

# *Proceedings*

OF THE

## ESTHETICAL SOCIETY

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



### **New Series, Part IV**

*“Periodic Reports from the Editorial Subcommittee”  
(Continues “Contributions on the ‘W’ Cache and Related Sources”)*

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

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

# “DEAREST E”:

NEWLY DISCOVERED DOCUMENTS RELATING  
TO THE ORDER OF THE THIRD BIRD  
LINKING BRITISH & PARISIAN ACTIVITIES IN THE 1870S  
(THE “FASCICLE OF E”)

TRANSCRIBED & EDITED BY D. G. BURNETT, J. MULLEN, & S. RANDOLPH

*In the studio of Monsieur Richart — skylit, darkness still hiding in the corners — 8 of us, I the only woman, though my sister waits outside — the smell of paint, penetrating, delicious and awful at once — a covered easel looms — I imagine the painting smothered, entrapped, overwhelmed by its own scent, swooning under the cloth — I try to breathe more deeply, as if breathing for it, though I don't know it yet. Who am I? Who is it?*

**L**earned readers, picture, if you will, a small notebook, bound in red leather, its front cover embossed with the indistinct image of a bird in flight (a wren perhaps), leather corners bent and worn as if the book had been held in a pocket or bag constantly with its owner. Imagine three individuals of this Editorial Committee bent close over the notebook (roughly the size of the palm of our largest member). One, with white-gloved fingers, begins to separate the pages, holding them apart so that all could read, for the first time, the words you find above. The script: spidery, written in haste. For a moment, it is true, the letters moving across cream-colored pages may have seemed to waver before the eyes of those trying to make them out.

To longtime friends of the Order of the Third Bird, and to scholars of its history, the significance of the words discovered in those pages will need no further explanation. For those readers who may have chanced upon this publication, a brief introduction is no doubt required.

As regular readers of the Proceedings are all too aware, the Order's reticence has made uncovering its histories arduous. The shape and action of its current membership remain enigmatic; even notions of the Order's purpose are frequently contested in these pages. And yet, there are a few things which can be said with some certainty:

- » The Order of the Third Bird is now, and has been for some time, a community of like-minded individuals (together with a penumbra of splitters and apostates) who concern themselves with formal practices of attention—in general, to works of “art”;
- » Members of the Order have traditionally cultivated, transmitted, and refined such formal practices—in the form of quasi-liturgical protocols of what is sometimes called “practical aesthetics”;
- » Which is to say, the Order—which has tended to be cagy about its history and membership—creates occasions for collective, ritual, and quasi-performative “attending” on works of art;
- » The theoretical framing of such Bird activity, like its history, is difficult to unfold concisely, and remains perhaps intentionally somewhat obscure. But we can quote from several telling fragments of the Order's documentation. So, for instance, we read in one internal [undated] document outlining the organization's mission, the following suggestive précis:

*A discipline of the senses is pursued. Both learning and judgment are bracketed, in conjunction with a carefully controlled hedonistic asceticism. Temporary metempsychosis can occur, but must not become permanent. At stake: the relationship between art objects and those who regard them.*

Further elaboration is beyond the scope of the present article, but readers may refer to the catalog of publications of the Esthetical Society for Transcendental and Applied Realization (now incorporating the Society for Esthetic Realizers)—known more familiarly as ESTAR(SER)—for such information about the Order as has come to light.

To return, now, to the document at hand: for some time, ESTAR(SER) has been engaged in the arduous task of preparing for publication the “W Cache,” a menagerie of fragmentary source materials bearing on the history

of the Order of the Third Bird and its practices. The small red notebook described above was held within a ribbon-tied bundle, a collection on which we have bestowed the moniker, the "Fascicle of E."

This fascicle consists of some thirty pages of manuscript sources from the 1870s, and a body of clearly associated printed matter. Internal evidence enables us to establish with certainty that these materials (together with a touching assortment of miscellaneous personal effects) were assembled by an Anglophone woman resident in Paris in this period. Since we have thus far been unable to determine her identity in a satisfactory way, she will be known to us as "E"—the initial by which her correspondents (a number of whom we can identify with precision) elected to address her. An inventory of the fascicle runs as follows:

- » Five folded bundles of letters (54 leaves in all) representing material from no fewer than six correspondents.
- » One small notebook containing various diary entries dated September 1874 to February 1875, comprising fewer than a dozen written pages.
- » 3 well-worn volumes of poetry (The Complete Poetical Works and Letters of John Keats; *Fetes Galantes* by Paul Verlaine; Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*).
- » A bill from M. D'Auteuille Couteur for 5 stoles in yellow silk brocade, 540 Francs.
- » A roughly-bound book (60 leaves) covered in what appear to be minutes written in an illegible shorthand or cipher.
- » Several sketches of hands in various positions, most likely drawn from Roman sculptures in the collection of the Louvre.
- » A single opera glove, white kid.
- » A note card from George Augustus Moore, dated 12 November 1874.
- » A set of 6 photographs, badly water damaged, depicting Egyptian statuary.

E was, it appears, courted by, and ultimately, it seems, incorporated into, a body of art-worshippers (if this is the right term) whose practices bear more than a passing resemblance to those of the Order. We would seem, then, to have to hand in the E Fascicle a telling body of source material bearing on the history of the Order of the Third Bird.

We have in this fascicle, unfortunately, more material addressed to E than legible writings in her own hand. Accordingly, we find ourselves forced to reconstruct her through a process of something like reserve portraiture: her contours come into focus as we watch a small handful of lovers, suitors, and friends reach toward her in epistolary gestures grand and delicate, telegraphic and baroque, intimate and mannered.

The first letter below affords the most capacious glimpse into the world of E's correspondents, since it has proven possible to identify the "Achille" who offers her the touching valediction that crosses his faithfulness with his mysterious "fallen" nature. He was, almost certainly, Achilles Larminie Fynn, a notoriously handsome dandy and classicizing aesthete of Irish extraction, educated Oxford and well traveled in the colonies. Born in 1849 as the illegitimate son of Sir William Wilde and an Austrian Baroness, Fynn was related on his mother's side to the minor symbolist painter Lewis Welden Hawkins, and grew up in a literary/artistic milieu on the Continent. He was, significantly, a childhood acquaintance of George Augustus Moore, whose family summered at Moytura, where Fynn was sent annually for time with his natural father. Fynn's friendship with Moore deepened in the early 1870s, when they briefly cohabitated in Paris, where Moore was studying painting, and Fynn was recuperating from illness developed during a year of travels in Greece and the Holy Land. Some of Fynn's Parnassian poetry found its way to print in the 1870s under a pseudonym, "Raoul Vast-Cigne," but he apparently lost interest in the writer's life, and is believed to have gradually given himself almost wholly to the collection of oriental ceramics – materials dispersed on his death, in London, apparently of tuberculosis, in 1882.

Fynn's Paris years are not well documented, but given his close association with Moore, it is reasonable to assume that he moved in similar circles. Moore's own friendships with Manet, Degas, Pissaro, and, of course, Zola, are all well established. And Fynn's maternal cousin Hawkins was fictionalized in Moore's Paris writings as a tragic-comic failed painter; whether Fynn himself was similarly parodied as one of the characters in Moore's work has been a subject of some debate.

All of this only goes as far as it goes. Which is to say, it suggests that "E," whoever she was, likely had relations both with the larger Anglo-Irish and American ex-patriot community of late Victorian Paris and with the remarkable cohort of painters and writers then defining the emergence of artistic modernity itself. She was certainly in the right place at the right time. Would we could say more about her. It is to be hoped that further research, or labors of the imagination, will crack this difficult case.

Bracketing "E's" identity, we can still speak to the evidences that these materials afford concerning the history of the Order of the Third Bird. Those with some knowledge of the Order's current practices will discern in the texts striking echoes of Bird rituals and actions. There is, for instance, the sociable frisson generated by a cultic regard for a made thing, and what we might think of as a willingness to cross the wires of subject and object in the approach to a given work. The high seriousness – which, in its extravagance, lapses into something very much like camp – is likewise familiar ground to those who have had occasion to spend an evening with a working cell of the Order. Finally, and most tellingly, E's fragmentary journal entries recapitulate, it would seem, the basic plot of an orthodox bird "action": to wit, the fourfold structure of Encounter, Attending, Negating and, ultimately, what devotees of the Order call "Realizing." This "arc," if one likes, whereby the work is "greeted" as a "thou," regarded with generous attention, "erased" in a mental movement that rebounds on the observer, and finally "brought back to itself" through the labor of a seeing servant who wishes to answer the haunting question "what do you need?" – all of this is profoundly intimate material for an initiate to consider. But such considerations are for initiates—and here we are not qualified to speak, so let us leave this territory.

Lastly, those in thrall to the ever-beguiling question of the Order's origins will doubtless attend, with keen interest, to the handful of oblique, tantalizing mentions of an "Eastern Brotherhood" (or, alternatively, "our Brothers in the East") speckling Achilles' dispatch to E. Indeed, Achilles claims to have encountered in Cairo a shrouded confraternity of fundamentalist initiates who, it would seem, either were invested with, or voluntarily assumed, a proprietary responsibility for the preservation of the Order's rites and lore. Beyond this, Achilles' says little about the identity, provenance, or purpose of the group, and his account seems constrained by a begrudging deference to the Brothers' insistence upon strict cultic secrecy.

Did such a group exist? Was there, in fact, an Eastern cell of the Order devoted, with an almost ecclesiastic rigor, to ritual (and doctrinal?) orthodoxy? Given the paucity of concrete – or, crucially, verifiable – detail afforded by Achilles' letter, it is impossible to say for certain. On the one hand, Achilles' claims fit comfortably within the lively (but often dubious) milieu of then-contemporary esotericism. The initiatic sojourn to the Muslim East is, after all, one of the central tropes of the Western esoteric tradition, from Christian Rosenkreuz's fabled pilgrimage to Damascus, to the privileged role of the Templars (and the 'lost' wisdom that, allegedly, they retrieved from the Holy Land) within Freemasonic mythos. In this case, we would have in Achilles' letter not a firsthand witness to the existence and activities of some clandestine Eastern order, but a mere rehearsing of an established choreography – a considered fabrication intended, perhaps playfully (perhaps not), to win for his affiliation the aura of the exotic and the ancient.

On the other hand, Achilles' story diverges in important ways from the typical narrative of esoteric initiation abroad. His is, foremost, a wry and intimate telling, lacking the heady sensationalism of similar accounts. Meanwhile, his attitude toward the Brothers is tinged with a certain frustration, even annoyance—stemming, apparently, from their obdurate resistance to change as regards ritual matters. Indeed, one wonders at the value of concocting such a fictive group only to bemoan its refusal to, of all things, modernize...

We leave the question open, and submit it, for consideration, to the discerning reader. Below, and without further ado, we have transcribed what we take to be the most striking of the materials available to us in the fascicle: first, a letter of six leaves, dated 22 June 1874, penned to E in Paris by Achilles Larminie Fynn, at that time travelling from London to Edinburgh; second, the note from November of the same year from George Moore; and finally the brief but telling excerpt from E's own diary of this period quoted from above.



*Edinburgh train*  
*17 September*

Dearest E.,

Forgive my poor hand, as I'm writing from the train heading north. There seems so little time for correspondence amidst my restless sojourning and endless enterprises, even for a correspondence so close to my heart as this one. But I remember well my long standing promise to write to you something of the doings of the society which commands so many of my hours and so large a portion of my thoughts.

Here is an account, drawn from my notes, of one meeting (somewhat typical, somewhat not, as they always are), which took place a fortnight ago. As you'll see I cannot reveal everything to you, much as my heart wishes and my true moral compass prompts.

Our small party convened, as usual, one minute after midnight in the drawing room of Mrs. L's house in Bloomsbury.<sup>1</sup> I was light-footed with anticipation, as we were to be present for the unveiling of a work which

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1. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Bloomsbury area of London was often host to secret or semi-clandestine affiliations with pronounced aesthetic and/or art-cultural commitments – including, famously, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was founded in Bloomsbury, and various of whose members, affiliates and acolytes were either resident or active in Bloomsbury from 1850 on. Most notable of these is William Morris, whose firm was headquartered in Bloomsbury from 1865 to 1872. Friends of the Order who are familiar with Morris' work will discern affinities between Morris' own aesthetic program circa 1870 and the attitudes implicit in certain of the Order's mental and relational postures, as set forth in the present documents. For a practicable overview of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the interested reader should consult Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art of the Pre-Raphaelites* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1914). For more on Morris and his milieu, consult E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*

Captain C. had unearthed recently in Cyprus, and which he assured us had been seen by no eyes but his own.<sup>2</sup> We were seven on this occasion: myself, Mrs. L, and the captain, as well as the sisters Miss P., and our colleagues Mr. F. and Mr. S.; all these more ordinarily known as Owl, Lark, Eagle (why must a certain type of corpulent Englishman forever conceive himself a large bird of prey?), Finch, Warbler, Tern, and (other men play the fool) Puffin.

The Work was already in the room, shrouded of course, as we filed in silently. Lark handed out small cards which indicated the order of ceremonies for the night. I looked down at her careful calligraphy. It seemed we were to begin with the Chant of Ascension. I felt myself grimace and had to hide my distaste: so obvious, since the Work had risen from underground, yet so wrong to choose one of the Latin chants for a Cypriot work. Very much like Lark in both ways. Unsubtle, that one. But I complain too much; it is in my nature as a critic (and you have rightly reprimanded me on this head). But here that posture is particularly improper -- as if this fellowship were not beyond both words and irritations. I reminded myself, by way of consolation, that her able chef was no doubt at work on a very fine late supper for us all.

Moving quietly we lifted our stoles over our heads and formed a semicircle around the Work, with Eagle taking up his place beside it.

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(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955).

2. Under Ottoman law, foreign-led archaeological expeditions required the written approval of the Sublime Porte (which had to be renewed at the end of each year), with any earnings divided three ways, between the excavators, the landowners and the government. However, in spite of (or, perhaps, because of) such attempts at governmental oversight, there existed a thriving black market for the acquisition and sale of Cypriot antiquities, the vast majority of which was conducted under the auspices of foreign consulates. Given the circumstances of the work's retrieval and swift passage to London, we might tentatively count "Captain C" among the scores of gentlemen archaeologists who plundered Ottoman Cyprus of its antiquities during the 1860s and 1870s. For an overview of illicit archaeology in Ottoman Cyprus, one may refer to Elizabeth Goring, *A mischievous pastime: Digging in Cyprus in the nineteenth century* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1988). For a colorful firsthand account, consult the work of American consul Luigi Palma di Cesnola, *Cyprus: Its Ancient Cities, Tombs, and Temples: A Narrative of Researches and Excavations During Ten Years' Residence in that Island* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1878).

I will describe some parts of the ceremony for you, though we both know this violates a promise, or at least a minor sort of oath. Our brothers from The East are keen (even fervent) about the formalities and about the vows, but I think sometimes their sensibilities are unsuited to this age of newspapers, cheap printing, and train travel. One wonders if the practices have become for some of them mere ritual, enacted for the sake of nothing more than perfect adherence and repetition; and thus whether some form of renewal might not be demanded by our times. And anyway how, I ask you, may we bring our fellows in to the joys of this (sacred?) work without telling them something of its nature?<sup>3</sup>

You know it is my hope that when I am next in Paris we can meet together to perform one of the minor protocols, and still more my aspiration that you will be moved to devote your rigorous intelligence and tender sensibility to the formation of a new Parisian volée.

Lark began the chanting in the high clear voice that always surprises me, given the dryness of her dress and demeanor. I won't reproduce the words here (yes, in deference to our Eastern brethren), suffice it to say that the chant of ascension is something of a poor imitation of scriptural quotations and lines of classical poetry—you can see why I might prefer the purity of the Sanskrit chants or the impeccable provenance of the Arabic. Néanmoins ... As the last strains of the chant died away I closed my eyes to prepare myself for the moment of Encounter, and heard a rustling sound as Eagle lifted the veil...

Now this moment, the moment when we first see the work, is at once the least predictable and the most freighted of our practice. Bring to mind the drama of an arranged marriage of the sort consummated in India perhaps, or far Asia, in which the bride and groom do not meet until the festive day. There is the family, the priest, the sound of sacred chants still ringing in the air, and a hush, a silence of great measure. And in that silence full of

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3. For a general discussion of a possible "Eastern Brotherhood", please refer to the introduction above. For an overview of the numerous Masonic or para-Masonic societies operative within, specifically, 1870s Cairo, see Jacob Landau, "Prolegomena to the Study of Secret Societies in Modern Egypt" (*Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 [Jan. 1965], pp. 135-186).

so much imagination that it seems to coalesce into a physical atmosphere, a weather, the bridegroom reaches his hand to lift the gauze covering her face so he can finally see and be seen.<sup>4</sup>

But now I've let my fancy carry me too far. I can imagine you laughing at me over this page. True, it is not so weighty a moment as all that. It is but an evening we spend with the work, not decades. But there is something.... how can I put this, dearest E., so you can taste in your mouth the savor of it. The work is, in some way, to us, for this time, a sort of person. And we bring to it a little of the ardent attention of love. Here we gaze on its face for the first time. Idolatry? Ah, no! Something rather worse, I fear!

I will refrain from describing the work itself. This may seem peculiar, not least because it has little to do with our Order's devotion to secrecy. It is one of our principles, rather—you may think of it as a method of sorts—that we remain silent to each other (as silent as possible) on the subject of the work. What then is there to talk about, since, of course we do talk, and at length, during the near-ritual feasts of our dinners (ah the memory of heaped piles of roasted squab conjured by Lark's chef, indeed a magician of the culinary arts)? More on that later.

Some groups prolong the moment of encounter, but we keep ours like a thunderclap. Just one indrawn breath, and one sigh. The veil lifted, we breathed in, we breathed out. Then Eagle rang our small silver bell (indeed, the same one Lark would later ring to call for changes of course as we ate—our group has not yet been deemed worthy, by the Eastern brotherhood, of the heightened status that would allow us use of the fully traditional ritual appurtenances which I glimpsed during my visit to Cairo).

After this, with a collective creaking of the floorboards, we each took a step forward, towards the work, to mark the Posture of Attendance. Here, we make of ourselves something like servants to the work. We wait on it. But not with mere patience or callow abasement. The work is a kind of beloved. There is a word used in East India for the hindoo masters worshipped by teeming hordes of followers: "bhagawan" which means at once teacher and

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4. It is unclear whether Achilles' numerous sojourns abroad ever afforded him the opportunity to witness such a ceremony firsthand. The available evidence would suggest that he did not, in fact, ever make it as far as the Indian subcontinent. However, it is worth noting that Fynn's description of the ritual follows closely the popular account of "hindoo nuptials" published in Charles Dickens' weekly periodical, *All Year Round*, in 1861 (Charles Dickens, *All Year Round: A Weekly Journal*. Volume VII).

beloved. It is a relation both exalted and intimate. It is something like this we seek with our work of art. We make it the master of us, we gaze on its face with love, learning each particular with our hearts as well as our eyes.

I make this sound, my E., like this is something one can do, when certainly it is not. Everything about our practice is in the realm of the impossible. We often, we always fail. That is why we name each gesture of the soul as a “posture,” no more (and never forget it is a kind of imposture as well). We try to move our stiff and reluctant souls in a particular way, and if the practice has any sort of efficacy it must be through the sheer attempt, rather than through any achievement.

Even on this occasion I found myself recoiling, in that first clap of encounter, from the work. I could hardly believe Eagle had chosen something so... (I would only breathe this word to you, Dearest E.) ugly. Yes, as I have told you, we are meant to push aside all forms of judgment, but, fair E., we are always and ever merely human. Sinners, as the Church would have it. But we do, in our practice, have a method or technique, an inner rite, for just such a circumstance, for this particular and common form of sin. We call this the Rite of Reciprocation. When we are overmastered by Judgment we are to do as follows: each thought that might be destructive towards the work we turn and reflect on ourselves. So it was that I spent the first few minutes of the Posture of Attending not truly looking at the work at all, but bringing to my mind ways in which I thought my soul ugly. Only by forgiving these, by transmuting them into peculiar beauties, could I ready myself to begin seeing the work. You know me well enough to know that I have no shortage of suitable perceptions about my own nature. The difficulty, in the Rite of Reciprocation, lies not in the location of one’s own blots, these are legion, but in the acts of forgiveness and transmutation.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, I could turn my sight from inner to outer and attend. The work and I simply existed. I could look. There are 33 minutes in each of the Postures, and I had used perhaps five or six confronting my own faults.<sup>6</sup>

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5. It is tempting to discern in this practice something of an echo—distorted, surely—of the first of St. Ignatius’ Spiritual Exercises, which requests of the practitioner catalog their sins by bringing to memory each sin, examining the places the practitioner has lived, relations with all other persons, and the performance of all occupations (Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*, 1548).

6. Given the historical centrality of numerology and number symbolism to Western esotericism, it is highly probable that the temporal partitioning of the rite—namely, into

The rest I spent pouring myself into my gaze and pouring my gaze out over and into the work. Lest you fear the fatigue of such pure looking, let me assure you that we are trained by the society in many techniques of mental discipline. These are not hypnotic or mesmeric—not quite. Though of these oriental theatrics we are not ignorant. But no, in the society, each school of regard amounts to a kind of minor rite of body and eye, and our society has some hundred or so on which one can draw during the major Postures. For initiates, there is, by example, the Rite of Cataloguing, in which one mentally collects and organizes features of the work: colors, forms, lines, textures, images and the like. It is beyond my scope (and for that matter, well beyond what I am permitted to tell you) to explicate these here, but be easy in that you will not be left without repertory or resources in the terrifying realm of pure experience.

I will leave you a bit in suspense, however, as I am nearing Edinburgh and must put down my pen for a time. I will take up my tale when I reach Ferney's dreadful old castle—I know it amuses you, E. to think of me enduring the cold draughts of that stony pile of faded grandeur.<sup>7</sup> I imagine too your

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three "movements" of thirty-three minutes each—does itself bear some kind of occult significance. Unfortunately, we have so far been unable to decipher the precise meaning of these numbers within the specific context of Achilles' ritual practice—or even, in a more general sense, within the dogma and mythos of the traditions preserved by these "Brothers in the East". Until further research can shed light on the identity of these "Brothers"—and, consequently, on the specific esoteric/numerological currents that informed their own understanding of Bird (or quasi-Bird) doctrine and practice—any concrete elucidative work pertaining to the meaning of intra-Order symbolism would be reckless at best. For the time being, let us merely note that the number "33" holds an important (and, to this day, poorly understood) position within certain forms of Freemasonry—in particular, Scottish Rite Freemasonry, which enjoyed great prominence in mid-nineteenth-century Britain. Moreover, "33" was an important number in various "Cabala"-based occult/numerological system then popular in Britain, often signifying a sort of cosmological/ontological "wholeness." For a good introduction to "Christian Cabala" and its inroads into British esotericism, the curious reader would do well to begin with Dame Frances Yates' classic *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991). For an overview of the uses of number symbolism among nineteenth-century Freemasons and esoteric practitioners, refer to Wouter Hanegraaf, "Number Symbolism in the Nineteenth Century," published in the exceptional *Dictionary of Western Esotericism and Gnosis* (New York: Brill, 2005).

7. Possibly Achilles refers to what is today called "Ferne Castle," situated in Fife, which lies just across the Firth of Forth from Edinburgh. Ferne castle has been described as a "Cream-harled agglomeration of additions to a C16 tower house.... perhaps begun by Florentin Adinuly, who was granted the lands of Ferne in *feu ferme* in 1510 on condition that he build

skepticism that I should put so much faith in the aesthetic, in something as spiritually frail as the act of looking. I want to be crossing swords with you, enjoying your imagined ripostes, but that pleasure will have to wait some days further.

I remain your faithful, if fallen,  
Achille

Mademoiselle of the Fields,

I call you that for your freshness and, dare I say, wholesomeness, not in any way to imply a suggestion of countrification which I know you would abhor. Chère Mademoiselle, I write to thank you. I am dazzled by the strange little experience of connoisseurship you brought me into. Such seriousness on every face! You know I could not linger, or I would have spoiled everything. Forgive me. But that painting, though I never would have paused in front of it, or peered high enough if it had hung at the Salon, that painting is now an oracle. It will haunt my days and tell my future. It contains, I know, my fortune, though I know not what that is.

I am yours in gratitude,  
Augustus Moore

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a sufficient house of stone and lime...probably heightened and enlarged later in the C16 by the Fernies of that ilk." See Mr. John Gifford's excellent *The Buildings of Fife* for additional details (London: Penguin, 1988). However, as the castle was passed from the Fernies to the Balfours early in the 18th Century, the "Ferney" addressed by Fynn would only be linked by the entirely speculative possibility of a nickname derived from the that of the castle. Further, at the time of Achilles' writing, the castle was occupied by conservative Scottish politician Alexander Bruce, 6th Lord of Balfour. As there is no record of any connection between Bruce and Achilles, Achilles may have intended another locale entirely.

*Septembre, 1874*

### Rencontre

In the studio of Monsieur Richart — skylit, darkness still hiding in the corners — 8 of us, I the only woman, though my sister waits outside — the smell of paint, penetrating, delicious and awful at once — a covered easel looms — I imagine the painting smothered, entrapped, overwhelmed by its own scent, swooning under the cloth — I try to breathe more deeply, as if breathing for it, though I don't know it yet. Who am I? Who is it?

### Regarder

Unmasked, unswaddled, freed to the eyes — all of us looking — but this is familiar, not strange, the same as afternoons copying at the Louvre — looks which seek to steal something, to bring the painting inside through the aperture of the eyes, to hold, to keep — but I must not be grasping, this is a gift to the painting, not a theft — to attend, to wait, to wait on, to serve, in service — I give the painting my eyes — it asks to be seen, so I see it — there is a dignity to its asking, to the service I perform

### Vider (Annuler)

Forget green, forget sky, forget arching, forget trees, forget sun on water, forget a boat and a boatman, forget a a far steeple, forget the silhouettes of distant buildings, forget again the trees, the close trees, the shocking height of the trees, the small figures, forget the light that catches one arm, forget shadow, forget shade, forget paint, brush, pigment, forget the painter, forget the place in which he stood, forget the ground beneath, forget the earth, the turning earth, the turning.

### Realizer

The breath has gone out of me and I hardly know how to take it back in — start up the earth again with a shove until it is rolling on its own in the smooth sky once more — everything back in place — relief — I laugh at myself, re-leaf, all those leaves returned to their trees — is that all the painting asked of me? To be carried by leaves here and there across the canvas — look! look! — greens with no name, whites with no name, blueishes, brownishes— naming is nothing, the painting tells me — your words, all your words you love, are nothing at all.



### *EDITOR'S NOTE*

At a late hour, as the foregoing was being prepared for the printer, an associate of the Editorial Subcommittee reached out to us brandishing a possible identification for E. We have chosen to include, below, the most relevant portions of her letter:

In November of 1874 – the time, you will recall, of his exuberant dispatch to “E” regarding their “strange little experience of connoisseurship”—George Moore was still two years away from his sudden ascension to the rarefied heights of the Parisian avant-garde. Prior to 1876, in fact, Moore’s social engagements were restricted to only a small handful of Anglophone compatriots. The limited extent of Moore’s social affiliations allows us to delineate, I would argue with some degree of precision, a discrete set of possible identifications for “E”.

To that end, then, I would suggest we attend a little more closely to a few choice passages from E’s own writing—in particular, her journal entry of 12 September 1874. There, in her telegraphic witness to that peculiar gathering at an artist’s studio, she notes in passing: “All of us looking— but this familiar, not strange, the same as afternoons copying at the Louvre.”

May I suggest then, that this passage clearly indicates that E was an artist – and, more specifically, almost certainly an art student. Furthermore, given the fact that her cohort of 12 September would often join her on these copying excursions to Louvre, mightn’t it be that those gathered—both E and cohorts—were peers, students at the same atelier?

Immediately, we are led to the observation that, in 1874, there existed but one private teaching studio in all of Paris that accepted both male and female students. This was the Academie Julian. Located in a modest garret on Passages des Panoramas, the Academie, at the time in question, sported a roster of twenty or so pupils—among whom, coincidentally (or not), was a young George Moore.<sup>8</sup>

In fact, it was there that Moore first met Lewis Welldon Hawkins, the celebrated symbolist painter and the cousin of Achilles Larminie Fynn. By mid-1874, Moore and Hawkins held a joint claim to a flat some three blocks from their atelier.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Fynn himself might well have stayed with Moore and Hawkins in the summer of 1874, for the duration of his time in Paris—during which, it seems safe to say, he also would have had occasion to induce E into the rites practiced by this mysterious order.

So, where does this leave us? Am I proposing that our mysterious “E” was a student at the Academie Julian at precisely this time? Indeed, I am. And, I will suggest, we go further yet: of the ten-odd female students enrolled at the academy in 1874, only one can be said (with absolute certainty) to have maintained social relations with Moore beyond the bounds of the atelier. This was none other than Elizabeth Jane Gardner.<sup>10</sup> (A significant academic painter of New England extraction, Gardner was, of course, among the first American women to exhibit at the Paris Salon. She would later, and somewhat notoriously, become Elizabeth Gardner Bougeureau, upon wedding the aged master, after a sixteen-year affair, in 1896.) Prior to her marriage, Gardner took numerous lovers—George Moore among them. Moore would later smuggle Gardner into his writing as “Lizzie”, describing her as a “demure, discreet and sly New Englander, who concealed a fierce sensuality under a homely appearance. Lizzie must have had many lovers,” he would write,

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8. Adrian Frazier, *George Moore: 1852-1923* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 28.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 46

“but I knew nothing of her except her sensuality, for she had to let me into that secret.”<sup>11</sup>

The little we can glean of E’s life and demeanor pairs well with what we know of Gardner. We have previously noted that E spent much time copying in the Louvre; Gardner, in her student years, supported herself by selling accomplished reproductions of works on display at the Louvre, often to wealthy American patrons.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, E’s comment—tinged, it would seem, with a certain unmistakable pride—that she was “the only woman” among the eight participants on 12 September—accords well with what we know of Gardner’s brash, even proactive, approach to matters of sex and gender. (Famously, Gardner once disguised herself as a man in order to gain access to the male-only drawing classes at a government-run art school.)<sup>13</sup>

Additionally, Moore’s cordial and preemptive clarification that the sobriquet “Mademoiselle of the Fields” refers not to E’s “countrification,” would seem to suggest a sensitivity on E’s behalf to intimations of provincialism; this recalls a similar sensitivity, indeed umbrage, displayed by Gardner in letters to her brother, wherein she complains that certain peers call her “le petite sauvage,” because she hails from “a country of savages!”<sup>14</sup>

Of course, I will concede that there are still some non-trivial problems with the identification of “E” with Elizabeth Gardner. To point to one difficulty that will, no doubt, be mooted by unbelievers: given the living arrangements of the relevant players in the summer of ’74, it is unclear why E—and not Fynn—should have been the one to introduce Moore to the clandestine rites of the organization.

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11. The above is drawn from George Moore, *Memoirs of My Dead Life* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1914), p. 66; see also George Moore, *Avowals* (New York: William Heneimann Ltd., 1924), 97.

12. Charles Pearo, “Elizabeth Jane Gardner: Her life, Her Work, Her Letters” (PhD diss., McGill, 1997), p. 24.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

14. Elizabeth Gardner to John Gardner, 13 November 1864, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 21.

Here seems an appropriate place to leave off. For while there are numerous possible objections, there is, chief among them, the confounding issue of the aviary: Gardner was, apparently, a great lover of birds—amateur ornithologist and feather collector—and she harbored for many years a considerable aviary in her Parisian flat, housing at one point as many as twenty-six birds. In conjunction with a subterranean concern shared by some members of the committee that the identification is too pat, too complete to be fully embraceable, it is feared that this unexpected profusion of birds might somehow cast doubt on the provenance of the fascicle itself: as if these documents were even confected by some unknown persons, with an interest to misleading potential editors to precisely this (mis-) identification of E. The birds, then, would become a kind of wry tell, a pre-planted avian wink peeping out from the dark warrens of the archives.