

**Places to Play:**  
Topographies of Gender in Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan*

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In the latter half of the twelfth century, the Arthurian romance made its entrance onto the stage of medieval vernacular literature and found an eager audience in German courtly culture. The works of Béroul and Chrétien de Troyes quickly (at least by medieval standards) found their way into German adaptations by Wolfram von Eschenbach and Gottfried von Strassburg, among others. Intended for a secular and noble audience, these Arthurian romances celebrate the feudal court and its way of life, offering listeners an appropriate measure of both pleasure and usefulness<sup>1</sup> in the idealized Arthurian mirror of their own society. Much recent research has been done on the "usefulness" of Arthurian romance as a vehicle for the socialization of its audience. This function certainly did not escape the medieval contemporaries of Chrétien, Wolfram and Gottfried. In his moral treatise *Der wälsche Gast*, written around 1215, the cleric Thomasin von Zerklære emphasizes the prescriptive values illustrated by the main actors in romance, casting the Arthurian characters as exempla for his readers and thereby allowing secular fiction to become an acceptable vehicle for moral teaching. In this way, Thomasin indicates that he believes the romance exceptionally well-suited for the education and socialization of noble women and men, superior even to other didactic literature of the time.

If Thomasin's treatise is any indication, the discourse of romance was particularly suited to offer a unique forum, in the form of secular literature, for discussion of vital social issues relevant to a twelfth-century audience. As Liebertz-Grün, Krueger, Gaunt and others have shown, one of these issues

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was gender.<sup>2</sup> Historian Jo Ann McNamara has actually described a "masculine identity crisis" ("*Herrenfrage*") precipitated by disturbances in the gender system of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>3</sup> The gender system began to destabilize after the First Lateran Council with its injunction against clerical marriage, for "if celibacy redefined masculinity, it also redefined femininity."<sup>4</sup> According to McNamara, celibate men gained public power during the early twelfth century, but they also became essentially ungendered, losing their unequivocally male identity: "If a person does not act like a man, is he a man?"<sup>5</sup> Eventually, masculine identity reasserted itself through a more rigid demarcation of gender boundaries and roles.<sup>6</sup> In this essay, I focus on the discussion of gender in early thirteenth-century German literature as it appears in the *Tristan* of Gottfried von Strassburg. Tristan is, of course, one of the models mentioned in *Der wälsche Gast*. But while Gottfried's contemporaries generally supported the prevailing "masculinist ideology,"<sup>7</sup> I argue that he offers two exemplary protagonists (Tristan and Isolde) whose portrayal resists (or at least questions) the seemingly inevitable resolution of the *Herrenfrage*. This resistance is achieved through the ways in which Gottfried inscribes his characters in the space of his text. This inscription takes place quite literally within the forests and pastoral settings of the traditional romance/Arthurian landscape. It is possible, however, to superimpose other topographies on the literal landscape in order to complete the "world" of the narrative. Gottfried uses these other topographies as a process of further signification, to map what he considers to be model constellations of femininity and masculinity for his audience. In the process, Gottfried creates a narrative in which topography and gender merge to show us a uniquely liberating landscape.

Before examining the role of Gottfried's topography in the construction of gendered identity in *Tristan*, I would like to review briefly aspects of the concept of "topography" as they pertain to cultural and literary analysis, particularly with respect to gender. Topography is, of course, most basically defined as the branch of geography that deals

specifically with localities and their positions relative to one another. This study of localities acquires broader cultural dimensions when one considers culture as a process in which people are constantly producing what they perceive to be realities.<sup>8</sup> These realities inevitably involve spaces which structure society and which help individuals to "make sense of surroundings that are otherwise chaotic and random, and to define and locate themselves with respect to those surroundings."<sup>9</sup> The on-going search for self-definition evolves through the process of cognitive mapping, understood on the most basic level as the representation of the world in which a writing subject finds itself. Clearly, narratives play a key role in orienting individuals to their cultural milieu, "locating" and providing appropriate models for readers to emulate. The influence of the author's voice (through his hand/pen/voice) can be felt literally from the beginning of a text, for the act of narrating a work for an audience establishes a relatively exclusive spatial

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relationship from the start. The notion of the existence of an "I/we" inherently creates space, since it implies a complementary "you/they," a *here* as opposed to a *there*.<sup>10</sup> The space of the literary narrative expands to locate an internal textual reality in which the narrator manipulates certain spaces and relationships to offer the audience a particular structure, thus advocating a particular arrangement of these relationships in the world of the text. Other arrangements (we could also understand them as maps) are implicitly or explicitly discouraged. Thus, the world constructed within the text serves as an indication of "who" the poet thinks he is and "who" the society he describes thinks it is or wishes to be. In this way, the space of the literary narrative and the world it offers serve as a place that allows the poet a creative response to his surroundings, even an opportunity to (re)structure society, in theory if not in practice.

The creative act of "writing a world"<sup>11</sup> certainly describes the work of the poets who were composing medieval romance at the turn of the thirteenth century. This creativity was in part prompted by a developing concept of the fictional. D. H. Green has recently discussed the phenomenon of thirteenth-century romance as an emergent understanding of fiction and the nature of fictional truth as opposed to historical truth; authors intentionally differentiated among *res factae* as opposed to *res fictae*.<sup>12</sup> German scholar Walter Haug views this development as the first in a series of changes in a consciousness of "fictionality," placing the idea of fiction in the context of a gradual "demystification of the world" that begins in the Middle Ages.<sup>13</sup> The courtly novel offers "a conscious structural experiment,"<sup>14</sup> based fundamentally upon "a new recognition of the true' fiction."<sup>15</sup> This fiction did not, however, aim at a concrete solution of the problems it described and elaborated. On the contrary, it is characterized by reflection upon the conditions of its own existence. This reflection offers the opportunity for a multivalent exploration of social and individual identity.

In his prologue to *Tristan*, Gottfried von Strassburg shows that he understands the poet's role as a facilitator of such reflection, as a manipulator of textual space. Gottfried targets a very specific audience for his text: "Thus I have undertaken a labor to please the polite world and solace noble hearts--those hearts which I hold in affection, that world which lies open to my heart."<sup>16</sup> These "noble hearts" comprise a select group: they alone possess the knowledge and experience necessary to comprehend the story Gottfried plans to tell them. The poet himself also desires to take part in the special existence granted to this group: "to this life let my life be given, of this world let me be a part, to be damned or saved with it."<sup>17</sup> Gottfried offers his poem as the end of a journey, the desired destination of those noble hearts who seek such refined enlightenment: "Therefore, whoever wants a story need go no further than here."<sup>18</sup> Clearly, Gottfried intends to construct his text and its worlds (both the narrative world and the world of the listeners themselves) so that they may serve as

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a means of identification; indeed, Gottfried takes great pains to convince the listener/reader that this means of identification has not been properly rendered into text until the present version of the poem.<sup>19</sup> To paraphrase Wolfgang Iser, Gottfried very self-consciously involves himself as well as the audience in an ongoing process that aims to produce meaning through interpretation.<sup>20</sup> Iser understands this process as a game, facilitated by "play" that invites the participation and interaction of the reader. While Iser attributes this type of play to modern, "performative"

texts, we can expect from *Tristan's* prologue that Gottfried will incorporate a certain degree of "play" in his text, inviting the participation of the readers/listeners in the world performed before them. In this way, Gottfried displays his understanding of texts "as constitutive of reality rather than mimicking it in other words, as cultural practices of signification rather than as referential duplications."[21](#)

The processes of "play" and cultural signification lead us back into the text and its topography, which literally and figuratively participates in both. First, Gottfried locates *Tristan's* geography in familiar places such as Cornwall and Ireland. In this way, the poet creates a frame of reference for his audience by recalling the characteristic outlines of Arthurian topography for the audience, even though Marke takes the place here of Arthur as the central ruler figure. Marke wears the crown of Cornwall and has taken England under his protection at the behest of that land's fractious rival kings. Furthermore, Marke resides at the castle of Tintagel, a place that resonates with Arthurian associations. Thus Gottfried firmly anchors his story in Arthurian tradition, though the work's focus is decidedly anti-courtly and in defiance of the courtly moral code (since Tristan, the consummate courtier, thrives on the decidedly unchivalric intrigues of the court).

Gottfried also demonstrates his ability to manipulate not only the familiar "real" places but also the *topoi* that Curtius has used to characterize the ideal romance landscape, most prominent among them the forest and the *locus amoenus*.[22](#) Gottfried transforms the forest of Broceliande, so familiar to his audience from the works of his predecessors Hartmann and Wolfram, where it functioned as a "limen, offering to the hero the means of embodying chivalry and of fulfilling his role as knight, justifying, indeed, the life of the court."[23](#) As Tristan and Isolde seek to conceal their affair from those around them, the forest offers more than a threshold; it becomes a destination in itself, the place where the lovers can be together, providing "both exile and idyll, pain and delight, the ideal yet the impossible escape."[24](#) The place is of course the Cave of the Lovers, a grotto secluded in "wild solitude":

whoever is so blessed as to reach and enter that solitude will have used his efforts to most excellent purpose, for he will find his heart's delight there. Whatever the ear yearns to hear, whatever gratifies the eye, this wilderness is full of it. He [or she] would hate to be elsewhere.[25](#)

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Gottfried's treatment of the cave offers not only a refuge for banished lovers but also a complex and multi-layered allegory that finally completes the transformation of the forest (l.16859 ff.).

As he transforms the forest, Gottfried also charts new territory with respect to another aspect of romance topography, namely its function as a mechanism for the inscription of gender roles: "gender shapes bodies as they shape space and are in turn shaped by its arrangements."[26](#) These spatial arrangements can occur on several levels, perhaps best represented by the image of concentric yet interlocking circles. In particular, the spaces of Ireland and Cornwall provide the outlines for the representational framework of the work, creating the gendered places and spaces in which and through which the gendered inscription can occur. German feminist Sigrig Weigel uses the term "gender topographies" to describe the metaphorical and discursive imprints left by the various places that men and women have occupied throughout the history of western culture.[27](#) These imprints survive through the persistence of images that Weigel refers to as perceived images ("*Denkbilder*"), in contrast to actual images ("*Abbilder*"). The perceived image carries an added dimension, functioning on the conceptual as well as on the concrete level "as a paradigmatic locus for the work of civilization."[28](#) For the culture intended to receive it, such an image represents a perceived rather than an actual reality (in so far as "actual reality" may ever be determined). As they are mapped onto literary space by poets who attempt to make them comprehensible to the audience in the context of its own cultural and historical landscape, these images are undeniably gendered; the topographies in which they are placed demarcate exemplary constellations of femininity and masculinity.[29](#) This mapping continues the "process of civilization" ("*Zivilisationsarbeit*") that

enables a culture to define itself. In that gender clearly plays an integral role in the arrangements of power and space in *Tristan*, I believe that the central loci of Ireland and Cornwall epitomize Weigel's concept of gender topographies. These topographies of Gottfried's narrative go on to create unique spaces which suggest potentially transgressive realities to the audience.<sup>30</sup>

Ireland is constructed as woman's space. It is not King Gurmun who is the focus of most of Gottfried's (and hence the audience's) attention but rather his wife and later his daughter Isolde. The connection between them and the influence (present and future) they wield is reflected in the fact that they both bear the same name. In fact, the daughter is also referred to with the epithets Gottfried applies to her mother (l. 9478). We first hear of Queen Isolde's great knowledge as Morold taunts Tristan during their duel, after the latter has received a serious wound from Morold's poisoned spear. No doctor in the world can heal Tristan; it is Morold's sister Isolde who alone possesses the knowledge of roots and all herbs<sup>31</sup> as well as the medicinal learning<sup>32</sup> to save his life: "She alone knows the secret, and no other in the world. If she does not heal you, you will be past all healing."<sup>33</sup> Repeatedly, she is referred to as

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"the wise Isolde" and the "well-versed Queen,"<sup>34</sup> whose knowledge (*liste*) belongs to her alone. Indeed, Tristan must go to Ireland for healing rather than to the famed doctors in Salerno.<sup>35</sup> The elder Isolde holds the power of life and death over him, since she would have redirected all of her healing energy towards arranging his death, had she known his real identity as the killer of her beloved brother (l. 7911 ff.). Within the boundaries of this island space, the queen also wields considerable political authority, though she takes care to act (publicly) only with her husband's approval.<sup>36</sup> Her skills are particularly evident in the incident of the steward and the slaying of the dragon. Concerned to keep her daughter from an unsuitable marriage, Queen Isolde uncovers the truth of the steward's deception and the slaying of the dragon through her hidden knowledge,<sup>37</sup> having dreamt that all was not as it seemed (or at least as it was told by the steward). Driven by the awareness that failure to find the truth would condemn the young Isolde to unhappiness as a result of her father's rash oath, both Isoldes discover the identity of the real dragon-slayer. It is the queen who, having taken Tristan under her protection, persuades her daughter to give up her desire for revenge, who presents the situation to her husband, who orchestrates the disclosure of the steward's treachery.

And the queen, who is as beautiful as she is wise, takes great care in the education of her daughter, her only child. Since Isolde's birth, her mother has devoted all her energies<sup>38</sup> to teaching the younger Isolde all that she can. As the older queen admits to Brangäne while preparing the infamous love potion for her daughter, "the better part of my life is bound up with her."<sup>39</sup> The mother's love and care is evidenced in the fact the queen previously entrusted the education of the younger Isolde to the same accomplished priest who taught *her* as a girl. On the recommendation of this priest, who is forced to recognize in Tristan a man more accomplished than he, the older Isolde engages the stranger (known to her as Tantris) as tutor for her daughter after he arrives in Ireland (l. 7979 ff.). Gottfried goes into great detail regarding the instruction that Isolde receives from Tristan with respect to *moraliteit* ("Sittenlehre"), or the behavior and decorum proper to the courtly sphere.<sup>40</sup> Describing the end result, Gottfried says:

Thus, under Tristan's instruction, lovely Isolde had much improved herself. Her disposition was charming, her manners and bearing good. She had mastered some fine instruments and many skilled accomplishments. Of love-songs she could make both the words and the airs and polish them beautifully. She was able to read and write.<sup>41</sup> Tristan builds upon her previous education and refines her accomplishments to the point where rumor of them begins to spread beyond the borders of Ireland. The daughter, too, like her mother before her, holds the sword that means life or death for Tristan after she discovers that Tristan's sword is missing the fragment that her mother removed from Morold's body; however, young

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Isolde is a superior model of womanhood or womanliness ("wipheit"), and her great virtue will not permit her to commit murder. And it is finally the queen who asks that the king grant Tristan mercy and that Marke's request for

Isolde's hand be given due consideration. The elder Isolde subsequently prepares the love potion<sup>42</sup> that she hopes will ensure her daughter a happy and joyful life with her new husband, thereby securing the younger Isolde's political position.

In regard to the relationship between mother and daughter in *Tristan*, Ann Marie Rasmussen has said that Ireland appears to support a "mimetic feminine ideology" (Rasmussen's term is "mimetische Weiblichkeitsideologie") that the love potion is designed to perpetuate.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, the younger Isolde's marriage promises even greater success than her mother's. As Marke's council points out, when they try to persuade him to seek Isolde's hand in marriage, Isolde is sole heir to the throne of Ireland (ll. 8501-8503); thus, her position reflects one commonly found among young women of her station. A marriage between her and Marke would end the conflict between Cornwall and Ireland and bring peace and wealth to both parties. The union would bring honor and fame to Marke, for winning such a prize, and it would also bring Isolde considerable political power; eventually, she would wear the crowns of both lands. Indeed, the kingdom of Cornwall is her *Morgengabe*, the gift she receives on her wedding morning (l. 11391 ff.). One is tempted to say "like mother, like daughter"; indeed, the knowledge (*liste*) of the young Isolde and her mother is matched only by that of Tristan himself.

The daughter, however, does not become the mother, defying the symbolism of their shared name.<sup>44</sup> The fateful journey from Ireland to Cornwall certainly represents a transition from one world to another, though with an unexpected twist. The love potion propels both Tristan and Isolde onto a new plane of existence, into a world hitherto unknown. This world is configured in a manner that differs fundamentally from any other Middle High German romance, for *Tristan* attempts to transform and transcend the Germanic code of ethics in the search for a higher truth. While the conventional game of *minne* seems to have encouraged women's passivity and to have left few acceptable alternatives to the strict code of noble behavior, Gottfried's path toward higher truth creates for his female protagonist considerable space to act and to be. On a very literal level, this space is underscored by Isolde's gradual inscription into the text, first as Gottfried describes the skills that she learns under Tristan's tutelage. The second phase of the inscription occurs when Isolde is presented to the court in Ireland after the dragon has been slain. Her appearance is described in great detail, carving space out of the text for her body and for her actions that we all know will follow.

She had brought her right hand farther down, you know, to where one closes the mantle, and held it decorously together with two of her fingers. From there it fell unhampered in a

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last fold revealing this and that--I mean the fur and its covering. One saw it inside and out, and--hidden away within--the image that Love had shaped so rarely in body and in spirit! These two things--lathe and needle--had never made a living image more perfect.<sup>45</sup>

Gottfried similarly inscribes Tristan at this point, describing his dress. Uniting the two soon-to-be lovers is the splendor of the gems that crown them in their exalted state:

Gold and gold, the circlet and Isolde, vied to outshine each other. There was no man so discerning who, had he not seen the stones already, would have said that there was a circlet there, so much did her hair resemble gold, and so utterly did it merge with it.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, Isolde rivals the sun, for so Gottfried has named her (led into the hall by her mother the Dawn and followed by Brangäne the Moon). But Tristan shines just as brightly: "It [the chaplet] was bright and full of luster and made a ring about his head and his hair. And so he entered, magnificent and gay."<sup>47</sup> In these descriptions, the body is clearly a site of social inscription particularly with regard to clothing. According to Margaret Higonnet, this is "one crucial marker in the system governing representation."<sup>48</sup>

Here Tristan and Isolde represent nothing less than the apex of courtly society, crowned by virtue of their accomplishments and their character. Isolde's match with Marke brings her power and wealth, neither of which she cares to relinquish over the course of the work. In addition, because of the (un)fortunate mishap with the love potion, Isolde enjoys with Tristan the "true" love that most considered possible only outside marriage. This is the kind of relationship encouraged by Andreas Capellanus and the troubadours, the kind of relationship decried by Gottfried's contemporaries. And this is precisely the relationship that Gottfried celebrates throughout his poem, culminating in the elaborate allegory of the cave of lovers. Eroticism, adultery, betrayal, and love that consistently thwarts patriarchal-feudal convention characterize the new life of "lying truth"<sup>49</sup> that Tristan and Isolde lead at the court of Cornwall. It is also significant that this world, where that which is seen remains unseen, maintains a remarkable equality between the protagonists. This equality is literally inscribed in the text in the scene described earlier, in which Isolde and Tristan are "officially" (albeit separately) presented to the Irish court. It continues on the narrative level in that, in order to maintain their relationship, both Isolde and Tristan prove adroit at manipulating appearances and narrowly averting potential disaster; they consistently create and re-create spaces for themselves.<sup>50</sup> When Marke's tolerance finally has reached its limit and he banishes the lovers from court, they seem to have attained their goal: they are together away from the court celebrating a love that seems sufficient unto itself<sup>51</sup> in a place that nourishes them through their love for one another:

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Nor were they greatly troubled that they should be alone in the wilds without company. Whom did they need in there with them and why should anyone join them? They made an even number: there were simply one and one ... Their company of two was so ample a crowd for this pair that good King Arthur never held a feast in any of his palaces that would have given them keener pleasure or delight ... What better food could they have for body or soul? Man was there with Woman, Woman there with Man. What else should they be needing? They had what they should have had where they wished to be.<sup>52</sup>

The lovers do, however, leave Brangäne behind to wait for an opportune moment to begin a reconciliation. Obviously, it is not in their plans to abandon their life at court entirely, for their courtly identity, which in large part defines them, is at stake.

As Tristan and Isolde tirelessly plan to meet and satisfy their desires for one another, they and their story constantly create space for themselves: space to be themselves, to act as they wish, to deceive, to escape. When one compares Isolde with her Middle High German romance contemporaries (Condwiramurs, Laudine, and Enite, for example), one realizes that Isolde remains herself and maintains her own dual identities as wife and lover--she is not entirely subsumed under the role of either one man in her life or the other. Indeed, Isolde seems to thrive on the challenge of keeping her life and relationships together, on the constant tension between love and sorrow, *liebe* and *leit*. In a position that seems to hearken back to the queens of an earlier era, Isolde seems to have everything a woman of her station could desire. She is not the typical woman in the castle described by Gale Sigal as "a prisoner of the pedestal" who has "no voice and no choice."<sup>53</sup> Her autonomy, at its most radical, is visually underscored by the obvious female imagery of the lovers' cave as a sheltered, womb-like space. Isolde's freedom contrasts sharply with the subtle restrictions placed upon Wolfram's major (secular) female role model, Condwiramurs. Of course, Gottfried and Wolfram had completely different views of the world and how it should be. Gottfried refuses to praise Wolfram's poetry because Wolfram's meaning (*sin*) seems so obscure; this is unacceptable to one who wishes to raise the literary experience to the highest of all human truths.<sup>54</sup> Gottfried does appreciate Hartmann's crystalline words<sup>55</sup> but he ends up taking Hartmann's moral purpose and transforming it, in the final analysis, into an aesthetic of lying. Indeed, Gottfried's narrative style in general has been described as an art of lying, of lying for the sake of a deeper truth.<sup>56</sup> The priority that Gottfried places on this "lying truth" must finally cause the audience (both medieval and modern) to question the "truth" of the younger Isolde's role, which seems so liberating and anomalous when she is compared to her contemporary (literary) models. While Isolde enjoys the roles of queen, wife,

and lover, she does not become a mother. In this way, she continues to defy her conventional, prescribed role; however, this also means her relationships remain essentially sterile.

Nevertheless, *Tristan's* topography accommodates spaces that are constructed as unmistakably (if not unequivocally) female, and this map thus represents a marked contrast to those found in the romances of Gottfried's contemporaries. As Foucault notes in his essay "Space, Knowledge, and Power," space plays a fundamental role in the exercise of power.<sup>57</sup> The spaces that both Isoldes occupy allow them considerable power and place them in unique positions when compared, for example, with their contemporaries in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* or *Erec* and *Iwein* of Hartmann von Aue. An examination of the spaces in and from which the two queens act illustrates that these spaces function as mechanisms not only for the construction but also for a possible reconstruction of gender roles at a time when such roles were becoming more rigidly established. Certainly, one must admit that adultery of the kind advocated by Andreas Capellanus was probably more a literary indulgence than a practical alternative for twelfth- and thirteenth-century noblewomen. Nonetheless, the topographies of a work like Gottfried's *Tristan* invite the audience to explore the possibilities that courtly romance offered, to stretch the conventional boundaries that left women no room to develop.<sup>58</sup> The fact that Gottfried was writing in the comparatively urban center of Strassburg (unlike many of his contemporaries he was not a knight or a *ministerial*) must also prompt the modern reader to speculate that these possibilities might also have been offered as an alternative to the negative effects of increasing urbanization and restrictions on the activities of women of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as McNamara has recently described.<sup>59</sup> Clearly, as Gottfried's artistry charts *Tristan's* domain for his audience, the work's landscape operates as a creative vehicle through which traditional gender roles may be explored, questioned, and perhaps eventually transformed.

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## Notes

1. In accordance with Horace's injunction that the purposes of poetry be *prodesse et delectare*.
2. See Ursula Liebertz-Grün, "On the Socialization of German Noblewomen 1150-1450," *Monatshefte* 82 (1990), 17-37; Roberta Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge, 1993); Simon Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge, 1995).
3. Jo Ann McNamara, "The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150," *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees (Minneapolis, 1994), 3-30, here p. 3.
4. McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*," p. 22. The gradual process of power redistribu-

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- tion through the family is described in Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple, "The Power of Women through the Family in Medieval Europe: 500-1100," *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowalewski (Athens, Georgia, 1988), 83-101.
5. McNamara, "*Herrenfrage*," p. 5.
  6. According to McNamara, in a more recent article, this revisionary and reactionary trend continues as one of the effects of increasing urbanization and restrictions on the activities of women through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. See Jo Ann McNamara, "City Air Makes Men Free and Women Bound," in *Text and Territory. Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Gilles (Philadelphia, 1998), 143-59.
  7. For a discussion of Wolfram's apparently progressive, yet ultimately conservative portrayal of women, see Alexandra Sterling-Hellenbrand, "Women on the Edge in *Parzival*: A Study of the 'Grail Women,'" *Quondam et Futurus: A Journal of Arthurian Interpretations* (renamed *Arthuriana*), 3.2 (1993), 56-68.
  8. For discussion of geography defined in terms of the cultural process, see Kay Anderson and Fay Gale, eds., *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography* (Melbourne, 1992).
  9. Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn, "Re-Presenting the Place Pastiche," *Place, Power, Situation, and Spectacle. A Geography of Film*, ed. Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn (London, 1994), 3-26, here p. 6. See also the recent collection of essays *Text and Territory*, cited in note 6 above, edited by Tomasch and Gilles.
  10. See Harvey Birenbaum, *Myth and Mind* (Lanham, MD, 1988), p. 56.
  11. See Trevor Barnes and James Duncan, eds., *Writing Worlds: Discourse, Text and Metaphor in the Representation of Landscape* (New York, 1992). The authors could be describing courtly literature when they write, "We construct both the world and our actions towards it from texts that speak of who we are or wish to be" (8).
  12. D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: The Primary Reception of German Literature 800-1300* (Cambridge, 1994). See particularly Chapter 9.
  13. See Walter Haug, "Wandlungen des Fiktionalitätsbewusstseins vom hohen zum späten Mittelalter," *Entzauberung der Welt. Deutsche Literatur 1200-1500*, ed. James F. Poag and Thomas C. Fox (Tübingen, 1989), 1-18.
  14. "[E]in bewusstes strukturelles Experiment" (Haug, p. 8).
  15. "Erkenntnis der wahren' Fiktion" (John M. Clifton-Everest, "Fingierte warheit," *Von Aufbruch und Utopie. Perspektiven einer neuen Gesellschaftsgeschichte des Mittelalters. Für und mit Ferdinand Seibt aus Anlass seines 65. Geburtstages*, ed. Bea Lundt and Helma Reimöller [Köln, Weimar, Wien, 1992], 203-15, here p. 203).
  16. "den herzen, den ich herze trage, / der werlde, in die min herze siht"

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- (*Tristan*, ll. 48-9). Throughout this discussion, the English text comes from the following translation: Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan and Isolde*, ed. and rev. Francis G. Gentry, Foreword by C. Stephen Jaeger (Continuum, 1988). Line numbers refer to the following edition of the Middle High German *Tristan*, cited throughout this discussion: Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, ed. Gottfried Weber (Darmstadt, 1967).
17. Gentry, p. 4: "der werlt wil ich gewerldet wesen, / mit ir verderben oder genesen" (ll. 64-5).
  18. Gentry, p. 4: "von diu swer seneder mære ger, / der envar niht verrer dane her" (ll. 123-24).
  19. Gentry, p. 5: "und ist ir doch niht vil gewesen, / die von im rehte haben gelesen" (ll. 133-34).
  20. Wolfgang Iser, "The Play of the Text," *Languages of the Unsayable*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (New York, 1989), 325-40, here p. 325. According to Iser, the author uses the existing world to create a text "made up of a world that is yet to be identified and is adumbrated in such a way as to invite picturing and eventual interpretation by the reader" (327).
  21. Barnes and Duncan, *Writing Worlds*, p. 5.
  22. See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1953), especially p. 183-202. The two are connected, of course. See also Christian Schmid-Cadalbert, "Der wilde Wald. Zur Darstellung und Funktion eines Raumes in der mittelhochdeutschen Literatur," *Gotes und der werlde hulde*, ed. Rüdiger Schnell (Bern, 1989), 24-47. He points out that the *locus amoenus* in romance often lies on the far side of the forest and that, most importantly, the forest functions as a "threshold between the world on this side and the other place" (33-5).
  23. Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance. Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 80.
  24. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance*, p. 94.
  25. Gentry, p. 225. See Weber, ll. 17091-99.
  26. Ivan Illich, *Gender* (Berkeley, 1982), p. 118.



27. Sigrd Weigel, *Topographien der Geschlechter, kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Literatur* (Hamburg, 1990), 11-12. For a similarly compelling analysis of women inscribed paradoxically both as uncolonized wilderness and as innocent nature in the literature of the Enlightenment, see Weigel's essay "Die nahe Fremde--das Territorium des 'Weiblichen.' Zum Verhältnis von 'Wilden' und 'Frauen' im Diskurs der Aufklärung," *Die andere Welt. Studien zum Exotismus*, ed. Thomas Koebner and Gerhart Pickerkodt (Frankfurt, 1987), 171-99.

28. "als verräumlichtes Sinnbild einer Kultur, als paradigmatischer Ort von Zivilisationsarbeit," Weigel, *Topographien der Geschlechter*, p. 156.

29. Weigel, *Topographien der Geschlechter*, pp. 11-12.

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30. In this way, Gottfried's narrative seems to combat McNamara's trend toward increasing restriction of women's spaces, as urban centers expand in the thirteenth century. This is all the more interesting since Gottfried is considered a very urbane author, one who was not a knight/ministerial, in contrast to Wolfram or Hartmann.

31. "wurze und aller crute craft" (l. 6949).

32. "arzatliche meisterschaft" (l. 6950).

33. Gentry, p. 93: "diu kan eine disen list / und anders nieman, der der ist" (ll. 6951-52).

34. "diu wise Isot" (l. 7291), "diu sinneriche künegin" (l. 7299).

35. Salerno also figures prominently in Hartmann's *Der arme Heinrich*. This reference underscores the special status of the elder Isolde for the German-speaking audience.

36. See Petra Kellermann-Haaf's detailed study *Frau und Politik im Mittelalter. Untersuchungen zur politischen Rolle der Frau in den höfischen Romanen des 12., 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts* (Göppingen, 1986).

37. "ir tougenliche liste" (l. 9301).

38. "alle ir vlizekeit" (l. 7721).

39. "an ir [Isolde] so lit min beste leben" (l. 11471).

40. Gentry, p. 260, note 51.

41. Gentry, p. 107. See Weber, ll. 8132-41.

42. "tranc von minnen" (l. 11435).

43. Ann Marie Rasmussen, "Bist du begert, so bist du wert. Magische und höfische Mitgift für die Töchter," *Mütter-Töchter-Frauen: Weiblichkeitsbilder in der Literatur*, ed. Helga Kraft and Elke Liebs (Stuttgart, Weimar, 1993), 7-35, here p. 18.

44. Rasmussen, p. 18.

45. Gentry, p. 144. See Weber, ll. 10940-57.

46. Gentry, p. 145. See Weber, ll. 10977-85.

47. Gentry, p. 147. See Weber, ll. 11130-41.

48. Margaret Higonnet, "New Cartographies, an Introduction." *Reconfigured Spheres. Feminist Explorations of Literary Space*. Ed. Margaret Higonnet and Joan Templeton (Amherst, 1994), 1-19, here p. 6.

49. See James F. Poag, "Lying Truth in Gottfried's *Tristan*," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 61 (1987), 223-37.

50. One need only look at the scenes commonly known as the "Assignment by the Brook" (*Baumgartenszene*) or the "Ordeal" (*Gottesurteil*).

51. Gert Kaiser, "Liebe ausserhalb der Gesellschaft. Zu einer Lebensform der höfischen Liebe," *Liebe als Literatur. Aufsätze zur erotischen Dichtung in Deutschland*, ed. Rüdiger Krohn (München, 1983), 79-97, here p. 91.

52. Gentry, p. 222. See Weber, ll. 16847-908.

53. Gale Sigal, "Courtied in the Country. Woman's Precarious Place in the

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Troubadour's Lyric Landscape," *Text and Territory*, ed. Tomasch and Gilles, 184-207, here p. 203.

54. Clifton-Everest, "Fingierte *warheit*," p. 207 ff.

55. "[C]ristallinen wortelin" (l. 4629).

56. Clifton-Everest, p. 212.

57. Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power," *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1984), 239-57, here p. 252.

58. According to Joachim Bumke, the game of courtly love finally serves the self-justification of an aristocracy that left women no room for self-development. See "Liebe und Ehebruch in der höfischen Gesellschaft," *Liebe als Literatur. Aufsätze zur erotischen Dichtung in Deutschland*, ed. Rüdiger Krohn (München, 1983), 25-45, here p. 40.

59. McNamara, "City Air Makes Men Free and Women Bound."