
In Search of
**THE THIRD
BIRD**

Exemplary Essays from
The Proceedings of ESTAR (SER)

2001



2021

D. GRAHAM BURNETT, CATHERINE L. HANSEN, JUSTIN E. H. SMITH
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For those who attend

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In Search of the Third Bird: Exemplary Essays from The Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)
Edited by D. Graham Burnett, Catherine L. Hansen, and Justin E. H. Smith

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The editors of Strange Attractor Press make every effort to maintain the highest scholarly standards in our research-based publications. Hence, the present work was indeed subjected to a standard “peer-review” process, and initial responses appeared positive. Subsequently, however, it came to light that several concerned/negative reviews had been unaccountably sequestered — surfacing only when *In Search of the Third Bird* was already in production. In this context, we have elected, with the permission of the reviewers, to make these critical discussions public, in the hopes of heightening awareness of a number of serious anomalies and misrepresentations that appear to mar these pages. They can be accessed at the following address: <http://strangeattractor.co.uk/thirdbirdreviews/>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

P. 15
INTRODUCTION

I. Preliminaries

P. 47
1
“BIRDS” AS A HISTORICAL PROBLEM
Considerations on the State of the Field
EIGIL ZU TAGE-RAVN

P. 79
2
ESTAR(SER) AND THE W-CACHE
The State of the Discussion
GREGG C. TOOMEY

P. 113
3
A PUBLICATION HISTORY
OF THE *PROCEEDINGS OF ESTAR(SER)*
1880–2014
KYRRE MIRADOR

“IS IT WORTH WHILE, CAN WE AFFORD, TO ATTEND TO JUST
THAT, TO JUST THAT...?”
— *Walter Pater*

“TO RECOGNIZE ONE’S OWN IN THE ALIEN, TO BECOME
AT HOME IN IT, IS THE BASIC MOVEMENT OF SPIRIT,
WHOSE BEING CONSISTS ONLY IN RETURNING TO ITSELF
FROM WHAT IS OTHER.”
— *Hans-Georg Gadamer*

“ORBIS TERRARUM EST SPECULUM LUDI.”
— *attributed to DuCange*



II. Attention and Its Objects

P. 149

4

THE EADS SUBLATION

*Fly-Fishing, Kentucky Hegelianism,
and Evolutionary Theory in American Bird Practices,
1821–1889*

CISCO T. LAERTES

P. 183

5

THE NACHTIGALL CONVOLUTE

*A Previously Unknown Ottoman Protocol,
Turkish Practices in the 1940s, and
Possible Links between the Order of the Third Bird
and the Work of Erich Auerbach*

THE NIBLACH WORKING GROUP

P. 223

6

THE VORKUTA ANTINOMY

Kant, the Birds, and Primavianist Deviations in the USSR

YU. K. KUZNETSOV

III. Metempsychoses

P. 277

7

MET-HIM-PIKE-HOSES

*The Literature of Amphibious Ecstasy in the Americas,
1948–1968*

THE GREER PAPERS WORKING GROUP

P. 319

8

THE RŪLEK SCROLLS AND THE PRACTICE OF THE DOOR

*Marton Bialek (1892–?), Central Asian Syncretism,
and the Guardian of the Threshold*

EASTER McCRANEY

P. 355

9

MADAME BANKSIA

*Margaret Preston's Flower Gazing and the Japonist Protocols
of Félix Régamey*

THE PRESTON WORKING GROUP

IV. Rogues and Renegades

P. 391

10

THE VATER LEGACY

*The Philistine Controversy and the Order of the Third Bird
in Germany, 1684–1888*

ANSGAR BLEIBTREU

P. 429

11

THE FITZWILLIAM SCHISM

*Practical Criticism and Practical Aesthetics in Britain and Beyond,
1925–1975*

THE SEVENS WORKING GROUP

P. 469

12

“FIX YOUR EYES RIGHT HERE!”

*The Life and Times of Inyard Kip Ketchem,
the Performing Attention Doctor*

THE WILLIAM JAMES WORKING GROUP

V. Gatherings

P. 523

13

THE KITTIWAKE DOSSIER

*Object-Oriented Aggregation and Foundational Efforts
of the Order among the Parisian Surrealists,
1932–1941*

JOANNA FIDUCCIA

P. 561

14

THE MAGPIE TROVE

*Decoying the New York School,
1950–1985*

CAITLIN SWEENEY

P. 593

15

THE MAZUMDAR LEGACY

*Practical Aesthetics, Practical Politics,
& the Order within the Jorasanko Triangle,
1910–1930*

THE WORKING GROUP TO DECOLONIZE THE *Proceedings*

IN SEARCH OF THE THIRD BIRD

VI. Remains

P. 631

16

THE FINDING AID FOLDER
Seeking Order in the Archives of the Order
THE META-ARCHIVAL WORKING GROUP

P. 671

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

P. 673

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

P. 683

BIBLIOGRAPHY

P. 717

INDEX

P. 747

GRAPHIC SOURCES

P. 749

COLOPHON

P. 753

PLATES

13

THE KITTIWAKE DOSSIER



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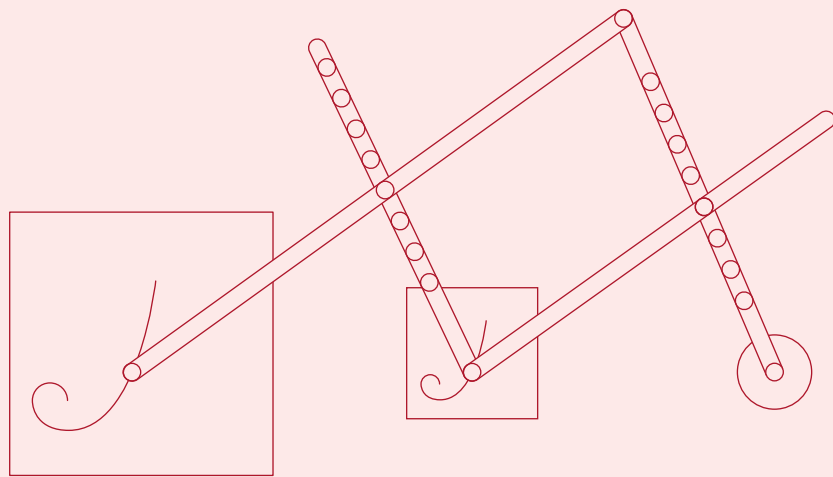
JOANNA FIDUCCIA,
“The Kittiwake Dossier: Object-Oriented
Aggregation and Foundational Efforts
of the Order among the Parisian Surrealists,
1932–1941,”
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Vol. 6 (2015): 17–35.

PREFATORY NOTE



The following essay is an especially rich one, and it opens a number of key issues. Not only does Joanna Fiduccia, herself a technical scholar of the French avant-garde, do a careful job coordinating the history of the Order with a crucial community of twentieth-century artists and art-thinkers (the Surrealists), she also delves that impossible solvent-adhesive of all communities: *desire*. And not just “sexual” desire (though that is definitely part of the messy tale she tells); desire, too, in the broadest sense of something like Plato’s “eros” — that weird and pervasive magnetism by which we are pulled this way and that in a world of bodies, objects, smells, sights, tastes, sounds, and even ideas. What is perhaps most striking in this essay is how questions of eros end up driving not only the relationship among Birds, but also relations *between Birdish persons and their attentional objects*. And desire works in this story in another way as well: at the heart of “The Kittiwake Dossier,” ultimately, is a classic episode of a Bird “embassy” — one of the subtle processes by which a new *volée* is “founded” (or, as in this case, fails to form). That, it turns out, is itself a vexed matter of yearning and resistance. For the Birds both are and are not “proselytic” in their doings. On the one hand, it is abundantly evident that associates of the Order tend to keep to themselves, and are hardly to be found on street corners passing out pamphlets. But, on the other hand, there is a great deal of evidence that their love for “the Practice” makes them, in fact, downright *keen* about sharing what they do with others. But how? As Joanna Fiduccia shows here in this “missiological” study of the Order and its doings, there are no easy answers. (NB: attentive readers may notice that this essay uses “Mirador” citations in the footnotes.)

— *The Editors*



THE KITTIWAKE DOSSIER

*Object-Oriented Aggregation
and Foundational Efforts of the Order
among the Parisian Surrealists,
1932–1941*



JOANNA FIDUCCIA

INTRODUCTION

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NEARLY all of the English-language editions of the *Manual of the Volée* found in the W-Cache give the following line of exposition, and the following line only, regarding the planning of any invocation of the Order's "Standard Protocol":

Having appointed a place and time and designated a Work for the Action of Practical Aesthesis, members of the volée and any guests drift quietly, approaching the work in silence.⁽¹⁾

By the close of this parsimonious description (the present perfect tense of which performs the foreclosure of any participation on behalf of the uninitiated), the reader has already entered the "Encounter" phase of the Standard Protocol. But many questions remain unan-

(1) *Manual to the Order of the Third Bird* (1879; 1912; 1917; 1933; 1934; 1951; 1966–67; 1978), W-Cache. The different editions show slightly variant titling (in addition to other divergences). Most show *Manual of the Volée* on the exterior cover and/or spine, and *Manual to the Order of the Third Bird* (which has become the standard citation format) on the title page. No variorum edition has ever been attempted, to my knowledge.

swered: How is the work selected for attendance by the Order, for what reasons, and by whom? Whence the members of said *volée*? How does this clutch of aesthetes come to be listening for the “call” to join such an Action?

ESTAR(SER) scholarship has converged, especially in the last decade, around what might be called the “standard view” of the origin of any given Bird Action. It would go something like this: in the modern period Actions are “called” by an associate of the Order in response to a “needy” (perhaps neglected) work-made-to-be-seen; this “caller” (sometimes “curator”), who typically conducts the choreography of the Protocol with the use of a bell, sometimes works in collaboration with, or with aid from, the so-called “Secretary Locotenant” — perhaps the only figure in the Bird ecology capable, by virtue of her/his/its position, of calling actions remotely.⁽²⁾ This Secretary, of whom the Order has apparently had quite a few since the turn of the nineteenth century (though none has ever been securely identified), would in theory maintain a working knowledge of active *volées* in cities the world over, such that an associate in flight or passage or migration might touch down briefly with other intimates “of the Feather” — or else, potentially, attempt to instigate a new flock among certain sympathetic residents and other “known quantities” in lands lacking a “nest” (a term used more in Europe — e.g., “*nido*” both in Spain and Italy, “*nid*” in France, etc. — than in the United States, but designating a cohort of Birds; the term tends to indicate a looser aggregation than a *volée*).

(2) In many ways the full story of the Secretary Locotenant remains to be told (and the full historicity of the figure is subject to debate). The basic introduction remains: William Douglas-Home and Mary Miller, *The Secretary Bird* (London: French, 1969). But see also: C. H. Frye, “Etymology of the Secretary-Bird,” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* DP 3 (*Ibis* 119 [October 1977]): 550–55. Tom Colbert, “The Parade of Secretaries,” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* DP 3 (*Rangeman’s Journal* 4, n°6 [1977]): 191–92. Confusion about the relationship between ESTAR(SER)’s own various (erstwhile) “Corresponding Secretaries” and the Secretary Locotenant (of the Birds) has also been an issue in the past. See, for instance: Augustus Morano, “Examining the Role of the Corresponding Secretary in ESTAR(SER),” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* DP 22 (*Society for Esthetic Actualizers*, single issue, 1996): 24–32. There is a useful anonymous memo on the topic issued by the Corresponding Secretary of ESTAR(SER)’s short-lived “Eastern Consistory.” It is undated and uncredited, but must have been written in the late 1990s or early days of the present millennium. We have proposed it for accession to the W-Cache, but it remains in limbo: no author, “A Clarification on the Topic of Secretaries” (unpublished), n.d.

Owing to a recent discovery in the W-Cache, we are able to reconstruct in this essay an especially rich episode in the history of both Action-calling and efforts at new *volée* formation in the Order. It is, as I hope to show, a story that offers notable counterpoints to the narrative glossed above. The episode at issue lands us in Paris in the 1930s, among a tribe of artist-hysterics renowned for their pursuit of the auratic potential latent in quotidian experience. Not only does the present study posit an explicit relationship between the Order of the Third Bird and said tribe (to wit, the Parisian Surrealists); it also introduces an entirely new modality or convention of Birdishness, one by which the traditional orientation of caller to object is *inverted*. In this idiosyncratic version of Bird practice, the object — which is not known to any practitioner prior to gathering, and might be *anything* in the zone through which the participants move — is given an opportunity to “assert itself,” and thereby spontaneously to aggregate the attenders *in situ*. This emergent aggregation, forming in response to the seductions of a particular work, articulates in turn an “erotics of the object,” which solicits attention not out of some quiet desperation or sad-sack pity, but rather through *a surplus capacity for sensual conductance*. The *frisson* that marked these encounters would come to exceed the subject-object relations that instigated them, and would play a crucial role in the dissemination of the practice among novitiates.

This is the story that emerges from the documents known as “The Kitiwake Dossier,” the body of documentation with which we will be concerned in this essay. In moving toward these materials, and amid them in these last years, I suppose I have come to think of myself as, in some small way, enacting a version of the story they tell. It is very much the case that these charismatic sources drew me to themselves, and — or so it seemed for a while — drew me in along with others with whom I thought I was sharing in this research.⁽³⁾ These others, however, have since fallen away, leaving me unsure as to what, exactly, I thought was happening all along. This, as I hope to show, is very much the fate of the figure who will be our subject in these pages. To her, and what she left behind, let us now turn.

(3) This project began as part of the “Working Group on Libidinal Problems,” which has since disbanded.

THE KITTIWAKE DOSSIER

THE contents of the Kittiwake Dossier might well have gone undiscovered, if not for a fortuitous encounter at a sidewalk sale near the Mall Studios in Hampstead, London in the summer of 2007. While out for a Sunday stroll, two researchers came upon the following contents bundled in a piece of broadcloth: one dog-eared copy of a *Plan de Paris par Arrondissement*, one ladies' glove of sky-blue kidskin, several napkins cicatrixed with inscrutable diagrams, a set of pages torn from the June 1934 issue of the Surrealist-run magazine *Documents*, a turn-of-the-century anthology of medieval poets, and twelve letters addressed to one "Dear Whippoorwill" and signed "Kittiwake."

To call the discovery of this bundle "fortuitous" is already to traduce its contents and, at the same time, to point to the heart of their troubling matter. For what these items suggest is something that has long been a point of conjecture for ESTAR(SER), namely, the presence of Parisian Surrealists within the Order of the Third Bird. But so insistent was that conjecture, so excessively reasonable (indeed so improbable had the absence of positive documentary confirmation become), that the Kittiwake Dossier may consequently be regarded with some suspicion — its alibis so plentiful that one suspects it doubly of the crime. The crisscrossings of fortuity and fate, chance and causation, coincidence and plot — these form the matrix of the Dossier. These crossings are redoubled in the tale it spins of Surrealist endeavors, and in the analysis I will, in turn, spin around it.

But we get ahead of ourselves. The Dossier offers not just evidence of contact, but also the fruit thereof: a new, so-called "Plein-Air" protocol, apparently devised in an effort to merge the Order's general tendencies with the specifically Surrealist praxis of urban *errance*, and the privileging of dissociative conditions thought to facilitate spontaneous irruptions of trans-conscious possibility. That protocol, the circumstances of its creation, and its residues in the canonical explications of the Surrealist "found object," will be the focus of what follows. At issue? A practice in which the aggregation of participants around a specific object ("flocking") is itself, apparently, an emergent phenomenon — unplanned, aleatory, automatic.

Before proceeding, one might recognize that the contents of the Kittiwake Dossier are rather anomalous in the W-Cache, which generally houses evidence of encounters with existing *volées* (i.e., practicing groups of the Order). Kittiwake, by contrast, appears to be writing to one such *volée* in Hampstead of her *attempts to "initiate"* the Parisian Surrealists — to establish, that is, a new *volée* among them. In other words, it appears that "Kittiwake" sets out to effect a "foundation," in the language of cenobitic monasticism (to which we will return). References in the Dossier to what appears to have been a "training manual" for the inculcation of the Practice (which does not survive in any known W-Cache repository, to the best of my knowledge), as well as to a second heretofore undocumented protocol (described here below as the "Penelope Protocol") only begin to reveal the broad field of potential research that lies before us. For those wishing to understand how *volées* do (and do not) form, these materials will be of the utmost interest.

We have begun to scratch the surface. Let us continue to scratch this archival itch: the enraccination of the Order in Paris *surréaliste*.

BIOGRAPHY

WHO, then, was Kittiwake? On the basis of several traces in the Dossier — among them, the dedication in the enclosed copy of *Récits extraits des poètes et prosateurs du Moyen Âge* to "mon P. E." and the anomalous signature on one letter (dated March 12, 1935) of "Poppy" — it seems most likely that our penwoman was Josephine "Poppy" Everleigh. Born Josephine Sinclair in Huddersfield, Yorkshire in 1903, Poppy showed an early aptitude for watercolors and drawing. Her name appears twice in local papers as a charming young entrant in the provincial art fairs, and indeed her talent must have been sufficiently patent to convince her parents to allow their only child to enroll at the Leeds School of Art in 1920. It was likely there that Poppy first met the sculptors Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, who enrolled in 1919 and 1920 respectively. While no traces of Poppy's juvenilia remain, one might tentatively identify her in several photographs now housed in the archives of the Leeds Arts University (as the School later came to be named) {FIG 13.1}.



FIG 13.1

“POPPY” EVERLEIGH (LIKELY BACK ROW, THIRD FROM LEFT)

Points of convergence and sympathy between the Surrealist movement and the Order of the Third Bird motivated Everleigh’s keen (and star-crossed) efforts to convert the Parisian Surrealists to the communal and ritual practice of sustained attention.

Courtesy of Leeds Arts University.

Shortly thereafter, Poppy was introduced to a young journalist by the name of Sefton Everleigh. It appears they married after a short courtship, and enjoyed an even more abbreviated phrase of matrimonial harmony before Sefton went abroad to cover politics for the *Leeds Intelligencer*, his byline appearing in articles posted from no fewer than twelve different countries before the decade was up. It is unclear whether Poppy accompanied him during these travels. More likely, she remained in England, a satellite member of the community of artists that settled in the Mall Studios in Hampstead in the late 1920s, including her former schoolmates Hepworth and Moore. Decades later, the art historian and literary critic Herbert Read, himself a resident of the Studios in the mid-1930s, would suggestively refer to the Studios as a “nest of gentle artists.”⁽⁴⁾ It may be there that Poppy fell in with the Order, and it may also be the Order’s presence that prompted Read’s felicitous description. Ultimately, we imagine Poppy convinced enough of the depths of the Practice that she became its — seemingly self-nominated — ambassador across the channel.

Poppy drops out of the record in the second half of the 1920s, but it is probable that she made at least one trip to the Continent during these years to meet Sefton in Paris, where he had settled briefly in 1928. Her visit would then have coincided with the first solo exhibition of the English artist Roland Penrose, who later organized the first Surrealist International Exhibition in London in 1936, and who by then had already met a number of the Surrealists through his wife, the poet and Surrealist “muse” Valentine Boué. It was perhaps through this chain of Franco-British acquaintance that Poppy first encountered the other “P. E.” of this tale, the poet Paul Éluard, as well as the writer, critic, and imperious impresario of the Surrealists, André Breton.

(4) Herbert Read, “A Nest of Gentle Artists,” *Apollo* 77 (September 1962): 565–69. Another possible line of encounter with the Order passes through Sefton’s family. His father, James Everleigh (1842–1931), was associated with the National Peristeronic Society, an association of “Pigeon Fanciers” active in London in the late Victorian period, a community known to have harbored associates of the Order. See Eigil zu Tage-Ravn, “The Lyell Slip: Evidence of Bird Practices in the Social Circles of the Philoperisteron, London, ca. 1879,” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER) New Series* v, Vol. 3 (2013): 44–53. This essay was just reprinted in an interesting edited volume: Julius von Bismarck, Julian Charrière, and Eric Ellingsen, eds., *Some Pigeons Are More Equal Than Others* (Zurich: Lars Müller, 2015).

The Parisian Surrealists had by then developed a robust and eccentric practice of attention that bears a tantalizing resemblance to the Order's customs. In fact, the Surrealists had not only developed such a practice, but had written it into the central works of the movement. One might name, for instance, the first section of Louis Aragon's *Paysan de Paris* (1926), in which the poet wanders the Passage de l'Opéra, and finds himself transfixed before an apparition in the window of a caning store. Rounding a corner in the galleria, he discovers a vitrine doused in green light, a vision that initiates a gripping hallucination of an underwater scene — an "activation," as the Order's acolytes would have it, of the vitrine's objects through the sustained application of Aragon's attention.⁽⁵⁾ This silent observation establishes one of the primary mechanisms by which the Surrealists reenchant their city, through the "profane illuminations" described by Walter Benjamin, which discharged the revolutionary energies latent in the mundane or outdated detritus of modern life.⁽⁶⁾

It is this mechanism, this *spellbound attention*, that differentiates Surrealist *flânerie* from its nineteenth-century, Baudelairean precedent. Rather than be pressed forward by the stream of progress, the Surrealist is halted in its eddies; if he adapts to his environment, it is not in the current of the swift and the fungible, but rather like a bit of reanimated flotsam suspended in electrostatic trance — a water-strider stock still, a mesmerized chimera. Readers will surely sense, in this posture, something of the Order of the Third Bird, particularly as its associates suddenly stop all, and direct their attention fixedly to marginal or marginalized objects. Moreover, Aragon's relative fixity before the vitrine suggests the Order's propensity to choreograph its encounters as a "halted passage." As with Aragon, Birdish aesthetics takes the form of a provisional rootedness before the object — a *wakame*-like wavering before the work for the duration of their practice.⁽⁷⁾

(5) Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, translated by Simon Watson Taylor (London: Picador, 1971 [1926]), p. 36.

(6) Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978).

(7) Relevant here: James Laughlin, *The Bird of Endless Time* (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon, 1989). But compare the earlier study of duration and Bird practices: Eugene A. LeFebvre and Richard C. Birkebak, "A Flight-Time Integrator for Birds," *The Auk* 84,

Paysan de Paris contains an even more suggestively Birdlike occasion in its second half, in which three Surrealist noctambulists — Aragon, Breton, and Maurice Noll — come upon a statue in the Parc des Buttes Chaumont. Supernaturally animated by their attention, the statue begins to hold forth on the status of his fellow "bird charmers," stone and bronze men praying to a "bird-god" for a benediction on their petrified kind.⁽⁸⁾ This collective conjuration — the animated statue speaks not only *to*, but, in its manner of occupying one of the most intense passages in the second half of Aragon's novel, *through* the Surrealists — quite evidently echoes the Order's central metempsychotic seductions. It is also but one in an extensive collection of instances in which birds are invoked by the Surrealists. By way of a very partial inventory of this generalized Surrealist "bird-veneration," one might name: Max Ernst's alter ego, "Loplop, Superior of the Birds" (first introduced in his collage novel *La femme 100 têtes* [1929]); the countless nightingales, sparrows, crows, and cocks that populate the poems of Paul Éluard, René Crevel, Tristan Tzara, or Benjamin Péret; the Oceanian bird effigies on the wall of André Breton's atelier; and Apollinaire's veritable *cortège* of avifauna. It was Apollinaire who first named "Surrealism," baptizing it under the name of the bird: the movement, he wrote, was born of a century "changé en oiseau."⁽⁹⁾ The bird appears so frequently that one scholar has called it the "major constant of the surrealist bestiary."⁽¹⁰⁾ Indeed, the conspiratorial mind might suspect that the Order had roosted in France far in advance of Poppy's arrival, perhaps extending its motifs into the imagery of the Surrealists through some long-occulted wing.

n°1 (1967): 124–28 (reprinted in an expanded form under the same title in *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* Second Series III, Vol. 5 [1968]: 18–32). On *wakame* and kinetics: Tadaharu Watanabe and Kazutosi Nisizawa, "The Utilization of Wakame," *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* DP 10 (*Hydrobiologia* 116–17, n°1 [1984]): 106–11.

(8) Aragon, *Paris Peasant*, pp. 186–94.

(9) This is from line 44 of his 1913 poem "Zone," for which, see his *Alcools* (Paris: Galimard, 2013 [1920]), p. 9.

(10) Claude Maillard-Chary tracks this "ornithological emphasis" in Surrealist texts, noting that of the thirty-nine animals composing the Surrealist animal canon, twenty-one are winged creatures. Claude Maillard-Chary, *Le Bestiaire des surréalistes* (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1994), p. 11.

POPPY *en Plein Air*

~

WHEN next we meet Poppy, she is on the Continent. At this point, a brief précis of the contents of the letters in the Dossier is apposite. The first two letters — dated November 22, 1932, and January 5, 1933 — relate “Kittiwake’s” arrival in Paris and her pursuit of the Surrealists. Composed on stationery from the Cyrano, a café located at Place Blanche, they relate what appear to be her early successes. Poppy explains that she chose the Cyrano on the basis of its proximity to André Breton’s home, and that after only a few idle afternoons, she had succeeded in catching the eye of the man himself. Invited to join a rotating cast of Surrealists and fellow travelers, Poppy’s letters recount conversations that turned on the Surrealists’ avid research into the “object of symbolic functioning” (the phrase is Salvador Dalí’s). She describes these objects with some skepticism: gloves and shoes and shells and sugars, arrayed in compositions Poppy characterizes as “rebuses to be unlocked only by the babble of a toddler.”

Her wariness obscures, here, the manifest common ground between the Surrealists’ fascinations and the Order’s faith in the generative capacities of objects — both groups had in view a socially transformative “engagement,” premised on the idiosyncratic application of *attention*. The Surrealist photographer Claude Cahun articulated the consequences of such engagements in a 1936 article titled “Beware of Domestic Objects.” Cahun underscored the potential of certain modified and rarefied contemporary objects (such as tweezers usable under a microscope) to overthrow the oppressive mantle of the status quo; although they, too, were simple “commodities,” they contained within them the capacity to “split apart our *actualité*.”⁽¹¹⁾ Through interacting with these objects, she prophesied, “[t]he chain of forced, brutalizing labor, the gold brake of the passions, will be broken and broken again” — an anarchic and utopian goal that could be hastened through activities like the so-called “*jeu de l’escar-bille*,” or “grit game,” wherein a viewer uses a hand-mirror to focus her attention on a set of small items.⁽¹²⁾ Attentional exercises are thus part and parcel of a program of Surrealist activity seen as immediately liberating and ultimately revolutionary.

(11) Claude Cahun, “Prenez garde aux objets domestiques,” *Cahiers d’art* 1–2 (1936): 43. One of Cahun’s earlier pseudonyms was “Claude Courlis,” meaning “Claude Curlew.”

(12) *Ibid.*, p. 46.

More generally within the movement at this time, the production of Surrealist objects was central to this program. By 1936, the Surrealist object was elaborated as both an artistic and a critical project that would span the technical and the organic, the artistic and the found, the outmoded and the futuristic, the model and the remnant.⁽¹³⁾ Yet it began more modestly, with André Breton’s stated desire to “put into circulation some oneiric and para-oneiric objects” as a means of communication, in a fashion similar to automatic poetry, between the individual subconscious and a collective unconscious.⁽¹⁴⁾ This aspiration marked a new orientation of the avant-garde to the commodity, yet it also expressed a new relationship to the object itself: as a prompt to further artistic production, to psychic resolution or, one might say, “realization” — and lastly, to an organic unity with other objects and/or beings.

It is into this milieu, with its dual relation to the object as representation and as catalyst, that Poppy arrived with her intention to organize a new *volée*. Contrary to her — or, perhaps, our — expectations, her path did not prove smooth. In a letter dated to April 23, 1934, Poppy expressed her frustrations in securing the commitment of the Surrealists, “so punctual for their café appointments, but for really nothing else besides.” Her chiding betrays just how little she had succeeded up to that date in mobilizing the energies of the Surrealists for the Order.⁽¹⁵⁾ The failure of her repeated attempts to encourage their participation is recorded in the attendance sheet Kittiwake appends to the letter: “March 28: Musée de l’Homme: five confirmed, two present — both insufferably stewed; April 2: Galerie Charles Raton: seven confirmed, three present; April 6: Musée du Louvre: six confirmed, zero present; April 14: Bibliothèque Nationale: four confirmed, one present, but promptly ushered from the rooms by guards who took offense to his steaming up the picture glass with his breath.

(13) Such a catalog of Surrealist objects appears on the cover of the 1936 *Cahiers d’art*, edited by Christian Zervos, and abundantly illustrated with photographs primarily by Man Ray.

(14) André Breton, *Mad Love*, translated by Mary Ann Caws (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), p. 33.

(15) As with the cenobites, we know that timeliness was a tenet basic to the Order’s practices, integral to its form of life, and thus the Surrealists’ incorrigible tardiness was not merely an offense; it was a rejection of one of the Order’s central modalities — to wit, social synchronization.

Quite the encounter.” Although these telegraphic accounts give us the impression of a disorganized, even infantile group of initiates, the responses may in fact have been intended to mock the presumptuousness of Poppy’s invitations. To the Surrealists, Poppy’s insistence on formal confirmations and scrupulous attendance must have appeared risibly naïve, even reactionary.

Poppy had not gone empty-handed into the enterprise in which she describes herself variously as “emissary,” “delegate,” or even “ambassador” for the Birds (epithets of a piece with that decade of international congresses and high-stakes diplomacy). Indeed, she alludes several times in her letters to Whippoorwill to the so-called “Vol Enc” or “Vee” — doubtless, the lost *Volatilium Enchiridion: A Pragmatic Primer for the Establishment of Foreign Volées*, fragments of which appear in several variants of the *Manual to the Order of the Third Bird* found in the W-Cache. A letter, dated December 12, 1934, comments on a portion of the primer addressing the creation of new practice groups, or *volées*, within preexisting coteries:

Of course I’ve read the fourth subsection of the Vee, but poetic though it may be — the “tuning of two sodalities,” the “revelation across the argent threshold of time or circumstance” — it isn’t so instructive, I find. Perhaps its fault is that it is too ethnographic: the given “sodality” always looks to be engaged in some primitive rite or another, unaware of its eccentricities. But what is one to do with a group accustomed to recounting its own peculiarity, a group already writing about their enchantments — already, I mean, *making something of them?*⁽¹⁶⁾

Poppy appears to have hit upon the crux of her difficulties with the Surrealists. The very affinities that prepared the ground for their convergence also made it, in some sense, gratuitous.

Ever set on succeeding, however, Poppy innovated. In her following letter (dated June 18, 1935) she writes, “We have taken our exercises into the streets, to see what might come of *plein-air* atten-

(16) Kittiwake to Whippoorwill, December 12, 1934, Kittiwake Dossier, Folder 3, W-Cache.

tion. I thought it worth a shot to work an Action into their constant *questing* — and it looks to be faring better.” (We may note, in passing, the oblique relation of “questing” to the Surrealist *errance*, a practice of urban “drifting,” subsequently theorized by the Situationist International as the *dérive*.)⁽¹⁷⁾ Poppy’s letter continues:

At the appointed hour, we gathered in the Place de Clichy — though “gathered” isn’t the word for it. No, I should instead say that we drifted, some of us, gusted this way and that. Or else scuttled over the paving stones, like old vegetables abandoned after the market has picked up and gone. One man had the hollow, beatific look of Joan of Arc. Another, sinister in his concentration, glowered at the knees of passers-by. What a strange set we made... We watched and did not watch each other. Rather, the watching passed between our bodies, not our eyes — it was a *charge*, Whippoorwill, and we bore it on our flesh! And then suddenly, it was clear: the object of our attention. As it drew us in like a Spanish dancer, we revolved like the undulating hem of its skirt. The pace quickened, as if centripetally, you see, and then seemed to slacken all at once. [illegible] tension gone slack. This persisted several minutes, until we settled in our places — not a line at all, but a precise formation, all alertness.

To the casual reader, the scene described by Poppy may appear to bear little resemblance to the modalities of the Order. Yet despite its disorderly and, notably, eroticized account, we hold that it is none other than the initial experiment of what may be henceforth called the “Plein-Air Protocol.”

A discussion of the schematic rendering of this protocol can wait no longer. It is the key to what is surely the strangest item in the Kittiwake Dossier — the volume of the *Récits extraits des poètes et*

(17) Scenes of wandering the city in Breton’s *Mad Love* and Aragon’s *Paris Peasant* provide urban correctives to the proto-*dérive* conducted by Aragon, Breton, Max Morise, and Roger Vitrac in 1924, in which the group trudged drearily through the countryside around Blois, their arbitrarily selected point of departure. See: Emma Cocker, “Desiring to Be Led Astray,” *Papers of Surrealism* 6 (Autumn 2007): 1–29.

prosateurs du Moyen Âge. Initial examination of this volume had taken it, by virtue of its inscription, to have functioned as a sentimental token for Poppy. Yet the obvious was lying in plain sight, as it were, and only a page away. On the interleaf, we find a hastily sketched object, bearing a resemblance to the monument to Charles Fourier which was located in the Place de Clichy {FIG 13.2}. This vague shape is iterated four times, surrounded with a smattering of X-es that alter their position with regard to it, like notations in an inscrutable football play. These sketches are accompanied by a numbered list that describes, doubtless, four “phases”: *pérégrination*, *circumambulation*, *divagation*, and *association*.⁽¹⁸⁾

All four terms refer explicitly to manners of walking, a common activity of the Surrealists (to say nothing of the urban denizen in general), here divided in a novel fashion into a sequence of attitudes. The notes under each attitude seem to document a walk segmented into specific choreo-cognitive stages, from the “wandering abroad” (peregrination) to the more explicitly engaged “encircling” (circumambulation), to the straying step (divagation), and at last to the gathering or structuring assembly (which Poppy elsewhere refers to as “synode-ation,” a neologism).⁽¹⁹⁾ These stages evoke, at the very least, a novel ordering of Surrealist *errance*. One might even hazard that they offer a dialectic of the *dérive*.⁽²⁰⁾

In sum, we appear to have at hand documentation of a novel protocol that casts a strange and sudden light on both the Order and the Surrealists. Regarding the Order, we may note firstly that this “Plein-Air Protocol” differs in some important respects from the four-phase or “Standard Protocol.” As readers are no doubt aware, the proceed-

(18) Formerly located near the Place de Clichy, the monument was removed in Vichy’s vast “bronze mobilization campaign” — the reallocation of non-ferrous metals, nominally in service of domestic agriculture, but recognized as an open secret to be harvested for German armaments. Breton’s *Ode to Charles Fourier*, composed while the poet was in Reno finalizing divorce papers, speculates on its disappearance, which Breton could not have confirmed until his return to Paris. Analysis of the annotated map in the Kittiwake Dossier would tentatively seem to confirm the importance of this location, as a number of asterisks are grouped alongside it.

(19) One wonders if the ecclesiastical connotations of the synod are intended ironically in light of the Surrealists’ fervent anti-clerical stance, or whether the diction remains as further evidence of Kittiwake’s unfortunate heedlessness.

(20) An adept of the Order might recognize more canonical forms of protocolized attention in these phases. I refer here to the four-phase “Standard Protocol,” included in



FIG 13.2
MONUMENT TO CHARLES FOURIER, PLACE DE CLICHY

An early twentieth-century postcard showing the monument to Charles Fourier at Place de Clichy in Paris. The sketches in the Kittiwake Dossier mentioned above reproduce the angle of the walking stick, the position of the legs, and the flare of the coat, permitting a surmise that this work was the occasion of an unusual Birdish attentional exercise in the interwar period. The statue does not survive: it was one of many that disappeared during the Nazi occupation, presumably to be melted down for munitions. Fourier himself is thought by some to have been associated with a French *volée* in the 1820s.

W-Cache, F. Howard Taylor Papers.

ings of a conventional practice of the Order follow the *pre-selection* of an object, around which the *volée* convenes to ply their attentional capacities. Indeed, Horton Boxfandall has gone so far as to claim that the selection of the object constitutes a zero-level of the Practice, and has elsewhere argued that no practice of the Order may be properly considered as such without the designation of an object displaying certain qualities (most eminently, a “desperation” or attentional-neediness).⁽²¹⁾ By contrast, in the Plein-Air Protocol (as reconstructed from the materials in the Kittiwake Dossier) the object is only revealed *after* the group has assembled, and *through the agency of that assemblage*. More precisely, the selection of the object and the constitution of the group itself — or what we might want to call the “ordering of the Order” — are emergent relations. Rather than merely submitting passively to the attentions of the *volée*, the object instead can be said to “constitute” its group of attendees. And yet, of course, the *discovery* of the object in this scenario depends on the friction generated by participants wandering in proximity — the bodily “charge” to which Poppy refers — that sets in circulation the choreographic gambit of the Protocol. We shall return to this mechanism shortly.

LOVE AND MADNESS IN THE ST. OUEN FLEA MARKET

POPPIE’S instincts for a Plein-Air Protocol appear to have been sound. For it seems that the Surrealists’ “constant questing” served up the essential binding function that her earlier invitations could not perform. Surrealist questing, as we will see, encouraged attachments

the *Manual* as well as in a number of its variants, in which initiates are instructed to guide their attention through four attitudes that execute what some have suggested is a dialectical movement, wherein “thesis” and “antithesis” phases (observation and denial, or acceptance and rejection) are completed by a final “synthesizing” movement. See: Edmund Horst Hoberman, “Quiet Economies: Dialectical Attention and/of the Other,” *New Journal of Arcane Thought* (Spring 2008): 212–48. I am certainly aware of currents of resistance that have discouraged emphasis on this “pseudo-Hegelian” interpretation of the core Practice of the Birds (e.g., Cisco T. Laertes, “The Eads Sublation: Fly-Fishing, Kentucky Hegelianism, and Evolutionary Theory in American Bird Practices, 1821–1889,” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* New Series III, Vol. 5 [2008]: 368–54), but I am not persuaded.

⁽²¹⁾ Horton Boxfandall, “Selection Strategies of the Order of the Third Bird,” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* DP 22 (*Society for Esthetic Actualizers*, single issue, 1996): 15–23. See also by the same author: “On the Nature of Selection Strategies,” *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* New Series III, Vol. 3 (2007): 54–103.

to others no less than to objects, and therefore furnished precisely the attitude missing in Poppy’s earlier attempts to forge Birdish fellowship. Consider, for instance, the following statement by Breton himself: “[M]y eagerness to wander *in search* of everything... keeps me in mysterious communication with other open beings, as if we were suddenly called to assemble.”⁽²²⁾ The convergence — however unintuitive — of what Poppy calls “convocation” and aimless searching was perhaps the core insight contained in Poppy’s decision to move Actions “into the streets,” where her own calls to assembly might finally be heeded.

Breton records this observation of a “mysterious communication with other open beings” in his 1937 novel *Mad Love*, where it serves as the prefatory lines to the now famous scene staged in the St. Ouen flea market — the canonical instance of the “chance encounter” in the Surrealist literature. It is worth reviewing it in detail, not merely because it vividly evidences the vibration of the Plein-Air Protocol through the core of Surrealism’s self-historicizing, but because its earlier and nearly identical version appeared in 1934, in the very same pages torn from the magazine *Documents* that we find within the Kittiwake Dossier. (We may assume that the pages stand in evidence, to Whippoorwill back in England, of Poppy’s Actions.)

Breton recounts how, in the spring of 1934, he set out to St. Ouen with Alberto Giacometti. The Swiss sculptor that season had been working on his enigmatic *Invisible Object*, a plaster figure approximately five feet tall, enthroned within an armature (not unlike the idol from the Solomon Islands that the artist had observed at the Ethnographic Museum of Basel) and holding her hands before her chest as if to present some absent object.⁽²³⁾ The head, Breton notes, had stymied the artist for many months.⁽²⁴⁾

⁽²²⁾ Breton, *Mad Love*, p. 25. These key passages, with their illustrations, originally appeared in an essay published in *Documents* in 1934, titled “Equation of the Found Object.”

⁽²³⁾ Reinhard Hohl, *Alberto Giacometti* (New York: The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, 1974), p. 22. See also Rosalind Krauss’s careful appraisal of this reference, as well as the sculpture more broadly, in: Rosalind Krauss, “No More Play,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 45–47, fn. 10. The figure also has a kind of “plate” attached to the lower legs, as if the shins of the almost-kneeling figure were guarded by a plank.

⁽²⁴⁾ And nor, in fact, would it cease to stump him. Shortly after the completion of *Invisible Object*, Giacometti hired a model to pose for a bust, initially intending to spend several weeks at the task. Breton reportedly dismissed this activity by scoffing, “But everyone

It was thus fitting that the first object to attract them in St. Ouen was a peculiar half-mask, “striking in its rigidity as well as in its forceful adaptation to a necessity unknown to us,” its eye holes shuttered by a dozen thin horizontal slats {FIG 13.3}.⁽²⁵⁾ The events are as follows: after some deliberation, including a brief conversation with the vendor, Giacometti eventually purchased the mask and, as Breton’s narrative goes on to claim, the face of his *Invisible Object* would later come to resemble it. Then, as Breton and Giacometti continued on, they came upon a second object: a wooden spoon of “peasant fabrication,” with a small boot affixed to its handle, likewise purchased {FIG 13.4}. This was subsequently understood by Breton to answer to his desire for an oneiric object inspired by a fragment of a “waking sentence” that consisted of the phrase “*le cendrier Cendrillon*,” or Cinderella ashtray.⁽²⁶⁾ Breton had several times asked Giacometti to fabricate this object, but the sculptor had neglected to execute it. It was only after returning from the market, and placing the spoon before him, that Breton recognized its connection to his waking sentence, and saw in it the answer to his unsatisfied request. Looking upon, or one might say, *attending to* the spoon, Breton “suddenly saw it charged with all the associative and interpretive qualities which had remained inactive while I was holding it. It was clearly changing right under my eyes.”⁽²⁷⁾ The spoon itself took on the silhouette of a dance slipper, the wood took on the transparency of glass, and the whole seemed capable of moving autonomously — just like the pumpkin-carriage in the fairy tale. “The marvelous slipper potential in the modest spoon” thereby assumed the moral of the Cinderella story itself, and provided closure previously unimagined, and by means previously unimaginable, to Breton. “A perfect organic unity had been reached,” Breton concludes.

knows what a head is!” — occasioning Giacometti’s rupture with the Surrealists. The Swiss artist would then spend the next thirty-one years falsifying Breton’s jibe.

⁽²⁵⁾ Breton, *Mad Love*, p. 28.

⁽²⁶⁾ The “waking sentence,” or *phrase de réveil*, is described by Breton as the “phrase that taps on the window,” seemingly external to one’s mood or mind yet quietly jolting one to attention. In their seemingly impersonal or even ready-made character, such phrases recall the function of obsolete or cast-off objects for the Surrealists — as external echoes of internal or unconscious life. *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁽²⁷⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

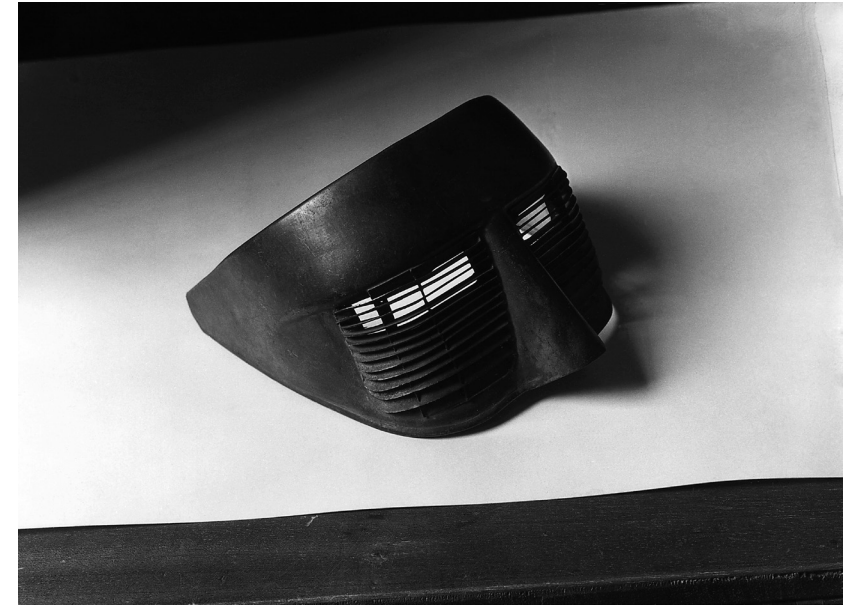


FIG 13.3
THE HALF-MASK OF *Mad Love*

Together at the St. Ouen flea market in Paris, André Breton and Alberto Giacometti wandered seeking answers to questions posed by life and art in the half-illegible script of desire — until they found this mask.

Photograph by Man Ray.
Courtesy of the Man Ray Trust. © Man Ray Trust / ADAGP, 2020.

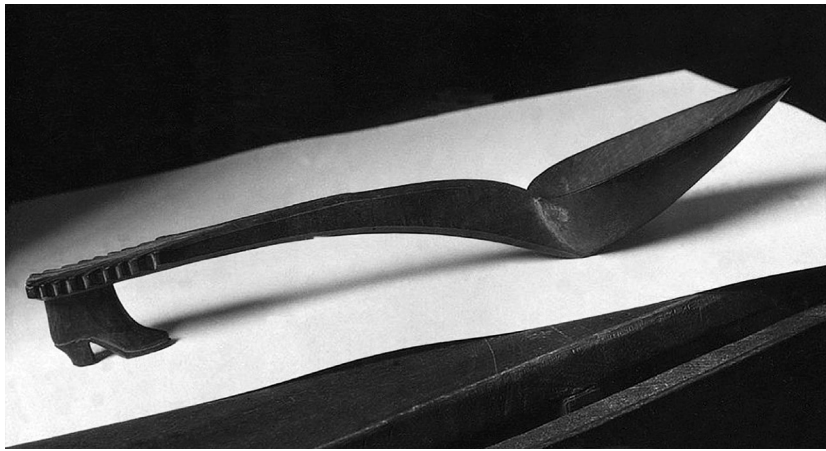


FIG 13.4
THE CINDERELLA SPOON

Before relating the discovery of this curious object at St. Ouen, André Breton wrote in *Mad Love* (1937), “eagerness to wander *in search* of everything... keeps me in mysterious communication with other open beings, as if we were suddenly called to assemble.”

Photograph by Man Ray.
Courtesy of the Man Ray Trust. © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, 2020.

Breton, however, does not leave off the account there. This perfect, “organic” unity — though it may seem to be achieved through a certain conjunction of time, space, man, and object, and elaborated *post factum* through psychedelic ekphrasis — required another element, at his elbow all along: Giacometti, or more broadly, as Breton put it, “[t]he sympathy existing between two or several beings.” He continues:

This sympathy inscribes in the realm of favorable happenstance... encounters which when they take place for one being alone are not taken account of... For individuals, as for societies, friendship and love, the relations created by the community of suffering and the convergence of demands, are alone capable of favoring this sudden dazzling combination of phenomena which belong to independent causal series.⁽²⁸⁾

The scene in the flea market is thus significant not only for its account of the discovery and operations of the found object, but also for making vigorous claims as to the communal energies of the Surrealist collective, in a manner heretofore sublimated in the Manifestoes of Surrealism. Powers formally attributed to the dream or to the lover — that is, to one’s own unconscious or to the object of desire — are given over here to the *community*, whose presence prepares the ground for the “perfect organic unity,” that dazzling realization of the marvelous within the commonplace.

In what might serve as a stirring description of the gathering of members of the Order before an object, Breton writes, “I would be tempted to say that...two people walking near each other constitute a single influencing body, *primed*.”⁽²⁹⁾

The necessity of this “corporealized” community for the realization of the marvelous, however, has gone largely unremarked by historians of Surrealism. In fact, one might argue that Breton himself never perfectly absorbed its full implications. After all, in his further elucidation of the found object in *Mad Love*, this special category of thing is described as the correlate to automatic writing — which is

(28) *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

(29) *Ibid.*, p. 32.

to say a spontaneous outpouring of language that bypasses the censure of reason. Unwilled and unrestrained, the resultant text (or, for Breton, the happened-upon found object that is its counterpart in the material world), “bears in itself the solution, symbolic or other, of a problem you have with yourself.... Interpretive delirium begins only when man, ill-prepared, is taken by a sudden fear in the *forest of symbols*.”⁽³⁰⁾ Breton’s reconsideration of the found object on these highly individuated, even solipsistic, grounds has authorized scholars’ neglect of the embodied, and specifically “corporate,” *community* as the cornerstone of the found object’s marvelous properties. But we do well to recover that, at its origin, the power of the found object lay in an encounter that unfolded *with others*.

The question remains as to why what Poppy, and we, may call “convocation” — two or more people walking beside one another as a single, primed body — should emerge so clearly, and so anomalously, in Breton’s canonical anecdote. It is our belief that the Kittiwake Dossier both attests to and accounts for the ambivalent status of an embodied community for Surrealism in the 1930s. For, as we recall, Poppy arrived within a Parisian avant-garde whose own acts of practical aesthetics and avian themes preceded her, and very likely greased the wheels conveying the Order’s attentional protocols. Yet it was precisely the solidarity of the *volée* that Poppy struggled to establish, and which compelled her, as her letter suggests, to stage Actions of the Order in the street in 1934. And it was precisely the critical and metaphysical potential of such an Action that emerges in *Mad Love*.

Was the visit of Breton and Giacometti to St. Ouen one such Action? Several details in Breton’s account might appear to indicate that it was — or, at the very least, that it was influenced by the sensibilities and protocol-structures of the Order.

Firstly, the choreography of the afternoon aligns with both the four-phase structure of the preponderance of Birdish protocols — and with what could, were one to make the interpretive leap, be indicated by the four “walking” phases briefly described above. The two Surrealists are first “primed” as a pair by their stroll through the market. Objects “flo[w] by, without accident, nourishing the medita-

(30) Ibid., p. 15. The reference is to Baudelaire’s poem “Correspondances”: “La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers / Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles; / L’homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles / Qui l’observent avec des regards familiers.”

tion that this place arouses, like no other, concerning the precarious fate of so many little constructions.”⁽³¹⁾ Here we may recall what the Order calls the phase of “Encounter” — and the “free wandering,” the “what have we here?” and peregrinating spirit that typifies the open and inquisitive attitude required in this initial phase. Then, coming upon the mask, Breton and Giacometti fall into a sustained period of observation, relayed by Breton in his careful description of the object: “The flatness of the actual face, outside of the nose, accentuated by the lines leading away, rapid and delicate, to the temples, joined to a second compartmentalization of the sight by strips perpendicular to the preceding ones, and narrowing gradually, starting from the curve, lent to the top of this blind face the haughty attitude, *sure of itself*, and unshakable, which had struck us from the start.”⁽³²⁾ This sustained and more or less direct observation, with the exception of a touch of anthropomorphizing color toward the end, is rather unusual for Breton, whose writing so often precipitates into interpretive delirium. Conducted, as Breton is careful to note, in the absence of any certain knowledge of the mask’s function, this attention to the object sidesteps the usual attitudes of interpretation, judgment, or “*studium*” — and is, I think, palpably legible as the second phase of the practice, “Attending.” It is interesting to note that Breton’s semantic encircling of the mask also echoes the circumambulatory posture of “hovering interest” that is native to flea-market commerce.

The two friends’ contemplation is then interrupted by the vendor of the mask, who can be understood to initiate the phase known to Birds as “Negation.” Oblivious to the mask’s “remarkably definitive character,” he suggests that it might be *painted and repurposed as a lantern*. This blatant annulment of both the mask’s character and its function is accompanied by a physical turning-away — a “divagation” from the place of interest, which in turn is reversed in a final phase. “Giacometti, usually very detached when it came to any thought of possessing such an object, put [the mask] down regretfully,” Breton relays, and goes on to explain that his friend, “seemed as we walked along to entertain some fear about its next destination, and finally retraced his steps to acquire it.” I would argue that *acquisition* here can be understood as an act of “commingling” (through a *becoming-*

(31) Ibid., p. 28.

(32) Ibid., pp. 28–30.

property) that accords with the culminating and fourth Birdish phase (“Realization”). For evidence of the incorporation of this object into an artwork, and the extension of Giacometti’s relation with it into the future (perhaps its true Realization, in the deepest Birdish sense), one need only examine *Invisible Object* in the aftermath of the whole episode: the work that had apparently hung in limbo, unresolved, has achieved its canonical form with the addition of *an aquiline face, broad but squat, and for all the world like a half-mask*.

But there are other reasons for which one properly suspects that this scene is permeated with Birdish dynamics. Not only does the scenography reprise the choreographic phases of a Bird Action, but Breton’s whole account of the objects themselves feels charged with Birdish preoccupations. For instance, Breton’s description of the effect the objects they encountered at St. Ouen had on him and on Giacometti is suggestive of the Order’s basic orientation to a given work. “The two objects...,” he writes, “which imposed with themselves this *abnormally prolonged sensorial contact*, induced us to *think ceaselessly of their concrete existence*, offering to us certain very unexpected *prolongations of their life*.”⁽³³⁾ Breton’s diction here — articulating the aesthetic encounter in terms of extension rather than intensity, as a “prolongation” occurring in both space and time over the course of the encounter — differs markedly from the dynamics of shock inherited from Dadaism (and embodied in the aesthetics of montage). What we have here emphasizes instead continuity and sympathy with objects of attention.⁽³⁴⁾ Perhaps more to the point, however, the similarity of these lines to language found in the 1912 *Manual* of the Order is startling: “A discipline of the senses is pursued. Through *prolonged sensorial contact* [those standing before an object of attention] are solicited to contemplate the *concrete existence* of all constituents of an Action, animate as well as inanimate, singular as well as diffuse.

(33) *Ibid.*, p. 30. My emphasis, translation slightly modified. The original reads: “Les deux objets... dont nous ignorions l’existence quelques minutes plus tôt et qui nous imposaient avec eux ce contact sensoriel anormalement prolongé, nous ramenaient sans cesse à la considération de leur existence concrète, nous livraient aussi certains prolongements, très inattendus, de leur vie.” André Breton, *L’Amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968 [1937]), p. 36.

(34) “Rien de ce qui nous entoure ne nous est objet, tout nous est sujet,” as Breton reflected some years earlier on the subject of André Masson. André Breton, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967 [1928]), p. 47.

Temporary metempsychosis may occur, but must not become permanent.”⁽³⁵⁾ It is not only an idiom that Breton’s description and this fragment share. For, indeed, what is temporary metempsychosis but a “very unexpected prolongation” of an object’s life?

From these two striking parallels — one choreographic, the other expository — we may plausibly conjecture that the scene in the flea market was none other than an Action of Practical Aesthetics patterned on the protocols of the Order. Hidden in plain sight in a canonical text of the Surrealist program lies evidence of Poppy’s Surrealist exercises of “*plein-air* attention.”

A CALL TO ORDER

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WE APPEAR to have on our hands a success story, which makes what follows all the more perplexing. For, after the letter of June 1934, there is a long gap in the correspondence, at the end of which comes a melancholic page that we may assume by its references to contemporary political events to have been written in 1937 or 1938. In an unsteady hand, Poppy informs Whippoorwill of her imminent return to London, claiming an acute case of legendary psychasthenia.⁽³⁶⁾ She then addresses the matter of her unfinished business:

You’ve hardly had a word from me this year, I know
— and though I’d readily blame it on the chaos of nations,
I think it is instead the limits of my own powers that
have made my pen run dry. For there is little to report,
no sense any more in trying to corral these young men,
who are not so young anymore; I myself feel I’ve aged

(35) *Manual to the Order of the Third Bird* (1912), W-Cache. My emphasis.

(36) Here she references Roger Caillois’s famous disquisition on insect camouflage, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia” (1935), which argues that the phenomenon, contrary to popular belief, is not a defensive tactic but arises out of an impulse toward self-annihilation. The camouflaged insect, much like the schizophrenic, effectively loses its bearings in its surroundings; space assimilates it, and eventually replaces it. “Then the body separates itself from thought,” Caillois writes, “the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses.” Roger Caillois, “Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia,” translated by John Shepley in *October: The First Decade 1976–1986*, edited by Annette Michelson et al. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 59–74, at pp. 70–72.

ten years.... Given what we knew before I arrived, my failure here feels all the more pitiful. I tried, I could not, [illegible-]pose the Order. I had only begun before it all unraveled.⁽³⁷⁾

Poppy's final admission is bleared by a water stain that has half-blotted that most important component in any question of transmission: the verb by which it is accomplished. She tried, but could not: impose the Order? Expose it? Compose it? Purpose or propose it?

An indication of her meaning may lie in the phrase that follows, "I had only begun before it all unraveled." Let us not be too literal-minded here: while the statement may at first blush appear to comment on her mental state, readers of these *Proceedings* might catch the scent of an alternative explanation in Poppy's woeful conclusion. In Antoinette Poldervaart's compelling analysis of the choreographic dispositions of the Birds, a certain variant held in the W-Cache's collection of Protocol Cards, dubbed the "Penelope Protocol," receives passing mention.⁽³⁸⁾ The four phases of the Protocol are listed as follows:

ENCOUNTER

Walk freely. All threads are loose threads.

ATTENDING

Step forward: *Ordiri*. Be as threads upon the loom.

NEGATING

Step back: Unravel what has been woven.

REALISATION

Step forward: Let warp be woof.

Poldervaart's gloss of these enigmatic directives — which in their earliest form she dates to the early-1870s *volée* embedded in the Bloomsbury circles of the pre-Raphaelite decorative arts firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.— is that foremost they are choreographic indications: the "loose threads" corresponding to free wandering in the environment of the object of attention, the "threads upon the

loom" to the flanking of initiates, and so forth.⁽³⁹⁾ If Poldervaart is correct about the provenance of the Penelope Protocol, one must surmise that the phase of Negation "may amount to a literal undoing. In this light, the meditative act of weaving within the Morris & Co. textile workshop took on the character of the Practice itself; acts of the imagination and of the hands would have occurred in concert."⁽⁴⁰⁾ This, after all, furnishes the most likely explanation for the Latinate "*Ordiri*," which means, of course, "to begin to weave, to lay the warp."

But that is hardly the only meaning of the term. And here we come to what I think must be understood as a crucial hinge in the history of the Birds. I propose that we linger for a moment on the questions of order, ordering, pattern, rule, discipline, and form-of-life that are all in play when we "begin to weave" — when we "lay the warp."

For *ordiri* is not just an act proper to the textile arts; *it is also the etymological origin of the word "order" itself*. In the thirteenth century, *ordiri*, via the Latin *ordo*, came to describe the arrangement of human beings, not merely of thread — in particular, that arrangement known as a *religious* order.⁽⁴¹⁾ The etymological remainder was carried over not only in the "binding together" of individuals through faith, but in the practical nature of the monastic order. The monastery, as Giorgio Agamben has recently noted, was the first place where life was understood as "art" — not as an aesthetic object, but rather as a continuous practice. His study of cenobitic monasticism, *The Highest*

⁽³⁹⁾ "In their earliest form": as with many other protocols in this W-Cache collection, the Penelope Protocol has been subjected to a kind of standardization of language and tone that to some has recalled the firm yet calming directives of an instructor of the yogic arts. The author of this most certainly late-twentieth-century enterprise remains unknown, but it likely had to do with the making of an anthology of protocols for Birdish use. The Penelope Protocol was in relatively wide use in Western Europe in the 1930s–1950s, so it was most likely known to Poppy.

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Poldervaart, "The Choreography of Attention," p. 109.

⁽⁴¹⁾ We may trace, as Agamben does, a notable instance of the usage to the Franciscan Ubertino of Casale: "[Franciscus] in auditu illius verbi in quo Christus, ut dictum est, formam tribuit apostolis evangelicam in vivendo...statum regularem et modum vivendi accepit, predictae norme apostolice per omnia se coactans, et in hoc *ordinem* suum incepit." ("[Francis], on hearing that word in which Christ, as it is said, shows to the apostles the evangelical form in the way he lived... accepted a regular state and mode of living, constraining himself in all things by the apostolic norm that was preached, and in this way he began his *order*.") Emphasis added. Ubertino of Casale, "Ubertini de Casali Opusculum 'Super tribus sceleribus,'" edited by A. Heysse, *Archivium Franciscanum Historicum* 10 (1917): 103–74, at p. 130.

⁽³⁷⁾ Letter from Kittiwake to Whippoorwill, n.d., Kittiwake Dossier, Folder 3, W-Cache.

⁽³⁸⁾ Antoinette Poldervaart, "The Choreography of Attention: Notes from the Protocol Card Catalogue of the Order of the Third Bird," *Proceedings of ESTAR(SER)* New Series (guest-edited by Nanshe Tianshi as *Journal of Transcendent Performance*, 2002): 92–116.

Poverty, is devoted to the explication of this *forma vivendi*. In brief, Agamben observes that monastic life developed through a distinction between “promising the rule” and promising to act *according to the rule* — between, that is, vowing to uphold or obey a legal text (on the one hand) and taking on a way of living (on the other). True or proper monastic behavior was defined negatively, through a penal apparatus implicating spiritual vices rather than particular transgressive acts, and positively, as the adoption of a certain form of life, the “production of a habitus in the will, whose ultimate result will be the establishment of a certain form of common life.”⁽⁴²⁾ (After all, as Wittgenstein has observed, one cannot follow a rule privately; the very observance of it presumes an observing community.)

Agamben, then, rejects the idea that the “purpose” of the rule is the “regulation of the community,” and instead makes a powerful argument that the community is itself the *result of the rule*.⁽⁴³⁾ Cenoby — *koinos bios*, the common life — lies at the origin of rules or protocols that cannot themselves be conceived apart from this “form of life.” For Agamben, such indivisibility reaches its apogee with the Franciscans, for whom the monastic vow is, precisely, an avowal of the coincidence of rule and life.

It is also with the Franciscans that the vow was brought into direct confrontation with the broader order of law and society — more particularly, their vow to poverty, which amounted to a rejection of the Church’s material wealth that threatened to extend to the very goods required for the Order’s basic sustenance. The bull of Pope John XXII, which denied that the use of consumable objects is distinct from their ownership, forced the Franciscans to devise for themselves a “de facto” or “poor use” conception of “their” goods — a posture that effectively placed them outside of the decreed law. But rather than questioning the very grounds of the emergent ecclesiastical laws of property, the Franciscans attempted a kind of work-around or legal fiction: “confining use on the level of a pure practice, as a fictitious series of acts renouncing the law.” In practice, the Order continued to use those goods secured for them through the Holy See, whose institutional status thereby allowed the Order to preserve its apostolic vow to poverty while avoiding its practical consequences.⁽⁴⁴⁾

⁽⁴²⁾ Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 57.

⁽⁴³⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁽⁴⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

This “worked.” But it had what Agamben argues were invidious consequences. Or perhaps it is more correct to say that this solution amounted to a missed opportunity, from Agamben’s perspective: since, as he contends, the issue could have been more productively, more *radically*, resolved by turning back to the notion of habitus described above. “Use,” he writes, “could have been configured as a *tertium* with respect to law and life, potential and act, and could have defined — not only negatively — the monks’ vital practice itself, their form-of-life.”⁽⁴⁵⁾ This *tertium* — this “third use” — has the potential, if properly construed, not only to justify the Franciscans’ means of subsistence, but also to produce the foundations of their common life.

Stated another way, their “order” could have been positively defined as a “third way” of making use of objects — one that seeks neither to own them nor to exhaust them.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Can the same be said, perhaps, for other Orders too? Might some of these — and one in particular — have struggled to become a *third way*?

THIRD USE AMONG THE ORDER, ELSE “ALL THREADS ARE LOOSE THREADS”

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THIS excursus into Franciscan cenoby now completed, we may return to Poppy and the Surrealists, in order to hazard two explanations for her perceived failure durably to convey the Order to Paris — her failure to effect a Birdish “foundation.” The first turns on this notion of a “third use.” The promise of the Plein-Air Protocol lay in its manner of reconfiguring the relationship between an object and the group. To begin to weave together a new *volée*, or a group that conceives of itself within a form-of-life indistinguishable from its commitments, one needed objects configured for a *third use* or, what

⁽⁴⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ The political potential of this *tertium* is clear when one considers the consequences of the papal bull that opposed its formation. For, in arguing that the use of consumable objects amounts to their “ownership,” Pope John XXII can be said to have anticipated the very conditions that drive mass consumption in modern capitalism. *Ibid.*, p. 131. The promise of the “third way” with objects might thus present not only a missed possibility for the Franciscans, but a missed orientation for the anti-capitalist Surrealists. And perhaps for all of us.

amounts to the same thing, one needed to use objects in a *third way*: neither material possession nor interpretive exhaustion, neither the bird that pecks at the painted fruit (believing it to be for its own delectation), nor the bird that flees (believing itself to have understood all there was to be seen). The attitudes that Poppy sought to establish lay in this *tertium*. We are compelled — by and through the allusive accounts in Poppy’s letters — to conceive an alternative to the Order’s conventional relationship to objects: for in the Plein-Air Protocol the object “selects” the *volée*, which reciprocally and simultaneously stages its rule-bound dance around the object. It is the potential inexhaustibility of this cycle that points to the fundamental quality of its dynamic: its *eros*.

The “circulation” of *eros* — from collective to objects and back, from participant to participant — saturated Poppy’s initial account of the Plein-Air Protocol. But there is reason to suspect that it was exactly *eros* that hamstrung everything in the end. A recent accession to the W-Cache of the letters of Mansfield Dalziel — an associate of Roland Penrose and probable member of the Order’s Hampstead *volée* who had been shuttling across the Channel between 1935 and 1937 — contains a mention of a young English woman in Paris who had once frequented the Mall Studios, “hanging around cafés à la *cocotte*, desperately seeking the eyes of those stale revolutionaries.”⁽⁴⁷⁾ Could this be Poppy, reduced in her final years in Paris to banal attempts at seduction? The anxiety of the Plein-Air Protocol is that the object ultimately drops out of view, becoming, as it were, little more than an invisible *occasion* for the “conjunction” of the members of the group. In this scenario, not only the object but the subjects, in their heady convocation, are subjected to a kind of “third use” — a kind of “free play” with each other that is intimate and inexhaustible in equal measure. But this would no longer be an “erotics of the object” or a communal reckoning with the multidimensional infinitude of a work of art, but rather just an erotics *tout court*. And perhaps, in Poppy’s case, a frustrated erotics.

A second, still more disturbing possibility must be broached. And this is that Poppy’s contact with the Surrealists may always have been thusly frustrated. It must be noted that Poppy’s account of the Plein-

⁽⁴⁷⁾ M. Dalziel to Boise Davenport, July 15, 1937, Dalziel Correspondence Collection, W-Cache.

Air Protocol is dated the same month as Breton’s recounting of his experience with Giacometti at the St. Ouen flea market. It stands to reason that Breton would have submitted his article (a version of the material later included in *Mad Love*) to *Documents* at least a month earlier, and if this conjecture is correct it would set the flea-market encounter in April or May of 1934 — *at least one month in advance of Poppy’s experiment*.

The possibility (and we should underscore that it is just a possibility; at this time the exact chronology cannot definitively be established) would be quietly devastating. For this little chronological earthquake puts Poppy’s assertions on shakier ground. The meetings she records all occurred at well-known haunts of the Surrealists; even the institutions Poppy selected for the actions of the Order — the Musée de l’Homme, the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Galerie Charles Ratton — were frequented by them. Might Poppy have only *coincided* with the Surrealists, in charged spaces not unlike the ones her protocol imagines? Might her attempts to recruit them to the Order have been constituted in her letters rather than in the streets of Paris? Might her annotations and sketches, those inscrutable football plays and dance cards of practical aesthesis, have been *plans* rather than records? What must the encounter contain for us to credit it?

CONCLUSION

OF THE ultimate effect of Josephine “Poppy” Everleigh’s time among the Surrealists, little more can presently be said. And whether to judge her excursion in Paris a success (or to dismiss it entirely as naïve mission-mishap) goes beyond the purview of the present study — a purview which it will benefit us to review as we conclude our time with the Kittiwake Dossier.

We set out in this study to unpack, both literally and figuratively, the contents of the Kittiwake Dossier, in an effort better to understand the long-suspected, but never confirmed, relationship between the Order of the Third Bird and the Parisian Surrealists. Analysis of Poppy’s letters to this end led us through some of the primary literature of the Surrealists (most particularly a highly suggestive scene set in the St. Ouen flea market from André Breton’s 1937 *Mad Love*)

and ultimately out into a broader exploration of the means by which the concerns and life-ways of the Order are conveyed. This trajectory revealed two novelties of note for scholars of the Order, one bearing on the core conventions of the Practice itself, the other on the conveyance/dissemination of Birdishness. As for the former, we learned of at least one speculative instance in which *an object “selected” its practitioners*, congregating a small flock of attenders by the elusive charisma of its quotidian, but coruscating, totality. As for the latter, we came to understand, through Poppy’s at times bumbling attempts to enlist Breton and his acolytes to the business of the Birds, the difficulty in transmitting the Practice to an already-formed convocation, one with its own set of allegiances, traditions, and interests — a difficulty marked by the erotic problems that often bedevil the high zones of Birdish ecstasy.

For all the heat and light of the initial sparks that kindled this research, I find myself now raking over the ashes of a fire that has perhaps burned out. Even so, here and there I still discern an ember hot enough to glow — and perhaps even to sear. I hold one before my readers, by way of valediction: it is a modest painting that belongs to a series of works on paper initiated in 1939, just as Poppy would likely have been returning to London. The “Constellation Series,” as it is called, records both the radical dislocation of Joan Miró’s flight from Paris — driven first north to Normandy, then to refuge in Mallorca — and the effervescent networks, real and imagined, that sustained him. Schematic figures are suspended in fields of tapered forms and spangles, at once connected and distinct, some becoming silhouettes, and others eyes, and others mouths. One of the last in the series, painted in July 1941, hangs today in the MoMA. Dominated by a leonine face, the image is densely peopled by creatures whose boundaries give way to the pulse of one primed, unified body — a phenomenon Miró titled, as though in dream-farewell, *The Beautiful Bird Revealing the Unknown to a Pair of Lovers*.

