



Rückenfigur

Author(s): Susan Howe

Source: *Conjunctions*, 1998, No. 30, PAPER AIRPLANE: The Thirtieth Issue (1998), pp. 46-58

Published by: Conjunctions

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24515772>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Conjunctions is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Conjunctions*

JSTOR

Rückenfigur

Susan Howe

Iseult stands at Tintagel
on the mid stairs between
light and dark symbolism
Does she stand for phonic
human overtone for outlaw
love the dread pull lothly
for weariness actual brute
predestined fact for phobic
falling no one talking too
Tintagel ruin of philosophy
here is known change here
is come crude change wave
wave determinist caparison
Your soul your separation

Susan Howe

But the counterfeit Iseult
Iseult aux Blanches Mains
stands by the wall to listen
Phobic thought of openness
a soul also has two faces
Iseult's mother and double
Iseult the Queen later in *T*
Even *Tros* echoes Tristan's
infirmity through spurious
etymology the Tintagel of *Fo*
not the dead city of night
Wall in the element of Logic
here is a door and beyond
here is the sail she spies

Tristran Tristan Tristrant
Tristram Trystan Trystram
Tristrem Tristanz Drust
Drystan these names concoct
a little wreath of victory

Susan Howe

dreaming over the landscape
Tintagel font icon twilight
Grove bough dark wind cove
brine testimony Iseult salt
Iseut Isolde Ysolt Essyllt
bride of March Marc Mark in
the old French commentaries
your secret correspondence
Soft Iseut two Iseults one

The third of Tristan's overt
identities is a double one
his disguise as nightingale
in *Tros* then wild man in *Fo*
Level and beautiful La Blanche
Lande of disguise episodes
the nocturnal garden of *Tros*
Fb recalls the scene in Ovid
Orpheus grief stricken over
the loss of Eurydice sits by

the bank of a river seven days
I see Mark's shadow in water
Mark's moral right to Iseult
David's relationship to Saul

Lean on handrail river below
Sense of depth focus motion
of chaos in Schlegel only as
visual progress into depth its
harsh curb estrangement logic
Realism still exists is part
of the realist dual hypothesis
Dual on verso as one who has
obeyed acceleration velocity
killing frost regenerative thaw
you other rowing forward face
backward Hesperides messenger
into the pastness of landscape
inarticulate scrawl awash air

Susan Howe

Insufferably pale the icy
limit pulls and pulls no
kindness free against you
Deep quietness never to be
gathered no blind treat
Assuredly I see division
can never be weighed once
pale anguish breathes free
to be unhallowed empty what
in thought or other sign
roof and lintel remember
Searching shall I know is
some sense deepest moment
What is and what appears

The way light is broken
To splinter color blue
the color of day yellow
near night the color of
passion red by morning

Susan Howe

His name of grief being
red sound to sense sense
in place of the slaying
Tristram must be caught
Saw the mind otherwise
in thought or other sign
because we are not free
Saw the mind otherwise
Two thoughts in strife

Separation requires an
other quest for union
I use a white thread
half of the same paper
and in the sun's light
I place a lens so that
the sea reflects back
violet and blue making
rays easily more freely
your nativity and you

Susan Howe

of light from that of
memory when eyelids close
so in dream sensation
Mind's trajected light

It is precision we have
to deal with we can pre-
scind space from color if
Thomas was only using a
metaphor and metaphysics
professes to be metaphor
There is a way back to the
misinterpretation of her
message TheseusTristan is
on the ship AegeusIseut
is a land watcher she is
a mastermind her frailty
turned to the light her
single vision twin soul half

Dilemma of dead loyalty
Mark's speeches are sham
Gottfried shows Tristan
only hunting for pleasure
Emerald jacinth sapphire
chalcedony lovely Isolt
Topaz sardonyx chrysolite
ruby sir Tristan the Court
sees only the beauty of
their persons that they
appear to be represented
Isolt sings to your eyes
Surveillance is a constant
theme in lyric poetry

Le Page disgracié his attempt
to buy a linnet for his master
from a birdcatcher he hoped
to comfort him with bird song
but gamboled the money away

Susan Howe

and in desperation bought a
wild-linnet that didn't sing
His first words occur in the
linnet episode the young master's
perplexity about the bird's
silence so just the linnet's
silence provokes Tristan's *je*
hero his shared identity the
remarkable bird list in *L'Orphée*

L'Orphée—a lanner falcon
takes pigeons a sparrow-
hawk sparrows a goshawk
partridge when Tristan was
young he would have watched
hawks being flown his own
little hunting falcon his
observation of the way in
which other birds refrain
from their characteristic

habit of "mobbing the owl"
Vignette of the bird-catcher
in the street that day the
linnet's mimic reputation

Parasite and liar of genius
even emptiness is something
not nothingness of negation
having been born not born
wrapped in protective long
cloak power of the woodland
No burrowing deep for warmth
The eagle of Prometheus is a
vulture the vulture passions
go to a predator tricked up
forever unexpressed in half-
effaced ambiguous butterfly
disguises authentic regional
avifauna an arsenal of stories

Susan Howe

Ysolt that for naught might
carry them as they coasting
past strange land past haven
ruin garland effigy figment
sensible nature blue silver
orange yellow different lake
effect of the death-rebirth
eternal rush-return fragment
I cannot separate in thought
You cannot be separate from
perception everything draws
toward autumn distant tumult
See that long row of folios
Surely Ysolt remembers Itylus

Antigone bears her secret in
her heart like an arrow she is
sent twice over into the dark
social as if real life real
person proceeding into self-

Susan Howe

knowledge as if there were no
proof just blind right reason
to assuage our violent earth
Ysolt's single vision of union
Precursor shadow self by self
in open place or on an acting
platform two personae meeting
Strophe antistrophe which is
which dual unspeakable cohesion

Day binds the wide Sound
Bitter sound as truth is
silent as silent tomorrow
Motif of retreating figure
arrayed beyond expression
huddled unintelligible air
Theomimesis divinity message
I have loved come veiling
Lyrism come veil come lure
echo remnant sentence spar

Susan Howe

never never form wherefor

Wait some recognition you

Lyric over us love unclothe

Never forever whoso move