

Proceedings

OF THE

ESTHETICAL SOCIETY

for TRANSCENDENTAL *and* APPLIED REALIZATION
(*now incorporating the* SOCIETY *of* ESTHETIC REALIZERS)



New Series, Part VII, Supplement

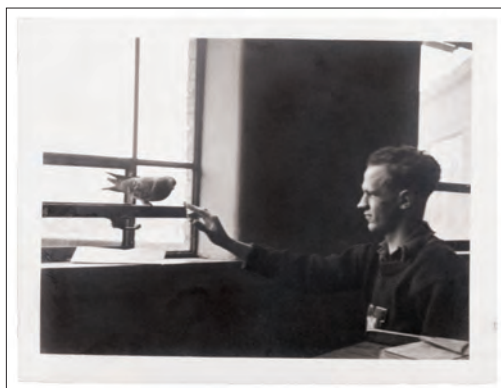
*“A 2016 Joint Symposium ‘Special Report’ from the Working Group on Exhibitions to the Subcommittee on Archives and Storage”
(Continues “Contributions on the ‘W’ Cache and Related Sources”)*

Documents Ostensibly Pertaining to the Origins and Development of
“The Order of the Third Bird”

The Editorial Board of ESTAR(SER) would like to acknowledge the support of its longstanding benefactors (Anonymous, Anonymous, and Anonymous), as well as the faithful subscribers to the Proceedings in its resurrected form. Correspondence should be addressed to individual authors.

PRESENTING AND REPRESENTING THE “W-CACHE”:

*PROBLEMS OF SELECTION, ACCESS, AND DOCUMENTATION IN RELATION
TO THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF THE ORDER OF THE THIRD BIRD*



A Gedenkschrift in honor of “Hogfoot” Milcom (1928–1972)

Collated and authored by
THE ESTAR(SER) WORKING GROUP ON EXHIBITIONS¹

1. The Working Group on Exhibitions consisted of: Catherine L. Hansen, D. Graham Burnett, and Jac Mullen (editorial subcommittee); Alison Burstein (chair, conservation and curation); Caitlin Sweeney (assistant to the chair); Sal Randolph (co-chair, *honoris causa*); Valentina Bonizzi, Mattia Capelletti, Sonali Chakravarti, Jeff Dolven, Steven Duval, Joanna Fiduccia, Agnieszka Gratzka, Parker Head, Sibel Horada, Holen Kahn, Kasia Katarzyna, Hellen Miller, Antonio B. Moreno, Alyssa Moxley, Len Nalencz, Carla Nappi, Rafael S. M. Paniagua, Gabriel Perez-Barreiro, Elena Radice, David Richardson, Justin E. H. Smith, Hermione Spriggs, Yasemin Nur Toksoy, Seçil Yersel, two contributors who have chosen to remain anonymous, and one whose name has been erased on account of fundamental divergence of view and orientation (deep affection notwithstanding — and not withheld).

INTRODUCTION

The pages that follow represent an earnest and collaborative effort to surface some small portion of a significant (if difficult) archive of texts and objects which are in the possession of the research collective known as ESTAR(SER), and by which, we might suggest, those researchers are themselves possessed. Readers of the *Proceedings* will be familiar with this body of sources, the “W-Cache,” whence the vast majority of historical inquiries into the practices of the Order of the Third Bird proceed.² It is to be assumed, therefore, that most of the readers of the present monograph have some acquaintance with the general matter at hand, to wit: 1) that the materials of the W-Cache seem to have been assembled (and reassembled, after periodic deaccessions and new acquisitions) by an individual (or individuals—this no longer seems so clear) who intended to write a synthetic treatment of the “attentional practices” (aesthetical, pious, metempsychotic, sometimes merely psychotic) of the so-called *Avis Tertia* or Order of the Third Bird across its apparently long and very definitely checkered history; 2) that, having failed in this endeavor, he or she or they bequeathed the totality of the W-Cache materials to the researchers of ESTAR(SER), who (after a number of false starts, conflicts, schisms, and realignments) have now for some time worked to bring the tools of critical scholarship to bear on said sources, in the hopes of creating the conditions of possibility for a properly rigorous and sober history of the Order; 3) that the *Proceedings* are rightfully the organ for this labor, and that the text before you represents yet another sally in this direction.

In this specific case, our demanding task has consisted in an effort to mount a small (and “representative,” though see below for the problems associated with this term) *exhibition* of W-Cache materials. What follows, then, can be thought of as a traditional “catalog” for that exhibition, a catalog that, in keeping with convention, features a brief introductory essay, followed by

2. A vexing inconsistency pervades W-Cache documentation, and continues to mar related publishing. From this point forward no ESTAR(SER) documentation treating the W-Cache will see print that fails to make use of the hyphen separating “W” from “Cache” — with the exception of the cover page of the *Proceedings*, which makes use of the older convention that set the “W” off in inverted commas, and which we have elected to retain in that place and only there, by way of a gesture at the diverse traditions that inform our work.

a series of images of the selected exhibition objects, together with associated analytic “captions” containing relevant and informative details.

The authors hope that the present volume, thusly constituted, may give certain interested readers the opportunity to encounter and attend on these objects, and, should it feel appropriate, to turn from them for a time to other matters — if, perhaps, to return to their company again at some later moment.

THE EXHIBITION

Although the airing of select objects from the W-Cache for a general audience is not, strictly speaking, without precedent, the present exhibition — insofar as it endeavors to prepare for public attention a *representative cross-section* of the Cache’s holdings — has posed an altogether unique set of problems. These challenges have, at times, in the course of this work, raised a specter that can be said to haunt the general task to which ESTAR(SER) has, since its inception, committed itself with an extravagant, single-minded zeal.

We might think of the specter in question as possessed of two heads. The first glowers with the frown of betrayal. Which is to say, it has been our concern that in exposing objects (often intended for intramural use) from the W-Cache to indiscriminate public scrutiny (and doing so by means of the very museological conditions that the Order’s practitioners, in their contravening posture of silent and sustained attention, strive continually to subvert), we would risk irreparable damage to the very entity we hoped thereby to bring to wider scrutiny — namely, that elusive confraternity of aesthetes (and anti-aesthetes) whose historical activities the material artifacts of the W-Cache purportedly document. After all, the Order of the Third Bird — if not, to be sure, a “secret society” — would certainly seem to be a self-sequestering body, one that has displayed notable ambivalence concerning the public airing of its doings and tendencies. Were all its private matters aired like so much philosophical (and pragmatical) laundry, we would legitimately confront the question of whether the Order *as such* even existed — or, to put it in less radical terms, could be said to continue to exist. Under such conditions, we would ourselves come to resemble a team of conservationists striving to increase knowledge of an endangered species through bulk vivisection. And this seems quite wrong.

The second spectral head menaces with the visage of fallacy. At issue is the nature of “the representative” as such. Because the identification of representativeness presupposes a synoptic glimpse of the whole (i.e., only once one has seen *what is there* can one determine what is *representative* of what is there), to deem any single set of objects “representative” of the Cache is also to posit, implicitly, a specific account of the Cache as whole — which account, once seen, might reasonably be misconstrued as authoritative, *when in fact no such authoritative inventory or historical account currently exists*.³

The full story of our collective combat, in committee, with this bicephalous avian goblin would tax the patience of even the most patient student of the Order — and would in any case be otiose, in that in the end we were, in a manner of speaking, evacuated *en masse* from said conflict via a rope dropped suddenly into our midst, which we collectively elected to climb to (relative) safety.

We speak of a documentary discovery. The “Archivist’s Introduction” is a 2685-word typescript which would seem to have been produced on a “tractor-feed,” dot-matrix printer such as were in use in business and domestic settings for a relatively brief period in the mid-1980s. A number of characters and diacritical marks have been added in blue ballpoint pen. It is unsigned. It was found with (but not in) the so-called “Finding Aid Folder,” that fascinating collection of partial and conflicting catalog systems, tags, and taxonomies which is the subject of a forthcoming *Proceedings* article. The “Archivist’s Introduction” consists of an essay on the origin and history of the W-Cache itself, composed, it appears, on the occasion of a previous — and hitherto unattested — exhibition of objects from the Cache. (NB: It is not clear that the exhibition in question ever occurred — indeed, it seems likely that it did not). As we read and discussed this remarkable text, we found ourselves variously positioned with respect to its specific claims concerning the W-Cache as a whole. But we were uniformly struck by the opportunity that the document afforded. For the fourteen pages (with tractor-feed margins partially removed) of the “Archivist’s Introduction” — as an

3. It is perhaps here worth noting that there are those who suspect, on the strength of technical arguments that cannot detain us in the present introduction, that any such definitive account is in fact quite impossible. The “Archivist’s Introduction” presented below alludes passingly to this position, but does not elaborate it. For further discussion, see the forthcoming study by the Meta-Archival Working Group, “‘The Finding Aid Folder’: Seeking Order in the Archives of the Order.”

expository text *about* the W-Cache that is found *within* the W-Cache; i.e., a scintillating singularity secreted within its formless proliferation — can be said to constitute a kind of “*self-consciousness*” within the body of the Cache.

Moved by this thought, the exhibition committee decided that we might honorably exit the field of combat with our spectral concerns (dispatching, as it were, two troubling birds with one archival stone), were we simply to reprint the “Archivist’s Introduction” in its totality — in that by doing so, we could be said to have *allowed the W-Cache to speak for itself*, and thereby to proffer “its own understanding” of the materials in our exhibition. We thereby satisfied ourselves that we could resolve all the problems of “representing” the W-Cache simply by reconceiving this unique document, in quasi-anthropomorphic terms, as a “representative” — as an ambassador or *porte-parole* that could speak on behalf of the body from which it hailed.

We therefore present this striking short essay essentially as we have found it, albeit with certain annotations (all of the footnotes are ours) and several silent emendations where these were seen to be absolutely necessary. It is our hope that it will serve the reader as an informative contextualization of the objects in this small but, we hope, significant exhibition.

THE ARCHIVIST'S INTRODUCTION

Although in principle ESTAR(SER) imposes no limit upon the field of its investigations, its efforts have tended to focus on a single extraordinary archive, called the W-Cache – both the subject of and the primary source for this exhibition. This is partly due to the fact that the archive itself has not yet been fully catalogued, nor even wholly submitted to any single system of organization, however provisional. But it is also because the results of any scholarly foray beyond the Cache are always, eventually, incorporated and absorbed into it – the better to inspire further forays, and further absorptions, as with the movement of some voracious yet well-mannered invertebrate.⁴ Moreover, given the rapidly evolving (though ever-incomplete) state of our knowledge about the Order, this archive that is devoted to it must be continually corrected. For every incremental addition, the entire overcrowded arena of fact must be adjusted and reshuffled to make space for it; all that previously counted toward progress must now be discovered anew.

The W-Cache continually humbles its stewards. There had already been a number of failed attempts to impose the basics of archival science upon the Cache before this mass of *prima materia* reached ESTAR(SER) and – to a certain degree – reconstituted and consolidated this organization in its present membership and consensus.⁵ Knowing that whatever order does exist within the Cache was always arbitrarily, often outlandishly, imposed upon it by an archivist-researcher not so different from oneself, the present-day Estar-Serian can never help but wonder if his greatest organizational achievements are more akin to flat-earth navigational charts (or if indeed – in darker moments – the earth might not be flat after all).

4. Those who have worked extensively with the W-Cache frequently and almost reflexively describe it as alive, and gestures toward its metabolic dynamism are surprisingly common.

5. It appears that the author of the "Archivist's Introduction" was aware of some of the materials found in the "Finding Aid Folder."

Even if, as is widely believed, the formation of the W-Cache as a discrete collection – though its apparently modestly bounded dimensions belie the complexity of its contours – can be attributed to a single individual, the fragmentary, cryptic bits of provenance, purpose, and pattern imparted by this veritable demiurge (suggesting, on the part of the latter, both great wisdom and spectacular blindness) leave no doubt that certain parts of the Cache, as cogent units, preexisted it, as well as its collector. What appear to be its foundational structures are repeatedly discovered to rest upon earlier and stranger foundations. The archivist in search of an “original order,” as the term goes, is thus compelled rather to respect a kind of original chaos.

* * *

Many of us will recall a majordomo of that chaos, the great “Hogfoot” Milcom (1930-1972).⁶ Across the late 1950s and 1960s, Milcom singlehandedly, it is said, amassed all the extant works of ESTAR and SER (when these had been separate organizations) as well as pamphlets and related materials issuing from their brief interludes of cooperation – and in doing so, brought about an especially fecund instance of the latter. After his untimely death in 1972, the research community briefly changed its name to ESTRAS (Esthetical Society for Transcendental Realization and Applied Sensuality). Around this same time, it could be argued, it lost a great deal of the single-minded focus that had previously stood it in such good stead, and it dissolved soon after. But work continued, even in this time of disestablishment. Notable for their ongoing labors were, of course, Gonzalo Merrill and Reni Eppling, who had been close to Milcom, and worked with him across the crucial years of the late 1960s. Eppling, a treasured colleague and brilliant linguist who is no longer among us, would often recount Milcom’s favorite story, of the

6. Milcom’s actual first name remains a mystery, but the author of this text cites a date of birth (1930) that differs from the one conventionally given in modern ESTAR(SER) material: 1928.

“delivery” of the W-Cache to his doorstep in Santa Ana in 1967, in a converted ice truck spangled with psychedelic graffiti; the driver, completely silent, and apparently dressed as a nun, pressed the key into his hand and walked off.

There are several problems with this founding myth, for myth is what it is.⁷ For all the emblematic appeal of the “converted ice truck,” for example, it is quite impossible to reconcile the scale of the collection we now manage with this relatively small storage space. The W-Cache that has come to us clearly represents a centripetal *bricolage*, assembled in the manner of a sucking whirlpool, as long-alienated lineages of the ESTAR(SER) family have come forward with contributions and donations. A necessarily more complex history involving several bequests (and one theft) is known to a great degree, but remains to be cogently told.

What is more relevant to our present efforts than the Cache’s origin are the challenges it poses to those who wish to use it as intended. For many challenges confront the scholar attempting to avail him or herself of a collection that gives the impression of having been assembled and “organized” by a covey of amateur, untrained, and highly distractible archivists impetuously wielding a number of contradictory and overlapping filing systems.⁸

Some of the more completely realized of these systems – numeric-alphabetic, based on type and subtype, e.g. photographic documentation, published books, notebooks or sketchbooks, figurines – are still to a degree useful. Others only deepen the confusion. (One unfortunate scheme attempts to group everything according to bird species – listing for example every document in which the word “sparrow” appears, or, since members of the Order tend

7. There are indeed many problems with this account, more troublingly so with additional hindsight. Gonzalo Merrill himself would later claim to have been the first recipient of the W-Cache, which he asserted had been dropped on the doorstep of his home in 2010 “in two stacks of red plastic moving crates” with a note specifying that it was a bequest “to any surviving members of ESTAR or SER locatable by the executor.” Merrill was by this time, it should be noted, quite unwell, and he passed away shortly thereafter. See also the (provisional) 2012 report by the Working Sub-Committee on Documentation, “A Brief History of ESTAR, SER, and their Unions.”

to adopt “bird names,” every document signed with it.) But even the most idiosyncratic taxonomies still respect certain salient facts about the Cache, specifically the items that constitute its largest categories.

There are, to begin with, the masses of research files on significant persons, groups, or places, most often including correspondence. There are also the artworks (paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, and other objects of varying quality and condition, some crowded tightly into boxes, others cossetted in crepe paper) which, after all, represent the most important category of object for the Order – works upon and in the presence of which it carries out the collective protocols of sustained and ritualized attention that it calls “Actions.” There are vast quantities of notes made by participants during what is most commonly called “Colloquy” – the informal, convivial period after the end of an Action, where the high flights of ineffable experience are brought down and translated into the realm of discourse and of social codes and ties. There are the books, periodicals, and other printed volumes. There are also the typescripts, manuscripts and incunabula, the diaries and memoirs, the surprisingly large number of alchemical texts (always grouped separately, though no one seems to know why these

8. It is actually widely believed that what is now called the W-Cache began as a modest repository of artifacts in the possession of ESTAR affiliates at the time of the organization’s re-founding in the late nineteenth century. It was upon this small collection of objects (filling a storage closet in a shared workspace in Decatur, IL) that a revived body of researchers – at the time, a mere five persons strong – conducted its first studies into the history of the Order of the Third Bird, the results of which it began to publish as the *Proceedings* shortly thereafter. We might therefore say that the W-Cache commences with the work of ESTAR, and that the first object scrutinized by the researchers of ESTAR was, precisely for this reason, the first object to be entered into the W-Cache. It was precisely this analysis that led Karst (1997) to argue that the W-Cache does not designate an entity, but rather a *relation*: a loose, distributed collection of objects dependent upon the peculiar, unplanned collaboration between a fugitive, acephalous confraternity of devotees of “practical aesthesis,” on the one hand, and a coterie of scholar-enthusiasts, on the other. The name of this interaction, he asserts, is the W-Cache. It is also worth commenting on certain recent developments in the secondary literature, most notably the critique of prevailing research practices in Wasserten (2013), which puts forth a tentative definition whereby the reach of the Order is coextensive with the reach of the W-Cache; any emergent order within either must therefore be a function of this relation.

are present), the bandboxes of clippings from books and magazines featuring birds of all kinds (ditto), a huge moldering strongbox full of scrolls of indeterminate age, musical scores, and several bronze tablets.⁹ There are materials that sketch a fascinating history of art acquisitions made and collected by the Order (auction catalogs, ledgers) along with evidence of efforts to locate appropriate objects for experimental forms of Action (museum brochures, exhibition catalogs, catalogues raisonnés); but there is also a surprising number of manifesti, screeds, and *cris de coeur* against collecting, preserving, conserving, hoarding – against keepings of all kinds. Some researchers suspect that damages sustained by certain objects in the Cache may indeed be evidence of efforts to confound the archival appetite itself, an iconoclasm peculiarly twinned to the Order's passionate materialism.

It is difficult to say, in this light, whether it is more Birdish ambivalence or archival cupidity that accounts for the large number of paraphernalia associated with Actions. There are twelve different kinds of timepiece (the separate phases of Actions, usually four of equal length, are often timed), including a number of identical, and preciously ornate, bird-shaped lapel watches. There is a variety of whistles and chimes, presumably for calling phases (the most popular being Tibetan *tingsha* – a usage dating from the 1960s); chests full of sashes, scarves, pins, and other colorful badges, likely tokens of mutual recognition for cells of practitioners, bespeaking a diverse heraldry of uncertain systematicity; boxes of invitations to Actions; and a surprising number of palm-sized calling cards, some of great age, in many languages (not all yet identified), evidently to be distributed to passersby who interrupt the silence of a public practice with importunate questions.

9. Missing and paradoxical objects are a perpetual problem in this collection. Many lists of objects, with proposed series and subseries, often include items – or even types or categories of item – that either cannot be found to exist in the W-Cache at present or, in certain cases, cannot be found to exist at all (to select two at random: “ghost objects,” the ghosts of no-longer-existing objects; and “the cosmos as a made thing, arising from creation as understood theistically,” which surely cannot be in the W-Cache).

Manuals of the Order appear in enough variants to account for another considerably well-stocked category, interspersed with a variety of "protocol cards" – a generic term for written instructions governing the basic forms and experimental permutations of the Practice, used to instruct novitiates and reorient old hands. New discoveries in the W-Cache frequently depend upon such cards, which tend to provide the most basic evidence both for the flourishing of particular forms at particular times and places, and for pursuit of the mad, irresistible dream of a stemma of all historical variants, regressing to the pure origin of an Ur-Practice. A partial finding aid exists that, with surprising success, organizes the Cache alphabetically by protocol name.

Closely trailing the manual and protocol collection in size is the collection of photographs and other non-print media, still mostly unsorted, and comprising 4098 photographic prints and slides, nine photograph albums, and several boxes of audio and video cassettes, many of which feature short, enigmatic, silent films of what appear to be Actions taking place in widely varying locations.

The last two large categories that require mention are perhaps the oddest. Members of the Order of the Third Bird, on the whole, appear compelled to collect bird-related books and objects: ornithological treatises, preserved specimens, artistic and decorative representations, and the like, and the W-Cache reflects this fact. It seems that, insofar as Birds are subject to whimsy, it sweeps them toward baroque intensities of ornithological appreciation, even in their formulas of correspondence ("in the feather," "yours in flight," etc., many of which survive to the present day).

Finally, there is the set of W-Cache items that we cannot categorize because, in a sense, we respect their privacy (others may come along who do not, and more power to them): items hidden in puzzle boxes or locked safes, stoppered vials and envelopes unconvincingly marked "poison" or "danger," objects encased in concrete or resin or covered in padlocks, objects fitted with straitjackets or muzzles, and so forth.

* * *

It quite often happens that an item in the W-Cache is discovered, researched, carefully documented, and then lost – since no other researcher is able to reconstruct the particular, perhaps ineffable experience of the item that led its discoverer to categorize and file it in a certain place. This is what happened, for example, with the *quipu* (an Inca information storage device made of plied and knotted thread), which was first found filed with correspondence (tag numbers beginning in Cr1.1, according to the most useful of the various overlapping filing systems) and then refiled under Avigogy (a category, invented at the spur of the moment by whoever filed it thus, which we believe refers to devices and materials of instruction for new initiates into the Order); we don't know where it is now. Other items now found under "correspondence" don't seem to belong there: for example the volume of letters written to artworks and objects (and, purportedly, by them); handwritten obituaries (some for artworks and objects, several for people); ambassadorial and other commissions signed (in various hands) by the "Secretary Locotenant," with their long, absurdly elaborate eschatocols; different attempts at stationery for the Order; a birth register; a large number of works of historical fiction about the Order (improbable, baffling, often self-flattering stories of various international chapters and *volées* engaged amid colorful moments in history); a long list of artworks by title, which we believe is a kind of "to do" list for Actions, of contemporary date; and a document that has gained a certain legendary status among denizens of the archive – an enormous folio completely blackened with minuscule handwriting, listing what are presumably titles of works, along with proper names and various substantives, with and without dates. Had the Order, in its own scattered, addled way, attempted to write its own history, via the works, objects, and even persons, it had "Birded," as the usage goes? In light of what we know to be deep traditions proscribing exactly such forms of writing by Birds on the objects to which they have given Birdish attention, this seems difficult to credit.

The journeys of certain objects through various filing statuses can be illuminating. A series of billowing veils, elaborate headdresses, and formidable masks, all kept in perfect condition, were fitted with tags marked Θ before the call number, to indicate their association during an Action with a phase known as "Encounter": most often the opening phase, it tends to involve free movement and exploration of a work and its environs. It was surmised (we imagine) that they had been used as part of a ceremony of formal greeting and joining, as when one wears a veil at a wedding or a mask at a celebration of Mysteries. Later, they were categorized under "Realization," since it was discovered that they had been used to dress and undress the work itself. A number of strange instruments were classified as works of art, until a new category was created for them, "receivers." They had been used to listen to or receive faint signals of an indeterminate nature from works of art, during a phase known as "Attending," a name that rightly suggests both intensely sustained attention and solicitous devotion. We also learn much about the phase called "Negation" from the items associated with it (one box labeled N , for example, contains a collection of profusely tooled throwing knives, a sixteenth-century Galician grimoire, and several Japanese-made kaleidoscopes), which tend to suggest a concern with the dialectical relationship between making and unmaking, doing and undoing. Some of the most difficult objects we have encountered are those at one point given the designation R for "Realization," most often the fourth and final phase of an Action. Included in this category is the largest single object in the Cache, a coffin (yew, with yellow satin lining, and unusually wide at the center); five identical hip flasks (a pattern of birds and grapes repousséd in the solid silver base); a collection of cooking and eating utensils (a wooden spoon, a frying pan, knives and forks); and a mortar and pestle. Realization is the phase of fulfillment, where one asks – of the work and of oneself – what "shall be."¹⁰ The suspicion that these

10. Any genuine account of Realization is quite impossible, it would seem, though it is noteworthy that a number of communities gloss the ambition of the phase with some version of the following formula: "Let us complete the work of its [the work's] making."

last items might have been used for cooking, eating, and otherwise “partaking” of a work of art, as the culmination of a particularly intense Action, is heightened by the fact that the utensils also appear in several drafts of finding aids with the call number GxY3303.5. “Gx,” we believe, is shorthand for an exhortation often heard, and often called a tenet: “be generous.”

Many such hortatory formulae or tenets can be found in the literature of the Order, suggesting together a kind of creed for practitioners keen to protect their enterprise from the habits of casual or professional regard. Their intent and interpretation are also reflected in the Cache. A series of copies of well-known works of art (art-school busts, prints), accompanied by a collection of empty easels, pedestals, plinths and display cases (and a number of works of dime-store kitsch), are believed to have been used to train novice Birds to “forego studium” and to “refrain from judgment.”

One of the most fascinating items in our possession was at one time assigned the classification “QJ” (along with sixteen other items, all comparatively nondescript), which we believe has primarily to do with the last so-called tenet, “avoid interpretation.” It is an abandoned research file that begins with an image from the Lascaux cave complex, showing a human figure bearing the unmistakable head of a bird, and holding a staff also tipped with the head of a bird. The figure faces an elongated hemisphere, in the shape of an upright tablet, which is marked with a messy pattern of concentric circles, an iconography used elsewhere to limn the distress of a disemboweled bison. The man-bird seems to suffer the same graphic affliction. Notes made by the researcher who assembled the file – one “Smew” – offer the following account (which, though anachronistic, displays a lavish range of Estar-Serian interpretive methods): that the “tablet” is a work of art; that the man-bird has hunted it, metempsychotically assumed its identity, and in slaying it has slain himself. No researcher of the history of the Order, and of the Order in history, could fail to find all this completely absurd, but this is precisely the point. The file may best be read as a cautionary tale about the dangers of interpretation.

Though that is also an interpretation, one with implications for history and hysteria, exhibitions and exhibitionism, *estar* and *ser* – and, of course, with implications for ESTAR(SER), and its patient labors of historiation.¹¹

In closing, one is inclined to invoke a basic truth: a failure of archival science is still an encounter with the archive, just as each Icarian failure to reach the sun must be understood as an encounter with flight. But even were all to be accomplished, and the W-Cache fully known and charted, the Estar-Serian's task must remain incomplete – until at last, staggering under the burden of history, he falls and subsides, making way for the bright and variegated world of the Birds.

11. Explicit references to the way that the ESTAR(SER) acronym invokes the two infinitives of the two different Spanish verbs of being are not common, but the author of this text would seem to here be playing on the tension between permanent or essential forms of being (predicated using *ser*) and contingent or transient forms of being (predicated using *estar*).

THIRTY-THREE OBJECTS
FROM THE W-CACHE

I

The Tale of the Third Bird, Pseudo-Ausonius

What devotees of the Practice of the Order of the Third Bird call the “Tale of the Third Bird” began as an *arcanum* of intramural lore, but has come to be treated as something much more. The tale in question represents a paratextual elaboration of the celebrated story (Pliny, *Historia Naturalis*, Book 35, Section 36) of Zeuxis and the painting of the boy carrying grapes. In the original, of course, the great painter takes no satisfaction in the birds coming to peck at the grapes in his tableau, for he deems their intrepidity a dismissive verdict on the verisimilitude of the boy — of whom the feathered creatures ought properly have been afraid. That is as far as the Plinian account goes. This version of the story, however, recounts the painter’s reworking of his creation, and then details another avian *paragone* in which three birds approach the image. By tradition the text is said to be the work of the fourth-century Roman poet and rhetorician Decimius Magnus Ausonius (c. 310–c. 395). It should be noted, however, that no such epyllion has come to light, and, further, that no commentary on or elaboration of *Natural History* 35.36 by Ausonius is known. The earliest existing Latin copy of the tale appears in ink inside the back cover of a copy of *D. Magni Ausonii Burdigalensis Opera* (Paris, 1629) held in the W-Cache. The author of the holograph text, here given in its entirety, is not known:

Fertur Zeuxis operi manum retulit ut pueri figuram melius pingeret et, pictura siccarum foras exposita, sese in virgultis abscondit atque respexit. Etiam dicitur aves tres appropinquantes vidit: una, uvam petens, puerum repente agnovit et stridenter evolavit. Secunda, a fructu pariter attracta, custodem ex toto ignoravit et epulas rabiose becco carpsit fictas. Sed avis tertia ante tabulam pictam cessavit et in atrio harenato stetit, imaginem constanter tuens, cogitatione sicut perdita. “Curiosula avis!” murmuravit Zeuxis, sed volucer haud movebat.

It is said that Zeuxis put his hand to the work again [after the grapes were praised so highly], so that he might improve the figure of the boy, and that after leaving this new work outside to dry, he hid himself in the bushes and watched. And it is said that he saw three birds approaching. One, making for the grapes, suddenly noticed the boy and flew off shrieking. The second, attracted to the fruit in the same way, completely ignored the guardian [implicit: the boy in the painting], and was furiously trying to snatch up the fake grapes with his beak. But the third bird froze before the tablet and stood in the sandy courtyard, looking constantly at the image, seemingly lost in thought. “A rather curious bird!” mumbled Zeuxis, but the winged creature wasn’t moving at all.



II

Selected Invitation Cards

The W-Cache contains a relatively large, and largely unsorted, collection of invitations to “Actions” of sustained attention by associates of the Order of the Third Bird. These invitations are the pieces of “Bird” ephemera most likely to be fondly preserved as mementoes (though at one time such retentions were strictly prohibited). Across the many differences of language and design, certain elements remain consistent in these documents. A place is given, as well as a time; and somewhere there must appear some variation on the phrase (in the language in primary use by the group) “this confirms what you already know.” This particular wording has much to do with the word-of-mouth nature of the Order’s internal affairs, and its reticent (though always open-hearted) temperament. ESTAR(SER) itself has had to balance on something of a tightrope between a critical (and historical) distance that, for all its advantages, tends to overlook the most important of the Order’s open secrets; and a truer, but necessarily mute, understanding of the inexpressible excesses of pure aesthetics at the heart of the Order’s practice. In order to participate in a Bird Action, one must be invited to do so by a Bird, usually in an atmosphere of secrecy that is playfully (or seriously, depending on the Bird) heightened as the moment of encountering the object of attention approaches. More interesting than a description of the invitations displayed here, would be a brief account of what we were unable to display. Aside from the large number of no-nonsense, typewritten invitations (bearing an inexhaustible variety of dates, locations, and *noms de plume*), and relics of an age when emails were printed out, or messages recorded on answering machines (in some cases ending with a request to “please destroy after listening”), there are also maps in which X marks the spot, or simply index cards with geographical coordinates, or scavenger hunts meant to last a leisurely week during some country retreat. Some invitations mention diving equipment, climbing or caving gear, or elaborate disguises; some require having ingested some substance beforehand. Most of the invitations are in English, French, German, Italian, Turkish, Spanish, and Arabic, but some are in Russian, Japanese, Chinese, Tamil, and Hindi. Among the rarest are invitations written in Sanskrit, Ancient Greek, Latin, or Old Church Slavonic, but definitely not while these were living languages; at least two appear to be written in blood. Present trends in the Order convey the invitation either toward the ephemeral — for example, text messages (but curiously, never popular social media platforms) — or toward the ornate and baroque, often on fine paper, and illuminated with drawings or even watercolor vignettes; which, for all that, are still often tossed away after the occasion.



III

A Tableau of *Volée* Figurines

The W-Cache contains three leather suitcases full of what should probably be called “figurines” of various sizes and forms, together with a large number of loose game tokens — particularly chess pieces. This subcollection is generally referred to as the “*Kriegsspiel Sammlung*,” after markings (in waxy chalk) on the cases themselves. Textual documentation for these interesting materials is, unfortunately, exceedingly sparse — which has led to a great deal of speculation as to their use and relation to the practices of the Order of the Third Bird. Elkonin (*Die Psychologie des Spiels*, 1980) has suggested that the pieces were part of a larger collection of abandoned and forgotten toys gathered by dissident associates of the Order in Russia and Eastern Europe in the 1970s, the poignancy of inattention being understood to be strongly marked in this class of objects. But no suitable explanation has ever been offered for why the *Kriegsspiel Sammlung* should consist almost entirely of small statuettes of human form (or at least human *proportions*), much less why the collection should bear the name it does — the German word “wargame” appearing on all three suitcases. Although Arnheim (1996) alleges that many small groups of practitioners (or “*volées*”) would leave small simulacral configurations of themselves before works, in the manner of votive candles in a Hindu temple, it seems more likely that these figurines represent an uncatalogued collation of “teaching pieces” used for demonstrating to neophytes the configuration of a *volée* in relation to its object in the course of a collective attentional practice. The most frequently used choreography for such occasions involves a phalanx-like aggregation before the work, with a collective step forward, back, and forward for each change of “phase.” That said, dozens of variations on these maneuvers are attested — semicircular evolutions, halting processions, sequential filiations, “quartering” passes. And several “protocols,” or physical and mental choreographies, of sustained attention (e.g. the “Doppler”) specify long approaches, or specific head and body postures (e.g. the “Orphic Realization”). Sheets of notes not unlike the “step charts” of ballroom dancing notation are not unknown in the W-Cache, and there are even several notebooks mapping variations on larger group maneuvers necessary for monumental works. The tableau shown here may be taken as characteristic of the *Kriegsspiel Sammlung* as a whole, though it should be noted that it resembles nothing else in the collection. Before a small work, a grouping of mismatched chess pieces (turned bone, mostly nineteenth century) are arranged in the “missing Bird” configuration used by many *volées*: leaving a space in the middle-range of the phalanx, it obliges a passerby who wishes to consider the work in question to step into the formation.



IV

The Douce Virgula

A sense that some, many, or perhaps all objects carry *legible traces of the attention paid to them in the course of their existence* appears to have been shared widely among associates of the Order of the Third Bird for some time. Neither the origin nor the historical development of this notion is known with certainty, and a full account of its evolution may be unrecoverable. Nevertheless, a small body of artifacts and documents in the W-Cache sheds light on the matter. Perhaps most significant in this regard is the “Douce Virgula” — an unusually formed metal rod, which (according to the accession record accompanying it) was acquired from the estate of eccentric English antiquarian Francis Douce (1757-1834). The claim cannot be verified, but the provenance is not improbable. Douce, remembered for his unsuccessful tenure as the “Keeper of Manuscripts” at the British Museum at the start of the nineteenth century, had a strong interest in history, aesthetics, and magic, and was an intimate of the esteemed English society sculptor Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823), from whom he inherited a small fortune. Nollekens was obsessed with his own fame, and the fame of his works, and rumors have long persisted that he sought out the assistance of a Galloway “cunning woman” who assured him she could use dousing rods to determine whether his works were receiving more or less attention than those of his arch rival, the esteemed Georgian sculptor John Bacon (1740-1799). Nollekens is not thought to have been associated with the Order, but his heir, Douce, almost certainly was. It stands to reason that the latter picked up the notion of “attentional dousing” from Nollekens. But whereas the conceited Nollekens seems to have been interested exclusively in using the device pictured here as a kind of silent “applause meter” for his own creations, Douce activated it for quite the opposite purpose: to locate — and perhaps, in the spirit of the Order, to remedy the condition of — marginal, ignored, or forgotten works of art. The Douce Virgula was eventually found in the notorious “Bequest Trunk” left by Douce to the British Museum under the constraint that the lock remain sealed until 1900. As is well known, the trunk, when opened, turned out to be filled with what looked like rubbish, together with a cover note reportedly denouncing the museum and its staff for their historic inability to discern works worthy of attention. If the W-Cache documentation is correct, it was members of the Order — perhaps in view of some pending indictment of traditional museology by one of their own — who saw to it that these materials, including the Virgula, were preserved.



V

The Practice Fragments

These water-aged ceramic fragments appear in the W-Cache in a trunk marked “teaching aids,” the bulk of the contents of which manifestly relate to the conveyance of the Practice of the Order of the Third Bird. Here that function is made explicit by an accompanying longhand note in ink on laid paper. The correspondents are not known, and the missive is undated — though on the basis of the paper and hand, a mid-twentieth-century American provenance is likely. The letter largely speaks for itself as a digest of common usages, though it features an unusual allusion to the classic form of “metempsychotic” inwardness with the object of attention sought by Birds. “Temp-metemp-only” would seem to be a colloquial invocation of the more traditional formula: “Temporary metempsychosis may occur, but must not become permanent.”

Dearest Margery,

I have finally reached the seaside after a series of tumultuous adventures, which I will not relate (suffice it to say they put Eddie in a rage more often than not). But all is peace here, and I wish you could be here with us! I know how you long to see the ocean — I’ve touched it and whispered your name as I promised. And I am sending some of its fruits to you. While the others have been gathering shells during our walks at low tide, I’ve collected these fragments of broken plates and cups. Local lore has it that a ship or three, carrying cargos of crockery, went down offshore uncounted years ago. Whatever their source, the sherds are constantly washing up and offering themselves to me. I’ve used them to keep in Practice now, daily for some weeks (mostly with Hattie and Olive), poring over these lost and broken things that so long to be seen. In what some might call a thoroughly renegade act of Realization, I’ve been writing little tales elaborating the life each fragment might have had if not for the fateful shipwreck. At summer’s end I’ll send you the results. Meanwhile, I convey this small collection to you, in hopes that it will provide you an excuse for Practice with Artie and the others. A portable museum — sea-curved. But I warn you: You must not become a castaway therein! Thursday last, around the gametable, we had an Action I’ll not soon forget (or Eddie either, since it was he who had to find the doctor). It was really my fault, I suppose, for letting myself go so completely. As the saying goes, “temp-metemp-only”! But it’s just like me to go down with the ship, isn’t it? I’ll tell you all about it when we are back together. Till then, in practice, practice (and do send word when you do — consider me your partner in Colloquy!)

Yours in love and affection, Shirley



VI A Blang World Gourd

More than for its intrinsic qualities, the item pictured opposite earns its place in the present exhibition by way of the astonishing results obtained using the “Douce Virgula” (also featured in this catalog). The Virgula, as attested *supra*, is a species of divining rod used with varying success by members of the Order of the Third Bird to detect and measure the attention that has been paid to an object over the course of its life and afterlife. It appears that, to use the odd phrasing characteristic of the Order, this modest item has been “Birded” — made the object of a ritual protocol of sustained attention — more times than any other yet tested with the Virgula (it should be added, of course, that the latter can only be properly used *during* an “Action” of the Order). It is a dried and hollowed gourd, called a calabash (*Lagenaria siceraria asiatica*). Accession records indicate its provenance in China’s Yunnan Province, specifically the Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture bordering Myanmar. It has been marked and etched *inside* by various implements, and was found in the W-Cache with a saffron-colored rope tied around it. It is at least possible that, in one or more of the montane Blang- and U-speaking villages of the region, a cell of practitioners existed whose mental and physical postures toward objects of sustained attention resembled, and perhaps were distantly affiliated with, those of the Order. What is more likely is that one of the larger Beijing-based groups was traveling in this region on a Birding junket with multiple stops, and kept this object after its discovery. The Blang creation myth so has it that all human beings and animals, and all the multifarious forms of nature, were once contained in miniature in a huge gourd floating down the Lancang River. When they had reached maturity and were ready, as it were, to be realized, a bird (sometimes a swan) came along to peck a hole in the gourd, and release them.



VII

Evidences of the “Second Bird”

This bucolic, rain-grey sheep-scape, gashed centrally by a sharp blade and otherwise showing evidence of piercings and defacement (including a pair of affixed pink plastic costume earrings that resemble cat or snake eyes), was discovered in the W-Cache within a large cardboard wardrobe box storing what appears to be a miscellany of other artworks — all of which have suffered comparable injuries and disfigurements. Among these objects we find, for instance, a set of small, fractured porcelain figurines; pencil sketches crimped with bite marks; singed charcoal line drawings; queer (inexpert) watercolors stained with what may be bodily fluids; a mottled satin shawl; and numerous other pieces, all of vastly differing quality, which together may be taken to mount a persuasive case for why one oughtn't to touch the art. Scrawled hastily in thick red brushstrokes on the side of the cardboard container, we find the following Latin exclamation: SECUNDA EPULAS RABIOSE BECCO CARPSIT! This translates as something like, “the second snatched with his beak at the grapes,” a clear allusion to the modified Zeuxis legend as it appears in the Pseudo-Ausonian “Tale of the Third Bird.” Readers familiar with this text will recall that it is the second of the three birds who, in a burst of concupiscence, assails Zeuxis's newly verisimilar rendering and proceeds to “peck furiously” (per the better-known translation) at the burden of grapes. It appears that, by the early 1800s, the “second bird” figure from this legendary account of the Order of the Third Bird's namesake had achieved a certain dubious prominence among practitioners, whereby the term “second birding” came to designate any action undertaken spontaneously in the course of the Order's ritual practices that proved either disruptive to the collective act of sustained attention or — as in the case of our perforated shepherd and flock — injurious to the object of said attention (or both). This notional second bird (and the indiscretions it came to exemplify) was frequently invoked in the course of the contentious intra-Order doctrinal disputes that roiled Continental “*volées*” throughout the 1840s and 50s — most commonly by way of denunciation. There exists ample evidence that the term remains an idiomatic commonplace among contemporary practitioners. It would therefore appear that our painting, and the works boxed along with it, have each, in one way or another, suffered the disruptive, appetitive peck of one or more second birds.



VIII

A Bureau Nail

To speak of objects is not easy. One must have lived with them, outside the rules that tie us unhappily to them.

—Jacques Bureau, "Le Clou" (1944)

It is likely that the first encounter the poet, Résistant, and jazz-obsessive Jacques Bureau (1912-2008) had with the Order of the Third Bird was during his deployment to Syria in 1939, as part of a signals brigade following the movements of Italian troops. If so, he probably knew much more of the still-mysterious (and likely quite ancient) "Syrian Order" than our best researchers have been able to uncover. A critical and historical essay on the so-called "Rülek Scrolls" (forthcoming in the *Proceedings*) suggests that one of the Syrian Order's rituals involved an invocation of the "Messenger of Empty Space," and that its members adopted "Bird names" drawn from the rolls of Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Levantine myth. It is still unknown whether this branch of the Order is linked to, even identical to, a doctrinally hyper-orthodox "Eastern Brotherhood" supposedly located in Cairo, and mentioned in intra-Order correspondence reproduced in the *Proceedings* in "The Fascicle of E." After Bureau's return to France in 1942, he joined the British Special Operation Executive's "Prosper" resistance network as a wireless operator; in the summer of 1943 he was arrested and imprisoned as a POW at the Fresnes penitentiary. It is here that he spent weeks systematically and ritualistically devoting his entire attention to a single rusty nail, leaving an account of this experience in his important essay of 1944, "The Nail." Bureau's experiment became legendary among a Paris-based wartime group of French and Belgian poets and artists who can only be described as mystics of the object. Its members repeatedly carried out, documented, and theorized collective acts of object-oriented metempsychosis — which is to say (as "Birds" use the term) a coalescence of "points of view," an uncanny alloying of seen and seer, of mute and voluble substance. They wrote obsessively of "becoming" objects, or of finding grace and redemption in an immersive relationship with the dark, cosmic "flux" of matter. It is difficult to say whether Bureau's influence — and that of the Order — started them on this path, or merely carried them further along it. At the end of Bureau's essay, "a man" — a prison employee — enters his cell and takes his nail. This was, we can show, Émilien Féret (b. Calvados, 1921), whose sister was part of a now-famous "volée" of Birds-Résistants in Paris, and the nail in question was for many years a talisman among Parisian Birds. It is now lost, and the present specimen is a facsimile known to have received metempsychotic attention among Birds in Geneva in the 1970s.



IX

The MacRae Collection of Icarian Trinkets

Kenneth MacRae (1923-2007, shown here in a photo from the late 1950s) was a Harvard-trained classicist, genealogy enthusiast, and real estate agent, who spent the later part of his life in Worcester, Massachusetts. He maintained his most expensive hobby — a collection of colonial American and British domestic treasures, such as eighteenth-century blown glass tumblers, pewter candlesticks, and Wedgwood vases — by means of supplementary revenue raised moonlighting as a private antiques dealer. It is within a crate of MacRae's knick-knacks that we find a peculiar hoard of cameos, jewelry, and charms, all depicting the mythological tale of Icarus. A silver locket in the Victorian style, for example, its incised floral pattern rubbed smooth, contains an engraving of the falling Icarus where a lover's face would normally reside; another pendant resembles the charms found at Christian pilgrimage sites; traces of wax survive on a black onyx cabochon, implying that the engraved design was used for epistolary purposes. Overlooked by the heirs of MacRae's estate as yet another example of his fondness for Greco-Roman themes, this collection is in fact properly understood only in relation to MacRae's longstanding connection to the Order of the Third Bird. For many in the community of the Birds, the demi-parabolic trajectory of the youthful, feather-clad Icarus represents not only the reckless ambitions of youth, but certain excesses tolerated by marginal (or even deviant) practitioners of the Order. In these contexts, Daedalus's warning to his son against flying too close to the sun, and Icarus's tragic fate, emblemize a cautionary attitude toward metempsychosis — that blurring of attendant and attended, observer and observed, lover and beloved that can occur during, and occasionally persist after, "Actions" of the Order. It is possible that some of these objects were thought of as material aide-mémoires (or perhaps even talismans of a sort) aimed at protecting fledgling initiates from the Icarian dangers of the Practice.



X

The Marinatos Saffron

Blazons of saffron hue (rosettes, filets, sashes, brocades, and the like) have been used by associates of the Order of the Third Bird for some time — generally as a means of mutual recognition. The heraldry of this convention has never been elaborated satisfactorily, but there seems to be good evidence that the tradition predates the early twentieth century (c.f. the assertion in “The Life and Times of Inyard Kip Ketchem, the Performing Attention Doctor,” a forthcoming essay in the *Proceedings*, that the saffron ensign of the Order is tied to the orange escutcheon of the Knickerbocker establishment of old New York). Relevant here are the well-preserved saffron stigmas (ostensibly dating to the Late Bronze Age, though this seems unlikely) that were found among the possessions of the Greek archaeologist Spyridon Marinatos, after he passed away in mysterious circumstances in 1974 — he was pinned by a collapsing wall during the excavations of the Akrotiri site on the Greek island of Santorini. Following a volcanic eruption at the end of the seventeenth century BC, Minoan settlements lay buried under a protective mantle of pumice and ash. Marinatos began digging at the site — famed for its peerless wall paintings depicting all aspects of Aegean life and culture — in 1967 and worked on it steadfastly until his death. According to private correspondence from Sir Arthur Evans, who became acquainted with Marinatos during the latter’s time as director of the Heraclion Museum in Crete, the archaeologist was an associate of the Order and apparently had come to believe that artifacts on the site pointed to an archaic prehistory for Birdish rites. Speculation on the full theory (and the evidences for it) reaches well beyond the scope of a brief analytic caption; at present it is enough simply to note that Marinatos’s preoccupations hinged on an interpretation (or, perhaps better, an *experience*) of the “Saffron Gatherers” fresco that he treated at length in the seminal Reckitt monograph of 1971, *Life and Art in Prehistoric Thera*. Native to Greece, the autumn-flowering *Crocus sativus* has been cultivated and gathered into baskets on Santorini since the Bronze Age. The wall painting commonly referred to as the “Akrotiri Saffron Gatherers” depicts several youths with partly shaven heads who collect crocus flowers, empty baskets full of blossoms into a common panier (presumably to be dried), and then offer a rosette of saffron to what appears to be a goddess — a resplendent figure seated in a temple surrounded by crocuses. It appears that Marinatos convinced himself that these different stages of saffron gathering depicted something more than a bucolic sequence of primitive agrarian labors, and he elaborated a fully allegorical treatment of the Akrotiri Gatherers in which the “phases” of their work mirrored phases of ritual attention to made things.



XI

The Korff Cylinder

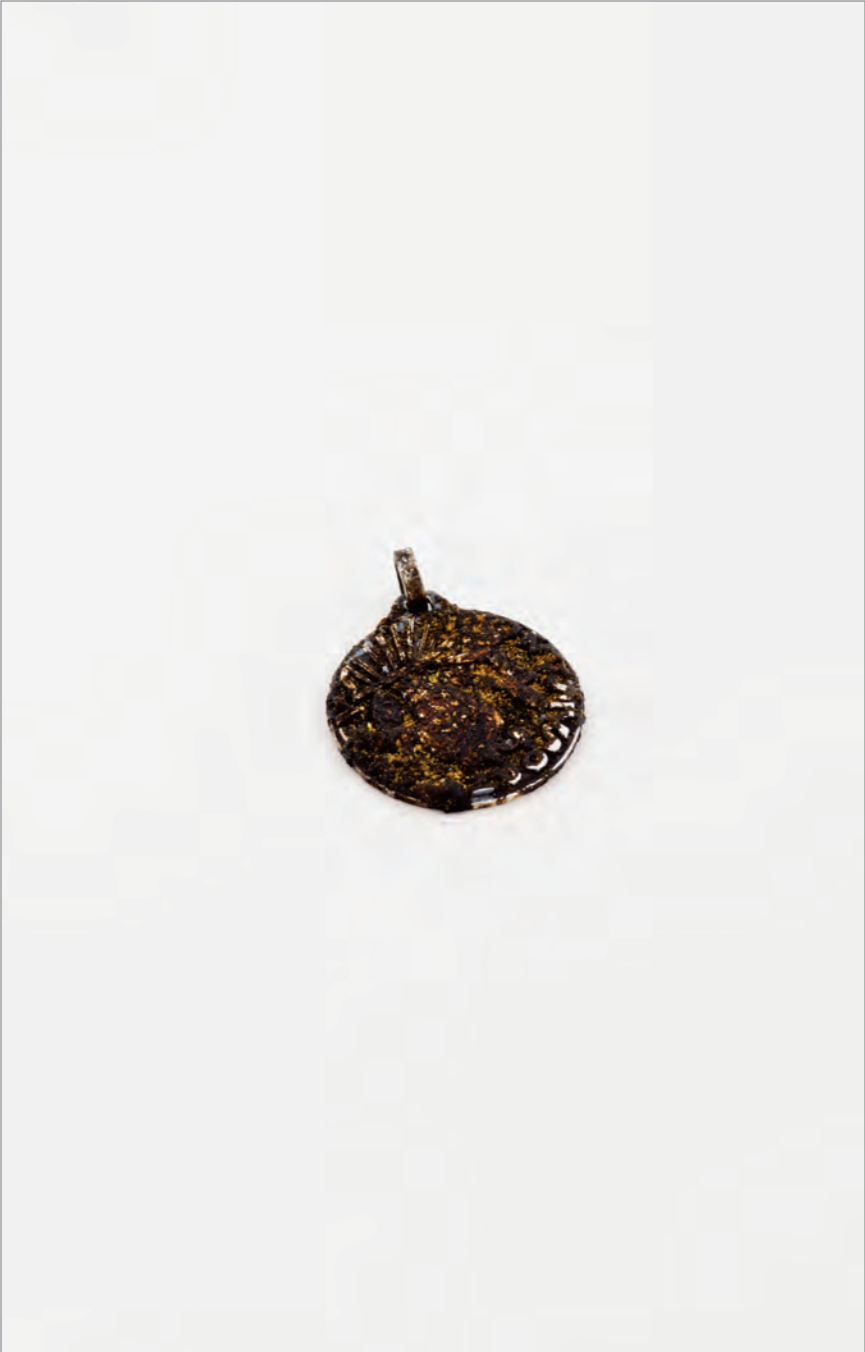
This empty container was made for an early recording of the aria “Rachel, quand du Seigneur,” from Fromental Halévy’s 1835 opera, *La Juive* — one of the most successful French operas of the early twentieth century (and one of Richard Wagner’s targets in his *Das Judentum in der Musik*). Pathé’s early cylinder recordings of the complete work seem to have belonged to Ludwig Karlovich von Korff (1919–1982), a figure of significance in the history of the Order of the Third Bird. This particular container was found in a trunk of personal effects and documents belonging to Korff and discovered in 2010 in an antique store in Charlottesville, Virginia. Shortly after he completed his doctoral studies in Königsberg, Korff, for reasons now unknown, became a prisoner of the Gulag, in the Vorkuta labor camp north of the Arctic Circle. It seems that there he, along with his cellmate Sergei Arturovich Zakharkin, and two others known only as “Gleb” and “Vova,” were conducting “Actions” of the Order (Korff having been introduced to “the Practice” in Prussia). This Vorkuta “*volée*” is remembered, to paraphrase research forthcoming in the *Proceedings*, for having developed a practice around things or objects not considered works of art — domestic utensils like cups and spoons, and still more heterodox compositions like aggregates of snow or rubble, even landscapes and the sky. What is more extraordinary is that “Korffianism,” as it were, survived this extremely marginal group, and is now considered one of the most robust Bird heresies. Many account it as a “First Bird” departure — a surprising number of Korffians appear to eschew attention altogether, preferring the purity of uncontaminated “flight,” an escape from what they take to be the sordid entanglement (visual or otherwise) with made things. Korff is best known for his samizdat writings that read the three birds of the Pseudo-Ausonian tale as allegorical figures for Kant’s three critiques — an analysis roundly rejected within orthodox Bird communities. Rivalries between Korffians and “rangebound” Birds (as the former call them) occasionally break into open feuding, sometimes to the point of theft and sabotage of art objects (or, sometimes, and in what would seem to be an atavistic gesture, their replacement with “ordinary” objects, e.g., swapping a painting with a paring knife). Interestingly, Korff appears to have brought this cylinder No. 27 with him from Leningrad to the Vorkuta prison camp. The cylinder itself was eventually lost, after which the container alone stood at the center of certain unorthodox experiments in “auro-mnetic” exercises of attention, in which members of the Vorkuta *volée* ran through, by memory alone, the aural qualities of the absent cylinder while focusing their gaze on its former container.



XII

A Sanctus Dionysius Medallion

Close attention reveals here a small, pewter “Saint Dennis medal,” picturing the third-century martyr and patron saint of Paris, together with the swordsman who has lopped off his head — which the saint is now contemplatively holding. The medallion reads “Sanctus Dionysius o.p.n.,” for “*ora pro nobis*,” or “pray for us.” It is the only item featured in this exhibition that comes from the personal collection of the Secretary Locotenant of the Order of the Third Bird, an office that has been filled for some time (since ca. 1830?) by a succession of more or less mysterious figures. The Order of the Third Bird is an acephalous and diffuse organization (if it can be called that at all). Any person playing a centripetal or centralizing role would do so in contravention of its spirit. Indeed, it is often said that the canons of circumspection around the Order are such that any person claiming an association therewith — not to mention any authority therein — cannot plausibly be thought to have true relations with the community. Thus the Locotenant stands in the empty place of would-be authority, performing certain administrative and archival tasks in a manner typical of the headless, though not heedlessly. A certain myth also persists about the Locotenant: that he/she sometimes appears (uninvited and incognito) at “Actions” of the Order, participating in them from a discreet distance. In addition, the Locotenant is said to keep a small token of the Action or its location — a stone, a ribbon, a dropped notebook page, a bit of crumbling fresco plaster. A number of small boxes of varying age and provenance in the W-Cache are linked to the Secretary Locotenant(s). This medallion, found in one such box, is unusual for the documentation that accompanies it. It was gathered up by a Locotenant from a crevice between two flagstones in the Chapel of St. Anthony of La Florida in Madrid, which houses the tomb of Francisco Goya as well as Goya frescos from 1798 (depicting St. Anthony of Padua raising a dead man to testify about his own murder). The scene is set in Madrid, among *majos* and *majas* of the streets, and angels. (As for Goya himself, during his posthumous transfer from Bordeaux to Madrid his head was lost, possibly stolen for phrenological purposes). This acquisition took place during an Action by a Madrid cell of the Order on June 13, 1982, on a day of the year when young people traditionally ask the mediation of St. Anthony in matters of love. Preserved notes from participants suggest an Action focusing on a complex negotiation between life and death, and on the placement of mirrors (a necessary consideration in the construction of headless-lady illusions).



XIII

Companions as Factors in the Bird's Environment

This sheaf of annotated pages represents an incomplete copy of Konrad Lorenz's pioneering ethological monograph *Der Kumpan in der Umwelt des Vogels* ("Companions as Factors in the Bird's Environment"), apparently extracted from an edition of the April 1935 issue of *Journal für Ornithologie*, where the study first appeared. The various scribbled notations throughout, to the extent they are decipherable, seem to amount to a rather scrupulous mistranslation of Lorenz's work into English. Through the mischievous pens of its would-be scholiasts, a seminal essay on the social habits of birds has here been rewritten as a playful feuilleton treating the collective activities (and scandalous interpersonal affairs) of what appears to be a semi-formal "society" of aesthetes — very likely an Anglophone "*volée*" of the Order of the Third Bird. The pages are primarily taken from Chapter VIII ("The social companion"), although there are clearly some from Chapter VII as well ("The sexual companion"). Many alterations feel gossipy or salacious. For example, where Lorenz notes, "courting male budgerigars commonly grasp at the body (usually the rump) of the female whilst dancing up and down and chattering in front of her," our annotators strike "courting male budgerigars" and insert "Allen." That said, there is much of value in the document. Of particular interest to historians of the Order are the glimpses of this community's specific ritual practices. In one striking instance, Lorenz's description of a collective attack mounted by a group of jackdaws upon a predator (noting the "synchronizing instinctive display patterns" central to the offensive), has been transformed into an elaborate account of the first moments of a typical collective "Action" such as (this cell of) the Order might perform in a museum. So, for example, volleys of "responsive signaling" by the approaching practitioners are described as "directing" them to the work or object to which they will collectively attend. The social dynamics of Bird groupings have been the subject of fewer formal studies than the topic would seem to deserve, but reliable sources for such research are quite rare. In view of the traditional warnings against undertaking any Bird-like practice of attention alone, inter-Bird interactions must always be central to the work of the Order.

The concept of an object or encounter arises from a process of stimulation on given things

We relate the assembled stimulus to the source of stimulation of the thing itself

552

JOURNAL
FÜR
ORNITHOLOGIE

Dreißunddritzigster Jahrgang

Heft 2 April 1935

Der Kumpan in der Umwelt des Vogels.

Der Artgenosse als auslösendes Moment sozialer Verhaltensweisen.
Jakob von Uexküll zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet.
Von Konrad Lorenz, Altenburg.

Inhaltsübersicht.

- I. Einleitung. Der Uexküll'sche Begriff des „Kumpan“.
- II. Arbeitsmethoden und Prinzipien.
- III. Die Fröngung des Objektes artigenrer Tröbhandlungen.
- IV. Das angestrebte Schema des Kumpan.
- V. Der Elternkumpan.
- VI. Der Kindkumpan.
- VII. Der Geschlechtskumpan.
- VIII. Der soziale Kumpan.
- IX. Der Geschwisterkumpan.
- X. Zusammenfassung und Ergebnis.

I. Einleitung.

Das, was wir als einen Gegenstand zu bezeichnen pflegen, entsteht in unserer Umwelt dadurch, daß wir die verschiedenen, von einem und demselben Dinge ausgehenden Reize zusammenfassen und sie zusammenfassen auf das betreffende „Ding“ als die gemeinsame Reizquelle bezeichnen. Dann gehört noch, daß wir die empfangenen Reize nach außen hin in den umgebenden Raum projizieren, in ihm lokalisieren. Wir projizieren das von der Linse unseres Auges auf unsere Netzhaut entfallende Bild der Sonne nicht eben dort auf der Netzhaut, nicht so als ob wir sie „sehen“, wie wir etwa das mit einer Glaslinse auf unsere Körperhaut



Eine vollständigere Inhaltsübersicht mit eingefügten Seitenzahlen wird am Ende der Abhandlung erscheinen.

Jahrg. 33, Orn. 82, Jahrg. April 1935.

10

Kumpan in der Umwelt

XIV

The Waltham Watch

The W-Cache contains a very considerable number of timepieces, many of them purpose-made (or modified) to permit the easy marking of a sequence of equal-length durations — an obvious desideratum for regular practitioners of the Order of the Third Bird's protocols of sustained attention to made things. These are perhaps best thought of as something akin to "meditation timers" — though technical historians of chronometry will readily recall the close link between the development of monastic prayer alarms and the invention of the modern clock itself in the thirteenth century (the escapement having almost certainly arisen as a modified bell-ringing device). The more ordinary watches and clocks in the Cache appear to have been accessioned largely on the basis of their connection to notable associates of the Order (or notable "Actions"). According to the label accompanying these objects, the Waltham Watch, its sealskin case, and its walrus tusk chain were found together — the watch inside the pouch, which was then, strangely, wrapped with the chain — in a sack inadvertently left behind by Jean-Jacques Cazayous on the Begouën estate at the time of his death in 1931. The pouch has been identified as made from the skin of a bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*) native to Spitsbergen. The triangular trim design is associated with indigenous Lule Sami motifs of the northern Norwegian coast. The pouch is inscribed with the initials "J. S. S." To whom this refers, and how the pouch fell into Cazayous's hands, remain to be determined. The Waltham pocketwatch is an 1881 model nearly identical to the 1857 model carried by Abraham Lincoln at the time of his assassination. It is monogrammed with the initials "F. L." on the reverse, and is believed to have belonged to François Lavel, an associate of Count Begouën (and a high-ranking Freemason) who died in Paris in 1895 under circumstances that drew scrutiny. A small diary (not displayed here) also left in Begouën's possession contains a note evidently written in Cazayous's hand:

Pas difficile de comprendre pour-quoi M. Lincoln où qu'il allait avait sa Waltham dans la poche. Parfait pour compter les intervalles: 7 minutes + 7 minutes + 7 minutes etc.

Not hard to understand why Mr. Lincoln always had his Waltham with him wherever he went. Perfect for counting the intervals. 7 minutes + 7 minutes + 7 minutes etc.

This has been taken as evidence by some that Cazayous used the watch while leading Actions in the Ariège region after his arrival there in 1896. There are others, however, who have expressed concern about the authenticity of the diary. A full treatment of the question is slated for publication in a forthcoming issue of the *Proceedings*.



XV

Still Life with Grapes, St. Pierre and Miquelon

According to accession notes, this small oil painting hails from the town of St. Pierre in the French territory of St. Pierre and Miquelon — though it is not believed to have been executed there. It appears that for a long while it was one of the very few works of art accessible to a group of practitioners of the Order of the Third Bird in that town, a “*volée*” whose founder had previously lived in Paris. Accounts suggest that the doings of the Order were part of a surprisingly lively winter season in St. Pierre. Former town governor and member of the St. Pierre *volée*, Maurice Caperon (1896–1957), writes:

Pendant l'hiver, c'est le désœuvrement complet, mais qu'on ne croie pas pour cela que chacun se confîne au coin de son feu. Il n'y a pas une petite ville de province où on soit plus noctambule qu'à Saint-Pierre. Malgré la neige, le verglas, on ne voit, le soir, que des gens emmitouflés et encapuchonnés, enrubbanés parfois en safran, se rendant à quelque rendez-vous...

During winter, there is a total lack of anything to do, but this is not to say that each is confined to his own fireside. There is no small provincial town more night-owlish than Saint-Pierre. Despite the snow, and the ice, in the evenings you see nothing but people bundled up and cowed, on occasion beribboned in saffron, on their way to some meeting...

A great part of this bustle of activity in the northern twilight consisted, as Caperon continues (in the expanded 1902 edition of his *Saint-Pierre et Miquelon*, quoted above), of carrying bundled parcels between households: these were paintings, a grand total of five being owned by town residents. In some cases two or three “Actions” would be held simultaneously at as many hearthsides; sometimes multiple protocols of sustained attention would be devoted in one day to the same painting. The painting pictured above, featuring grapes, was the most popular — and shows telltale wear. A note on the reverse of the painting in charcoal pencil, dated 1899, is a testament to the great, often hallucinatory intensity of response characteristic of repeated devotions to a single object. Most likely scrawled during or after an Action, it reads: “*le pouce pâle du souffle de ta bouche, ta naissance ossifiée dans l'hiver de ma bouche, le rire glacé du ministre frêle, le rire laqué du rouge-gorge.*” A literal translation of this ecstatic inscription might read: “the pale thumb of the breath of your mouth, your ossified birth in the winter of my mouth, the glazed laugh of the frail minister, the glossy laugh of the robin.”



XVI

A “Listening” Fan

The W-Cache features a considerable range of devices that appear to have served as sensory prosthetics (or, in some cases, constraints). Experimentation with such paraphernalia has characterized a number of communities in the Practice. This handheld fan, to which a small ear trumpet has been attached by means of a fine gold chain, is said to have been used by members of the Order of the Third Bird working in Madras, India (now Chennai) in the Company Raj period, during the governorship (1832-1837) of Waterloo veteran General Sir Frederick Adam. This Madras “*volée*” had its start at the famous Madras gentleman’s club, and was probably founded by Stephen Rumbold Lushington (1776-1868), the Madras governor preceding Adam, and a personal friend of Jane Austen’s. As recent work in the Fort George archives has revealed, the unlikely group of scholars and administrators that Lushington gathered together also included, along with other members of the Madras Literary Society, the pandit Cavelly Venkata Lechmiah, erstwhile companion of the great Orientalist and collector Colin Mackenzie. The group frequently made the thirty-mile trip to the megaliths and magnificent temples of Mahabalipuram, where they carried out protocols of sustained attention upon ornate carvings and sculptures. In this, they followed in the tracks of the great Orientalists of the Madras School — though the ultimate purpose of their explorations and excavations could not have been more different. This item was found in the W-Cache filed with a number of other objects classified as “sensory concentrators,” many with attached notes. A tag on the box containing this fan reads as follows: “Used for listening to works of art, specifically to paintings.” It is unclear, from associated sources, whether this means listening to something like voices conceived to be emergent from within the illusionistic frame of the painting (and hence relevant only with portraits of people or images of animals), or whether one is supposed to be capable of hearing some whisper of molecules below the ordinary sensory thresholds. What is, however, clear is that the purpose of the handheld fan is to hide the ear trumpet from the painting — so that it will not know it is being overheard. There is good evidence that this object was modified by users well after the 1830s: the rubber ear-nub on the base of the listening tube is synthetic, and what was originally, one supposes, a trumpet of horn has been replaced by a fragile paper cone (which, inexplicably, displays a hand-drawn map of Europe such as might have been part of a school lesson in the 1950s). The small funnels were found in the same box, but of their purpose and/or relation nothing is known.



XVII

Two Isopsephic Adding Machines

The W-Cache contains a surprisingly large trove of early mechanical calculators, spanning the 1930s through the 1960s, of which the two displayed opposite are among the best-preserved examples. A short note packaged with the collection describes the use of these devices in “spatio-numeric isopsephy,” a practice briefly *en vogue* among certain devotees of the Order of the Third Bird, and consisting in the calculation of an artwork’s “numerical value.” The process employed to calculate an artwork’s “sum” under these elaborate isopsephic protocols parallels the more familiar alphanumeric procedures of antique isopsephy — the computation of the number-value of a given word by means of the interpretation of its letters as numerals and the calculation of their sum. The Birdish *spatio-numeric* version of this ancient activity makes it applicable to non-linguistic situations: rather than correlating numerical values with the individual letters of an alphabet, practitioners assigned such values to specific visual features — colors, for example, or geometrical forms — in ways redolent of (but apparently not derived from) Charles Henry’s “psychophysical aesthetic” (see Argüelles, 1972). Examples may be appropriate: in antiquity, the written Greek language lacked a numeral system separate from its alphabet; accordingly, the letters of the alphabet were also used to signify numbers. Using one of the standard techniques for isopsephy in this tradition, one would calculate the value of $\pi\upsilon\omicron\lambda\acute{\iota}$ (bird) as follows:

$$\pi (= 80) + \omicron (= 70) + \upsilon (= 400) + \lambda (= 30) + \acute{\iota} (= 10) = 590$$

A “spatio-numeric” isopsephy, as activated in Bird usage, would convert an *image* of a bird into a similar quotient, by means of a summation of values assigned in advance to select visual phenomena consistently manifested in representational (and even non-representational) art. Papers preserved with the collection offer evidence of several such systems, and they manifest varying degrees of specificity. One assigns the numerals 100 through 213 to various shades of brown; another reserves 80-100 for planar transformations of the trapezoid; and a third uses only the numerals 1, -1, and 2 (1 corresponding to “Something is Present to the Eye”; 2 corresponding to “Nothing is Present to the Eye”; and -1 to “Something is an Eye”). Spatio-numeric isopsephy seems to have emerged initially as a form of close attention, paralleling more traditional techniques used by Birds, but it quickly evolved into a tactic used primarily for “Negating” the object of attention during an “Action” of the Order, with quantification functioning as a form of erasure. There is, however, some evidence it was also used during a phase of “Realization,” in order to discover an artwork’s affinity with other objects that had been assigned similar numerical values.



XVIII

The Philadelphia Physiognotrace

This 1945 issue U.S. Navy Bureau of Ships pantograph — together with a roughly-carved chinrest and annotated instructions — strongly suggests the kit-assembly of a “physiognotrace,” an apparatus first devised in the early nineteenth century for the production of silhouettes. Given the consonances between the present object and a watercolor sketch now archived in the Thomas Jefferson Papers in the Library of Congress, the W-Cache model would seem to conform to the original design of John Issac Hawkins — inventor, inter alia, of the “portable grand” (or upright) piano, the “ever-pointed” (or mechanical) pencil, and the trifocal corrective lens — who exhibited his debut physiognotrace in the Philadelphia *Wunderkammer* of the painter and politician Charles Willson Peale. As a (partially) automatic silhouette-making machine, it became one of the Peale Museum’s primary attractions — principally under the operation of the newly manumitted Moses Williams (formerly Moses Peale). The physiognotrace enabled the accurate transposition of a profile, traced directly from the face by means of a bronze cursor, to an engraving instrument that carved the profile onto a folio-folded card; the concave appendage on the bottom of a board served to stabilize the head of the sitter. To promote the device, Peale sent the aforementioned watercolor sketch of Hawkins’s invention to Thomas Jefferson, along with a silhouette taken from a bust of Jefferson himself, suggesting a subtly heterodox use of the device: not merely to produce, *but actively to attend to* representations. A large selection of so-called “blockheads” in the W-Cache — the discarded positives of profiled people and, significantly, objects — would appear to point to the use of the physiognotrace by adepts of the Order of the Third Bird for a “haptics of attention” to artworks (as well as to physiognomies — despite the traditional Bird interdiction concerning the use of Order protocols on human persons). As to the origins of this practice, several possibilities remain to be investigated. Was the model in the W-Cache an initial experiment in the repurposing of physiognomy — the divination of inner nature from close observation of a surface — by a member of the well-documented Philadelphia “*volée*” of the Order in the 1950s? Or was Peale himself an associate of the Order, whose eccentric use of Hawkins’s device passed down through generations of the initiated? This preeminent naturalist’s prodigious museum collection of taxidermied specimens strongly favored avifauna. Indeed, his most famous self-portrait depicts him lifting a velvet curtain before a gallery of bird specimens, with a wild turkey at his feet awaiting immortalization and an eagle presiding — a gesture to the motto from the Book of Job inscribed at the entrance to Peale’s museum, “Ask the fowls of the air, and they shall teach thee.”



XIX

The MacGinitie Collection

The “MacGinitie Collection” consists of eleven pairs of goggles of various types, each of which has been modified in one way or another so as to create a “Ganzfeld effect” — the encompassing perception of an empty, uniform, and ideally, untextured field. We here present three characteristic items from this larger set, to wit: a pair of Vispec “Stadium” goggles (vinyl, of English manufacture, circa 1964); a pair of carved Inuit snowgoggles (elk femur bone with sealgut cord, circa 1950); and a pair of vented metal welding goggles (safety-glass lenses, unknown date, possibly as early as 1920). The flexible lens of the first of these has been rubbed with several layers of a waxy petroleum-derived paraffin-jelly compound — quite possibly a hair pomade. Into the eye-slits of the second have been fitted slips of folded paper. The flat eyepieces of the third appear to have been finger-painted with a white oil-based paint in cloudy whorls. Bud Crocher “Crosshairs” MacGinitie (1922-2006) served as a test pilot and master parachutist with the U.S. Air Force after compiling a distinguished record in B-17s with the 358th squadron during World War II. Seconded to Dr. John Paul Stapp in the biophysics group of the medical laboratory at Wright Field Air Force Base (and later at Holloman Air Force Base in Alamogordo, New Mexico), MacGinitie worked on extreme state physiology and avionics — eventually assisting in Joseph Kittinger Jr.’s stratospheric jump of 1960. The German Gestalt psychologist Wolfgang Metzger (1899-1979) experimented with Ganzfeld effects in the late 1920s, and was struck to discover that sustained exposure to an unstructured retinal image could produce hallucinations. The technology was incorporated into sensory deprivation experiments in the 1950s, and the American perceptual physiologist James J. Gibson appears to have been the first to develop head-mounted Ganzfeld “screens,” which eventually took the form of goggles not unlike those in the MacGinitie Collection. At present nothing is known of Bud MacGinitie’s relationship to the Order of the Third Bird. MacGinitie’s obituary in *Jump*, the newsletter of the Clewiston Skydiving Association, makes no mention of the Birds, or of MacGinitie’s work on attentional practices more generally — but there is a telling mention of his smearing Vaseline on the inside of his goggles for the first time in 1959, apparently to create a “softer, silkier view of the earth.” The piece goes on to assert that MacGinitie “performed perhaps 200 vaseline [sic] dives in the early 1960s.” The presence of these Ganzfeld goggles in the W-Cache strongly suggests that these dives had something to do with the work of the Order, and it is difficult to resist the speculation that they were used in some form of aerial phase of “Negation” that privileged the disorientation of a luminous “total field.”



XX

The Boonville Loom

This small handmade wooden lap-loom was found in the W-Cache wrapped in pages from *Handweaver & Craftsman Magazine* (Vol. 28, No. 3, June 1975). Still attached to the loom is a partially completed pile weaving, and wrapped with it is a quantity of precut yarn. Based on the crimping and condition of the yarn, it appears that the weaving was first taken apart and then rewoven. Pinned to the back of the loom is a small diagram of two interlocked lozenges, one light, one dark, possibly the image originally depicted in this small textile work. Also legible on the drawing are the hyphenated words "Negation-Realization." Of the identity of the weaver little evidence remains, apart from a name and address on the magazine's mailing label (K. Sombart, 500 4th Street, Boonville, MO). Curiously, the pages of the magazine are redolent with bird imagery. Might the rural town of Boonville — with a population of 7,451 souls in 1975, and featuring an aspirational "Thespian Hall" — have supported an experimental small group of practitioners of the Order of the Third Bird in the postwar period? More convincing, perhaps, is the image of the reweaver as a lone votary, a solitary practitioner who, bereft of the welcome socializations of Colloquy and *convivium*, allowed his or her devotions to become increasingly peculiar. (The conventional warnings against solitary practices of the Order are well attested, two Birds frequently being deemed insufficient for an "Action," and three often considered a bare minimum; nevertheless, the formation of full communities can prove challenging in certain environments, and the existence of anchoritic associates of the Order is recognized). The conjunction of the significant terms "Negation" and "Realization" merits commentary: these are, of course, "phases" frequently encountered in ritual protocols of the Order (in the former, a thing is undone; in the latter, it is completed, extended, or replied to). A hyphenation of such disparate, and constitutively distinct, movements — particularly in the context of independent material evidence of weaving/unweaving/reweaving — strongly suggests a heterodox tendency.



XXI

The Arte Madí Conflagration

This photograph, which came to light recently in the W-Cache in a body of materials associated with the American editor Stephen P. Greer (1935-1988), seems to have belonged to the important Argentinian artist Gyula Kosice (1924-2016), and provides new evidence regarding a faction of the avant-garde Arte Madí group active in Buenos Aires in the 1940s and 1950s. Like many such groups, the Madí artists sought a fusion of art and life along utopian principles. A number of artists who appear in the pages of the magazine *Arte Madí Universal* (1946-53) were never heard of again: Alejandro Havas, Raymundo Rasas Pet, Anibal Biedma, and others. Rumors have long persisted that, faced with the possibility of their works circulating in the "inattention festival" of the artworld (galleries, museums, private homes), these evasive artists split from the main group and lived in a strictly regimented and secretive environment in which their artworks were suitably protected from the vampiric ravages of casual regard. In the early 1960s, a fire destroyed the special studio-gallery they had built in Montevideo for their exercises in attention — a conflagration that destroyed essentially the whole of their artistic production, along with all material evidence that might bear on their doings. To this day there remains a great deal of uncertainty concerning the circumstances of the blaze. There are those who have claimed that the fire represented a quixotic sacrifice by the artists themselves, who may have come to believe that their efforts on behalf of art were in vain. Others have alleged an act of arson by members of the original Madí group, who were known for their ruthless attacks on rival factions. Speculation in recent years (particularly in light of work on the Greer Papers; see "MET-HIM-PIKE-HOSES: The Greer Fragments and the Literature of Amphibious Ecstasy in the Americas, 1948-1962," forthcoming in the *Proceedings*) has turned to the Order of the Third Bird. Were members of the "cisma" (the "schism") engaged in the Practice, or one of its deviations? If so, it is possible to imagine that the fire in question was linked to an anomalous or catastrophic "Negation" — perhaps part of an effort permanently to place the works in question beyond reach of imperfect forms of attention.



XXII

The Witkacy *Łyzeczka*

We have here the fabricated skeletal remains of an amphicephalous marine creature, its twin antipodal skulls encased in thick resinous molds that resemble death masks left unfinished. Associated documentation seemingly establishes that this ambivalent piscine specimen/sculpture was once the property of virtuoso polymath artist Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885-1939), a leading figure of the Polish avant-garde in the 1920s and 30s. It would appear that Witkiewicz (or “Witkacy,” as he was often known) associated this two-headed *memento mori* with the spectacular collapse of his longstanding friendship with the anthropologist Bronisław Malinowski. In 1914, Malinowski, then making preparations for his first trip to the Trobriand Islands, was notified of the suicide of Witkiewicz’s pregnant fiancée Jadwiga. Concerned for his friend, Malinowski invited Witkiewicz to accompany him on the expedition as a draughtsman and photographer. As the journey progressed, however, their intimacy unraveled. The reasons for this estrangement have never been clear, but new evidence, recently come to light in the W-Cache, strongly suggests that the initial dispute involved a practice of sustained attention to a Trobriand lime spatula carved by one of the “bone weavers of Boitalu.” It would seem that Witkiewicz, in the course of a passionate Colloquy, accused Malinowski of failing adequately to set aside his technical expertise concerning the manner of the artifact’s manufacture, which the latter had apparently invoked in some detail (this would be, of course, a legitimate complaint under the tenets of an orthodox Order of the Third Bird practice). The conflict escalated rapidly, and is perhaps best understood as a hot, local irruption of a larger doctrinal division among early twentieth-century European associates of the Order — a split sometimes shorthanded as “the ancients versus the moderns,” but better characterized as an emerging schism between the considerable majority of “traditional” Birds, and an insurgent clique of practitioners who in this period began to conceive of the Practice as a “scientific” technique for refining observational precision and recall. Malinowski, it seems, had come under the sway of the latter — to Witkiewicz’s mounting consternation. The rift widened in the decades that followed, and episodically vomited forth further discord, most notably in the form of Witkiewicz’s sniping attacks on anthropological functionalism. He took the latter to be a “petty empiricism” that endeavored to “explain away” so-called primitive religion — which was, as far as Witkiewicz was concerned, the purest existing expression of the so-called “metaphysical sentiment” that lay at the vital core of the human person (and hence desperately required defending from the ravages of demystifying positivism). The object itself may be a parody of evolutionary thought, but this is pure conjecture. What is certain is that Witkiewicz called it his *łyżeczka*, or “little spoon,” perhaps in reference to the fateful lime spatula.



XXIII

The Vogelwarte Horse

This wheeled, hollow, wooden horse seems to have been preserved in the W-Cache on account of the small business card discovered in its pivot-hinged interior. Typed on the card are three words: "1. RECEVOIR / 2. REJETER / 3. RENCONTRER" (which we would translate as: "1. RECEIVE / 2. REFUSE / 3. MEET"). This sequence is known to our researchers from the papers of Wilhelm Freimuth, a German-Jewish student of sociology who worked with Marcel Mauss at the Collège de France in the early 1930s. It is Freimuth's writing (including correspondence under the *nom de plume* "Vogelwarte") that has provided so far the only glimpse of a controversial variant of the Practice known as the "Protocole du Don" (or "Protocol of the Gift"). Professor Mauss's interest in the problem of the gift is well known: his foundational 1925 work of anthropological theory, *Le Don*, argues that no gift is free; that debt, repayment, and revenge are instinct in any act of donation. Close readings of the social function of gift exchange and circulation (with particular emphasis on such traditions in Polynesia, Melanesia, and the Pacific Northwest) lead to a reassessment of period ideas about "primitive" economies and ritual life. The "Protocol of the Gift," in its three phases of receiving, refusing, and meeting, is described in one of Freimuth's surviving notebooks as "ein Verfahren zur Neutralisation," a method of neutralization by which "ein Geschenk kann zu einem Objekt werden" ("a gift can become an object"). It is suspected that the protocol, as meant for use by associates of the Order of the Third Bird, was intended to have the practical effect of abstracting a gift from the bondage of debt — liberating at once the object and all associated with its transfer. That a practice might have such a practical effect, let alone a worldly function, accounts for the controversy surrounding the protocol, then and now. For some, this hint of functionalism is enough to disqualify it from Bird practice altogether, and in presenting the evidence here we duly acknowledge those objections. Freimuth's notebooks suggest that works to be practiced upon were presented in ceremonial vessels, of which no description has yet been discovered. This folk-art "Trojan" horse may indeed be one such.



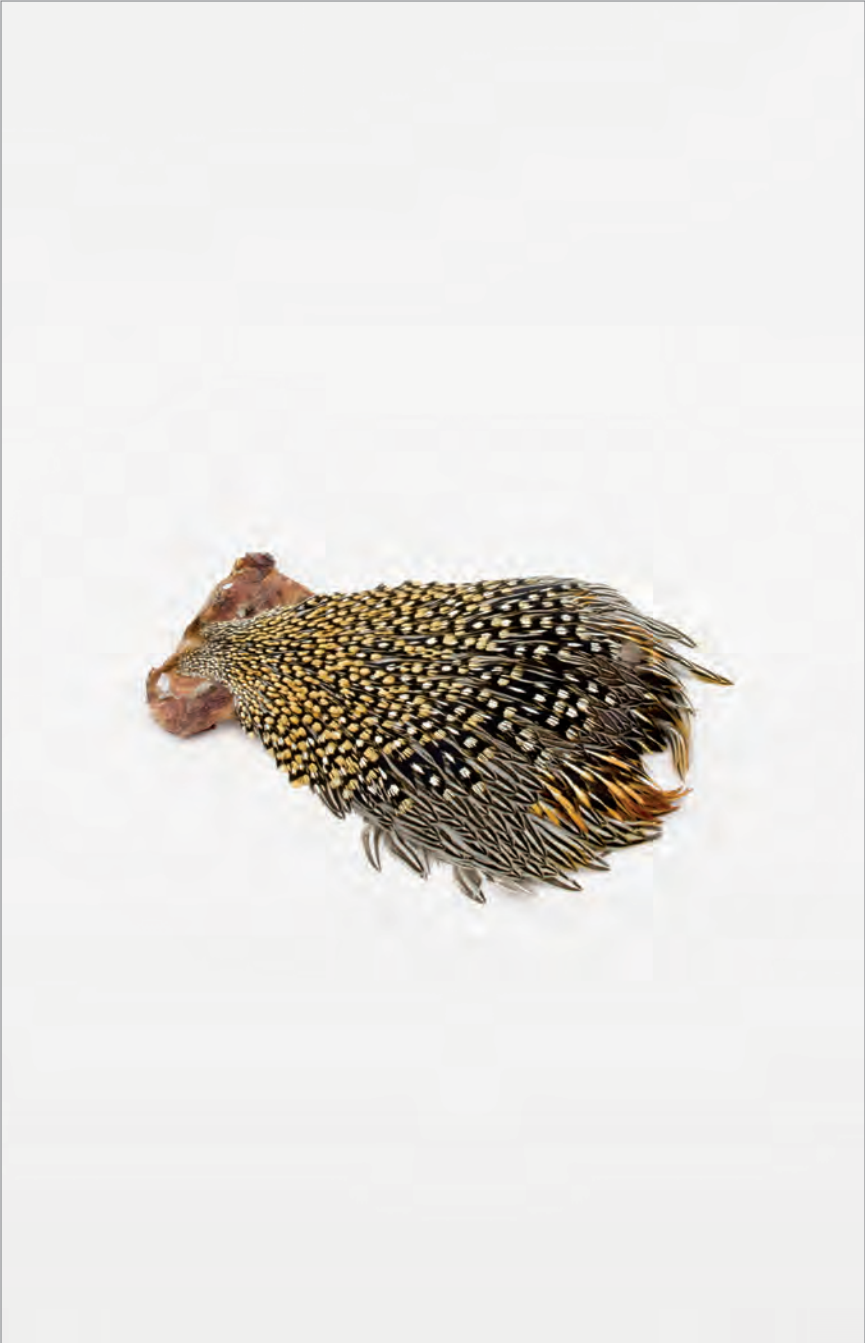
XXIV

The Eads Cape

Among the natural history specimens preserved in the W-Cache, we find a handsome and relatively well-preserved neck “cape” from a mature grey jungle cock (*Gallus sonneratii*). The matrix is brittle, but the fine pattern of ochre spots still show to advantage, despite the specimen having a claim to considerable antiquity. There is reason to believe that this item first belonged to the American botanist, chemist, and linguist Orville Eads (1804-1889), perhaps best known as the standard-bearer for the “Kentucky Hegelians” — a group centered on Transylvania University (Lexington) and notorious for their conflict with the more prominent St. Louis Hegelians gathered around Henry Clay Brockmeyer (1826-1906). Eads appears to have served as an assistant to the infamous naturalist and con-man Constantine Samuel Raffinesque (1783-1840) during the latter’s systematic investigation of the freshwater fishes of the trans-Appalachian region. And it is in notes from that work in Eads’s hand that we find a reference to “*Die Ordnung des dritten Fisches*,” or, literally, “The Order of the Third Fish.” The exact significance of Eads’s text remains unclear, since the German “*Ordnung*” is essentially a taxonomic term, whereas the English sense of “association” is conveyed by the German “*Orden*.” But recent work has brought to light a pirated American edition of Izaak Walton’s classic *Compleat Angler* (1824) that features the following unsettling interpolation:

Three Trouts approached the artificial Fly. The first made for it straightaway, but espying the sharp Hook of it changed course and disappeared into the depths. The second Trout was like-wise enticed, but bit right down on that Fly, and was pulled in by the Happy Angler. But there was a third Trout, too, who hovered long before that Fly, looking fixedly upon it. “What a curious Trout,” said the Angler, but the Trout did not move.

This and related material, forthcoming in the *Proceedings* (“The Eads Protocol: Kentucky Hegelianism, the *Walam Olum*, and the Sublation of the Third Fish, 1826-1877”) argues for the existence of a hitherto unknown, deviant (or ludic) community of practitioners of the Order of the Third Bird in and around Transylvania University in the second half of the nineteenth century, working in a largely aquatic or ichthyoid idiom. At some point the present object almost certainly came into the possession of this cohort, who seem to have thematized the “eye” in ways linked to — but also diverging from — Masonic usages. The significance of the junglefowl “cape” becomes clear: the characteristic spotted neck feathers of the South Asian *Gallus sonneratii* were avidly sought by fly fishermen from the early nineteenth century forward, as they afforded dedicated fly-tyers working on “wet” flies a perfectly unique and supremely effective way to counterfeit the small eye of a baitfish.



XXV

Hynek's Close Encounters

The W-Cache features a considerable amount of visual material, including a full set of the cinematic works of Peter Greenaway (all on film). Videotapes take up nearly twenty-five feet of linear storage. We present here a VHS tape (runtime 137 minutes) dating to the early 1980s, a home-viewing edition of Steven Spielberg's 1977 feature film, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, starring Richard Dreyfus and Teri Garr. The film's title derives from J. Allen Hynek's 1972 classic, *The UFO Experience: A Scientific Inquiry*. In it, Hynek, a Chicago-trained astrophysicist and military consultant during the Cold War, renounces his skepticism regarding extraterrestrial life and develops a three-tiered scale on which to rank "close encounters" with alien beings. To wit: in a close encounter of the first kind, no direct engagement with the unidentified object occurs. An encounter of the second kind leaves a physical trace, in or upon the body of the witness, or a disturbance of animal and plant life at the encounter site (e.g., sand fused into glass as a result of high temperatures). But a close encounter of the third kind is something else entirely: a direct encounter with the life of the alien object. Speculation that this three-fold typology stands in some relation to the Pseudo-Ausonian "Tale of the Third Bird" has met with resistance among the preponderance of ESTAR(SER) scholars, who underline a set of disanalogies between the two, as well as an ambivalence concerning "fringe" or "paranormal" tendencies in the Practice of the Order of the Third Bird. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that Hynek's work — particularly his advocacy of a general vigilance and, crucially, *a suspension of judgment* in the face of an encounter with the unknown — echoes important themes in the work of the Order. To date, it is impossible to assert with any confidence that Hynek's dramatic reversal on the issue of alien life came as the result of his interactions with a "*volée*" of Birds known to be operating in mid-century Akron, Ohio. This view, however, continues to attract attention.



XXVI

The *Sennichi Kaihōgyō* Rock

A leatherette bowling ball bag within the W-Cache was found to contain, along with a number of postwar-era Japanese knick-knacks and bits of Buddhist ephemera, a small “scholar’s rock” (Chinese *gōngshí*, Japanese *suiseki*) altered with looping and layered lines of paint. It is accompanied by a manuscript poem or poetic notation in English. Of indeterminate origin, and standing six inches high, this object is an example of the strikingly shaped rocks used as a daily source of inspiration and meditation within learned East Asian traditions. These semi-natural sculptures (it is not uncommon for them to be worked to enhance their natural qualities) are often understood to represent miniature landscapes which the poet-scholar or scholar-calligrapher may mentally traverse via imaginative alterations of scale. The accompanying text consists of 260 fragments, each in three lines, under the title “*Sennichi Kaihōgyō*.” The text begins as follows:

*one / breathe in first / breath never / first breath // two / mountain under / above around
/ endlessly // three / and here moss / chanting for moss / green and // four / the tree-jewel
/ branching making / sky-jewels // five / scuff the sound / foot path / stop don't stop here*

Sennichi kaihōgyō, or “Thousand-Day Encircling,” names an esoteric Tendai Buddhist ritual, dating from the early sixteenth century and still in use, which requires a thousand repetitions of a twenty-five-mile trail around Mount Hiei in Japan. During their daily walking meditation, monks stop at 260 shrines and halls to offer mantras and chants. This significant historical fact suggestively links the lines above with the painted scholar’s rock, as each line of paint on the object makes an ambulating path linking 260 painted dots. It would seem that, if indeed this object was used by associates of the Order of the Third Bird, the trail of paint on the rock is an index of the eye and mind’s daily circumambulation of this symbolic mountain. It is a challenge that was not, apparently, completed to the full specifications of the “Thousand-Day Encircling” — as the course marked out on the rock displays only seven discernible layers of paint.

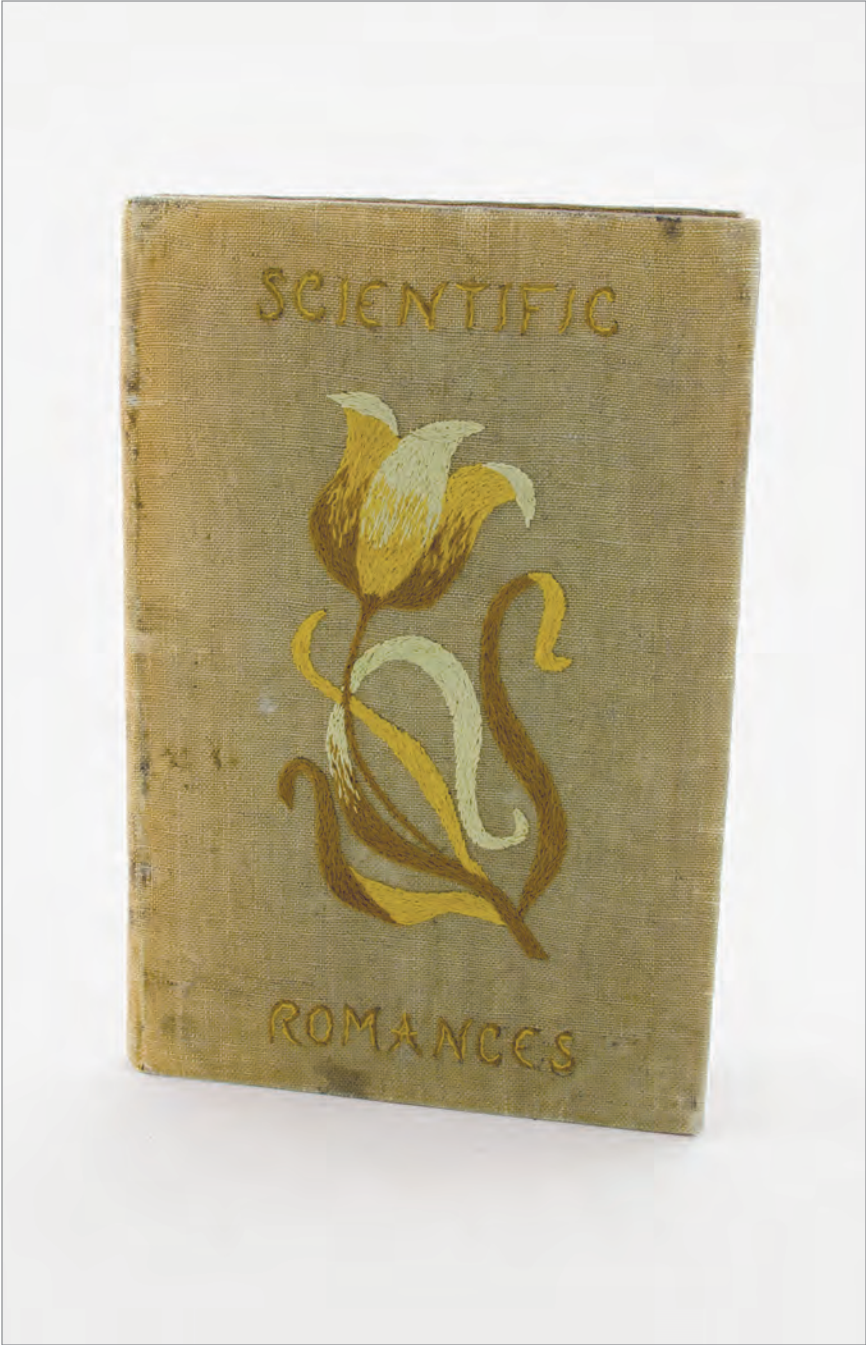


XXVII

The "Scientific Romances" of Charles Howard Hinton

Recently discovered among the documentary materials of the W-Cache is this unusual hand-bound "edition" pairing two of the shorter works of Charles Howard Hinton — the nineteenth-century Oxford-trained mathematician, philosopher, and inventor who pioneered an elaborate system of memory games, visualization techniques, and contemplative practices for achieving direct experiential knowledge of four-dimensional space. In order to "see" hyperspace, he alleged, one needed first to achieve a high degree of facility in the manipulation of a set of small, multicolored cubes of Hinton's invention. He maintained that, by studying his cubes in the correct fashion, one could progressively eliminate the marring traces of perspectival selfhood from spatial perception. The ultimate aim of this process was to activate a "pure and native" faculty of apperception which afforded direct access to noumenal realms (in this case, a fourth spatial dimension, the hypothesized existence of which could, according to Hinton, provide a rigorous and empirical grounding for all paranormal and spiritual phenomena). This rough-cloth, dual volume binds together two of Hinton's pamphlets, each originally published in the mid-1880s. There is reason to believe that it was composed by a turn-of-the-century group of aesthete-practitioners, fluent in the rites and lore of the Order of the Third Bird, who pursued a modified version of Hinton's program toward uncertain ends. Initial inquiries into its provenance point to a Bird-inflected group of Hintonian meditators gathered around the mathematician during his time on the faculty at Princeton University. In particular, there is strong circumstantial evidence suggesting the involvement of Hinton's sister-in-law, the Irish-American mathematician Alicia Boole Stott. Stott, the daughter of eminent logician and algebraist George Boole, was an avid practitioner of Hinton's system and expert in the "tesseract" figure, a Hinton-invented model of a hyperspace cube. At some point following the death of their mentor, the Hintonian cell graduated from manipulating little cubes to "advanced" group visualization practices. Rather than collective attention to four-dimensional objects or objects in four-dimensional space, members of the Princeton cell strove (heretically, in the eyes of most) to apprehend *one another* in four-dimensional space, as fully four-dimensional beings. Hinton, perhaps, adverts to such pursuits under the rubric of "scientific prayer," writing in *A New Era of Thought* (1888):

In as much as the least of us knows and is known by another, in so much does he know the higher. Thus, scientific prayer is when two or three meet together and, in the belief of one higher than themselves, mutually comprehend that vision of the higher, which each one is, and, by absolute fullness of knowledge of the facts of each other's personality, strive to attain a knowledge of that which is to each of their personalities as a higher figure is to its solid sides.



XXVIII The Tuibumbi Crown

Among the various regalia to be found in the W-Cache, this shamanic headdress (a recently commissioned copy of an original that cannot be publicly displayed) stands out for its striking form and atypical usage. What follows is excerpted directly from the accession note. The author is a well-known Sinologist formerly associated with ESTAR(SER).

I arranged, through an acquaintance, a meeting with a purported member of the Order of the Third Bird residing in the Gulou neighborhood of Beijing. Taken into the back of a small shop selling garden pottery, I was introduced to a middle-aged woman with a Northern face, who said nothing as the television blared and tea was served. I had been told she was the inheritor of the Manchu shamanic traditions of her family, acting as medium and healer to the shopkeepers in the surrounding blocks. Through my translator, I expressed my interest in acquiring any local materials related to the Order. She simply glanced at me and turned back to the television. After a long and awkward silence, I came to feel my optimism had been misplaced; I bowed as politely as I could, and departed. Three days later an envelope was left at my hotel's desk, containing an indistinct photograph of the ceremonial "crown" here reproduced, and the following text in Manchu with a note appended: "to induce metempsychoses."

Narhū narhū, hohoro hohoro. — At the hour in which the risen sun sets.

Narhū narhū, hohoro hohoro. — At the hour in which the three stars shine.

Narhū narhū, hohoro hohoro. — At the hour in which the birds sleep.

Place the three-bird crown on the head
Rub a cold pearl against the lips
Raise a hide of fermented horse milk
Drop a small stone into a glass dish
Cover the eyes with marten fur

This text appears to be an excerpt of a Manchu *tuibumbi*, or "rite conducted in darkness," and the headdress conforms to the type used when a shaman seeks mediumistic union with bird-spirits. A great deal of uncertainty persists concerning these sources, partly as a result of recent litigation. In view of the possibility that the scope of a non-disclosure agreement signed by a former member of the Editorial Committee extends to this catalog, we will confine ourselves here to the remarks above.



XXIX

The “R.M.” Phial

This lachrymatory brass perfume bottle was likely used by members of a Calcutta-based coterie of practitioners of the Order of the Third Bird, active throughout the 1910s, who met frequently at Jorasanko Thakurbari, the ancestral home of Rabindranath Tagore. The bottle contains traces of elemi (resinous and strong), ginger, nutmeg, labdanum, and ambergris — an unusual accord, suggesting the fragrance may have been personally mixed by one of the group’s members. On the basis of the present evidences (comprising a small sheaf of obscure handwritten retrospections, dateable to the 1920s and penned by a once-active member of the Calcutta *volée* — she signs her name “R.M.”), it is clear that the bottle was incorporated frequently into the Calcutta group’s ritual “Actions.” Whether in the course of such rituals the group gave its primary attentions to the bottle itself (*qua* visual object), or to the perfume within it, remains uncertain. References to an “olfactory protocol” and “attentional olfaction,” found in R.M.’s notes, lend support to the latter possibility — though a ritual protocol of olfaction, once developed, might be applied to any object and/or to its contents. A choreographed engagement specifically with a fragrance, nascent in the sequential emergence of its top notes, middle notes, and base notes, would present opportunities for imaginative reconstruction quite unlike that which occurs with visual objects. A third option, also arguably suggested by R.M.’s notes, is that the bottle was a component of a second-order ritual choreography: the fragrance may have been dabbed on the wrist of each participant as a way to signal the beginning of the collective ritual Action. Whatever the use of the bottle, it would appear the protocol relating to it developed unexpectedly out of extensive discussions around the religious concept of *darśana*, as part of the group’s ongoing efforts to syncretize Hindu devotional elements with Continental aesthetic philosophy, in the ultimate aim of articulating a non-Western secularism. A Sanskrit term meaning “auspicious sight,” *darśana* refers both to a theophanic glimpse of a deity (typically, achieved in the course of *pūja*) and to the merit bestowed through said vision upon the worshipper. R.M. intimates that perfumes were used as a means of materializing for sense experience the “merit” conferred upon the religious celebrant through the act of witnessing itself, which lingers “like a scent upon the body.”



XXX

The Runciman Cage

The Protocol of the Proosphorion, and its associated Protocol of the Representative, represent a relatively rare instance of the “revival” of a previously lost protocol of sustained attention — a case made still more unusual by the implication of ESTAR(SER) itself in this development. The Proosphorion is used exclusively with absent, faraway, lost, or destroyed objects — in short, objects inaccessible to participants. It is accompanied by a second four-part protocol by which one individual, chosen to be the “Representative” of this absent object, *takes on the essence and to some degree the consciousness of this object, and “radiates” this essence to the remaining Birds*. The Representative guides them through a series of mental postures in which they joyously rediscover the lost object, eagerly desire it, re-experience its loss, and finally subside to the knowledge that it cares for, or “attends upon” them in return. The Estar-Serian revival of the Proosphorion was, actually, its second revival. The first took place amongst a close-knit group of intellectuals and artists in Istanbul in the 1940s, as documented in a forthcoming issue of the *Proceedings*. Until very recently, however, ESTAR(SER) researchers have been unsure of the identity of the individual who first gave the distinguished scholar and writer Minâ Urgan (1915-2000) a copy of the Proosphorion protocol unearthed from Ottoman archives. We have been delighted to discover that this was none other than Halet Çambel (1916-2014), the renowned archaeologist and fencer, and the first female athlete to represent Turkey in the Olympics. Stationed at Istanbul University in the 1940s, she was in those years Urgan’s closest friend. Among the vast personal and archaeological archives she donated to Boğaziçi University in 2004, one item made its way into the W-Cache — the birdcage pictured opposite. Correspondence between Urgan and Çambel indicates that it was originally a gift to Urgan from the Byzantinist and Bird Steven Runciman (1903-2000), on the occasion of the Istanbul group’s successful resurrection of the Proosphorion protocol. The word *aksetme* in Arabic script — Ottoman Turkish for “radiance,” meaning also “mirror-reflection” — is inscribed on an inner rim. The two women’s exchange centers on the possible meditative approaches to an empty cage (here called a “joyful echo chamber”) — and the unique opportunity its form might afford to perceive and attend upon emptiness as such. Urgan compares the bottom of the cage to the mirror-like pond in Farid ud-Din Attar’s twelfth-century poem *The Parliament of the Birds*, in which the thirty birds in search of the mythical Simurgh, purified by their difficult journey, find their own collective reflection. A note in Çambel’s hand was found in the cage, a Turkish proverb: “They put the nightingale in a golden cage, yet he sang, my home, my home... .”



XXXI

The Cheviot Hills Blowtorch

For half a century, the visionary science fiction writer Ray Bradbury lived in a house in Cheviot Hills, one mile's walk from the Culver City Foshay Masonic Lodge. His brief encounter with a small, locally-based cell of the Order of the Third Bird is well-documented, though among Bradbury's own works only his little-known 1950 short story "The Bonfire" (concerning the rescue of works of art from an end-of-days conflagration) represents a direct acknowledgement of this fact. More elusive but no less striking references to the Order (and to this small but active group of Birds specifically) abound in his great novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Each of the four other members of Bradbury's "volée" — Cecilia and Tildie McCaghren (who were mother and daughter); a part-time Santa Monica College instructor of English named Paul T. Ridderhoff; and a young, chronically inspired, sharply charming writer whom the group called "Twiglets" — patently correspond to figures in *Fahrenheit*. This includes the character Granger (obviously Twiglets) who introduces the repentant book-burning "fireman" Montag to a shadowy network of former model citizens — who, by memorizing the great books that will be lost forever as the world burns down, literally "become" said books. The Cheviot Hills group frequently used a "Representative Protocol" bearing a striking resemblance to the "Prosphorion" sequence (detailed above in the present volume), during which one participant stands in for, and to a certain degree becomes, an absent, lost, or destroyed object. Bradbury is known to have been present at a late 1951 "Action" in which Tildie McCaghren, representing a book once held in the Library of Alexandria, repeatedly circled the block in a trance while the others followed her; Twiglets (as one gathers from preserved selections of the notes that are traditionally taken by each participant after an Action is complete) brought along the blowtorch pictured opposite, holding it up to the Representative in an act of stylized, symbolic aggression. It certainly bears consideration how often books are compared to feathered creatures in *Fahrenheit*. They are "slaughtered birds"; or they "leapt and danced like roasted birds, their wings ablaze with red and yellow feathers"; or they "aligh[t] almost obediently, like a white pigeon" in one's hands. In the brightening dawn of the book's closing pages, the birds "that had flown away now came back and settled down." Lost to material presence, the books burned by a civilization-run-amok rise again in the mind and memory, like the phoenix of myth.



XXXII

A Visible Object

In his third homily on the Gospel of Luke, the third-century theologian and Church father Origen draws a distinction between “solid, corporeal” bodies (for example the bodies of humans and material objects) and “spiritual” or “incorporeal” bodies (for example the bodies of angels). He writes:

Of themselves, beings that are corporeal and lack sensation do nothing to be seen by another. The observer's eye is simply directed toward them. Whenever the observer directs his gaze and his regard at them, he sees them, whether the objects will it or not. What can a man or any other object that is enclosed in a solid body do to avoid being seen, when these bodies are in fact there? In contrast, things that are from above and divine are not seen, even when they are there, unless they themselves will it. It lies within their will to be seen or not [...]. Perhaps an angel is helping us as we are speaking now, but we cannot see him because we do not deserve to. Even though the eye of our body or our soul makes an effort to see, the man who wants to see will not, unless the angel willingly appears and offers himself to sight.

In other words, according to Origen, there exists a certain class of beings that have voluntary control over their own visibility, and thus are able freely to “offer themselves” to sight *at will*, giving the act of vision its fullest meaning. A not inconsiderable number of practitioners of the Order of the Third Bird — over a surprisingly wide geographical and temporal range — have come to the belief that in certain circumstances, and given certain preparatory actions and attitudes of sustained attention, certain objects can be “realized,” in such a way that, though nothing on the object’s surface seems to have changed, it is permanently clothed in a new corporeality, whereby visibility becomes for it voluntary, and it can give itself freely to sight. A record storage carton in the W-Cache, accompanied by extensive documentation, was found to contain twelve carefully wrapped objects, each of which, we have reason to maintain, had been submitted to just such a “protocol” or process of realization. The item pictured opposite is one of them; others include a late Neolithic figurine once owned by a “*volée*” in Czernowitz, and a French penny doll of the type once hidden in Christmas puddings. We are convinced that at present, indeed at this very moment, *this object is generously allowing itself to be visible* — along with its boxed companions, and possibly many, many other objects wittingly or unwittingly “realized” by Birds or by other disciples and artists of sustained attention *in saecula saeculorum*. In the words of an unnamed Czernowitz Bird whose meditations are preserved in the file, they will all, in their lowly beatitude, continue to do so “until the restitution and mending of all things, when we are all seated for the final Colloquy.”



