure, due to God’s grace: this will be explained in more detail in the following.

³⁹⁹ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 448f. (chapter CXIV).

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 447 (chapter CXIV).

⁴⁰¹ Ibid., p. 449f. (chapter CXIV).

love for Isotta.⁴⁰² Due to his love for Isotta, Tristano remains the best worldly knight, but not the most successful Grail knight:

“Ed essendo in fra due confini, Tristano si diparte da Lancialotto, e Lancialotto da Tristano; imperò che Tristano lascia la ’mpresa del Sangradale, per ritonare a vedere la bella reina Isotta la bionda. E sie si diparte senza commiato, imperò che non era allicenziato; chè non era tanto degno, cioè fermo, che, per ricevere la grazia, lasciasse il pensiero del peccato; ed era assai più desideroso de vedere la reina Isotta, che di sedere alla santa Tavola, sì come sedeano i dodici cavalieri ch’ erano senza pensiero di peccato carnale, e senza odio nè superbia; chè peccato d’ avarizia non regnava in quel tempo. E sappiate che ’l pensiero e la volontà di vedere Isotta, tolse a Tristano la grazia di non vedere e di non sentire; e se ciò non fosse stato, sarebbe stato, pela sua leanza e cortesia, degli primi a vedere e a gustare la grazia del santo Vasello.”⁴⁰³

As the most potent worldly knight, Tristano is shown leniency by God and is not condemned by Him but rather accepted in his entirety, including his flaws, and is helped by Him when his

⁴⁰² It remains to be noted, therefore, that Tristano is ultimately able to triumph during the Grail adventure, though solely due to God’s lenience. However, before he eventually fails during the final Grail experience because of his love relationship to Isotta, similar to Lancialotto, Tristano decides to abort the search of his own free will and in favour of his love for Isotta. This particular turning point saves the protagonist of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ from a direct defeat during the search for the Holy Grail. It is Tristano’s own will, not an explicit failure on his part, that has him abort the search in favour of his love for Isotta. During the crucial moment, in which Tristano should in principle be beaten, God shows leniency by helping him in his hour of need and, instead of letting him die, has him triumph over Fellone. This is one of the instances in which the author of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ has employed a design which determines the narrative’s direction.

In addition, the author divides the Grail experience into two parts: the first, in preparation of the search, and the second, a complete one, only granted to a select few: “I due eventi, che nel *Tristan en prose* sembrano proprio identici, sono chiaramente distinti nella versione italiana. Solo nella *Tavola Ritonda* alla prima comparsa il Graal è coperto da uno sciamito vermiglio, il colore liturgico del giorno e simbolo dello Spirito Santo secondo la *Queste*, per cui si accentua l’illuminazione spirituale emanata dall’Oggetto sacro. Il «servizio del Graal» a Corbenic celebra l’Eucaristia, nella quale il Salvatore trasmette oltre al corpo anche il suo sangue.” Heijkant 1997, p. 29. With this adaptation based on his own work, the author accentuates and ensures Tristano’s participation in the first important Grail experience.

In version I, the shorter account which is deemed to be closer to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, of the ‘Tristan en prose’, however, there is no description of such an elaborate Grail experience, especially not one endowed with such spiritual substance, as far as this may be substantiated through the comparisons of the manuscripts: “Et pourtant Galaad est là; mais son arrivée, tout comme l’épreuve qualifiante du Siège Périlleux, sont expédiés en une seule phrase (au debut du § 104), comme si cette présence dont l’excellence est pourtant rappelée était finalement impuissante à pallier l’absence de celui que chacun désire. Quant au Graal, son apparition n’est nullement décrite, et il est à ce point éclipsé qu’on est tout surpris d’apprendre au § 108 que sa quête a été entreprise et jurée. Bref, dans le recit de ce qu’on hésite de ce fait à appeler encore la Pentecôte du Graal, la version brève s’efforce manifestement, de manière très concertée, d’opérer un déplacement du centre d’intérêt, du Graal et de Galaad vers Tristan, de sorte que c’est bel et bien l’apparition de ce dernier qui constitue le point culminant de la fête: *la ou estoient hors de la cité, ils s’aloient deduiant par la prairie de Camaalot, ez vos monseignor Tristan venir entr’ elz. Et ce il est bien receüz a grant honor et a grant joie, ne le demandéz. Tuit sont orendroit resjoï en sa venue* (§ 107).” Menard, Philippe (Publ.): *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*. (Version du manuscrit français 757 de la Bibliothèque nationale de France). Publié sous la direction de Philippe Ménard, Tome IV. Édité par Monique Léonard et Francine Mora. (Les Classiques Français du Moyen Âge, 144. Directeur : Philippe Ménard. Directeur-adjoint : Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet). Paris 2003, p. XXXV.

Rather, Tristan only arrives there just before the search for the Holy Grail begins and merely participates in the final events in Camaalot. Cf for this: *ibid.*, p. 91-94 (§ 107-111).

⁴⁰³ Polidori 1864, p. 453f. (chapter CXV).

prospects were most dire, despite his love for Isotta⁴⁰⁴. Therefore, the author's depiction appears almost 'modern', similarly to how Karlheinz Stierle was able to highlight this regarding Francesco Petrarca, a contemporary of 'l'anonimo toscano'⁴⁰⁵, thereby already indicating the development during the, so termed, transition period between the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern era and 'umanesimo'⁴⁰⁶.

4.1.2.3.7 *Tristano's Joint Death with Isotta and the Revenge Subsequently Enacted upon Marco by his Friends and the Arthurian Community*

After this very important passage, the author continues with several more of Tristano's adventures, not all equally important, however, during his return journey to Isotta. Shortly before their joint death in chapter CXXVI, he is able to reunite with his lover. At the end of chapter CXVI, a particular moment of suspense occurs with Tristano's swift approach towards Gioiosa Guardia, where Isotta is believed to be during Tristano's absence and quest for the Holy Grail, only to be immediately interrupted for five chapters in favour of the Grail quest and experience of the 'chevalerie celestielle'⁴⁰⁷:

“[...] e [Tristano] prende a cavalcare per essere nello reame di Longres, cioè al castello della Gioiosa Guardia. E ora lascia lo conto di parlare di messer Tristano, e conteremo di messer Prezzivalle, lo quale fue compagno alla santa Tavola de Sangradale.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁴ This distinct focus of the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda', in particular through his differentiation between chivalry completed by 'grazia remunerata' on the one hand and 'grazia gratis data' on the other, is also addressed by Emanuele Trevi, who notes in this regard: “La perfezione di Galasso e quella di Tristano, spiega l'Anonimo nel cap. CIX [...], non possono oscurarsi reciprocamente, poiché discendono da due differenti tipi di grazia divina, secondo una distinzione già esattamente formulata da Tommaso d'Aquino. La grazia della quale partecipa Tristano è «rimunerata»: comporta la bontà delle opere e tiene conto dell'imperfezione costitutiva delle creature; l'altra, quella di cui beneficia Galasso, *gratis data*, appartiene pienamente all'ordine sovranaturale, ed è concessa a prescindere dalle possibilità della natura e dai meriti della persona. Il permanere di Tristano al di qua della perfezione di Galasso, figura cristologico di cavaliere-redentore senza la macchia del peccato, nulla toglie, dunque, al suo merito personale: merito, a differenza di quello di Galasso, integralmente umano e costituito dall'esercizio di virtù il cui perfetto compimento non eccede mai i confini di una dimensione puramente mondana. È una soluzione di brillante compromesso, che, tenendo conto fedelmente dei dati narrativi offerti dalla tradizione arturiana, e del loro significato spirituale, permette alla *Tavola Ritonda* di affacciarsi sulla vertigine mistica della liturgia del Graal senza minare la fondamentale unità dell'opera, dovuta all'energia centripeta che indirizza costantemente l'attenzione verso Tristano.” Trevi 1999, p. 63f. A short, additional note in this regard: this may very well be seen as a key to understanding the work in question.

⁴⁰⁵ Heijkant 1997, p. 28.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. also in regard to this observation: Stierle, Karlheinz: Francesco Petrarca. Ein Intellektueller im Europa des 14. Jahrhunderts. München/Wien 2003, p. 392-324.

⁴⁰⁷ Ménard, Philippe (Publ.): Le roman de Tristan en prose. Tome IX. Publié sous la direction de Philippe Ménard. La fin des aventures de Tristan et de Galaad. Edité par Laurence Harf-Lancner. (Textes littéraires français). Genève 1997, p. 25.

⁴⁰⁸ Polidori 1864, p. 458 (chapter CXVI).

This serves as a delaying moment, leaving the reader in the dark for five chapters whether Tristano will reunite with his lover or not. Following the self-sufficient sequence of episodes concerning Galasso, Isotta is once more kidnapped by Marco, however, and is immediately brought back to Cornwall, thus putting the fatal process in motion, culminating in the lovers' deaths, in chapter CXXVII⁴⁰⁹. During Isotta's abduction, the author once more takes great care in portraying Marco as a treacherous coward and also as the unchivalrous antagonist of Artù. Not only does Marco unscrupulously take advantage of the Arthurian community's weakness during the quest for the Holy Grail by conspiring with three other kings against Artù, but he also abandons these newly acquired allies while their siege of Camelot is still ongoing in order to capture Isotta⁴¹⁰. After Marco retreats to his kingdom in Cornwall, having had Isotta brought there beforehand, as the siege of Camelot failed due to several remaining and returned Arthurian knights, Tristano is informed about the events that cause him pain and suffering in chapter CXXIII. Two interim chapters follow: they describe Tristano plagued by grief and on his way to Isotta, accomplishing further chivalrous deeds and meeting Lancialotto for the last time, including a case of mistaken identity and duel, and finally culminating in Tristano's reunion with Isotta at the end of chapter CXXVI⁴¹¹.

As previously mentioned, the way towards the joint death of the protagonist and his lover is then paved from chapter CXXVII onwards, with Tristano being wounded by a poisoned spear wielded by the treacherous Marco, and only ends in chapter CXXX with the lovers' joint death⁴¹²:

“Morti sono in braccio in braccio, a viso a viso, gli due leali amanti, gli quali tanto s'amarono in questo misero mondo; e quegli che tanto furono leali, che mentre ch' egli vivettono, mai per loro amore non fue affalsato.”⁴¹³

In this lengthy passage, describing the death of the best worldly knight and his beloved queen, it is conspicuous that the author highlights once more Tristano's perfect chivalry and also his love for Isotta. Thus, the author comments directly after Tristano's fatal wounding:

“Imperò che sappiate, che lo colpo che lo re Marco diede a Tristano, sì fu mortale e pericoloso e molto dannoso; e ciò s' approva per cinque ragioni. La prima fu perché Tristano morì giovane cavaliere; chè lo di ch' egli fue ferito, sì compieva egli XXXIII anni e due mesi e XIII di, e di

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 476f. (chapter CXXII) and p. 496 (chapter CXXVII).

⁴¹⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 476ff. (chapter CXXII and CXXIII).

⁴¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 477-495 (chapters CXXIII to CXXVII).

⁴¹² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 495-505 (chapters CXXII to CXXX).

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 505f. (chapter CXXX).

sua ferita vivette XVIII di. E pongono i maestri delle storie, che se Tristano fosse vivuto anche X anni più, ch' egli, per sua discrezione, none avrebbe portato più arme: chè, s' egli l' avesse portate, li cavalieri, per temenza di lui, non si sarebbero più messi in avventura. E anche Tristano fu fiore di bellezze e onore di cortesia e pregio di cavalleria. E anche, per la morte di messer Tristano, venne meno la Tavola Ritonda: imperò che lo re Artus, avendo ricevuto lo grande dannaggio della 'nchiesta, si pensava e credea mantenere e rilevare la detta Tavola colla prodezza di messer Tristano e di messer Lancialotto; ma, per la morte di Tristano, lo re Artù perdè lo vigore e la potenza, e non fu mai di tanto ardire. E anche, per la morte di Tristano morì la bella e la gentile e la piacente reina Isotta, la quale passava tutte l' altre del mondo di bellezze. E la quinta ragione perché di messer Tristano fu grande danno, si fue perch' egli fue verace amante; perch' egli usò l' amore leale mente, e savia mente lo mantenea."⁴¹⁴

With this statement, it is basically implied that Marco, by murdering Tristano, has played an integral part in destroying the Round Table⁴¹⁵. Tristano then gives his weapons to his friend Sagamore, to be passed on to the Arthurian community, in chapter CXVIII, thereby stressing yet again the perfection of his chivalry, the author emphatically and summarily ascertains the following:

“Imperò il nostro libro pone e dà sentenza, che messer Tristano fu lo più pro' cavaliere mondano e 'l più ardito che mai natura formasse: [...] e per cotale virtù, della sua morte fu un grandissimo danno.”⁴¹⁶

By virtue of his life's peace-making effects in general and on the other barons moved by the message of his death, the narrator afterwards stresses the special worth of Tristano as the best worldly knight:

“[...] imperò che ciascuno barone che voleva vivere co' ragione, si era da messer Tristano favoreggiato; e quello barone che pensava di volere isforzare altrui o di città o di castella, quella volontà si tenea dentro dal cuore e nolla dimostrava, per la grande temenza ch' avieno di Tristano, lo quale era campione e difenditore di ragione e di verità [...]”⁴¹⁷

Following the magnificent funeral of Tristano and Isotta, however, even Marco has a premonition, one which ultimately comes true, of the damage he has caused by killing Tristano, not only to others but also himself and the entire realm. He thus laments:

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., p. 497 (chapter CXXVII).

⁴¹⁵ This is directly said so by Artù in chapter CXXXIII: Cf. *ibid.*, p. 511 (chapter CXXXIII).

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., p. 503 (chapter CXXVIII).

⁴¹⁷ Ibid., p. 506 (chapter CXXX).

“— Ahi bello mio nepote Tristano, quanti saranno quelli che oggi mai conturberanno mio stato, li quali lasciavano per vostra temenza! Chè quando lo re d’ Irlanda saprà vostra morte, si vorrà che no’ siamo servi, si come noi fummo mai per altri temporali; e quando lo saprà lo re Artus e lo re Governale di Leonis, e Lancialotto e gli altri cavalieri erranti, si prenderanno vegianza sopra di me e sopra mio reame. Ahi bello mio nipote, quanto per voi è tristo lo mio cuore! chè [sic] io conosco che, si come lo mio reame fu per voi diliberato e tratto di servitudine, cosie, per vostra morte, lo reame sarà distrutto e le genti consumate, e amici e nemici prenderanno vegianza sopra di me, sappiendo si come io sono stato cagione di sì grande dannaggio —.”⁴¹⁸

In the subsequent chapters, the premonition does indeed come true – after the Arthurian court has appropriately mourned for Tristano, displaying his helmet, shield and sword with his insignia in their church – and revenge is de facto enacted upon Marco. It is noteworthy that King Artù himself is actively engaged with the campaign of revenge, joined from the beginning by Isotta’s close relative and Tristano’s friend, the King of Ireland, as well as Tristano’s former protector Governale of Leonis. None of them rest until Marco, who tries to hide in his own town, has been brought to justice.⁴¹⁹ Artù then distributes the lands of the Kingdom of Cornwall amongst these fellow campaigners⁴²⁰:

“A quel punto, lo re Artù fece bandire, che tutta la gente dello reame di Cornovaglia, cioè quegli da XV anni per infino a LXXX, che quegli ch’ erano morti, se n’ avessono il danno; e quegli ch’ erano iscampati, fossono isbanditi di quello reame [sic] della testa. E fa allora della città quattro parti: in ogni parte fece fare una rôcca; e l’ una diede allo re Amoroldo, e l’ altra allo re Governale, e la terza a Lancialotto, e la quarta a Morderette suo figliuolo; e a loro quattro donò tutto quello reame di Cornovaglia. E poi, eglino quattro furono in concordia, e feciono signore messer Dinasso.”⁴²¹

Thus, Marco principally provokes his own demise and that of his kingdom by murdering the best worldly knight and his nephew, whereas King Artù is once more able to triumph during the campaign of revenge in commemoration of Tristano.

A further point of interest in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ is marked by Tristano’s and Isotta’s close connection to God, highlighted by their funeral and the close inclusion of the church. However, this will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid., p. 508 (chapter CXXXI).

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Ibid., p. 509-523 (chapter CXXXII-CXXXVII).

⁴²⁰ Regarding this campaign of revenge in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ in comparison to other Tristan-versions which include this theme, and also in regard to the process of ‘vendetta’ itself, refer for Marie-José Heijkant’s further analysis: cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 19f.

⁴²¹ Polidori 1864, p. 523f. (chapter CXXXVII).

4.1.3 The Love between Tristano and Isotta

Only a short while after Tristano's accolade and his first great duel against Amoroldo of Ireland in chapters XVII and XVIII, the newly minted and wounded knight already comes into contact with Isotta, his later and unique love, under unfavourable circumstances in chapter XX – as he had killed her uncle on her mother's side immediately prior to this⁴²². Tristano cannot reveal his true identity during this first stay in Ireland, because he would have to fear for his life if he were uncovered at this stage⁴²³. In addition, Tristano had only briefly before, in accordance with the narrative structure of the 'Tavola Ritonda', met another king's daughter, Bellices, in chapter XVI. She had offered him her love, but he had refused her by referring to his youth and his wish to perfect his knighthood, which would have to be completed before being able to burden himself with the obligations of having a wife⁴²⁴.

4.1.3.1 The Relationship between Tristano and Isotta before the Love Potion Episode

With these factors in mind, it appears even more remarkable that Tristano is willing to prove himself in front of Isotta by undergoing a leap challenge while she is tending to his wounds in chapter XX:

“Uno giorno disse Isotta a Tristano: — Cavaliere, darebbev' egli lo cuore di saltare? — Tristano rispuose e disse di sie. Ella disse ched e' saltasse, ed e' saltò allora da ventidue piedi; e a quel punto la fedita sua s' aperse. Allora Isotta la ricomincia a medicare; chè per altro non ave' fatto ella fargli quella pruova, che per sapere se la fedita era bene salda.”⁴²⁵

In addition, Tristano reacts with extreme jealousy in the next chapter when he meets another young knight who has fallen in love with Isotta:

“E stando uno poco, le tavole furono messe, e assettati furo a mangiare; e la bella donzella Isotta serviva dinanzi allo re suo padre. E Palamides vedendo la bella donzella, tanta leggiadra e adorna, di subito innamorò di lei e molto la mirava; e del molto mirare Tristano s' accorse, e allora prese a mirare Isotta in contrario di Palamides. E Palamides, accorgendosi del mirar di Tristano, avea grande dolore; sì che, per tale maniera, Palamides molto molto odiava Tristano e Tristano odiava lui, e volentieri l' uno avrebbe tratto a fine l' altro; e cominciassi in sì forte punto

⁴²² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 74f. (chapter XX).

⁴²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 83-88 (chapter XXIII).

⁴²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 57-60 (chapter XVI).

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75 (chapter XX).

quello odio e quel mal talento, che poi furono sempre mortali nemici. E ciascuno era giovane cavaliere, salvo che Palamides avea pur alquanti anni più di tempo che Tristano.”⁴²⁶

In this manner, a love is shown to unfold between Tristano and Isotta before the love potion takes effect, as Isotta also reveals her strong affection for Tristano by advocating for him in front of her father, after Tristano’s true identity has been uncovered, and thus saves his life in chapter XXIII⁴²⁷. The author denotes this love between Tristano and Isotta, as previously noted in all brevity in 4.1.1.4, before the additional effect of the love potion as the ‘liale amore’⁴²⁸. Thus, they are mutually aware of their respective physicality, subtly exemplified by Tristano’s glances towards Isotta in chapter XXI and Isotta’s subsequent reaction to a question by her confidante, Brandina, pertaining to whom she liked best, with the words “[...] e s’ egli non fosse tanto pro’ quant’ egli [Tristano] è bello, vorrei inanzi l’ altro [Palamides] [...]”⁴²⁹. However, this is initially only a form of the love of the soul. Consequently, the physical dimension remains in the background until the additional impact of the love potion takes effect. Once more, this is directly stressed in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ in chapter XXXIII, which precedes the drinking of the love potion:

“[...] e Tristano onestamente e di buono talento serviva Isotta di tutte quelle cose ch’ egli pensava che a lei fosse in talento. Si come liale e cortese cavaliere, studiava Isotta avesse piacere e sollazzo, acciò ch’ ella non si desse alcuna malanconia; e ’nverso di lei non gli tiròe ancora niuno folle pensiero nè reo, se non com’ ella fosse stata sua sirocchia. E sappiate che della lianza di messer Tristano parlava [...]”⁴³⁰

Joan Tasker Grimbert conceived of a similar notion in 1994, by stressing:

“[...] Tristano and Isotta, as a result of Tristano’s first stay in Ireland, came to love each other with a “loyal love,” like brother and sister. Furthermore, their love became carnal only after they had unwittingly consumed the potion, in contrast to the conscious decision made by Lancilotto and Ginevara to consummate their love.”⁴³¹

⁴²⁶ Ibid., p. 78 (chapter XXI).

⁴²⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 83-88 (chapter XXIII).

In support of this observation, Marie-José Heijkant may also be referred to: cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 21.

⁴²⁸ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 88 (chapter XXIV).

⁴²⁹ Ibid., p. 78 (chapter XXI).

⁴³⁰ Ibid., p. 117 (chapter XXXIII).

⁴³¹ Grimbert 1994, p. 94.

In other words, Tristano and Isotta are overwhelmed by their passion for each other after taking the love potion, incapable of resisting their urges any longer, whereas Lancialotto and Ginevara wilfully decided to act upon their desires and thus betray King Artù.

In addition, the narrator clearly states and accentuates twice Tristano's loyalty and faithfulness in short succession within this important passage of the 'Tavola Ritonda'. With the term 'liale', Tristano's and Isotta's love is marked as special and is highlighted multiple times before the drinking of the love potion, as also in chapter XXIX when their love is directly contrasted with the love between Lancialotto and Ginevara:

“[...] e anche per fare manifesto a Lancialot e alla reina Genevra, ch' egli era al mondo più bello cavaliere e più bella dama di loro; e doveva essere più corale e liale amore che non era lo loro; e questi dovea esser Tristano e Isotta la bionda, i quali al presente s' amavano di leale amore. Tristano amava Isotta perch' ella l' avea campato da morte, quando lo avea guerito della fedita che l' Amoroldo gli diè; e Isotta sì lo amava per la sua prodezza, e quasi lo tenea per uno suo leale cavaliere.”⁴³²

In this manner, the basis for their remarkable 'liale amore' before the drinking of the potion is also explained: Isotta is a young woman who does not primarily rescue Tristano as a knight and helper in need, but is the first to cure him of death in a seemingly hopeless situation and returns him back to life. In accordance with this, Isotta views, as is shown shortly after his recovery, the up-and-coming knight as 'uno suo leale cavaliere' because she nursed him and thus returned to him all his powers⁴³³. The reciprocal 'loyal' love is thereby also different from the failed affiliations, as previously mentioned, between the King's daughter Bellices and Tristano as well as the Dama dell' Aigua della Spina and Tristano. In the first case, the missing reciprocity lead to failure, as only Bellices loved Tristano; in the second case, it is the sexual desire, which comes to the fore too quickly and subsequently predominates, and its fulfilment with the Dama dell' Aigua della Spina. Even so, Tristano deliberately deceives the prospective husband and returns her afterwards to him – without any further interest – after she had been kidnapped by another knight. Donald L. Hoffman notes in this regard:

⁴³² Polidori 1864, p. 105 (chapter XXIX).

⁴³³ Tristano's feeling of connectedness with Isotta as the person who saved his life is even accentuated another time during the first stay in Ireland, as Isotta's father Languis stresses after his decision to leave Tristano alive: "E la terza cagione per la quale io vi perdono e dimentico ogni offese e rendovi pace, si è per amore della mia figlia Isotta la bionda: e veramente da lei ne conoscete la vita." Ibid., p. 88 (chapter XXIII). Thus, Isotta has already saved Tristano's life twice, by healing his poisoned wound and also through her efforts in persuading her father, before Tristano can even return the favour once. As a consequence, the 'liale amore' is marked as a special connection even before the potion takes effect. Due to this, the short sentence "e veramente da lei ne conoscete la vita" may be seen as a double entendre.

“With this discordant love, the Tavola begins to prepare for the harmonious love of Tristano and Isotta, a love not only absolutely shared, but absolutely adequate, stable and unchanging.”⁴³⁴

Tristano’s uncle, Marco of Cornwall, encounters this already existent ‘loyal’ love, as already mentioned in chapter 4.1.1.4, when he finds his nephew, due to three drops of blood which had fallen into the snow, to be in the ›minstrel’s trance‹ (Middle High German ›Minnetrance‹) or, to use the Romance terms, in ›penser‹ as a sign of the ›amor de lonh‹. With this, the author underlines that Tristano, who is long since bound by the ‘liale amore’, cannot forget Isotta anymore and that even a seemingly unremarkable event can cause him to be buried in thoughts of her. Dominated by his jealousy of his young relative once he learns from Tristano that the Irish King’s daughter, Isotta, has caused this special state within him, Marco’s reaction is constituted by a fatal demand with which the king hopes to make a loser out of his nephew. Tristano is to procure for Marco the young lady as a bride, the lady his nephew already loves with a ‘liale amore’ and whom he cannot yet take as a bride himself, being an up-and-coming knight in the succession of his father who also married late, or never to return to Cornwall, the place which he had just freed from any tributary obligations: either because he cannot secure Isotta for Marco, or because he will die trying to complete the difficult task. Instead of binding his nephew closer to him, as Tristano had proved to be very useful to Cornwall, the king is solely governed by his ill will and attempts to harm Tristano. Principally, this is the foundation of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, ultimately culminating in Marco’s downfall. Although Tristano himself is still guided by his main characteristic, the ‘leanza’, in regard to his uncle’s demand, as his delivery of Isotta certifies⁴³⁵, Tristano is already bound to the Irish princess by the ‘liale amore’, and this is the case even before a further, far-reaching tie is established between them: the love potion. Before the author has Tristano and Isotta drink the potion by mistake and chance in chapter XXXIV, he uses the entire chapter XXXIII to present Tristano and the subsequent incisive love potion episode in a proper light according to the ‘sens’ he wishes to portray and also to give a short summary of his narrative intentions. First and foremost, it is indicative that he aims at a close connection to God and Mary:

“Ed èè cosa certa, che il mondo, cioè il cielo e la terra e l’ acqua e l’ aria, le mantiene l’ onnipotente Iddio, padre, figliuolo nato della vergine Maria; cioè vergine e umile fedele; innanzi parto

⁴³⁴ Hoffman 1995, p. 211f.

⁴³⁵ Polidori 1864, p. 142 (chapter XL).

For an additional text passage in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ related to this, to name just one further example, see also: *ibid.*, p. 506 (chapter CXXX).

vergine pura e piacente; nel parto vergine benigna, glorificata nel principio, nel mezzo e nella fine. E questo benigno signore Iddio padre, che volle carne umana, si è quello che, colla sua potenza e bontà e sapienza, mantiene e sazia e nutrica il mondo e le creature; ma, temporalmente e materialmente parlando, la gente del mondo il mondo mantiene: e si mantiene in quattro colonne; cioè in leanza, in prodezza, in amore e in cortesia. E queste quattro virtù discendono a Tristano, e appropriansi agli quattro alimenti [...].”⁴³⁶

Next to this close connection to God, which the author also highlights once more during the couple’s death and which remains present in the entire narrative course of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, it is conspicuous in this passage that the particular wording “la gente del mondo il mondo mantiene” places greater emphasis on the worldly aspect, of which Tristano is the representative as the best ‘worldly knight’, in the context of the “benigno signore Iddio padre”. In a further step, the author then responds to the possible accusation of treachery and deceit in regard to his protagonist by having the narrator unequivocally state in advance:

“Queste quattro colonne furono nella persona di messer Tristano fermamente: imperò ch’ egli fue il più leale mondano che si trovasse; chè mai egli non fece niuno tradimento nè inganno; anzi fue ingannato. Messer Tristano fu veramente ingannato egli nescientemente, per lo beveraggio amoroso; che gli fue uno legame lo quale gli costrinse lo cuore, la volontà e ’l pensiero, a none adoperare nè potere altro che in amare quella a cui il beveraggio l’ avea sotto messo; chè innanzi non avea egli niuno rio pensiero. E quie si è scusato e si scusa, per ogni cagione, lo liale cavaliere messer Tristano: però ch’ egli non domandò da bere perchè gli fosse dato il beveraggio del bel piacere, ma domandò per volontà che avea di bere; e per ignoranza gli fue dato bere di quello beveraggio amoroso.”⁴³⁷

Thus, he shows his narrative intention to place any blame, if there is to be any, at the feet of fate or an unfavourable succession of circumstances, but never with Tristano. The love potion is described as the unstoppable force of love itself, for further clarification in the words of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’: “[...] lo beveraggio amoroso; che gli fue uno legame lo quale gli costrinse lo cuore, la volontà e ’l pensiero, a none adoperare nè potere altro che in amare quella a cui il beveraggio l’ avea sotto messo [...]”⁴³⁸. Also, it is once more stressed that the ‘liale amore’ between Tristano and Isotta existed even before the potion took effect, though it is clear in regard to Tristano “chè innanzi non avea egli niuno rio pensiero”. After this, the narrator con-

⁴³⁶ Ibid., p. 117f. (chapter XXXIII).

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 118 (chapter XXXIII).

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

tinues to further elucidate Tristano's excellent qualities. In this manner, the protagonist is subtly contrasted with Marco:

“La seconda cosa che ebbe in sè messer Tristano, si fue cortesia e larghezza; chè mai non rinunziò cosa che addomandata gli fosse; e non curava di portare corona, solo per non signoreggiare altrui; e voleva essere cavaliere e non re, acciò che altri avesse materia di più arditamente comandargli, e aoperare a sua cavalleria. Ed era Tristano largo, chè donava; ed era cortese, chè non toglieva. La terza cosa che Tristano ebbe in sè, si fue amore e carità; per ciò ch' egli amava ciascuna persona nel suo essere, e non portava odio nè invidia ad altrui: era misericordioso, e avea compassione là ove si convenía. La quarta colonna che mantiene lo mondo, si è prodezza: e questo veramente non fallò nella persona di messer Tristano; però che in lui fue prodezza con grande umiltà; ed era grande sofferitore, e non si crucciava troppo: chè crucciandosi egli, per certo, veruno cavaliere gli sarebbe potuto durare. Sicchè, con verità si può dire, che messer Tristano ebbe in sé prodezza senza viltà e senza inganno, amore senza invidia, larghezza e cortesia senza avarizia e senza villania.”⁴³⁹

In a last step, the previous remarks are recurringly connected to the spiritual context by using a slightly modified assertion from the bible as an interface between the great theme of love, simultaneously a transition to the next chapter, and Tristano's fate which is shaped by adversity despite all his talents – key word 'disavventuroso' – and reads as follows:

“E in ciò dimostra che fue dal principio per fino alla fine d'amore: e di ciò parla bene la Santa Scrittura, quando dice, che nullo puote nè debbe essere contento in questo mondo, nè dèe esser perfetto. Ma messer Tristano, essendo sì bello, prode, ricco e gentile, fue lo più disavventuroso cavaliere del mondo; e non fue mai una ora allegro [sic], ched e' non fosse uno di dolente e pensoso.”⁴⁴⁰

Thus, the author does not characterise Tristano as always melancholy and sad – we also experience him quite often in a joking mood in the 'Tavola Ritonda' – although he pays for his happiness with pain and suffering⁴⁴¹. It is revealing how he deals with this, however. In particular, this becomes plain in the way he henceforth accepts the dramatic experience of the love, transformed by the potion, for Isotta.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 118f. (chapter XXXIII).

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 119 (chapter XXXIII).

⁴⁴¹ Cf. for the joking Tristano, to name just three concise examples from a greater selection: *ibid.*, p. 268 (chapter LXXIII), p. 273-276 (chapter LXXV) and p. 353-362 (chapter XCIII).

4.1.3.2 The Love Potion Episode

The love potion episode in chapter XXXIV is introduced by a game of chess between Tristano and Isotta. The game of chess remains present with the couple until their death, as they even play it once more in chapter CXXVII shortly before Marco's fatal wounding of Tristano⁴⁴². Furthermore, it is pointed out in chapter XXXIV, before the love potion episode, that it has already become a custom for them at this stage:

“Ma, secondo che pone la storia, che essendo Tristano con sua compagnia andato da quattro giorni per alto mare, e venendo il quinto giorno; dopo desinare, Tristano e Isotta si puosono allo scacchiere a giuocare a scacchi, come erano usati; e giucarono grande parte del dì: ed era a quel punto un grande caldo, sì per la sentina del mare, e sie per la stagione del tempo. E giucando eglino in tale maniera, aveano grande talento di bere [...]”⁴⁴³

In chess, the game of kings, Tristano accepts Isotta as an equal, despite her sex. Thus, a connection on this level is already hinted at before the potion takes effect.

Wishing to drink wine, the fatal mistake occurs, one which is to unite them on a very different and new magnitude:

“[...] e allor addomandaro che lo vino fosse apportato. E allora Governale e Brandina andaron a una coverta della nave, là dove era loro roba; e per ignoranza, sie presono il bottacino là dove era lo beveraggio sì amoroso, e sie diedono di questo bere a Tristano e Isotta. [E] [= sic] avendo eglino beuto, e Governale e Brandina ripuosono il bottacino; e abbiendolo riposto, ed eglino s'avidono come quello era stato lo beveraggio che la reina Lotta [= Isotta's mother, who had intended the love potion for Isotta and Marco] tanto loro avea raccomandato. E di tale disavventura molto se ne doliano; e Governale diceva a Brandina: — Nostra malinconia non vale niente; perchè fatto è, e non puote stornare —.”⁴⁴⁴

The effect of the potion in the 'Tavola Ritonda' is not, however, just limited to Tristano and Isotta, but also includes other characters, henceforth also bound to the lovers, because Governale, led by emotion, spills the rest of the liquid onboard the ship:

“E a quel punto, una cucciolina di Isotta, la quale era appellata Idonia, sie leccòe di quello beveraggio sparto; e fue appresso della compagnia degli due leali amanti, e nella sua vita non gli ab-

⁴⁴² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 495f. (chapter CXXVII).

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 119 (chapter XXXIV).

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119f. (chapter XXXIV).

bandonò mai; e da poi ch' eglino furo morti e seppelliti, 'l terzo giorno si trovò morta sopra l' arca di Tristano e di Isotta. E fue tanto fine quello beveraggio e sie amoroso, che, per lo odore che Governale e Brandina sentirono di quello, mai in verso di Tristano nè di Isotta non fallirono: e fallar non poteano; tanto quello beveraggio gli facea congiunti. Qui dice uno dottore, che avendo messer Tristano e Isotta e Governale e Brandina e Passabrunello [Tristano's horse at that point in time] e Idonia, ch' egli avea la più bella dama e 'l più fedele serviziale, e la più leale serviziale e lo più forte cavallo e la migliore cucciolina che avesse niuno barone del mondo. E là dove cadde quello beveraggio, fece di sopra uno napuro e una schiuma di colore d' argento; e dove si sparse, si strinse tanto forte, che tutti gli ferri del mondo non ne arebboro levato."⁴⁴⁵

In this manner, the author accentuates the enormous power of the potion. This has also been observed by Joan Tasker Grimbert, who notes:

“Then, rather than following the Prose *Tristan*'s lead in playing down the importance of the potion, the *Tavola* greatly elaborates on its overpowering effects: Tristano's dog [Note: Idonia is already depicted as Isotta's dog in this passage; see the previous quotation] laps up a few spilled drops and becomes bound to his master forever; the same fierce loyalty is inspired in Governale and Brandina, who merely inhale the drink's fumes. The potion is seen as greatly attenuating the culpability of the passion that now seizes them, but it also imbues them with a transcendent power [...].”⁴⁴⁶

Donald L. Hoffman goes a step further by inserting another line of argumentation:

“Beyond erasing guilt, the potion here confers a blessing. It is this potent potion that allows Tristano and Isotta to transcend worldly obligations (like marriage ties [Note to that: A concrete marriage bond is not yet existing between Marco and Isotta at the point of the love potion, because Marco has not any knowledge before the delivery of Isotta by Tristano to him in Cornwall takes place, if his demand could have been accomplished at all. Furthermore, subsequently a secret marriage between Tristano and Isotta first occurs.] and feudal duties) and ordinary human limitations. It is the potion that allows Tristano and Isotta to achieve the *concordia*, the mutuality and stability of desire, that makes them unique [...].”⁴⁴⁷

In closer inspection of the 'Tavola Ritonda', it may in accordance with this at least be stated that Tristano is able to forget his obligations of loyalty towards chivalry, from his father's example, and Marco's demands in regard to Isotta due to the potion's effects. Isotta, on the other

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 120 (chapter XXXIV).

⁴⁴⁶ Grimbert 1994, p. 95.

⁴⁴⁷ Hoffman 1995, p. 213.

hand, had been intended by her father for Tristano all along, and this is consequently merely precipitated by the love potion:

“E avendo Tristano bevuto questo beveraggio, egli si maraviglia molto molto, perché sua volontà nè suo pensiero egli in alcuno modo non poteva raffrenare. E simile e in tale modo era infiammata madonna Isotta; cioè di lui [...]”⁴⁴⁸

It is noteworthy that the author divides the love potion episode into several parts. Initially, he describes the potion and its effect in a more general and broad context, after which he deals with Tristano and Isotta in a more detailed and specific manner. In his depiction of the potion's effects on the young lovers, he unambiguously shows it to be a gradual process, until finally the full effect is reached. This occurs with an, in part, humorous undertone, which may by all indications be found in two interspersed comments in a more moderate form, with the corresponding readings. Instead of using wordplay, such as the well-known *«l'amer»*, the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' uses chess, including its terminology, for it, although he also in a way pays homage to the source by Thomas d'Angleterre⁴⁴⁹:

“[...] e per tale, l' uno guatava l' altro; e per molto mirare, l' uno conosce il disio e la volontà dell' altro. E a quel punto dimenticarono lo giuoco degli scacchi; chè quando Tristano pensava giocare dello dalfino, ed e' giocava assai volte della reina; e tal facea Isotta: quando credeva giocare dello re, ed ella giocava dello cavaliere. E aveano lo giuoco tanto travagliato, che cia-

⁴⁴⁸ Polidori 1864, p. 121 (chapter XXXIV).

⁴⁴⁹ In the 'Tristan en prose', at least in the shorter version I which is deemed to be the source for the 'Tavola Ritonda', it is merely briefly hinted at during their sea voyage and still before the love potion that Tristan and Yselt play chess. There is no mention of mistaken identities. It appears that the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda', who we know also used Thomas d'Angleterre as a source, himself placed it within this passage in the love potion episode, in all likelihood paying homage to the latter source. The skilful artistry of its word play with *«l'amer»* is not achieved, though it appears that the author did not attempt to do so. Instead, he utilises situational humour, and for that inserting a special word play of his own by the use of chess terminology, arising from his depiction and mistaken identities (with 'dalfino', 'reina', 're' and 'cavaliere'). This use of mistaken identities and the underlying humour tie him strongly to Thomas' portrayal, whereas the spirit of V I of the 'Tristan en prose' in the love potion episode stresses from the very beginning onwards only misery and death, implied by taking the potion. Cf. for this Curtis 1976, p. 65ff. (§ 445-4449). At this point, the reference to Renée L. Curtis' edition is intentionally employed as a comparison because it seems to provide the best text edition, as Philippe Ménard explains in his preface to edition of the 'Tristan en prose' in accordance with manuscript 757: “Après avoir publié en neuf volumes la version classique du *Tristan en prose*, appelée V.II. ou la vulgate, il nous a semblé indispensable de faire connaître en cinq autres volumes la rédaction différente appelée V.I. par Emmanuèle Baumgartner. On notera que cette version ne concerne que la deuxième partie du roman, à partir du § 184 de l'analyse de Löseth, la première partie de l'œuvre présentant une version indifférenciée.” Ménard, Philippe (Publ.): *Le Roman de Tristan en Prose*. (Version du manuscrit français 757 de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris). Publié sous la direction de Philippe Ménard, Tome I. Édité par Joël Blanchard et Michel Quéreuil. (Les Classiques Français du Moyen Âge, 123. Directeur : Philippe Ménard. Directeur-adjoint : Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet). Paris 1997, p. 7 (Préface). The 'Tristano Riccardiano', in which the love potion episode is described in a compressed fashion, may serve as a further comparison: although the game of chess is mentioned multiple times, the characteristic instance of mistaken identities is missing, next to other detailed depictions. Cf. for this Heijkant 1991, p. 138f. (chapter LVII).

scuno crede essere morto; ed erano tanto presi d' amore, che lo minore scacco di suso lo scacchiere pareva a loro lo maggiore.”⁴⁵⁰

Following the disturbance of the game of chess by the first signs of the potion's effect, the focus switches towards the unity of hearts and wills created by the potion, and includes the aforementioned short comment by the author:

“E questo, tutto loro intervenía per quello beveraggio, il quale fue fatto e ordinato bene, che non fue meraviglia gli due cuori essere una cosa; ma fue meraviglia come gli due cuori non si partirono di loro luogo, e non si congiunsono insieme, e essere uno cuore ed essere in una forma, sì come erano una volontà. Chè sappiate, che se quello beveraggio avessono gustato cento creature tutte di diverse nature, cioè cristiani, saracini, lioni, serpenti; tutti gli arebbe fatti una cosa, e mai non si sarebbero abbandonati. E però non è da meravigliare sed e' costrinse lo cuore di due giovani amanti; ma è da meravigliare che gli due cuori non si spezzarono in pezzi e non si feciono una cosa.”⁴⁵¹

Only afterwards does the author begin to describe the physical union, as well as the union of hearts, within a further comment:

“Ora, vedendosi insieme loro visi amorosi e piacenti, non si poteano saziare dello guatare l' uno l' altro. E sappiate, che se quello beveraggio fosse stato ordinato ad aoperare diletto carnale e piacimento, che quanti cavalieri e donzelli, dame e damigelle furono già mai più leggiadre, non si sariano messe solo a uno disordinato sguardo e pensiero d' amore; imperò che 'l detto beveraggio fue ordinato a sforzare la natura, e a sottomettere la ragione e la volontà, e dare volontà di piacere. E fue quella una catena la quale incatenò il cuore degli due amanti; sicchè degli [due] [= sic] cuori fece uno cuore, cioè uno pensamento; e delli due corpi fece una volontà: però che quello che piaceva a Isotta, a Tristano dilectava; e quello che Isotta voleva, Tristano lo desiderava; e quello che spiaceva a l' uno, a l' altro gli era in odio: e gli due amanti ebbono una vita e feciono una morte, e credesi che le anime abbiano uno luogo stabilito insieme. E da quel punto, gli due amanti non si travagliano di molte parole, ma dipartironsi dal giuoco e dallo scacchiere, e vanno nella camera della nave [...]”⁴⁵²

Although the physical and sexual aspect of Tristano's and Isotta's love comes into play due to the potion at this point, the author always connects this to the couple's union in other spheres: of the heart and will and thereby also the spiritual union. Thus, the sexual relationship never

⁴⁵⁰ Polidori 1864, p. 121 (chapter XXXIV).

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Ibid., p. 121f. (chapter XXXIV).

stands alone, although freed of blame by the power of the potion. Rather, it is connected to a completed spiritual union. This is partially shown before the potion takes effect, and an additional exoneration and justification is provided by it. In this manner, the author is able to bring Tristano and Isotta together in a remarkable union and extraordinary unity by completely adopting the love potion and its effects. Donald L. Hoffman uses the term ‘concordia’ in order to juxtapose Tristano and Isotta with the famous lovers Paolo and Francesca in Dante Alighieri’s canto V from the ‘Divina Commedia’, intentionally alluded to by the author in the love potion episode with the previously cited sentence “e gli due amanti ebbono una vita e feciono una morte, e credesi che le anime abbiano uno luogo stabilito insieme”⁴⁵³:

“When summoned by Dante, Francesca sails into view fettered to her silent lover. In her three-fold invocation, she defines love as flammable, inescapable, and fatal: “Amor condusse noi ad una morte” [...] she explains, recalling the essential feature of the Tristan story, the rootedness of love in [addition: early] death. Like Paolo and Francesca, Tristano and Isotta in the *Tavola* [...] “... ebbono una vita e feciono una morte,” 122 [...]. When the *Tavola* adds, “e credesi che le anime abbiano uno luogo stabilito insieme,” [...] the primary reference to the lovers’ tomb competes with the image of Paolo and Francesca together forever in Hell. While the *Tavola* strives to reinvest the notion of love with virtue and valor, Francesca’s fate recalls the danger in the text’s redemptive project.”⁴⁵⁴

In addition to this, Donald L. Hoffman further comments in regard to the concept of ‘concordia’, which he had previously explained:

“The distinctive theme of the *Tavola*’s treatment of love is its emphasis on *concordia*, a harmony most perfectly created by the potion that chains the hearts, thoughts, bodies, and wills of the lovers. While Paolo and Francesca again define the antitype of this eternal bondage, the *Tavola* never wavers in its commitment to the praise of chained hearts indissolubly linked even at the risk of death and damnation.”⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ Cf. for this also Emanuele Trevi, who states in regard to this episode: “Prima di ogni indagine erudita, l’autore della *Tavola Ritonda*, precoce lettore di Dante, aveva compreso, riscrivendo la scena del filtro, l’equivalenza tra la lettura del *Lancelot* e l’ingestione del filtro magico, inserendo all’interno della materia narrativa derivata dal *Roman* allusioni al V canto dell’*Inferno*.” Trevi 1999, p. 52.

⁴⁵⁴ Hoffman 1995, p. 210f.

Additional comment: much could be said in Dante’s defence and in regard to a more detailed clarification of his intended meaning in these verses of Canto V. However, this would require a separate essay due to the scope of the subject matter and would thus lead too far from the topic at hand. In principle, it is true that the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and its conception of love were intended as a reply to parts of Dante’s ‘Divina Commedia’, as previously mentioned.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 211.

In accordance with this, it is stated at the end of the description of Tristano and Isotta drinking and being affected by the love potion: “[...] e fue quello cosìe fatto cominciamento, che fue perfetto nello principio e nel mezzo e nella fine.”⁴⁵⁶

This fundamental and concise statement has also been emphasised by Joan Tasker Grimbert, who clarifies in regard to the concept of love in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’:

“But this love is considered “chaste,” because it is so noble and loyal—so perfect—that it transcends mere lust. Indeed, the narrator first describes their love as superlatively perfect—“innamoramento perfettissimo” (8); he then asserts that with the consumption of the potion began the love that was “perfetto nello principio e nel mezzo e nella fine” (123) [...]; and finally, he states at the moment of the lovers’ death: “E sappiate che no’ fu mai mantenuto amore tanto gentile mente e leale mente per neuno amante, quanto fu per loro due” (507) [...].”⁴⁵⁷

In this way, Isotta is principally lost for Marco from this point in the narrative onwards, although Tristano still sees the denotation of ‘leanza’ as an obligation to at least superficially comply with his uncle’s demands. In concordance with this, the close of chapter XXXIV is constituted by a very short dialogue between Brandina and Governale worriedly discussing the loss of Isotta’s virginity and Governale’s plan to obfuscate this fact.

4.1.3.3 The Couple’s Love Relationship after the Potion

Immediately following the love potion episode in chapters XXXV until and including XXXVII, a further legitimization of Tristano’s and Isotta’s love is created, even before she is to be handed over to Marco. As was addressed in 4.1.1.4, this constitutes a special feature of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ version: the lovers’ secret marriage in the context of the ‘Isola della Malvagia Usanza’-Passage⁴⁵⁸. Similar to the introduction of the love potion episode, the belief in and connection to God is stressed by Isotta’s long prayer for her lover, while he is engaged in a dangerous duel and from which he finally emerges victorious⁴⁵⁹. Although Tristano takes heed of Marco’s demand by handing over Isotta in chapter XL, after staying on the Isola della

⁴⁵⁶ Polidori 1864, p. 123 (chapter XXXIV).

⁴⁵⁷ Grimbert 1994, p. 96.

⁴⁵⁸ Cf. in this regard footnote 289.

⁴⁵⁹ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 129-132 (chapter XXXVII). The transition from the previous chapter to the next is as follows: “La bella Isotta, vedendo lo suo amico Tristano a tale battaglia pericolosa, e veggendoli perdere del sangue e tagliare de l’ armadura tanta del suo dosso, quasimente ella tramorti; poi levava il suo cuore, colla mente, al cielo, dicendo fra sé onestamente e pietosamente verso Iddio queste parole:”. Ibid., p. 129 (chapter XXXVI).

Malvagia Usanza, also called Isola degli Giganti, the evil custom of which has since been abolished, his uncle completes the marriage process only in part with Isotta, strictly speaking. He does not notice that Isotta has been surreptitiously replaced during the wedding night.⁴⁶⁰ To hide the fact that Isotta is no longer a virgin, the bride is subtly replaced, as is the case in other Tristan versions as well, by Brandina. It is characteristic that Marco, unaware of the replacement, is overjoyed at the wedding night and Isotta's alleged virginity at this point, as was already briefly mentioned in 4.1.1.4. He also temporarily forgets his jealousy of Tristano, from whom he was purportedly able to take away the beloved lady, and acts in the following manner:

“E al mattino, lo re si lieva, e fae raunare al gran palagio tutti gli suoi baroni e dame e cavalieri e ancor damigelle, e sie incorona la reina Isotta della metà suo reame: a Tristano donòe l' altra metade, perch' egli aveva menata Isotta, la quale tanto gli piaceva.”⁴⁶¹

This unforeseen generosity may be construed as the king's long overdue and public compensation for the freeing of Cornwall from tributary demands and especially for Tristano's successful delivery of the bride. In any case, Tristano is tied more closely to Cornwall through this turn of events.

4.1.3.3.1 The Couple's First Stay at the Court of Cornwall and its Conclusion

Shortly after the wedding, Isotta is once more lost to Marco, as previously mentioned in 4.1.1.4, through the rash granting of a gift to Palamides and has to be retrieved by Tristano, who subsequently scolds the king for his actions⁴⁶². Immediately following this in chapter XLIII, the lovers, who keep their relationship alive in secret, are victim to a trap because Tristano remains steady in his love for Isotta and does not turn towards the 'folle amore', which is contrasted by the 'leale amore':

“Manifesta la vera storia, che mantenendo lo re Marco sua corte in grande gioia e allegrezza cogli suoi baroni, allora una camarlinga, confida donzella della reina Isotta, appellata Girida, sie s' innamorò di messer Tristano, e sie gli disse: — Bel sire, io voglio essere donzella del vostro amore, imperò che io amo più voi, che niun' altra persona viva —. Ma, con tutto ch' ella fosse

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 141-144 (chapter XL).

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 144 (chapter XL).

⁴⁶² Cf. Ibid., p. 147-154 (chapter XLI-XLII).

molto bella, Tristano nolla volle intendere; anzi le disse: — E come, malvagia donzella, pensate voi ch' io v' ami di folle amore? — E qui si dimostra che Tristano era savio e leale cavaliere; chè stando egli bene, non si voleva mutare, e non voleva lasciare la cosa cara per la vile: sì che Tristano conosce il vantaggio, e non vuole lasciare la cosa cara, cioè Isotta, per veruna altra persona [...].”⁴⁶³

With this, it is highlighted that Tristano stands the test of love for Isotta on the basis of the ‘leale amore’, which characterises and elevates the couple, not only due to the potion’s effects but also because of his own decision. Thereby, it is suggested that the love between them is not merely the result of the potion. In addition, the ‘folle amore’ is once more presented as the negative counterpart to the ‘leale amore’, as this was described for the first time in the Bellices episode⁴⁶⁴. However, the chambermaid Girida does not operate on her own concerning the trap, she receives help from Adriette:

“E la donzella Gilida, conoscendo che Tristano non curava di suo amore, schifò molto, e fue poi sdegnosa e inimica a Tristano. E uno giorno ella disse ad Adrette, figliuolo della sorella dello re Marco, lo quale odiava molto Tristano, solo per invidia di cavalleria; e Girida gli dice come a lei pareva che messer Tristano amasse Isotta di folle amore. Ed egli in ciò fue allegro assai, e tantosto l’ ebbe a contare allo re Marco; e lo re disse che tale conveniente in neuna maniera egli nollo credea. E allora Adriette disse: — Io in ciò vi farò chiaramente vedere —.”⁴⁶⁵

As a further relative of Marco, on his mother’s side though, therefore possessing the status of a cousin, Adriette consequently does not have such an outstanding position at his uncle’s court in comparison to Tristano, who receives half of the kingdom in chapter XL. Furthermore, he is presented as being jealous of his relative’s perfected chivalry. Similar to Marco in his mode of operation, he attempts on occasion to bring about Tristano’s downfall through intrigue and subterfuge: he ultimately succeeds in this by contributing to Tristano’s death in chapter CXXVII⁴⁶⁶, thereby, however, causing his own swift death in chapter CXXXV⁴⁶⁷. Meanwhile, Adriette’s first deceitfulness materialises in chapter XLIII as the sickle trap test,

⁴⁶³ Ibid., p. 154 (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁶⁴ In regard to the author’s use of these terms in the Bellices episode, see in particular: *ibid.*, p. 56 (chapter XV) and p. 62 (chapter XVI).

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 155 (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 496 (chapter CXXVII).

⁴⁶⁷ Cf. the following text passage from chapter CXXXV in this regard: “E lo re Marco, vedendosi in tale maniera assediato e vedendosi a tale partito, era lo più tristo [sic] re del mondo; e piangeva la morte di messer Tristano, ch’ era istato difenditore di quello reame; e piangeva per sé, che si vedea a così fatto partito, chè vedea che non potea scampare. E a quel punto, per lo grande dolore, fece tagliare la testa a u’ suo nipote Adriette; imperò ch’ egli era istato cominciamento e mezzo e fine della distruzione di messer Tristano.”. *Ibid.*, p. 518 (chapter CXXXV). With this narrative comment, it is stressed that Adriette, through his scheming and influence on the king, shares responsibility for Tristano’s death.

with which he wishes to trap Tristano and the Queen, and thus expose them to Marco. Through Isotta's undetested response, however, the trap can eventually be circumvented.⁴⁶⁸ Independent of that, a drinking horn, enchanted by the faerie Fata Morgana, is then brought to the king's court by Amorotto of Gaules in order to test the fidelity of all the ladies present there. Apart from 13 ladies out of 686, as the narrator informs us of, none further of them passes the test, not even the queen, after which Marco pronounces the following verdict⁴⁶⁹:

“Vedendo lo re Marco la pruova, disse: — Io comando che la reina, e tutte l' altre dame che qui sono, si siano prese; e comando ch' elle tutte siano dibruciate e arse, come false e meretrici —
”⁴⁷⁰

This merciless sentence can only be deflected by “[...] Dinasso, lo grande siniscalco, lo quale era uno grande barone, ed era molto intimo e amico di messer Tristano [...]” by means of very calculating rhetoric⁴⁷¹. For Amorotto, however, the consequences of his transmission of the drinking horn is as follows:

“E da quello punto, Tristano porta grande odio all' Amorotto, dicendo che s' egli lo truova mai in alcuna parte, che giàe non gli mancherà che nollo combatta colla spada, più che l' Amorotto non vorrà.”⁴⁷²

From this moment onwards, Marco's distrust of Tristano is undoubtedly reignited, especially due to Girida's and Adriette's incitement, and he consequently decrees:

“Ed essendo in tanto sospetto, comanda allora non sia nè barone nè cavaliere che osi entrare nella camera della reina Isotta senza suo comandamento, o vero senza la sua persona propria.”⁴⁷³

After this description and a short comment by the narrator, Tristano reacts as follows to this decree:

“Ma Tristano, si come saggio, conosce bene che lo comando era solo fatto per lui, più che per altri; e allora egli divenne vie più infiammato dello amore della reina, ched e' non era: però che

⁴⁶⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 155f. (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 156-159 (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 159 (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159f. (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 160 (chapter XLIII).

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 160 (chapter XLIV).

lo perfetto amore quanto à più contrario, tanto è più infiammato; e quanto egli è più dubbioso, tanto è maggiore e più il diletto; e quanto egli è più celato, tanto è più congiunto ed è più perfetto. Cosie interveniva a messer Tristano; chè quando lo suo amore era più molestato, tanto n'era più bramoso, e cercava ogni via e ogni modo com' egli potesse parlare alla reina Isotta."⁴⁷⁴

Although Tristano does not openly confront Marco, he by no means accepts his dictates concerning the access to Isotta, as the narrative comment regarding the 'perfetto amore' stresses. In this way, Tristano, who now cannot enter Isotta's chambers through the usual entrance, comes up with the idea of climbing a tree in order to enter through her balcony, though this is discovered by Girida, who relays it to Adriette, in turn revealing it to the king⁴⁷⁵. He then acts as follows: "E quando le [sic] re sae questo, fece vista di non se ne accorgere; ma non di meno, fae armare da trenta cavalieri, e menògli con seco, e difilasi verso la camera de la reina."⁴⁷⁶. It is merely a warning by the vigilant Brandina that saves the couple from being discovered red-handed, and Tristano is able to force his way out and flee to his own palace⁴⁷⁷. Nevertheless, his uncle takes the following action: "E lo re Marco, rivenendo in sè, s' fae prendere la bella Isotta, e falla imprigionare nella mastra torre della città, e le chiavi mantiene appresso di sè."⁴⁷⁸. Subsequently, Tristano suffers great pain and for 36 days undergoes a sort of hunger strike, which cannot, however, soften Marco's resolve of refusing his nephew access to Isotta. As a solution to this problem, the lovers secretly exchange a series of letters, at the end of which Isotta comes up with the idea of smuggling Tristano, with the help of Brandina, into her chambers dressed as a lady. Although Tristano is cured of his sorrows during this meeting, they are once more betrayed by Girida and the king is this time able to capture both of them with the help of 80 knights.⁴⁷⁹ The next day, Marco passes the following judgment:

"Allora lo re dice: — Immantamente conviene che di voi io prenda alta vendetta: di questo siate certani —. E dàe per sentenza che a Tristano sia tagliata la testa, e la reina fosse data agli misselli (ciò sono gli malatti), acciò che niuna altra persona avesse mai voglia nè cagione di contender nè avere a fare con lei."⁴⁸⁰

Still in the same chapter, Tristano is able to escape the enactment of his punishment near the sea by means of the well-known 'chapel leap' and his confidant Governale rescues Isotta from

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 160f. (chapter XLIV).

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 161 (chapter XLIV).

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Cf. Ibid., p. 161-164 (chapters XLIV and XLV).

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 164 (chapter XLV).

the lepers unscathed, after which they all retreat to the tower of the Savia Donzella near the border between Cornwall and Leonis. Brandina joins them there later.⁴⁸¹ In the subsequent limited period of 75 days, they lead an unburdened life:

“[...] e Governale apparecchia da desinare, e Brandina le letta da posare; e quando àno mangiato, ed eglino sullo bello letto vannosi a diportare. E venendo l' altro di, e Tristano e Governale vanno a cacciare, e tornaro dopo nona con molta caccia di selvaggina; e ognora che Tristano e Isotta aveano mangiato, ed eglino per sollazzo giuocano a scacchi. E in tale maniera dimorarono gli due amanti per termine di settantacinque giorni.”⁴⁸²

In accordance with the ‘Tristan en prose’, the main source for this narrative passage, except in some details, the author already for a first time accentuates there in contrast to a great number of Tristan versions in verse that the lovers enjoy their lives with cheerful modesty outside of Cornwall’s court society and still manage to live a civilised day-to-day life⁴⁸³.

This carefree life only comes to a sudden end when Marco, now regretting the loss of Isotta, discovers the tower during a hunting excursion. Marco has Isotta brought back to Tintoille – as both Tristano and Governale are absent, also hunting – and keeps her prisoner there in a luxurious chamber in one of the town’s towers.⁴⁸⁴ Furthermore, Tristano is wounded just at this point by means of a poisonous arrow shot by a young man who wishes to avenge himself for his father’s death, which occurred during a tourney⁴⁸⁵. Thus, the author concludes the lovers’ first stay at the court of Cornwall and the first stage away from it. At the same time, he leads over to Tristano’s wound-healing trip to Petite Bretagne and his formal marriage to Isolda dalle bianche mani.

⁴⁸¹ Cf. Ibid., p. 164-167 (chapter XLV).

Additional remark: there is a tangible difference in the arrangement of episodes between the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and its source, the ‘Tristan en prose’, in regard to the narrative passages beginning with Tristano’s recovery of the kidnapped Queen, continuing with traps and tests of loyalty, until the couple’s exile and stay with la Roche a la Saige Demoisele. To name just one example for this: in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, the trap and test involving the sickle comes before the episode of the enchanted drinking horn, whereas it is the other way round in the ‘Tristan en prose’. Also, both versions differ in various details in this narrative passage. Cf. Curtis 1976, p. 130-135 (§ 528-533).

⁴⁸² Polidori 1864, p. 167 (chapter XLV).

⁴⁸³ Cf. also Donald L. Hoffman, who notes in regard to this text passage: “In the Tower of the Savia Donzella on the border of Cornwall and Lyonesse, the brutal forest of the verse romances is no longer *aspre et dur*, but fully equipped with food, servants and a beautiful bed (“bello letto”) for entertainment (“a diportare,” 163). Here, the lovers spend their time hunting, fishing [note: there is no direct mention of fishing] playing chess, and otherwise enjoying themselves in this civilized Forest, where, for seventy-five days, they indulge again in the private pleasures of their shipboard love, as they had in the Castello del Proro. Again, however, the unstable, but ever present, world imposes the only defect in their pleasure, the compulsion to leave (when Marco discovers them).” Hoffman 1995, p. 215.

For the ‘Tristan en prose’, refer to: Curtis 1976, p. 147-152 (§ 548-555).

⁴⁸⁴ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 168ff. (chapter XLVI).

⁴⁸⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 170 (chapter XLVII).

4.1.3.3.2 *The Interval Preceding Tristano's Trip to Petite Bretagne*

During the interim narrative passage, chapter XLVII focusses on Tristano's pain caused by the separation from, and therefore the loss of, Isotta due to her isolated captivity in the tower, as well as his undying love for her:

“E allora, sì come la grande calura fae seccare le foglie, e 'l grande vento le manda in terra; co-sì il grande dolore e la mortale novella seccòe a Tristano ogni virtù e sentimento, e per libera forza lo mette alla terra, e cadde sì come corpo morto. E sappiendo sì come la reina era tolta per lo re Marco, sì come gli pastori gli diceano; a lui gli mancarono i cinque sentimenti, e non sentia niente; e 'n tale maniera giacque per mezza ora. E rivenendo egli in sé alquanto, parlòe con boce fioca e sottil, dicendo: — O cuor mio, or chie mi v' àe così rapita? O speranza del mio intelletto, riposo mi, speme di mia vita; come m' ài di mortal morte fedito, e non vi veggio; ond' io per voi sempre saròe sconcolato! — [...].”⁴⁸⁶

Thus, Tristano himself compares the separation from Isotta with death in this passage. Following Brandina's advice, he asks his uncle to grant him to stay in the 'castello di Cornasim' until he is able to leave for Petite Bretagne for his final cure from the poison⁴⁸⁷. In accordance with Brandina's recommendation, he is to spend a certain amount of time there, as she hopes that the following will occur in regard to Marco:

“E 'n fra questo tempo, lo cuore dello re sì si raumilieràe in verso di voi; e io, s' i' posso, parleròe a Isotta, ed ella mi doneràe per voi consiglio; e anche sara buono questo ch' io vi dico —
.”⁴⁸⁸

Concerning the transmission of Tristano's letter to the king, with the help of Governale, it is noteworthy in which way the subjects are portrayed to react with consistent appreciation in regard to the liberator from tributary obligations:

“[...] e [Tristano] allora scrive una lettera, e scrivela a Governale, e mandala per Governale allo re Marco. Ora, andando Governale per la città, tutta la gente lo 'nchinava; ma, non di meno, niuno osava domandarlo come stava Tristano, nè dov' egli si fosse, per paura del bando.”⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 171 (chapter XLVII).

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 171ff. (chapter XLVII).

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 172f. (chapter XLVII).

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 173 (chapter XLVII).

Although Marco subsequently grants his nephew to stay in the ‘castello di Cornasim’ in chapter XLVIII, he forbids him to come within a hundred feet of the walls of the town in which Isotta is held captive. Tristano adheres to this; nevertheless, he performs the following ritual as soon as he is able to:

“Ma pure, essendo Tristano migliorato, ogni mattina cavalca in su uno palafreno presso alla città, e sie rimirava la torre dov’ egli sapeva che la bionda Isotta dimorava imprigionata per lo suo amore; e appresso faceva uno pianto tanto umile e tanto pietoso, ch’ era uno grande peccato a sentirlo o a udirlo.”⁴⁹⁰

With this, the author clarifies that the love for Isotta has higher value for the protagonist than to directly challenge Marco’s power. It is precisely this reciprocal love between him and the Queen of Cornwall, however, that provides Tristano with influence and power over the kingdom, more or less directly affecting Marco’s prestige in this area.

Still in the mournful and trance-like state over his love for Isotta, whom he cannot reach, Tristano encounters Lancialotto one morning in chapter XLIX. Due to a misunderstanding and the ignorance of the identity of his opposite, a vicious duel ensues between them. Ultimately, the aggressiveness quickly evaporates when the opponent’s identity is clarified and the personal bond of friendship between these two excellent knights is affirmed⁴⁹¹. In the course of this, Lancialotto declares:

“[...] Tristano àe uno suo liale e buono amico nello reame di Longres, lo quale egli non vidde mai; e sì lo ama quanto sè medesimo, o più, per amore di cavalleria. E io sono quello che amo messer Tristano per amore di sua gran bontade e buona noméa; e per amore di Tristano, io amo la reina Isotta come mia suora carnale. E sacciate, cavaliere, che io sono appellato Lancielotto, figliuolo dello re Bando di Benuicche; e partomi dello reame dello re Artù e di sua corte, solo per vedere Tristano [...]”⁴⁹²

The use of the word ‘liale’ is noteworthy in this narrative passage: therewith, next to being one of Tristano’s main attributes, a loyal and indestructible friendship is denoted. According to the portrayal in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, this loyalty, which Tristano initially also unrestrainedly showed towards his uncle at Marco’s court during the liberation from tributary demands, seems to have been eroded to some degree at this point in the narrative due to the

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 175 (chapter XLVIII).

⁴⁹¹ Cf. Ibid., p. 175-179 (chapter XLIX).

For an additional comment, cf.: Heijkant 1997, p. 15.

⁴⁹² Polidori 1864, p. 178 (chapter XLIX).

king's actions, having shown signs of degradation all along due to a lack of reciprocity in this matter. In regard to his newly acquired friend Lancialotto, however, the case is different: having been shown the honour of being invited to Marco's domain, Lancialotto effects Isotta's release from the tower and even a peace agreement for Tristano, so that Tristano is able to accept the Queen's invitation to the 'palagio del Giardino' and see her again at last⁴⁹³. Tristano can soon return the favour after Lancialotto's stay in Cornwall by helping him in regard to Gioiosa Guardia in chapter L, and he subsequently receives it as a gift and a safe haven, as previously mentioned in 4.1.2.3.2.

4.1.3.3.3 *Tristano's Trip to Petita Bretagna*

In the subsequent chapter LI, the interludes end and Tristano makes his way to Petita Bretagna in order to completely cure his wound from the poison⁴⁹⁴:

“Tornato che messer Tristano fue dalla Guardia Gioiosa [sic], e avendola conquistata per grazia e per amore; lo re Marco, vedendolo, gli mostrava grande amore, ed era assai allegro del suo onore e della sua grandezza: ma assai dubitava che Tristano non gli togliesse la reina Isotta; e ch' egli non se ne andasse con essa ad abitare alla Gioiosa Guardia, sì come Lancialotto menata n' avea la reina Ginevra. E per lo grande sospetto, fae riserrare Isotta nella torre, sì come fatto avea da prima; non ch' ella non avesse ben tutte quelle cose ch' ella domandava; e lo re una volta la settimana l' andava a parlare con diletto, ma in altra maniera egli le parlava ogni dì. Ma Tristano nolla poteva vedere in neuna maniera; e di ciò egli era lo più tristo cavaliere del mondo. Ed eragli tanto rienfiata la sua fedita del braccio, la quale Brandina curata gli avea da prima, che, avvegna ch' ella fosse salda di fuori, dentro magagnava, e davagli grande dolore al braccio; el quale era molto infiato, e tanto gli doleva, che nè dì nè notte non trovava luogo nè posa, e venne di ciò quasi in caso di morte. E vedendo Tristano che al tutto gli era fallito il consiglio di Isotta, fermòssi d' andarsene nella Petitta Brettagna, a farsi curare alla figliuola di quello re, sì come Brandina consigliato l' avea. Allora, con grande dolore e con grave dipartenza, egli e 'l suo Governale entrano in una nave, e vanno per alto mare.”⁴⁹⁵

Once more, the narrative passage clarifies that Marco does not put all of his cards on the table in regard to Tristano. He only externally shows himself pleased at his nephew's increased honour and chivalric successes, but fears him internally, doubts his nephew's intentions, as-

⁴⁹³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 179-182 (chapter XLIX).

⁴⁹⁴ Brief note: in the following, I will use the spelling 'Petita Bretagna' in accordance with the more common use, which is also closer to the French spelling.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 187f. (chapter LI).

cribes negative things to him and is afraid of the possibility of losing Isotta, who might be led away by Tristano and want to live with him. One should note, however, that at this point in the narrative there is no reason for this suspicion, as Tristano only extracted Isotta from court in chapters XLV and XLVI due to his uncle's punitive sentence of forcing her to live among the lepers. Nevertheless, Marco reacts with great harshness in regard to his suspicion and subsequently denies his nephew any access to his lover. At the same time, Isotta is also 'per amore' one of the main incentives for Tristano's perfection of his chivalry, which finds its apex during the tourney of Verzeppa and simultaneously constitutes an extolment of his lover. Due to this, and not only in regard to the poisoned wound, the narrator says the following about him at this point: "e venne di ciò quasi in caso di morte". Thus, Tristano reaches Petita Bretagna with Governale and is amicably received there by King Gilierchino, although the latter is engaged in a war with a relative, "[...] uno suo nipote[...]"⁴⁹⁶. Tristano helps Gilierchino in this conflict, although his wound is healed by the king's daughter, Isolda dalle bianche mani, before that. During the treatment, the narrator states in regard to the protagonist: "E Tristano, mirando alla donzella, diceva fra sè, che da Isotta la bionda in fuori, non se ne vidde mai una tanto bella."⁴⁹⁷. After the victorious conclusion of the siege and the fighting for Gilierchino owing to Tristano, the young knight is honoured and celebrated by the king and his children Ghedino and Isolda for his decisive assistance⁴⁹⁸.

"E dimorando in tale maniera Tristano, a uno giorno egli e Ghedino andarono a cacciare alla marina; e cavalcando e mirando e maginando, cominciò fortemente a pensare e a rimembrarsi della bella Isotta la bionda; e pensando, imaginava le sue bellezze, e lo buono amore il quale ella sempre gli aveva portato; e come per lui aveva intralasciato padre, madre e tutto l' altro mondo. E ricordandosi, poi, com' egli l' avea lasciata imprigionata per lo suo amore, e immaginando gli grandi dilette ch' egli aveano avuti insieme, era sì grande l' accendio ched egli aveva, che lo cuore gli si fendea, e ardeva gli di voglia ch' egli avea di vederla; sì ch' egli uscì di sè medesimo, e cadde da cavallo in terra. E sì era trasmortito, e stette grande pezza ch' egli non si sentie: e allora Ghedino lo teneva in braccio, e faceva di ciò grande pianto. E rivenendo messer Tristano alquanto, egli parlòe, non credendo egli essere da niuno inteso; [...]"⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 189 (chapter LI).

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

Note: It is noteworthy that Isotta and Isolda are separated from each other by a different spelling in the respective editions by Filippo-Luigi Polidori and Marie-José Heijkant. By all appearances, this is already the case in the manuscripts used for their editions, though a definite statement would require an exact comparison with all relevant manuscripts.

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 189-195 (chapters LI and LII).

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 195 (chapter LII).

As a result, the mistaken identity occurs with the well-known, grave consequences, as Tristano utters the following in this state:

“[...] e [Tristano] disse: — Ahi bella e dolce mia Isotta, rivederòvvi io giammai al mio vivente? Ahi gentile e piacente bella dama, quando saràe quel giorno ch’ io vi tenga nelle mie braccia? Ahi nobilissima e preziosa gemma, quando vi vederò io, e udiròe il vostro umile e grazioso parlare? — E Ghedino udendo ciò, molto se ne maraviglia; perch’ egli sentiva menzonare Isotta, credeva che messer Tristano dicesse della sua suora Isolda; [...].”⁵⁰⁰

Thus, Tristano is being misunderstood, as is familiar from other Tristan versions, and his love for Isotta remains a constant – at least in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. The author even stresses through his use of words and his way of depicting Tristano’s memories of his lover the reciprocal selflessness and devotion.

Due to Ghedino’s misinterpretation, however, he offers Tristano his sister Isolda as bride. This leads the protagonist, who still misses Isotta, to conceive of the following idea: “E Tristano udendo le parole, cominciòe a pensare, dicendo in fra sè: — Se io avessi Isolda al mio volere, io, per avventura, dimenticherei la bella Isotta —.”⁵⁰¹. Directly following this, he is overwhelmed by sorrow and justifies the previous decision as follows:

“Ed essendo al palagio, Tristano sie se ne vae a sua camera, e cominciò duramente a piangere, dicendo in fra sè stesso: — Ahi bella Isotta, se io prendo Isolda per dama, ciò fo io per trarre di tanta pena me e voi, e per donare pace in tra voi e lo re Marco: non per tanto ch’ io non vi ami voi sopr’ ogn’ altra persona —. E in ciò, Tristano molto se ne conforta: ma il suo pensiero era vano, perchè in nulla maniera prendere poteva d’ altra dama gioia, cioè a compimento, se none a quella a cui il beveraggio amoroso l’ avea sottomesso.”⁵⁰²

With Tristano’s statement, the selflessness which the lovers have for each other is once more stressed, as Tristano is immediately willing to burden himself with sorrow in order for Isotta to feel better. It is clearly depicted that Tristano does not doubt his love for Isotta for a second, but merely seeks to alleviate his pain over his unreachable lover. Consequently, he sticks to his decision and marries Isolda according to the land’s customs, although he does not consummate it during the wedding night and so does not sleep with her⁵⁰³:

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 195f. (chapter LII).

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., p. 196 (chapter LII).

⁵⁰² Ibid.

⁵⁰³ Cf. Ibid., p. 196f. (chapter LII).

“La sera ched e’ furono andati al letto, e Tristano abbraccia e bacia sua dama; non per tanto che egli prendesse in lei altro diletto. E Isolda essendo nelle braccia di Tristano assai allegra, credendo che per tale convenente dama s’ ingravidasse; e non conosceva altro perfetto amore: tanta era la sua purità.”⁵⁰⁴

Hence, it is affirmed that Tristano in practice remains faithful to his true love Isotta despite his apparently effective marriage to Isolda. On the morning after the wedding night, Isolda’s father asks for a free gift from Tristano, who grants it without hesitation. Following this, it is apparently Gilierchino’s wish to bequeath his crown and his kingdom to his new son-in-law. Tristano cannot completely deny this request, and as a result asks the king to administrate it until he calls upon him⁵⁰⁵. He justifies this once more with his duty to chivalry, the adherence to which constitutes the most important thing for him, next to his undying love for Isotta, as is stressed on a number of occasions in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’:

“— Sire, io non ò presa vostra figliuola per volere vostro reame; chè io non voglio altro che cavalleria: però che se io fossi re, io non sarei tanto libero a provare mia persona in fatti d’ arme.”⁵⁰⁶

With this, Tristano only ties himself by appearance to Petita Bretagna. In the next chapter LIII, the author has Tristano’s intention of improving Isotta’s situation by his marriage make inroads; at the beginning of this narrative passage, Marco’s distrust and resulting captivity of Isotta is described:

“[...] che istando le re Marco a sua corte, e non sappiendo là dove Tristano si fosse, nè anche s’ adoperava, per lo grande sospetto ch’ egli aveva, continuo teneva la reina Isotta imprigionata; ed ella era la più triste dama del mondo, non sappiendo di Tristano niuna novella, e non sapeva s’ egli era morto nè vivo.”⁵⁰⁷

As soon as the king learns of his nephew’s marriage and his additional domain constituted by Petita Bretagna, however, he reacts in a pleased and relieved fashion, but also indicates⁵⁰⁸:

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 197 (chapter LII).

⁵⁰⁵ Cf. Ibid., p. 197f. (chapter LII).

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 197 (chapter LII).

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 198 (chapter LIII).

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. Ibid., p. 198f. (chapter LIII).

“[...] Ma d’ una cosa voi [= the messenger] m’ avete tribulato, che soe che Tristano non fae oggi mai più per me; ch’ io non conosco re al mondo lo quale perdesse uno cosie fatto nipote, che non fosse assai tristo e dolente —.”⁵⁰⁹

This utterance is in so far relevant as that it brings to bear Marco’s view of his nephew as being useful for the defence of his power against external enemies and also his, up to that point, useful ties to Cornwall and Isotta, ties which he believes will not exist in future. Following this insight, Marco continues:

“E allora, per la grande sicurtade, fae trarre la reina Isotta di pregione; e appresso le conta tutto il convenente, e dalle licenzia ch’ ella vada e stia e venga a tutto il suo bel piacere;[...].”⁵¹⁰

Isotta shows herself to be externally pleased at Tristano’s marriage to Isolda dalle bianche mani in front of Marco, though she is internally deeply shaken by the news and filled with sorrow⁵¹¹. In this state of mind, she announces to the king:

“— Monsire, della grandezza di Tristano sono io assai allegra; e veggio io che al presente à egli conosciuto suo vantaggio; ed èssi dipartito da vostra corte, là dov’ egli sempre ricevut’ ha e riceve disonore e onta assai. Cosie gli doni Iddio tanto senno, che giammai non torni in questo paese —.”⁵¹²

Next to announcing her joy at Tristano’s convenient marriage, she principally blames Marco for his nephew’s actions at the same time. In the moment of her, so far, greatest unhappiness, standing in total contrast to Tristano’s actual intentions, Isotta begins even to doubt her lover and laments on her own, unnoticed:

“[...] e quanta pena, Tristano mio bello, tu mi fai e farai portare! Ahi lassa a me, taupina! Io non mi pensava che la mia speranza mi fosse in tale guisa tolta nè che mi fallisse, nè d’ esser abbandonata: e non dico, lassa! pur nella vita, ma io mi credeva star certana che ancora nella morte tu non mi abbandonassi; e io con voi, speme mia, credeva morire —.”⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 199 (chapter LIII).

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Cf. Ibid.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid., p. 200 (chapter LIII).

In her desperation, Isotta sends her confidante Brandina with a message to Tristano in *Petita Bretagna*⁵¹⁴. Having arrived there, Brandina immediately admonishes him upon their meeting:

“— Tristano, Tristano, questo già non credeva io che potesse intervenire per nulla maniera, nè esser potesse, che per oro o argento, nè per corona nè per reame, s’ abbandonasse uno amore tanto perfetto e leale —.”⁵¹⁵

In accordance with the narrative intentions, Brandina’s statement marks the love between Tristano and Isotta as “perfetto e leale”. Brandina then continues with her grievances, before giving Tristano his lover’s letter. Within it, Isotta expresses her pain and despair. In addition, she accuses Tristano and pleads with him to return to her as soon as possible, as she would then once more have a happy life; if not, she would die of grief.⁵¹⁶ It is also noteworthy concerning the contents of Isotta’s letter that the author puts the following words into her mouth in her message to her lover: “E se voi dama non avavate, io già non aveva marito; chè io, per mia volontà, non conobbi mai altra persona.”⁵¹⁷ With this, he also highlights the fact that Isotta also refuses to truly acknowledge her spouse, whom she married in public, in his capacity as husband. Before Tristano is able to return to Isotta, he tearfully declares in that regard:

“[...] Ahi bella e dolce Isotta, la quale per me mai non temesti paura nè vergogna! e io, per mia folle ventura, mi sono innobrigato: ma non per tanto che lo liale amore sia affalsato —.”⁵¹⁸

Once more, the ‘liale amore’ is contrasted not with its exact opposite of the ‘folle amore’ but with the slightly altered ‘folle ventura’. Following this, Tristano admits to Ghedino:

“— Ghedino, io sì òe amata e amo una donzella, la quale si è la reina di Cornovaglia; ed è per nome appellata Isotta la bionda: la più bella dama che natura mai formasse. Imperò io vi rendo vostra sorella cosie pura come voi a me la daste; chè io sì voglio ritornare a rivedere mia gentil dama [...]”⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 201ff. (chapter LIII and LIV).

Note: an instance exemplifying Isotta’s despair may be found in the episode describing Tristano’s madness, following a misunderstanding during which he believes to have lost Isotta’s love to Ghedino, and subsequent cure of it in chapter LXX to LXXII of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. Due to streamlined analysis and a lesser relevance to the topic at hand, this episode is not specially dealt with and these remarks may be regarded as sufficient for the purposes of this work.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 202 (chapter LIV).

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204 (chapter LIV).

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

After this, Ghedino, wishing to meet Isotta, asks Tristano whether he can join him. Before the departure of Tristano, Ghedino and his companions, Governale and Brandina, from *Petita Bretagna* takes place in chapter LIV, the author combines the wish of Isolda's brother with an appreciation of the source material by Thomas d'Angleterre in this passage by overtly alluding to the well-known 'Salle aux images' episode⁵²⁰:

“E sappiate che innanzi che messer Tristano si partisse, egli fece dipignere [sic] in figura la bella Isotta la bionda, per la grande volontade ch' egli avea di vederla: e si glielie affiguròe uno maestro della città di Gippi, la quale per altre fiate l' aveva disegnata nella cittade di Londres in Irlanda alla reina Lotta; e fecela tanta propria e tanta bella e a sua sembianza, che veramente quasi ella pareva dessa: e messer Tristano la si teneva in sua camera.”⁵²¹

In doing so, he transforms to a degree Tristan's basic mood of grief and desperation, at least that is what is known from Thomas' only surviving verses of the 'Salle aux images' passage at the beginning of the first Turin fragment from Novati's copy, into its opposite⁵²²:

“E riguardando uno giorno Ghedino nella detta camera, allora Tristano, per ridere si disse: — A me si è venuta la bella reina Isotta —. E Ghedino, vedendola dalla lungi cosie nella camera, pensòe su quella veramente ella sia dessa, e dalla lungi la 'nchina, e si la saluta, dicendo: — Madonna, voi siate la molto molto bene venuta per le mille fiate; chè troppo siete da gradire quando voi degnaste di venire a vedere lo vostro Tristano, che cotanto egli vi desiderava di vedervi —. E Tristano e Governale cominciârò allora a fare le maggiori risa del mondo; e Ghedino, conoscendo poi il modo, rimase beffato; poi, molto pregava Tristano che tosto fosse la loro andata, per volontà ch' egli aveva di vedere Isotta, s' ella era cosie bella in carni com' ella era in figura. E sappiate che il maestro che figurò quella figura, o vero statua, Tristano il fece cavaliere; [...]”⁵²³

⁵²⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 204f. (chapter LIV).

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 205 (chapter LIV).

⁵²² Cf. in regard to the Turin fragment: Bonath, Gesa (Ed.): *Thomas. Tristan. Eingeleitet, textkritisch bearbeitet und übersetzt von Gesa Bonath. (Klassische Texte des romanischen Mittelalters in zweisprachigen Ausgaben, Band 21. In neuer Folge herausgegeben von Reinhold R. Grimm und Henning Krauß). München 1985, p. 10 and p. 144-161 (Vers 941-1134 or T 1-T 194).*

For Thomas' template for this passage in the 'Tavola Ritonda' cf. also: Trevi 1999, p. 38f. as well as footnote 66, p. 79.

⁵²³ Polidori 1864, p. 205f. (chapter LIV).

In this way, the author creates a predominantly relaxed and cheerful atmosphere among the active persons in this passage, by presenting Tristano and Governale as jovial and laughing⁵²⁴. Once more, as was already recognisable in a narrative passage during and immediately after the drinking of the love potion, he uses a well-known episode from Thomas' version and re-shapes it according to his own narrative intentions without lessening his respect for his source. The basic gist of his depiction is a totally different one, though without disregarding the core of his model: the extraordinary appearance of the Isotta's life-like statue by virtue of the creator's craftsmanship. The special virtuosity of the scene, which is first and foremost created through Thomas' language, is not achieved by him, though by all indications it was not his intention as there is a similar approach in the love potion episode.

On the pretext, given to Gilierchino and his daughter, of having to go to Leonis in order to settle a dispute among his barons, Tristano travels with his followers in the next passage in chapter LIV from Petita Bretagna, leaving a grieving Isolda behind, and instead returns to Isotta in Cornwall⁵²⁵. Before reaching his beloved queen in Cornwall, having sent a message via Brandina beforehand regarding his swift approach, however, Tristano and his followers are tossed to the coast of Longres and the wilderness of Andernantes by a storm in chapter LV⁵²⁶. As a result, the up-and-coming knight decides to prove himself for the time being at this very place, "[...] lo quale ave' udito tanto menzonare, e inteso sie com' era paragone là dove si paronavano tutti gli cavalieri erranti [...]"⁵²⁷. In this manner, the author places Tristano's chivalric deeds and adventures in the wilderness of Andernantes, including the freeing and rescue of Artù, between his reunion with Isotta in chapter LXIII⁵²⁸. In addition, on his arrival in Andernantes, Tristano first prepares his renewed trip to Cornwall by having Governale transmit a letter to Marco asking for permission to stay there on the pretext of his new relation to the King of Petita Bretagna⁵²⁹. From chapters LXIII to LXXIII, the second lovers' stay together at the court of Cornwall, as well as other places, follows: it begins with a sequence of episodes, once more ascribed to Thomas' source, continues with Tristano's 'folie', or also called his 'insanity', due to a misunderstanding regarding Isotta, and ends with Tristano's renewed and long departure from Marco's kingdom.

⁵²⁴ In support of this view, Emanuele Trevi may be cited, concisely stating in footnote 67 of his edition's introduction to the 'Tavola Ritonda' in 1999: "Sull'episodio [= 'Salle aux images'] [...] che l'autore della *Tavola Ritonda* rielabora in chiave scherzosa al cap. LIV: [...]" Trevi 1999, footnote 67, p. 79.

The author includes a first reference to Thomas' 'Salle aux images'-episode as early as chapter XXXII. Therein, Isotta's mother has a lifelike image of her daughter created by the very same artist from Petita Bretagna after Isotta's departure: cf. Polidori 1864, p. 116f. (chapter XXXII).

⁵²⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 204ff. (chapter LIV).

⁵²⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 206f. (chapter LV).

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207 (chapter LV).

⁵²⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 206-232 (chapter LV-LXIII).

⁵²⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 207f. (chapter LVI).

4.1.3.3.4 *The Couple's Second Stay at the Court of Cornwall and its Conclusion*

Immediately after Tristano's delayed return to his lover at Marco's royal court, the king having less distrust of his nephew at this point due to his alleged marriage, the author continues with a sequence of episodes, for which once more Thomas' Tristan version serves as the source⁵³⁰. They are called the 'arboretum scene' or also the 'eavesdropped tryst' in chapter LXIII, the 'bloodletting trial' and the 'flour sprinkling scene', followed by the 'judgment of God' in chapter LXIV, the 'Petitcru' episode in chapter LXV and 'banishment' until the lovers' return to the royal court in chapters LXVI and LXVII⁵³¹. This sequence of episodes is introduced in chapter LXIII with Tristano's wish to finally speak with Isotta alone after the lovers' long separation and his return from Petita Bretagna, after having been provided a welcome by Marco in his and Ghedino's honour⁵³²:

“E dimorando in tale maniera, Tristano giorno e notte in altro non potea pensare se non com' egli potesse parlare alla reina; e tanto aoperòe, che eglino s' andarono a parlare una sera sotto a uno pino, la quale era nel mezzo del giardino della reina. Essendo insieme, l' uno disiosamente abbraccia l' altro, e con grande disio l' uno si languiva per l' altro; e Isotta sie si doleva molto perchè messer Tristano tanto tempo l' aveva intralasciata; e Tristano si scusa a lei, e dice che mai nolle aveva di suo amore affalsato.”⁵³³

Thus, the author shows that the long separation between Tristano and Isotta has not lessened their love. And so it comes about that they meet regularly in the garden below the pine tree: “[...] e tutte le volte che a loro piaceva, s' andavano sotto a quel pino a parlare insieme. E tanto v' andarono, che allo re Marco fue spiato; e per alcuno gli era detto [...]”⁵³⁴. Although Marco accords little credibility to this suspicion, he wishes to make sure and thinks of a plan: “[...] chè venendo una sera, lo re se n' andòe al giardino e celatamente sie montòe in su quello pino, e quivi aspetta e fra sè dice: — Io voglio sapere se questo sarà verità, o no — [...]”⁵³⁵. The king thus acts himself and, in a rather unkingly fashion, spies on his wife and

⁵³⁰ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 231f. (chapter LXIII).

⁵³¹ Cf. in this regard the statement made by Marie-José Heijkant, who notes: “Dopo l'episodio del deserto di Darnantes nella *Tavola Ritonda* viene inserita una serie compatta di episodi che segue la trama narrativa di Thomas: il rendes-vous sotto l'albero spiato da Marco, l'agguato con la farina, la prova del ferro rovente, il duello con Urgano, la meravigliosa cagnolina (Pitetto Ariavuto) e il soggiorno nella foresta [...]. Queste vicende, posteriori anziché anteriori [the prominent examples of the Tristan versions by Thomas d'Angleterre and Gottfried von Straßburg, which precede this sequence of episodes, are meant here] alle nozze di Tristano e precedenti l'episodio della sua follia, presentano una ripetizione del flagrant délit, della fuga nella foresta e del duello con il gigante con nuovi sotterfugi, travestimenti e furberie.” Heijkant 1997, p. 21f.

⁵³² Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 231f. (chapter LXIII).

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, p. 232 (chapter LXIII).

⁵³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.*

his nephew. When the lovers are indeed in the garden, the following happens: “E a quel punto, lo lume della luna era bello e molto chiaro; e mirando gli due amanti nell’ ombra del pino, vïdonvi una spera d’ uomo, e di ciò amendue dubitarono molto.”⁵³⁶. After the bright moonlight has illuminated the spy’s presence to the lovers, Isotta is the first to act quick-wittedly by starting a skilfull dialogue with Tristano, thereby pointedly stressing her virtuous intentions and which Tristano quickly adopts for himself. In this way, the couple is able to avert the suspicions of the king, spying from within the tree, to an extent. As previously addressed in 4.1.1.4, Governale is in the following given the gift of the kingdom of Leonis by Tristano, with Marco’s consent, and is sent to King Artù, who possesses the right to transmit it, to be crowned.⁵³⁷

In the following chapter LXIV, however, Marco’s distrust is rejuvenated once more:

“[...] che dimorando in tale maniera Tristano nella corte dello re Marco, lo re, per alcuno rio rapportamento e per altri sembianti della bella Isotta, ciascuno giorno egli n’ era in maggiore sospetto. E allora, ancor per esserne vie più certo, pensòe una sua grande sottolità [...]”⁵³⁸

⁵³⁶ Ibid., p. 232f. (chapter LXIII).

⁵³⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 233ff. (chapter LXIII).

In regard to this ‘arboretum scene’, Marie-José Heijkant highlights in the introduction to her edition of ‘La Tavola Ritonda’ that, next to the main source by Thomas d’Angleterre whose work can only be reconstructed by the Tristan versions recognisably utilising it as a source, such as the ‘Tristan’ by Gottfried von Strassburg and the ‘Tristrams Saga ok Ísondar’ by Brother Robert, as well as ‘La Tavola Ritonda’ and the ‘Sir Tristrem’, some details were used from Bérout’s ‘Tristran’: “Il motivo del rendez-vous nel giardino, spesso rappresentato indipendentemente come nel *Novellino* (LXV), è l’espressione emblematica del rapporto triangolare fra Tristano, Isotta e Marco. Nella *Tavola Ritonda* sono omessi i trucioli di legno, che Tristano getta nell’acqua come segnale, forse perché questo elemento celtico accenna a una reggia molto primitiva. Il nano astrologo che spia gli amanti, è sostituito dalla figura più realistica del falso consigliere Federumgotto. L’albero nel quale si nasconde il re è, come in Bérout, un pino, che in Oriente era considerato come il vero e proprio Albero della Vita. Coincidono con Bérout inoltre alcune espressioni del falso discorso di Isotta, che nega le accuse dei calunniatori e giura fedeltà al suo signore: l’ambivalente perifrasi, «colui il quale ebbe lo mio pulcellagio» [...] («*cil qui m’ot pucele*», v. 24), la finta rabbia per il momento, «a così fatta ora» («*a itel ore*» v. 7), la paura per la punizione del re, «egli mi farebbe ardere» («*il me feroit ardoir en ré*» v. 192) e il rifiuto di passargli la richiesta di Tristano «cotesta ambasciata non vi farò io niente» («*n’en ferai mie*» v. 172). Cambiato è il discorso di Tristano che, invece di chiedere armi e soldi per fuggire, sostiene di voler tornare da sua moglie Isotta in Bretagna. Esprime inoltre il nobile desiderio, vero e non finto, di donare tutto il suo reame a Governale, il che rievoca un passo di Eilhart (vv. 7866-8654). Di conseguenza, beneficiari dell’arguto colloquio non sono soltanto gli amanti discolpati, poiché il re rinuncia alla sua quota ereditaria di Leonis.” Heijkant 1997, p. 22f.

Furthermore, it may be stated in regard to this succession of episodes in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, as Marie-José Heijkant already alludes to in the above quote, that the author reserves a certain amount of freedom for himself regarding his sources, depending on his narrational intentions. This could be verified further by a more detailed comparison, the scope of which would necessitate a separate work of research. In order to keep this body of research as streamlined and as focussed as possible, however, this will be omitted.

In addition, from this point of the analysis regarding the sequence of episodes onwards, specific instances not directly pertaining to the thematic focus will not be dealt with in full detail, in order to avoid a drifting away from the principal focus.

⁵³⁸ Polidori 1864, p. 235f. (chapter LXIV).

Again, it is Marco himself who devises the trap to apprehend the lovers if possible, and the ‘bloodletting trial’ and the ‘flour sprinkling scene’ immediately ensue, during which the king persuades Tristano and Isotta to engage in bloodletting together with him, including subsequent bed rest, and then proceeds as follows⁵³⁹:

“E passato lo primo sonno, lo re si lieva e vae per la camera, e celatamente sparse farina fra il letto di Tristano e quello di Isotta; e appresso fae uno motto a Tristano, e dice ch’ egli vae a fare far una mattinata a suo piacere, e partesi della camera.”⁵⁴⁰

This time, Marco almost succeeds with his trap, which is reminiscent of the sickle trap test from the couple’s first stay, due to the fact that although Tristano recognises his uncle’s intentions when he is underway to Isotta’s bed, he does not let himself be deterred, “[...] come cavaliere valentre di sua persona e destro [...]”⁵⁴¹. Instead of walking over, he opens his wounds again during his considerable leap to his lover’s day bed in order to cover the distance without touching the tell-tale flour on the ground. As a result, the blood is dispersed among both beds after their pleasureable encounter and Tristano’s leap back to his own bed:⁵⁴²

“E stando uno pezzo, lo re si ritornòe, e aveva in sua mano uno grosso torchio acceso; e mirando egli a terra, non vi vidde niuna novitade nella farina; e mirando nello letto della reina e di Tristano, viddelo tutto insanguinato, e allora egli monta in grande sospetto.”⁵⁴³

Although Marco has no definite proof – by which the author once more augments the negative characteristics of his personality – he reacts merely on his own suspicions with great cruelty and commands the archbishop to have Isotta burnt at the stake⁵⁴⁴. However, the archbishop dissuades him from this reprovably:

⁵³⁹ Cf. Ibid., p. 236 (chapter LXIV).

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Cf. Ibid.

Moreover, Marie-José Heijkant explains in regard to the ‘bloodletting trial’ and the ‘flour sprinkling scene’:
“Per la mancanza del nano, nell’episodio del flagrant délit prende una dimensione grottesca la figura del re geloso, che inventa lui stesso l’agguato, sparge la farina fra il letto di Tristano e di Isotta, e controlla l’effetto alla luce di una candela come in Bérout: [...] («*Li ros a sa chanbre revient; /Li nain, que la chandele tient*» vv. 257-8). Corrisponde pure con Bérout il «piacere e diletto» («*delit*» v. 734) d’amore pienamente goduto, prima che l’eroe si accorga della riapertura della ferita.”. Heijkant 1997, p. 23.

⁵⁴³ Polidori 1864, p. 236 (chapter LXIV).

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Ibid., p. 237 (chapter LXIV).

“— A volere incolpare uomo e fare morire persone per sospetto, non è cosa licita. E dite sì come di loro fallo voi non ne siete certo. Ma se vi piace, io vi donerò altro consiglio santo e giusto —.”⁵⁴⁵

Instead of burning the queen, the archbishop suggests a trial by ordeal at the Petrone Vermiglio, and Marco deems this acceptable. When Isotta utters her worries about the test to Tristano, he soothes her:⁵⁴⁶

“[...] e allora messer Tristano pensa uno poco, e appresso disse: — Dama, non dubitate di niente, chè io penso fare tanto e adoperare, che voi farete salvo saramento, e che lo arzente ferro non vi farà veruno male; chè io sarò nella isola [= the sacred island, on which the Petrone Vermiglio is placed] in tale maniera divisato, e terrò il cotal modo e la cotale condizione: e se nostra maestria non valesse, e’ varrà[àe] [sic] la trinciante spada —.”⁵⁴⁷

In this manner, the queen is able to withstand the trial by ordeal unscathed with Tristano’s help by telling the truth without Marco and the other bystanders being able to recognise the true content of it:

“[...] e lo re comanda alla reina che vi ponga suso la mano ritta e giuri di dire la verità; e la reina cosie fae, dicendo: — Io giuro sopra queste sante orlique, che mai a me non si appressòe niuna persona la quale di mio corpo usasse niuna villania, se non se voi re Marco, e lo pellegrino [Tristano in his first disguise] ch’ era al porto, e cotesto folle [Tristano in his second disguise] che voi vedete costì; e d’ ogni altra persona io sono netta e pura e leale, e mai co’ niun’ altra persona io non fei mai niuno fallo, se no’ se com’ io v’ òe contato —.”⁵⁴⁸

Due to Isotta’s success during the trial by ordeal, the king’s distrust is once more allayed, and she receives many and abundant gifts from the king for it⁵⁴⁹. Marie-José Heijkant correctly states that this entire portion of the episode sequence in chapter LXIV possesses an almost

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. Ibid., p. 237f. (chapter LXIV).

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 238 (chapter LXIV).

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 240 (chapter LXIV).

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. Ibid.

Marie-José Heijkant states in regard to this ‘judgment of God’ episode: “Nella *Tavola Ritonda* è l’ arcivescovo, invece di Isotta, che propone di sottoporre la regina alla prova del ferro rovente, procedimento giuridico conforme al diritto consuetudinario dell’epoca. Vi si aggiunge nel testo italiano la prova del Petrone Vermiglio, che equivale alla superstizione popolare della Bocca della Verità. Il carattere sovversivo di questo *escondit* è dovuto al fatto che la compatibilità del giuramento ambiguo e del processo fisico implica la complicità di Dio. Probabilmente per attenuarlo sono omessi tutti gli elementi del rituale religioso (la messa, il cilicio, le elemosini), come pure il riferimento alla misericordia divina. Maggiore attenzione è prestata invece all’inganno degli uomini e alla manipolazione del sistema giuridico.”. Heijkant 1997, p. 23. For further comments in this regard: cf. Ibid., p. 23f.

grotesque undertone. The author effects this by means of an exaggerated depiction of Marco's furious attempts to unmask the couple and, contrary to this, by means of the lovers' clever resourcefulness, which is able to continuously throw off the king in the form of Tristano's dual masked performance in different roles. Thus, a subtle humour is brought into this narrative passage.

In the subsequent 'Petitcrü' episode in chapter LXV, Tristano then actually decides to visit Duke Bramante, a visit he had used to provide Marco with a reason for his absence during the trial by ordeal and had been granted one month leave from court as a consequence. Having arrived there, Tristano, gradually beginning to miss Isotta again, immediately helps Bramante rid himself of his tributary obligations towards the giant Urganò and receives as thanks the doggy *Petito Araviuto*, endowed with extraordinary powers and able to distract from sadness, as a gift. This episode is also used to stress the special and selfless love between Tristano and Isotta, as Tristano immediately decides to give *Petito Araviuto* to Isotta as soon as he himself receives it from Bramante.⁵⁵⁰ After this, Tristano makes his farewells to Bramante and returns to the court of Cornwall:

“E a tanto, prende commiato dal duca, e sie ritorna làe a corte dello re Marco; e lo re Marco gli fae allora grande onore: non per tanto che Tristano avesse ancora dimenticato l' amore della bella Isotta, ma sempre stava e non pensava in altro che d' esser con essa a suo diletto. E di tale conversare grande mormoramento n' era per la corte, e bene se ne accorgeva lo re Marco e tutti gli altri baroni.”⁵⁵¹

In this manner, the king receives the following advice in chapter LXVI after some time from an advisor named *Mariadoco*:

“— Sire, meglio vi sarìa uno dolore che mille. Imperò, se voi volete uscire di tanta langura e donarvi pace, a voi conviene fare sì come dice lo proverbio: « Al mal compagno donagli la buona parte, a partirlo da te ». Chè se voi volete porre fine a vostro dolore, cacciate Tristano e Isotta fuori di tutto vostro reame, e per tale di loro non avrete mai più langura —.”⁵⁵²

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 241ff. (chapter LXV).

Marie-José Heijkant adds in regard to the 'Petitcrü' episode: “L'episodio del cucciolino *Pitetto Ariavuto* (*Petit Crëu*) [Note: in this text, the spelling closer to the French name has been intentionally used] è caratterizzato da un'atmosfera fiabesca e cortese. Invece di descriverne i diversi colori, l'autore toscano si sofferma a elencare i vari suoni prodotti dal meraviglioso animale, che spiegano meglio l'effetto benefico sulla malinconia di Tristano. [...] Il duello con il gigante è nella *Tavola Ritonda* anch'esso uno scontro intellettuale, perché l'eroe trionfa grazie alla sua astuzia.” Heijkant 1997, p. 24.

⁵⁵¹ Polidori 1864, p. 243f. (chapter LXV).

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 244 (chapter LXVI).

Marco's handling of this piece of advice is described as follows:

“E lo re, che era uomo mobile a credere, allora prese lo consiglio di Mariadoco; sicchè, per tale, egli comanda a Tristano e a Isotta, che, sotto pena di prigione perpetuale, si debbano tantosto partire di tutto suo reame, e che giàe mai non vi tornino; però ch' egli voleva anzi perdere tutto, che dare parte.”⁵⁵³

With this last sentence, the author also highlights a characteristic and attitude of Marco he wishes to convey in his depiction of the antagonist, next to his envy and distrust: the king is extremely self-centred and demands everything that is within his reach, as is the case with Isotta. In addition, we may recall his brother Perna, one among many further incisive figures; it is difficult for Marco to share any of his possessions. Thus, it is the lady who his nephew already loves, of all people, who was chosen by the king to be his wife, although Tristano regarding Isotta recurringly opposes him openly.

During banishment from court, however, the lovers hide their true feelings for each other in front of Marco, so as not to play into his hands and thus put their love at risk:

“Allora Tristano, con grandi sospiri, e la reina, con grande pianto, escono fuori della città e prendono insieme a cavalcare. E cavalcando a tale maniera, Isotta, la quale davanti allo re avea pianto, cominciò a cantare una dolce melodía; e Tristano, che tanto avea sospirato, cominciò a ridere, dicendo: — Iddio, voi siate ringraziato di tanta ventura che ci avete dimostrata; chè lo re ci crede avere fatto uno grande dannaggio, ma, per mia fè, egli non ci servì giammai tanto in tutto il tempo della sua vita —. Adunque, eglino entrâro per lo grande deserto d' Urgano. Essendo in cima d' una grande montagna, sie vi trovavano uno bellissimo casamento; lo quale molto diletto loro, però ched e' v' era una bella fontana e di molte erbe dimestiche e salvatiche, ed era tredichi leghe di lungi a Tintoille; e quivi si dimorano gli due fini amanti.”⁵⁵⁴

Similar to their first departure from Marco's court, the lovers are not left wanting, they are self-sufficient and lead a happy life:

“E Brandina cavalca ogni giorno al castello di Monte Albrano per loro bisogne; e Tristano ogni mattina andava a cacciare e prendeva molta selvaggina, e ritornava a ora di terza; e poi che avevano desinato, facevano uno giuoco o due a scacchi; poi appresso, sullo mezzo giorno, si riposavano con diletto: non giàe in letto, ma, per la grande calura, si diportavano in suso una grande tavola d' arcipresso, molto bella. E sempre che messer Tristano dormía, sempre tra lui e Isotta

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 244f. (chapter LXVI).

sì metteva la spada sua ignuda in segno di croce; imperò che quello luogo era molto tribunale e molto dubbioso. E assai erano contenti gli due amanti essendo insieme a tale partito; e gli uccelli andavano cantando per quella verdura. Di ciò molto erano allegri.”⁵⁵⁵

Thus, a downright idyll is described. The only person who cannot cope with this solution is Marco: “[...] che essendo lo re Marco rimasto in tale maniera, giorno e notte egli faceva pianto e grande lamento [...]”⁵⁵⁶. The king finds by chance the couple’s resting place during a hunting trip with one of his barons⁵⁵⁷:

“Ed essendo nella sala di sotto, truova Tristano e Isotta che dormivano, perchè era di mezzo giorno, in sue una tavola; e in mezzo di loro era la spada ignuda. E allora lo re divenne tutto smarrito, e maravigliòssi molto credendo che la spada stesse in mezzo di loro per via d’ onestade [...]. E a quel punto, uno picciolo raggio di sole sie intrava per uno picciolo luogo e percoetea nel viso della bella Isotta, per tale che l’ avea tutto riscaldato; e ciò le faceva avere molto sudore, e bene pareva quel suo viso uno latte rosato, e tutta era fiorito. E lo re mirandola e maginando quelle sue bellezze, duramente lagrimava e sospirava e tremava, e avea grande impassione di quello visaggio sì angelico.”⁵⁵⁸

He finally leaves a valuable glove on Isotta’s cheek, departs then, however, without disturbing the sleeping couple and rides back to Tintoille. There, he has his advisor Mariadocco executed for his recommendation and sends a trustworthy delegation to Tristano and Isotta, “[...] pregandogli che debbano ritornare a corte.”⁵⁵⁹. The emissaries are indeed able to bring the couple back to the court of Cornwall: “[...] e allora lo re, quando gli vidde, fece grande onore; e a quel punto, lo re si teneva tutto fuori di sospetto.”⁵⁶⁰.

At the end of this sequence of episodes in chapters LXVIII to LXXII, the author adds a description of Tristano’s insanity, caused by a misunderstanding of Isotta’s feelings regarding Ghedino who has fallen in love with her, during the lovers’ renewed stay at the royal court⁵⁶¹.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 245 (chapter LXVI).

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 245 (chapter LXVII).

⁵⁵⁷ One may add the following in regard to the ‘banishment’ episode and the subsequent return to court in Marie-José Heijkant’s words: “L’*esilio* nella foresta riproduce la scena più antica della leggenda, che è basata su un *aithed* irlandese. Involontariamente il falso consigliere Mariadoco ha fatto un favore a Tristano e Isotta [...]. Anziché regredire allo stato selvatico, essi seguivano lo stile di vita cortese nel «bellissimo casamento» non tanto lontano dal mondo civile, dove Brandina provvede a tutti i loro bisogni. [...] Questo [Marco’s] doloroso rimpianto serve a motivare la sua credulità e l’inaspettata clemenza, quando scopre nel bosco gli amanti dormienti divisi dalla spada di Tristano, e vuole interpretare lo strumento di protezione come segno di castità.[...] Mentre i segni polisemici sono ridotti rispetto alla versione originale, il bellissimo volto di Isotta, percosso da un raggio di sole, è ampiamente descritto nel momento in cui Marco lo contempla.” Heijkant 1997, p. 24.

⁵⁵⁸ Polidori 1864, p. 246 (chapter LXVII).

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 247 (chapter LXVII).

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁶¹ Cf. Ibid., p. 247-262 (chapter LXVIII-LXXII).

After having mindlessly fled into the wilderness, Tristano is brought back to the court of Cornwall by a royal hunting party and is only initially recognised there by his animals until he is identified by Marco, who is for once depicted in a completely positive light by the author at this point and who forwards him on to Isotta for his recovery, without any distrust⁵⁶². After Tristano's recovery, however, the narrator has us informed that the suspicions once more arise:

“Ed era già compiutamente pacifico colla bella Isotta, e a lei andava a parlare in celato spesse fiate: e di ciò grande mormorio n' era per la corte; e lo re medesimo aveva, di ciò accórtosi, di malvagi sembianti; e per tale convenente, era assai pensoso, e sempre pensava in che maniera egli si potesse Tristano dipartire da sé, o vero di farlo morire, acciò che più sicuro egli fosse di sua dama Isotta e che uscire potesse di tanta langura.”⁵⁶³

In other words, the court of Cornwall, and with it Marco, falls back into its old patterns. Consequently, the king then decrees in public:

“— Cavaliere, voi sì siete fatto sì come lo malvagio albero, che quanto più si nutrica, più malvagio frutto fa. E però io vi comando che, sotto pena della testa, che voi dobbiate partire di questo reame; e prendete, se vi piace, dell' oro e dello argento, e di quie a quattro giorni voi siate dipartito —.”⁵⁶⁴

In this way, the lovers' second stay in Cornwall comes to an end and is followed by a long passage in which the couple is separated. Before that occurs, however, the farewell scene between Tristano and Isotta is formulated in great depth, and during which the consistency and selflessness of their love for each other is once more highlighted⁵⁶⁵:

⁵⁶² Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 253-262 (chapter LXX-LXXII).

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 262 (chapter LXXII).

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 262f. (chapter LXXIII).

⁵⁶⁵ Here, one may agree with Marie-José Heijkant, who additionally states in the context of the lovers' farewells before their separation: “A queste riprese delle versioni metriche ritengo si possa aggiungere la scena dell'addio, dopo che Tristano folle è stato guarito da Isotta [...]. Coincidono con Thomas l'anello offerto da Isotta e l'inizio del sonetto di Tristano: «la mia dipartenza è tanto dolorosa (*«Tel duel ai por la departie»*, Ms. Cambridge, v. 30). L'immagine dello scambio dei cuori, «'l cuore di Tristano si dipartiva da lui e rimaneva a Isotta, e Isotta donava lo suo a Tristano», ha associazioni con i versi di Goffredo di Strasburgo, che danno risalto alla presenza continua dell'uno nel cuore dell'altro: *«Isôt diu muoz iemer/ in Tristandes herzen sîn/ [...] [sic] so ensol doch in dem herzen mîn/ niht lesene noch niht lebendes sîn/ wan Tristan»* (vv. 18282-18300).” Heijkant 1997, p. 25. It may be additionally said in regard to Gottfried's farewell scene between Tristan and Îsôt/ Isolde: this exchange of hearts is not only verbalised in these two verses, but also recurringly and consistently throughout the farewell scene between Tristan and Isolde.

“[...] e sie prende commiato dalla bella Isotta, e si si licenza da lei con pieno mandato, avendo insieme grande diletto, e appresso faccendo insieme il maggiore pianto del mondo. E insieme si dolevano assai di loro partenza, imperò che si partivano gli loro cuori: cioè, che ’l cuore di Tristano si dipartiva da lui e rimaneva a Isotta, e Isotta donava lo suo a Tristano; però che più pensava l’ uno de l’ altro, che di sè medesimo. E Tristano, in quello dolore e per quello patire, s’ie fece uno sonetto, e Isotta ne fece un altro [...]. A questo punto, la reina Isotta donò a Tristano uno anello, [...] che in quel dì che altri il vedeva, non poteva essere costretto da niuno incantamento, e veruna opera fatta per arte non gli poteva nuocere.”⁵⁶⁶

4.1.3.3.5 *The Couple’s Third Stay at the Court of Cornwall, Gioiosa Guardia and the Tournament of Verzeppe*

During the subsequent phase of the lovers’ separation stretching from chapters LXXIII to LXXXVIII, the author mainly deals with Tristano’s adventures as a knight⁵⁶⁷. Only then is Tristano’s longing described as so great that he dares to return to her in Cornwall:

“[...] che essendo dimorato messer Tristano da trenta giorni in grande sollazzo, l’ amore della sua bella Isotta la bionda gli andava tanto pungendo el cuore, che era troppo grande fatto. E per tale convenente, egli prende commiato dallo re Artù e dalla reina Ginevra, e da messer Lancialotto e da tutti gli cavalieri della Tavola Ritonda [...]. E preso che Tristano ebbe commiato, s’ie si diparte; e tanto cavalca nella compagnia d’ Alcardo, ch’ eglino furono nello reame di Cornovaglia, al castel di Cornasim: e quivi Tristano ricevette grande onore, imperò che più amavano lui, che non amavano lo re Marco. E allora Tristano fae assapere sua tornata, per Alcardo, alla reina Isotta sua sorella [Explication: Alcardo is Isotta’s cousin on her father’s side].”⁵⁶⁸

This time, Tristano does not return to the court of Cornwall in chapter LXXXVIII, as Marco had threatened to have him executed in that event. Instead, he takes up quarters with friends in the Castel di Cornasim and avoids his uncle. As soon as Isotta hears of his return, it is said: “[...] tutta se ne ringioisce e fiorisce sì come fa l’ albero per la bella primavera; e tanto adoperò, che Tristano andò a lei in guisa d’ uno sacerdote il quale l’ andasse a vicitare.”⁵⁶⁹.

In contrast to the couple’s two previous stays at the royal court, the author significantly changes the initial situation: Tristano stays clear of his uncle, who has threatened him with death, as he had done on multiple other occasions. Meanwhile, Tristano is for the most part in-

⁵⁶⁶ Polidori 1864, p. 263f. (chapter LXXIII).

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 264-337 (chapters LXXIII to LXXXVIII).

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 236f. (chapter LXXXVIII).

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 237 (chapter LXXXVIII).

tegrated into the Arthurian community and shows no interest in the court of Cornwall; only Isotta draws him there. Despite the long separation, however, the couple's 'liale amore' is described as unchanged:

“E rivedendosi insieme gli due liali amanti, che tanto tempo s’ erano desiderati, l’ uno abbraccia l’ altro, e cosie abbracciati si riposarono in uno ricco e nobile letto, e quivi cominciârò a usare la grande gioia intralasciata; e in quella notte, non dormirono niente per fino al mattino. Ed essendo giorno, le dame della città venfano a richiedere la reina, sì com’ elle erano usate; e sì la aspettarono in fino a mezza terza. E lo re vedendo che Isotta non si levava, fassene meraviglia; e andòe alla camera e apèrsela, e truova Isotta e Tristano, che dormivano.”⁵⁷⁰

Due to the delight at seeing each other again and their improvidence, the lovers oversleep and thus put themselves into a difficult situation:

“Allora lo re tantosto torna a dietro, e fece armare da quaranta cavalieri, e fece pigliare Isotta e messer Tristano; e l’ uno imprigiona in una torre e l’ altro in un’ altra; e fece giuro di giammai non cavargli di prigione. E sacciate che già era corsa la novella per le province, sì come Tristano era imprigionato; e lo re Artus e tutti cavalieri arranti in altro non pensavano, se non come lui potessero diliberare e trarlo di prigione. E in tale maniera, stette Tristano imprigionato bene da sette mesi, e più.”⁵⁷¹

Due to their negligence, caused by the joy of seeing each other again after such a long time of separation, they are indefinitely held captive in separate towers by Marco. With this form of punishment, the author links it to Marco's own conviction and enactment of his sentence by Artù and the community of those wishing to avenge Tristano's death, close to the end of the 'Tavola Ritonda' in chapter CXXXVII, as the king is also imprisoned until his demise in a tower with a view of the couple's grave⁵⁷². In addition, his newly acquired integration into the Arthurian community is of great usefulness to Tristano at this point, as he has no opportunity of freeing himself or Isotta this time. Finally, Prezzivalle lo Gallese comes to the court of Cornwall in chapter LXXXIX and is able to effect their release with Marco⁵⁷³. In the following, Prezzivalle makes a request of Tristano: “— Ecco qui lo re Marco e Adriette. Ora, io v’ addomando voi gli facciate provare quella prigione ch’ egli à fatta provare a voi —.”⁵⁷⁴. Thus, the king and Adriette are incarcerated and Isotta, not to be forgotten, is freed by Tristano in

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., p. 337f. (chapter LXXXVIII).

⁵⁷² Cf. Ibid., p. 523 (chapter CXXXVII).

⁵⁷³ Cf. Ibid., p. 338ff. (chapter LXXXIX).

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 340 (chapter LXXXIX).

accordance with her position as the first lady of that domain⁵⁷⁵. As addressed in great depth in 4.1.1.4 and 4.1.2.3.3, Tristano takes the queen, by her own accord, from Cornwall to Gioiosa Guardia, which is then his possession, in chapter LXXXIX. Following this, the couple's happy life, despite which Tristano can still fulfil his chivalric duties, in Gioiosa Guardia and his triumphant standing within the Arthurian community as well as with other kings and important knights during the tourney of Verzeppe from chapters XC to XCIX, is depicted⁵⁷⁶. Even after this, Isotta remains Tristano's accepted partner and, without returning to Cornwall and to Marco, stays permanently in Gioiosa Guardia in chapters XCIX through CXXII, apart from an interim stay with Queen Ginevara – before the first Grail experience – in Camellotto, and even while Tristano is embarked on his quest for the Holy Grail⁵⁷⁷. The only interference is constituted by Marco's renewed attempt to disturb the couple's happy life in accordance with the Arthurian community from chapter CXXII onwards. This happens while Tristano is away with several other knights searching for the Grail and King Artù is in a weakened position:

“Manifesta la vera istoria, che sappiendo lo re Marco sì come sua dama Isotta e suo nipote Tristano erano alla Gioiosa Guardia, era lo più tristo re del mondo, e averebbe dato per patto tutto suo reame, per potere riavere sua dama. E stando lo re in tanto dolore per più tempo, egli s' accorda collo re di Sansonia e collo re di Gualagnia e collo re di Sobois; e tutti e quattro giurano d' essere insieme in contro allo re Artù, imperò che volevano essere da lui liberi. A ciò si movevano perchè lo re Artù era a quel punto debole e povero di cavalieri; chè gli grandi baroni e gli pro' cavalieri della Tavola Ritonda si erano tutti messi nella alta inchiesta.”⁵⁷⁸

Once more, the author depicts Marco as treacherous and cowardly, as the King of Cornwall only conspires against Artù when the latter is for once lacking most of his knights. Furthermore, Marco even betrays his own fellow conspirators for a time, as the narrator informs us, by secretly seizing Isotta, who is almost entirely without protection in this situation:

“E allora gli quattro re che io contato v' ò, assediaron lo re Artù dentro da Camelotto. E stando nello assedio, lo re Marco sappiendo sì come Lancialotto e Tristano erano pella Valle Bruna e

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 346-391 (chapters XC-XCIX).

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 391-476 (chapters XCIX-CXXII).

Addendum: a special, ostentatious celebration of Tristano's and Isotta's love, along with Lancialotto's and Ginevara's, has also been included by the author in this narrative passage, in chapters CV to CVII with the episode of the enchanted pavillon of the Dama del Lago. Due to the fact that the element of magic plays a decisive role in this context, and also constitutes a separate episode, it will not be discussed in any further detail in order to keep this work as lean as possible. For further explanations in this regard, see Marie-José Heijkant's remarks: cf. Heijkant 1997, p. 35f.

Regarding this episode in the 'Tavola Ritonda': cf. Polidori 1864, p. 415-425 (chapters CV-CVII).

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 476 (chapter CXXII).

PELLA Valle Franca, egli celatamente, in compagnia di cento cavalieri e di quattrocento pedoni, cavalca alla Gioiosa Guardia; ed essendo lì presso, si si missono in aguato e stéttonvi tre giorni. [...] Ed essendo giunti, cominciano vigorosamente a ferire; e fuvvi quivi una crudele battaglia, nella quale môre missere Gulistante e messer Lantris e assae pedoni, da l' una parte e da l' altra. E lo re Marco vi fu fedito nel viso: ma, alla fine, lo re se ne menò la reina Isotta, e rimándala in Cornovaglia, in guardia di C cavalieri e di CC pedoni; ed egli ritorna all' assedio di Camellotto.”⁵⁷⁹

With Isotta's final return to Cornwall, the fatal course of events takes place, as Tristano aborts his quest for the Holy Grail and begins to search for Isotta and travels to Marco's court, where both meet their deaths. Regarding Marco's characterisation, which is conducted once more in great detail by the author in chapter CXXII, it is noteworthy that the King of Cornwall, according to his depiction, always prefers to attack his enemies when they are weakened and hides behind superior numbers. Also, he avoids a direct confrontation with Tristano because he fears that his nephew, unlike in Marco's kingdom of Cornwall, could count on greater support from a multitude of allies. Furthermore, Marco's attraction for Isotta is described as being based predominantly on her looks, as the feelings she shows Tristano seem to be of little consequence to the king, demonstrated in the episode involving the exchange of Isotta for Brandina during the wedding night, during which Marco is not able to discern any difference in personality between his two partners.

4.1.3.4 The Lovers' Death

After Marco's return of Isotta to Cornwall by force in chapter CXXII, Tristano finally arrives after having aborted his attempts at finding the Grail in chapter CXXVI. Subsequently, they are able to enjoy a short time of unfettered happiness, although Isotta's fear of never seeing Tristano again is initially developed in some detail:

“[...] e Tristano fece assapere di sua ritornata alla reina Isotta; e la reina di ciò fu la più allegra donna del mondo, imperò ch' ella giorno e notte era istata per lui in grande pianto e tormento, e nollo credea mai rivedere. Ed operò allora tanto, che Tristano andó a lei a guisa di donzella; e rivedendosi insieme furono gli più allegri amanti del mondo, e dimenticarono ogni altro dolore passato; e in celato stettono in sieme da quattro giorni e in grande diletto, ristorandosi del tempo intralasciato.”⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 476f. (chapter CXXII).

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 494 (chapter CXXVI).

On the fifth day, however, Marco is able to wound his nephew in chapter CXXVII, as previously addressed in 4.1.1.4 and 4.1.2.3.7, with a fatal and insidious stab from a poisoned weapon. During the couple's subsequent death, it is conspicuous that the author once more highlights, next to his exaltation of their love and hints at their continued life after death, Tristano's and Isotta's great connection to God⁵⁸¹. A first indicator is Tristano's age at the time of his death, which is separately given by the author and, next to the triad's allusion to the trinity and its additional symbolic meaning as Marie-José Heijkant has elaborated upon in more detail, consciously provides a mental link to the age at which Jesus Christ died⁵⁸²:

“[...] Tristano morì giovane cavaliere; chè lo di ch' egli fue ferito, si compieva egli XXXIII anni e due mesi e XIII di, e di sua ferita vivette XVIII di. E pongono i maestri delle storie, che se Tristano fosse vivuto anche X anni più, ch' egli, per sua discrezione, none avrebbe portato più arme: chè, s' egli l' avesse portate, li cavalieri, per temenza di lui, non si sarebbero più messi in avventura.”⁵⁸³

A second indicator is provided by Tristano's forgiveness of Marco and all which he had to endure, following by Tristano's reverse request to have his uncle also forgive him:

“E vedendo Tristano lo re, si disse: — Caro mio zio, voi siate lo ben venuto, che siete venuto alla mia dolorosa festa, la quale tanto tempo avete desiderata, e ora avete a compimento vostra gioia, imperò che tosto vederete morto il vostro Tristano. Ma, per avventura, ancora ne sarete pentuto. Ma, poi che così è intervenuto, non può essere altro; e imperò, io lo vi perdono, e priego voi che perdonate a me ogni offesa ch' io incontro a di voi avessi fatta —.”⁵⁸⁴

A third indicator is provided by Isotta's pleading prayer for Tristano's life, her own death and subsequently Tristano's extensive prayer as well as his life's confession among a great number of church dignitaries before his death⁵⁸⁵. In a last step in chapter CXXXIII, the author has the narrator then speak of the, unconfirmed, belief “[...] per alcuno lettore [...]” that two popes had in their prayers, first for Tristano's and Isotta's lives and then for their souls after

⁵⁸¹ Marie-José Heijkant makes note of this in a brief half-sentence: “[...] e la morte cristiana degli amanti.” Heijkant 1997, p. 9.

⁵⁸² Cf. regarding the connection delineated by Marie-José Heijkant: *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁵⁸³ Polidori 1864, p. 497 (chapter CXXVII).

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 498 (chapter CXXVII).

⁵⁸⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 499f. (chapters CXXVII and CXXVIII).

their deaths, been prepared to grant a certain indulgence for them, in the knowledge “[...] che loro peccare era stato per opera d’ incantamento, e no’ per altra malvagia volontà [...]”⁵⁸⁶.

The exaltation of their love, the survival of which is at the same time being prepared by the author, is placed alongside the emphasis on the couple’s connectedness to God. For its depiction, he mainly uses dialogues between Tristano and Isotta – shortly before their joint deaths – in which its quintessence is once more accentuated and survival hinted at:

“[...] e appresso Tristano disse: — O gentile reina, dolce mia dama e corale mio amore e leale mio conforto, venuto è lo tempo che lo tuo Tristano no’ puote più vivere. Or come farete voi dopo la mia morte? Lascerétemi voi in tale maniera dipartire da voi? Or, chè no’ mi fate voi compagnia, acciò che le nostre anime sieno insieme in quello altro mondo? E io ò fede e speranza i’ Dio, che ci arà misericordia delle nostre offese —. [...] E sentendosi, di lei [Isotta] uscì boci sottili, dicendo: — Amor mio Tristano, per voi mia vita sarà poca. Imperò vi priego che voi no’ lasciate dopo voi questa dolente, la quale per voi è presso al morire: la quale morte molto desidero, dappoi che la vita voi abbandona; la quale morte mi sarà vita, essendo io nella vostra leale compagnia —.”⁵⁸⁷

Thus, the author consequently develops their joint deaths as follows:

“E stando insieme in tale maniera abbracciati, che l’ uno era contento di morire per l’ altro; e a quel punto, non per istretta nè per niuna forza fatta, ma per debolezza e per proprio dolore, e con piacere e diletto sì dell’ uno e dell’ altro, amendui li leali amanti passarono di questa vita, e le loro anime si dipartirono del corpo. [...] la reina morì innanzi che Tristano uno àttimo di poco d’ ora, e messer Tristano morì appresso.”⁵⁸⁸

Following this, the couple’s connectedness to God is once more stressed by the author in regard to their grave, as he has them buried by Marco close to a place of worship:

“E appresso, gli due corpi furono portati alla città di Tintoile, al grande duomo di Santo Tommaso. Ed essendo tutta gente ragunata alla grande chiesa, lo re fa fare davanti la porta uno bellissimo munimento, lo quale era tutto intagliato a oro ed argento e a pietre preziose; e in quella ricca sepoltura lo re fa seppellire gli due corpi, e favvi intagliare due imagini d’ oro; l’ una alla

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 514 (chapter CXXXIII).

Cf. also in support of this: Heijkant 1997, p. 21.

⁵⁸⁷ Polidori 1864, p. 503f. (chapter CXXIX).

Additional remark: of particular note is the short passage “[...] la quale morte mi sarà vita, essendo io nella vostra leale compagnia —.” Ibid. Thereby, references are being evoked to other Tristan versions which also tell of the continuously united existence of their souls after death.

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 505 (chapter CXXIX).

figura di messer Tristano, e l' altra in forma della bella reina Isotta. Le quali imagini pareano veramente desse, e pareva ch' egli fossero vivi.”⁵⁸⁹

He then adds a description of the life-like impression made by Tristano's and Isotta's likenesses as a further reference to the well-known 'Salle aux images' episode by Thomas d'Angleterre, which was mentioned in greater detail in 4.1.3.3.3⁵⁹⁰. The life-like impression of the images is not, however, sufficient for the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda'. Through the depiction of a special event, one year after the couple's funeral, he provides an ultimate glorification of their unique love and hints once more at a continued existence after Tristano's and Isotta's worldly deaths⁵⁹¹:

“Conta la vera storia e pruovano più persone, che compiuto l' anno, in quel dì subitamente, cioè dal dì che Tristano e Isotta furono sopelliti, nel pillo si nacque una vite, la quale avea due barbe o vero radici; e l' una era barbicata nel cuore di Tristano, e l' altra nel cuore di Isotta; e le due radici feceno uno pedale, lo quale era pieno di fiori e di foglie, e uscía del pillo e faceva grande meriggiana sopra le due imagini delli due amanti. E la detta vita faceva uve di tre maniere; cioè in fiore e acerba e matura; a dimostrare che negli due leali amanti furono tre nature: imperò ch' eglino furono fiore di cortesia e di bellezza e di gentilezza; e furono acerbi in quanto e' ricevettono molta tribolazione; e furono maturi e dolci, imperò ch' el loro diletto fu tanto, che no' curavano di neuna tribolazione. E fu quell' albero vite, a significare che sì come la vite fae frutto e 'nebria altrui, così la vita di Tristano e di Isotta fu albero d' amore, e appresso il quale confortava e inebriava ogni fine amante.”⁵⁹²

Consequently, Tristano is victorious in his premature and non-intended death regarding all of his uncle's claims to Isotta, who remains unreachable for Marco, whereas the couple's love survives, as the author indicates. Furthermore, the following chapters of the 'Tavola Ritonda' comprise of the worldly 'vendetta' by the friends and allies of the best worldly knight enacted upon Marco for the killing of his nephew and the resulting death of Isotta. The antagonist Marco thus remains the loser in this rivalry with his nephew and even pays with his own life as a result.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 506f. (chapter CXXX).

⁵⁹⁰ Cf. also: Heijkant 1997, p. 38f.

⁵⁹¹ Joan Tasker Grimbert remarks in regard to this depiction: “For a love now explicitly described as exemplary, the description of the vine that roots in each of their hearts and grows out of their tombs provides an almost blasphemous apotheosis [...]”. Grimbert 1994, p. 96.

⁵⁹² Polidori 1864, p. 508 (chapter CXXXI).

In addition, the special wording of the last sentence of this quote, most notably “il quale confortava e inebriava ogni fine amante”, possesses a counterpart of sorts in the end of the prologue in Gottfried von Strassburg's 'Tristan'. Although it is wine and not bread in the 'Tavola Ritonda', there are certain allusions made in regard to the Christian Eucharist, as Joan Tasker Grimbert has also remarked.

4.1.4 Partial Results

Consequently, the inscription of the genealogical conflict of generations between Tristano and his uncle is clearly visible in the 'Tavola Ritonda'. Although Marco could have averted it by changing his behaviour at multiple stages in the narrative, by recognising his nephew as an asset instead of a threat and tying him ever closer to himself in order to strengthen his power, as is the case with Artù, the conflict is exacerbated by the king's rigid persistence in his jealousy and distrust until it reaches its tragic conclusion. With Marco, there is no effective learning process in this area of behaviour. On the contrary, the narrative presents the antagonist as becoming more and more stubborn and self-centred, as was specially analysed in depth in 4.1.1.4, 4.1.3.1 and 4.1.3.3.5. The greatest mistake made by the King of Cornwall is that he is completely dominated by his jealousy and distrust, so that he wishes his nephew dead or at least seriously wounded as soon as he recognises him as such. He intends to accomplish this by giving Tristano the task of bringing to him as bride the princess he assumes to be the recipient of his nephew's love. In addition, Marco, up until that point unmarried and swiftly viewing Tristano as solely a rival, proceeds to lessen his nephew's possibilities in regard to the inheritance of the kingship of Cornwall or even prevent it entirely. Tristano is portrayed as an heir, having been orphaned from an early age onwards, who wishes to step in his father's footsteps and thus his ancestral line and prove himself as a perfect knight. Thus, the protagonist does not merely emulate Meliadus, but he tries to surpass him in honour of his ancestors and his father self. As the best worldly knight, he undoubtedly succeeds in this endeavour in the course of the narrative, as is depicted in 4.1.2. Based on Meliadus' role model for his son, having married late, Tristano follows his conviction of first devoting himself entirely to chivalry and to put aside the other obligations which go along with his inheritance, getting children and thus the continuation of his genealogy. A further complicating secondary factor for Tristano would be in regard to his settling in one place for a longer period of time and his commitment to a wife, as he is, "[...] continue connessioni causali [...]"⁵⁹³, as Daniela Branca phrases it, initially driven from kingdom to kingdom in his youthful years. Although the thematic focus of her study prevented a deeper analysis of the subject, the relevant approach is already present, if without the link to the generational topic, in her first detailed study of the 'Tavola Ritonda', as she elaborates the following in a footnote:

"Le persecuzioni della matrigna e la morte del padre obbligano Tristano a lasciare la sua terra, l'amore di Bellices a lasciare la corte di Faramonte, la venuta dell'Amoroldo a svelare la pro-

⁵⁹³ Branca 1968, p. 69.

pria identità a Marco. Ma la ferita ricevuta in questo primo duello lo spinge a cercare guarigione affidandosi al mare: viene guarito proprio da Isotta, nipote dell'Amoroldo, e rimane alla corte d'Irlanda finché, riconosciuto, deve allontanarsene e tornare in Cornovaglia. Marco, invidioso del suo valore (episodio della damigella dell'Agua della Spina) gli ordina di condurgli Isotta come sposa, per metterlo in mano ai suoi nemici, ma Tristano, difendendo Languis da un'ingiusta accusa, porta felicemente a termine la pericolosa missione. Ci pare inutile continuare il riassunto, dal quale sempre meglio emerge una salda concatenazione causale."⁵⁹⁴

Regarding the statement that Tristano indeed had to return to Cornwall after his departure from Ireland, one might demur the fact that he would have had the possibility of accepting his inheritance in Leonis in the meantime. However, the notion of chivalry in the 'Tavola Ritonda' and especially for Tristano would stand contrary to doing so, as he would have to tie himself completely to his holdings in Leonis and thus betray the strict standards of traveling knighthood, as shown in 4.1.1.4 and 4.1.2.3. In addition to that, he accordingly also utters the wish to return as soon as possible from Ireland to Cornwall, the place of his accolade and his first successes as a knight, as Tristano says: "[...] Tristano comanda a Governale ch' egli faccia acconciare la nave di tutte cose, imperò ch' egli si voleva partire e tornare in Cornovaglia."⁵⁹⁵. Due to a lack of clues in the 'Tavola Ritonda', it cannot clearly be said to which degree the protagonist feels loyally bound to return to his uncle at this point in the narrative, as there had been no dampening of their newly-formed relationship among kinsmen until then. Next to chivalry, love is the second important and unexpected influence on Tristano. This love between the protagonist and Isotta is presented to us as extraordinary, even being depicted as bordering or crossing the transcendental due to the potion and life after death, as an investigation in 4.1.3 was able to shed light on. At the same time, the generational conflict between uncle and nephew could only then really grow to its full potential, as Marco was determined to hurt Tristano due to his feelings of rivalry towards him. Based on his outstanding characteristic stressed multiple times in the 'Tavola Ritonda', loyalty, Tristano meanwhile attempts to respect the norms of chivalry and also initially the king, who knighted him. However, the protagonist is powerless against his love for Isotta, ultimately sealed by the potion, and this love constitutes the most important part of his life, as is exemplified by his abandonment of the quest for the Holy Grail. 4.1.2.3.6 mainly deals with this subject in more detail. Although Isotta's feelings, voiced in her consistent choice of Tristano, matter very little to Marco, who is only interested in her physical beauty according to the depiction in the 'Tavola Ritonda', he still shows no sign of wishing to relinquish her in favour of his nephew and a reconciliation

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid. footnote 14.

⁵⁹⁵ Polidori 1864, p. 88 (chapter XXIV).

with him. In the episode of the wedding night, it is even revealed that Isotta could be exchanged for another woman, as long as it is not too conspicuous, without Marco noticing at all. Thus, she is replaceable for him. With this, it is conveyed to us that the Irish princess is seen and used by Marco as predominantly a status symbol and compensation in regard to Tristano's superiority, in order to be one step ahead of his nephew. Consequently, there is no deviation in the character of the King of Cornwall in the 'Tavola Ritonda': he consistently remains the antagonist, even after the narrative has unearthed his primary motivations for his actions to us. The further Tristano's estrangement from Marco progresses, however, the clearer the protagonist's orientation towards his other close relative, King Artù, becomes. As was expounded in 4.1.3.3.5, Tristano tries to avoid his uncle during his last two visits to Cornwall and takes Isotta, following her own wishes, back to the protective domain of the Arthurian community during his second to last visit. In the course of the narrative, the protagonist thus detaches himself more and more from the Cornish king and instead ties himself closer to the knights of the Round Table. A decisive turning point is discernible in chapter LXXXVIII, when the protagonist refuses to return to Marco's court for the first time and instead stays with friends in the Castello di Cornasim before visiting Isotta in disguise. The generational conflict inscribed in the 'Tavola Ritonda' is also used in order to have an even clearer reason for the protagonist's integration into the Arthurian community. In accordance with this aim, the author positions Marco's distrust and jealousy as the antithesis to the acceptance and appreciation of Tristano as an outstanding knight, but also in regard to his connection with Isotta, by Artù and his knights of the Round Table. The Arthurian community provides the protagonist with excellent allies, although Tristano is also of use to the king and his chivalric community as the best worldly knight. This becomes apparent in the 'Tavola Ritonda' particularly after his death, as it is given as the main reason for the community's disintegration. Furthermore, Artù is definitely painted as more ambivalent, both before the protagonist's entry into the narrative, as well as after his death and the subsequent campaign of vengeance. Before Tristano's birth, the king is clearly characterised as more scrupulous and indifferent to the newborn, hardly protected Lancialotto, as mentioned in 4.1.1.1. After Tristano's death and the subsequent campaign of revenge, Artù is unsuspectedly ascribed a character trait, which is seen in academic analyses of other versions in the areas of the 'matière de Bretagne' in which he features as rather negative: passivity and inaction. In regard to him and the beginning of his community's downfall, chapter CXXXVIII says the following:

“[...] avendo presa la grande veggianza della morte di messer Tristano, tutti i baroni erano in fra loro in grande pace e in grande concordia; e niuno di loro non si metteva più in avventura, e none affaticavano loro persone altro che in grande diletto pella città. E ciò facevano per tre cose: l’ una, perché lo re nol comandava; tanto gli pareva essere abbassato [...]. E no’ mettendosi i cavalieri in avventura, si godeano e stavano ad agio e traevansi bello tempo, e altro pensiero none aoperavano, che di godere. E pello troppo agio, peggioravano loro prodezze, e aoperavano altre cose disoneste, e l’ uno desiderava e volea cose de l’ altro. Chè sappiate che lo troppo agio e lo soave si commuove altrui a tre cose principale [sic]: cioè a lussuria ed avarizia, o a ira o vero superbia. [...] E così interveniva a’ cavalieri della Tavola Ritonda; chè alcuno abitava a suo castello, [...]; e alcuno stava alla città, e faceva di belli palagi e desiderava degli altri; e alcuno ragunava moneta e desideravane più; ed alcuno amava sua dama e desiderava d’ avere l’ altri.”⁵⁹⁶

After the generational rivalry and conflict has been brought to its conclusion through the murder of his nephew, even Marco, the antagonist, laments his death because he soon after becomes prescient of the fatal consequences it will have for him. Although Tristano would be in a position to disempower his jealous and distrustful uncle due to his close ties to the Arthurian community and also several other friendly kings, he is never tempted to do so in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, in accordance with its sources. It is merely on Prezzivalle’s request and in order to take Isotta with him uncontested that he holds Marco prisoner for ten days in chapter LXXXIX in his own kingdom and tower in which Tristano himself had been held captive by him before⁵⁹⁷, as was elaborated upon in 4.1.3.3.5. Only in regard to Isotta does Tristano more or less openly confront his uncle in the generational conflict sought predominantly by the latter. At the same time, however, the outstanding knight is the one who truly provides the kingdom of Cornwall and Marco with protection, as is exemplified for the first time by his fight against Amoroldo and the lifting of tributary burdens. As long as Tristano is alive, this inviolability of the domain of Cornwall is not even touched by Artù in respect to the best worldly knight. With his nephew’s death, Marco finally loses all protection of his power position and territory, as the campaign of vengeance shows, and his lowly actions even provide other kings and members of the Arthurian community with an additional reason to attack him. As punishment, Cornwall is consequently divided among four powers which in turn hand it over to the seneschal Dinasso, as was previously mentioned in 4.1.2.3.7. The ‘Tavola Ritonda’ shows that the generational conflict created and kept alive by Marco can only cause loss for all parties. The King of Cornwall, as well as Tristano and Isotta pay with their lives for it. The greatest

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 524f. (chapter CXXXVIII).

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. for the exact specification of ten days also: Ibid., p. 340 (chapter LXXXIX).

loss, however, is attributable to Marco, as he permanently loses Isotta to his nephew, and the couple's love lives on after death, as the prospering and fructiferous vine tendrils suggest. The protagonist's death additionally constitutes a further important factor leading to the downfall of the Round Table and finally even of King Artù. On the one hand, the generational conflict in the 'Tavola Ritonda' is introduced in order to more plausibly integrate Tristano into the Arthurian community and, on the other, to highlight the devastating effects which are caused by it. One may state, therefore, as a concise partial result: aside from the prominent aspects of love and chivalry, the 'Tavola Ritonda' clearly depicts a genealogical conflict between generations and, analogous to that, a diachronic generational consciousness.

In the following, however, it shall be examined in which way the synchronic generational term is also present in the 'Tavola Ritonda' with a distinction between the 'Tavola Vecchia', an 'Old Round Table', and a 'Tavola Nuova', a 'New Round Table'.

4.2 The Added Generational Theme through the Division into 'Tavola Vecchia' and 'Tavola Nuova'

The narrative of the 'Tavola Ritonda' begins in the first chapter with occurrences surrounding the 'Tavola Vecchia', as was already noted in 1 in the introduction to its sources and content structure. Tristano's future father Meliadus competes with King Scalabrone as a knight and king of Leonis in Uter Pandragon's tourney, "[...] lo quale sì portava a lo re Meliadus grande odio, solo per invidia di cavallaria."⁵⁹⁸ Also, King Bando of Benoich, Lancialotto's father, and his brother Bordo, consequently Lancialotto's uncle, take part in this great chivalric event. As a result, mainly knights from the 'Tavola Vecchia' led by Artù's father Uter Pandragon are presented to us. It is noteworthy in this regard that some of those who witness the transition from the 'Old Round Table' to the 'New Round Table' already die shortly after their offspring are born or are in their youth, according to the depiction. The narrative then moves directly on to King Artù's reign in chapter V, and it appears that it was assumed the recipient would know that he is the son of Uter Pandragon, as this is only briefly mentioned in summary in the last chapter 145⁵⁹⁹. As such, we are immediately confronted with the fact in chapter V that Meliadus is unwilling to submit himself to Artù as a vassal:

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 4. (chapter I).

⁵⁹⁹ In regard to the brief mention, cf. Ibid., p. 544 (chapter 145).

“[...] lo re Meliadus fu pro et liale cavaliere, et non aveva mai auta donna nè pensava d’ avere; et ciò faceva per piacere a Dio et per meglio conservare sua forza. Ma, sicondo che in nella storia si contiene, lo re Artù fu signore della Gran Bretagna, capo et aiuto delli cavalieri erranti, e spesse volte faceva oste et poneva l’ assedio alla città di Lionis; et questo faceva perchè voleva che l’ re Meliadus gli rispondesse omaggio et trebuto et censo, come facevano gli altri re, salvo che lui e l’ alto prencipe Galeotto, sire delle lontane isole et paesi [...]”⁶⁰⁰

By contrast, King Artù’s allies are members of the house of Benoich, as is explained immediately afterwards: “Et a quel tempo lo re Artù aveva gran possanza; imperò ch’ elli aveva in suo aiuto lo re Bando di Benoich e tutto lo suo lignaggio.”⁶⁰¹. In the following chapter VI, however, the death of King Bando and, almost at the same time, the birth of his son Lancialotto is described. Thus, Lancialotto is portrayed as distinctly younger than Artù, as the latter is already embarking upon military campaigns when the heir to Benoich is still in his infancy.⁶⁰² After Lancialotto, aged 15, travels to Artù’s court in order to be knighted, also in chapter VI, he meets the knights Calvano, Arecco and the king’s seneschal Chieso; it may be discerned from this that, by all appearances in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, all other members belonging to the ‘Tavola Nuova’ are consequently older than him⁶⁰³. The narrator provides a single additional hint in this regard within a brief explanation in the same chapter: “[...] et al mattino lo re lo [= Lancialotto] fe cavaliere; ma non gli cinse la spada a quel punto, imperò che a nissuno non la cigneva se non era in tempo di XXV anni.”⁶⁰⁴. It should be noted that Tristano is not yet born at this point in the narrative. His father Meliadus, on the other hand, is described as being older than Artù, as he takes part in a tourney, which Artù does not attend, as a knight and king as a member of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ led by Uter. The protagonist is only born after Lancialotto has proven himself as an outstanding knight on multiple occasions and was able to conquer Dolorosa/Gioiosa Guardia⁶⁰⁵. As a result, it is not surprising that the battle-hardened Meliadus, who possesses important allies such as Alto Prencipe Galeotto⁶⁰⁶, refuses to submit himself to Artù, and only Lancialotto’s shrewdly arranged peace agreement and marriage, to strengthen the alliance and on Artù’s request, are able to bind both rulers closer to each other⁶⁰⁷. Due to the narrative’s depiction of these events in the past, it may therefore be stated: Lancialotto is most likely at least 16 years old at the time of Tristano’s birth. As was also ad-

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 12 (chapter V).

⁶⁰¹ Ibid.

⁶⁰² Cf. Ibid., p. 12ff. (chapter V and VI).

⁶⁰³ Cf. Ibid., p. 14 ff. (chapter VI).

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 16 (chapter VI).

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. in regard to Lancialotto’s first great successes as a knight: Ibid., p. 16-27 (chapters VII and VIII).

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. in regard to a more detailed listing of Meliadus’ allies: Ibid., p. 20 (chapter VII).

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. Ibid., p. 30ff. (chapters IX and X).

dressed in 4.1.1.1, the protagonist is related, through his mother Eliabella's line, to King Artù as the son of his niece and also to the house of Benoich and thus to Lancialotto as the descendant of King Bando's second cousin. In addition, Tristano's father Meliadus represents an important link between the 'Old Round Table' and the 'Tavola Nuova' due to, on the one hand, his participation in the 'Tavola Vecchia' and, on the other, as a friend and an in-law of King Artù through his wife Eliabella. In this way, the 'Tavola Ritonda' skilfully weaves between the two Round Tables a connection and a certain mode of transition, which is only indirectly hinted at. This technique of making connections not immediately apparent, but rather constructed through multiple additions of smaller details *en passant*, is visible at numerous stages in the 'Tavola Ritonda' and demands the recipient's attention. After all important prerequisites have been met for the narrative entry of the protagonist, Tristano's birth is described in chapter XII. Eliabella, who has served her function, disappears from the story by dying, while Meliadus survives for the time being. As a result, the paternal influence on Tristano's later chivalry is causally, and thus more plausibly, underpinned by his direct role model, so that at the end of chapter XIII the following may be said: "[...] Tristano era molto buono scolaro, e apparva molto nobilmente ciò che di bene gli era mostrato; e per tanto, Tristano era amato da ciascuna persona che lo vedeva."⁶⁰⁸ Following this, however, the death of Meliadus and thus of the last link to the 'Tavola Vecchia' is described, also in chapter XIII⁶⁰⁹. It is only at a later stage in the 'Tavola Ritonda' that we, in passing, learn that there are other knights of the 'Old Round Table' alive, against whom Tristano is able to prove himself. In accordance with Lancialotto's age, the protagonist is 12 years old after Meliadus' death, a complete orphan now, and comes to his uncle Marco's court in Cornwall in the course of his training as a knight after some interim stops with King Fieramonte in Gaules. In unison with Lancialotto's development, he receives aged 15 already his accolade, which is depicted in great detail in chapter XVII, as was previously addressed in 4.1.1.4. This early transference to knighthood is justified by Tristano's wish to fight against Amoroldo of Ireland, one of Artù's 'cavalieri erranti', in order to free Cornwall of its tributary obligations⁶¹⁰. After the protagonist beats Amoroldo in chapter XVIII and then has the poisoned wound he received as a result healed in chapter XX, he initially takes part as a spectator in the first tourney of the King of Scotland in chapter XXI and then chooses Palamides lo Pagano, of whom he is jealous because of Isotta, as his next opponent. At the time, it is said about their age difference: "E ciascuno era giovane cava-

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 51f. (chapter XIII).

⁶⁰⁹ Cf. Ibid., p. 52 (chapter XIII).

⁶¹⁰ Cf. in regard to Amoroldo of Ireland: Ibid., p. 54f. (chapter XV) and p. 382 (chapter XCVII).

liere, salvo che Palamides avea pur alquanti anni più di tempo che Tristano.”⁶¹¹. We do not, however, receive an exact specification of how many years Palamides is older than the protagonist, but the following partial result may be said in principle, when taking into account the previously preparing statements, to the depiction of the portrayed age groups in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’: a first group of knights belongs solely to the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ led by Uter and possesses no special link to the ‘Tavola Nuova’. Additionally, there is a lesser amount of knights who may initially be attributed to the ‘Tavola Vecchia’. When Artù takes over the reign, though, they are incorporated into the ‘Tavola Nuova’ mostly by their own accord through an alliance or, in Galeotto’s case, the fulfilment of a wish, as is described at the beginning of chapter V⁶¹². Thus, they may be seen as ‘links’ between the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ and the ‘Tavola Nuova’, although their life spans often only reach the time of their offsprings’ birth or youth. Next to Bando of Benoich, Meliadus may after all also be counted as one of them due to his marriage. Furthermore, a third group is presented, consisting of knights who only belong to Artù’s ‘Tavola Nuova’. It appears that Calvano, Artù’s nephew, Chieso, the king’s seneschal and even Amoroldo of Ireland belong to this group, to name just a few from the illustrious circle. Moreover, there is a small fourth group consisting of ‘late borns’, who only join the ‘Tavola Nuova’ with some delay. Among their ranks are Lancialotto, Palamides, Tristano, Amorotto, the son of Amoroldo of Ireland, and finally the Grail knight Galasso, who is also Lancialotto’s son. This can be discerned especially in chapter XXXI from Artù’s entry of Tristano’s name into the book of the Round Table:

“[...] lo re Artù dimostra grande allegrezza; e fassi avanti a sè portare lo confermamento della Tavola, cioè uno libro ove erano scritti gli cavalieri erranti, e l’ ordine e l’ modo ch’ eglino doveano tenere. E lo re Artus vi fae suso scrivere lo nome di Tristano, e appresso poi lo risuggella. Il quale libro non fue mai più disuggellato, se non se per lo re Amoroldo e per messer Galasso.”⁶¹³

This is once more confirmed in chapter XCVII, during which Amorotto is added to it by Artù. We learn of Lancialotto’s admission to the ‘Tavola Nuova’ in chapter VI, whereas Palamides is only mentioned on the side in a half sentence in chapter XCIII and his allegiance is seemingly assumed to be known to the recipient⁶¹⁴. Through the creation of statues in their image, these five young knights are particularly elevated as outstanding Arthurian knights after

⁶¹¹ Ibid., p. 78 (chapter XXI).

⁶¹² Cf. in regard to Galeotto: Ibid., p. 28ff. (chapter IX).

⁶¹³ Ibid., p. 112 (chapter XXXI).

⁶¹⁴ Cf. in regard to Palamides as a member of the ‘cavalieri erranti’: Ibid., p. 355 (chapter XCIII).

the tourney of Verzeppe, whereby this stands in connection with the concept of ›memoria‹ and a self-reference of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’⁶¹⁵.

Although the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ undoubtedly distinguishes between an ‘Old Round Table’ led by Uter and a ‘New’ led by Artù, there is no importance placed on an exact distinction through homogeneous groups. Instead, the identification of the individual knights with the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ or the ‘Tavola Nuova’ seems to be of greater importance, although a portion of the ‘cavalieri erranti’, formerly belonging to the ‘Old Round Table’, functions as a link and may under Artù’s rule be more strongly associated with the ‘New Round Table’⁶¹⁶. Also, all Arthurian knights born after the creation of the ‘Tavola Nuova’ are to be classified as belonging to it.

In addition to the distinction between a ‘Tavola Vecchia’ and a ‘Tavola Nuova’, a narrative comment in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ in chapter CIX illustrates the three subsequent and principally different ‘Tavole’ and thus also their origins in regard to the Grail:

“Sappiate ch’ elle furono tre tavole principali. La prima fu quella degli Apostoli, a riverenza della messa celestiale; e a questa tavola mandò Iddio lo di della Pentecosta la grazia dello Spirito Santo, della quale divennero pronti e sicuri a predicare e a ricevere morte o passione per lo suo santo amore. La seconda tavola fu quella di Giuseppe di Bramanzia; e quindi mandò Iddio, per grazia, lo santo Vasello o vero Ampolla là dove era la terra là dove era caduto il santo sangue delle piaghe di Cristo; e anche v’ era lo vino con che furono lavate le dette piaghe: e ’l sangue non v’ era, imperò che, lo di che Cristo risucitò, il santo sangue si partì dalla terra e ricongiunsesi collo corpo o colla divinità: la quale grazia del santo Vagello fece Giuseppe e suoi discepoli pronti e arditi e fermi nella fè di Cristo. E la terza tavola, a riverenza di questo Giuseppe, ordinò e deficò Merlino; la Tavola Ritonda: e puósevi il seggio periglioso; e prefetezzò anche a quello seggio, sì come e’ vi doveva sedere uno cavaliere vergine, lo quale per sua virginità era degno di sedere alla santa Tavola, e di venire a compimento dell’ alta inchiesta del Sangradale: ciò volle dire ch’ egli mangiava o bevea alla santa tavola della santa fede, e la santa speranza lo inebriava di quello diletto.”⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁵ See Marie-José Heijkant’s comments concerning this: Heijkant 1997, p. 36ff.

⁶¹⁶ Bordo di Gaules, Lancialotto’s uncle, who may be seen as an exception, can be attributed to them: along with his brother Bando, he already takes part in Uter’s tourney (cf. Polidori 1864, p. 3f. and p. 7 (chapters I and II)), joins Artù after the transition of power, as is attested to in an incidental remark, “[...]lo re Bando di Benoich e tutto lo suo lignaggio [...]” (Ibid., p. 12 (chapter V)), is present during the first part of the Grail experience and at the beginning of the quest for the Holy Grail (cf. Ibid., p. 427f. (chapter CVIII)), after which he successfully takes part in it (Cf. Ibid., p. 460-476 (chapters CXII-CXXII)), then returns to Camelot (cf. Ibid., p. 476 (chapter CXXI)) and subsequently even witnesses the downfall of the Round Table (cf. Ibid., p. 544 (chapter CXLV)). Thus, he is most likely the only knight who regularly occurs from beginning to end in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’.

⁶¹⁷ Polidori 1864, p. 433f. (chapter CIX).

In accordance with medieval hermeneutics and typology, this narrative comment may be seen as prefiguring in regard to the 'Tavola Vecchia' and as fulfilling in regard to the 'Tavola Nuova'. Similarly, both Round Tables belong to a common 'Tavola', which is based on the 'Holy Table' and stands as a successor. Therefore, it is only a natural consequence that the Grail knight Galasso, who finally comes to Artù's 'Tavola Nuova', fulfils his destiny ordained by God and successfully completes the quest for the Holy Grail. Tristano, on the other hand, has to complete a different task as the best worldly knight: due to his perfected worldly knight-hood, he is the one who proves that, with the emergence of the 'Tavola Nuova', the time has come for the predetermined knights to gather and take part in the Grail experience. For this, Tristano not only has to prove himself in front of the knights of the 'Tavola Nuova', but he also has to show that he is capable of defeating members of the 'Tavola Vecchia' and the kings who preserved their independence from Artù, as his father had done. A first example of this is the King of Scotland, who is attendant at a tourney during Uter's rule and then himself hosts a tourney in Ireland, during which the protagonist defeats Palamides⁶¹⁸. At this stage in chapter XXII, it is said about Tristano in regard to the King of Scotland:

“[...] e a l' ultimo colpo, egli abbattè messer Palamides a terra, con tutto il cavallo. E appresso misse mano alla spada, e veniva dando sì grandi colpi, che verano aveva ardire d' aspettarlo nè attendere lo voleva; e se lo aspettava, era tantosto da lui abbattuto: però ch' egli abbattè lo re di Scozia e quegli cavalieri de l' Inghilterra, e della sua propria mano, misse a morte più di venticinque cavalieri.”⁶¹⁹

In the narrative, the tourney in question is the very first the protagonist takes part. He subsequently defeats the King of Scotland at Queen Ginevara's tourney at Rôcca Dura and at the tourney of Verzepe⁶²⁰. Tristano meets in combat the first knight of the 'Tavola Vecchia' still alive, Brunoro lo Bruno, in the episode of the Dama dell' Aigua della Spina in chapter XXV⁶²¹. In chapter CXXVIII he is also called “[...] il fiore della Tavola Vecchia [...]”⁶²². The duel is a draw, however, due to the kidnap of the Dama dell' Aigua della Spina, as both contenders agree upon leaving the decision with whom the young lady wishes to go with up to

⁶¹⁸ Cf. for Uter's tourney and the 'Tavola Vecchia': Ibid., p. 3 (chapter 1).

For the hosting of the tourney in Ireland and Tristano's victory over Palamides cf.: Ibid., p. 76-81 (chapters XXI and XXII).

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., p. 80 (chapter XXII).

⁶²⁰ Cf. in this regard: Ibid., p. 304f. (chapter LXXXII) and p. 387 (chapter XCVIII).

⁶²¹ Cf. for the statement pertaining to the fact that Brunoro lo Bruno is a knight of the 'Tavola Vecchia' first of all: Ibid., p. 127 (chapter XXXV).

⁶²² Ibid., p. 502 (chapter CXXVIII).

her⁶²³. In the following narrative events, however, Tristano then beats and kills Brunoro lo Bruno, the father of Alto Prencipe Galeotto, in the course of the ›Isola della Malvagia Usanza episode‹, in order to save his and Isotta’s life⁶²⁴. In chapter LXXVI, Tristano meets a further knight, of whom we only know that he belongs to the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ and is the brother of Sicurano lo Bruno, who as the best knight won the tourney under Uter’s chairmanship at the beginning of the narrative: Oris l’Aspro⁶²⁵. After discovering the identity of Tristano, who is staying with him as a guest, he declares the following:

“— Cavaliere, [io con]osco che veramente voi siete Tristano di Cor[nova]glia, lo quale uccideste messer Sigurano [mio] carnal fratello; e fue veggente gli miei occhi, al torneamento d’ Irlanda —.”⁶²⁶

Due to the fact of the protagonist’s involvement in his brother’s death at the tourney, Oris insists on avenging him in a duel against Tristano, although the latter offers him peace and a second guest, Dinadano, also tries to deter him. Oris cannot be dissuaded, however, and thus loses his life.⁶²⁷ Tristano then receives notice of the next knight of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’, “[...] Arpinello, sire dello castello di Bauttiganero [...]”, in chapter LXXXIII⁶²⁸, as the latter lost his shield to Carados il Treze and confides in the protagonist as follows:

“[...] chè passando io l’ altro giorno per me’ una grande torre, e quivi, per mia disavventura, io sonai uno corno da ulifante, lo quale io vi trovai attaccato, per lo quale suono mi convenne giostrare con uno cavaliere, lo maggiore e lo più pro’ combattente del mondo. Ed egli m’ abbattè, e appresso mi comandò che io dovesse scrivere mio nome nello mio scudo, e poi ch’ io l’ appiccassi nella parete della torre cogli altri; e se ciò non voleva fare, convenía che io stessi in sua prigione tre mesi. E io, intendendo tali parole e tale partito, scrissi mio nome nel mio scudo ed appiccâlo, significandovi dentro sì come io era per lui abbattuto, attaccato a uno anello di quella torre cogli altri. Tutto ciò non ebbi io però a grande onta troppo; imperò che più ve n’ erano appiccati, che CXL: chè lo cavaliere si è di troppa grande prodezza, ed egli è appellato messer Carados il Treze —.”⁶²⁹

With regard to this news, Tristano reacts in the subsequent manner:

⁶²³ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 94f. (chapter XXV).

⁶²⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 124-133 (chapter XXXV-XXXVIII).

⁶²⁵ Cf. in regard to Sicurano lo Bruno: *Ibid.*, p. 7 (chapter II).

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 278 (chapter LXXVI).

⁶²⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 277ff. (chapter LXXVI).

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 312 (chapter LXXXIII).

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*

“E Tristano intendendo le parole del cavaliere, e udendo menzonare messer Carados, di cui più volte udito avea menzonare sì com’ egli era quello cavaliere della Tavola Vecchia e che niente ridottava i cavalieri della Tavola Nuova, tantosto innamorò di vederlo e di combatter con lui [...]”⁶³⁰

Thus, the protagonist is escorted by Arpinello to Carados’ ‘torre Vitturiosa’, after an interlude in chapters LXXXIII and LXXXIV, during which he successfully helps his landlord, messer Adinain, against Count Balie and his four brothers⁶³¹. Having arrived, he discovers the possibility described by Arpinello to challenge Carados to a duel under a certain set of rules:

“[...] e davanti la porta era una colonna di marmo vermiglio, nella quale avea catenelle d’ arien-
to attaccate con sei corni d’ aulifante; ed eranvi lettere intagliate, le quali diceano a tal guisa: —
O tu, cavaliere trapassante per di qui, lo quale vai in avventura per onore acquistare e grande
pregio di cavalleria, ora suona uno di questi corni, se ti senti pro’ e ardito; e averai giostra di
lancia e battaglia di spada dallo più pro’ cavaliere del mondo. E se sarai vincitore, arai vendica-
ta l’ onta di tanti prodi cavalieri, quanti qui sono stati abbattuti e che ànno lasciati gli loro scudi
nella torre, come vedete, qui appiccati; e se sarai perdente, starai in mia prigione tre mesi, o vor-
rete appiccare vostro scudo appresso gli altri, e giurare che di qui a tre mesi voi non porterete
scudo —.”⁶³²

After Tristano has read the rules and also receives the good combat equipment needed as a knight from Carados, he praises him for it and then has one of the horns, to be challenged by Carados, resound. Subsequently, the following happens: “E dimorato che Tristano fue una pezza, ed ecco della torre uscire uno cavaliere armato a cavallo, di statura di grande gigante, ed era tutto apparecchiato a battaglia.”⁶³³. Carados proves to be very courtly in regard to the young knight, although he is described as having a giant’s frame of body. Neither of them, however, hesitates in starting the fight. Their fierce duel continues the next day after a night’s break, whereas the narrator notes at this point:

“E nello terzo assalto, ciascuno aveva fedite assai, e le loro carni erano tutte tinte e livide di san-
gue e di sudore: ma tutta fiata, molto si sforzavano, imperò che quella battaglia era di grande
pregio; tale che messer Tristano molto si sforzava d’ averne l’ onore e di venirne al di suso so-
pra quello che ’l cavaliere acquistato per tempo passato avea, però che più di quaranta anni egli
era stato in fatti d’ arme; e lo cavaliere molto dubitava di perderlo, acciò che non mancasse sua

⁶³⁰ Ibid.

⁶³¹ Ibid., p. 312-317 (chapter LXXXIII-LXXXV).

⁶³² Ibid., p. 317f. (chapter LXXXV).

⁶³³ Ibid., p. 318 (chapter LXXXV).

nominanza, perch' egli era vantato degli migliori cavalieri del mondo. Avvegna che a tutta la gente della rôcca, e a messer Arpinello e Adanain, pareva loro che tutta volta Tristano avesse lo migliore assai della battaglia; imperò che Carados era molto stanco e molto era allenato, e messer Tristano risembrava tutta volta più fresco.”⁶³⁴

With this remark in the text, we have a first distinct hint, next to Tristano's growing dominance during the fight, at the fact that the knights of the 'Tavola Vecchia' are at least a lot older than the younger age group to which the protagonist belongs, called the 'Tavola Nuova' in the narrative. As a result, one may speak of at least two distinct generations. Meanwhile, it is impossible to separate the two generations from each other by a time frame, as the Siense manuscript, noted by Polidori in his corresponding footnote, actually states that Carados' experience as a knight stretches back 60 years⁶³⁵. Amid the continued clash between the two knights, described as taking a very long time, a third engagement is followed by a fourth in this next narrative passage, during which the author has both of them engaged in the following monologues:

“E nel quarto assalto, grande parte della terra era tinta di loro sangue; e messer Carados dicea fra sé: — Ahi sire Iddio, or chie puote essere questo cavaliere tanto pro' e tanto buono combattante? A me non pare egli già messer Sigurans lo Bruno; e non mi pare ancora l' alto prencipe Galeotto, nè Lancialotto, nè Palamides: però io per altre volte gli ò provati, e ò fatto loro lasciare gli loro scudi mal loro grado —. E cosie, da l' altra parte, messer Tristano molto si maraviglia, dicendo: — Ahi sire Iddio, per certo questi è uno pro' cavaliere. Senza avere arte d' incantamento, lo cavaliere à veramente in sè buona e diritta forza; e costui è de' buoni cavalieri del mondo e che già mai io trovassi; e niente fue appo lui messer Brunoro lo Bruno, nè l' alto prencipe Galeotto, nè ancora Lancialotto, nè altro cavaliere del mondo —.”⁶³⁶

It becomes apparent that neither Carados nor Tristano strictly divide their opponent into 'Tavola Vecchia' and 'Tavola Nuova', but rather in accordance with their skill as a knight. This also corresponds with a previous comment in a passage in chapter XLII, during which the narrator himself uses the term ›generation‹ albeit in a somewhat different sense:

“E sappiate che a quel tempo erano sei generazioni di cavalieri, ciascuno in sua prodezza nominato. E la prima generazione fue quella di messer Sigurans lo Bruno, e di messer Brunoro lo Bruno, e di messer Tristano, e di messer Lancialotto e de l' alto prencipe Galeotto: e la seconda fue di messer Prezzivalle lo Galese, e di messer Palamides, e di messer Brunoro lo Vermiglio e

⁶³⁴ Ibid., p. 320 (chapter LXXXV).

⁶³⁵ Cf. Ibid. footnote 2.

⁶³⁶ Ibid., p. 320f. (chapter LXXXV).

dello Amoroldo d' Irlanda: la terza si fue dello Amorotto di Gaules, e di messer Briobris e di Bordo: la quarta fue di messer Galvano, e di messer Astor di Mare e di Sagris: e la quinta fue di messer Ivano, e di messer Sagramorre, e di messer Arecco e di tutti altri cavalieri erranti: la sesta si fue di messer Eris l' Aspro, e dello re di Scozia, e dello re di Cento Cavalieri, e di Meliagans, e di Pinabello e di tutti altri cavalieri stranieri.”⁶³⁷

It appears, therefore, that the narrator does not use the term ›generation‹ in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ as we do today, but in regard to ›generational graduations‹ among all knights and following the “prodezza” principle of classification. Thus, a ›generation of knights by equal ‘prodezza’‹ may arise, and members of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ as well as the ‘Tavola Nuova’ can both be part of it. It remains essential for the intended direction of the story, however, that Tristano proves himself as a knight to be among the ›first generation of ‘prodezza’‹, capable of besting all opponents who are also part of this group, be it members of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ or ‘Tavola Nuova’. In accordance with this, the protagonist is able to land such a heavy blow to Carados’ head with his sword during the fifth engagement that the following happens:

“[...] e quello colpo fue tanto pesante, che li passò l’ elmo e la cuffia del ferro, e fecegli sì grande piaga nella testa, che Carados cadde tutto dilibero alla piana terra, e stette grande pezza ch’ egli non si risentì nè polso nè vena, e giaceva cosie smemorato.”⁶³⁸

After Tristano’s obvious victory over the experienced knight of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’, he turns to Carados, as soon as the latter has regained consciousness, and calls for him to stop fighting. Carados shows himself to be courtly and a dignified loser by answering:

“— Certo, bel sire, io non credo che sia combattante che aggia tanto combattuto quanto aggio io, nè tratte più battaglie a fine; e di tutte tutte io sono rimasto al di suso con grande onore: e ciò fae chiaro e manifesto li tanti scudi alla parete che voi potete vedere appiccati a l’ alta torre; però ched e’ vi sono queglii degli più pro’ cavalieri del mondo. E tutto questo onore e tutto questo pregio, certo io veggio bene l’ òe acquistato per voi; imperò che voi siete lo cavaliere il quale m’ avete abbattuto e vinto, e avete vendicata l’ onta di tutti gli altri, e portatevene l’ onore e lo pregio per me acquistato per lo tempo passato; e avetemi condotto a tale, che se io fossi ora fresco sì come io fui, mai non farei con voi un altro assalto per tutto l’ oro del mondo [...]. Ma io in cortesia v’ addomando, e per onore della vostra cavalleria, che voi mi contiate vostro nome e chi siete voi; e io da ora innanzi, vi lascio la ròcca e lo tenere, e sìe porrò il mio scudo là dove io ò fatti assettar gli altri [...].”⁶³⁹

⁶³⁷ Ibid., p. 153 (chapter XLII).

⁶³⁸ Ibid., p. 321 (chapter LXXXV).

⁶³⁹ Ibid., p. 321f. (chapter LXXXV).

With Carados' statement, Tristano's outstanding chivalry is proven and forms the reason for his ability to defeat the best fighter of the 'Tavola Vecchia', as well as all those opponents the latter had previously bested himself. Furthermore, it is underlined that the protagonist is capable of defeating a knight of the 'Tavola Vecchia' who had until then proven to be unbeatable by even the most outstanding members of the 'Tavola Nuova'. This is further verified in the 'Tavola Ritonda' in chapter LXXXVI by the following glorifying inscription Carados has placed on the shield in verse form after his defeat and in honour of Tristano and then hangs upon the tower:

“— In vanagloria stando là dove niuno pregio dura,
 Io Carados ebbi in me tanta franchezza,
 Che lo re Uterpandragon nè li baroni della Tavola Vecchia
 Già non dottai io di niente nè tenea a cura;
 E tutti me ridottavano i cavalieri della Valle Bruna,
 Lo re Artus e tutta sua gentilezza,
 Messer Lancialotto e quegli de l' alta inchiesta;
 Di me tremavano giganti e cavalieri della avventura.
 E stando in cima della rota, venne uno cavaliere giovane e garzone gentile,
 Il quale, per sua prodezza e suo ardire,
 Mi tolse il pregio e lo onore e al tutto mi vinse, con verità si può dire:
 E questi fue messer Tristano, figliuolo dello re Meliadus di Leonis —.”⁶⁴⁰

This is stressed by a short comment by the narrator, providing exact figures which do not, however, work out:

“E sappiate che provedendo Tristano a sua agina gli scudi, egli gli truova per numero a punto cento trentotto; degli quali cento trentotto, erano quindici de' cavalieri della Tavola Vecchia, e cento ventisei degli cavalieri arranti; e due ve n' erano di messer Lancialotto, e dodici ve n' erano di grandi giganti, e gli altri erano stati di più prodi cavalieri stranieri, per conquistare onore e pregio di cavalleria.”⁶⁴¹

It is especially noteworthy here that Lancialotto is specifically named twice as one of those Carados defeated in combat. Consequently, it is emphasised in chapter LXXXVI that the protagonist is able to be victorious against nearly the best knight of the 'Tavola Vecchia', who in

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 322 (chapter LXXXVI).

⁶⁴¹ Ibid., p. 323 (chapter LXXXVI).

turn defeated the best knight of the ‘Tavola Nuova’ apart from Tristano. Although it is once more promised in the transition from chapter LXXXVI to LXXXVII “[...] e conterem d’ uno pro cavaliere della Tavola Vecchia [...]”⁶⁴², scepticism is called for in the following Lasancis episode regarding the latter statement. Lasancis is a knight with an enchanted weapon and armour and his affiliation with the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ receives no mention within the self-contained episode. Although he is asked by Lancialotto at one point, due to his enchanted weapon, whether he is Carados or Sigurans lo Bruno, he never calls himself ‘cavaliere errante’ but instead seems to oppose them.⁶⁴³ He first identifies himself as “[...] uno cavaliere di lontano paese [...]”⁶⁴⁴ and is then called “[...] uno [stran]iero cavaliere, non soe di che luogo o paese si sia [...]” by Queen Ginevara⁶⁴⁵. Once his intention of enacting vengeance upon the Arthurian knights has failed thanks to Tristano, he fully reveals his identity and says that he is named Lasancis “[...] della Rôcca della Ancisa dell’ Isola Riposta [...]”⁶⁴⁶. There is no mention of his being a knight of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’, however.

Tristano finally meets the last and best member of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ alongside Lancialotto, having embarked upon the adventure together, in the Valle Bruna in chapter CV. The encounter is initially described in the following manner:

“[...] al quinto giorno, si ritrovarono [= Tristano e Lancialotto] in capo della Valle Bruna, appiè d’ una grande montagna; e in cima avea uno forte castello, il quale si chiamava Rôcca Forte. E cavalcando eglino in tale maniera, sie scontrarono uno antico cavaliere di più di centosettanta anni; ed era molto grande di sua persona, troppo bene attagliato di membra. E come lo cavaliere vidde gli due compagni, sì gli saluta cortesemente, e sì gli domanda di loro condizione.”⁶⁴⁷

On the courtly request of the “antico cavaliere”, Lancialotto and Tristano introduce themselves as Arthurian knights. As a result, the unknown host invites them to his castle and reveals his identity by saying: “— Signori, venitevi a riposare; chè io sono uomo che amo molto gli cavalieri arranti, imperò che io già fui cavaliere della Tavola Vecchia, appellato per nome messer Sigurans lo Bruno —.”⁶⁴⁸. Tristano’s direct reaction to this revelation is presented as elated:

⁶⁴² Ibid., p. 324 (chapter LXXXVI).

⁶⁴³ Cf. Ibid., p. 324-336 (chapter LXXXVII).

⁶⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 328 (chapter LXXXVII).

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 330 (chapter LXXXVII).

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 334 (chapter LXXXVII).

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 413 (chapter CV).

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 413f. (chapter CV).

“Quando Tristano intese che questi era messer Sigurans, cavaliere Agragone, lo più forte combattitore che avesse lo re Uterpandragone in sua corte, si si fae allora molto allegro, e sie si trae allora avanti: — Sire, — dicendo, — io v’ addimando in cortesia, che vi piaccia di giostrare meco una fiata, perchè io volentieri proverrei vostra prodezza —.”⁶⁴⁹

Thus, the protagonist immediately recognises his host by his name to be the best knight of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’, whom he would preferably at once engage in a duel. Sigurans’ magical old age of 170 years does not appear to be an impediment according to the narrative logic of the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, as he answers his young counterpart’s request by saying: “[...] — che di queste parole io mi foe grande meraviglia; però che io non credo che sia cavaliere nella Tavola, che non m’ abbia provato.”⁶⁵⁰. However, he declares himself willing to engage his young contender in combat once the latter has told him his name. As soon as Sigurans hears who is standing before him, he reacts as follows:

“E quando messer Sigurans intese che questi era lo giovane Tristano, di cui si alta fama era già per lo mondo, si disse allora a Tristano: — Cavaliere, io vi dico, che voi non avete la metade voglia di giostrare con meco, che io ò di giostrare con voi, per sapere se voi siete così fine giostatore come fue lo vostro padre, lo re Meliadus; chè Lancilotto ò io provato più e più fiata —
.”⁶⁵¹

With this, the two knights’ respect for each other is underlined in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, although the age gap is very great; one of them stands for the best representative of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ and the other as the best knight of the ‘Tavola Nuova’. Similar to the situation involving Carados, Lancilotto is deemed defeatable by this outstanding representative of the ‘Tavola Vecchia’ in a short remark. In the following, the duel between Tristano and Sigurans is described, after the latter has armed himself:

“E allo scontrare ched egli si fanno, si dierono due sì grandi colpi, che le loro lance si briciano in pezzi; e poi, gli cavalieri si trafierono de’ petti e di visaggi per tale e si fatta forza, che amendue andarono alla terra con loro cavagli; e lo cavallo di messer Sigurans subitamente si morie; e gli cavalieri amendue stettero grande pezza storditi, e stetter per un’ ora. E Tristano si lieva prima, e prende messer Sigurans per la mano e fàllo rilevare, dicendo: —Cavaliere, or come vi sentite voi? — Ed egli giura che già mai a sua vita, uno sì grande colpo non avea ricevuto. E Tristano dice che altrettale gli era incontrato a lui.”⁶⁵²

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 414 (chapter CV).

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁵¹ Ibid.

⁶⁵² Ibid., p. 414f. (chapter CV).

In this manner, Tristano's victory is only hinted at, apart from the nuance that the protagonist is the first to stand and then helps Sigurans, whose horse did not survive the encounter, get to his feet. Only Sigurans' next action really makes the protagonist's achievement clearer. He asks Tristano for a little break and to lend him his horse so that he could also face Lancialotto. During the joust with Lancialotto, the following event is then described:

“Ma messer Siguras abbattè Lancialotto, e appresso rendè a Tristano suo cavallo, e molto gli priega ched e' si vadano a riposarsi al suo castello: ma Lancialotto suo invito non volle ricevere, perchè uno poco era aontato. E allora si partono di quindi [...]”⁶⁵³

Accordingly, the protagonist's abilities as a knight, even outstripping Sigurans', are conclusively made clear by the victory of the best knight of the 'Tavola Vecchia' over Lancialotto, who himself is deemed to be the most outstanding representative of the 'Tavola Nuova' with the exception of Tristano, at least until Galasso enters the narrative. In a further backwards reference in chapter CXI when Tristano and Lancialotto are engaged in the quest for the Holy Grail, Sigurans' subsequent fate is illuminated:

“[...] che cavalcando messer Tristano e messer Lancialotto più e più giorni senza altro pensiero di peccato, eglino andarono pella valle Bruna tanto a dentro, che si ritrovarono a piè della grande montagna di Rôcca Forte; e trovarono sì come messer Sigurans lo Bruno era già trapassato di questa vita, e credeasi per alcuno ch' egli fussi morto pella caduta ch' egli fecie quando giostrò con Tristano.”⁶⁵⁴

With the message of Sigurans' death and the rumour of the cause of his death, the protagonist's fighting prowess is once more underlined in the 'Tavola Ritonda', and his superiority, even to the members of the 'Tavola Vecchia', is established. In addition, Tristano's duel against Sigurans marks the high point of the competition between the best knight of the 'Tavola Nuova' and the best one of the 'Tavola Vecchia' according to the narrative structure in chapter CV and thus is reached in time before the quest for the Holy Grail begins. The rivalry is decided at the same time in favour of Tristano and therefore the 'New Round Table'. As addressed in the introduction in chapter 1, the depiction in the 'Tavola Ritonda' intentionally reverses the portrayal in Rustichello's source material, which had favoured the 'Tavola Vecchia' in the direct confrontation of the two Round Tables. Thus, the 'Tavola Nuova' and the

⁶⁵³ Ibid., p. 415 (chapter CV).

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 436 (chapter CXI).

protagonist Tristano, in particular, are given precedence. This is unsurprising when considering the entire orientation of the narrative, which focusses on the main character, in the 'Tavola Ritonda'. Similarly, Marie-José Heijkant states in this regard:

“La *Tavola Ritonda* capovolge il paradigma esemplare esaltato da Rustichello, poiché alla generazione dei padri preferisce quella dei figli, di cui quattro cavalieri sono menzionati nel prologo. Galasso è la figura emblematica della *chevalerie «celestielle»*, che compirà l'Inchiesta del Graal, realizzando l'alleanza mistica fra Dio e cavalleria. A lui si congiungono i maggiori rappresentanti della *chevalerie terrienne*: Lancillotto, Palamides, già convertito al cristianesimo, e Tristano, che trionferà sui Vecchi Cavalieri.”⁶⁵⁵

In principle, Marie-José Heijkant is correct in asserting that the sons of the knights of the Round Table surpass their fathers in the 'Tavola Ritonda' in accordance with the diachronic generational term. Meanwhile, it is only with great difficulty that both of the Round Tables can be divided regarding the synchronic generational term, if not impossible unless a broader and rough definition is used, due to at least four different factions among the age groups ascertainable among the 'Tavola Vecchia' and the 'Tavola Nuova', as shown here in 4.2. An added difficulty in this regard is the relatively inconsistent arrangement and transparency of the birth cohorts depicted, if they are at all, in some cases, mentioned in the 'Tavola Ritonda'. Thus, one can only speak of a generational location with great caveats. Furthermore, multiple unclear age cohorts of knights come into play, some of which belong to Uter's 'Tavola Vecchia' and a part stays loyal to the 'Tavola Vecchia' after the transition of power, whereas others from their ranks, such as Bando of Benoich and Bordo of Gaules later switch to the 'Tavola Nuova' according to the text's depiction. This prevents a straightforward assessment without constraints of the generational connections based on mutual fate providing a bonding experience. With a very wide time frame for 'similar birth cohorts', however, a generational location for the 'Tavola Vecchia' and the 'Tavola Nuova' is at least possible. As a result, there exists a generational link on the grounds of a similar fate for the majority of knights in the respective groups. In addition, the 'Tavola Vecchia' as well as the 'Tavola Nuova' could well be seen as generational units in a broader sense. For the most part, their participants live in unison with the norms of the 'cavalieri erranti' and the predetermined alignment of their respective 'predecessor-Tavole', reacting to and shaping the ›Arthurian world‹. In conclusion, the synchronic generational term can only be applied to the 'Tavola Ritonda' in a wider sense and with caveats.

⁶⁵⁵ Heijkant 1997, p. 10f.

In any event, there is a definite generational split between the established members of the 'Tavola Vecchia', who never turn their backs on it, and the 'later born' representatives of the 'Tavola Nuova', to which Tristano belongs. As the text shows, the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' places great emphasis on demonstrative signs concerning the dominance of one group over the other. The changing 'links' between the 'Old and New Round Table' can be seen with their transition to the 'Tavola Nuova', in the context of this general division, as then included in the latter one, although the main focus still remains on the 'later borns'. Meliadus is an exception, having tied himself as a friend and relative to Artù, and is always called 'lo re Meliadus di Leonis' and Tristano's father by the members of the 'Tavola Vecchia'; as a result, the impression is created that he still feels he belongs to them⁶⁵⁶. The 'regular' members of the 'Tavola Nuova', not born at a later date, including Artù, also possess an important role. In a comparison of importance between the two Round Tables, however, they do not occupy as critical a role as the 'later borns' within their own ranks.

Without distinguishing between these exact categories, Emanuele Trevi also notes in regard to the division into 'Tavola Vecchia' and 'Tavola Nuova' in the 'Tavola Ritonda' in contrast to, but also in debt to, Rustichello's source:

“Con Rustichello, si afferma nella narrativa arturiana d'origine italiana un'attenzione particolare rivolta ai cavalieri della Tavola Vecchia di Uter Pendragon, padre di Artù, attenzione nella quale già il Gardner riconosceva «una caratteristica peculiare al trattamento della leggenda arturiana in Italia». Come dimostra la prima sezione (2-39) del romanzo (di probabile invenzione rustichelliana), il confronto fra le due Tavole, risolto a favore di quella più antica, si gioca sul terreno del valore cavalleresco, la cui manifestazione più compiuta viene spostata ulteriormente indietro nel tempo, dai giorni di Artù a quelli di Uter. Questo interesse per la Tavola Vecchia sarà condiviso anche dall'autore della *Tavola Ritonda*, come dimostrano il Prologo e le prime avventure. Ma se la *Tavola* risulta in più punti debitrice della compilazione rustichelliana, questo rapporto va inquadrato in un ben più ampio panorama letterario [...]”⁶⁵⁷

Next to the prologue and “first adventures”, however, Emanuele Trevi does mention that the entire 'Tavola Ritonda' contains references to the 'Tavola Vecchia', most notably up until the first Grail experience and the subsequent quest for the Holy Grail, encounters with the 'Old Round Table', mainly by Tristano, as well as brief allusions. During every encounter with knights from the 'Tavola Vecchia', the protagonist proves himself to be dominant. At the same time, the supremacy of the 'New Round Table' is underpinned in comparison to the

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. in this regard the cited example in the aforementioned study: Polidori 1864, p. 322 (chapter LXXXVI) and p. 414 (chapter CV).

⁶⁵⁷ Trevi 1999, p. 16.

'Old Round Table'. The competition's climax is reached when a duel ensues in chapter CV between the best fighter of the 'Tavola Vecchia' and Tristano. As the result of this encounter can undoubtedly be deemed a victory for the protagonist, and with that the primacy of the 'Tavola Nuova' is definitely established. Three chapters later, the emergence of the immaculate Grail knight initiates the quest for the Holy Grail in chapter CVIII. As has been previously shown, he can be ascribed to the 'later borns' within the 'New Round Table' and is the last knight to become a member. Thus, the protagonist and Galasso are in the same age cohort, although the latter is the son of Lancialotto, who is also in this category. In all likelihood, Galasso's completeness, conceived as such in the source material, must initially have been the largest problem in his own interpretation of the 'matière de Bretagne' faced by the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda', whose intention and grand scheme it was to place Tristano at the centre of the narrative and to portray him as the perfect protagonist, proving himself to be the perfect knight. As shown in 4.1.2.3.6, he solves this in very skilful fashion by providing a good reason for a division into 'chevalerie celestielle' and 'chevalerie terrienne'. In this way, he can present his protagonist as the best 'worldly' knight, who earned his skills through his own talent and is in no way inferior to the Grail knight Galasso, who received his from God for ›free‹. Thus, Tristano is the representative of the 'Tavola Nuova' who confirms the supremacy of his Round Table through acknowledged victories over his opponents, including those from the 'Tavola Vecchia', and at the same time remains the best worldly knight who is not even surpassed by Galasso, a member of the same age cohort, due to the merits of his own achievements.

In the following, a brief overview will provide a comparison with two other, possibly contrasting, sources used by the author of the 'Tavola Ritonda' for his own work. It will be analysed to which degree certain differences, and if applicable also similarities, exist within this cyclical Tristan and Arthurian romance due to the added feature of the generational focus. This is intended to provide as much as possible a comprehensive impression regarding the roots in or likely influences exerted by other Tristan versions on the generational theme so strongly present and inwrought in the 'Tavola Ritonda'.

5. Brief Comparative Overview with Additional Tristan Texts Serving as Source Material for the 'Tavola Ritonda': V I of 'Tristan en prose' and 'Tristan' by Thomas d'Angleterre

Among the sources, two Tristan versions which differ as much as possible from each other will be selected: for one, the prose work 'Tristan en prose' in its V I, considered to be the main source of the 'Tavola Ritonda'⁶⁵⁸. On the other hand, the verse romance 'Tristan' by Thomas d'Angleterre, providing the source for several passages and notable key details for the 'Tavola Ritonda', as addressed in 4.1 and especially in 4.1.3⁶⁵⁹. As Thomas' 'Tristan' only survives in a fragmentary state, statements regarding certain passages in his version which have not survived, even with the additional constriction of focussing on content and the broader structure, will inevitably remain in the realm of speculation. Thus, using this Tristan version is not without its problems. Although we could include 'Tristan' by Gottfried von Straßburg, for which Thomas in all likelihood served as the main source, it has been established in recent studies that this author also deviates from his source and creates his very own interpretation of the subject matter as soon as it is deemed necessary in serving to portray his intended 'sens'. In her study, Gesa Bonath, who extensively dealt with Thomas' version, notes in this regard:

“Gottfrieds Bearbeitung, nach allgemeiner Ansicht um 1210 entstanden, ist nicht beendet. Sie bricht ab mit Tristans Überlegungen, ob er Isolt Weißhand heiraten solle oder nicht. [...] [Exactly at the point at which the great majority of Thomas' text has survived only as fragments.] Das ist eine sehr schmale gemeinsame Textbasis. [...] So sicher es ist, daß Gottfried bestimmte Teile freier und andere in sehr engem Anschluß an die Vorlage gestaltete, so unsicher ist das Verhältnis seines Textes zu dem des Thomas dort, wo er und die Saga ['Tristrans Saga ok Ísondar' by Brother Robert is meant here] differieren. Gerade an den Stellen, wo Bruder Robert nachweislich kürzt, ist oft bei Gottfried eine freiere, und das heißt auch erweiternde, Behandlung der Vorlage zu vermuten. [...] Handlungsmomente, die Gottfried hat und die bei Bruder Robert fehlen, können immer schon bei Thomas vorhanden gewesen sein.“⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. also the more detailed observations in 1 in the introduction to 'The Dissemination of the 'matière de Bretagne' in Italy: a Short Overview'.

⁶⁵⁹ Regarding the comparative texts, it was a conscious decision to favour Thomas' version over Bérout's and it was necessary, because too many comparisons would have extended this study to a great degree and would also have led further away from the original focus at hand. Although Bérout's 'Trist(r)an' serves in part as a source for the 'Tavola Ritonda', it is nonetheless also a fragment. Furthermore, the 'Tavola Ritonda' conveys the impression of orienting itself more towards Thomas than Bérout.

⁶⁶⁰ Bonath 1985, p. 14.

In addition, the new fragment of Carlisle found in 1995, consisting of a part of the love potion episode, the couple's arrival in Cornwall and the exchange of women during the wedding night in 154 verses, could only clarify the following⁶⁶¹:

“Das neue Fragment zeigt, daß Bédier irrte und daß Gottfried hier das Ursprüngliche im Rückgriff auf Eilhart wiederhergestellt hat. Hier stößt man auch handlungsmäßig auf die Grenze von Gottfrieds Quellentreue. Sein kritisches Vergleichen der Versionen fällt keineswegs bedingungslos immer zu Thomas' Gunsten aus.“⁶⁶²

Gesa Bonath made a similar assessment in 1985, before the discovery of the Carlisle fragment, by noting in regard to Gottfried's poetry:

“Gottfried hat [...] ein Werk von einer ganz andersartigen ästhetischen Qualität geschaffen, das auch bei engster Abhängigkeit von der Vorlage durch und durch individuell geprägt und damit letztlich von ihr unabhängig ist.“⁶⁶³

Including in the Carlisle fragment and therefore a part of the love potion scene, Walter Haug moreover notes in addition to the previous appraisal:

“Wie immer dem aber sei, entscheidend ist, daß Gottfried an dieser zentralen Stelle nicht nur frei von der Vorlage, sondern doch wohl mit aller Deutlichkeit gegen sie sein Liebeskonzept entwickelt. Dabei darf man die Perspektive, die Gottfried mit der Freude-Leid-Thematik eröffnet, nicht zu flach nehmen [...].“⁶⁶⁴

For this reason, academics now prefer a different prose version, despite reservations, for a reconstruction of Thomas' version, as it appears to be the closest approximation of Thomas' original. It is the Old Norse 'Tristrams Saga ok Ísondar' by Brother Robert, in regard to which Gesa Bonath states:

“Diese altnordische Prosaversion des Thomas-Textes, im Jahre 1226 durch einen Bruder Robert für den norwegischen König Haakon Haakonsson (1217-1263) angefertigt, ist nach Bédier (I,

⁶⁶¹ Cf. in this regard: Haug, Walter: Gottfrieds von Straßburg Verhältnis zu Thomas von England im Licht des neu aufgefundenen 'Tristan'-Fragments von Carlisle. (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen. Mededelingen van de Afdeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel 62 no. 4. Gehouden op 14 september 1998). Amsterdam 1999; Benskin, Michael/ Hunt, Tony/ Short, Ian: Un nouveau fragment du Tristan de Thomas. In: Romania 113 (1995), p. 289-319.

⁶⁶² Haug 1999, p. 13f.

⁶⁶³ Bonath 1985, p. 14f.

⁶⁶⁴ Haug 1999, p. 15.

S.11) der ›in jeder Hinsicht treueste Repräsentant, den wir von dem Gedicht des Thomas haben‹. Im Vergleich zu den anderen Bearbeitungen stimmt diese Aussage; man darf daraus nur nicht ableiten, daß die Saga ein wirklich guter Repräsentant des Thomas-Textes wäre. Sie ist vollständig nur in einer Papier-Hs. des 17. Jh.s erhalten; außerdem existiert noch ein Pergament-Doppelblatt aus dem 15. Jh. Nach Kölbing [an acknowledged translator of the 'Tristrans Saga'] ist der Text der Papier-Hs. gegenüber dem des Fragments gekürzt, ›allerdings nicht so sehr dem sinne, als dem wortlaute nach‹ (S.3f.). Die Überlieferung des altnordischen Textes ist also nicht gerade hervorragend, und es kann sein, daß Bruder Roberts Version insgesamt besser war, als sie in der sehr späten Abschrift erscheint. Nach dem Bild, das sich aus dieser von seiner Arbeitsweise gewinnen läßt, hat Bruder Robert den afz. Text wohl partienweise ziemlich wortgetreu wiedergegeben, zum Teil aber erheblich und nicht selten sinnentstellend gekürzt [...].⁶⁶⁵

Thus, it becomes apparent that even the 'Tristrans Saga' cannot provide an absolute and undoubtable reconstruction of the missing parts of Thomas' version. Gesa Bonath clarifies this by elucidating:

“Im ganzen steht Bruder Robert dem Roman des Thomas verständnislos gegenüber. Auch dort, wo er ziemlich genau übersetzt, finden sich immer wieder kleine Verschiebungen und Ungenauigkeiten, in denen sich seine Unempfindlichkeit gegenüber den Qualitäten des Originals erweist. Relativ gesehen mag die Saga der ›treueste Repräsentant‹ des Thomas-Textes sein, dennoch ist sie nicht treu.”⁶⁶⁶

Thus, it is revealed how difficult it is to gain an approximation of those of Thomas' passages which have not survived as fragments in a reasonably plausible manner. As Gesa Bonath has, however, judiciously dealt with this problem in-depth for her translation, including a juxtaposition of the Old French text passages in accordance with Bédier's edition, and was able to convincingly present her decisions, her edition is used as a reference point for a brief comparative overview, with the inclusion of the edited Carlisle fragment by Michael Benskin, Tony Hunt, and Ian Short as 'background knowledge'. She points to the following in regard to the missing passages among the surviving fragments for her edition: “Die Textlücken zwischen den Fragmenten habe ich nicht durch eine Übersetzung der Rekonstruktion Bédiers, sondern durch den Text der Saga in der Übersetzung Kölbing's überbrückt.”⁶⁶⁷

Apart from the fact that Thomas' 'Tristan' is a verse romance and the 'Tristan en prose' is a prose text, these two sources of the 'Tavola Ritonda' also differ in their inclusion of the

⁶⁶⁵ Bonath 1985, p. 12f.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

Arthurian circle in their narratives. Thus, one may generally state in regard to this aspect in the respective versions: although the protagonist first occurs in the Old French 'Tristan en prose' as a member of the Arthurian circle, and the latter is consequently also mentioned without a doubt, there is no division between an 'Old' and a 'New Round Table' as is the case in some of the later Italian Tristan romances. In the 'Tristan' by Thomas d'Angleterre, created somewhere between 1170 and 1200, in all likelihood known to the anonymous author of the 'Tristan en prose' as a source, the community of the Round Table is not mentioned at all, at least not in the surviving fragments.⁶⁶⁸ Due to this finding, a closer localisation of our focus is made possible in regard to the respective versions. Following these propositions, we are now able to immediately turn towards the brief comparative overview and therefore the question whether, and if so to which degree, a diachronic generational theme is already inscribed into these two sources of the 'Tavola Ritonda'.

In Thomas' 'Tristan', in contrast to the 'Tavola Ritonda', Rivalen of Ermenie, the later father of the protagonist, is not the brother of Marke of Cornwall but a ruler, not related to him, who pays a visit to his court⁶⁶⁹. Furthermore, Marke is not only the King of Cornwall but also of England, as it appears that Thomas has replaced Arthur with him as the influential ruler. A relational connection only occurs between Rivalen and the king due to Marke's sister Blanche-flor, who secretly falls in love with Rivalen and vice versa. In Thomas' version, Tristan is additionally the child of a partly illegitimate connection between Blanche-flor and Rivalen, as the latter does not dare openly tout Marke for his sister's hand but rather covertly takes her with him to his domain after impregnating her in order to defend against an invading Breton duke. Having arrived there and without obtaining her brother's permission, Rivalen apparently marries Blanche-flor in public and subsequently engages in a military campaign against the invader, during which he dies. After news of Rivalen's death have reached her and as a result induce her labour pains, Blanche-flor gives birth to the protagonist and then dies herself.⁶⁷⁰ Therefore, one can determine the following large difference between this source and the 'Tavola Ritonda' in this textual passage regarding the relational connections and Tristan's

⁶⁶⁸ Regarding these observations, see chapter 1, the introduction to this study. Regarding the absence of the Arthurian community in particular in Thomas' version, cf. the remarks in footnote 18. Regarding the difficult and continually discussed problem of dating Thomas' 'Tristan', cf. in particular: Bonath 1985, p. 16ff.; Stein 2001, p. 32; Grimm 2006, p. 29ff.

⁶⁶⁹ Note: For Thomas' 'Tristan' the names in accordance with Gesa Bonath's edition will subsequently be used for the overview comparison.

Regarding the 'Tavola Ritonda' and Thomas' 'Tristan', there are multiple passages in which there are conspicuous differences between well known characters' names, as is the case in this passage: Thomas chooses for Tristano's parents the names Rivalen und Blanche-flor, in the 'Tristan en prose' they are called Elyabel and Meliadus, which are accordingly chosen for the 'Tavola Ritonda' as Eliabella and Meliadus. Thus, there is a discernible divergence between the verse romance and the prose versions.

⁶⁷⁰ Cf. in this regard Bonath 1985, p. 35f.

birth: in Thomas' version, the protagonist is merely related to his uncle Marke, King of Cornwall and England, on his mother's side. Furthermore, he originates from a union which may be construed by a strict interpretation on the recipient's side as illegitimate, thereby moving him more in the direction of the term of ›bastard‹, used in the Middle Ages for children born out of wedlock and possessing a rather negative connotation. As a result, his claim to the throne of Cornwall and possibly England is thus weaker and there is a greater dependence, especially in this regard, on his uncle who has so far remained childless. Also, he is portrayed at the time of his birth as a complete orphan. It is apparent in this narrative passage, therefore, that the emphasis is placed more on his parents' prefiguring love, dealing less with dynastic orientation and more with the power of love between Rivalen and Blanche-flor, even if that love is premarital or not quite legitimate.

In contrast, the 'Tristan en prose' places an ancestral history, much more detailed than in the 'Tavola Ritonda' which focusses more on the relevant parts, before the connection between Tristan's parents is made. Thus, § 1-222 deal with this ancestral history before addressing Elyabel and Meliadus, Tristan's future parents⁶⁷¹. In § 222, it is said:

“Li rois qui fu apelez Felix ot deux filz et quatre filles. Li uns des filz fu apelez Mars en batesme, por ce que au mardi fu nez et ou mois de marz. Li rois Felix morut, et sa feme autresi ; mes quant il gisoit / dou mal de la mort, il fist coroner son fil Marc dou reume de Cornoaille. Et cil de Cornoaille s'en tindrent a mout bien païé quant il l'orent a seignor.”⁶⁷²

Immediately following that, § 223 adds the wedding between Elyabel and Meliadus by stating:

“Quant il fu coronez en tel maniere, il fist tant que li rois de Leonois, bons chevaliers et preuzdons vers Dieu et vers le monde, prist a feme une de ses serours, l'ainznee, qui estoit apelee Elyabel ; et li rois estoit apelez Meliadus. Cele Eliabel, sans faille, estoit de trop merueilleuse biauté. Li rois l'ama de si grant amor, qu'il n'ama onques tant ne soi ne autrui. Si estoient endui mout dolent de ce que Diex ne lor envoioit hoir. Que vos diroie je ? Grant piece furent ensemble ençois que la roïne engroissast. Et quant ele fu grosse, et cil de Leonois le sorent, il en firent mout grant joie.”⁶⁷³

⁶⁷¹ Renée L. Curtis' edition is used as a reference point for the 'Tristan en prose', as well as for direct quotes. For a more detailed explanation of this, see footnote 449.

⁶⁷² Curtis 1963, p. 124 (§ 222).

⁶⁷³ Ibid. (§ 223).

In this manner, the protagonist's relational connection to Marc of Cornwall is only established on his mother's side in the 'Tristan en prose', in accordance with Thomas' version and in contrast to the 'Tavola Ritonda'. Tristan's mother, here called Elyabel, is the oldest of Marc's four sisters. Next to these, there is another brother who is not, however, Meliadus of Leonois, but Pernehan, as we learn later on. Instead, Meliadus marries Elyabel, Marc's sister, and thus once more creates a close relational connection between the royal houses of Cornwall and Leonois, which had been united several generations prior to that for the first time according to the ancestral history and after which a separation had occurred⁶⁷⁴. In contrast to Thomas' depiction and in unison with the 'Tavola Ritonda', the protagonist in the 'Tristan en prose' is sired and given birth to during the marriage of Meliadus and Elyabel – and even after a certain period of waiting, as the depiction clearly shows. As a result, Tristan's claim to the throne of Cornwall as Marc's successor is not as clearly justified by the line of succession as in the 'Tavola Ritonda', but he undoubtedly originates from his parents' wholly legitimate relationship, again in analogy to the aforementioned. Also in accordance with the description in the 'Tavola Ritonda', Meliadus then rides off for a spot of hunting before Tristan's birth, and not to engage in a military campaign as with Thomas. Furthermore, the 'Tavola Ritonda' also complies with the 'Tristan en prose' as its main source in the fact that both texts relate of Meliadus' disappearance and the search for him in the spacious woods by the pregnant Elyabel and only one lady-in-waiting.⁶⁷⁵ There, she subsequently gives birth to Tristan and dies after having named her son. The lady-in-waiting and the new-born are also discovered in the 'Tristan en prose' by two knights, who hope to seize power in Leonois and to liquidate the heir after recognising the Queen's death and the fact that her husband is still nowhere to be found. Similar to the 'Tavola Ritonda', however, the lady-in-waiting is able to save the new-born's life by pleading with the knights. With Merlin's intervention, the discovery and return of Meliadus and his heir to the royal court are effected.⁶⁷⁶ In their overall narrative structure, the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tavola Ritonda' are more similar in this passage than the 'Tristan en prose' and Thomas' version. In details, however, they differ. An analysis of each of these differences would necessitate a separate study and thus a summary must suffice at this point. In neither the 'Tristan en prose' nor in the 'Tavola Ritonda' is the protagonist, as is the case in Thomas' version, depicted as a complete orphan at birth. In turn, the 'Tristan en prose' and Thomas' 'Tristan' have in common that the protagonist is only directly related to his uncle Marc on his mother's side, whereas the 'Tavola Ritonda' deviates from both texts and

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. in this regard the straightforward genealogy of Tristano's ancestors by Renée L. Curtis: *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 124f. (§ 224-228).

⁶⁷⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 125-129 (§ 228-239).

strengthens this genealogical connection as well as the associated claim in favour of the main character by presenting Meliadus, the first born, and Marco, the second born, as brothers. In this way, Tristano is connected in the 'Tavola Ritonda' on his father's side to Marco as the son of the latter's older brother and at the same time on his mother's side to an equally noble ancestry by being directly related to Artù and the royal house of Benoich.

In both the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tavola Ritonda', the protagonist still possesses a father in his first years of life, although the latter obtains a new wife after Tristan's mother, Elyabel, dies⁶⁷⁷. In 4.1.1.2 in footnote 252, the differences between the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tavola Ritonda' were already shown in regard to the course of events in the episode involving the assassination attempts by Tristan's stepmother⁶⁷⁸. In all likelihood, this episode is not even part of Thomas' verse romance: the young heir of Ermenie instead has to fear external enemies, rulers who are not related to him, such as the Breton duke who was already his father's enemy. For this reason, he is probably brought up incognito as the son of marshal Roald in Thomas' depiction, until he arrives at his uncle Marke's court by chance during a kidnap.⁶⁷⁹ Meanwhile, it is probably common to all three versions that Gorvenal/Governale features as a character who trains the protagonist and counts as one of his confidants⁶⁸⁰. Compared to Thomas, it is only the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tavola Ritonda' that portray the murder of Perna/Pernehan, although even then there are recognisable and notable differences between the two texts: in the 'Tristan en prose' Perna/Pernehan is presented as Marc's only brother, who disagrees with Marc's decision to comply with the Irish tributary demands, not so much due to the potential of taking over as ruler but rather in accordance with his feelings concerning the proper conduct, of how a king ought to act. Consequently, he incites his brother's wrath. Accordingly, it is stated in the 'Tristan en prose':

⁶⁷⁷ Cf. in this regard: Ibid., p. 131 (§ 244/ 245); Polidori 1864, p. 48 (chapter XIII).

⁶⁷⁸ A further remark concerning the assassination attempts by the protagonist's stepmother on his life in the 'Tristan en prose': Although it transpires that the Queen has killed her own son already after the first attempt – this is reversed in the 'Tavola Ritonda' and only happens during the second attempt – the text offers a psychologically well thought out reason for the Queen to continue with her murderous plans. She transfers the motives for killing her son unto Tristan, which would have otherwise been sure to have resulted in self-hatred, and thus increases her hatred for Tristano even further. In the 'Tristan en prose', this is related as follows: "Si dist a soi meïsmes [= the stepmother/ Queen] que ores est ele bien honie dou tot quant ele meïsmes a son fils ocis, et si a failli de ce qu'ele cuidoit faire. Mout est dolente et triste de ceste aventure ; et quant ele voit Tristan aler par devant li, et il li sovient de son enfant, tot son duel et tote s'ire retourne sor Tristan. Por li a ele, ce li est avis, son enfant perdu. Por li a ele tot ce corroz qu'ele a. Si s'en vengera, s'ele puet en nule manière. En tel manière et par tel achoison com je vos cont enprist la roïne de Leonois sor Tristan si grant ire et si grant haine qu'ele dit qu'ele veust mieuz morir et estre honie qu'ele ne le face a dolor morir. Si se porchace de sa mort quanqu'ele puet." Ibid., p. 133 (§ 250).

⁶⁷⁹ Cf. in this regard Bonath 1985, p. 36f.

⁶⁸⁰ Cf. regarding this finding: Polidori 1864, p. 44-48 (chapter XIII); Curtis 1963, p. 127ff. (§ 234-239); Bonath 1985, p. 36ff.

“Et Pernehan parole autre foiz, et dit : «Se vos ne faites come rois, vos n’iestes pas dignes de porter corone ; et se vos la portez, et ne faites oevres de roi, vos iestes plus honiz que je porroie dire. Or gardez que vos ferez.» Li rois se test, qui bien set que ses freres li a dit la verité. Et li mesaige dient au roi Marc : «Sire, avrons nos nostre treü ? Itant nos dites !» «Oïl, voirement le sachez vos,» fait li rois. Lors comande li rois que de set anz lor soit renduz li treüz, car tant avoit ja passé de terme qu’il n’en avoient riens demandé ; et il si fu sanz faille. Et sachiez que li sors cheï sor une des serors le roi Marc, qui estoit encores pucele, si qu’ele fu envoiee en treü en Yllande avec les autres demo/iseles [sic], dont assez i avoit. Quant Pernehan vit que sa seror aloit en estrange terre en servaige, il dist au roi Marc : «Vos nos avez honiz par vostre mauvestié. Se cest reaume vos remenoit longuement, encores i feriez vos pis. Mes il ne vos remandra mie, car je le vos osterai des mains.» Li rois Mars ot paor et dotance de ceste parole, car il savoit que ses freres estoit bons chevaliers, et tant amez de ces de Cornoaille que tost li poïst grever, s’il vosist. Et por ce se pensa il que s’il onques venoit en point de li ocirre [...].”⁶⁸¹

However, Perna is presented as the third brother in the sibling constellation ‘Meliadus, Marco and Perna’ in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. Therein, he definitely challenges Marco, the second born, in order to dispute the royal succession. The reason provided for his actions is his status as a third born, who has so far inherited nothing, and his wish to obtain the possessions of his older brother, whom he deems to be vulnerable. There is no mention in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, however, of any sister, who is to be handed over to Ireland as tribute and whom Perna wishes to save from that fate.⁶⁸² Once more, the genealogical connections in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ are observable at this point even before the encounter between the protagonist and his uncle is especially emphasised or made more conflict-ridden, as was also shown in 4.1. While Thomas’ version presents Tristan’s father as most likely possessing no siblings, having only to defend his domain against external aggressive forces, the ‘Tristan en prose’ features a pair of brothers, Marc and Pernehan, who come into conflict over the question of the best way of ruling Cornwall. Finally, the rivalry is clearly presented as stemming from disputes over succession between Marco and Perna in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, although they are only described as second and third borns, as Meliadus is their almost faultless first born brother.

After the stepmother’s assassination attempts, the protagonist himself travels to the court of Faramon/Fieramonte in Gaules, after having lost his father in very early years in the ‘Tristan en prose’⁶⁸³, in order to complete his knighthood on Gorvenal’s/Governale’s advice and by

⁶⁸¹ Curtis 1963, p. 130 (§ 241/242).

⁶⁸² Cf. 4.1.1.1 and Polidori 1864, p. 11 (chapter IV).

⁶⁸³ In the passage after the Queen’s first assassination attempt in the ‘Tristan en prose’, it is related that Tristan is in his eighth year of life: cf. Curtis 1963, p. 133 (§ 251).

his own consent both in the 'Tavola Ritonda' and the 'Tristan en prose'⁶⁸⁴. Regarding the differences apparent from a comparison of the details in both texts, see the findings in 4.1.1.2, and footnote 256 in particular. Suffice it to say at this point that only in the 'Tristan en prose' does Marc fear his nephew and wish him dead before their first encounter due to prophecies⁶⁸⁵.

In Thomas' version, however, there is probably no interlude at the court in Gaules. In addition, the protagonist does not leave his home by his own will but rather is kidnapped and is by chance let free within his uncle's domain. Furthermore, his education has progressed to the point that Marke is so impressed by his abilities as to promote him at court, while both do not know who their respective opposite is, as the protagonist does not know his full identity at this point and the king, similarly, possesses no information concerning his relative. Only in the following does marshal Roald, Tristan's foster-father, reach Marke's court in search of his charge. Having arrived, he meets Tristan again, provides both uncle and nephew with information about each other and thereby reveals the protagonist's true identity. Furthermore, Tristan probably received his accolade well before his fight with Morholt in Thomas' version, as he receives it in Cornwall, before he can accept his father's inheritance, defend it against the Breton duke and subsequently return to Marke's court.⁶⁸⁶ The interludes at the court of Gaules, and therefore the Belides/Bellices episode, in all probability are not present with Thomas. In the 'Tristan en prose', however, they are already existent and are later adopted by the 'Tavola Ritonda', although there are numerous differences in the details, which cannot be dealt with here so as not to lose oneself in particulars and thus digress from the brief comparative overview intended at this point⁶⁸⁷. In both texts, it serves to stress the chivalric training and as a delaying moment before the meeting between Tristan and his uncle. Similarly, a first encounter between the protagonist and Morholt is included, in all likelihood missing in Thomas' version. However, Tristan's meeting with Marke takes place without delay in Thomas' Text, before once more a temporary departure by the protagonist from his uncle's royal court is included and the fight with Morholt takes place. The main difference between Thomas' work and the two following versions may be briefly summarised in regard to the narrative passages leading up to the Morholt/Amoroldo duel as follows: in Thomas' version, the protagonist, a complete orphan since birth, does not know his true identity until his accolade and is

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 135-138 (§ 257-262); Polidori 1864, p. 52ff. (chapter XIII and XIV).

⁶⁸⁵ Cf. in this regard the following passage: "[...] et avoient apris par une devinerresse de Cornoaille que li oir de Norholt devoient estre ocis par le roi Melyadus, ou par home de son linaige. Et por ce estoient il ça venu, plus assez par le conseil le roi Marc que par autre chose ; car li rois Mars ne dotoit nul home autant com il faisoit Tristan." Curtis 1963, p. 136 (§ 257). Also cf. *Ibid.*, p. 136f. (§ 259/ 260).

⁶⁸⁶ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 36f.

⁶⁸⁷ Cf. in this regard: Curtis 1963, p. 138-146 (§ 263-285); Polidori 1864, p. 52-63 (chapters XIV-XVI).

therefore unable to develop a genealogical consciousness as his father's successor. Without wanting to, he is kidnapped and arrives by chance at his uncle's court. In the 'Tristan en prose' and in the 'Tavola Ritonda', however, the protagonist is first raised as heir by his father and can develop from the very beginning, due to being confronted by his ancestors' legacy, a consciousness for his heritage and descent. On Gorvenal's advice, he also consciously and purposefully decides to leave his home for a while in order to travel to Gaules for the perfection of his knighthood and then, once more voluntarily, himself seeks his uncle's court. In the 'Tristan en prose' as well as in the 'Tavola Ritonda', Tristan indeed knows his identity situated within the line of his ancestors' succession. The depiction of the protagonist as an extremely competent young aristocrat and prospective knight, whose identity remains hidden to the King of Cornwall, according to the respective depiction, either until shortly before (in Thomas' version) or until shortly after (in the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tavola Ritonda') the accolade, and who impresses Marke, ignorant of his nephew's identity, by his abilities alone, provides a rough conformance of all three works. This is justified in Thomas' version by Tristan's ignorance of his relatives and his inheritance; in the 'Tristan en prose' and the 'Tavola Ritonda', however, the heir of Leonois consciously decides not to reveal his identity so as not to receive any benefits due to this but instead on his own merit.⁶⁸⁸ Before the Morholt fight, Tristan's return to inherited territory and the claims regarding his possessions of them in the face of his Breton opponent are only described in Thomas' work at this stage in the narrative⁶⁸⁹. In the 'Tristan en prose', however, the depiction of revenge enacted by the protagonist immediately following the murder of his father is added in an anticipatory insertion⁶⁹⁰. This narrative is only again included in the 'Tavola Ritonda' after the Morholt fight and the subsequent trip to Ireland⁶⁹¹. An additional difference manifests itself by the fact that legitimacy of Tristan's birth is put into question by the hostile duke and that the protagonist has to defend himself against it in Thomas' version⁶⁹². By doing so, the danger from forces threatening the protagonist's position, especially by external power interests not necessarily tied to kinship, are well highlighted in Thomas' text. In contrast, Tristan never has to fear any doubts concerning his legitimacy as the direct successor and heir of Leonois in the 'Tristan en prose' or in the 'Tavola Ritonda', as the lawfulness of the connection between his parents and his birth, as first born, within their union is unequivocally underlined. While the Morholt fight immediately follows the accolade and the revelation of the protagonist's identity in front of his uncle

⁶⁸⁸ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 37; Curtis 1963, p. 146-150 (§ 285-295); Polidori 1864, p. 63-69 (chapter XVI-XVIII).

⁶⁸⁹ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 37.

⁶⁹⁰ Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 136 (§ 257).

⁶⁹¹ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 88ff. (chapter XXIV).

⁶⁹² Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 37.

in both the ‘Tristan en prose’ and the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Thomas’ work most likely features between the accolade and the Morholt fight an interlude after which the young knight, having safeguarded his father’s inheritance, returns to Marke’s court. When considering only the broader narrative structure, all three versions depict Tristan’s voluntary fight against Morholt in order to free Cornwall of its tributary obligations. Without paying too much attention to the details, such as the composition of tributary demands or the exact behaviour of the Irish demanders of tribute, this is most likely also the case when considering the poisoned wound inflicted by Morholt and the subsequent trip in order to heal it, during which the protagonist reaches, by chance, Ireland for the first time⁶⁹³. The weighing and emphasis in regard to the protagonist’s motives of embarking upon the expedition of freeing Cornwall of tributary demands, meanwhile, are a different matter in the respective versions. As was shown in chapter 4, especially in 4.1.1.4, for the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, Tristano intentionally joins the ranks of his ancestors as protector of their heritage and underlines this by a pointed remark, not to be repeated at this point. In similar fashion, if not quite so accentuated, the protagonist’s service for and connection to his ancestors is also addressed in the ‘Tristan en prose’, as he says there:

“Cil de Cornoaille sont honi a toz jorz, car il n’ont tant de hardement qu’il s’osent metre en champ por combatre encontre le Morholz. Ne sai por quoi je le vos celaroie, mestre : je vos di bien que se je fusse chevaliers, je ne lessasse en nule manière que je au Morholz ne me combatisse por cest treüaige deffendre. Et se a Dieu pleüst que je la victoire en eüsse, tot mon linaige i avroit honor, et s’en seroie plus prisiez tote ma vie.”⁶⁹⁴

In Thomas’ case, however, this reference to ancestry probably did not exist, as narrative logic would hardly allow for Tristan to flaunt his ancestry when it is not absolutely unquestionable and his legitimacy therefore uncertain. Instead, the protagonist in all likelihood declares himself ready to fight against Morholt by his own free will and without invoking the aforementioned in Thomas’ depiction. Special to Thomas’ version, though, is most likely the following promise made by his uncle to the protagonist at this point in the narrative: “[...] Marke verspricht ihm [Tristan is meant here] öffentlich, ihn im Falle seines Sieges zum Erben seines Reiches zu machen.”⁶⁹⁵. Such an open declaration of purpose by the king, of placing his nephew in the position of heir if he is successful in battle, is neither observable in the ‘Tristan en prose’ nor in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ in this narrative passage⁶⁹⁶. At this point, Thomas seems to

⁶⁹³ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 37f.; Curtis 1963, p. 147-158 (§ 287-312); Polidori 1864, p. 65-74 (chapters XVII-XX).

⁶⁹⁴ Curtis 1963, p. 148 (§ 290).

⁶⁹⁵ Bonath 1985, p. 38.

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 150-156 (§ 294-310); Polidori 1864, p. 68-73 (chapters XVIII-XIX).

move the newly-won and unhampered relational connection between uncle and nephew into the foreground and to characterise Marke in a more positive manner than this is the case in the ‘Tristan en prose’ and in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. Instead of doing this, the other two versions emphatically and consciously underline the protagonist’s inclusion into his ancestry, his genealogical line of succession and heritage, although next to this the relationship between Tristan and Marc is still portrayed as friendly and unburdened. With the knowledge that Marc was previously in the course of the narrative of the ‘Tristan en prose’ filled with fear of his nephew due to prophecies and wished him dead, the King of Cornwall’s sudden change of mood may appear somewhat strange to the recipient and in some respect constitutes a logical flaw⁶⁹⁷. Nevertheless, Marc expresses the following to his nephew before the Morholt fight:

“Et li vient ses oncles au devant, si li dit en plorant: «Niés, fait il, bele creature, flor de toz de-moisiar, por quoi t’iés tu si longuement celez envers moi ? Se je te coneüsse aussi bien com je fais orandroit, ja ceste bataille ne t’eüsse otroiee. Mieuz vossisse que Conoaille fust toz jorz en cuvertaige, car se tu iés ici morz, jamés n’avrai joie, et si serons / toz jorz mes pis mené que nos n’estiens devant.»”⁶⁹⁸

In the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, we also find a benevolent stance by the King of Cornwall in regard to Tristano, but there is no logical flaw as Marco only really begins to pay attention to his nephew and to notice him from this point in the narrative onwards⁶⁹⁹.

After the Morholt fight, it is conspicuous that the person in charge of healing his wounds is in all likelihood Isolt’s mother, the queen, in Thomas’ version, during the young knight’s fatal illness in Ireland⁷⁰⁰. In contrast to that, Yselt/Isotta herself is presented as the person tending to his poisoned wound and therefore decisively contributing to the protagonist’s complete recovery in the ‘Tristan en prose’ and also in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’⁷⁰¹. Similarly, there are notable differences between Thomas’ text and the other two works, such as in the accentuation of Tristan’s guidance of Isolt after his recovery in the first-mentioned version⁷⁰². In relative contrast to this, the young knight’s attention after his recovery is more geared towards participating in his first tourney and his extraordinary chivalric abilities, which he is able to prove once more, in the ‘Tristan en prose’ and in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’. At the same time, a gradually growing love for Yselt/Isotta, before the potion comes into play, is implied by Tristan’s jea-

⁶⁹⁷ Cf. in this regard footnote 685.

⁶⁹⁸ Curtis 1963, p. 152 (§ 298).

⁶⁹⁹ Cf. Polidori 1864, p. 67ff. (chapter XVIII).

⁷⁰⁰ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 38f.

⁷⁰¹ Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 158f. (§ 312-316); Polidori 1864, p. 74f. (chapter XX).

⁷⁰² Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 39.

lousy regarding Palamedes, who turns out to be a rival for the affection of the Irish princess and a competitor in the tourney. In regard to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, this was addressed in more detail in 4.1.3, and especially in 4.1.3.1. Meanwhile, the protagonist’s jealousy and growing love for Yselt is even more highlighted in the ‘Tristan en prose’, as it is remarked there:

“Tant regarde Palamedes Yselt que Tristanz s’en aperçoit, et bien connoist a son semblant qu’il l’aime de tot son cuer. Tristanz avoit mout avant regardee Yselt, et mout li plaisoit, mes son cuer n’i avoit pas mis dusqu’a l’amer granment. Et neporquant, puis qu’il vit que Palamedes i entendoit si merveilleusement qu’il dit ou il morra ou il l’avra, Tristanz redit a soi meïsmes que ja Palamedes por pooir qu’il ait ne l’avra. S’il est bons chevaliers, si soit ; il en a d’aussi bons par le monde. Et il meesmes, qui estoit bien gariz, dit qu’il fera autretant d’armes en un jor com fist devant hier Palamedes. Ensi entra en orguel et en bobant Tristanz por les amors ma dame Yselt. Il le regarde mout ireement por ce qu’il li est bien avis qu’il li soit destorbement et encombrement de s’amor.”⁷⁰³

By means of this depiction in the ‘Tristan en prose’, it is particularly emphasised in which way the knightly rivalry of the young heir of Leonois primarily sparks his love for the Irish princess before the love potion. In contrast to the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, there is no clear reciprocity on Yselt’s side, but merely a relatively neutral stance⁷⁰⁴. With the reciprocal ‘liale amore’ in the ‘Tavola Ritonda’, then, a completely new concept of love is consequently developed before the potion takes effect, as was already shown in 4.1.3. For Thomas’ ‘Tristan’, one can merely assert: “Der Minnetrank ist zeitlich nicht limitiert. Strittig ist, ob Liebe schon vor dem Trank bestand.”⁷⁰⁵.

Thomas’ depiction of the Irish queen’s (= Isold’s mother) discovery of the fact that the protagonist had killed her brother possesses also a very different importance in the course of his narrative. In his version, this is introduced only during Tristan’s second trip to Ireland and in the context of a very different “courtship fight” against a dragon, instead of a trial by combat as in the other two texts.⁷⁰⁶ Meanwhile, the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ uniquely contains the fact that Tristano inadvertently has his uncle recognise his existent love for Isotta due to the condition of ›amor de lonh‹ or ›Minstrel’s trance‹ because of three drops of blood which had fallen into the snow, as was mentioned in 4.1. Common to both the ‘Tavola Ritonda’ and the ‘Tristan en prose’, the source for this passage, is the ›episode of the Dama del Aigua della Spina‹, includ-

⁷⁰³ Curtis 1963, p. 164f. (§ 329).

⁷⁰⁴ Cf. Ibid., p. 165f. (§ 330/331).

⁷⁰⁵ Stein 2001, p. 32.

⁷⁰⁶ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 39ff.

ing the head-on duel between the King of Cornwall and his nephew, despite multiple differences in the details⁷⁰⁷. In Thomas' version, however, this episode probably does not exist⁷⁰⁸. The final change of the relationship between Marke and Tristan is most likely constituted in all three versions by the king's mission for Tristan of sending him on a courtship trip, thus leading to the drinking of the love potion by the protagonist and Isolt and therefore causing all other fatal events to follow. In Thomas' version, however, Marke's motives for action are ascribed to the intrigues of his courtiers and barons, who prompt the king into choosing the Irish princess as his bride and having Tristan deliver her⁷⁰⁹. In the 'Tristan en prose' and in the 'Tavola Ritonda', however, it is Marc himself who comes up with this idea and is generally depicted as the more distinct antagonist, although only the first-mentioned work also attributes to the protagonist a fear of his uncle⁷¹⁰. As becomes apparent at this stage of the narrative at the very latest, the conflict in Thomas' work between uncle and nephew is mostly provoked by external forces, explicitly named as the scheming barons and courtiers. In contrast, the King of Cornwall himself is the person who evokes the fatal rivalry and antagonism towards his nephew due to his own fear and mistrust in the 'Tristan en prose' and then later in the 'Tavola Ritonda'.

As the decisive change in the relationship between uncle and nephew is reached at this point and the unique focus of the respective versions should have become clearly apparent up to this point, the brief comparative overview is brought to a conclusion here, not least to keep this comparison as short and selective as possible. It is intended to show a tendency, and any greater proliferation on this topic would necessitate its own study. In principle, one may summarise in regard to the comparative overview realised (up until this point): in Thomas' source, the confrontation between the protagonist and Marke of Cornwall and England is caused more by external forces, as well as the fatal development of their fates connected them. A specific generational conflict is, however, not clearly discernible in this version. In the 'Tristan en prose', on the other hand, the conflict between uncle and nephew is portrayed as emanating from Marc. Clear and detailed indications of a generational conflict, which are present in the 'Tavola Ritonda', are meanwhile lacking. Finally, the 'Tavola Ritonda' clearly creates a generational conflict between Tristano and his uncle. This is mainly established by changing details from the source material. In a nutshell, each of these three works possesses its very own 'sens' and autonomous emphasis on what is deemed relevant and important.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 177-186 (§ 354-373); Polidori 1864, p. 90-95 (chapters XXIV and XXV).

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. Bonath 1985, p. 39.

⁷⁰⁹ Cf. Ibid.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Curtis 1963, p. 196ff. (§ 394-399). Also cf. Polidori 1864, p. 96ff. (chapter XXVI).

6 Final Conclusion

As was established in the partial result in chapter 4.1.4, the 'Tavola Ritonda' possesses a diachronic consciousness of generations, and also a genealogical conflict of generations, between the protagonist and his uncle. This is clearly connected to the two other important groups of themes, which have been attached to the Tristan myth from the very first related poetry onwards, namely love and chivalry. Due to his outstanding level of chivalry, Tristano evokes the envy and mistrust of his uncle, Marco of Cornwall, who is presented as the obvious antagonist to the recipient. During the entire course of the narrative, Marco exhibits no recognisable learning process or any long-term control of his jealousy and his distrust of his nephew in his capacity as ruler. No sooner has the King of Cornwall in the 'Tavola Ritonda' recognized his young relative's exemplary chivalric potential, than he begins developing negative feelings for him and feels threatened by the young heir to the throne of Leonis in regard to his kingship. In order to truly wound or bring about Tristano's death, Marco has him escort the Irish king's daughter, his bride to be, suspecting that his nephew is already in love with her and thereby setting in motion the fatal process which ultimately culminates in the death of all three characters. Due to the fact that neither the egocentric King of Cornwall wants to relinquish his claim on the Irish princess, nor Tristano is capable of doing so, being doubly bound to her by the reciprocal 'liale amore' and the love potion, the rivalry and conflict between the two is increasingly exacerbated as the narrative unfolds. Instead of binding his nephew, the best of worldly knights, closer to him through appreciative behaviour, and thereby securing his own grip on power, Marco is described in the 'Tavola Ritonda' as having immediately perceived Tristano as a competitor and a threat. Although Tristano subsequently devotes himself more and more to the Arthurian community and is integrated into it, there is no mitigation of the conflict, as the King of Cornwall insists on having Isotta returned to him. Finally, he even resorts to abducting and holding her against her will within his domain. Only as a result of these developments is the protagonist, having followed his lover back to Cornwall, fatally wounded by Marco, finally leading to the couple's joint death.

Yet, the king is not presented as triumphant, since the demise of Tristano and Isotta is avenged through his own punishment and death by the Arthurian community, which has lost its best worldly knight and is itself facing extinction. Rather, the living-on of the lovers after death and therefore their ultimate victory is indicated by the author by means of the flowering vines, which sprout from the grave. This was made apparent in some detail while examining

the usage of the generational conflict in the 'Tavola Ritonda'. In addition to this, the application of an extended grid for the synchronous generational concept has shown that the latter is also identifiable in the form of the division of the Round Table in 'Tavola Vecchia' and 'Tavola Nuova', as became clear in the corresponding analysis in Chapter 4.2. However, the portrayal of the protagonist as the best worldly knight, who is superior to both the members of the 'Tavola Nuova' as well as the 'Tavola Vecchia', with the exception of the Grail knight Galasso, is more important to the author than the incorporation of the synchronous generational consciousness. The narrative may, therefore, be viewed as prefiguring and preparing the experiencing of the Grail. The author never loses his focus, which is always oriented towards Tristano as the center of narrative events. Without the employment of a relatively broad synchronous generational concept, the latter is hardly applicable to the very individual attributions of affiliation to the 'Tavola Vecchia' and 'Tavola Nuova', or the change-over of some knights between the two. The fact that the 'Tavola Nuova' generally dominates, in particular through the participation of Galasso and Tristano, in opposition to the 'Tavola Vecchia', thus reversing Rustichello's representation in this regard, is beyond doubt and has been clearly substantiated in the original text in Chapter 4.2. An additional, compressed comparison with two other Tristan versions, the 'Tristan en prose' and 'Tristan' Thomas' d'Angleterre, which contrast as much as possible with each other and which both served as source material for the 'Tavola Ritonda', albeit to varying degrees, was then definitively able to confirm, in Chapter 5, the hypothesis that it is first and foremost the 'Tavola Ritonda' which has a genealogical consciousness of generations and a tangible generational conflict inscribed into it.

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