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André Breton the Collector: A Surrealist Poetics of the Object

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BRETON THE COLLECTOR:
A SURREALIST POETICS OF THE OBJECT

by

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This thesis entitled:
André Breton the Collector: A Surrealist Poetics of the Object
written by Christina Helena Rudosky
has been approved for the Department of French and Italian

Professor Elisabeth Arnould-Bloomfield

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Date_____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline

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André Breton the Collector: A Surrealist Poetics of the Object

Thesis directed by Professor Elisabeth Arnould-Bloomfield

In 1937 André Breton declared in his surrealist novel *L'Amour fou*, “what I write is my life, my house,” suggesting a direct relationship between his writing and his home which was uniquely curated, wall to wall with collected objects. Breton’s statement, no doubt made in affirmation of the Surrealist project to revolutionize everyday life offers reflection on the complex experience of writing as a practice inspired by daily encounters with our material surroundings. The fact that Breton chose to live among a myriad of objects in his atelier, at 42 rue Fontaine, suggests the construction of an intimate relationship between his work, his house, and the material collection he inhabited. By the end of his life, Breton possessed more than 15,000 items in his home: man-made and natural objects, books, manuscripts and other miscellaneous curiosities and ephemera. “Andre Breton the Collector: A Surrealist Poetics of the Object” explores this facet of Breton’s life and work which has been largely overlooked in scholarship. By situating the surrealist interest in the object as a vehicle for artistic experimentation the 1930s, I argue that Breton’s collecting can be viewed as a revolutionary and poetic practice within everyday life. In four chapters I draw from an investigation of archival art-objects and documents. Chapter one contextualizes the history and theory of Breton’s collecting practice. Chapter two discusses

Breton's acquisition and writing about oceanic ethnographic objects—such as the “Uli” effigy—as an anti-colonial gesture during early twentieth century Primitivism. Chapter three explores Breton's layout practice within different albums and presents a detailed reading of his *Scrapbook* as a collection of newspaper articles, photographs and ephemera compiled during WWII while exiled in North America. Chapter four shows how Breton used the *Scrapbook* collection for the writing of his novel, *Arcane 17* during his trip to the Gaspésie in 1944. This dissertation explores how Breton's collecting practice directly influenced his literary and artistic production in Surrealism, ultimately defining a poetic of collecting in his work.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Filippo, my family, and Joann.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to the members of my committee for their dedication and time to my project, to Constance Krebs for her enthusiastic mentorship and to Aube Breton Elléouët for her generous support.

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INTRODUCTION

In 1937 André Breton declared in his autobiographical novel *L'Amour fou*, “what I write is my life, my house,”¹ suggesting a direct relationship between his writing and his home, which was uniquely filled, wall to wall with collected objects. Breton’s statement, no doubt made in affirmation of the Surrealist project to revolutionize everyday life through artistic experimentation guided by the avant-garde docta that “*life is art*,” offers reflection on the complex experience of writing as a practice inspired by daily encounters with our material surroundings. The fact that Breton chose to live among a myriad of objects in his atelier, “42 rue Fontaine,” suggests the construction of an intimate relationship between his work, his house and the material collection he inhabited. By the end of his life, Breton possessed more than 15,000 items in his home: man-made and natural objects, books, manuscripts and other miscellaneous curiosities and ephemera. Even though Breton would never call himself a collector, by definition, this he was. This dissertation will consider the importance of Breton’s atelier collection and his practice of collecting in relation to his writing and thought in Surrealism as revolutionary and poetic practice.

The term “collecting” does not appear as a major subject of theoretical inquiry within the literature of surrealism,² yet many artists and poets maintained private collections and the acquisition of objects at flea markets or from art dealers was a common practice. Apollinaire

¹ My translation, “La maison que j’habite, ma vie, ce que j’écris” p. 14.

² Breton mentions it briefly as a “surrealist activity” specifically within his preface to the 1948 catalogue for the *Océanie* exhibit in Paris. I will explore this text in depth within Chapter 2.

possessed a large collection of African and Oceanic fetishes as did Eluard.³ Tristan Tzara had a penchant for African masks,⁴ and Picasso, Braque and Matisse also shared in this obsession (Bonfait 18). Kurt Seligmann collected a bit of everything,⁵ and Aragon accumulated a great number of books at his residence in the Yvelines.⁶ These objects were often displayed within the intimate space of the owner's dwelling, as was Breton's private collection at 42 rue Fontaine.

Traditionally, a collection involves a particular organization of a number of objects for display either for personal or public spectatorship (Cardinal 9). I argue that Breton's collection and collecting practice can be seen as moving beyond the traditional model of a collection to attest to the poetic and political values of 20th century Surrealism. In order to clearly situate Breton's collection and collecting practice as a unique representation of the surrealist poetic that I propose, I will briefly trace the relevant historical lineage of collections and collecting here.

Historical Contextualization of the Collection

The act of collecting art-objects and or items of subjective value dates most readily to Early Modern Era in Europe during the 15th century (Pearce 109). The rise of collecting within this period can be traced to a change in the perception of art as reflecting noteworthy qualities or characteristics instead of being solely for the purpose of religious contemplation. The

³ For more information on Apollinaire's interest in African and Oceanic art see Tythacott, pp. 111-113. Eluard's collection is documented in the Breton-Eluard auction catalogue from Hôtel Drouot in 1931.

⁴ For further detail on Tzara's collection see Scopelliti.

⁵ See Sawin, p. 183-5.

⁶ Aragon's mill house in the department of the Yvelines still holds 30,000 books that he collected, a great number of them with dedications from other authors. See://www.maison-triolet-aragon.com.

secularization and commercialization of art can therefore be seen as a reflection of the values and affects of Renaissance Humanism.⁷ The tradition of collecting *naturalia* and *artificialia* found its origins in the Italian *Studiolo* (Room of Study) of the Renaissance palaces of princes and nobles and the well-known *Wunderkammerer* (Cabinet of Curiosities) of the German royalty (Bonfait 3). Collections were composed of the particular and bizarre such as natural materials (animal, vegetable and mineral), scientific instruments, as well as things that were monstrous and misshapen. These objects deemed as “wondrous” were considered to offer the objective and rational mind a true understanding of the mysterious natural knowledge of God (Pearce 110). The physical process of observing and arranging these materials was therefore a kind of divine education. While diverse in content these collections were often organized on the principle that they represented a microcosm resembling the universe where it was possible to pass from the “visible to invisible” (Bonfait 3).

The Early Modern concept which proposed that the collection was a “cast of the mind”—a mental extension of the material world—gathered momentum in the 16th and 17th centuries culminating in the work of the French scientists and the Fellows of the Royal Society in England. The Enlightenment, propelled by a dedication to the scientific method and rationalism also saw the publication of the first *Encyclopaedia* and the monumental *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, both extensive works of scientific knowledge concerning the human world, nature and language. Collections in this period concentrated on measurement and distinction; notions of classification served as the explanatory paradigm (Pearce 123). They were categorically specific, revealing series, typologies and Linnaeus-inspired taxonomies of the physical and natural world of man,

⁷ By citing Humanism, I imply here the system of thought that rejected medieval scholasticism and embraced values of human agency, knowledge, and rationality.

animals and plants. This period boasted a total rationalization of the world through the method of empirically acquiring knowledge.

After the French Revolution, the culture of collecting moved away from scientific-based knowledge towards a culture of mass-consumption. Yet, collections were still organized by an interest in a particular type or category of objects (such as coins, stamps, sculpture or painting). With the rise of industrialism, commodities were made available to the greater public and collecting became more of a mainstream pastime during the age of the “bibelot” (Bielecki 9). Yet, collecting during this period was an activity that underwent a dismantling. While it was seen at times of a sophisticated nature implying the classically-tinged role of a “connoisseur,” it also acquired the negative association of being pathological and therefore a sign of degeneration. Collecting was thus viewed more as a symptom of irrational urges than a heuristic device (Bielecki 4). This particular conception of collecting would soon be perpetuated by Freud’s theories of psychosexual development in the 20th century and co-opted by many other literary and cultural theorists, some of whom use this premise to discuss activities of collecting in society today.⁸ However, collecting as a sign of degeneration was first documented within Edmond Bonnaffé’s *Causeries sur l’art et la curiosité* in 1878,⁹ well before the most significant work on psychoanalysis was published (Bielecki 6). Emma Bielecki has shown how this particular

⁸ *A & E*’s T.V. show, *Hoarders* (2009-2013), tropes on the idea of a “sick” person who needs intervention from a psychotherapist. The narrative of each individual is based on the possibility of a “cure” to the mania of “hoarding” objects. The show was so popular that *Lifetime* bought it in 2014, in order to create a follow-up series on the individuals who received counseling in the original 6 seasons. Mainstream psychology now acknowledges hoarding as a mental disorder. In 2013, the American Psychiatric Association released the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* in which hoarding was classified as a separate disorder in itself. See www.mylifetime.com/shows/hoarders.

⁹ Bielecki cites Bonnaffé’s text: “l’homme du monde de bibelotiers; seul, le médecin vous tirera le chapeau [...] espérant bien avoir prochainement votre clientèle.” (6)

conception of the collector was later appropriated by artists and authors who desired a lifestyle that rejected bourgeois mores. Her analysis on the representation of collectors in 19th century French literature shows that the idea of a collection and the collector gained a specific place in the cultural imaginary and evolved to the point where collecting objects eventually became allied with the role of an artist. While Balzac represented the collector as a decadent fetishist (*Cousin Pons*), Proust saw the collector as a failed artist (*A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*) and Anatole France deemed the collector a hermetic archivist (*Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*). However, Champfleury interpreted the role of the collector as a radical within his novel, *La Mascarade de la vie parisienne* through the character of Topino (a rag-picker and therefore degenerate) who collects posters and interprets them together as one would a collage (Bielecki 210). Bielecki contends that Topino is a revolutionary figure in that he stands outside of the normal paradigm of collecting. The meaning he finds in objects is created by his manipulation and interpretation of the objects together instead of separately. This type of collector, who views objects of refuse as potentially meaningful within new juxtapositions and combinations, approaches the type of aesthetic we see elaborated within the work of Walter Benjamin and his conception of collector and 19th century commodity culture. It is also similar to what we will see in the collecting practice and atelier of André Breton.

Breton's collection has been described as a "universe of surrealism," (Gracq 1991) "the most unmediated work" (Conley 2006) of a collector, and a "*gesamtkunstwerk*," (Lehni 2003) a total work of art. These commentaries each hold an understanding of previous paradigms that I have just briefly described. Yet much like the fragmentary nature of a collage, Breton's collection simultaneously rejects and adheres to certain notions of a collection which have evolved since the

15th century.¹⁰ In reference to the idea of a “total work of art,” the word “*gesamtkunstwerk*” echoes the idea of collecting a symbolic universe within the confines of a private space such as a *Wunderkammerer*. Breton’s “*bizzareries*”—objects such as shrunken heads and taxidermy specimens—along with certain collections of *naturalia* such as minerals and insects, are similar to the objects of interest for 15th century collectors. Breton was perhaps inspired by the idea of collecting “marvelous” and strange items, following the interest in the abnormal and marginal worlds of being within surrealism. However, the ideological apparatus tinged by deism on which the Early Modern collection was constructed differs from how Breton perceived of his own objects. To some extent, Breton can be identified with the diversity of the 15th/16th century model of the collection in that it valued the surprising, and unknown phenomena of experience. Yet Breton’s collection opposes the rational and scientific method of the 17th and 18th centuries, valuing the mysterious over the understood and the Baroque over the Enlightened.¹¹ In Surrealism, it is the paradigm of reason that Breton excoriates the most. Such is reflected in his theoretical writings and the seemingly haphazard display of his atelier collection. I will go into the details of Breton’s theoretical perspective within chapter one but I would like to point out here that the organization of objects within his collection did not follow a categorically imposed order. While some objects did get placed next to others of the same type and provenance (such as the Hopi Katchina dolls, arranged in a pyramid-like formation on the wall preceding his office space) for the most part the collection follows a personal aesthetic of forms which only Breton knew.

¹⁰ While collecting has been embedded in civilization since prehistory, the historical contextualization for Breton’s collection begins within the European tradition.

¹¹ Surrealism’s nod to the Baroque has been established within scholarship, notably that of Christine Buci-Glucksmann in *La Raison Baroque* (1984). Peter Bürger in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974) has also suggested this connection by saying that Walter Benjamin’s work on *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1925) was possibly influenced by Surrealism.

Breton's collection also reflects the poetic ideals of collecting as stipulated by 19th century artists and authors. As we will see, some of Breton's collected objects were considered to be the "refuse" of a culture. Neither artistic nor of use, such things were obsolescent to society but valued by Breton. Such is stipulated in his theory of "Objective Chance" where his interest in the object reaches beyond an aesthetic value towards the potential to unleash a sense of desire when encountered. The historical genesis I have briefly sketched out here is not an attempt to explain Breton's collection nor his collecting practice but to merely situate his work within a larger context of the history of collections and collecting.

Literature and Scholarship on Collecting

While traditionalist methods of studying collecting began in the 19th century, the field of scholarship has grown to acknowledge the phenomenon as a social and cultural practice that can be analyzed through economic patterns, consumer culture, psychological studies, anthropological studies and cultural studies (Pearce 5). However, it is in the last thirty years that collecting has caught the attention of a more theoretical-inflected cultural analysis providing for a range of critical paradigms that appraise material culture through sociology, linguistics, post-Freud and post-Marxist studies. While I have previously mentioned the tremendous influence of psychoanalysis on theories of collecting, the impact of structuralist and linguistic thought has also been considerable, as well as the post-Marxist critique of ideology and the production of knowledge. These paradigms of thought are most often best described as post-modernist.

In particular, my work has been influenced by the recent literature of Susan Pearce, a museum studies specialist who has written extensively on the history of collections and who provides a more broadly defined methodology influenced by the aforementioned post-modernist

paradigms. Pearce proposes three major axes of investigation: 1. collecting as a practice, 2. collecting as a poetic and 3. collecting as politics. It is the second, collecting as a poetic, that takes precedence over the other two in my approach. Exploring collecting as a poetic is defined as the inquiry into “the meaning of collection to individuals, the symbolic dimension of collecting and the act of structuring life through collecting” (Pearce 31). Pearce defines “poetic” as a word that stands at the source of a European effort to understand and assess creative activity. She refers to Gilbert Murray’s discussion of Aristotle’s *Poetics* in order to point out that the words “*poësis*” and “*poëtês*” originally mean “making” and “maker” and that the notion of an individual is characteristically expressed in forms of fiction through which imaginative constructions can be conveyed (31). Because my investigation of Breton’s collection and collecting activity is also intertwined with his writing and production of literature, this entryway into his work has provided me with the most productive mode of analysis. In addition, Pearce’s definition also brings to surface another angle of my study which is crucial to Breton’s work and theoretical position within Surrealism. Pearce points out that the word “praxis” within Aristotle’s *Poetics* translates into the English word “practice” which is generally translated as “action” and bridges it with the use in contemporary critique of “how an individual experiences the world both as an actor and as acted upon” (31). My approach of seeing the collection as an example of a surrealist poetics of the object thus also encompasses the idea of the activity of collecting as a practice that allows the individual a sense of personal experience within a world of alienation as stipulated by Marx.¹² The idea of collecting as a poetic thus provides a set of ideas for the exploration of notions of self, artistic creation and the import of objects within everyday life.

¹² Marx’s idea of praxis is built on an interpretation of Aristotle’s. See Margolis 330.

Literature on Breton's Collection and Surrealism

While Breton's collection attracted attention from his contemporaries, the early literature on his atelier speaks of the collection within the framework of the art itself, focusing on specific pieces collected from the great artists of the modern era.¹³ Within this period, Breton's role as a collector is often lauded as a visionary.¹⁴ More recently, Breton has been allied with a nuanced idea of collecting within his concept of possession in Surrealism.¹⁵ Yet it was not until Breton's atelier was threatened to dispersal by auction in 2003 that the assemblage of objects gained critical scrutiny and became the target for community protest and scholarly investigation. The last generation of Surrealists once connected to Breton, such as Jean-Michel Goutier, along with the scholars who made up *Centre de Recherche pour le Surréalisme* formerly attached to CNRS (now independent and known as *L'association pour l'étude du surréalisme*) founded by Henri Béhar through the Université de Paris-III in 1971, protested the sale and called for a renegotiation on the part of the French Ministry of Culture to finance turning the atelier into a museum. This perspective, loyal to the sentiments of Breton's daughter, Aube Breton-Elléouët, and the beginnings of *l'Association Atelier André Breton*,¹⁶ was met with vehement opposition

¹³ The atelier was documented as early as 1955 within an article written by Alain Jouffroy.

¹⁴ In 1960 Giraud, R.C. (Raymonde Moulin), wrote the first article about Breton as a "collector" in "André Breton, Collectionneur," *Jardin des Arts*, n. 65, May, 1960.

¹⁵ Bernard Dufour, a contemporary of Breton published a short book in 1994 entitled "Des collectionneurs tels André Breton." In the first few pages he cites Breton's catalogue preface to the oceanic tribal arts exhibit entitled, *Océanie* (1948) in which Breton speaks of the surrealist desire for possession.

¹⁶ A foundation devoted to the mission of promoting the study of André Breton and Surrealism directed by Aube Breton-Elléouët, her daughter, Oona, and a committee of scholars including Henri Béhar, Jacqueline Chénieux-Gendron, Isabelle Diu, Anne Egger, David Fleiss, Marcel Fleiss, Jean-Michel Goutier, Marie Mauzé, Anthony JP Meyer, Gilles Mioni, Camille Morando and Didier Schulmann.

on the part of more radical proponents of surrealism within the global literary and artistic community, specifically that of the Chicago Surrealist Group who disagreed with the proposed institutionalization of the collection. In April 2003 the Chicago Surrealist Group issued a tract entitled “Who Will Embalm the Embalmers?” in which they rejected the idea of a state-sponsored museum, calling attention to its implications of nationalism, patrimony, literary greatness and the preservation of private property (Eburne 7). Believing to be in accordance with the original Surrealist ideals and goals, the Chicago Group did not approve of the commercialization nor the preservation of the collection. While each group sided with an idea of the historical importance of surrealism, the commercial sale of the collection was inevitable.¹⁷

The dispersal of Breton’s belongings in 2003 therefore ironically brought attention to the fact that Breton’s atelier could be considered a cohesive collection. While in part, the commercial sale entitled “42 Rue Fontaine” popularized the idea of “la Collection Breton,” and resulted in a number of articles written by art dealers and connoisseurs within the art market and the museum world,¹⁸ it also became a subject of academic inquiry. *Aube* and *L’Association Atelier André Breton* created a website (www.andrebretton.fr) based on the auction inventory and photographs for the purpose of scholarly research and public interest in the collection. The website has been a digital platform for the international academic community to access high definition images and scans of archival material.¹⁹ Most recently, the website has concentrated

¹⁷ I cite these reactions not to engage in what I see as an irrelevant discourse on the legacy of Surrealism, but rather to highlight the historical context and literary precedents for the following wave of academic interest, in which I situate my own project amongst a new conversation of scholars.

¹⁸ See *Revue du Louvre*, La Revue Musées de France, Issue 3, June 2003 for a series of articles on the Breton Collection within the context of the auction, pp.9-20.

¹⁹ The resolution of the images was greatly improved in 2014, when www.andrebretton.fr moved from the cloud computing platform of GiantChair to Logilab.

its efforts on digitizing photographs of the atelier to create a virtual exhibition of sections of the collection.²⁰

In the last two decades, literary scholars and art historians such as Paolo Scopelliti (1996), Jean Clair (2003), Kate Conley (2006), and Jonathan Eburne (2011) have considered or critiqued the importance of Breton's atelier collection as Surrealist, mostly through the angle of surrealist literature and theory. These authors are from a new generation of scholars of surrealism, following the postmodernist practice of critics such as Mary Ann Caws, Rosalind Krauss and Hal Foster. While Scopelliti views the collection as a symptom of the Freudian notion of repression, Conley focuses on the Surrealist concept of psychic automatism to discuss the placement of objects as surrealist. Jean Clair and Jonathan Eburne interpret the collection as a representation of political tactics. Clair vehemently critiques Breton's collection (and Surrealism) as a representation of failed utopian political "totalitarianism," and Eburne uses recent inquiries into notions of the archive as a repository of power to suggest that Breton's collection is an example of subversive surrealist anti-archival tendencies. Even though these authors have significantly elaborated on the topic of Breton's collection as surrealist and propose rigorous interpretations of the atelier upon which I have built my own analysis, they have remained distant to the specifics of the collection. Scopelliti emphasizes the activity of collecting, yet Conley, Clair and Eburne analyze the idea of a surrealist collection. These latter analyses written after the 2003 auction are based for the most part on the only remaining assemblage left intact: the "*Mur*" ("Wall"), a section of Breton's atelier located within the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern art at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The "Wall"

²⁰ Thanks to Constance Krebs, the website editor who has directed these initiatives, the site now offers two "live" photographs of Breton's atelier (1. the "wall" and 2. Breton's "desk"). A user can click on any object in the image and be redirected to an individual notice which details the object with bibliographic information.

of the atelier is certainly important to the study of Breton's collection, yet it remains a fragment of the atelier and therefore limits interpretation to this specific display of items. In my investigation I do not attempt to analyze the entirety of the collection. However, my work extends beyond the "Wall" to offer a new perspective on the phenomena of Breton's collection: my method and inquiry are based on specific examples in the atelier collection which tell the story of Breton's practice of collecting. I also propose that Breton was a collector, which has not been defined in these previous studies. In addition, no scholars to date have looked at the activity of collecting in relation to Breton's literary work. My inquiry takes into account his theory of the object, but also focuses on the material production of Breton's writing.

In my dissertation I propose to examine the practice of collecting as a poetic process within Breton's artistic and literary production, starting from the physical collection in his atelier, to the lesser-known manuscript collections, to the very appearance of collections within the textual works themselves. Throughout these different manifestations of collecting, Breton seemed to be exploring the nature of representation itself as the lines between the collected object and the making of art or literature are blurred and played upon. By extending my analysis beyond those previous inquires already mentioned, the questions I ask tend towards larger theoretical problems on collecting and explore various facets of this activity within the life and literature of Breton. How does Breton collect and why? What is the role of an "object" in his collection and how is it defined in Breton's theory of Surrealism? What is the relationship between Breton's collecting practice and the production of his literature? In asking these questions, I will consider three main areas of inquiry. First, I look at a number of surrealist theoretical texts focusing on Breton's idea of the object, the theory of Objective Chance and the surrealist notion of desire. But instead of centering my analysis on the notion of desire from a

psychoanalytical perspective—an angle into surrealism which has been exhausted by a number of scholars over the years, notably Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss and Johanna Malt—I suggest an analysis of Breton’s theory of the object in relation to the subject-object relations of Hegel, as proposed by Kojève during his seminars at the École des Hautes Etudes in Paris which Breton attended. My concern with Kojève in Breton’s work comes from my interest in the specifics of the surrealist turn to a materialist-based artistic practice in the thirties through which the importance of physical objects and the practice of collecting became primary to the movement itself through the idea of desire. The Marxian interpretation is also at work within the surrealist focus on the material conditions of the object. Yet because Breton frequently refers to Hegel directly in his texts, my focus lies at the origin of this surrealist diffusion of subject-object relations. As I approach the act of collecting Oceanic objects within chapter 2, this theoretical axis will be explored further. My second focus looks at the surrealist object as anchored in the practice of *détournement*. Breton refers directly to this method as the duchampian gesture of placing an object into a new context and therefore changing its original meaning or “détourning” it. In the process of collecting, this gesture of appropriation is key: the collection of an object depends on its very withdrawal from an original context and consequential placement into a collection. As I approach Breton’s literary collections of the *Scrapbook* and *Arcane 17*, in chapters 3 and 4, this method of *détournement* will arise as essential to negotiating a bretonian practice of collecting. Thirdly, a theme which extends throughout my entire dissertation is how collecting can be viewed as a revolutionary artistic practice within everyday life. Engaging with the theory of Peter Bürger who discusses how the movement of surrealism proposed a social praxis through the erasure of boundaries between life and artistic experimentation, I argue that collecting is another facet of this praxis. It is through collecting an object and using it again

through a broader sense of *détournement* —including the desire and possession of objects— that Breton exercised a surrealist poetics. It is also this third axis of investigation which reveals that I am not just interested in the material culture or philosophical nature of subject-object relations of surrealism, but that I pose questions which are of interest to the literary scholar. I am concerned with how collecting practices in everyday life relate to specific textual practices. As Breton was a “poet” *avant-tout*, his collecting practice is inextricably intertwined with his writing practice. My preliminary focus on the object in surrealism is therefore a platform to discuss not only Breton’s relationship to the collected object, but how it is related to everyday life and to the production of his writing. I aim to explore how his practice of collecting manifests not just within his theoretical exegeses of the object, but in the material process of writing—a process which I see is a step beyond symbolist texts in which the word has a physical and linguistic resonance as in Mallarmé’s *Crise de Vers*. Susan Stewart, the literary scholar, has offered me a productive theoretical basis through which to explore the relationship between the collected object and writing within the work of Breton in the context of desire and narrative. Building off of the Barthesian notion that at the “heart of narrative lies desire” and that this desire is a material one, Stewart suggests that the production of narrative and the collecting of objects shares the same structure and framework.²¹ My ideas on collecting and narrative are also influenced by the work of Walter Benjamin who suggests that collecting and allegory are intertwined. Through the examination of these three axes, and the questions that arise from these points of contact with Bretonian surrealism, my exploration is detailed within the following chapters culminating in what I see as a *poetic* of collecting.

²¹ These ideas will be interpreted through two conceptual structures: 1. The collecting of singular objects generates narrative through desire and 2. A collection of objects is a “nexus of narratives” (Stewart xxii).

Chapter Summaries of the Dissertation

In chapter one I introduce the history and theories of Surrealism and collecting and situate Breton's practice of collecting in the context of late modernism. Before Breton moved to 42 rue Fontaine in 1922 and began accumulating what would become his "collection," he had been exposed to the idea of a private collection as early as 1916, when he first met Apollinaire at his apartment. From 1921-1924, Breton served as an art and literature advisor for the collection of the successful fashion designer, Jacques Doucet. I expand on the nature of collecting in this historical moment and construct my definition of Breton's collecting practice through theoretical texts which speak of the surrealist object and the theory of objective chance. It is important to note that I situate Breton's practice of collecting in the aesthetic production of the avant-garde and its politicization of art. The surrealist rejection of the 19th century creed "art for arts sake" was played out in Breton's turn from automatic writing to the plastic arts where the material world became just as important as the purely interior one that had dominated previous artistic experiments within Surrealism. The newly-held importance of the material world in artistic production was the result of a culmination of influences: the discovery of the unconscious by Freud, the search for desire as a realization of self-conscious as seen in Kojève's lectures on Hegel, the active participation in transforming the world as proposed by Karl Marx, and the "poetic will" prescribed by Rimbaud to "changer la vie." It was from these vantage points that Breton conceived of a material-theoretical practice in the arts, seen in his attempt to fuse "art" and "everyday life" together in Surrealism. It is in this context that I propose collecting as an artistic practice for Breton thereby setting the stage for the following chapters of my dissertation which will focus on specific examples of Breton's collecting.

Within chapter two, I focus on the surrealist interest in oceanic tribal objects and examine a series of texts that Breton composed for an exhibit of ethnographic arts presented at the Galerie d'Andrée Olive in 1948. Drawing on the idea of Kojévian desire and the literary theories of Susan Stewart and Barbara Johnson, I examine how Breton's objects act as rhetorical devices to generate narratives.²² In particular, I focus on the case of an ancestral effigy from Papua New Guinea that became an object of Breton's obsession in 1930. Called "Uli," the statue was a formidable object standing 4 ft. 10 in. high, sculpted out of wood and painted with red, black and white pigments. This statue was held on display at the Oceania exposition, and Breton wrote a poem about it in which he places himself standing before the statue, speaking to it in first person. Breton then later acquired the object in 1964 when it was put up for sale. Yet, the possession of the object had already taken place in his "collection" in many different ways: Breton had written about the object and Breton had named his domestic pets after the object. In this chapter I will theorize the relation between the collection of the object and storytelling seen in Breton's writing.

In chapter three, I explore the archival *Scrapbook* (c.1944) as a protean example of Breton's collecting practice, informed by surrealist theory. The unique album in black percale with the word "Scrapbook" stamped on its front cover in gold-leaf lettering contains a number of article clippings, photos and post-cards collected towards the end of WWII. I present Breton's *Scrapbook* as an unpublished archival object and define its place in history and scholarship. In situating the work within the lineage of artistic experimentation of *découpage* and *montage*

²² This idea of the material object connected to a narrative can be traced to early modernist practices of collecting where "collected material demonstrat[ed] [...] evidence [...] upon which other stories depend" and can be seen in the medieval and classical notion of the 'art of memory' such as seen in Camillo's *Memory Theatre*, where a visitor was inducted into secret wisdom by seeing its objects arranged within this particular space. See Pearce 111-114.

exercised by the surrealists, I attempt to define the development of Breton's layout practice by first examining earlier loose album pages also found within the collection. I present my study of the *Scrapbook's* layout and show that its compilation reveals three topoi which reveal thematic interest in: 1) the geological and natural phenomena of the Canadian Gaspé coast; 2) differing political attitudes between the US and France at the end of WWII; and 3) the recollection of the major surrealist figures—with Breton at the center—at the impending threat of the Surrealism's dissolve. To conclude, I suggest that Breton's *Scrapbook* is conversant and divergent with current theoretical definitions that seek to define a specific temporality within the genre. I argue that in Breton's case, the *Scrapbook* refers to a past, but also calls forth a very specific and relevant future and therefore can also be regarded as a collection.

In chapter four, I continue my conversation on the *Scrapbook* and investigate how its poetic collection acts a pre-textual figuration to André Breton's last experimental novel, *Arcane 17*. Written in wartime exile during the summer of 1944, *Arcane 17* is entitled after the card in the Tarot deck symbolizing chance, happiness and hope. Inspired by the Canadian landscape of the Gaspé Peninsula, Breton wrote this novel over a period of three months while he and Elisa Claro resided there on a hiatus from life in city of New York. Originally authored in a student composition journal, the book holds the contents of the voyage (train tickets, pictures) and reveals the use of heterogeneous materials present in Breton's undeclared creative process, some of which correspond to the scrapbook. In 2003, during the seven-day sale of "42 rue Fontaine," the contents of André Breton's atelier were put up for auction and his scrapbook was separated by categorical imperative from his other books and works of literature. While the *Scrapbook* was sold to the Kandinsky library at the Museum of Modern Art at the Centre Pompidou, Breton's manuscript book, *Arcane 17*, written at the same time as the *Scrapbook's* contents were

collected, went to the archivists at the manuscript library of Jacques Doucet. Thus, the separation of these two works (the scrapbook and *Arcane 17*) was perhaps an unintentional breach of Breton's personal aesthetic which I argue here, is that of a collector—one who carefully arranges and poeticizes connections between the material and immaterial points in his life. In this chapter, I propose a study which reconciles these two items from Breton's atelier as crucial to understanding Breton's creative process as contingent upon the act of collecting. In doing so, I continue my discussion of Breton's *Scrapbook* as a prime example of his collecting activity—an aspect of Breton's life which has been little considered in scholarship on his work—but more importantly, as a new-found key to reading *Arcane 17*.

In my conclusion, I propose the existence of a poetic of collecting in Breton's work as I examine my last examples within the textual micro-collections as seen within the preparatory dossiers for the experimental novels *Nadja* (1928), *Les vases communicants* (1932), *L'amour fou* (1937) and *Arcane 17* (1947) as well as the “stuffed” (“truffée”) surrealist journals which Breton edited, *Littérature* (1919-1921), *Littérature nouvelle série* (1922-1924), and *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution* (1930-1933). In these dossiers and journals, Breton archived original manuscripts, notes, paper cuttings, photographs and other documentary material, which he used to formulate the published texts. Drawing on this archival research, my investigation into different types of collecting for literary production will culminate in this last section as a study of Breton's *poetic of collecting* within these well-known surrealist works.

CHAPTER 1: HISTORY AND THEORIES OF SURREALISM AND COLLECTING

Introduction

In this preliminary chapter, I discuss the historical and theoretical context relevant to my investigation of André Breton and his practice of collecting. In the first part, I present the historical background of André Breton's thought and the development of the Surrealist movement from a language-based aesthetic towards an object-centered method of artistic experimentation and philosophical inquiry in the 1930s. I discuss Breton's contact with the collections of Guillaume Apollinaire and Jacques Doucet as historical precedents to Breton's own collecting practice, and the formation of his personal atelier collection at 42 rue Fontaine. In the second part, I explore the surrealist attempt to rethink objects in artistic production. Among the many influences within this project but primary to my analysis is the surrealist ideological rejection of rationalism. I therefore propose the theoretical discussion between Bachelard and Breton on the idea of "Surrationalism," as an entryway into what seems to be an interest in the Hegelian philosophical concept of subject-object relations. I attempt to show that the idea of an "object" in relation to the "subject" was a philosophical notion appropriated by Breton within his theoretical texts surrounding the use and conception of the material object in surrealism as a locus of artistic experimentation and social praxis. Through this vantage point, I trace the theoretical precepts of a poetics of collecting within surrealism through the encounter and experience of Objective Chance as motivated by desire, and the negative act of possession in collecting as a perpetual state of "détournement." These points then lead to a hypothesis about the allegorical nature of Breton's collection.

I. Historical Background to Breton and his Collection

1- André Breton and the Surrealist Movement

André Breton (1896-1966) is most well known for becoming the founder and leader of the Surrealist literary and artistic movement, which began in the early 1920's in Paris. Influenced by his experiences during WWI at the Saint-Dizier neuropsychiatric center in northeastern France as well as the Val de Grâce hospital in Paris, Breton began to take interest in the writings of psychiatrists such as Jean-Martin Charcot, Emil Kraepelin, Constanza Pascal, Emmanuel Régis, Angélo Hesnard and most notably, Sigmund Freud (Polizzotti 46). It was at the Val de Grâce hospital that Breton witnessed profoundly disturbed trauma victims whose mental capacities had been altered, a discovery which prompted Breton's exploration of the unconscious as a model for experiencing the everyday world as a series of random and surprise encounters. Inspired by his readings on psychoanalysis, Breton assumed the premise that absolute liberty existed in another dimension of daily life uncontrolled by reason, and that art and writing could tap into or transcribe that freedom.

Between 1917-1918, Breton met Philippe Soupault and Louis Aragon during his military service. Sharing the same disdain for war and a love for poetry, the three of them collaborated on a number of publications. In 1919, Breton and Soupault authored a collection of poems entitled *Les Champs Magnétiques* done in the experimental style of automatic writing through which they proposed a liberation of the unconscious on paper. 1919 also saw the publication of the journal *Littérature* which sought to radicalize the practice and reception of writing, and was subsequently also known as the ironic homonym, "Lit – e(t)- ratures" or "read and strike out"—suggesting a revolution in the idea of what constituted a textual work.

The radical movement of Dadaism was also an influential point of contact for Breton's interest in art's capability of revolt and revolution and became the avant-garde precursor to Surrealism. In particular, it was Tzara's Dada manifesto of 1918 that influenced Breton's writing of the Surrealist Manifesto in 1924 (Polizzotti 185). While Breton believed in the collaborative aspect of the Dadaist movement and would seek the same type of collective action within Surrealism, Breton eventually concluded that Dadaism's aims were too negative and centered on bellicose performance for his goals (Polizzotti 142). Above all else, Breton was greatly moved by the idea of poetry as a real source of change.

Profoundly influenced by Isidore Ducasse's (Lautréamont) *Poésies*, Breton took to heart the declaration that "poetry should be made by all, not by one,"²³ embracing the idea that poetry and art could be the vessels for change and freedom in society. In Breton's essay, "Les Chants de Maldoror" in *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (June of 1920), Breton affirms Lautréamont's call to poetry and underlines his rejection of rational language as an arbitrary system of expression, stipulating that "nothing can ever hope to be solved by grammatical artifice."²⁴ Thus, blind faith in poetry and the paradoxical rejection of language in its known logical form would allow Breton to judge that the key to unlocking creative potential in the human mind was through liberating secrets from the unconscious.

In 1924, André Breton published his first *Manifesto of Surrealism* based on these experiments in writing and formally presented the movement as focused on the activity of recording "spoken thought" (*la pensée parlée*) through writing (36). Drawing on his conviction

²³ Translation from "la poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un." 386.

²⁴ As reprinted in *Les Pas Perdus*. See Caws 50.

in Freudian psychoanalysis and the Marxist revolution through his readings of Trotsky,²⁵ Breton would frame the surrealist project around a revolt against the traditional concepts of art and literature entrenched in “non-conformism” and present a seemingly viable conception of the individual’s relationship to the world through radical artistic production.²⁶

The first experiments in automatic writing paved the way for a great number of Surrealist publications concurrent with the swell of artistic innovation that Surrealism saw in the 20’s and 30’s. Breton took a position of authority in the group’s activities, assuming the head figure in the group. While some were attracted to Breton’s leadership, others were averse to it and over the years the group underwent a series of purges, internal dissensions and ruptures. Breton stayed at the helm of the group’s artistic pursuits and café meetings remaining active as the director and spokesman of Surrealism until his death in 1966.

As the theory and practice of Surrealism was redefined throughout the years, the movement can be divided into three periods (1919-1924, 1924-39 and 1939-post WWII) designated by surrealist publications—collective and individual—which reflect the changing attitudes, ideological as well as aesthetic.²⁷ The beginning of the movement is marked by Breton’s publication of the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) in which he defines Surrealism

²⁵ Polizzotti 219.

²⁶ See the first Manifesto of 1924.

²⁷ The different periods I have sketched out can be defined generally by: 1. Automatic writing as seen in the publications of *Littérature* (1919-1921), *Les Champs Magnétiques* (1920), *Manifeste du Surréalisme* (1924), 2. Interest in the visual arts as seen starting in the later issues of *Littérature, nouvelle série* (1921-1924), and continued in the review *La Revolution Surréaliste* (1924-1929), appearing also in *Surrealisme et la peinture* (1926) and most prominently in the text-image novels, *Nadja* (1928), *Les vases communicants* (1932) and *L’amour fou* (1937) and in the review *Minotaure* (1933-1939). 3. This third period marks a break away from the second as a more politicized Breton is seen during and just after the war years. Prior interests continue in works such as *Arcane 17* (1944)), while mysticism and occultism becomes prominent in the 1950s.

as “psychic automatism” which entailed the careful “recording” of unconscious thought on paper. Psychic automatism was only supposed to be issued through automatic writing but Breton eventually came to accept image-based works of automatic drawings, “cadavres-exquis” and experiments in photography as true products of Surrealism, defined in *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (1928).²⁸ The poem-object paintings and drawings that incorporated material objects were next in line to join the experimental lines of creation and Breton discusses these developments in essays such as “Qu’est-ce que le Surréalisme?” (1934), “Crise de l’objet” (1936) as well as in his more famous experimental novel, *L’Amour fou* (1937). While the surrealist movement began to incorporate the visual arts (mostly painting) in the movement as early as 1925 seen in the Exposition de la peinture surréaliste on November 13th at the Galerie Pierre, the plastic arts, including tangible and found objects found their way into surrealist exhibitions in 1926 with the opening of a surrealist gallery and the exposition of works by Man Ray with objects from Oceania. Exhibitions became a preferred way to showcase surrealist activity such as the Exposition Surréaliste d’objets in 1936 held in the Charles Ratton gallery in which found objects and debris were exhibited alongside the works of artists including those of Breton, Arp, Duchamp, Tanguy and Picasso.²⁹

In this dissertation I will focus on the literature concerning visual-artistic production that happened in the second and the third moments of the movement (1924-39 and 1939-post WWII), investigating the texts written during this time. The prefaces to the catalogues that Breton wrote

²⁸ The “exquisite cadaver” was a game that the surrealists played but became a method to create surrealist works of art and writing. In the creation of a visual image, it is a collaborative work where each person takes a turn drawing on a piece of paper that has been folded. The paper is unfolded at the end of the session and a new “reality” is revealed.

²⁹ See preface by André Breton. Catalogue to the *Exposition surréaliste d’objets: du 22 au 29 mai 1936*. Paris: Charles Ratton, 1936.

for the numerous art exhibitions are therefore also important to this study. These primary texts will allow me to explore Breton's theoretical stance and creative work in relation to the material object and the activity of collecting.



Figure 1 André Breton at his desk. (Sabine Weiss, 1955)



Figure 2 André Breton surrounded by collected objects. (Sabine Weiss, 1955)

2- André Breton and 42 Rue Fontaine

From 1922 to his death in 1966, André Breton lived and worked in his atelier on rue Fontaine in Paris.³⁰ While various photographs of the atelier exist and can be viewed online at www.andrebreton.fr, none compare to the clarity of images taken by the photographer Sabine Weiss in 1955 when she visited the atelier and documented Breton and his collection [Figures 1 and 2].³¹ It was well-known that Breton possessed a great number of objects and in 1960, after the fall of major Surrealist activity, the journalist R.C. Giraud (pseudonym for the feminine Raymonde Moulin) published an article in the magazine *Jardin des Arts* entitled “André Breton, Collectionneur,” presenting the atelier as a world filled with “marvelous” things. Citing Breton’s first encounter in 1916 with the personal collection of his honored friend and mentor, Apollinaire, as evoked in Breton’s *Entretiens* with André Parinaud in 1952 Giraud captures the affinity between Breton and Apollinaire and their respective collections in her article. Breton describes Apollinaire’s home as a space where one would enter:

in between rows of books, [...] African and Oceanic fetishes were set, paintings of the most revolutionary nature ... as such are the lashing sails towards the most adventurous horizons of the human spirit ... there are no paths more winding that

³⁰ Except for his years in exile abroad during WWII, when Breton was forced to leave France during the German occupation because of his revolutionary ideas.

³¹ Sabine related to me that Breton had at first refused to be photographed in her documentation even though she had not made the request. She went about her business photographing the atelier and when she was about to leave Breton then encouraged her to take a few portraits. Personal interview, 2013.

this one which leads towards the table before which he sits, half-present, half-absent.³²

Breton's commentary reveals his fascination for the presence of objects that evoke an imaginary realm surrounding the poet. The poet is "half-present" and "half-absent" caught between the differing states of the real and the imaginary—perhaps momentarily encountering a instant of surreality that surges forth from the two. Breton's enthrallment with Apollinaire's collection seems to have served as a model for his own atelier at 42 rue Fontaine. The photographs seen in Giraud's article are the same, reprinted from Weiss's documentation in 1955. They show the whole of Breton's atelier covered in decoration much like how Apollinaire's was described: African and Oceanic masks and various paintings hung side by side, Hopi Kachina dolls in rows, statues posed on tables, agates piled in bowls and in objects placed in patterns of Breton's accord.³³ Most telling is the image of Breton, behind his desk scattered with objects, posing as such as is imagined of Apollinaire before that helm of written adventure. One can guess that somewhere near Breton's right hand was Apollinaire's former golden-hued penholder (given as a gift to Breton by Apollinaire's wife after his death), engraved with sinuous lines as such would be those undulating waves by which he was to navigate the dark and luminous words of poetry towards a revolution of the "human spirit."

³² My translation: "On s'y faufille entre des rayons de livres, des rangées de fétiches africains et océaniens, des tableaux de l'espèce alors la plus révolutionnaire... comme autant de voiles cinglant vers les plus aventureux horizons de l'esprit... Il n'est pas de chemins plus sinueux que celui qui mène à cette table devant laquelle il se tient, mi-présent, mi-absent..." See Giraud 33.

³³ These photographs have been used to reconstitute sections of the atelier, such as the Wall at the Centre Pompidou, and most recently the desk of Breton that was exhibited in 2014 at the Musée Henri Martin in Cahors.

Perhaps we can say that Apollinaire was one of the first encounters in Breton's exposure to personal collections and collecting. Tristan Tzara, another important figure for Breton during his years with the Dada group before their break in 1923 also possessed a collection of ethnographic objects like Apollinaire's, mostly of African masks. Picasso and Matisse too, were very inspired by ethnographic arts and their formal qualities. Yet, even though Breton's collection held similarities with respect to these other collections, none were so diverse nor grand. Breton's collection was by far the most inclusive, and therefore unique. The vast nature of his collection is perhaps due to the fact that objects for him followed not only an aesthetic but theoretical value under the guise of destiny and desire as stipulated in his theory of "Objective Chance" which I will discuss later on in the second section of this chapter. Objects were not generally collected by type or category but were collected for their experience in an encounter. However, the historical propensity for "primitive art," or objects from foreign countries and cultures encouraged Breton and his contemporaries to ravish ethnographic objects in particular.³⁴ Primitivism (although not called as such at this time) was a trend in vogue and even though the Surrealists would formally condemn the "mission civilisatrice" of French colonialism and speak out against events such as the Colonial Exhibition as seen in their 1931 tract, "Ne visitez pas l'exposition coloniale," the incorporation of "primitive art" into expositions, collections and artwork was still widely exercised. For the surrealists, this gesture was seen as a restoration of these objects to their original state and an attempt to bring due respect to an art form that was misunderstood as lacking in sophistication. The appreciation of exotic arts and in particular Oceanic art—an ethnic group of cultures largely ignored in favor of African art— was perceived by the surrealists as subversive. Breton's collection contained numerous masks, statuettes and

³⁴ As stipulated by James Clifford's historical account of ethnography and collected objects in his essay "On Ethnographic Surrealism."

fish hooks from Oceanic and African countries and as an example of how these particular objects would become so important for Breton, I will briefly mention his obsession with an effigy from Papua New Guinea called “Uli,” which before becoming a part of his collection, lived with him in spirit through the name of his pet Skye terrier and bird.³⁵ I will come back to this particular statue and discuss its history and place in Breton’s collection in chapter two.

3- Advising Acquisitions for Jacques Doucet

From 1921-1924 Breton worked as a counselor of acquisitions for the famous designer and collector, Jacques Doucet.³⁶ Doucet called on Breton to help him build his personal collection of modern art and literature. This relationship is detailed in a lengthy correspondence between Breton and Doucet and recounts the acquisitions and suggestions made by Breton.³⁷ Often written on the back of stationary belonging to surrealist publications such as *Littérature*, or *La Révolution Surréaliste* in green or blue ink, the content of Breton’s letters range from intimate confessions about his life and the artistic pursuits of his contemporaries to reports on the discovery or price of an acquisition to be made. One of the most celebrated works of art that Breton urged Doucet to purchase was Picasso’s *Demoiselles d’Avignon*. Breton implored Doucet to consider acquiring the painting on four different accounts beginning in 1921.³⁸ Yet by 1924,

³⁵ See Rudosky, “Une collection qui a du chien: l’atelier André Breton,” *Histoires Littéraires*, Dossier Breton, 2013.

³⁶ See Edouard Graham. Documented in the Breton-Doucet correspondence.

³⁷ Breton’s correspondence to Doucet is a compilation of 95 letters between the years of 1920-1924. A few of these letters were also written by Simone Kahn, Breton’s first wife. See BRT 7210 (Fonds Breton), Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet.

³⁸ The dates of these letters are: December 3rd, 1921; November 6th, 1923; June 18th, 1924 and December 12th, 1924.

when Doucet had still not heeded his advice, Breton's tone gains urgency, referring to the work as the "theater of all that has happened in the last 50 years" and a "secret" of the times which should not be allowed to "disappear":

C'est la une œuvre qui dépasse pour moi singulièrement la peinture, c'est le théâtre de tout ce qui se passe depuis cinquante ans, c'est le mur devant lequel sont passés Rimbaud, Lautréamont, Jarry, Apollinaire, et tous ceux que nous aimerons encore. Que ceci disparaisse, il emportera la plus grande partie de notre secret.³⁹

While the purchase was not specifically documented in the correspondence we know that it was made by 1925 when Breton begged Doucet to give him a photograph of the work itself.⁴⁰

Breton's letters were often penned in passion and vigor, calling Doucet's attention to the "new spirit" of Modern artwork. In February of 1922, Breton collaborated with Aragon for the specific task of recommending a list of authors and titles to Doucet for the creation of his own library. This particular text, preserved as a correspondence of ten pages on which both Breton's and Aragon's handwriting appear was one of pure collaboration. Their missive states that the suggestions they are making are done in the spirit of creating a library of poetic modern thought: "Nous nous sommes rapportés constamment à un seul critérium: la formation de la mentalité poétique de notre génération."⁴¹

³⁹ November 6th, 1923.

⁴⁰ April 7th, 1925.

⁴¹ BRT 28, p. 10.

The experience of being a cultural, literary and artistic advisor to Doucet was no doubt an important one for Breton. It informed his activity and knowledge of collecting during a time he himself had begun to collect objects. In 1921 Breton married Simone Kahn, his first wife, and moved to the apartment-atelier located at 42 rue Fontaine. Yet because Breton lacked the financial capital to purchase objects and maintain a household, Breton frequently offered his own pieces to Doucet for purchase when he needed money.⁴² Over the years, Breton acquired and sold objects according to his financial situation, but the latter was always done with regret.⁴³ By the end of his life the collection seemed to outgrow his atelier as books and objects are seen in piles all over the floor in Weiss's pictures from 1955. However, despite the grandiosity of the collection Breton seemed to have it organized to his own liking. In 1966, the year of Breton's death, Julien Gracq, a friend and fellow surrealist writer, poignantly described Breton's atelier as a "universe of surrealism... where every thing and image [was to be] a magical one" referring to the constellation-like resonance which seemed to exist between the many objects.⁴⁴ Jean-Michel Goutier, friend of André Breton and his third wife, Elisa Breton, also testified to the importance of the placement and juxtaposition of the items. He commented that upon the acquisition of an object or painting Breton would bring it back to his atelier where he would sit and contemplate for hours at a time "the powers of seduction" the new found piece held, and the "magnetic fields"

⁴² Breton asked Doucet to buy one of his African masks in a letter dated February 8th, 1923.

⁴³ Interview with Jean-Michel Goutier, secretary and friend of Breton. (May 9th 2011, Paris).

⁴⁴ "Appartement de collectionneur, certes, si l'on veut, mais tout autant, et peut-être plus encore, antre de chamane ou de féticheur, peuplé de tableaux et d'objets sauvages, mais où toute image élue veut être une image magique, à la manière d'un pentacle, et aussi à la manière d'un mandala, une figuration, condensée, à elle seule, de *l'univers surréaliste tout entier*." Julien Gracq, cited in the catalogue "42 Rue Fontaine," Vente de Breton, section "Arts Primitifs," Calmels Cohen, 2003.

which could be induced from placing it here or there in relation to the other objects and works of art.⁴⁵ The collection was truly an ineffable exemplification of the poetic spirit of its collector, André Breton.



Figure 3 Breton's "Wall" reconstructed in room 22 at the Centre Pompidou, Museum of Modern Art in Paris. (Centre Pompidou, 2003)

⁴⁵ Interview with Jean-Michel Goutier.

4- André Breton's Collection Today

Elisa Breton continued to live within the atelier even after her husband's death in 1966, preserving the collection until she died in 2000 never moving an object lest it be for the temporary loan to a museum exhibit. In 2003, despite the many efforts of Breton's daughter, Aube Breton-Elléouët and granddaughter, Oona Elléouët, to keep the atelier intact as an official cultural institution for the purposes of education and research, an auction seemed to be the only solution. The sale of items would allow research institutions in France to gain preemption to invaluable manuscripts and objects. After thirty-six years of keeping Breton's collection at 42 rue Fontaine it was dispersed by sale at the "mercy of the gavel." Breton's "Mur" ("Wall"), a section of the collection that originally decorated the wall behind his writing desk was the exception.⁴⁶ Valued at approximately one quarter of the total sale of the auction,⁴⁷ it was donated by Aube Breton in February of 2003 to the National Museum of Modern Art at the Centre Pompidou in lieu of paying state taxes. The assemblage was an example of how Breton meticulously arranged his objects and is an extraordinary work in itself. Reconstructed at the Centre Pompidou with the aide of Weiss' photographs, the "Mur" appears as it had been arranged by Breton himself and is comprised of 255 objects. It stands as an extraordinary 20ft by 13ft personal totem à la Arcimboldo of the poet and is part of the permanent exhibition at the Centre Pompidou [Figure 3].

The rest of the collection filled seven rooms at the Paris auction house, Hôtel Drouot-Richelieu, from the 7th to the 17th of April 2003. Sold under the title "André Breton. 42, rue Fontaine" the auction was organized and directed by Laurence Calmels and Cyril Cohen. As was

⁴⁶ Aube also donated items to other institutions for the sake of conservation. Breton's desk and the items upon it were donated to the Jacques Doucet library in Paris.

⁴⁷ Around 10 million euros. The total sale was estimated at 40 million euros.

hoped for by Jean-Jacques Aillagon, Minister of Culture and Communication in France, the state largely exercised its right to preemption on behalf of a number of national institutions that now house parts of the collection (Lehni 9).⁴⁸ Jean-Michel Goutier, André and Elisa Breton's former friend and secretary was present for the inventory of Breton's possessions and wrote in the introduction to the auction catalog that "the pieces of the puzzle are now at the disposition of new players." His metaphor cleverly references the ludic surrealist practice of the fortuitous encounter with one's object of desire but also implies that the oeuvre collected by Breton is now disassociated and may never again come together to form the original combination. Goutier's commentary seemed to foreshadow the eventual act of reuniting the pieces of the collection virtually in the space of the World Wide Web. Since the dispersal of the contents of rue Fontaine, the website has sought to reassemble the puzzle of Breton's collection online in order to offer to the public information about the objects that once belonged to Breton.⁴⁹ The inventory of the Atelier that was completed in the three months preceding the sale was digitized to create the buyer's catalog for the auction (available in an 8-volume hard copy or in a single CD-ROM) and this information became the first database and website for André Breton's Collection at <http://breton.calmelscohen.com> (Picard 25). Two years later this website was defunct and it

⁴⁸ The National Museum of Modern Art at the Centre Pompidou, the Quai Branly museum, the national museums of Picasso, the Orangerie et les Arts et Traditions populaires, the museum of Modern Art of the City of Paris, the regional museums of Cahors Henri-Martin, Collioure, Colmar, Les Sables d'Olonne, Marseille, Nice, Quimper, Reims, Rennes, the research library of Jacques Doucet, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, various municipal libraries and in particular that of Nantes, the departmental archives of Lot and the municipal archives of Rézé.

⁴⁹ In the last two years, the website has created "live" photo reproductions of sections of Breton's atelier (the "Wall" and the area surrounding his "Bureau") by which a user can move a mouse over an object and see the title of the object, provenance and other information (See "Accueil" > "Le Mur au Centre Pompidou"; "Accueil" > "L'atelier de la rue Fontaine").

wasn't until 2009 that www.andrebretton.fr came into existence.⁵⁰ In 2014, the website underwent another overhaul in order to correct various problems concerning image quality and search engine efficiency. It is now powered by Logilab. The website's editorial director, Constance Krebs, oversees the hypertext content organization through XML and works with the scientific committee of the *L'Association l'Atelier André Breton* to revise and create new content for the thousands of bibliographic notices detailing the objects online. Krebs and the association is at the helm of numerous promotional ventures to expand and enrich the site within external networks, such as the national institutions whose holdings include lots from the auction of André Breton's estate. The site today presents itself as a virtual museum, a library, and an encyclopedia of the objects sold in 2003.

5- The "Gold of Time" and "Solidified Desires"

While the atelier no longer holds Breton's possessions nor belongs to his family⁵¹, the memory of the poet's formidable presence and history in the Surrealist movement lingers on at rue Fontaine with the following words inscribed on a plaque affixed to the front of the building: "*Je cherche l'or du temps*" from his 1924 essay, "Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité."⁵² This is also the epitaph inscribed upon his tomb in the Batignolles cemetery and thus can be noted here as a phrase which we should not pass by without consideration. A reference to the alchemist-versifier who transforms ordinary words into the gold of poetry, it is a fitting

⁵⁰ The 2009 site was powered by GiantChair, the high-tech company which hosts a cloud-computing platform for meta-data management in the book publishing industry. Content for the site was managed through Onixsuite which had the infrastructure to allow for the eventual publishing of e-books.

⁵¹ The atelier is now inhabited by a friend of Breton's, Guy Flandres.

⁵² *Point du jour*, 7.

metaphor for a man who was greatly fascinated by esotericism, mysticism and a world that could not be explained through western science. Yet, Breton's memorial has other readings too. Infused with the contradictory nature of the surrealist spirit, Breton's search for "gold in time" does not seem comprehensible without an imaginative leap of faith in language and logic. Rephrased as a play on the phonetic "or" (gold) which is a homonym for "hors" (outside), "Je cherche l'(h)or(s) du temps,"⁵³ seems to offer a second interpretation that "gold" is at once the invaluable ore found in nature and something ephemeral which is not constrained by physical reality, nor the limitations of time. The words thus pervade a polyvalent irreverence in linguistic possibility, an ironic play on meaning celebrated by the surrealists. Beyond this semiotic ambiguity, perhaps the idea of evaluation haunts Breton's words. "L'or du temps" is perhaps that substance of personal pleasurable value, insoluble within the economic exchange-value imposed on things and their meaning by a capitalist society. Denis Hollier suggests that Breton identifies aesthetic experience with "use-value" in resistance to "exchange value" which he defines as a "pleasure [that] is the result of incommunicability itself." Hollier seems to be making a point for the surrealist experience that is incommunicable; the "unexchangeable is what gives rise to the enjoyment that is the most characteristic feature of use-value" (113). This "unexchangeability" which is a rejection of the accepted equivalencies of the social scale seems to be upheld in the choice of objects collected in his atelier and may offer a clue to understanding Breton's collection as a means of social and cultural resistance. Another interpretation, considering the unnatural physics of "l'or du temps" evokes the possibility of a fantastic circumstance, the very sought-after stuff of Surrealism. As "time" is usually considered an immaterial dimension of existence, gold in time suggests a fusing of dimensions, that of the material in the immaterial, the

⁵³ Spector 1.

impossible made possible, the real and surreal, and seems to antithetically echo the phrase from Marx's Communist Manifesto which the late Marshall Berman made so famous in his monumental work on modernism: "All that is solid melts into air." In this sense it seems if Breton was referring to a reversal of this trend, finding the "gold in time" is similar to finding those things "solid" which are prone to disappear. Berman's expression, here evoked in memory of Breton, can be used to refer to Breton's collection of objects—those things he so passionately collected and assiduously placed in his atelier no longer representative of original contexts and contrasting temporalities but united within the constellation of Breton's own universe. Why material objects became the focal point for Breton and Surrealism in the 1930's—the moment of "solidified desires"—and how collecting became a part of his life and literature will be explored in the following section.⁵⁴

II. Theoretical Background to the Collected Object in Surrealism

1- Anti-Rationalism and its Philosophical Origins in Surrealism

In 1927 René Crevel, a fellow surrealist, published the essay "L'esprit contre la raison" wherein he detailed Surrealism's rejection of reason and rationalism. For the surrealists rationalism had largely inhibited a consciousness of self and originated from an "exercise of discursive logical thinking." Breton was behind this opposition and saw rationalism as a mode of reasoning that had largely been accepted by society and had brought human interactions and communication into decay. Breton had already stated in 1924 within *La confession dédaigneuse*, that it was crucial to value all "that keeps reason in check" (OC I 194-5), professing again later

⁵⁴ "Crise de l'objet", OC II, 355.

in *Les chants de maldoror* that “there is interest in encouraging all that can throw doubt on reason” (OC I 234). In opposing rationalism Breton was searching for a new kind of reality that suspended “logic” in its scientific form. Since truth in this context is deduced from reason, altering this main criterion (reason) in favor of instinct, intuition and sensory perception became the goal of surrealist activity. Going beyond reason, towards a different “method of thinking”—one that did not limit “true” uninhibited thought and imagination was at stake. The surrealist contestation against rationalism thus presented itself as a combat against logic as a moral and social absolute.⁵⁵

The anti-rational stance was the foundation upon which the surrealists would build an aesthetic theory that borrowed from major philosophical precepts. The discovery of the writings of Isidore Ducasse (Lautréamont) and the development of automatic writing influenced by psychiatry and psychoanalysis were all part of denouncing the hegemony of occidental rationalism. Here we can imply the influence of Freud’s discovery of the “unconscious” in the attempt to go beyond the Cartesian model. While ideas of a subliminal depth within the individual had been a premise of the Romantic Movement, Freud’s scientific explanation of the unconscious became a stronghold for Breton’s experiments in psychic automatism and dream analysis as artistically driven projects for Surrealism. The rejection of reason also held origins in the philosophical implications of Hegel’s conception of subject-object relations as a radical revision of the Cartesian model. Breton, who had learned of Hegel from as early as 1916, read Benedetto Croce’s *Ce qui est vivant et ce qui est mort dans la philosophie de Hegel* published in

⁵⁵ While Surrealism came to valorize the anti-rational, Breton’s literary and artistic methods were far from being exercised in “irrationalism.” Breton’s essays often follow the didacticism and scholarly nature of the traditional form and style of the French essay. His experimental novels, while indeed experimental, still retain a mild form of narrative and references to past authors.

1910 and considered the philosopher in 1922 as “l’homme qui pour Mallarmé, Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, Jarry et surtout dada, fut le véritable Messie” (OC I, 632).⁵⁶ Breton’s conception of Hegel developed over the years and can be summarized in phases which relate to Breton’s changing conception of Surrealism. Breton was initially drawn to Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* and the notion that human affairs and nature were in a dialectical relation. However, for a period of time he was also strongly influenced by Marx’s interpretation of dialectical materialism through the surrealist adhesion to communism within the 1920’s. It was through Pierre Naville, the director of the first issues of *La révolution surréaliste* (1924-1929), who had ties with the communist journal *Clarté*, that the surrealist group first became acquainted with the ideas of the communist party through their mutual opposition of the colonial war in Morocco (Ottinger 10). It was Breton’s discovery of Leon Trotsky’s biography, *Lenin* (1925) and his published summary of the book’s importance in the 5th issue of *La révolution surréaliste* in October 1925 that brought communism to the forefront of surrealism for a short period of time (Ottinger 10). In 1927 the surrealists officially joined the communist party and by 1933 they were all excluded except Aragon. Breton ultimately saw a failing in the communist project to resolve social problems and declared that “la method dialectique ne [peux] s’appliquer valablement qu’à la resolution des problèmes sociaux” within his *Second Manifesto* (OC 1, 793). Breton’s conception of the dialectic then became centered on its application to the arts as an engaged practice in the 1930s.⁵⁷ This would also be met with the growing interest among French intellectuals as Alexandre Kojève would introduce Hegel’s *Phenomenology of the Spirit* through his lectures on the

⁵⁶ The symbolist generation had been introduced to Hegel through the *Philosophy of the Spirit*, *Philosophy of Nature*, and the *Aesthetics* through the translations of Augusto Véra. See *Dictionnaire d’André Breton*, 491-2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 493.

Introduction to a Reading of Hegel from 1933-1939 at the l'École des Hautes Études in Paris.

Among those in attendance were André Breton, Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, Raymond Aron, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Pierre Klossowski, Eric Weil, Henry Corbin, Raymond Queneau, as well as perhaps Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Blanchot (Selcer 181). Kojève's interpretation is known for focusing on Hegel's concept of desire within the Phenomenology through a reading of the struggle between the Master and the Slave which is also at the heart of Marx's interpretation. While Breton had rejected dialectical materialism in its absolute form, it seems that Kojève's focus on desire within the dialectical method met Breton's curiosity in a movement of consciousness that was applicable to surrealist goals. It is this philosophical background that is of interest to my historical study of Breton's relationship with the object as it relates to his practice of collecting.

In Breton's essay, "La situation surréaliste de l'objet," which was given as a conference speech on the 29th of March in Prague in 1935, Breton quotes Max Ernst and explains that current surrealist artistic experiments that focus on the object are engaged in going beyond "l'envoûtement de la raison" (OC II, 492). Here, Breton speaks of the evolution of the object as a central to surrealist art. In this context, the object suspends the "bewitchment" of rationalism, and thus is not a complete rejection of reason itself but a demystification of it. While the "object" in surrealism had previously been defined as early as 1924 as a physical object that corresponds to an internal desire,⁵⁸ this early definition of the object was predicated on a dream image or an image that came from the subconscious. In 1930, Dali proposed the fabrication of "symbolic objects" (Objets à fonctionnement symbolique), which unleashed a period of the creation of "surrealist objects" which could "provoke unconscious acts [and] release desires" (OC II 494).

⁵⁸ Seen as early as Breton's 1924 text, *Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité*, where he proposes the idea of recreating objects seen in dreams. *Point du jour*, 25.

Breton for a short time was enthusiastic about “symbolic objects” — and especially keen on Giacometti’s *Boule Suspendue*, which came to occupy a central place in his collection— yet, these objects disappeared from the surrealist landscape by the end of 1930 (Ottinger 24). However, it is in the essay “La situation surréaliste de l’objet,” that Breton seems to turn to a new more philosophical conception of the object, contextualizing the idea of the “surrealist object” as an “‘object’ within the greatest philosophical sense possible” (OC II, 475). In speaking about going beyond rationalism and the object within this essay, Breton was most simply interpreting his ideas on how reality was constructed, reformulating conclusions made between the contending schools of materialist and idealist thought which had come into play in the literature and language of the 18th century (OC II, 492). While each of these philosophical systems of belief have much more complex histories it is important to know what theoretical premises Breton was ruminating over at this time, and how they came to influence his perspective. Whereas materialism proposed that reality exists independent to thought and consciousness, idealism proposed that reality depends on human consciousness. Among the interpretations and divergences on these two strains of philosophy the current that Breton refers to is German Idealism and the polemic between Kant and Hegel on the human experience of reality. Developed in reaction to the supposition of a Cartesian split subject during the Enlightenment, both Kant and Hegel redefined the subject’s position towards reality not as a mediation of rational nor empirical method of knowledge as espoused by the Scientific Revolution, but through sensory perception and consciousness. For Kant, consciousness was perceived as the ultimate arbiter of reality where the real “object” was a “thing in itself” and was unknowable except for the impression of the sensuous world upon the mind through universal categories. Within his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) Kant concludes that the mind makes

knowledge of reality possible and that it is through aesthetics that a harmonious balance can be maintained between understanding and imagination in an elevated state beyond human desire (Singer 6). Hegel however disagreed with Kant's idea and instead proposed that consciousness and desire or the subject and the object were interrelated. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) he posits that consciousness cannot exist in isolation. It is within the latter position that we seem to find the philosophical inspiration behind Breton's surrealist conception of the object as a necessary tool in the pursuit of "going beyond reason." If Breton looked to Hegel for inspiration in formulating a revolutionary ideal which rejected rationalism as a viable principle of freedom and considered instead the importance of a relationality between the subject and the object between the individual and the material world, it is this philosophical context which can be said to shape Breton's idea of the physical object as an important point of contact for a surrealist encounter.

2- Surrealism and the "Object"

In 1935 Gaston Bachelard, a contemporary of Breton and professor of history and philosophy of sciences at the Sorbonne University, published an article entitled "Le Surrealisme" in the single issue of the surrealist journal, "Inquisitions." The article, inspired by Tristan Tzara's text "Grains et Issues: rêve experimental" stipulates the formulation of a new kind of thinking—a "surrealism" or "experimental" form of reasoning by which thought would be dialectically returned to a natural state allowing for primal "turbulence" and "aggression" in human reasoning—that which was seen as irrational. The dialectical process, appropriated from Hegel was contested as a rational method that could lead to "a moral and a general politics" but was nevertheless accepted as a way towards "the necessity of reforming

experience” (2). In Breton’s “Crise de l’objet” (1936) he presents the importance of the “object” in surrealism in relation to Bachelard’s claim that surrationalism could accompany the method of surrealism and eventually be analogous to it if practiced by surrealists in the quest to break all former limiting structures of thought in the name of “a spiritual revolution.” Breton also responds to Bachelard’s invocation of Hegel and states that

Si par application de l’adage hégélien: ‘tout ce qui est réel est rationnel, et tout ce qui est rationnel est réel’ la raison d’aujourd’hui ne se propose rien tant que l’assimilation continue de l’irrationnel, assimilation durant laquelle le rationnel est appelé a se réorganiser sans cesse. (355)

Breton supports Bachelard’s claim and applies his idea of the turbulent irrational towards a dialectical reformulation of reality and states that reason can only call for the reorganization of the rational through the irrational. Therefore, the method of “surrationalisme” was to be exercised as the “physical world” would be experimented with in new ways. Through Hegel, Breton reveals the philosophical nexus by which the physical object and the material world would become central to Surrealism. Breton speaks about a way of looking at the world beyond empiricism where “reality” is no longer just a “fact” but something more unified and fluid. Breton’s quotation of Hegel’s paradoxical adage, “If all that is real is rational, and all that is rational is real,” reveals how the object and subject relate as one. The phrase appears to take the form of a syllogism, but in actuality does not offer a deductive form of reasoning at all.⁵⁹ Instead,

⁵⁹ My interpretation of this linguistic play is based on Frederic Jameson’s reading of Hegel’s Phenomenology as a “linguistic experiment.” Seminar on Hegel’s Logic, Duke University, 8-25-15.

the sentence offers a linguistic parabola that disavows deductive logic. If rationalism itself could relate to the reality of the material world, just as the material world could relate to the rational then there is a fluid movement between the two which dispels categories of being for a conception of experience which is only relational.⁶⁰ Breton also states that “le réel, trop longtemps confondu avec le donné, pour l’une comme pour l’autre s’étoile dans toutes les directions du possible et tend à ne faire qu’un avec lui” (354). This sentence affirms Breton’s support of the idea that reality is mutable, relational and not that which is seen as “fact” but unified to the subject.

By 1936, Breton’s conception of the object took on a more philosophical outlook, most apparent within the essay “Crisis of the Object” where he situates the surrealist object as radical within the philosophical development of subject-object relations as interpreted through Hegel. One year prior, within his “Situation Surréaliste de l’objet,” Breton had quoted Hegel saying that “l’objet d’art a-t-on fort bien dit, tient le milieu entre le sensible et le rationnel. C’est quelque chose de spirituel qui apparaît comme matériel” (OC II, 472). These preceding remarks offer insight into Breton’s “Crisis of the Object” whose title refers to the radical shift in subject-object relations. Within the essay, Breton speaks of an experimentation of the physical world as a method and says that:

⁶⁰ Breton’s interest in this phrase probably had something to do with another central idea to Surrealism which saw reality as a nexus of correspondences. Breton touches on this idea in his text, *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (1928) when he says: “Tout ce que j’aime, tout ce que je pense et ressens, m’incline à une philosophie particulière de l’immanence d’après laquelle la surréalité serait contenue dans la réalité même, et ne lui serait ni supérieure ni extérieure. Et réciproquement, car *le contenant serait aussi le contenu*. Il s’agirait presque d’un vase communicant entre le contenant et le contenu” (69).

de part et d'autre, c'est la même démarche d'une pensée en rupture avec la pensée millénaire, d'une pensée non plus réductive mais indéfiniment inductive et extensive, dont l'objet, au lieu de se situer une fois pour toutes en deçà d'elle-même, se recrée à perte de vue au-delà. (355)

While Breton does not explain this notion further, we can interpret Breton's proposal to mean that instead of the object or the material world being second to thought as he relates to "reductive" thinking, the object will now come first by way of "inductive" thinking. Thought, or conscious perception then is relegated to the object and the material world. Breton also suggests that instead of being underestimated in thought, the object will finally be "beyond" thought. We can also see this as being "beyond" reason, or beyond comprehension in logic. As such, Breton rephrases this difference as a kind of movement and suggests that thought will never actually attain the "object" as it will recreate itself at a vanishing point, "à perte de vue au delà" (beyond sight). If the "object" in Breton's surrealism is a kind of external material to the individual as well as part of the physical world, and we remember that Breton's quest is to go beyond "le monde soi-disant cartésien qui [nous] entoure" towards a world which reduces antinomies and the separation between the unconscious and consciousness, it becomes understandable that Breton wanted to break the barriers between the external, physical "objective" world, also related to consciousness, and the interior psychic interior world, related to the unconscious. Breton does not transgress the barrier per se, but rather puts it into a perpetual mode of relation. The "object" then can be understood as an instrument of this dialectical process for Surrealism—a method of apprehending the world without reducing any part of it through reason.

3- Destabilization of the Rational Subject

The surrealist goal to reinterpret the value of the material world in subject-object relations as suggested within Hegel's dialectics made for a project which paradoxically sought to explore the interior and exterior in a dynamic union. This ultimately meant the destabilization of the rational subject and even though the Surrealists would not go so far to call this project their own, it was already inherent in their revolutionary stance adopted from Rimbaud's "Je est un autre"—"I is another." Breton's understanding of this metaphysical dilemma also appears in his 1928 text, *Nadja*, when he asks in the first paragraph a series of questions which implies that he, the author of the book and subject of experience is/are in crisis: "Qui suis-je", "Qui je hante?" "qu'a-t-il fallu que je cessasse d'être pour être *qui* je suis," "je m'efforce de savoir en quoi consiste [...] ma différenciation." Underlying these questions is a doubt in the appearance of the world and our existence within. It is thus understandable that Breton would pursue these questions and how they related to the creation of art and poetry. Breton explicitly refers to the philosophical problem of the subject in poetry in "Misère de la poésie" (1930) and in "La situation surréaliste de l'objet" (1935), when he says that, "il y a un siècle, le sujet en poésie ne pouvait déjà plus être tenu que pour indifférent" (OC II 481). Referring to the idea that the subject is destabilized in the making or reading of poetry and art, Breton cites this revelation as being implicit in the following sentence from Lautréamont's *Maldoror* (1869) which exposes the natural physical world to possess just as much creative potential as a human being: "c'est un homme ou une pierre ou un arbre qui va commencer le quatrième chant" (OC II 481). Breton also gives the example of Rimbaud's last poem, "Rêve" which seems to exemplify the loss of an individual subject in favor of an ironic polyphony of voices that discuss the banality of hunger and French cheese (OC II notes, 1603). Grappling with the idea of the tenuous subject and the

importance of reconciling the inner and outer worlds of an individual's existence became an important aspect of Breton's inquiry and formulation of surrealism at this time. Anna Balakian explains the surrealists in this moment as motivated by the "seek[ing of] both physical and metaphysical satisfaction by pushing back the frontiers of logical reality and recreating the infinite possibilities of the concrete world" (1994: 125). The surrealists were looking to new forms of reality, fueled by the premise that this was possible through artistic expression by merging of the inner and outer worlds of an individual.

Acknowledging this tension in his work, and attempting to place Breton in a conceptualized historical point of early twentieth century thought, I propose considering Breton as situated in what Frederic Jameson's calls "high modernism," or the conceptual historic periodization between the movements of modernism and post-modernism as a moment where "the very concept of expression presupposes indeed some separation within subject, and along with that a whole metaphysics of the inside and outside" (11). There are indeed other ways of bringing this concept to light but I have chosen Jameson's idea to illustrate Breton's preoccupation with alterity in the subject, as seen in Breton's famous declaration from the first Manifesto that "existence is elsewhere." Breton's claim that we may find "existence" in "otherness" is testament to the idea of a contested subject. In the following section I draw on this ideological disposition to discuss how the object became important for Breton in Surrealism.⁶¹

⁶¹ The words "modernity" and "post-modernity" can be seen as arbitrary but are useful in sketching a conceptually temporal landscape for discussing the philosophical and literary developments which led to the types of collecting seen in Breton.

4- Object as Praxis

Breton's choice to reject rationalism and theoretically move towards a more radical experimentation in the plastic arts aligns with Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974). Based on a Marxist-inflected historical interpretation (via Herbert Marcuse and the Frankfurt School) of the production and reception of art in society, Bürger suggests that the avant-garde's goal to revolutionize the status of art in the twentieth century was brought about by an ideological shift which dictated that art had become nothing but a separate and contemplative activity.⁶² Whereas art previously had a role to play in the function of everyday medieval and courtly societies, within bourgeois society it had become an object of "aestheticism" which was no longer connected to a social purpose (or "praxis") in everyday life. In this phase, art is created for and of itself, it is "art for art's sake" and therefore "autonomous." It is relegated to an idea of "high art" that is separate from the everyday and at best is considered a kind of hobby. In rejection of the rationalization of capitalism which proposed a false separation of art and life, the avant-garde negated this bourgeois "autonomous" status of art. Henri Lefebvre, in his *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947-1968), gives an explanation of the conceptual shift that occurred causing the separation of work from other activities. Lefebvre states that in bourgeois society,

⁶² Bürger's reconstruction of art history includes three phases (Medieval, Enlightenment and Bourgeois) in which the art object goes from being an object of cult-like proportions to one which contains a sense of auto-reflection and thus and internal critique itself. While the evolution can also be described as a distancing of art away from the ideal of mimesis and pure representation, Bürger's thesis emphasizes that what really was at stake is the status of art itself, and not necessarily the form or style it takes (even though this is inherently a part of the aesthetics of an art work). It is in the last historical phase (that of the bourgeois society) that art becomes alienated from the life praxis of men and women. See Bürger, Chapter 3: "On the Problem of the Autonomy of Art in Bourgeois Society."

individual consciousness split into two (into the private consciousness and the social or public consciousness); it also became atomized (individualism, specialization, separation between differing spheres of activity, etc.). Thus at the same time a distinction was made between man ‘as man’ on the one hand and the working man on the other (more clearly among the bourgeoisie and the proletariat). (31)

Lefebvre’s explanation of the separation of individual consciousness (“man as ‘man’ and man as ‘working man’”) along with categories of everyday life describes the rupture between labor and art that Bürger proposes in his theory of avant-garde praxis.⁶³ The separation of work and non-work activities that led to the conviction that art is “autonomous” from the social and political sphere of individual life can be read within Bürger’s claim that there was a dissociation of art from everyday life. This separation exacerbated the alienation of the working individual and served to uphold the system of capitalism to a greater degree: if labor is equated with the everyday, and art with an external sphere of that everyday then art is no longer connected to the social and political conditions of human beings.

Bürger explains that it was this social ideology of the autonomy of art imposed by the economic system of capitalism that paved the way for the avant-garde rebellion. The idea that art was separate and impotent to social and political conditions was unacceptable. For the Surrealists, the autonomy of art reflected a rationalism that privileged the alienation of individuals in favor of the accumulation of capital. The Surrealist’s take on radical (anti-rational) thinking was thus also formulated in adherence to the idea that the artistic production of society had been

⁶³ Lefebvre’s theory concentrates on the activity of leisure being consequently an “escape” and simultaneously a redefinition of the category of work but he denies that art is an activity of leisure.

compromised by this economic system. If art and poetry were the keys to a social and cultural revolution, then the status of art had to be renewed, reenergized, and radicalized from the inside out—the “sublation” of art, or the Hegelian idea that art should be transferred back to the praxis of life had to be fulfilled (Bürger 49). Breton’s rejection of rationalism was therefore also rejection of the logic of capitalism, the dismissal of bourgeois logic as a reductive and prescriptive kind of reason which structured the viability of commodity fetishism and the market “exchange-value” of an object. The shift towards the physical object marks a desire to directly relate to the material aspects of existence as proposed by Breton’s interpretation of Marx and Hegel during the 1930s. The object as “physical poetry” (Eluard) could more effectively bring social praxis back into play, fulfilling the surrealist triumvirate to “change the world” (Marx), “change your life” (Rimbaud) within the ideal that “poetry should be made by all, not by one” (Lautréamont).⁶⁴ It was the object that could physically embody and perform the very aesthetic theory by which the Surrealists proposed *life as art*.

Contextualizing Surrealism within Bürger’s theory allows us to better conceptualize the historical impetus and cultural attitudes that affected this group of artists and authors. While Bürger ultimately proposes the failure of the avant-garde to fully revolutionize the status of art (and therefore successfully create social change through art), his conclusion is not relevant to my study in that I am not evaluating the success of the surrealist project to induce social change. Nor do I believe that this was the true goal of Breton and the surrealists. As previously mentioned, Breton had already denounced the possibility of social change through dialectical materialism within his separation from the Communist Party in 1933. My hypothesis is that this is why Hegel takes on a newly held importance within a context of situating the object as a philosophical

⁶⁴ Translation from “la poésie doit être faite par tous. Non par un.” 386.

concept—that of a dialectical object of desire. What is productive to my discussion here is how Bürger’s theory proposes that the surrealist shift to the material object was a radical change in artistic experimentation motivated by the will to reinvest art with praxis in everyday life. Bürger maintains that this shift shows that modernity revealed a deep skepticism in language as a viable tool of communication and representation, producing an art that was self-conscious and critical. It was the avant-garde that consciously reacted to this change by attempting to reinvest art with social practice, moving beyond an art that was purely self-conscious in form and style. I therefore propose that the shift seen in the surrealist experimentation from “automatic writing,”—a practice focused on language—to the exploration, negotiation and use of objects, reveals this alternative practice on the part of the surrealists. In dialogue with the recent study of Didier Ottinger on surrealist objects and dialectical materialism, *La sculpture au défi* (2013), my work on the practice of collecting seems to be the next step in studying the complex and provocative surrealist focus on material object. Didier Ottinger, conservationist and specialist of Surrealist holdings at the Centre Pompidou suggests that the Surrealist turn to the material object was focused on an artistic praxis invested in the rejection of authorship, an idea synonymous not only with the democratization of art but a negation of previous art styles that attempted to represent reality. Ottinger thus proposes that the evolution from collage to “symbolic objects” to the “found object” in Surrealist art shows that the surrealists were paradoxically searching for a type of art that held no artisanal qualities whatsoever. In moving towards the “found object,” the surrealists were attempting to eviscerate the artist from the object and make “art” accessible to all (27). My focus on the object in this dissertation therefore can be situated within Bürger’s framework which evaluates the importance of a material social praxis for the avant-garde and as a follow up to Ottinger’s hypothesis that the “found object” was the end product to this search.

My research on the *collecting* of objects can be located in the Surrealist project to make the “found object” a part of everyday life. Through the continuous process of collecting objects, the surrealists attained an artistic “praxis.”

5- The Theory of “Objective Chance”

While initially André Breton would proclaim that a surrealist and revolutionary life was possible through experiments in language, and would formally present the movement as focused on the activity of recording “spoken thought” (*la pensée parlée*) through writing, this would evolve and become more complex towards the late twenties into the early thirties, when Breton began rethinking his own conception of the possibilities and the definition of pure psychic automatism. Rather than solely pursuing the existence of an unconscious flow of thought separate from the immediate exigencies of consciousness and material reality as he did in the early 20’s, Breton started to focus on the inextricable relationship between unconscious thought and conscious perception. The activity of the unconscious is prompted by experience; perception of reality is inevitably mediated by unconscious desires. Thus automatism transformed into a means to liberate perception and interpretation of a concrete reality. This theoretical development gave form to his thoughts on coincidence and the *encounter with an object* that symbolized and thus materialized his internal desire. As I have previously discussed, the philosophical premise of anti-rationalism and the dialectic was an important development in the surrealist idea of synthesizing the physical, material world with desire. Breton’s theory of “objective chance” is crucial to my study because it announces a Surrealist method by which objects were sought out as the main generators for surrealist experience. I will discuss how this

works out in the theory of “objective chance” in which the found object defined by Breton as a manifestation of desire, lends itself to the activity of collecting as praxis in everyday life.

In *Le Surréalisme et la peinture* (1928),⁶⁵ Breton begins to articulate the importance of two major concepts: vision (desire) and the physical “object,” which are interrelated. In order to further discuss his idea of encountering an object of desire, I will briefly discuss both Breton’s conception of a “vision” and an “object” here. Breton’s take on vision is most apparent in this famous declaration: “The eye exists in the savage state,” where vision is not just perception or sight in the physiological sense but rather an interior vision referring to something closer to the unmediated unconscious of an irrational realm. As Martin Jay has shown in his extensive study of the denigration of vision in 20th century art and literature in his book, *Downcast Eyes*, the “vision” which Breton here refers to is in a trend of “anti-ocularism,” a rejection of Cartesian perspectivalism and the notion of rationalism, which supersedes it. Breton’s “vision” is thus an analogy for *interior vision* which is *desire*—a desire unmediated by reason that functions on an unconscious level. This desire then leads the person to something that manifests it—the object, which responds to what the person has been unconsciously looking for (Malt 78). The “object” could be any material object that corresponded to the internal unconscious “vision.” The meeting of the unconscious vision—or desire, and the material object is what Breton calls “objective chance” or “le hasard objectif.”

Breton does not formally discuss objective chance until 1937 in *L’Amour fou*: “What I have wanted to do above all is to show the precautions and the ruses which desire, in search of its

⁶⁵ It is important to note that Breton’s title is “surrealism and painting” and not “surrealist painting”—an early acknowledgement of the problem of art and praxis: art could be deemed as “surrealist” but there was there was no “surrealist art.” Instead, Breton concluded that an art object and surrealism were in dialectical tension. See José Pierre *André Breton et la Peinture*, 187-203.

object, employs as it wavers in preconscious waters, and, once this object is discovered, the means (so far stupefying) it uses to reveal it through consciousness” (Malt 78). And in 1935, “The attention [that I have focused] on recalling certain troubling events, certain upsetting coincidences in my works, such as in *Nadja* [...] has, as an effect, to reveal, with new acuity, the problem of objective chance, otherwise known as a kind of hazard through which for mankind, manifests a necessity that escapes him even if he desires it.” Objective chance then is like a marvelous coincidence. It is described in terms of receptiveness to external impulses, and also as a process of projection. Objective chance occurs when the preconscious finds its corresponding form in the material world and the conscious mind is alerted and the material object is then experienced as meaningful, as the apparently mysterious answer to an unasked question (Malt 78).

The theory of objective chance allows the individual to fulfill a poetic and revolutionary life through the pursuit and encounter with material objects. Objective chance is a mode of encountering the world, and of finding objects that hold personal value. It is the surrealist experience of two distant and heterogeneous worlds coming together as practiced in psychic automatism, but now with an element of serendipity existing in the finding of an object – as the encounter is always unseen, unexpected and unknown. Objective chance then seems to be a type of everyday praxis in which Breton seeks not only a reconciliation between the interior and exterior worlds but also the maintenance of a certain poetic freedom where the imagination will “be liberated” in perpetual movement (485). This poetic freedom can also be equated to the radical position the surrealists hoped to take concerning the revolution of the status of art. Under objective chance, the poet-artist was not limited to the constraints of an artistic method (s/he did not have to learn the skills of a particular art). It was purely by finding an object in a shop, on the

road or in a flea market that the artist could live a poetic life free of societal and rational constraints.

III. Collecting as a Surrealist Practice

1- Desire in Objective Chance, The Experience of Dialectical Relationality

The theory of objective chance is central to our discussion on the practice of collecting objects within Surrealism. For Breton, the desirous encounter of an object was not just a passing illumination but an impetus to behold the object for the purpose of relating to everyday life through a dialectical relation. Within the context of objective chance, the process of encountering an object by which the realization of desire is provoked within the individual collapses the boundaries between the internal and external worlds. Following Breton's adherence to a dialectical process through the interpretation of Kojève, desire was one of the most important aspects of Hegel's teachings and is explained as a process of self-acknowledgement through an external object or being. Desire here seems to delineate the dialectical structure Breton describes in the process of objective chance.

The idea of desire is found within the first section of Kojève's published lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a type of will for acknowledgement of the subject from an exterior being in the process of consciousness of self. This is a process of self-recognition in another object:

L'homme qui contemple est "absorbé" par l'objet qu'il contemple. Le sujet connaissant se perd dans l'objet connu. La contemplation révèle l'objet, non le sujet. C'est l'objet et non le sujet qui se montre à lui-même dans et par—ou mieux

encore, en tant qu'acte de connaître. L'homme 'absorbé' par l'objet est rappelé à lui, seulement par le Désir [...]. (11)

The process then depends on desire for and elicited by an exterior “object.” This desire is an experience of self-acknowledgement through something else and therefore an experience of dialectical relationality. Kojève goes on to explain that it is through desire that the subject may be moved to constitute itself as “desire is what transforms Being, revealed to itself by itself” (3). The process of self-consciousness in Kojève is therefore described as such:

Pour qu'il y ait conscience de soi, il faut donc que le désir porte sur un objet non-naturel, sur quelque chose qui dépasse la réalité donnée. Or la seule chose qui dépasse ce réel donné est le désir lui-même. (12)

Kojève's interpretation of the object seems to saddle the very definition of Breton's objective chance. The “object” must be in this instance, one that is “not natural,” and something that “goes beyond the given reality” present. For Breton, the search for an unknown object of desire within objective chance then seems to bring some experience of understanding about life and destiny—a certain “conscience de soi” through the material world. In Surrealism, this process ultimately reaches beyond “reality” pointing to the sublimation of the self and the object within a state of “surreality.” The experience of objective chance then, could very well be synonymous to the Hegelian notion of a desirous and dialectical process of self-recognition through relating to the material world.

This interpretation may just as well illuminate the idea of why objective chance and the collecting of objects may be a radical form of praxis in everyday life. It is an experience of self-recognition that relies on chance and the common object through the mediation of desire. It thus provides a way for the individual to find a connection to the material world, thereby eliminating an empirical perception of the self, and subverting reason for desire. Within this aesthetic of chance and desire the surrealists assumed that they were eliminating the constraints of bourgeois social hierarchy in order to experience a moment of self-liberation. Accordingly, Peter Bürger interprets objective chance to be a reflection of an artistic response to the experience of alienation. Because society is monopolized around “means-ends rationality” the person who seeks chance is looking to escape the teleological structure imposed by capitalism through an experience that is free of the rules and regulations of such a system (65). While ultimately Bürger contends that this search for freedom is paradoxical since he is of the opinion that, like Adorno, such practices are only a type of adaptation to alienation and therefore cannot offer freedom, Bürger’s point of view is productive in that he describes the search for freedom as a search for a specific kind of experience:

what the surrealist self is aiming at can best be characterized with the term experience [...] the more bourgeois society merges to a single context of functioning in the monopolistic phase of its development, the less it allows one to make individual experiences that could be mediated, and in turn could lead to a meaningful praxis. In a society that tendentially eliminates the possibility of experience, the surrealists seek to regain this experience (xliii; 115-6).

Experience then, is something that can define the motivation for a surrealist encounter within objective chance. It is a process of desiring and encountering an object in order to gain a sense of self through directly relating to the phenomenal world which had been supposedly denied by the means-end rationality of bourgeois culture. In this sense according to the Surrealists experience offered a sense of freedom from the limitations of society and a possibility for individual meaning only through the continued encounter with material objects. This continuous encounter with objects seems to recall the very practice of collecting.

2- Traditional Collecting vs. Breton's Surrealist Practice of Collecting

Traditionally, the process of collecting shows that material objects are perceived by human beings through their symbolic designation of them (Pearce 166). The purposeful attention ascribed to an object in the process of collecting is one which is mainly dependent on the subjective interpretation of what that object means. Jean Baudrillard, within his *System of Objects* says:

The objects in our lives, as distinct from the way we make use of them at a given moment, represent something much more, something profoundly related to subjectivity: for while the object is a resistant material body, it is also, simultaneously, a mental realm over which I hold sway, a thing whose meaning is governed by myself alone. (7)

Baudrillard theorizes the material consumption within modern society as defined by the subject. In this sense, each object is built on the concept of a “commodity” within Marx’s sense of the term. It suggests that there exists a material realm and mental realm which ascribes two functions

to the object. The first category is similar to Marx's concept of "use-value" which denotes a practical control on the outside world. The second is based on "sign-value" which stretches beyond the idea of Marx's "exchange value" towards the symbolic ascription designated to the object by the individual. It is this second designation, which separates the use of an object from the mere aesthetic pleasure of it, and thus the will to possess and collect it. Baudrillard explains that it is this category of possession that refers back to the subject and not the "use-value" as

possession cannot apply to an implement, since the object I utilize always directs me back to the world. Rather it applies to that object once it is divested of its function and made relative to a subject. In this sense, all objects that are possessed submit to the same abstractive operation and participate in a mutual relationship in so far as they each refer back to the subject. They thereby constitute themselves as a system, on the bases of which the subject seeks to piece together his world, this personal microcosm. (7)

The possession of an object is thus synonymous with a process of ascription towards the piecing together of a "personal microcosm." The "system" that he speaks of can be seen as the collection within which the object will be placed. Baudrillard asserts the definition of a collection as a group of objects chosen because of their symbolic value, designated by the collector:

A collection is basically determined by the nature of the value assigned to the objects or ideas possessed. If the predominant value of an object or idea for the person possessing it is intrinsic, i.e., if it is valued primarily for use, or purpose, or aesthetically pleasing quality, or other value inhered in the object or accruing to it by whatever circumstances

of custom, training or habit it is *not a collection*. If the predominant value is representative or representational, i.e., if the said object or idea is valued chiefly for the relation it bears to some other object or idea, or objects or ideas, such as being one of a series, part of a whole, a specimen of class, then *it is the subject of a collection*. (Pearce; Durost 1932:10)

Within Baudrillard's definition of the collection, objects are collected for their symbolic value and in relation to an internal order within the collection itself. This definition of the activity of collecting is largely traditional and conceptualizes the collection as a representation of the subject. For Breton, there are some points in common with this traditional modern practice of collecting— as we will see, Breton's taste for collecting objects followed a personal aesthetic which was subjective. However, because it was also prescribed through the lens of a surrealist praxis as stipulated by objective chance, Breton's practice of collecting complicates and goes beyond the simple definition of what would could entail the composition of a "personal microcosm" defined by objects collected solely for their symbolic designation. What Breton seeks to do is to proliferate the symbolic resonance of the thing through a continual process of *détournement*.

3- Détournement, Negation and the Practice of Collecting

In Breton's "Crisis of the Object" he speaks of the new surrealist art experiment as being a "total revolution of the object" suggesting that the artistic development of surrealism lay in "solidified desires" or the manipulation of objects (356-59). As previously shown, Breton seems to base this aesthetic argument off of his interpretation of the Hegelian subject-object relations,

describing the “object” as work of art that relies on a philosophical procedure, affirming the surrealist process as one that is realized in the experience of apprehending the object in a dialectical method. Citing the work of Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst, Breton explains that the surrealist manipulation of the phenomenal world lies not only in the Duchampian “requalification of the object” within the context of a found object, and the “mutation of [its] role” by “*détournant* it from its ends by attributing it with a new name” but also lies in the procedure of showing the object in its previous state by which its new meaning takes on an *ambiguity* – an ambiguity which thus renders it irrational”.⁶⁶ This ambiguity is sought in itself for the consequential tension created. However, the process does not end here, in ambiguous tension. What Breton describes next suggests that such a tension opens up a space— by which the viewer must then reconstruct a new reality with the present pieces given “reconstruire enfin de toutes pièces a partir d’éléments épars, pris dans le donné immédiate” (360). The surrealist procedure of *détournement* then, is one, which theoretically seeks to render the object as “convulsive” or distanced (*détournée*) in relation to its original signifier(s), yet also asks for a reconstruction of a new object within the immediate reality. It is the forced negation of one thing for the creation of something else in which a certain “individual liberty” is attained. This liberty holds creative potential and is based on the rejection of a normative understanding of the object.

In summary, while initially it seems that the collecting of an object can be seen as a simple negative process in that the physical collection of an object is the very extrication of it from an original context and the subsequent recreation of it within a new one, for Breton it is actually a *dialectical* process and thus a continual process where collection of the object is thus

⁶⁶ “[...] de le retenir en raison même du doute qui peut peser sur son affectation antérieure, de l’ambiguïté résultant de son conditionnement totalement ou partiellement irrationnel, qui entraîne la dignification par la trouvaille (objet trouvé) et laisse une marge appréciable à l’interprétation au besoin la plus active [...]” (359-60).

also the “the destruction or at least the transformation, of the desired object” (Kojève 4) by the collector. This process of collecting is Breton’s definition of *détournement* and is a kind of perpetual negation.

Breton was not just collecting in order to compose a collection, but was collecting for the desirous experience of it, as defined to be a sense of relationality between the objects and Breton himself. This relationality was not just one of a teleological nature, as such would be found in a traditional collection. The relationality sought by Breton was one that disrupted a teleological superimposition designated by the collector upon the object. To some extent, Breton was looking to level the playing field between humans and things, reinvesting things with a status beyond that of the simple commodity.

4- Collecting and Recollecting Objects of “Convulsive Beauty”

The perpetual negation elicited by *détournement* therefore suggests perspective on the world which illuminates both a respect for the unaccountable, the unknowable “thing” and the contradictory human desire to gather experience and knowledge. There is thus an element of instability to the surrealist conception of an object that creates a tension between the act of collection and the ephemeral meaning which the object provides. For Benjamin, it is perhaps the “aura” which creates a sense of “distance” between the object and the recipient, who within this context desires nothing but its closure. For Johanna Malt, who emphasizes the psychoanalytic influence on surrealist objects within the context of Dali’s “paranoiac-criticism,” this instability could be called “hysterical.” Hal Foster too in *Compulsive Beauty* (1993) presents a case of how Breton and the surrealist enterprise were influenced by psychoanalysis, thus revealing that Breton and his work consistently reiterate a tension between the life and death drives (Eros vs.

Thanatos) as stipulated by Freud. Foster suggests that the series of objective chance encounters as seen in *Nadja*, is the compulsive repetition of repressed desire. If we pause to consider the repetition of the event of a found object at the flea market, we can see this scene as the playing out of repressed desire

in the compulsion operative in objective chance, [where] the subject repeats a traumatic experience, whether actual or fantasmatic, exogenous or endogenous, that he does not recall. He repeats it because he cannot recall it: repetition occurs due to repression, in lieu of recollection. (30)

While Foster's psychoanalytical reading offers explanation for the repetition of the phenomenon of objective chance, it does not provide for an explanation of surrealist praxis. For if according to Foster Breton is constantly "forgetting" his desire, and thus is compelled to continuously search for it in a material object, is Breton's activity of collecting in objective chance only a series of instances of "forgetting" and attempts at "recollecting"? It does not explain the poetic practice of using objects continuously. It seems that there is more to Breton's collection and collecting than the idea of a compulsive urge, it seems that we are omitting the importance of the material world, and a certain physicality and sense of the object itself which cannot be explained by unconscious drives. Therefore, in lieu of Foster's "compulsive" I propose the restoration of Breton's own term, which is "convulsive" from the expression, "convulsive beauty" as one we can use to describe the collected object. In the last pages of the book, *Nadja*, Breton describes "convulsive beauty" in opposition to the classical form of beauty typified by Baudelaire's "rêve de pierre," suggesting that the experience of beauty is neither "dynamic nor static" but perhaps found

somewhere in between. It seems that it is the perceived instability of an object which defines Breton's collecting practice.

Within the context of semantic possibility, the perceived instability of the object can be related to the very essence of desire. For Kojève, the object can never be attained in its totality and consciousness of self can never reach satisfaction because “être conscient de soi, implique donc et presuppose le désir.” In other words, as soon as consciousness is experienced, through a chosen exterior object, it desires to attain this experience again through a new object. Self-consciousness, then, is a continuous, repetitive process of desire. If “le moi est le moi d'un, ou du, désir,” desire and consciousness are *always* in flux, and are never accomplished. The never-ending quest for consciousness, through an external object, can be related to desire as an *active* state of being seems to be the key to self-consciousness, and also seems to describe Breton's experience of collecting, which is continuous and never-ending.

5- The Collection as Allegorical

Susan Stewart in her book *On Longing*, elaborates on the idea of a collection as being “like other forms of art, its function is [...] the creation of new context” (151). Breton's collection thus can be seen as a place of fiction, where his collected objects, once taken out of their original environment are then given new meaning, new life important to only the collector himself. This place of fiction seems to be one that is also in constant change and flux. If the collector, and the surrealist is in perpetual state of desire, it is also a perpetual state of accumulation, of change. Jean Baudrillard concludes that the collector can never be satisfied, as “a single object can never be enough: invariably there will be a whole succession of objects [...] This is why the possession of an object of whatever kind is always both satisfying and

frustrating: the notion of there being a set of objects to which it belongs lends the object an extension beyond itself and upsets its solitary status” (8). While Breton did not necessarily seek to complete a specific “set” of objects, he did seek to continually supplement his collection; he constantly kept adding to his collection, and rearranging the pieces in his atelier, so that they might find resonance in their aesthetic form and given meaning in relation to the other objects nearby. The very act of collecting and creating a collection then is dependent on a kind of infinite play, and can be seen to function such as narrative “infinitely” generates symbolic, by “inscrib[ing] again and again the gap between signifier and signified” (Stewart ix). Indeed, I think we can say that Breton’s collection is a text to be read and re-read, depending on the newest acquisition, or the newest arrangement. I will argue then, that just as we have seen that the collection can be read as a text, it is specifically allegorical. If desire potentially is something that exists within a structure of infinite time, it is one that keeps generating again and again within the framework of the collection itself, much like the structure of allegory. According to Paul de Man in his essay, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” allegory creates “a distance in relation to its own origin [...] and renouncing the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference” (207).

Breton’s renowned autobiographical-experimental novel, *Nadja* (1928), includes a passage about his atelier that illustrates the collection as allegorical. In this particular scene, Nadja has come to call on Breton at 42 rue Fontaine for the first time and begins to look around and comment on objects that strike her as being noteworthy. Breton watches and listens to Nadja’s impromptu curation of the atelier’s holdings. What ensues is a kind of magical revival of Breton’s most prized possessions through Nadja’s initial reactions. Breton thus confirms Nadja’s genius for a kind of psychic automatism which corresponds with his own ideas of the surrealist

encounter. What is important then is Nadja, much like a medium, is able to *read* the importance of certain objects in his collection.

The passage starts with Breton describing Nadja's visit: "Nadja, having come to my house, immediately recognized the "horns" on a large Guinea mask which used to belong to Henri Matisse, and "which I always loved." She then immediately took note of the nail and the string in a Braque painting (*Le Joueur de guitare*); as well as the "famous hand of fire" in the triangular de Chirico painting (*L'angoissant voyage ou L'egnime de la fatalité*) – both elements which had always "intrigued" Breton. Nadja continues her tour of the atelier and quips at a conic shaped mask "Tiens, Chimène" (look, Chimene). Breton relates that Nadja also stops to "explain in depth" the particularly difficult sense of a painting by Max Ernst (*Mais les hommes n'en sauront rien*) – her explanation of the painting so "on target" that it was almost exactly like the detailed explanation pasted to the back of the painting (which of course Nadja did not see). The finale of her tour ends with one object in particular, a statuette from Easter Island. It is in the experience of beholding this particular statuette, in looking at it, that Nadja hears the object saying, "I love you, I love you." Breton then reveals that this piece may be the most important piece of the collection. In *La Passion de L'art Primitif: enquête sur les collectionneurs*, Brigitte Derlon and Monique Jeudy-Ballini's literary study on collecting and personal interviews with collectors, explain that the experience of beholding an object for many is "hypnotic" and "full of pleasure" so much so that the collector often relates an experience of the object having a "life" of its own wherein the object seems to talk or emanate a message to the beholder (61-63). The fact that this is Breton's first collected object is then important as it is "generally recognized among collectors that the first object possessed is also the beginning point of a passion for more" (63). Fascinating then is that Nadja has brought us back to the beginning point, the origin of his

collection by hearing the voice of the statuette utter the words “I love you.” She thus recreates the potential feeling of acquisition Breton experienced when he collected the object himself. If we are to say that in this instance, Breton engages with his atelier as a text to be read, Breton then re-experiences, and re-reads this moment of acquisition through Nadja, thus presenting the atelier as an allegorical space: “Within allegory there is not simply a sign and a signified. Instead, there is a “a relationship between signs in which the reference to their respective meanings has become of secondary importance... the meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority.” The object’s speech thus refers to its moment of acquisition, its moment of becoming part of the collection. “I love you, I love you” are the very words that connote the desire and passion that Breton once felt for this object. The double phrasing also suggests the repetitive structure of desire through the repetition of the locution. Here, I suggest that this moment is one which illustrates that reading the collection is a repetition of desire. The procedure points to its future but also consistently refers back to its origin, and is thus allegorical. In the following chapters I will investigate how Breton’s collecting practice of singular objects and micro-literary collections are also allegorical.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to establish the relevant historical and theoretical contexts of Surrealism and collecting. I have discussed what I see as the important developments that influenced Breton in his personal life and within his aesthetic conception of the object in order to explore his activity of collecting as a practice motivated by a dialectical method. Following a methodology that blends literary, art-historical and cultural theory I hope to bring a new

perspective to the discussions that have been made about Surrealism, Breton and the object, his collection and textual practices in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 2: OCEANIC OBJECTS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the surrealist interest in Oceania and how objects from the Pacific were used as poetic devices. By first situating the elevated status of exotic art within the historical vogue of Primitivism in early twentieth century France, I will contextualize the surrealist passion for oceanic objects as a way to express a rejection of the French colonial mission in Africa. Then, within the framework of the 1948 Oceanic Arts exhibit and Breton's preface to the exhibition catalogue, I will explore how anti-colonialism was expressed through Breton's surrealist desire for the encounter and collection of such objects. Breton seems to argue that it is the object that possesses the subject, thus reversing the traditional dynamic of a collector's possession of the object. Focusing on this reversal of subject-object hierarchy, I will discuss Breton's poems, *Tiki*, *Korwar* and *Uli*, from the collection, *Xénophiles*, published within the Oceanic Arts Exhibit catalogue. By investigating the rhetorical function of apostrophe within these poems we see that the object indeed is given agency through the text. Yet the poems can also be seen as a collector's supplement to possessing the visual and physical presence of the phenomenal object; they are textual accounts of surrealist passion for possession. Borrowing Walter Benjamin's concepts of possession and storytelling, this chapter will explore how Breton's desired objects generated texts. We will consider the specific historical case of "Uli," a statue originating from New Ireland (Papua New Guinea) which Breton aspired to acquire for thirty years but which was instead eulogized in the homonym poem within the 1948 exhibition catalogue, along with the allegorical appearance of the object in his everyday life until Breton could finally obtain the sculpture in 1964.

I- The Importance of Oceania in Surrealism

1- Primitivism, Ethnography and Surrealism

In the 1920s and 1930s a trend towards favoring the exotic arts and cultures of Colonial France, also known as “Primitivism” came into fashion in Paris.⁶⁷ The popularization of what was seen as primitive life and art was at the heart of this cultural trend and was directly linked to the French colonial expeditions taking place abroad. This interest eventually led to the concrete study of Sociology and Anthropology but it was Ethnology, the theoretical study of humankind, which emerged in Paris as a discrete academic discipline in 1928 and became the mechanism behind colonialism overseas (Tythacott 6). The Institut d’Éthnologie, founded in 1925 by Marcel Mauss, Paul Rivet and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl helped organize and teach administrators, missionaries and others working for the empire. The fact that the institute also was bound to the Museum of Ethnography located at the Trocadéro Palace fueled the aestheticization of artifacts thus promoting the neo-colonialist gesture to collect ethnographic objects found during colonial missions for the purpose of displaying them in the museum upon return. In 1931 a nationally funded expedition, the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, was organized and led by Marcel Griaule and individuals from the Institut d’Ethnologie (Clifford 122-3). The expedition began in Dakar and continued straight across the continent in a very cartographic manner to Djibouti. 3,500 pieces of artwork and artifacts were collected during the trip and were taken back to the Trocadéro museum in Paris in 1933.

Among the participating members of this mission was Michel Leiris, who had left the surrealist group in the late 1920’s to work with Mauss and apply his literary talents to a more

⁶⁷ “Primitivism” is an art-historical term.

concrete and “subversive” cause (Clifford 122). The result of the conquest was primarily the fragmented and disparate booty of ethnographic arts from all the countries traversed, but was also documented in writing and photography. A special edition on the mission was featured in the surrealist-based artistic journal *Minotaure* in 1933. A year later, Michel Leiris published his journal with Gallimard under the title, “*L’Afrique Fantôme*.” An echo to his past surrealist inclinations, the choice of title was an “allusion certes aux réponses apportées à mon goût du merveilleux. Leiris continues, “ma déception d’Occidental mal dans sa peau qui avait follement espéré que ce long voyage dans des contrées alors plus ou moins retirées et, à travers l’observation scientifique, un contact vrai avec leurs habitants feraient de lui un autre homme, plus ouvert et guéri de ses obsessions” (Leiris 7). Leiris spells out the malaise of the time from which he was not unaffected – the search through scientific observation and the collection of “field data” for a cure to cultural dysentery and lack of spiritual belief. Leiris’ retrospective confession confirms the failure of such an endeavor.⁶⁸

Leiris’ initial desire to find the “marvelous” in a foreign culture was an echo to André Breton’s statement that “*existence is elsewhere*,” declared at the end of the first Manifesto of Surrealism in 1924 (60). Evocative of Apollinaire’s verse in the poem “Zône” which suggests that his era seeks out “chests of another form and another belief,” Breton claimed the everyday and the mind as rich undiscovered territories to mine. Surrealism was a quest for the absolute and while it was not defined as such in its inception, it turned out to be “an aesthetic that value[d] fragments, curious collections, unexpected juxtapositions—which works to provoke the manifestation of extraordinary realities drawn from the domains of the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious” (Clifford 118). Such became manifest in what Louisa Tythacott calls a “leitmotif

⁶⁸ Written in the “préambule” of the 1950 edition of *L’Afrique Fantôme*.

of the surrealist movement”—that of “oneiric disorientation,” including the early surrealist cultivation of hypnotic trance states, automatic drawings, deliberate wanderings and chance encounters (1). These early activities were a part of the European culture that privileged alternative exotic worlds and were therefore engendered by the very movement they condemned. Tythacott, in her book on *Surrealism and the Exotic* echoes Clifford’s idea in affirming that the surrealists used other cultures as a means of transgressing, reshuffling and subverting the orders of Western classificatory systems by deliberately realigning different cultural realities, adherents believed they could bring into question the very nature of their own European reality (2).

2- Against Colonialism

Even though the Surrealists extolled the exotic, they were quick to denounce acts of French colonialism during the Colonial Exhibition in 1931, when the Paris Colonial Exposition set up a six-month long event in the Bois de Vincennes where visitors could take a stroll amongst the “panoply of exotic worlds” in which the French nation boasted colonial power (qtd. in Shelton: 329). In the 1931 tract, “Ne visitez pas l’exposition coloniale” the surrealists formally condemned the “mission civilisatrice” of the French colonial project. Yet, while the Surrealists spoke out against French colonialism, they collected tribal art. The surrealists venerated and integrated ethnographic objects within their collections, their exhibitions and their work. The use of ethnographic objects was perceived to be a stance against the domination and subjugation that the French colonial power was exercising on foreign peoples. The surrealists saw their use of

such objects as an act of reconciliation— a return and revaluation of these appropriated objects to their original state, and thus a gesture symbolizing their rejection of colonialism.⁶⁹

3- A Surrealist Geography

In 1929 *The Surrealist Map of the World (le Monde au temps des surréalistes)* also translated as *The World at the Time of the Surrealists*⁷⁰ was published in the surrealist-inspired Belgian periodical *Variétés*. The drawing shows an equator that deviates from a straight line and features the Pacific rather than the Atlantic occupying the center of the map, thus “banishing Europe (and its ethnocentrism) to the edge of the page and the end of the earth” (Morris and Voyce). Paris is now located in what should be Germany, and France has disappeared. North America is non-existent and is replaced by Alaska and Labrador, while Russia has practically taken over the the entire Asian continent. Yet in terms of colonial empire, what is most interesting is that Africa, the major colonial territory of France is now equal in size to a magnified Easter Island which is situated in an widely expanded and well-defined Pacific Island region.

According to this Surrealist “countermapping” a new geography reverses the dominating eurocentric and colonialist view of the world within a reimagined global system of value. The map thus literally exemplifies the french word “dépaysement” giving the viewer a sense of disorientation through the surrealist use of a displaced world in which pacific island nations dominate the center of the globe (Adamowicz 113). Morris and Voyce cite Dennis Wood’s suggestion that Paul Eluard was most likely the creator of the map, being that in 1924 he had

⁶⁹ See Martine Antle who specifically looks at how the exploitation of the “other” manifests in photography, theatre, feminine identities and Primitivism.

⁷⁰ Translation by Matthew Gale in Morris and Voyce.

toured Southeast Asia and parts of Indochina, during which he had encountered appalling colonial violence committed by the Dutch and French powers. Eluard traced his travels on a mercator map during his voyage and this was perhaps the beginnings of a surrealist reimagining of the world in which European political power was no longer the arbiter of cartography.

4- Against Africanism

The Surrealist Map of the World illustrates how the surrealists valued Oceania over Africa for the very reason that the French vogue of Africanism represented the mission of colonialism. By favoring Oceania, the surrealists idealized and aligned themselves with a territory that was undefined by colonial power. The surrealists consciously sought alternative worlds to Africanism, looking towards the unknown Pacific region for inspiration (Tythacott 128). The veneration of Oceania thus found its manifestation in the interest and collecting of oceanic artifacts. Oceanic objects in the '20s were undomesticated compared to African carvings, more unpalatable to European sensibilities, more exotic than African sculpture and more aligned to the Bretonian notion of the “eye existing in the state of savagery” (Tythacott 128). The fact that oceanic objects were less appreciated by mainstream Parisian society, criticized against the “classical” style of African art, gave the surrealists all the more impetus to embrace their uncommon forms and features. Oceanic artifacts were traditionally bright in their polychrome decoration, heterogeneous in form and use of materials comparable to the surrealists own use of collage and the aesthetic of unforeseen yet fortuitious chance encounters between different elements. They were “more bizarre, real and dreamlike” than the “sculpted, naturalistic forms that had emerged on the art market from Africa [...]” (Tythacott 128).

Pacific pieces were frequently incorporated into surrealist exhibitions. In 1926 during the month of March, the work of Man Ray and various objects from Oceania were displayed together at the Surrealist Gallery. Man Ray used a Nias (Indonesian) sculpture from Breton's collection for the cover illustration photograph of the catalogue, entitled *The moon shines above the Island of Nias*, showcasing the funerary object, in the middle of a dreamy landscape with a full moon on the left-hand side (Tythacott 133). Oceanic objects were featured in surrealist publications as well. In *La Revolution Surréaliste*, issue number 6 (1 March 1926) a New Ireland Malagan sculpture is pictured, and in the following issue, a Baining mask from New Britain was accompanied with a description of a "ritual scene" in which it was used (Tythacott 135). In Numbers 9-10 (October 1927) an illustration of a Marquesian tiki advertised the gallery of the prominent collector and art dealer, Charles Ratton and in issue 12 (15 December 1929) Sepik River and German New Guinean carvings were reproduced. Even dissident journals, such as *Documents* revealed an interest in Oceania: the fifth issue, published in 1930, contained an article by Louis Clarke, curator of the Museum of Archeology and Ethnology in Cambridge, on the art of the Solomon Islands, then almost unknown in France (Tythacott 135). Despite the Surrealist zeal for Oceania, neither Breton nor any of the prominent surrealists ever visited the Pacific islands, except for Eluard who did go to Tahiti in 1924 during his extended trip through Southeast Asia.⁷¹ Therefore, it can be said that Surrealist adoration of Oceania was based on the available physical objects in Europe at the time, along with a limited understanding of the region's ethnography.

⁷¹ The lesser known Jean Bénéit, the Canadian sculptor, journeyed decades later to New Ireland. Jacques Viot (expelled from the surrealist group in 1925) collected objects for Pierre Loeb, and traveled to Polynesia around 1927.

5- “Océanie,” the Exhibition

In 1948, André Breton, Pierre Loeb and Charles Ratton, three major collectors of Oceanic objects lent a considerable number of their Pacific artifacts to Andrée Olive, for an exhibition entitled “Océanie” which took place at her gallery in Paris, 31, Quai de l’Horloge during the month of June. It was the first exhibition in Paris to solely feature Oceanic objects. The gallery exhibited 116 objects total originating from regions of Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia and showcased a diverse display of items; from smaller objects such as javelins, fishhooks and stone axes to larger pieces like ancestral and religious figures and sculptures. Of the 116 pieces displayed, 29 of them came from Breton’s own personal collection.

In addition to the lending of many of his objects to the show, Breton contributed directly to the exhibition catalogue by writing the preface and five poems about specific Oceanic objects which were featured in the exhibit. Within the published catalogue, some of the poems face the photographic reproductions of the sculptures themselves. The preface, which spans the first four pages of the catalogue, reveals the passion for the collecting of Oceanic objects at the very heart of the surrealist movement.

While the surrealists’ embrace of Oceania was rooted in a quasi politico-aesthetic motive to denounce French colonialism, this motive was undefined and mingled with a privileging of accepted thoughts on the “primitive.” At this time, the “primitive” was associated with animistic, infantile, mythological and religious ideas of these other cultures as suggested by Sigmund Freud in his *Totem and Taboo* (1913) along with ideas of “uncivilized” societies as defined by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl in his celebrated *La Mentalité Primitive* (1922) (Tythacott 54). The surrealists’ rejection of colonialism has therefore been highly contested since their ideological and aesthetic pursuits underlined these concepts without serious criticism (Tythacott 55). In Breton’s preface

to the catalogue, the tension between his desire to elevate oceanic objects in the realm of “art” and a disdain for colonialist endeavors is made apparent. This tension appears also within the poems in a subtle manner. Therefore, Breton’s texts seem to be more of a testament to the aesthetic superiority of these objects and the surrealist passion to collect them than a rejection of colonialism. However, the surrealists were not political activists in this scope and Breton did not consider his uninformed passion for Oceania as a type of abstract objectification or intellectual colonialism of the place or culture. As Elisabeth Cowling has noted, Breton’s mission was

[...] to reinvest Oceanic objects with the ‘Surreal’ power once native to them but since lost (as he thought) through misappropriation by the colonists, missionaries and ethnographers who had brought them to Europe as so many curious trophies of peoples in a state of still-unregenerate savagery. In buying up Oceanic art in the curio shops, flea markets and auction houses of Europe the Surrealists were saving it from defiling hands. (181)

For the surrealists, it seems that the point of contention was not the act of collecting (nor the somewhat fantastical restoration of these objects) but rather the devaluation of tribal artifacts in the face of European art and in European hands. The surrealists thus took it upon themselves to elevate these objects to a higher status. While this project was rife with contradiction, the surrealists did attempt to rectify what they thought was a transgression on Oceania within works of art and poetry. As we will see, Breton validates oceanic objects through his discussion of poetic experience in his preface to the exhibition catalogue for “Océanie,” and in the composition of poetry about the objects in *Xénophiles*.

II. Breton's Preface to the Exhibition Catalogue for "Océanie"

1- Poetic and artistic ancestors

Breton's preface heralds Oceania with an epigraph taken from section IV of "Le Voyage" by Charles Baudelaire echoing a nostalgia for the foreign within the lineage of exotic art: "Frères qui trouvez beau tout ce qui vient de loin!" [To my brothers who find all things beautiful which come from afar!]. Breton then begins his essay by discussing the changing landscape of artistic values within his contemporary time and compares the 19th century Impressionist interest in Japanese art and Orientalism to the love of African art within the twentieth century. By tracing the development of Africanism in art through fauvism and cubism, Breton validates the collection and display of these ethnographic objects as a part of this art-historical evolution.

Breton explains the importance of collected artifacts from the specific region of Oceania as a poetic necessity. He recalls that it was Apollinaire that first "indicated a choice" in his preference for such objects in his poem, "Zône," published in *Alcools* in 1913. Breton quotes the famous line of this poem which gives an image of the very collection which Apollinaire held in his own atelier: "... tu veux aller chez toi à pied/ Dormir parmi tes fétiches d'Océanie et de Guinée." Knowing that Breton revered Apollinaire, and was perhaps first introduced to the idea of a heteroclite collection which included oceanic objects while visiting this poet's atelier, it is natural that Breton would draw the connection between Apollinaire's poetry and collecting oceanic objects within this text. Breton would attempt to poeticize certain objects in his own verse, following the preface included in the catalogue.

Apollinaire's choice of objects is used to underline the poet's visionary embrace of Oceania, which has now piqued the interest of contemporary ethnographers and collectors of tribal artifacts. Breton mentions that, "in the last weeks," two texts have been published which seem fundamental in circumscribing a special place for the objects of Oceania in the world of ethnographic art: Georges Buraud's *Les Masques* and Michel Tapié's *Au pays d'Henri Michaux*. Breton quotes from Buraud: "The oceanic mask, just as revealing as an African mask, just as strange yet less profound, raises itself at times to the abstract transposition of plastic elements created by black artists, but rests more often beyond" and immediately follows this citation from Buraud up with a quote from Tapié: "I hadn't really appreciated oceanic fetishes, without form in appearance, anti-plastic in any case, but a wonderful second potential and an efficiency continues to open up, specifically due to their peculiar form which is evasive." These two citations echo an appreciation for a form that is different from the Western aesthetic. Yet Breton emphasizes that "while the first (Buraud) responds to a realist perspective, the other (Tapié) responds to a poetic (surrealist) one," thus stressing the connection between Oceanic objects and the poetic nature of the surrealist pursuit. This pursuit will be described as one of collecting these objects for the purpose of a poetic encounter, one that is motivated by desire.

2- Surrealist Desire for the Oceanic object

In the first line of the following paragraph, Breton declares "Oceania... of what prestige this word, would it not have ravished in Surrealism? It would have been one of the greatest lock-keepers of our heart." Using the future perfect tense, Breton seems to express a wish to have discovered the art of Oceania earlier on—situating the objects as an expression of a fundamental and "sovereign desire" which guides the practice of surrealism itself. Breton declares that for his

friends and himself, “there was a time when our travels, outside of France, were only guided by the uninterrupted search from morning to night, for the rare oceanian object.” While Breton never travelled to Oceania, he could be referring to the search of oceanic objects by former surrealists such as Eluard who traveled to Polynesia, or perhaps the more common habit of frequenting flea markets and art dealers during travels abroad as Breton had done during his exile in New York during the war.⁷² Breton also specifies that the collection of oceanic objects is an activity that for some “amateurs” is based on a desire that speaks through “instinctive values” of “no hierarchy” [“c’est, d’abord, une quête instinctive qui n’en passe par l’intervention d’aucune hiérarchie des valeurs”]. Breton outlines his own ideas about collecting, as he viewed himself as an “amateur” collector who sought out objects by an instinctive singular desire rather than an educated decision based on the previously set categories of what makes an object valuable. Yet the most important and fundamental feeling Breton describes is one of “an irresistible need to *possess*” those objects which were to be found and collected. This “need” (*besoin*) is described to be like “fire” and “unlike any other” feeling; incomparable to the desire any other object could produce. Within this one paragraph, Breton has declared that oceanic objects hold a “sovereign desire” over the collector, *who is also a surrealist*. Similar to his theory of objective chance as outlined in 1928, Breton’s concept of the serendipitous encounter with a specific object revealing an unknown desire seems now to be reiterated in the domain of oceanic objects.

⁷² Breton and Kurt Seligmann would look for Oceanic objects together in New York, where Seligmann owned a farmhouse upstate in which he kept a collection. See Sawin 253.

3- Living Objects

While the desire seems to be the same motivator to seek out and collect these objects, the encounter of oceanic objects is different from those Breton describes within his theory of objective chance. At the end of the preface, Breton concludes that he is “guilty” of being emotionally “moved” before the “primitive soul” and has, “kept since childhood, the regard of stupefaction for such things.” Perhaps referring to his first collected object from Easter Island, as mentioned in *Nadja*, Breton seems to be referring to a more profound characteristic of the surrealist conception of primitive art. In *Nadja*, the fantastic element of this scene, in which the Easter Island statuette is introduced, is within the context of Nadja hearing the object speak “I love you, I love you.” The object is thus portrayed to have a life of its own through the ability to be an interlocutor. Breton reiterates this type of mysterious power which ethnographic objects hold, a power that seems to hold an independent life: “The surrealist practice (*démarche*), at the start, is inseparable from seduction, from the fascination that *these objects exercise over us*.” Breton’s statement here suggests that the collector-surrealist who seeks to possess such objects is bound by the power of seduction, which comes from the object. These objects thus wield a “poetic” life of their own, over the surrealist. Breton emphasizes that such is not to be dismissed and should be experienced: “he who esteems to have other fish to fry has never been poetically piqued by the oceanian mystery”⁷³ [“qui estime avoir d’autres chats à fouetter n’a jamais été mordu poétiquement par le mystère océanien”]. Breton thus suggests the very oceanic experience is at the peak of all surrealist encounters with all objects. Breton declares “he who has not found himself in the presence of this (kind) of object ignores the possibilities of the poetic sublime”⁷⁴

⁷³ My translation.

⁷⁴ My translation.

[“qui ne s’est pas trouvé en presence de cet objet ignore jusqu’où peut aller le sublime poétique”]. Breton thus explains that one must be in presence of the oceanic object, subservient to it, in order to experience the sublime. In the end, it seems that what Breton is describing is an object who *possesses* the collector.

4- A Reversal of Hierarchy

The experience of the poetic sublime with an oceanic object is the most dramatic encounter with an object that Breton describes in all of his texts. While at the beginning of the preface it seems that Breton is writing a manifesto for the collector by declaring the possession of oceanic objects a surrealist pursuit, the possession of the object is revealed to be synonymous with the object possessing the surrealist collector. Breton’s reversal of person-object hierarchy seems to point to a reversal of the master-slave dialectic, as proposed by Hegel.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Breton’s theoretical perspective on the material object can be traced to his meditations and interpretations on the work of Hegel. While he was not a Hegelian scholar, Breton attended Kojève’s lectures on Hegel at the Sorbonne from 1933-1939. At this time, Kojève’s lectures were the only interpretation and translation of the *Phenomenology* available to the French speaking audience. Breton clearly sought to bring the Hegelian dialectic into play within his ideas on an automatism evoked in the physical and material world. This is clear within texts such as *Surrealism and Painting*, *Crisis of the Object* and *The Situation of the Object*. For Kojève, desire was one of the most important aspects of Hegel’s teachings and is explained within the first section of his published lectures. Kojève focused on the idea of desire found in Hegel’s section on the “Master and the Slave,” as a type of will for acknowledgement of the subject from an exterior being in the process of consciousness

of self. The process of self-acknowledgement then depends on an exterior “object” which fuels desire, yet this consciousness of self is explained then to never reach satisfaction because “être conscient de soi, implique donc et presuppose le désir” (11). In other words, as soon as consciousness is experienced, through a chosen exterior object, it desires to attain this experience again through a new object. The process of self-acknowledgement is a phenomenological one but also can explain the power relations between a “Master” and a “Slave” in that the master is the the subject who chooses the exterior object to contemplate, and to use within the process. The dialectical tension created from the Master and Slave also describes the relations between two people, one of whom dominates the other. It is this relation which is at stake within Breton’s theoretical musings about the collector and the oceanic object. Instead of perpetuating the idea of a collector who possesses the object, Breton seems to suggest the idea of an object possessing the collector. This power dynamic reverses symbolic colonial dominance through possession. Inasmuch, we can see how Breton’s anti-colonial stance is subtly working out within his surrealist poetic: the oceanic objects are vested with a power that reverses the normal dominant hierarchy—instead of the person being in control of the object, it is the object that is in control of the person.

5- The Agency of Things

Breton’s stance on the object assuming power holds resonance with a contemporary growing field of inquiry focused on “things.” The critical field, known as “Thing Theory” has been defined by Bill Brown as the inquiry into a changed relation between an object and a human subject, and can point to a power dynamic which belies the subject’s hold or understanding of an object (4). Brown mentions that the surrealist relationship to objects was an

important one— an effort to “achieve a greater intimacy with things, and to exert a different determination for them” (10). Yet, Brown’s analysis of things has been critiqued as more of a theoretical mashup than a material investigation and concentration on the history of things which proponents of the art-historical world favor (Wharton 427). However, Thing Theory has ties to the fields of cultural studies and visual culture, perhaps influenced by WJ. T. Mitchell’s inquiry into images and his question of “*what do pictures want?*” which assumes a position of investigating and considering the object as more than a text to be read, under the guise that pictures too have “lives” of their own:

A poetics of pictures, then, in contrast with a rhetoric of hermeneutics, is a study of “the lives of image,” from the ancient idols and fetishes to contemporary technical images and artificial life-forms, including cyborgs and clones. The questions to ask of pictures from the standpoint of a poetics is not just what they mean or do but *what they want*. (XV)

The recent critical investigation into objects and pictures as things which hold a kind of subjecthood or “agency,” also suggests a kind of distance to the object which harkens back to a time when art was considered a political tool, and synonymously a danger to the nation state. Donald Preziosi writes about how Plato’s idea of *theios phobos* (“god like terror”) within the *Republic* describes art as having the potential to inflict violence on civic society (505). It therefore seems that there has been a return to such a consideration within Thing Theory today. The interpretation of the art object endowed with subjecthood suggests a living power. In this respect, the object potentially subjects its viewer to a state of submissive prostration. While art

historians and cultural critics suggest the ethical stance of such a position, alluding to the reversal of a critical power play in such an approach, Giorgio Agamben has approached this trend in theory as a “time for a destruction of aesthetics.” In his essay *The Man without Content* (1994) Agamben asks if art can ever reacquire its original stature, implying that theory has nothing to do with this return to a “cult”-like sense of art. While the field of Thing Theory and its ethos are not the subject of my inquiry here, I find it productive to mention this growing trend in visual culture and art history since it holds certain similar elements to what Breton was attempting to achieve in his position on ethnographic (and specifically oceanic) objects.

Breton discussion of oceanic objects breaches the possibility of subjecthood for inanimate things, proposing that objects do indeed hold agency. Within Breton’s description of his personal relationship to such objects he reveals an intimate engagement which depends on a subject-object reversal as noted previously. This relationship thus aligns with the dialectic reversal of power in which it is the object and not Breton, the beholder, that wields control: “for my part, I often need to come back to them, to come to life while watching them, to take them in my hands, to speak to them, to accompany them back to the places from which they came in order to reconcile myself of the places where I am”⁷⁵ [“pour ma part, j’ai souvent besoin de revenir à eux, de m’éveiller en les regardant, de les prendre en mains, de leur parler, de les raccompagner vers les lieux d’où ils viennent pour me concilier ceux où je suis”]. Breton here seems to rely on the objects he collects; he comes to his objects for comfort and reconciliation and speaks to them as if they were alive. They are not only things but *generators* of a life beyond. Breton’s evocation echoes that of Xavier de Maistre in “Voyage autour de ma chambre,” suggesting that he doesn’t need to move at all from his room to access other places,

⁷⁵ My translation.

other lives. It is through these objects that he travels. Their poetic sublime allows him to access another place, another time. Through his imagination and memory these objects are vessels of another life. Within his hands, they are not just objects, but are spirits that *return* his gaze; they enliven him and they allow him to “waken” as he “looks at them.” While Breton’s words here could be interpreted to trope on a fetishistic notion that the tribal artifacts hold the power and ritual of a fantasized primitive value, my reading is that Breton’s aim is to highlight the undervalued Oceanic culture and art as something alive and powerful. Through the ideal of poetry, the art “above all arts”⁷⁶ which Breton has always deemed transformative, oceanic objects are presented as living things.

III. Xenophiles: The Surrealist Reversal of “Things” to “Persons”

1- The *Xénophile* poems

The five poems written about, and named after Oceania and specific Oceanic Objects, (*Korwar, Uli, DukDuk, Tiki and Rano Raraku*), were written from 1947-1948, and were first published within the “Océanie” exhibition catalogue in 1948. Two of the poems (*Uli, Korwar*) were published with photographic reproductions of the corresponding objects adjacent. The other three poems are without imagery within the catalogue, but for the most part the poems are about witnessing the objects first-hand (with the exception of *Rano Raraku*). Two of the objects (*Korwar, Tiki*)⁷⁷ belonged in Breton’s personal collection, while one had previously been in

⁷⁶ Breton upholds Hegel’s statement in his essay, “Situation Surréaliste de l’Objet” (OCII 477).

⁷⁷ Noted within the catalogue’s exhibition list of objects.

Breton's hands (DukDuk)⁷⁸ and one would enter into Breton's possession at a later date (Uli) as will be discussed in the last section of this chapter. While it is suggested that all of the objects corresponding to the poems were present at the exhibition, this cannot be confirmed for *Rano Raraku*.⁷⁹ Yet, it is considered that the poems were written in relation to, and specifically about the individual objects displayed.

Breton later added the five poems to a collection of his work entitled "Xénophiles" within the publication, *Poèmes*, which appeared at the end of 1948 (OC III n.1278). The title of the collection, "Xénophiles," was in response to the idea of xenophobia, which Breton penned in an ironic tone to suggest a counter position to the French colonial mission. The poems are thus conceived of with an anti-colonial attitude in mind. Albeit of a dated perspective, Breton's aim in writing these *Xénophiles* poems was to overturn what he saw as the common euro-centric position on the colonialist endeavor to appropriate and objectify foreign cultures without due appreciation for their culture and art. Breton's gesture in writing the five *Xénophiles* poems about Oceania engages in the surrealist attempt to reverse the under-represented region and an under-appreciated tribal art. In the poems, Breton endows the objects with the value that he sees in them, subverting the colonial objectification and aesthetic disregard of the oceanic cultures, peoples and arts of his present day. In his writing, Breton achieves this by rhetorically bringing the objects to life.

⁷⁸ It is not sure if Breton possessed the mask or if Eluard did. But the object appeared within the 1931 Breton-Eluard auction at Hôtel Drouot, when the two surrealists divested themselves of a large quantity of ethnographic objects with the help of Charles Ratton (OC III n. 1281). A photographic reproduction of the mask can be seen within the auction catalogue "Sculptures d'Afrique, d'Amérique, et d'Océanie," slate VIII, number 58.

⁷⁹ *Rano Raraku* is the only poem which does not situate a singular object within its verse, but rather suggests the importance of the objects' impermanence (the large Moai head figurines on Easter Island) in their original state.

2- Recasting the Physical Object into Words: *Tiki*, *Korwar* and *Uli*

In three of the five poems, *Tiki*, *Korwar* and *Uli*, Breton gives testimony, revealing a witness account or fantasized personal interaction with the physical object, seemingly recasting the physical object into words. The similarities drawn between the real physical object and the poeticized version in verse are wrought in a way that it is apparent that Breton was attempting to give specification to a singular object. In *Tiki*, the poet, upon looking at the object is “transported to a clearing” by the object and “press[ed] on a woman’s belly as if against a mother-of-pearl olive tree.” The Tiki object in Breton’s collection was made of mother-of-pearl and looks like an anthropomorphic tree-figure; it has two large circular eyes and a body that is squat but which branches out into four limbs. The poetic version thus resonates the visual qualities of the real object.

The object takes on an ever-present maternal role in the poem as the speaker says “you calm me/ you put me to bed/ in relation to having lived/ before and after.” According to Vincent Bounoure’s account of Jean-Claude Blachère’s interpretation, the last three lines: “[...] having lived/before and after” could have been inspired by the book of T.E. Donne, *Moeurs et coutumes des Maoris* (Payot, 1933) which stipulated that according to beliefs, the Tiki is a representation of the fetus, a symbol of birth and simultaneously, the symbol of death, as its form (curled up) is the same a body takes after life (OC III n.1282). While most Maori tiki were statues made of wood, this tiki is one of a pendant style (heï-tiki) made completely of mother-of-pearl, and thus rare (OC III n.1282). The object was noted as being one of the most beautiful Tikis ever seen within the exhibition review written by Patrick O’Reilly, published within *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Issue 4, Volume 4. (1948), 190.

In *Korwar*, the poet's voice illustrates the sculpture in movement, as if it were alive, "you hold like no other." Made from wood and originating from the North West of New Guinea, these types of objects are described by Jean Guiart as "persons of a squat body, the head cubic shaped and disproportionate, standing or sitting on a pedestal" holding in two hands a "kind of openwork shield" decorated with vegetal motifs and sometimes, the bird of paradise (OC III n.1280). The poet points out this shield as a gate and the object's hold on it, as if in movement "[...] you shake the garden gate/ you have raised up to your heart the serpentine grass" also mentioning the appearance of a bird of paradise within, "and forever curled the birds of paradise in the hoarse sky." These figurines were funerary objects and the "skull" was of great importance as that is where the head of the dying person was supposed to rest.⁸¹ Interestingly, Breton pokes fun at Sartre within the poem. In 1947, Sartre accused the surrealists of being mystics and denounced their use of poetry and literature as ineffective and uncommitted to being politically engaged. Breton and the surrealists were outraged and responded to Sartre's attack. Here, in this poem, Breton uses the skull, the cavity of death, as the starting point to criticize the doctrine of existentialism which stipulates that we are responsible of our existence: "The skull for a few more days/ In the dip of our features/ All our acts are before us/ At arm's length/ In the little one's vine tendril/ You are feeding us a line on existentialism [...]." Suggesting that death is the ultimate arbiter, Breton alludes to the idea that there exists a force greater than what humans can control. This falls in line with the sense of most of these poems, which celebrate the divine rites and spirits of these ritual objects.

Uli is perhaps the most impressive poem of them all, going so far as to describe the object as "a great god" whose "creation prostrates us still." Originally from the island of New

⁸¹ The Musée Quai Branly also shows *Korwar* objects as receiving the skull of the dead person. <http://modules.quaibrantly.fr/d-pedago/surrealistes/pdf/MQB-DP-ABreton-Korwar.pdf>

Ireland in Papua New Guinea, the sculpture is an ancestral effigy, also called “Malangan Uli” of the homonym tribe. The 4-foot tall hermaphroditic statue made of sculpted wood and painted with red and black pigments is an impressive piece. Upon consulting the object in person, it is easy to comprehend the deep appreciation and passion Breton had for this object: it is a masterful carving of formidable size, yet also seems to exude the illusion of an animate being. The poem focuses on gaze of the object as “leer[ing] at us from the depth of a seashell,” illustrating the fact that Uli held seashells for eyes. The sculpture’s eyes are not painted, nor made of wood but are single cowrie shells, affixed to the wooden statue itself. Because of the shading of the shell’s pigments, the eyes are perhaps the most alarming and prominent feature, giving the sculpture’s regard an anamorphic quality. As an observer moves from one side of the front of the sculpture to the other, the eyes of Uli seem to follow.⁸²

3- The Animating Power of Apostrophe

While the descriptive details of the poems give exegesis to each object, allowing the reader to come into contact with Breton’s vivid imagination which brings them to life, there is a rhetorical device within the language of the poems that celebrates the “living” quality of the objects on a more powerful level. Through the specific rhetorical strategy of apostrophe, Breton attempts to give an alternative testimony to these objects through his poetry, endowing the objects with the life of a *subject*.

By using the personal pronouns “I” and “You,” Breton engages with the rhetorical figure of apostrophe, where the “I” is the voice of the speaker or poet, and the “You” is the listener or addressee to whom the poet is speaking. In the first line of each poem, the poet’s voice

⁸² Noted upon personal observation of the object in 2013, Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet.

pays homage to an imagined deity-like figure: in *Tiki*, “I love you in the face of oceans,” in *Korwar*, “You hold like no other,” and in *Uli*, “To be sure, you are a great god.” This type of rhetorical figure thus enacts a relationship between the “I” and the “You” and addresses the objects as if they were subjects and thus *people*. Barbara Johnson, within her book *Persons and Things* writes on the power of apostrophe, which is defined as a “calling out to inanimate, dead or absent beings” and consists in “addressing [...] an abstract quality or idea as if it were alive” (6-7). Johnson’s theory situates the use of personal pronouns as the linguistic act. Following Emile Benveniste, if the personal pronouns of “I”/”You” and “He” used together destroy the notion of “person,” then the use of “I”/”you” creates the notion of “person” when it is lacking in “he”:

It must be seen that the ordinary definition of the personal pronouns as containing the three terms, *I*, *You*, and *he*, simply destroys the notion of ‘person.’ ‘Person’ belongs only to *I/You* and is lacking in *he*.⁸³

Johnson thus extends Benveniste’s theory to explain the relation between address and the notion of objecthood and subjecthood. Johnson explains that if the use of “I”/”You” immediately evokes the presence of a person-person relation, then “‘I’ and ‘you’ are persons because they can either address or be addressed, while “he” can only be talked about” like a “thing” [...] in the same way that being an object of discussion rather than a subject of discussion transforms everything into a thing” (6). Apostrophe is therefore “a major rhetorical figure by which an act

⁸³ Quoted in Johnson, 6. See Emile Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics*, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1971), 217.

of *animation* is achieved,” thus relating the interaction between a person and a thing as a person and a person (6).

4- Tension between the inanimate and the animate

For Breton, and the surrealists, the tension between the inanimate and animate had always been a source of fascination and subject of artistic exploitation. Referenced first in the transference between the unconscious and conscious, psychic automatism tapped into the exploration of a life after death and the mediumistic talent that could bridge the two together. Yet it was the foray into the creation and exploration of objects as works of art that allowed for a greater reflection of the Freudian notion between eros and thanatos; desire and the death drive. We can think of the grotesque dolls of Bellemer which look living and dismembered at the same time, Man Ray’s rayographs of objects which evoke a life beyond the material based on Tzara’s essay “When things Dream” or even Dorothea Tanning’s later soft-sculptural works, like *Canapé en temps de pluie* (1970) which suggest both the domesticity of furniture and the rounded soft tangible forms of naked bodies. What all these works of art have in common is a reflection on the dual nature of existence and a desire to subvert the common commodity whether it be a child’s play thing (a doll, a spinning top) or an adult’s domestic property (a couch) in order to show another side to the surface of the thing. Inasmuch, the possibilities of life beyond the face-value of the object are revealed. It is the semiotic status beyond the use-value of the object—the symbol of a certain privilege, class or population reversed and turned on its head.

Breton’s animation of oceanic objects within his poems, thus seem to follow the surrealist aesthetic of infusing an object with subjecthood for the purpose of social and political subversion of capitalism. The critique of capitalism was interpreted from the surrealist affiliation with the

teachings of Karl Marx in the communist party from 1927 till 1933 when Breton was expelled. While other members went on to assume more strident positions, the surrealist group retained the major notions of the Marxist docta which in particular decried the tendency to forget the products human labor. While it can be said that Breton was perhaps humanizing objects in these poems, and thus engendering what Marx denounced as the “fetishism of the commodity,” that is relating a human tendency to create an intimate relation with an object outside of its labor of production, Breton was in fact attempting to create a subversion of opinion through an opposing process of reification. Instead of expanding the notion of thingness of the thing—Breton attempted to do the opposite, that is, show the *humanness* of the thing in order to pass his deeper message about the act of colonialism as a dehumanizing process. Evocative of Aimé Césaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism*, which states that “colonization=thingification [*chosification*]” it seems that Breton was attempting to show that “figures which increase humanness are by nature working against a decline of humanness and a thingification that [...] have only accelerated with commodity capitalism” (Johnson 23).

5- The Patina as *Skin*

This opinion is confirmed in Breton’s stated position on the “patina” of an object within his preface to the catalogue. The “patina” is the external surface of a tribal object that has accumulated over its lifetime, thus attesting to the originality and authenticity of the piece. Described in Derlon and Jeudy-Ballini’s case studies of collectors of ethnographic objects, the patina is the “grime constituted of miniscule quantities of matter (mineral, vegetal, animal, human etc.), that attaches onto the object directly or by an intermediary, the body of one of its users ... this matter that is foreign and strange” [“cette crasse constituée d’infimes quantités de

matières (minérales, végétales, animales, humaines etc.) qui se fixent sur l'objet directement ou par l'intermédiaire du corps de ses utilisateurs [...] cette matière étrangère ”(50). It is therefore not only the object itself, but usually the intermediary use of the human contact which gives the object value. Yet while Breton underlines the importance of “patina,” within the collecting of an object it is not in the traditional sense as described by Derlon and Jeudy-Ballini. Breton describes the patina as the “*skin*” of a sculpture “more than that of *blood*,” thereby reversing the ethnographic principle that blood on a ritual artifact was the most valuable and prized element that it could hold [“à l'exception de l'intérêt porté à une certaine noblesse, de peau plutôt que de sang, attestée par la ‘patine’”]. Breton’s remark proposes an alternative view on the much prized muck which was sought after by collectors, suggesting his perspective and approach as one that values the desired object on a different level. Breton seems to suggest that he views objects as animate beings; an object does not have a “skin” but a living being does. This opinion seems to resonate with elements of Tristan Tzara’s conception of patina. Tristan Tzara, himself a collector, was one of the first avant-garde artists of the Dada and Surrealist group to document his ideas on ‘primitive’ arts. In 1930 he worked with Charles Ratton, the successful primitive art dealer in Paris to organize *L'exposition d'art africain et d'art océanien* at the Pigalle Theater gallery and helped to write the exposition catalogue as well as helped to supply 36 objects (23 from African and 13 from Oceania) to the 400 objects displayed (Murphy 145). Three years later, within his essay “Concerning a Certain Automatism of Taste” (1933), which was four years prior to the *Océanie* exhibit, Tzara describes patina in the traditional sense affirming that “those who deal with primitive art know what the finest pieces present a worn finish caused by prolonged handling which adds to their value and their beauty (a patina spread more or less evenly across the whole surface and hence not caused simply by practical effects of transport and

shifting around)” (209). Yet Tzara also makes the claim that “nothing would be able to exist outside *human characteristics*,” revealing his idea of an art that is always linked to its human creator. This point has been critically discussed by Kate Conley who has drawn a relation between Tzara’s idea of patina and Walter Benjamin’s concept of “aura” in that it is the tactile human touch which creates uniqueness and history unlike mechanical reproduction which draws from the originality and authenticity of a work of art (2013: 11). While Breton’s idea of a patina that resembles “skin” seems less about the creator than the object itself as a human, it is not discussed further as a theoretical point within his preface to the catalogue. However, this notion does seem to be developed within Breton’s *Xénophiles* poems, thus developing a conception of the objects as more *human* than collected thing.

Within the next section, we will explore a singular case of an object, Uli, which Breton also referred to and wrote about as an animate object. While Breton desired to collect this object, it was unattainable for sometime and thus Breton remained prostrate to the figure for many years. It is this period of prostration that interests us — as it is the phase in which desire, and the surrealist “way” is most potent— it is the stage in which the surrealist collector wishes to possess and synonymously be possessed by the real object. In the next section we will investigate how, in lieu of the real sculpture, the operation of desire for possession generated allegorical and textual representations of Uli within Breton’s collection at 42 rue Fontaine.

IV. The Case of Uli: Poetic Possessions

1- Uli, the effigy

The case of “Uli,” an ancestral effigy named after the homonym cult from the island of New Ireland (Papua New Guinea) is one that illustrates the surrealist experience of seduction and “sovereign desire” for objects that Breton describes in his preface to the Oceania exhibition [Figure 4]. Breton observed the sculpture for the first time in 1930 in Paris, in the collection of Roland Tual and immediately wished to acquire the object for himself, but did not have the financial means to purchase it. Uli then haunted Breton for thirty some years—until the effigy finally entered into his collection in 1964, two years before Breton’s death. Photographs taken of 42 rue Fontaine at this time show that Breton placed it on his desk, where he could face the object and behold it at all times, especially when writing.

Once one of Breton’s most prized possessions, it is now conserved in the Jacques Doucet Library in Paris. Donated to the library by Aube Breton, the statue figured part of Breton’s desk collection and was an integral part of Breton’s literary work space.⁸⁴ Yet before the sculpture came to rest atop Breton’s desk, the object held an important place in Breton’s collection. Even though the object was unattainable for 34 years, Breton’s desire to collect the object was tangible and manifested itself in different modes of literary expression.

⁸⁴ Breton’s desk collection and the desk itself was donated by Aube to the Jacques Doucet Library in 2003.



Figure 4 Uli, the ancestral effigy from Papua New Guinea. (L'Association Atelier André Breton, 2003)

2- Uli, the poem

In 1948, Breton published a poem entitled after the object, a poem that seems to read as an ode to the effigy itself:

ULI

Pour sûr, tu es un grand dieu/ To be sure, you are a great god

Je t'ai vu de mes yeux comme nul autre/ I saw you with my eyes like no other

Tu es encore couvert de terre et de sang tu viens de créer/ You are still covered with dirt and blood you just created

On voit que tu t'en es fourré jusqu'aux oreilles/ We see that you are filled with the stuff to your ears

Tu n'entends plus/ You don't hear anymore

Tu nous reluques d'un fond de coquillage/ you leer at us from the depths of a seashell

Ta creation dit haut les mains et tu menaces encore/ Your creation prostrates us and you menace us still

Tu fais peur tu émerveilles/ You instill fear, you enthrall⁸⁵

Breton addresses the sculpture as if it was an animate being. He renders homage to its imagined deity-like figure (“to be sure you are a great god”), and describes certain physical attributes such as the patina (“you are still covered with the dirt and blood you just created”). Even though the poem is written in present tense, it is also evident that the poem is a remembrance of the first encounter Breton had with the object (“I saw you with my eyes like no other”), evocative

⁸⁵ My translation.

perhaps of Breton's surrealist moment of "objective chance" with the object when he first beheld it within the collection of Roland Tual.

The poem was first published in the catalogue for the exhibit of Oceanic objects in which Uli was displayed at the galerie d'Andrée Olive in Paris, then later in the collection of poems entitled *Xénophiles*. When read in conjunction with Breton's preface to the catalogue, the object assumes a more theoretical context within Surrealism. As I have discussed in the previous section, Breton explains that the "surrealist consciousness" has an "irresistible need to possess." This is the central element since "the surrealist way, at the start is inseparable from seduction, from the fascination which these things have over us." For Breton, the passionate experience of loving Uli for possession is thus implicit to desire; it is a state of being prostrate to the oceanic object which is essential to the practice of surrealism itself.

3- Possession as a text generator

Breton's desire to collect this beloved object is thus an example of the "surrealist practice" described as "inseparable from seduction." Possession is thus key to understanding the motivating factor behind Breton's desire for Uli, the statue, but may also illuminate the genesis of Breton's poem and subsequent writings and domestic use of the name Uli for his pet animals. Ackbar Abbas in his essay on Walter Benjamin, "Walter Benjamin's Collector: The Fate of Modern Experience," suggests that the interest of Benjamin's collector lies in his desire to *possess* an experience of something through objects or written texts. Benjamin's idea of possessing an experience through collecting or writing parallels Breton's surrealist desire to collect Uli and write about the figure when physical possession is delayed. Abbas cites Benjamin's essay, "Unpacking my Library," where Benjamin describes the experience of

possession as the most important for the collector: “for a collector [...] ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects” (67). Just like Breton’s confessed intimate interaction of “speaking to his objects,” and his desire to submit to the experience of being “bitten poetically by an oceanic object,” Benjamin affirms that the relationship between object and owner is an experience which holds a kind of creativity. While most critics of collectors despise the appropriation and erasure of the collected object’s original identity for its integration into a system of meaning (the collection), Benjamin insists that the acquisition and ownership (the possession) of the object is its “rebirth.” For Benjamin, such “is the collector’s deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things” (61). Within the act of possession the collector gives new life to the object, assigning it a value beyond its original value. It is a “rebirth” in a sense that the collector has renewed its life and meaning upon bringing it into the collection. This new meaning, which the object holds is also like a new story. If collecting objects is likened to the creation of a narrative, then the act of writing is implied to be a similar process. The material form of the object holds meaning just as the material form of a text holds a history. Thus, through the act of possession, Abbas draws a parallel between collecting objects and the practice of writing and suggests that: “textual practices are comparable to collecting” in that putting into words may supplement the experience of possessing the object itself.

In this case, can we see Breton’s poem as the manifestation of his desire for Uli the sculpture—the textual practice a function of desire to possess the real object? If writing the object is a way to behold it in words, a way to transfer its physicality to the page then it seems that Breton could be writing Uli’s presence. Susan Stewart suggests that writing has the capacity to “generate significant objects and hence to both generate and engender a significant other” (X).

While Stewart specifically points to the form of narrative as generating this effect, I suggest that the poem, and furthermore, any kind of language performs the same operation.

4- The Totem of Uli: Animal Figures

After the first reappearance of Uli in the poem, Breton repeatedly brings the name and therefore idea of Uli into his personal and poetic life despite the lack of the real object in his collection. In 1948, in a letter to his daughter, Aube, Breton writes that he has bought her a Skye-Terrier in place of a former canine companion, Violette, who disappeared.⁸⁶ Breton named this new dog “Uli,” after the effigy he so admired (23). Naming the pet dog after the tribal artifact can be read as an act of desire for the missing object itself, which Breton could not acquire. Instead of owning the object of Uli, Breton would appropriate its name for that of his dog.

Nomination—the act of naming— has frequently been associated with the act of authority and possession. Within Emile Benveniste’s essay, “Subjectivity in Language,” (1958) he makes the claim that discourse “permits each speaker to appropriate to himself an entire language by designating himself as I” thereby showing the relationship between the speaker’s personal pronoun and possession of language (226). Benveniste’s claim suggests that the ability to name, or rename, enables the speaker to separate already existing elements within the world and appropriate them for new purposes through language (Esterhammer 111). For Breton, naming his *dog*, “Uli,” was a way to perform an act of authority not only on the dog, but an operation on the word and linguistic signifier of “Uli,” the sculpture. Naming his dog after the effigy thus brings the presence of the object into the atelier to remind Breton of the object and

⁸⁶ Aube did not live with Breton and Elisa at 42 rue Fontaine on a regular basis.

the spirit he first experienced when beholding it in 1930.⁸⁷ Yet the dog was not just a porter of the object, but a living being itself, and thus an ironic détournement of the original function of the object, Uli, a funeral effigy. Breton came to love the dog, Uli, and the dog's presence was recorded in numerous letters and pencil sketches preserved in Breton's archives.⁸⁸ In one particular letter dated the 29th of November 1948, Breton recounts that Uli would accompany him to weekly meetings with fellow surrealists at Place Blanche, Uli being "him who is most joyful to attend [the meetings], as the single word "café" is magical." Uli thus simultaneously lived in Breton's atelier and poetic life—a living creature and symbol of an effigy, a true expression of the radical and subversive avant-garde maxim that "life is art."

Uli the dog is mentioned within various letters and notes to Aube over the years, but stops around 1953, when we can surmise that the dog has died. Yet later this same year, we find that the name Uli comes back to life yet again, but this time, as a pet bird, a Swallow. In a letter from Saint-Cirq-Lapopie dated the 28th of August in 1953, Breton speaks of this new Uli: "Uli, who had held his strength over these last few days thanks to a strict vegetarian diet has now lost his feathers again, and is not at all handsome to see! Elisa is very worried about the future of the little swallow: it is out of the question that he can live in Paris." ["Uli, qui avait assez bien tenu le coup jusqu'à ces derniers jours grâce au régime strictement végétarien, s'est de nouveau déplumé gravement et n'est pas beau à voir! Elisa s'inquiète fort de l'avenir du petit martinet: il est tout à fait exclu qu'il puisse vivre à Paris."] While this is the only mention of the pet bird, Uli, it is

⁸⁷ This was not the first time Breton would name a pet dog after a beloved object. In the 1920's Breton named his first pet Skye-terrier "Melmoth" after the English gothic novel, *Melmoth the Wanderer*. See Rudosky, "Une collection qui a du chien: l'atelier d'André Breton" in *Histoires Littéraires*.

⁸⁸ See <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100583780> and Breton's correspondence with Aube (p. 30) for examples of these sketches.

enough to give us insight into Breton's continued passion: he repeatedly named his pet animals after the effigy in order to perpetuate the presence of the object in his domestic space. Uli was so important to Breton that he brought the object into his atelier—by dog, by swallow and in his writings and poetry through the use and reuse of its name.

The swallow seems to be the last of the Uli animals recorded in Breton's letters and writings. Yet in 1955 Uli the dog reappears as the subject of an important essay published in *La Tour Saint Jacques*, entitled "Daily Magic." However, from 1953 on, there is an absence of the name until we find that in 1964, "Uli" the original sculpture has finally been acquired at a high price— a trade for his celebrated painting by di Chirico, "*Le cerveau de l'enfant*." Nevertheless, the object and its rightful name had finally found its resting place on Breton's desk, next to his paper and pen.

From the moment that Breton encountered Uli, the statue, till the moment he acquired it, Breton was continuously obsessed with the object. His desire for the physical possession of Uli seems to be expressed in the perpetual recurrence of the figure of Uli in his compositions and personal life. By writing about the object in his poem, his letters, and allegorically naming his pets, Breton brought the presence of his beloved sculpture into the atelier, before the object ever entered into his collection.

5- Allegory's Alterity: Against Commodity Fetishism

As mentioned earlier, for Breton, naming his *dog* and his *bird* "Uli," was a way to perform an act of authority not only on the dog, but an operation on the word and linguistic signifier of "Uli," the sculpture which is one of possession. Considering Benveniste's claim that language allows for possession through discourse, Breton's repetitive use of "Uli" seems to

suggest an allegorical procedure in which the separation of the signifier “Uli” from is signified, the statue, is appropriated and applied to his domestic animals in order to bring the statue to life within the animal. Allegorically reliving the object in this sense is related most closely to Walter Benjamin’s conception of modern allegory, where “transforming things into signs is what allegory does and what it is about” (Cowen 3). Yet, Benjamin’s conception of allegory, goes beyond this signifying practice to touch on a sense of loss, explains Bainard Cowen: for Benjamin, allegory is “pre-eminently a kind of *experience* [...] which arises from an apprehension of the world as no longer permanent” — it is an experience “of the world [which] ceases to be purely physical and becomes an aggregation of signs” (3). Allegory then infuses a new sense into something that seemed lost or lacking through words for the purpose of giving it life. It is an attempt to stop the world becoming purely an “aggregation of signs.” Such seems close to Breton’s practice of naming living animals in his atelier after an object that could not be present.

The allegorical procedure of endowing an object with the life through the appropriated name of another thing seems to speak to the act of creation within collecting. Alluded to within in Benjamin’s “Louis-Philippe or the Interior,” we can point to the process of collecting as one that is likened to a process of creation since the “possession of objects strips things of their commodity character” giving the object a new meaning. Benjamin celebrates the act of possessing an object since the collector gives it a new life and suggests that the collection *saves* objects by turning them into art (Abbas 222). Yet, like with all of Benjamin’s philosophical meditations, such creation is inconclusive, suggesting a diametrical tension for an opposing reality: while the collection “saves” objects through the collector’s conferral of new meaning onto the object, “in the process, art turns into mere objects of contemplation” thus limiting the

object to a type of commodity fetishism. Therefore, within the collection an object can never fully be “saved” in the eyes of Benjamin. It is thus only perhaps in the continuous re-purposing of an object that an object can resist commodification. This repurposing is perhaps also described by the unequivocal process which serves as a never-ending narrative to the object itself. Once the object has reached a term, a name, an end, it becomes obsolete.

While Benjamin’s idea of commodity fetishism is pertinent to a world made solely of objects, in the case of Uli the gaze of contemplation is blurred. Breton’s animals resist commodification because they are *living beings*, thereby reversing the process of commodity fetishism. Even though they are named after an object they in return confer another meaning on the object through their own personal life. However, while the life of Uli began as desire for possession of the physical object and would end in its acquisition, for a short while, the animals retained a sense of *otherness* even though they are stamped with the mark of Uli, the sculpture. It is this alterity that Breton sought to bring about in his everyday life as a surrealist practice.

In *Prolégomènes à un troisième manifeste du surréalisme ou non*, Breton categorically rejects the idea of a *telos* in rationalist thinking and declares that it is imperative to stop believing in an absolute knowledge, the genius and omniscience of man. This goes also for the relationship humans have with animals. Breton relates a conversation that he had in Mexico with a “great man” (supposedly Trotsky) who saw in his dog a devoted animal, and attributed to this animal a sentiment of love that Breton contested at the time as an anthropomorphic sentiment. In his text, Breton opposes this vision of the animal world, and invites us to travel to a “utopic land” suggesting that the vagabond and rebel surrealist spirit will never cross certain limits of this world—therefore persuading us that we must apprehend the world in a radical manner. Instead of regarding the animal and the world like a child who “contents [himself] to conceive of an ant

below, just as he has gone and given a walloping thump (of his foot) to the anthill,” Breton, whose ex-libris held the image of an anteater, offers a reversal of this perspective—in the wake of Novalis—for who “we live in reality in an animal of whom we are the parasites.” An animal world of which we, the parasites belong to. Similar to the “content of the containers” of the communicating vessels, “the constitution of this animal determines ours, and vice-versa.” This reversal reveals humanity as being small and curious within the phenomenological world. The text ends with the proposition of a “new myth,” that of “the Great Transparents” of the world – those beings who are amongst us within our domestic spaces, gone unwatched: “Man is perhaps not the center, the cynosure of our universe. Instead, we should let our selves think that above him, exists a whole scale of animal beings, those beings whose behavior is just as strange as his can be to the mayfly or the whale.” This reversal of a rationalist logic which situates humankind at the center of creation is reversed for the acceptance of a different kind of hierarchy— a hierarchy no longer ruled by the subject of man, but by other living beings such as animals. This line of thought, a surrealist, and Bretonian leitmotif, is renewed in Breton’s 1957 publication, *L’art Magique*, which investigates the powers of certain objects as holding a “primordial power” in which a “charge” of energy could be released in “exceptional circumstances.” It is this later work which sums up the potential of “magical power” Breton sees in the object world. It is a power that has the potential to change a world set on rationalizing its surroundings.

Breton’s theoretical reversal of the rationalist order of things is at work within the desire to possess Uli: it is the animal and the object that may transform the dynamic of power which has dominated social relations for too long. Even though Breton wished to possess Uli, this desire also included the wish to be possessed by the sculpture itself, signaling that the object is a thing which holds agency. In the period of longing in which Breton could not acquire the object,

Breton replaced the object with an idea of it through the allegorical procedure of naming his domestic pets and writing about the object in his daily life. For Breton, it was Uli that generated the desire, the naming and the texts; the object was always at the heart of the subject.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the historical and theoretical importance of oceanic objects as poetic generators within the Surrealist movement. It has contextualized this surrealist endeavor as contradictory in that it sought to subvert rationalist ideologies of French colonial geographic power and domination through the collection of such objects. By first reviewing the historical and cultural context of the surrealist favoritism of Oceania over Africa, we have seen how the surrealists situated themselves as the promoters of a territory unknown and untouched by French colonialism. For the surrealists, delimiting and using the unknown region of the Pacific as a source of inspiration meant the liberation of the artistic and poetic mind. Yet because this territory was geographically unreachable, what became the point of contact for the surrealist experience was the tribal artifact, originating from the region. Through contact with the physical object, and the collection of it, the surrealist could attain the experience of the “poetic sublime.”

Breton’s personal engagement with the collection of and writing about Oceanic objects illustrates and reveals the theoretical process by which a surrealist experience was perceived to be obtained. Breton not only collected the objects with passion, but conceived of and wrote about these things as human subjects, endowing them with life through the rhetorical power of nomination and apostrophe. Within the *Xénophile* poems, Breton places his attention on the reproduction of the object in words in order to describe the physical likeness of the sculptures. The case of Uli is a case in point of how Breton sought to collect and possess a thing which he

also desired to bring to life within his atelier through the allegorical naming of animals and writing of texts. Through this subject-object reversal Breton was attempting to theoretically subvert cartesian ideology and the anthropomorphic world which viewed humans and not animals (nor objects) as sources of power. For this reason, Breton and the Surrealists were in some sense radically seeking the same ethical stance which is still sought today in the field of Thing Theory and art-historical investigations which privilege the agency of objects.

CHAPTER 3: THE SCRAPBOOK

Introduction

This chapter explores the archival object of the *Scrapbook* (c.1944) as a protean example of Breton's collecting practice, informed by surrealist theory. This unique album in black percale with the word "Scrapbook" stamped on its front cover in gold-leaf lettering contains a number of article clippings, photos and post-cards collected towards the end of WWII. In the first part of this chapter, I present Breton's *Scrapbook* as an unpublished archival object and define its place in history and scholarship. By situating the *Scrapbook* within the lineage of artistic experimentation of *découpage* and *montage* exercised by the surrealists, I attempt to define the development of Breton's layout practice in the second part of this chapter by examining earlier loose album pages also found within the collection. In the third part, I present my reading of the *Scrapbook's* layout and show that it reveals three *topoi* which reveal thematic interest in: 1) the geological and natural phenomena of the Canadian Gaspé coast; 2) differing political attitudes between the US and France at the end of WWII; and 3) the recollection of the major surrealist figures—with Breton at the center—at the impending threat of the Surrealism's dissolve. To conclude, I suggest that Breton's *Scrapbook* is conversant and divergent with current theoretical definitions that seek to define a specific temporality within the genre. I argue that in Breton's case, the *Scrapbook* refers to a past, but also calls forth a very specific and relevant future and therefore can also be regarded as a collection.

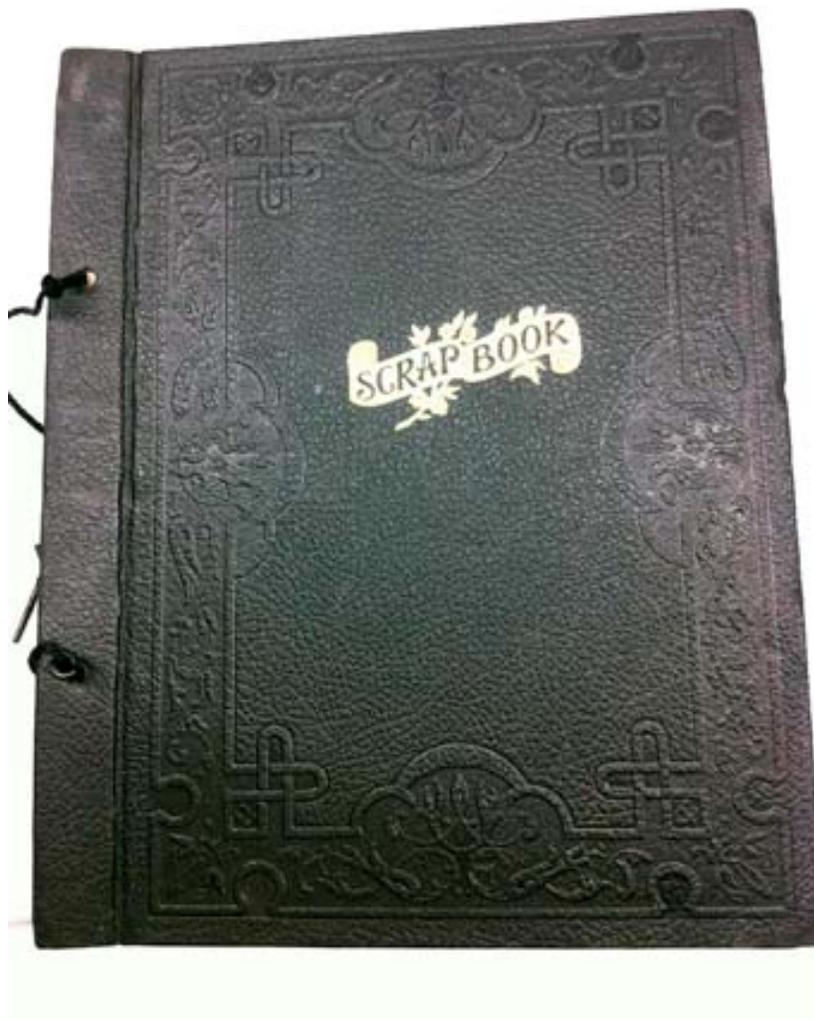


Figure 5 Cover of the Scrapbook.

I. The Scrapbook and its Origins

1- Description of Breton's *Scrapbook*

Breton's scrapbook, presently located within the reserves of the Kandinsky library at the Centre Pompidou is a large in-4 sized album [Figure 5].⁸⁹ Its front and back covers are made of black glossy percale with a decorative border in relief, reminiscent of the art-nouveau style of the early 1900's. In the border in the upper half of the front cover the word "Scrapbook" appears, off-set from the image of a decorative scroll printed in faux-gold inlay and ornamented with a loose sprig of wild flowers in the fashion of Victorian-era scrapbooks. According to the first interior sheet, the scrapbook was industrially made, as it is numerated #541. The printed notice also states that it was produced "containing 30 10x12 ½ inch sheets." While Breton only pasted items in to the first 15 sheets, leaving the last 15 sheets empty, the printed notice gives information for the avid scrap booker who would like to add supplementary items given that the book is bound with black cord and may be opened for more sheets to be inserted as desired: "for extra sheets ask for Filler No. 531-F consisting of 20 sheets." The notice also states in large lettering that the book is "MADE IN THE USA."

Within the pages of the *Scrapbook* André Breton placed a total of 46 ephemeral items that come from a wide variety of sources: 32 newspaper clippings from French-Canadian, French, American and Polish newspapers and magazines; 3 art-exhibit brochures from events in New York City; 4 post-cards picturing views of the Gaspésie Coast in Canada; 5 original photographs of the area (probably taken by Elisa Claro); 1 colored print of an engraving of Henri Douanier Rousseau's *Cascades* and 1 sheet of paper on which Breton hand wrote in green ink a

⁸⁹ Located under the "Fonds André Breton 105090 Boîte de la vente 'divers'"

list of titles of his own work, possibly to be included in an unnamed anthology.⁹⁰ A number of these items are pasted onto both sides of the first 15 pages (21 if counted as back and front pages), but the rest remain loose, compiled into the back pages of the book.⁹¹

2- Historical Context of Breton's *Scrapbook*

The *Scrapbook's* contents are dated from July 1944 to January 1945, towards the end of WWII. Breton had been living in exile within the United States, in New York City, since he escaped from France in 1941 when the Vichy government banned his writings. While the exact period of the creation of the *Scrapbook* is unknown, the chronological progression of the book suggests that he began the book concurrently with his trip to Canada in the summer of 1944, even though it is possible that he had already clipped out a few of the articles from publications in New York. For the most part, it seems that Breton pasted these items in the book as he found them, especially because he would often annotate clippings with their date and source.

In the summer of 1944, Breton went on a trip to the Canadian Gaspé coast with Elisa Claro, his newfound love and companion. They arrived at the peninsula on the 20th of August and remained there in the region of Percé until the 21st of September. Many of the first articles pasted into the *Scrapbook* come from French-Canadian publications and are specifically about the coastline in Percé. The trip would then be prolonged as they decided to stay on at Sainte-Marguerite, in the region of the Laurentides. They did not return to New York until October. It is important to note that at this moment in time Breton was writing the manuscript of what would

⁹⁰ As suggested by the BK notice of the *Scrapbook*.

⁹¹ See appendix for complete inventory of the *Scrapbook*.

become his last novel, *Arcane 17*. While it is my intent to bring this novel into discussion with the *Scrapbook*, I will save this elaboration for the following chapter.

3- Breton's *Scrapbook* in Scholarship

Despite the publication of the enormity of Breton's work in four volumes published by the Pléiade,⁹² there has been no mention of the *Scrapbook*. The *Scrapbook* was acquired by the Centre Pompidou in 2003, upon its purchase from the 42 rue Fontaine auction held in the Spring of that year. The notice of the *Scrapbook* within the Bibliothèque Kandinsky's catalogues simply reads as an inventory of the book.⁹³ In 2011, I translated a similar version of this bibliographic notice into English for the André Breton website and gave additional information based on my archival research of the object, along with three supplemental photographs of the book which the

⁹² This does not include his personal correspondence, which is censored for publication until 2016 (50 years after his death) under Breton's own directive.

⁹³ Album commencé par Breton lors de son séjour aux Etats-Unis et d'un voyage au Canada pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, contenant des coupures de presse provenant de revues et des fragments de journaux collés ou simplement insérés, provenant de divers journaux québécois, français, polonais et américains parus entre juillet 1944 et janvier 1945 et quelques cartes postales. On trouve en outre des articles provenant des journaux: "La Patrie", "Le Petit Journal", "France Amérique", "Le Jour", "New Masses", "The New Yorker", "The New York Times", "The Nation", "Le Figaro" et "Newsweek" et des cartes postales du Canada portant sur des sites géographiques (Le Rocher Percé en Gaspésie) ou géologiques. Renferme également la partition et les paroles du "Chant des partisans" [Joseph Kessel et Maurice Druon] et la "Chanson de l'Université" (Louis Aragon), des articles sur la politique et les événements durant la seconde guerre mondiale, sur des hommes de lettres (Gide, Aragon, Claudel), des peintres (Joan Miro, Salvador Dali, André Breton, le Surréalisme), ainsi que 3 cartons d'invitation pour les expositions de: Joan Miro à la Pierre Matisse Gallery (janv-fév. 1945), "Through the big end of the opera glass" à la galerie Julien Levy présentant les oeuvres de Marcel Duchamp, Yves Tanguy et Joseph Cornell [s.d.]. et "Exhibition 3-45" présentant des oeuvres de Martinelli et Petrov au Swarthmore college

online notice lacked (specifically of the catalogue of Duchamp, Tanguy and Cornell at the Julien Levy Gallery on December 7th, 1945 and the front and back cover of the *Scrapbook* itself).⁹⁴

In 2013, the book *Faits divers surréalistes* by Masao Suzuki was published suggesting the importance of scholarship in this genre for surrealism. The “fait divers,” a type of news story which is notable for reporting strange and sensationalist occurrences, is discussed as an important type of document within Surrealist work for its possibility in framing a “convulsive” relationship with the reader. This is in contrast to the idea that “fait divers” can offer “information in its totality”—an erroneous conclusion that Roland Barthes suggests is due to its problematic structure revealing an aberrant causality.⁹⁵ The same year, Henri Béhar also published an article entitled “André Breton et le grand fait divers,”⁹⁶ which discusses Breton’s penchant for these brief news stories with sensational themes, and wherein the *Scrapbook* is mentioned in scholarship for the first time. For Béhar, it was Breton’s surrealist aesthetic for life rather than art (“plutôt la vie que la littérature”) which must have encouraged his interest in the fait divers. As Béhar notes, the haphazard nature of reading these “current events” is analogous to the spontaneous and irreverent process of “spoken thought” (“*la pensée parlée*”) and automatic writing, where the speaker, in the course of their free digressions, would say or write a verbal item that would cause surprise and shock due to its unexpected juxtaposition of words and visual innuendo. According to Béhar, the scrapbook is thus an example of this surrealist aesthetic because of its inclusion of fait divers. In my detailed study of the *Scrapbook* here, I hope to illuminate other artistic principles at stake within what I see as a very visual piece of work,

⁹⁴ <http://www.andrebretton.fr/en/item/?GCOI=56600100374731>

⁹⁵ “Structure du fait divers” (1964)

⁹⁶ See Béhar in *Histoires Littéraires*, Dossier André Breton, ed. Henri Béhar. vol XIV, n. 53. Du Lérot: Paris, 2013. 47-58.

inclusive not only of “fait divers” and news clippings, but photographs, postcards and other ephemeral items. I thus present the scrapbook as a polyvalent text and an example of Breton’s artistic praxis. The work of the *Scrapbook* plays on verbal and visual content as well as an intentional layout which recalls Breton’s surrealist practice which seeks to exploit the creed “plutôt la *vie* que la littérature.” It holds connections between words, images and the placement of these items in an ensemble. Much like the procedure of metaphor and montage the signification within the scrapbook works in an a-temporal connection of similarity and substitution instead of narrative.⁹⁷ The elements depend on the spatial configuration of montage where co-existing realities are brought together in surprising and unforeseen ways. Breton was engaging with the world around him through various ephemeral documents framing them in a style that reflected his interests and attitude at that time.

4- Genealogy of the Scrapbook

The idea of a scrapbook – of gathering ephemera and fixing pieces or marking things into the pages of a book for later review or retrieval has a long history and parallels the modern act of placing objects in a collection within a museum (Ott 16). The basic principle is that within the organization and order of the placement, a system of information will be displayed which in turn helps the reader learn, remember and keep the information accessible for future readings.

For the early Greeks, this practice was already in place within the creation and use of “*koinoi topoi*” – or the exercise of using spatial memory– where places served as memory aids for information and knowledge. These “*topoi*” (the root of the word is “topic”) were committed to memory and thus a person could mentally revisit them to retrieve information, comfort or facts

⁹⁷ Drawing on the work of Roman Jakobson, and his fundamental essay on “The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles” (1956).

for public oratory. The idea that memory was essential to rhetoric was taken up by Cicero and Quintilian and taught within Quintilian's *Instituto Oratorio* (ca. 90 AD) during the Roman Empire.

Collections of objects in the Early Modern period, such as those heterogeneous assemblages of the *Wunderkammer*—or Cabinet of Curiosities—can also be seen as variations of “*koinoi topoi*” for learning and committing to memory information about the universe. Yet, with the invention of paper in 13th century Europe, and the 15th century printing press, spatial memory began to be committed to a very specific topographical practice within the object of a book. Instead of being committed to the mind, “*topoi*” were to be saved on the physical page.

The commonplace book, much like a scrapbook was used to collect and organize quotations to commit to memory, or as a resource for oratory and writing is widely known for its popularity in the early modern period but also has its roots in the ancient Greek and Roman practices previously mentioned. It is interesting to note in this context that the Latin word “*album*” means “white,” and is today most commonly known as an object which comes with blank pages, in which we place and save photographs or souvenirs, much like the scrapbook (Ott, 5).

It was this lineage of collecting information that laid the foundation for what would become the specific nature of the scrapbook. With the proliferation of cheap, colorful images available to the public in the late 18th and early 19th centuries—what can be categorized as “printed ephemera,” the public had access to not only text and image but a combination of both from the wide variety of newspapers, journals and magazines which circulated widely. The industrialization of media made the material possibility of the scrapbook feasible.

It was not until the late 19th century and specifically in the United States, that scrapbooks acquired their current name and contemporary meaning. In 1835, the use of scrapbooks was so common that a publication was born entitled *The Scrapbook* which described the hobby as keeping a blank book with pictures, newspaper clippings and the like for safekeeping. The scrapbook which Breton purchased was one created in this commercial trend: made in the USA, it was already entitled as such, ready to hold the items Breton found and collected.

5- Scholarship on Scrapbooks

As the field of literary studies expands to encompass non-traditional forms of literature, discussion of scrapbooks and ephemera is just beginning to take its place within serious scholarship. I am indebted to Katherine Ott, Susan Tucker and Patricia P. Buckler for their work on the American scrapbook, which has helped to shape my present understanding of the genre. Authors such as Susan Pearce and Susan Stewart have helped inform my analysis of Breton's *Scrapbook* as a theoretical object. While Pearce is a specialist of collections, and approaches such from the framework of a museum specialist, Stewart is a literary theorist, specifically looking at the scrapbook within a framework of desire and longing. I will take these ideas up later in my discussion. I also will mention here that Mary Ann Caws has done exceptional work on the surrealist text-image, as well as Katherine Conley on the visual nature of surrealist work—both providing the bridge in my study from scrapbooks in general, to this surrealist one.

II. Breton's Album Pages

1- Tracing André Breton's Layout Practice

The very nature of clipping and gluing the items into the first 15 pages of the *Scrapbook* shows a meditated reflection to keeping these things in an order. Yet, while retaining surrealist intention, the *Scrapbook's* layout moves away from previous artful techniques. Breton's earlier method of clipping and pasting suggests the celebrated surrealist method of montage and can be seen in specific loose album pages which Breton decorated himself and which I will explore in the next section. This archival material predates the *Scrapbook* and has been little studied. It reveals Breton's habit of collecting, organizing and artfully pasting ephemeral items onto album pages as early as 1929. However, Breton's technique seems to change by 1944, within the *Scrapbook*. While the method of artful montage is less pronounced, the very principle of reframing within the art of montage still lingers within a bolder statement about the origin of the *Scrapbook* itself. Because the earlier works and the *Scrapbook* all share the same medium upon which the ephemeral items are pasted and preserved (album pages) it seems worthy to note that a difference in layout can be observed.

Within the following section, I will explore Breton's early examples (c.1929) of *découpage* and montage in a study of loose album pages from Breton's personal collection (lots 5257 and 5258), in order to establish the origins of Breton's compositing technique. I then will move on to a discussion of how the *Scrapbook* is informed by, but also differs from this tradition.

2- Breton's Album Pages—Découpage and Montage

The fact that Breton kept his own personal albums and that some of these had a specific *mise-en-page* suggests that Breton practiced a method of collecting, clipping and placing items into the pages of an album before he began the *Scrapbook* in 1944. In Breton's collection inventory, multiple loose pages of album paper were found upon which Breton pasted artistic montages of photo clippings and paper figures. These loose album pages of Breton's collection have been little studied due to their incomplete nature, but in the context of Breton's *Scrapbook*, the study of such album pages lends perspective onto the very practice of collecting images and Breton's surrealist placement of them—in this example, specifically photographs.

Here, Breton's method can be situated within a surrealist practice not unlike the Exquisite Cadaver, the game of collaboratively creating a composition of images or words which when revealed after a series of singular additions from different hands, unearth unforeseen and surprising juxtapositions and connections within the composition as a whole. Such a practice was also inherent to the surrealist notion of "Convulsive Beauty"—which Breton wrote about at the end of his first novel, *Nadja*, as a new kind of beauty in opposition to an ideal beauty. This new beauty was visualized as "neither dynamic nor static" and therefore a celebration of what non-harmonic, fragmentary, shocking and base (Duwa 122). Breton's evocation of convulsive beauty in the novel as convulsive is paired with an anonymous "fait divers" about a lost plane whose last words of warning were cut off, therefore reaffirming the strange and fragmentary nature of life, and a beauty which is found in the interstices of life and death. The intended visual—the image of beauty being "convulsive or not at all"—plays on the idea of a double image and would be developed further in his later novel, *L'Amour fou* as something "veiled-erotic, fixed-

explosive, magic-circumstantial.” It is something which is neither whole nor separate but is located in between seeing both the particulars and the aggregate image overall.

In Lots 5257 and 5258 of Breton’s sold collection in 2003, surmised to be dated c. 1929, we find 3 loose pages of album paper dedicated to Suzanne Muzard in which there exists a specific and playful placement of clipped photographs. In Lot 5258 we find a montage of photomaton prints mixed with additional photos of Suzanne as a child, Suzanne with her sister, and Suzanne dressed in women’s traditional clothing and “coiffe” or headdress from Brittany (“à la Bretonne”) [Figure 6]. In reflecting on his choice of photos, Breton must have been bemused by his lover’s performance in these pictures of his own genealogical regional roots and origin of his name. Yet in compiling the montage Breton must have meditated on the theme of Suzanne’s last name too, for if we bring our focus to the larger image displayed by the placement of the photos we see that the total image seems to pay homage to Suzanne’s surname as the photos are placed in the form of a letter M—most probably in a comedic nod to the forebears of Muzard.



Figure 6 Album page, Lot 5258.



Figure 7 Album page, Lot 5257.

In Lot 5257, we find another playful montage featuring Suzanne [Figure 7]. There are 7 photomaton prints (4 of Suzanne by herself, 1 of Suzanne and Breton and 2 of Suzanne with Breton's dog, Melmoth) placed in a rectangular circle around 3 larger photos vertically placed in the middle of the page. The centered photo is an enlargement of Suzanne's face, which has been cut to a singular horizontal bandeau of her eyes. The upper photo reveals Breton, Suzanne and a group of other people together outside on a bench. The lower larger photo depicts Suzanne and Breton standing in front of a dark doorway to what seems to be a celebrated monument in Paris. However, the most striking element of this montage is of course, the magnified eyes, which are placed in the upper middle section of the page. The eyes are central to the overall image and thus appear to be a part of a face, of which the surrounding photos—especially the dark arched doorway below— gives the illusion of a morbidly gaping mouth. In Georges Sebbag's reading of this particular album page, he draws the connection between Suzanne's eyes and those of Nadja's in Breton's text-image work *Nadja*, yet there is no mention of the specificity of the layout nor the suggested illusive larger face as I interpret here in this study (56-57). The face, perhaps is none other than a version of a *memento mori* – a reminder of the insatiable desire and perhaps *vanitas* found at the heart of *Nadja* – that which Breton called “la seduction mentale” (109), is sought within the figure of a clairvoyant woman, now transposed as Suzanne. The fact that Breton's dog, Melmoth, also appears in this photomaton collage is curious – echoing a phrase from *Nadja*, within the section where the photomontage of her “yeux de fougère” appears: “Qui étions-nous devant la réalité, cette réalité que je sais maintenant couchée aux pieds de Nadja, comme un chien fourbe?” (111). In this album page, Melmoth, Breton's dog sits at the lower level of the collage, and on the lap of Suzanne harkening the outdated analogy that Breton

considered women to be the object of poetry, desire and therefore the liberty sought in surrealism typified as love.

The placement of the photos on to these album pages seem to follow Breton's early theoretical premise about the surrealist photo collage as expressed in *Surrealism and Painting*, where Breton suggests that the truly radical nature of Max Ernst's collages exist in the double nature of the image—that is that the elements of the collage which come to create a larger image are also independently things in themselves and which are rendered most effectively by the photograph (44). Recently theorized by Kate Conley in her book *Surrealist Ghostliness* (2013) – this “doubleness” relies on a visual paradigm which is “anamorphic” or the art of “seeing double.” Referencing the Baroque influence upon the surrealist movement and the classic example of Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, Conley describes the experience of this type of surrealist art as “doing a double take” – where for the spectator a second viewing of the same work reveals a kind of embedded “ghost” which virtually pops out of the picture, allowing us to reassess our first viewing and overall understanding of the work as a whole (xii).

In considering the way the eye moves around the aforementioned examples of Breton's compositions on these loose album pages, we see that the photomontages of Suzanne Muzard, contain such a “ghostly” quality which offers a “doubleness” to the viewer. In the first example, the layout reveals a looming “M” and in the second, the placement of images resembles a face, with a gaping mouth. The idea of the “ghost” harkening Holbein's anamorphic skull is particularly poignant when discussing the second composition considering the *memento-mori* inflected archway as a dark mouth. Beyond the application of Conley's “ghostliness” to our visual analysis we can talk about a discrepancy between the first and the second viewing of each

composition as a kind of irreverent “détournement” or displacement. In both album pages, an optical affect is created by the independently existing visual entities.

For Benjamin Buchloh, scholar of the avant-garde and conceptual art, surrealist montages can be seen to operate under a re-framing process. As explained by Buchloh the irreverent “reframing” of an object seeks to play with interference in its signification:

the inventors of the collage/montage techniques understood just as clearly that they performed operations on the pictorial or poetical signifying practice that ranged from the most subtle and minute interference in linguistic and representational functions to the most explicitly and powerfully programmatic propaganda activities (27-28).

In the examples of album pages showcasing Suzanne Muzard we seem to find representational and linguistic interference in both montages. Breton, in his use of *découpage* and montage was engaging in a layout technique that played with the linguistic and visual signifiers of his photographs. Buchloh’s analysis also extends to define a third kind of technique within montage – that of a “programmatic” (almost propagandic) kind of tension being created within the image, which I suggest functions on an ideological level. Breton also seemed to toy with this type of technique of “framing” in other album pages. In the next section we will discuss these other examples and discuss this third type of ideological framing as a potential model for how Breton conceived of his scrapbook.



Figure 8 Album page, Lot 5001.

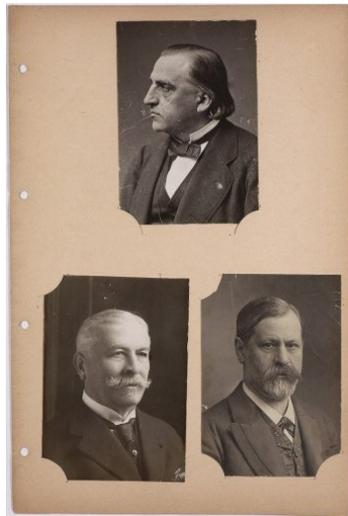


Figure 9 Album page, Lot 5002.

3- Negating the Traditional Photo Album

Within lots 5001 and 5002, of Breton's loose album pages, we find a number of portraits of the fathers of psychoanalysis (Charcot, Freud, Babinski) as well as other literary figures (Nerval, Hugo, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Maeterlinck and Stuart Merrill) affixed to 4 separate pages of album paper [Figures 8 and 9]. The placement of the photos on

these pages is linear and conventional and there is no known artistic placement involved in the display of the figures. Yet, while there is no obvious artful *découpage* layout on the page, there is perhaps a larger reference to the framework of the page—a specifically ironic one—albeit missing to our eye.

In 1924, the same year Breton published his first surrealist manifesto, a photomontage that resembled a page of a family photo album appeared in the first issue of the surrealist journal, *La Révolution surréaliste*. Yet what is figured is an *alternative* family photo album, one that shows the anarchist, Germaine Berton, as the center of the surrealist family—the mother and muse of the movement. The photomontage is structured like any other ordinary photo-album page with individual portraits organized on the sheet, side by side. But the composite reveals the central figure as Germaine Berton, a militant anarchist who in 1923 assassinated a political figure. Her trial was mediatized heavily in France and she became a kind of celebrity, her case taken up by the surrealists as one of a true revolutionary. Surrounding Berton are the faces of surrealists, and those authors and artists who inspired them. Some of the faces figured are: Apollinaire, Freud, Picasso, Rimbaud and Breton himself. At the bottom of the page is a quote from Charles Baudelaire: “La femme est l’être qui projette la plus grande ombre ou la plus grande lumière dans nos rêves.” Thus, while the photomontage holds the elements of a family album, it is really an homage to the radical politics of the surrealist movement and the idea of woman as muse which at this point in time figured an alternative maternal lineage in place of a paternal one. This composition then specifically plays on and ironizes the structure and idea of the 19th century family photograph album, a common cultural object of every bourgeois household which sought to recount the family tree in portraits of ancestors and their progeny. Subverting the layout of the common family album thus also ironically subverted the ideological

value of the album itself, playing with the notion that photo albums were a part of a larger, ideological framework—the socially accepted idea of a capitalist consumer society and the capitalistic nature of personal portraits. The surrealist practice of ironizing the object of the photo album can also be highlighted in the later well-known montage of the photomaton portraits of surrealists pictured around Magritte's *je ne vois pas la cache dans la forêt* (*La Revolution surréaliste*, n.12 15th of December, 1929) and Georges Bataille's *La figure humaine* in *Documents* (n. 4, 1929). Breton's loose album pages in this third lot therefore echo the practice of surrealist détournement of the photo album. While this third example lacks a double image as like we saw in the examples featuring Suzanne Muzard, the composition of the fathers of psychoanalysis and those of the 19th century poets within these pages are in discourse with the larger notion that photographic albums were bourgeois objects. As we turn to the scrapbook, another type of album, and culturally accepted commodity, we must keep this practice in mind.

4- Negating the American Scrapbook?

While photographic portraits encouraged the creation of family photo albums in 19th century Europe and America, the scrapbook was a different type of object. It was specifically American. It was not until the mid to late 19th century and specifically in the United States, that scrapbooks became known as such. In 1835, the use of scrapbooks was so common that a publication was born entitled *The Scrapbook* which described the hobby as keeping a blank book with pictures, newspaper clippings and the like for safekeeping. By the end of the 19th century, scrapbooks were highly commercialized and were available to purchase as a ready-made object in bookstores with the label of "Scrapbook" on the cover. The trend was so popular that even Mark Twain patented his own version of the scrapbook, with primed mucilage already on the

interior pages of the book. Much like wordpress or blogger.com today, the space of the scrapbook was already created—the landscape of the page ready to receive the owner’s selection and layout of photos and clippings.

What is specifically interesting about the trend of scrapbooking was that it became an educational and moral code for American society. The hobby became institutionalized in school curricula from the 1860s-1930’s as schoolteachers were instructed to teach their students how to make the books in order to promote art skills.⁹⁸ Moreover, this educational skill was not just seen as essential for child development, but something key to the creation of moral character. In 1880, the American author, E.W. Gurley, was well known for suggesting that the creation of a scrapbook was essential to promoting family harmony and solving problems of idleness and unfocused reading: “we all read, but are we all well informed? —No!” Gurley thus proposes that “we [should] read for a purpose, look for something and keep it when found and in no other form [could] it be so well preserved as in the pages of a *good scrapbook*” (Ott 9).

We can suppose that the specificity of having a scrapbook that was “MADE IN THE USA” titillated Breton’s surrealist instincts at the possibility of ironizing such a commercialized and institutionalized item,⁹⁹ such as the European photo album had been in previous surrealist experiments. Because the surrealists had a long running relationship with the procedure of

⁹⁸ This initiative came about much like John Locke’s commonplace book was institutionalized in 18th century England for schoolboys and statesmen. The practice of copying information within a process of “gathering and framing” became mandatory in school curricula.

⁹⁹ I have also considered that Breton was attracted to the scrapbook’s tradition of being a practice affiliated with children’s education and games. The surrealist pursuit was, after all, first cast in the “return to childhood” and an untainted imagination, which could “perceive all things with a momentary and extreme facility” (First *Manifesto*, 13). After Breton’s return to Paris, a young girl named Maguelonne, of French origins, living in the US, wrote to Breton about his views on art, and how she clipped out one of his essays on Picasso and pasted it into her scrapbook for school. Breton’s lengthy response must have been written in great amusement. (OC III, 938).

creating a tension between (or *détourning*) content from form, it is plausible that Breton would use the collected items within the scrapbook as a drawing board for the practice of negating an external framework, in order to trouble the very rationale behind such an organization of knowledge. If the traditional American scrapbook's usage was based on collecting clippings to "stay informed," or to set an order to information learned, then can Breton's scrapbook can be seen as a troubling of the American tradition which relied on a specific organization of information?

If we are to consider that Breton chose to begin his American scrapbook with his vacation to Canada, then this might very well be a possibility. There is not a single item from an American newspaper or about American life until page 8—and then the item seems sardonic, as it appears to be cartoonish survey of the American population who regularly attends church services. The item, placed next to a clipping of the patriotic French anthem of *Le Chant des Partisans*, becomes increasingly ironic when considering that the juxtaposition clearly illustrates a difference of opinion, and a difference in national concern. Breton's position seems clear—he is at odds with his country of exile. This is not surprising considering that at this time, the Allies were fighting silently amongst themselves, De Gaulle's politics incompatible with Roosevelt's. Thus, Breton's very American scrapbook starts *outside* of the United States, with the French-Canadian landscape of the Gaspésie coast, its waters, geological formations and birds.

5- Collecting and Reframing in Surrealist Theory

The theoretical principles by which we can read Breton's scrapbook as a negation of this external framework are present in the era of surrealist experimentation post-1933, after Breton proclaimed his disappointment with automatic writing in the essay, "le message automatique." In

1936, Breton wrote another essay, “Crisis of the Object,” which situated new surrealist art experiments as a “total revolution of the object” suggesting that the artistic development of surrealism lay in “solidified desires” or the manipulation and the creation of objects (dream-objects, found-objects, poem-objects etc.) (356-359). Basing his aesthetic argument off of the surrealist reading of the Hegelian subject-object relations, Breton describes the “object” as work of art that relies on a philosophical procedure, affirming the surrealist process as one that is realized in the experience of apprehending the object. Citing the work of Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst, Breton explains that the surrealist manipulation of the phenomenal world lies not only in the Duchampian “requalification of the object” within the context of a found object, and the “mutation of [its] role” by “détourning it from its ends by attributing it with a new name,” (359) but also lies in the procedure of showing the object in its previous state by which its new meaning takes on an *ambiguity* – an ambiguity which thus renders it irrational.”¹⁰⁰ This ambiguity is sought in itself for the consequential irrational tension created. However, the process does not end here, in ambiguous tension. What Breton describes next suggests that such a tension opens up a space—by which the viewer must then reconstruct a new reality with the present pieces given “reconstruire enfin de toutes pièces a partir d’éléments épars, pris dans le donné immédiate” (360). The surrealist procedure of détournement then, is one, which theoretically seeks to render the object as distanced (détourned) in relation to its original signifier(s), yet also asks for a reconstruction of a new object within the immediate reality. It is the forced negation of one thing for the creation of something else, in which a certain “individual liberty” is attained. This liberty holds creative potential, and is based on the rejection of a

¹⁰⁰ “[...] de le retenir en raison même du doute qui peut peser sur son affectation antérieure, de l’ambiguïté résultant de son conditionnement totalement ou partiellement irrationnel, qui entraîne la dignification par la trouvaille (objet trouvé) et laisse une marge appréciable à l’interprétation au besoin la plus active [...]” (360).

normative understanding of the object. Breton's philosophical-aesthetic principles illuminate the process of Breton's collecting the fragments of his North American, and specifically Canadian world into the beginning of his scrapbook.

III. Reading the Scrapbook

In the first part of this chapter I have given a description of the *Scrapbook* and in the second part, I have elaborated Breton's aesthetic of layout. I will now discuss at length the first 21 pages of the scrapbook, counting each side of a page as one page. These pages contain glued articles, photos and other ephemeral items. In this section, I am specifically exploring the material aspects of the *Scrapbook* and so I will discuss all items in their particular placement within the book. Recent studies of the scrapbook as discussed by Ott, cite Keith Smith's study of a similar type of book—the artist's book—to show that the two function in a similar way. Both the scrapbook and the artist's book depend on placement for meaning. Visual elements which are heterogeneous and do not appear to form what we may traditionally think of a system of knowledge, can, in fact portray one as “referral sets the order of viewing, binding maintains the order [and] turning the pages reveals the order” (12). In considering the *Scrapbook* as an example of Breton's artistic practice, I believe that keeping Smith's approach in mind is productive to my analysis. My intention in presenting the contents of the book is to shed light on Breton's process of collecting and displaying these items, and so I will focus on the pages that have been compiled. Indeed, there does seem to be a kind of organization of the items. I will thus attempt to draw connections between recurring subjects and themes. My engagement with layout then will focus on the *Scrapbook* keeping in mind the notion that the meaning of every item or

image selected has a relationship to its juxtaposing parts. While I do not seek to find a total narrative within the *Scrapbook* itself, I seek to illuminate the sense of certain sections, their pages and items, and their juxtapositions following Mary Ann Caw's idea that within surrealist art work, which plays on the visual and verbal together, we are able to read a certain "stress" which can be understood as a productive tension or interruption created by the "interference" of certain items. I embark on this task humbly, knowing that this archival object is subjected to my reading and "just as objects in exhibitions, the contents of scrapbooks can undergo double and triple readings: as themselves, as fragments on a page and as objects related to whatever the viewer brings to them" (16).

My analysis of the compiled pages of the *Scrapbook* shows that we can demarcate three sections: the first (pages 1-6) deals with the natural landscape of the Canadian Gaspésie coast, revealing an interest in the geological wonders of agate stones and the Rock of Percé, as well as a pointed attention to the life of the seabirds. The second section (pages 7-11) comments on the differing French and American sentiments about the war and reveals Breton's attitude as a Frenchman in exile. The third and last section (pages 11-21) conveys a strong interest in surrealist compatriots who were living in New York or France.

Part 1– The Natural Wonders of the Gaspésie: Agate Stones, the Rock of Percé and the Reproduction of Seabirds

The first pages of the *Scrapbook* are devoted to Breton and Elisa's stay in the region of the Gaspésie, during their séjour in Canada from the 20th of August to the 21st of September 1944. On pages 3 and 5 we find two articles from the French-Canadian publication, *La Patrie*, featuring a weekly column written by Eugene Stucker about the wondrous features of the Gaspé

region. Each article discusses in essay-style the historical and geological features of some of the most famous landmarks in this area. The first article pasted into the scrapbook, is about the geological process and production of Agate stones and therefore why people come to the shores of Percé to look for and collect the stones. The second article is about the formidable Percé Rock, and the geological history of its particular formation and slow deterioration.

Considering that Breton carefully cut out all pieces of each article (which seem to have appeared on different pages of the paper) and rearranged them in order onto each page, it seems that he wished to preserve the entirety of each text, including the date and images. Each article thus appears as a singular document within the scrapbook, even though its original context has been lost.



Figure 10 First item, Page 3 of the Scrapbook.

Agates

The first article is entitled, “les Agates de Percé: matière d’une nouvelle industrie locale” and is dated from Sunday the 3rd, September 1944 [Figure 10]. The article remains in pristine condition—complete with two printed photographs of children looking for agates on the shores of Percé: one photograph pictures two boys with great rock of Percé in the background and one is a close-up of two girls squatting front of the water’s edge carefully sorting through the pebbles and the rocks.

The content of the article discusses the geological formation of the island of Bonaventure and explains the processes of volcanic activity as causing the creation of polished and colored Agate rocks which “locals and tourists covet.” The article therefore focuses on the natural resource of Agate stones that surface on the shores of Percé. At times, the style of the writing seems slightly prosaic and seems to be more of an essay with novelistic details. The formation of the rocks is described as one of the mysteries of the earth. Stucker uses the metaphor of the “book” of history in which human kind’s relationship with the stones fits into the earliest of chapters:

Des les premières pages de l’histoire humaine, les agates firent l’objet d’industries fort régulatrices. Les Hébreux ornèrent de ces pierres les vêtements des grands prêtres. Les Babyloniens firent graver leurs initiales en creux, et les Romains donnèrent au monde les camées sculptés en relief. Les scarabées mystiques de l’ancienne Egypte furent souvent taillés dans des agates. Parmi les trésors dont se glorifient certaines nations, il y a celui qui est conserve au musée national. Le “grand camée de France” un agate sardonix, a

cinq couches, et d'extraordinaires dimensions: douze pouces sur dix. Depuis l'antiquité, toutes les nations se sont efforcées d'accumuler de telles trésors [...]

The article discusses human interaction with the material agate stone as a spiritual and ritualistic relationship—one that reaches from an individual to communal level where the end result of such a relationship is that nations are motivated to “accumulate such treasures”—exemplified in the specifically unique “Grand Camée de France” conserved in the National Museum.

This article begins the collection of the *Scrapbook* and presents the act of collecting agates as a specifically valuable activity, and one that is inherent to the very landscape of the Gaspé coast and its natural resource of Agates. Before traveling to the Gaspésie, Breton already held an interest in Agate stones and wrote about them as early as 1924.¹⁰¹ It seems that Breton's interest in the stone increased significantly while vacationing in Sainte-Agathe and the act of collecting it would continue long after having returned to France.¹⁰² Placing this article as the first item in the *Scrapbook* suggests the importance of the stones and thus the reality of collecting the stones—which was part of his daily routine with Elisa while sojourning on the coast.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Breton's interest in agate stones can be traced back to the early work of *Poisson soluble* and one unpublished page from April of 1924 which relates a curious romantic adventure of an agate (sexually personified as a female character) and the narrator (as the male observer). The story begins with “The agate came to take me at two o'clock. She looked nervous and her rose and blue veins only gave me the same thoughts I always had. The agate lay out on the divan with a nonchalant air...she looked at me for awhile. I was naked until the belt [...].” See Sebbag: Catalogue de l'exposition *La Maison de Verre*, 82.

¹⁰² Breton would later collect agate stones from the riverbeds in the Lot region of France, near the country house he would acquire with Elisa in 1950 at Saint cirq la Popie.

¹⁰³ See Béhar 2005 (*André Breton: le grand indésirable*). This fact was related by Elisa, and documented by Anna Balakian. 407.

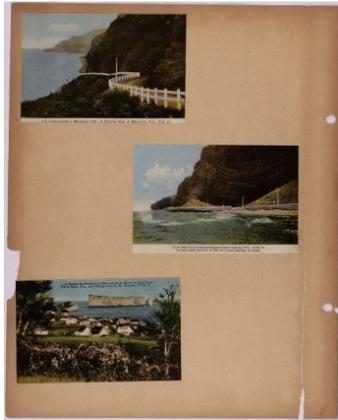


Figure 11 Page 4 of the Scrapbook.

Affixed to the next page (p. 4) we find three colored scenic post cards of the Gaspé coast, which illustrate to some extent the information we have just read in the first article [Figure 11]. Explanatory headlines written in both French and English are printed on each card. Starting from the top they read: Card 1: “vue émouvante à Marsouins P.O. – A thrilling View at Marsouins, P.O. – P.B. 42”; Card 2: “Curve after curve along the Rugged Gaspé Highway, P.Q. – G. M. 17, Tournant après Tournant, le long de la route escarpée, de Gaspé”; Card 3: “Le Rocher de Percé et la ville, vue de la colline du Sud-Ouest. Percé Rock, P.Q., and Village from S.W. Hillside. – p.W. 5.”

The visual layout of this page creates an effect on the eye that is quite interesting. The images and placement of the cards evoke the very subject matter illustrated on the cards themselves. The first card, showing a “thrilling view” is placed on the far left hand side of the page while the second showing “curve after curve” is offset, placed underneath the first on the right-hand side. The third and last card, which also holds the most visually interesting image of

“Percé rock and the town seen from the hill on the west” repeats the placement of the first card underneath the second. The placement of the cards leads the eye in a snaking line which starts at the top and goes to the bottom, mimicking the very vision of a road which switches back and forth, following the formation of the coast. Moreover, while the first two cards picture only the coastline, the third shows the Percé Rock in the distance. Therefore, the placement of the cards, and the images themselves seem to mimic a trip whose movement wraps around the coast, finishing with the last and most breathtaking view of the Percé Rock in the distance—Breton’s destination and place of séjour. The layout, while not specifically surrealist in design, does seem to hold an artistic and reflective air about it: it seeks a re-representation of the road trip itself, tracing the lines that the traveler would have had to take to arrive at the town of Percé.



Figure 12 Panorama of Percé Rock, Taped between pages 4 and 5 in the Scrapbook.

The Rock of Percé

Next, taped into the binding between two pages is an individual item, a panoramic photograph of the Percé Rock formation, which we just saw in Card 3 of preceding page (Page 4) [Figure 12]. This shot is closer, revealing the changes and incongruities of the rock formation,

showing the details and immensity of its form. Taken from what seems to be on the water, the edge of a boat, or the very edge of the shore, the photograph reveals other boats and the ocean within the frame. The provenance of the photo is unknown but it is possible that Elisa Breton was the photographer. Her series of prints (as found within the 2003 itemization of the collection for auction) are in the style of this photograph. However, the photograph is panoramic, and would be the only panoramic shot within Elisa's series. The photograph therefore could have also been bought at a local tourist shop.



Figure 13 Page 5 of the Scrapbook.

The placement of this particular photograph has meaning in its repetition, as the subject matter of the next page is the Percé Rock—explained in detail within the article “Le Rocher Percé: Joyau de la Gaspésie” by Eugene Stucker, taken from same newspaper as Page 3: *La Patrie*, dated Dimanche, 10 septembre 1944 [Figure 13]. The article, also written in essay style

describes the rock as a monument, which stands as a marvel to all— from scientists to poets. The first sentences read:

Depuis nombre d'années, bien des géologues, des littérateurs et des artistes ont usé leurs vocabulaires pour dépeindre ce tableau fantastique qu'est la Gaspésie, mais le sujet est loin d'être épuisé. Il est surtout certains aspects, tel que le Rocher Percé, devant lesquels la plume et le pinceau s'avouent impuissants.

The article then discusses the rock's features, and its progressive deterioration into the sea. Two photographs, illustrate the two specific arch formations of the Percé rock. The first photograph features an arch still intact and the caption from it reads: "Voici comment le Rocher Percé est ... percé. L'arche a une hauteur de 60 pieds. Son creusage a été effectué par la poussée des vagues qui, y rencontrant de la pierre moins résistante, ont fini par la désagréger et par 'percer' le Rocher de part en part." The second photograph features a collapsed arch and the caption reads: "Cette vue, prise de l'est à l'ouest, fait voir à gauche le bloc qui est séparé de la masse principale du Rocher. La séparation n'était qu'une arche il y a un siècle. Mais le haut de l'arche est tombé le 17 juin 1845." The article, too long to paste onto one page, continues to page 6 where the last section is affixed to the top left-hand side of the page. Its subtitle, "vrai musée de fossiles marins" announces the subject of the last two paragraphs which discuss the fact that the rock contains thousands of fossils of petrified marine animals; "dans chaque tonne de pierre, on peut trouver un nombre incalculable de fossiles; tellement qu'on peut affirmer qu'au bas mot le Rocher Percé contient 300,000,000 d'animaux marins pétrifiés."



Figure 14 Page 6 of the Scrapbook.

The Reproduction of Seabirds

Affixed on this page are four images which seem to illustrate the article, and its conclusion [Figure 14]. The first photograph, placed directly to the right side of article features the Percé rock (again from what seems to be the hull of a boat) and in the second, third and fourth photographs we see seabirds—in particular, gannets. While the article may not have specifically described the fossilization of seabirds, these animals could very well be included in the millions that decay on the rock's surface, becoming part of formation. Yet what is most curious is the allusion to the myriad number of animals fossilized in the article, and the mass of seabirds illustrated here. The central two photographs reveal this multitude of birds. Moreover, the middle two photographs double each other, repeating the same subject and hyperbolizing the number of birds we see. While the two photographs are not identical, they are of the exact same

subject and point of view. The image is taken from what seems to be the staggering sides of the Percé rock itself. There is also an interesting effect that takes place in seeing the photos side by side, the left in black and white and the right in color. The theme of fossilization, the cycle of life and death seems to be reiterated here in the repetition of subject in black and white, then in color. The color photograph symbolizing the life of the birds before their impending fossilization. The last and bottom photo is a close-up of the gannets.

Part 2- The Irony of War and Peace: Le Chant des Partisans/ A Survey of U.S. Public Opinion, the Ghost Town of St-Georges de Val-Jalbert, and De Gaulle vs. Roosevelt

In the next section, Breton changes his focus to the world at large, and his confreres back in Europe while reflecting on the impending end of the war and his place of exile in North America. On the next page, we see a striking combination of two newspaper/ magazine clippings. The sources and exact dates of these clippings are unknown, but fit into the context of the end of the war in 1944.

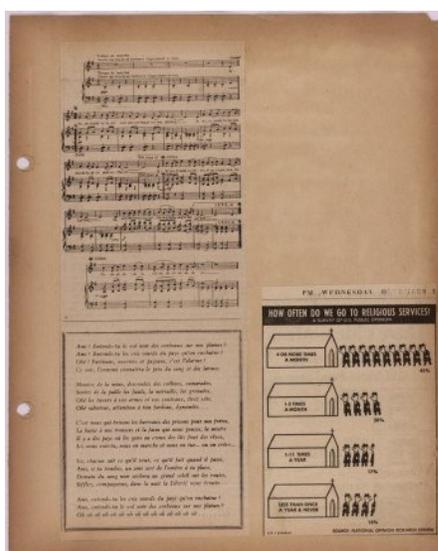


Figure 15 Page 7 of the Scrapbook.

Le Chant des Partisans/ A Survey of U.S. Public Opinion

On the left hand side of the page, we see a piece of music [Figure 15]. The musical score is accompanied with the lyrics written in French, and while there is no title, it was easy to find out that this song was none other than “Le Chant des Partisans” a famous WWII song, written in 1943, for the French resistance. The lyrics revolve around the idea of a life or death struggle for national liberation and carry elements of a communist political message. The song, clipped in its entirety must have been cut out of a French publication. The item placed next to the song is in English, from an American publication and has nothing to do with the song or the French liberation but rather features a domestic interest in the attendance of churchgoers. The clipping features a survey illustration of men walking into a Christian church. It reads at the top: “How often do we go to religious services? A survey of U.S. Public Opinion.” Percentages are listed below with 45 % at 4 or more times a month; 20% being 1-3 times a month; 17% being 1-11 times a year and 18% being less than once a year or never. Overall, the survey shows that the majority does not attend church services (those being Christian) regularly. Paired with the Chant des Partisans, these two items offer a disconnect. Breton perhaps wanted to convey the gap between the secular slant of rallying song of the battlefield—a song concerned with the liberation and freedom of mankind—and the specific domestic concern with the American population attending church service succinctly illustrated by the ascending or descending number of little figures of men marching into or out of a church (whose denomination and faith is specifically of one order—Christian). Juxtaposing these two items side by side with the knowledge that Breton was atheist, seems to offer up a sense of curt irony, one that scoffs at the American concern for the religious. What makes the juxtaposition so surprising is that while the song seems to represent the tumult and sacrifice of the Free French against the Nazis, and thus the heroic

French struggle in general, the number of small cartoon men walking into a church door illustrates the Americans.¹⁰⁴



Figure 16 Page 8 of the Scrapbook.

The Ghost Town of St-Georges de Val-Jalbert

In the following two pages we travel back to the Canadian landscape. After considering the disconnect between French patriotism and American religiosity, we come across what seems to be an out-of-place story about a lost city in the area of French Canada called lac Saint-Jean. Pages 8 – 9 of the scrapbook hold the newspaper article entitled “La nature envahit une ville fantôme du lac Saint-Jean. Une cité morte garde ses rues et ses maisons désertes depuis 1927.” At the top of page 8 the title and header from the newspaper page is cut and pasted in 6 separate

¹⁰⁴ Symbolized by a cross, and thus uniquely Christian.

lines as to preserve source and origin: from page “10” of “Le Petit Journal, 24 Septembre 1944.” Peribonca, Lac-St-Jean, 23. – (Spécial au Petit Journal par Phyl LaFerrière). The subject heading reads: “Il existe quelque part au lac St-Jean, à mi-chemin entre Chambord et Roberval, une petite ville abandonnée, une cité morte, où depuis 1927 n’habite âme qui vive. Cette ville s’appelait autrefois St-Georges de Val-Jalbert.” The article thus recounts the history of a ghost town once full of life, now deserted. As described in the article, finding the town is a mysterious and surprising happenstance occurrence of the author’s own wanderings in the forest. Thus the introduction to the article bears surrealist elements to which Breton was most certainly a bemused witness, attracted by the fairy-tale-like story of such a place:

Le hasard d’une promenade le long de la rivière Ouitchoquan (nom sauvage qui signifie petite rivière ou l’eau tourbillon) laquelle se jette dans le lac Saint Jean, me conduisait récemment a une barrière défendant l’accès d’une avenue mystérieuse bordée de cèdres, de sapins, d’épinettes et autres essences propres a la région... dans le lointain, on apercevait des maisons dont les toits émergeaient ça et là jusqu’au pied d’une montagne barrant l’horizon. Intrigué par le silence... j’allais m’engager dans cet étrange jardin lorsque, surgissant tout a coup devant moi un homme dont je n’avais pas soupçonné la présence me barre soudain la route [...]

Similar to the surrealist stories which recount the experience of “objective chance” or situations of coincidence, this story also features a narrative which revels in the serendipitous encounter of a quasi-mythical town. Page 8 features two photographs: one of the man who guards this town, the “M. J.- Arthur Simard, que voici, est le gardien de la cité morte de Val-Jalbert. Il est chargé

de prévenir la destruction, par les vandales, de cette ville abandonnée,” and the second of old school which reads: “Voici l’école St. Georges telle qu’elle nous apparaît aujourd’hui dans son grand état d’abandon. Avant sa fermeture en 1927. Cette institution comptait huit classes et recevait plus de trois cents élèves. On peut encore juger de l’aspect effrayant que présentât cet immeuble, il y a dix-sept ans. On page 9 we find the continuation and end of the article along with four photograph illustrations. The three headers read: (first top photo which comprises two images):

1. Voici l’aspect que présentent deux rues désertes de la cité morte. A gauche, nous apercevons le côté nord de la rue Dubuc. A droite, c’est la rue St. Georges. Nous y remarquons à gauche l’hôtel abandonné et, a droite (au premier plan), le bureau de poste, Les herbes et les fleurs sauvages ont envahi ces avenues qui, avant 1927, bourdonnaient d’activité. Aujourd’hui, le silence et le mystère règnent sur cette ville abandonnée et qui se meurt sous les intempéries des saisons.
2. Cette photo nous fait voir l’ancien moulin de Val-Jalbert qui employait jadis plusieurs centaines d’ouvriers et de techniciens. On aperçoit aussi la magnifique chute Ouitchouan, d’une hauteur de 210 pieds, dont les eaux alimentaient l’usine de pulpe aujourd’hui délaissée.
3. Le monument apparaissant ici dans un charmant décor champêtre n’est autre que la statue de saint Georges, qui se dresse encore là ou, il y a dix-sept ans, se trouvait la place de l’église.

What is a story about a ghost town in Canada doing in between pages dedicated to items that symbolize the Allies at war? Does it reflect Breton's ironic sentiment, a reflection of extricating himself from all the tumult, vacationing in the hinterlands of the Canadian landscape? The reader of these pages can sense that Breton's place is one of privilege and deceit; his appreciation for his retreat to the Gaspé seems to be mixed with disdain for choosing such an isolating place.



Figure 17 Page 10 of the Scrapbook.

De Gaulle vs. Roosevelt

On page 10 we return to the ending of WWII, with an article on Roosevelt and De Gaulle [Figure 17]. The article is clipped out and pasted onto the page in its entirety along with the header which gives the title and author of the piece: “Deux Hommes entre les Hommes: Roosevelt et De Gaulle par Georges Duthuit.” Handwritten by Breton for reference in upper right

corner in blue pencil, we read that the source of the article is the newspaper, *France-Amérique*, a French American publication founded by expatriates during 1943 in New York.¹⁰⁵ Breton also included the date of this particular paper, printed on “2 juillet 1944” in blue pencil. In addition to the origin of the article, Breton made quite a few markings on the page: he emphatically marked two exclamation points on each side of this header with blue pencil and underlined in red pencil certain words and sentences within the article itself. Clearly, Breton found this article an important piece on the French sentiment towards De Gaulle, and the complications that he had endured with Roosevelt leading up to D day, but which were now somewhat appeased, the two men being reconciled at the end of the war.¹⁰⁶ Breton’s underlined words, phrases and sentences include some of the most zealous language of the article in its description of De Gaulle which is more a laudatory essay on the leader than a discussion of the two Ally heads, painting the former in the role of an unequivocal hero, an Apollo of the 20th century. Breton underlined Duthuit’s portrait of De Gaulle as being an “officier bien noté” who later became a force “incarnée.” For the French, “partout de Gaulle est le premier” as he was “la voix du génie” during the war. Breton also underlined “astres”; “père” “frères” in a section which describes De Gaulle as a quasi-mythic visionary who foretold the future of France, perhaps recalling Churchill’s early comment that De Gaulle, in 1940 was “a man of destiny”—as he proposed that De Gaulle would be the one to save France from the Nazis.¹⁰⁷ Accordingly, a description of De Gaulle’s wartime feats as the truth and light of history are also underlined: “Il a fait la vérité. C’est cela le génie. Il

¹⁰⁵ Founded in 1943 by World War II France Libre exiles in New York, *France-Amérique* became the international weekly edition of the French daily newspaper *Le Figaro* in the 1960s.

¹⁰⁶ See Simon Berthon.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

y a des instants d'illumination qui éclairent la suite des temps.” Indeed, De Gaulle is presented as a great orator, for Duthuit’s article describes him and his words as legendary as he is also described as a “guerrier-poète.” Roosevelt is mentioned two-thirds through the article and while he is praised at times, a critique of his politics is scathing, couched in metaphors of domination. The French people are portrayed as those who greatly suffered and in particular, the “exiles” are those who were in the “galleyes of Octavian.” The last section of the article extends beyond the page on the lower right hand corner and must be flipped down to read. I have transcribed it here, as it was not included for digitization in the catalogue, nor Breton website: speaking of De Gaulle, and the Allies withholding of him in London: “... le maintenir dans la ligne shakespearienne, pendant que les villages de la Normandie flambent, a débarqué d’un navire de guerre pour un tour de visite sur un plage de son pays.” This last line thus summarizes what the first line criticizes, which is that De Gaulle was held hostage by the Allies during the D day invasion for fear that he would not comply with the plan created by Roosevelt and Churchill.

Part 3 – Reuniting the Surrealists: Aragon, Dali, Picasso, Miró, Duchamp, Tanguy, Cornell,
Ernst– a Portrait of André Breton

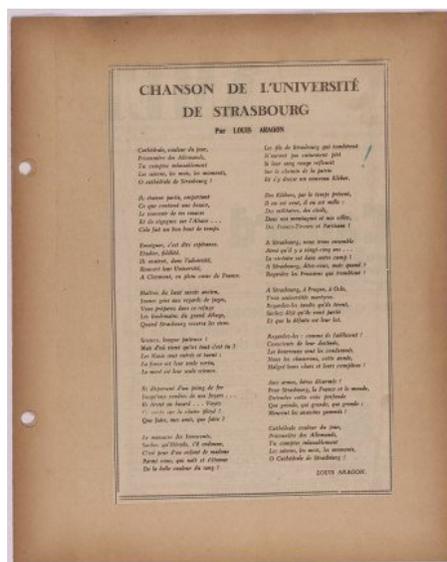


Figure 18 Page 11 of the Scrapbook.

Louis Aragon

The next few pages (11-13) focus on the poet Louis Aragon, a former surrealist. Aragon met Breton in 1917 during their time at the Val-de-Grâce hospital in Paris while they were medical students. Together, they would be at the helm of surrealism in 1924, but later grow apart due to political disagreements. Aragon left the group in 1932.¹⁰⁸ These few pages illustrate Breton's continued interest in Aragon, his writing and his literary and political views despite their separation and disagreements. Centered on page 11 is one of Aragon's most well known

¹⁰⁸ See entry "Aragon, Louis" in the Dictionary of Surrealism, ed. Henri Béhar. 2012. Breton's relationship with Aragon ended due to their different political alignments within communism.

wartime poems, the “Chanson de l’Université de Strasbourg” [Figure 18]. On pages 12 and 13 we find articles on the subject of Aragon’s clash with André Gide.

The source of the publication is unknown, but it can be surmised that Breton found it in a newspaper or a weekly journal because of the newsprint markings we can see shadowing the back of the page. Breton did not write the date nor origin of this found clipping. The poem, “Chanson de l’Université de Strasbourg” was published in a collection of his poems at the end of 1944, entitled *La Diane Française*. It is possible that he had already read the poem or knew of it, and now, upon finding it published in a periodical had cut it out for safekeeping in his scrapbook. However, André Breton’s handwriting does make an appearance on this item: an emphatic exclamation point (as we saw in the last item on the title header for the article on Roosevelt and De Gaulle) in blue crayon to the right of the following stanza:

Les fils de Strasbourg qui tombèrent
N’auront pas vainement péri
Si leur sang rouge refleurit
Sur le chemin de la patrie
Et s’adresse un nouveau Kléber.

The whole of the poem lays witness to the violent Nazi occupation of Strasbourg, and the unfortunate series of events that led to the takeover of the French university. Written as a patriotic ode, the poem begins with a vision of the city’s center and heart of community—the cathedral—that has been a prisoner of the German forces. The next few stanzas then give an account of the fall of the French university—of the loss of education equated with hope and

scholarship equated with loyalty (“Enseigner, c’est dire espérance, / Etudier, fidélité”), which in turn was replaced with the Nazi’s “one and only science of death” (“La mort est leur seule science”). The next few stanzas call for the strengthening of the French military force and a renewed hope for the future of France and the world at large (“aux armes, héros désarmés!/ Pour Strasbourg, la France et le monde,/ Entendez cette voix profonde ...”). Breton’s marked stanza comes at the beginning of this call for arms—and specifically illustrates a death-for-life cycle morality illustrated in the falling of “the sons of Strasbourg” for the making of a new hero; their blood shed for the rising of a new Prometheus come to save the day—“un nouveau *Kléber*.” Aragon is referring to Jean-Baptiste Kléber, the Napoleonic general, who within the following stanza, serves as a mythical model to which all the free French should aspire: “Des Klébers, par le temps présent, / Il en est cent, il en est mille:/ Des militaires, des civils, / Dans nos montagnes et nos villes, / Des Francs-Tireurs et Partisans!” Aragon’s poem thus seems to draw an analogy between the struggle the French experienced within the Napoleonic wars and WWII, calling for the people to rise up together, in place of singular war hero of yesteryear. No doubt, we can feel the communist sentiment shifting beneath the radical Nationalism mythologized on the surface of this poem.



Figure 19 Page 12 of the Scrapbook.

Aragon vs. Gide

The next page (p.12) holds one article pasted into the upper left hand corner, with no annotation of the original source or date of publication (however, Aragon does mention within the article that he is writing exactly one month and two days after the end of the war) [Figure 19]. This article is an editorial of Aragon's strident commentary on Gide's rebuttal to his first letter that presumably condemned him of being a Nazi collaborator within a Parisian publication, and sought to have him withdrawn from the publication. In this editorial commentary Aragon responds to his critics, explaining his judgment of Gide. Aragon reviews certain claims made against him and gives reason why Gide should be condemned. Indeed, Aragon makes a good case and cites many outlandish (and what could very well be read as fascistic), immoral and Nazi-sympathetic remarks made by Gide. Towards the end of the commentary, Aragon cites Gide saying, "Oppression can't but help the best thinkers [...] creating an excessive need for liberty." Aragon then responds with scathing irony "*Long life oppressed thought!*" and asks his

readers to consider the gravity of such a remark: “What of you, those of Auschwitz, what do you say of Monsieur Gide’s virtue and free spirit?”¹⁰⁹

On page 13, we see a continuation of Breton’s interest in this particular affair. The first of two articles, pasted side by side, reads “Quand M. Aragon...” and is a summary of confrontation between Aragon and Gide that we have just read of in the preceding article. Written by Félicien Mondor, this article makes note of all the publications implicated in this ugly volley between the two great writers, and with great humor. Mondor comments “Aragon basically asked for Gide’s head on a plate” and that he needed “a good spanking.” While his portrayal of both authors is comical, Aragon is in the spotlight and does not escape pithy criticism: “Aragon has said that ‘In French, the verb *faire* (‘to make’) means *chier* (‘to shit’)’.”

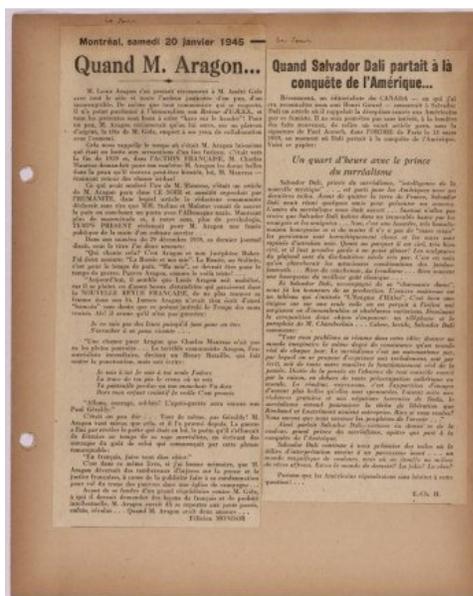


Figure 20 Page 13 of the Scrapbook.

¹⁰⁹ My translation.

Salvador Dali

The second article, written by de E.-Ch. H. pasted to the right of this one is entitled “Quand Salvador Dali partait à la conquête de l’Amérique” and states that “in light of recent events by which Dali has deceived the American public, we reprint here an article published in 1939, which recounts an interview with the artist when he first came to America” [Figure 20]. A section of the interview then is pasted below and is subtitled “Un quart d’heure avec le prince du surréalisme.” The interview, which took place in Paris, recounts “how the artist who seems eccentric actually lives with quite formal and conservative taste within his apartment.” It also mentions his commentary on his new work, entitled “L’énigme d’Hitler,” which illustrates a telephone and the umbrella of Mr. Chamberlain. Dali explains with an almost verbatim account of the surrealist image from the Manifesto giving the explanation of automatism in his paintings creating images that are more “beautiful as they are more spontaneous.”

Both of these articles are annotated to be originating from the paper *Le Jour*, and seem to be both dated by the header “Montréal, samedi 20 janvier 1945.” As both the articles are about former surrealist compatriots, it seems as if Breton was trying to regroup his old friends within his scrapbook—gathering news about their most current activities, opinions, pieces of work within the publications he found in North America.

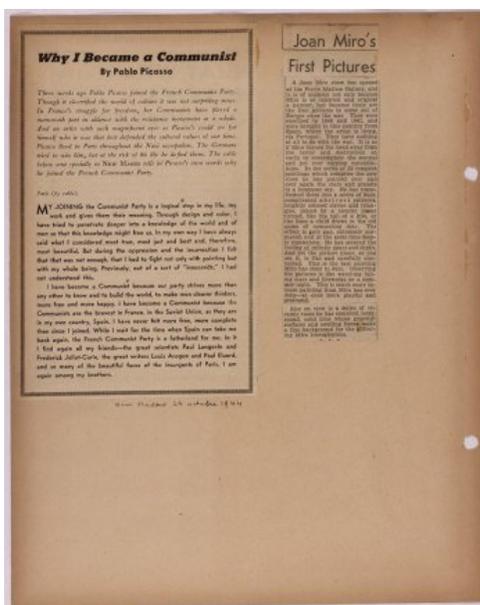


Figure 21 Page 14 of the Scrapbook.

Pablo Picasso

This grouping extends to page 14, where we see two short articles side by side – the one on the left about Pablo Picasso decision to join the communist party and the one on the right about Joan Miró and his “first pictures” after the war [Figure 21]. “Why I Became a Communist” is annotated by Breton in the lower right hand corner to be from the publication, *New Masses*, dated the 24th October, 1944. Prefaced as a cable from Picasso to the press, we read Picasso’s own words as he explains that beyond his art, joining the communist party was a way to “fight with his whole being.” At the end of the missive, he writes that it is within communism that he finds his brotherhood (citing Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard), especially outside of Spain, his home country.

Joan Miró

The article on the right is entitled “Joan Miró’s First Pictures” and is not annotated. The origin and the date is unknown, and the print and font of the article do not resemble that of the *New Masses*. We can surmise it is from a different publication altogether. This small article celebrates the “first pictures” out of Europe—Miró’s tableaus created during the war now reaching the United States and showing at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. The article describes these works as being colorful, beautiful and seemingly very unwarlike—as if Miró “had turned his head away from the terror and destruction on earth to contemplate the eternal and yet ever varying constellations.”

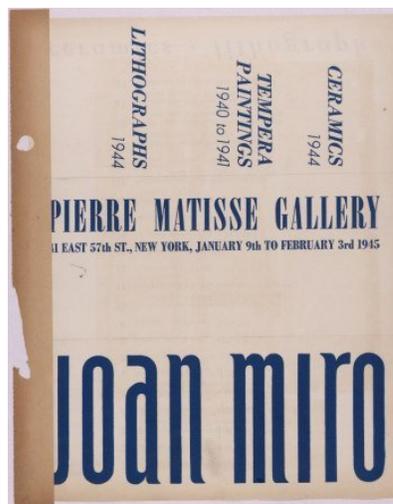


Figure 22 Page 15 of the Scrapbook.

This article works as a preface to the next pages, (15-16) and the actual exhibit brochure from the Pierre Matisse Gallery [Figure 22]. Listing 22 works from Miró, the two-page brochure reads that on East 57th st., in New York on January 9th-February 3rd, 1945, Miró’s Ceramics

(1944); *Tempera Paintings* (1940-1941) and his *Lithographs* (1944) were exhibited. We can surmise that Breton got the chance to go, and visit the exhibit himself.

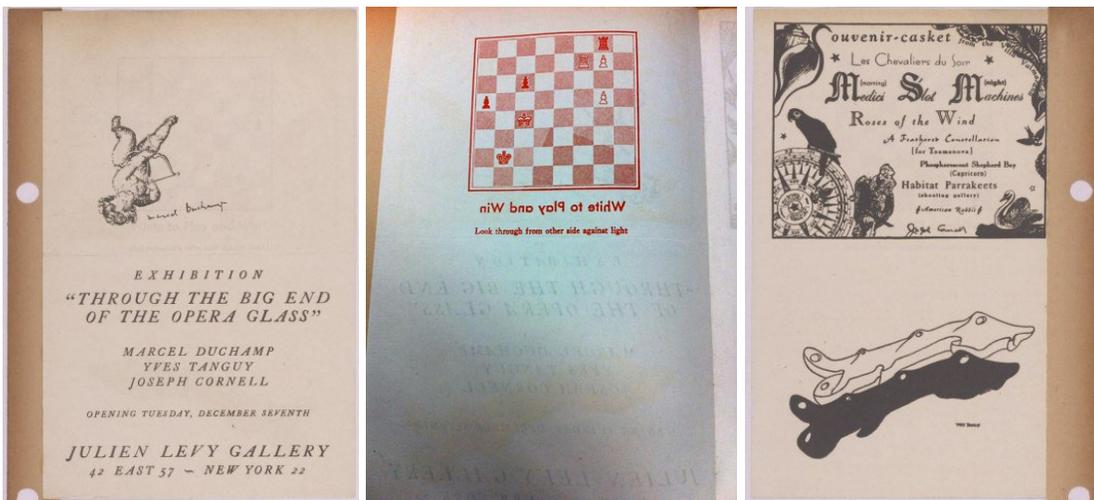


Figure 23 Page 19 of the Scrapbook.

Figure 24 Page 20 of the Scrapbook

Duchamp, Tanguy and Cornell: "Through the Big End of the Opera Glass"

For purposes of continuity I will skip pages 17-18, and come back to them after discussing pages 19-21, which illustrate another art exhibit in New York, which we can assume Breton attended. The exhibit brochure is taped to pages 19-20 in a way which allows the brochure to be seen from all sides as it is itself a small work of art, designed and conceived by Marcel Duchamp, one of the artists exhibited in the tri-artist show (along with Joseph Cornell and Yves Tanguy) [Figures 23 and 24]. I found that the brochure was to be folded in half, although it is not represented as such in Breton's scrapbook—probably for the case of preserving the announcement in the best way possible. This is apparent as the wording changes from side to side, and must be manipulated to read right to left. On the first page we see that the title of the

exhibition was “Through the Big End of the Opera Glass.” A play on Lewis Carroll’s “Through the Looking Glass,” it has been noted by Francis Naumann that Duchamp had been playing with Carroll’s idea of the looking glass for sometime.¹¹⁰ Upon opening the brochure, we find a copy of a printed montage of the title’s of Cornell’s works, with various whimsical fonts and images—such as a shell, a parrot, a compass, a swan and other parts of various constellations along with Cornell’s signature at the lower center of the page. Underneath this, we find a copy of one of Yves Tanguy’s biomorphic forms, a shadow that rises up and overlaps on top of the three-dimensional white form above it. The curious aspect about this announcement is Duchamp’s personal contribution to his name, which is a single cupid-cherub figure that he drew in ink and pen and placed upside-down on the first page, pointing its arrow at an unspecified target. Upon opening the brochure, we see that there is a visual pun at work. A red chessboard is shown on the other side of the page, with the words “Look through from the other side against the light” and with backward lettering above, to be read *through* the page showing the cupid. Upon looking again at the first page, holding the paper up to the light we can see that the cupid is indeed superimposed on the chessboard, seemingly pointing at a direction on the board. Here we can also read the message through the page “White to Play and Win”—therefore completing the mystery and setting up the rules of the game for the viewer. Francis Naumann has done in-depth research to the actual sequence of chess plays that can be made, from the starting point that Duchamp has given us in this image but has found that none can result in the “White to win” that Duchamp predicted and specified. He has thus suggested that it is an impossible solution and that there is no solution to the problem Duchamp has given us here, thus suggesting a pun which will forever be played upon the viewer. Naumann astutely relates that the cupid who “points to the

¹¹⁰ See Naumann.

presumed solution” in the illustration must reflect a certain insurmountable difficulty Duchamp wanted to convey specifically in matters of love.

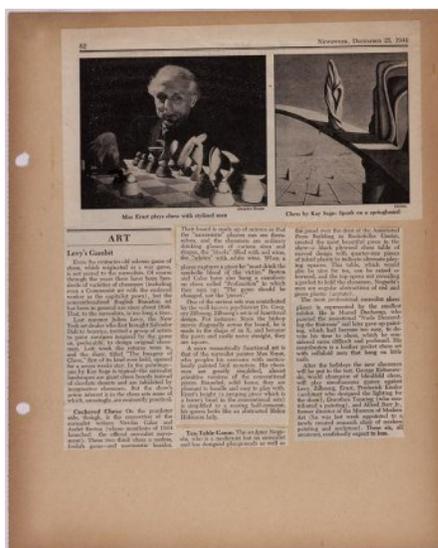


Figure 25 Page 21 of the Scrapbook.

Ernst, Sage, and Duchamp: “The Imagery of Chess”

Needless to say, this brochure does lead the way for the next article on Page 21 in Breton’s scrapbook, which is clipped from *Newsweek*, retaining its origin and date as “December 25, 1944, page 82” [Figure 25]. The article is clipped in its entirety, with two illustrations: one of Max Ernst who “plays chess with stylized men” and one of a painting by Kay Sage entitled “Spook on a Springboard” which depicts an endless landscape resembling a chessboard on which geometric organic forms are spread out, including the foreground figure who seems to be on the verge of falling off of a plank into the void of the chess landscape below. The article announces the new exhibit taking place that week, “The Imagery of Chess.” It thus has a direct connection

with the Duchamp's image in the last item of the preceding page. The exhibit, held by Julien Levy, regroups paintings and art surrounding the theme of chess, as well as artistic chess sets. Among the sets highlighted is one created by Nicolas Calas and André Breton himself. Made in jest of the game, it situates the board as a series of mirrors to reflect the players as "narcissistic." The other chess boards of interest are discussed as follows: that of Ernst illustrated in the photograph which shows "meticulously painted bird monsters" and "primitive versions of conventional pieces," that of a well-known sculptor Noguchi who created a chess table which is in fact a tea-table, and lastly, a miniature version of a chess game from Duchamp, cited as a small "leather pocket chess set with celluloid men that hang on little nails." The event, like most surrealist exhibitions, included a performance of chess playing as a competition between various members of the show and George Koltanowski, "world champion of blindfold chess."

This article is the last item glued into the *Scrapbook*, and completes the recollection of various surrealist figures and friends with which he had or still collaborated with at the time. If we consider that the recollection of these articles was symbolically a re-gathering of those people who had formed the surrealist group in Paris, then it makes sense that he too would paste himself in to the pages of the *Scrapbook*—which he did quite unabashedly on page 17. His placement within the book is at the heart of the section that refers to and symbolizes his fellow compatriots and former comrades.



Figure 26 Page 17 of the Scrapbook.

A Portrait of André Breton

Centered on page 17, he is placed amidst the other pages in the *Scrapbook* which hold articles about Aragon, Dali, Picasso, Miró, Duchamp, Tanguy, Cornell, Ernst and the others [Figure 26]. The article, “Nouvelles d’André Breton,” written by Guy Gillequin is dated “11-1-45” and resumes news from the author himself. Included in the article is a portrait of Breton within the first column. Staring straight ahead, into our eyes, we are at last confronted with the direct gaze of the author, the collector, the scrap booker himself whose world we have been piecing together through the pages. The article is praiseful of André Breton as a writer and poet and recalls many of this most famous works, citing several lines of poetry from *Fata Morgana* (1942). Gillequin speaks briefly of his life abroad in North America and explains that Breton chose not to learn English because of his desire to keep his language pure for the writing of his

poetry: “Il n’a pas voulu apprendre la langue anglaise pour corrompre sa langue maternelle, qui est la langue dans laquelle il écrit de la poésie.”

Yet the thing that is most curious and most interesting for our study of the scrapbook is that the poet is described first and foremost as a confessional figure, one who reveals the “mystery” behind his craft, leaving nothing unexplained:

De tous les poètes ou écrivains surréalistes, Breton est le seul qui dévoile ses recettes. D’autres, peut-être plus secrets, se contentent de livrer au public une œuvre toute faite, en laissant au lecteur le difficile soin de se faufiler à travers symboles et métaphores jusqu’au cœur du problème. Il faut rendre à Breton cette justice qu’il donne au lecteur le fil d’Ariane pour ouvrir sa voie dans les arcanes poétiques de sa pensée. Je pense surtout à cette *Nuit du Tournesol* parue dans le *Minotaure*, puis dans *L’Amour Fou* où il donne une véritable traduction juxtalinéaire de son poème. Je crois que le fait de livrer sa clé qui pourrait paraître à certains une faiblesse est au contraire une grande force en ce sens que le jugement qu’on est amené à porter sur l’œuvre se limite ainsi à la seule valeur poétique, à la seule force intrinsèque de la transposition voulue par l’auteur et livrée telle quelle part lui. Une place extrêmement limitée est laissée aux sentiments personnels et à l’imagination du lecteur : c’est à croire que la puissante personnalité de Breton ne tolère pas que l’on déforme à sa façon ce qu’il a voulu et ce qu’il a dit.

I have transcribed this section of the article above as Gillequin gives us quite an interesting portrait of the poet, which obviously pleased Breton, seeing as he preserved it in his *Scrapbook*. In some sense, this aspect of Breton’s character to “reveal his recipes” and secrets of poetry are

illuminated by the very act of placing this article, among others within a scrapbook. The gesture of collecting, gathering and saving these items within a framework suggests a practice that seeks to trace origin, to preserve and guard the thought behind the thought. In some sense, this article is a window to the art of Breton's *Scrapbook*—a perfect illuminating item of the collector's personal poetic. It is also a meta-textual reference to the task of the scrapbook, a *mise-en-abyme* of the poet-collector's attempt to reframe the world as he saw it.

Conclusion

While I have given an explanation of every item within the compiled pages of the *Scrapbook* and have done a general reading of Breton's layout, there is still much to be explored. The discussion could extend well beyond this chapter to include the items that Breton failed to paste into the book, which were amassed in the last few pages. I have included a brief description of their contents within the appendix. Overall, I have shown that Breton was working within a tradition of decoupage and montage which influenced the framework and layout of the *Scrapbook*.

The physical gesture of collecting and compiling these items into a book suggests a practice that can be considered as artistic according to the surrealist philosophical-aesthetic theory of *détournement* of an object. The intentional lifting out, paring down and or sifting of material is a manipulation and a *détournement*. Casting these items into a new context ultimately gives them a new meaning and new signification such like items organized in a collection.

Susan Pearce, theorist within the field of museum studies has found that the creation of a collection is dependent on the removal of an object from its historical and cultural context and its redefinition by the collector and the construction of a collection to represent an ideology. The

process of creating a collection thus relies on the organizing principle in order for the collection to hold its own meaning. Yet, while Pearce's definition renders the importance of a new organizing principle in order for a collection to be created, it is true that not all objects completely lose the implication of its original context within the new network. While one could understand the erasure that happens for unnamed items, such as beetles or particular creatures classified in a scientific collection—in Breton's scrapbook the items collected are sometimes dated, and annotated with the original source from which they came. In such cases, there exists an exacerbation of their displacement.

It seems then that these pieces would fall into what Pearce defines as that of the "souvenir"—and the act of souvenir gathering, in which the object is prized for its distinct relationship to the past. Pearce explains what she sees as a difference between the act of collecting other things and that of collecting souvenirs. Susan Stewart, who has explored concepts of desire and longing in relation to collecting also agrees that there is something fundamentally different between a collection of objects and those specifically related to the past: "when it comes to collecting, the souvenir and the collection are fundamentally different in their relationship to time: the collection is a group of objects that have been removed from their original context and placed into a new context" and therefore the history and origin of those objects is no longer present, or is at least obscured (151). The souvenir, Stewart argues is connected to the idea of memory and therefore always refers to an origin. Based on this conclusion, Stewart says that "the scrapbook is a kind of souvenir" always referring back to an *original* experience (152).

What can we make, of Breton's Janus-headed gesture to both create a collection, and to then reassign the object with a reminder of its authentic context? It seems that we are dealing

with a type of collecting that exacerbates both temporal aspects of a collection and souvenir. The items within the scrapbook both seem to rehearse a past and call forth a future.

For Breton, the *Scrapbook* was a souvenir of his time in North America. It begins with his trip to the Gaspé coast with Elisa Claro, and subsequent items from his life in New York. There seems to be a specific attention to origin in that Breton seeks to document this experience with things that hold a sense of veracity and immediacy from this time and place. Yet, the *Scrapbook* is also a *collection*, as I have shown in that it creates meaning in and of itself – there are three distinct parts that illustrate three specific types of reflections, bound to the pages by the use of layout. In the next chapter, I will explore this question of a dual temporality in relation to André Breton's last experimental novel, *Arcane 17*, which was written at the same time he collected the items within the *Scrapbook*.

CHAPTER 4: ARCANE 17

Introduction

Arcane 17 (1944), eponym of the Hebraic-Bohemian-Egyptian tarot card that symbolizes the triumph of a luminous star, the pentagram under which “chance, hope and happiness can take place,” was written in 1944 near the end of WWII, before Paris was liberated from the Nazi occupation. Authored during Breton’s exile in North America, the book is a series of personal reflections on occultism, mythology, and literature of the Romantic period with a focus on 19th century philosophers of French social utopianism. Dedicated to Elisa Claro, Breton’s new found companion,¹¹¹ the original manuscript was composed during a trip they took together to the Gaspé Peninsula, on the south shore of the Saint Laurent River in Canada. The prosaic narrative is a combination of free verse and cadenced prose structured by a new “analogical” form of writing that is generated by a series of image associations (Balakian 1994: 7). *Arcane 17* thus can be situated as the last of Breton’s post-automatic writing experiments resembling the novel form and is written in two main parts: the first recounts variable instances of the magnificent Gaspésie coast, while the second weaves the symbolic order of the 17th Arcane with the medieval myth of Melusina, the well known tale of the half woman, half water serpent made popular by Jean d’Arras’s 15th century account (Balakian 1994: 11). Read in its entirety, *Arcane 17* stands as Breton’s poetic antidote to a society ravaged by war, violence and grief; it is a passionate rendering of his particular reality within the natural seascape as a source of inspiration, imagination and regeneration for a future world at peace.

¹¹¹ Elisa Claro was André Breton’s third and last wife. They remained together until his death in 1966.

The book thus seems to be Breton's versified version of the Philosopher's Stone—the myth that stipulates that an alchemic substance has the power to transform base material into gold. In echo of Breton's surrealist pursuit, stated in 1924 at the beginning of the movement, "*je cherche l'or du temps*" (I am looking for the gold of time), along with the borrowed image of the "poet as mage," *Arcane 17* is the answer to this once-rallying call which searches for the "marvelous" within everyday reality. Breton's prescient phrase thus suggests the very process of creation by which the manuscript was made. The renewal of life and love in the face of despair and destruction is demonstrated by the material process of collecting pieces of ephemera from his everyday life for the creation of his novel. Breton's motto, "I search for the gold of time" is thus more than the celebrated surrealist alchemic legacy writ epigraph of Breton's tomb, but is also an expression of the very *poesis* of his last experimental novel.

The original manuscript of *Arcane 17* forms a very intimate and personal work of art as it is a combination of Breton's hand written prose and corresponding items that he collected during his trip to the Gaspésie. First written in a student composition journal, the work holds pieces of his life at the time of creation; train tickets, photographs, post-cards and newspaper clippings. Yet, because Breton published the book in 1945 as text-only, these heterogeneous elements were often ignored in scholarship until 2008, when the original book gained due attention with the publication of Henri Béhar's edition of the manuscript in facsimile, precipitating readership of the unique form of the novel as a surrealist "*poem-object*." Coined by Breton in 1942 after the experimental text-sculptural assemblages that were seen as surrealist forms of art, the manuscript of *Arcane 17* is now considered as a one of Breton's "composition[s] which tended to combine the resources of poetry and material objects and speculat[es] on the power of reciprocal exaltation" (*Surréalisme et la peinture* 365). Keeping in mind that the fabrication and

conceptualization of *Arcane 17* originated from the symbiotic relationship of image and text, as discussed by Pascaline Mourier-Casile in her foundational study of the book in *André Breton, Explorateur de la Mer-Moire*,¹¹² I suggest a new reading of the novel which reconsiders Breton's original intention of text-image in light of his collecting activities in order to discuss the resonance found with the contents of Breton's *Scrapbook*.

In 2003, during the seven-day sale of "42 rue Fontaine," the contents of André Breton's atelier were put up for auction, and his *Scrapbook* was separated from his other books and works of literature. The album was sold to the Kandinsky library at the Museum of Modern Art at the Centre Pompidou. However, Breton's manuscript book, *Arcane 17*, written in 1944 at the same time as the *Scrapbook's* contents were collected, went to the archivists at the manuscript library of Jacques Doucet. Thus, the separation of these two works (the *Scrapbook* and *Arcane 17*) both compiled and written in the same time period, was perhaps an unintentional breach of Breton's personal aesthetic which I argue here, is that of a collector—one who carefully arranges and poeticizes connections between the material and immaterial points in his life. In this chapter, I propose a study of the reconciliation of these two items from Breton's atelier as crucial to a new understanding of Breton's creative process which is contingent upon the act of collecting, viewing the later publication of his novel *Arcane 17* as a comprehensive work of literature based on the *Scrapbook's* collection [Figures 27 and 28]. In doing so, I will continue my discussion of Breton's *Scrapbook* as a prime example of his collecting activity—an aspect of Breton's life which has been little considered in scholarship on his work—but more importantly, as a new-found key to reading *Arcane 17*.

¹¹² Excepting Mourier-Casile's study, this approach in reading *Arcane 17* has been generally ignored in scholarship because Breton himself did not include the images in his original proof for publication.

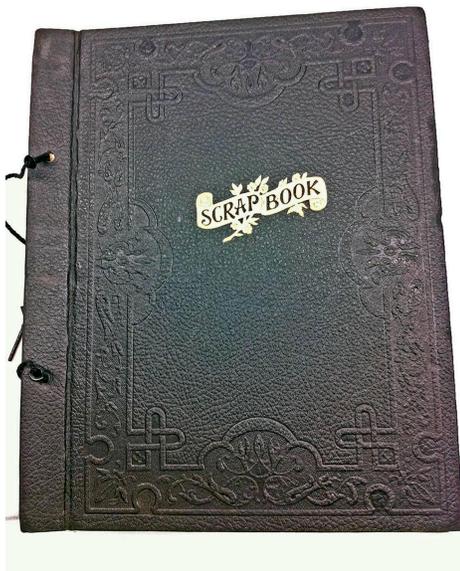


Figure 27 and 28 André Breton's lesser-known "Scrapbook" and his prized manuscript, Arcane 17.

In the spirit of Jordan Stump's idea of the "other book" as a generative star in the constellation of the development of a literary work, I will consider the *Scrapbook* as an early manifestation of *Arcane 17*, a kind of tenebrous poetic matter when placed next to its successor, creates "sparks [which] illuminate certain small patches of a work of literature's existence that may have well remained in the dark otherwise" (9). Never before considered in scholarship on *Arcane 17*, I argue that Breton's *Scrapbook* is more than an album of compiled souvenirs. Instead, it directly relates to those pieces of ephemera and text included in the original manuscript of *Arcane 17*. The *Scrapbook* in fact constitutes the unknown "other book," or "other star" from which we may better understand *Arcane 17*, thereby showing the two as part of the same whole, thus shedding light on to Breton's artistic process as one which depends on the collecting and reattribution of the real world in view of the imaginary. Taking into account Breton's own reflections on art in *Arcane 17*, in which he states that "even physical death, the destruction of a work of art is not, in such an occurrence, an end,"¹¹³ I suggest that the instances of continually re-purposing collected objects into *Arcane 17*, imply that the very phenomena of art is an experience of something always to come, but never accomplished. I propose that the formal process of creation and Breton's idea of art is always *in the making*. In dialogue with Roland Barthes' final work, *La Préparation du Roman*, in which he describes the creative process of writing a novel as "something which may never reach completion" along with Maurice Blanchot, who proposes in his essay "L'avenir et la question de l'art," in *L'espace littéraire* that the work of art "is in the approach of the unreachable," I will discuss the act of negation implicit in what seems to be Breton's creative process. In investigating Breton's work in relation to Barthes' and Blanchot's theoretical ideas, I will explore what I find to be the after-

¹¹³ My translation. "La mort corporelle même, la destruction physique de l'œuvre n'est, en l'occurrence, pas une fin." (63)

effect of a collection and collision (or composition) of various sources in the *Scrapbook* and *Arcane 17*: the negative act of re-collection, again and again.

I. Historical and Theoretical Context of Arcane 17

1- A Radical Proposition from the Outside

The *Scrapbook* and *Arcane 17* are works created during WWII, when Breton was isolated and living in exile from his native country, considering the historical and political implications of a war which had devastated Europe. We can imagine that while composing *Arcane 17*, Breton was considering the ideological frameworks of politics and culture which cannot be seen nor touched but which would persist quite powerfully over the phenomenal world and our place within them: “We hope that at the end of the war, there will arise a fairly large number of radical propositions formulated outside the existing framework... and faced with the temporary bankruptcy of the language of the mind, will make the language of the heart and sense heard loud and clear” (1994: 51). Reflecting on the implications of a war torn country, and his role as a perceived “bystander” within North America, Breton would nevertheless find a way to voice his thoughts while in exile through writing *Arcane 17*.

2- Surrealism and the “New Myth”

The surrealist circle which had been once concentrated in Paris had dispersed and Breton was faced with the possibility of Surrealism’s dissolve. Maurice Nadeau pronounced that “Surrealism died in 1940” within his 1944 publication, *The History of Surrealism*, and Breton would hereby attempt to prove the longevity of the movement. Upon his return to Paris, Breton

presented his most recent ruminations on the occult, magic and myth at the 1947 International Exhibition of Surrealism, where he would proclaim the importance of a “new myth.” While mythology had been a surrealist interest for sometime and can be found within the mythologized city-scape in Louis Aragon’s early work, *Le Paysan de Paris* (1926), it was during Breton’s years in New York that a renewed interest in myth came about, leading to his composition of the “Prolegomena to the Third Surrealist Manifesto or Not” (1942) which analyzes the bleak intellectual situation in wartime and calls for the constitution of a new “myth” on which society would be based, replacing what he considered the outmoded economic myths of Marxism and Capitalism (Polizzotti 457). In this text, Breton calls for the reconceptualization of humanity’s place within the universe, denouncing the point of “cynosure” which history had given mankind and instead celebrates the invisible unknown beings called “les Grands Transparents” (“the great invisibles”)—beings that existed among humans, but went undetected by the five senses. For Breton, these beings were “insubstantial nodal points of our desires and aspirations toward the marvelous” (Polizzotti 457). This belief in the presence of invisible creatures inaugurated Breton’s turn toward the premises of occult thought.

The idea of a “new myth” was formulated in response to the contemporary attitude that society considered itself at a loss, erased of cultural rituals and mythological origins. Claude Lévi-Strauss, whom Breton met and worked with at the Voice of America radio broadcast station was also involved in the study of mythology, and while his approach focused on the anthropological structures of the field minus a flair for the occult, his interest aligned with Breton’s in that it stemmed from his distrust of a Cartesian duality which divorced scientific thought and the reality of the human senses.¹¹⁴ Georges Bataille, too became very interested in

¹¹⁴ As stipulated by Lévi-Strauss in *Myth and Meaning*, 26.

the anthropological idea of society's belief in a lack of myth, and contributed to the catalogue of Breton's 1947 exhibition with a short essay entitled "the absence of myth." Bataille suggested that the absence of myth did not deny the existence of myth, but rather implied its presence within the work of negation—what Bataille saw as a dialectical process.¹¹⁵ Even though by 1948 the surrealists had become peripheral to the currents of French cultural life and the movement was considered by most an "interwar indulgence," Bataille took the opposite view and was planning to write a book called *Surrealist Philosophy and Religion*. In this work, Surrealism was to be explored in relation to the post-war atmosphere in France which called for a retribution of France's perceived humiliation and in which surrealism seemed to have retained its prewar generosity of spirit (Richardson 1-3). Bataille's collaboration and involvement in the 1947 exhibition thus affirmed Breton's own preoccupations with the importance and revival of myth in contemporary society and seemed to lessen the distance between these two great thinkers who had previously been at opposing poles of the surrealist movement.

3- Romanticism Recast for the Future of Surrealism

Works of great 19th century writers such as Hugo, Nerval and Fourier were also primary to Breton's renewed interest in aligning the forgotten past—that of Romanticism—to a renewed Surrealism. Most importantly, Breton's focus on the important social visionaries of the last century would be echoed in his statement for a new surrealist docta which would prescribe that one should look to the past for improvement for the future. In addition, Breton's focus on the phenomenal world was also inspired by these Romantic thinkers. Nathalie Aubert suggests that

¹¹⁵ Philippe Forest suggests that André Breton and Georges Bataille who had been in opposition, were now somewhat reconciled on the common notion (although elaborated differently) that mythology and modernity were inextricable from each other. See Forest, "De l'absence de mythe" in *Georges Bataille, Cinquante ans après*.

Breton's interest in his natural surroundings was a gesture to connect Surrealism with Romanticism "not as a nostalgic look toward the past, but as a re-orientation to the future" and the post-war moment which was expected to come (199). The story of *Arcane 17* draws from Breton's reflections of the Gaspésie, its natural inspiration of a universal order, and his philosophical readings in order to propose that understanding the presence of history shall be productive for the future. For Breton, the whole history of the world, leading up to the present and humanity's hopeful quest can be seen in a moment of insight while perceiving the geological magnificence of the Percé Rock:

[...] in a flash, it uncovers the tortured heart of old Europe feeding the long trails of spilled blood. Somber Europe, just for a moment so far away. The vast red and rust clots are now forming right in front of my eyes with stains of excremental gold among cascades of blue fun barrels and propellers. Soiling it all, there are even vast splashes of ink as if to testify that a certain kind of writing, apparently quite common, is nothing more than deadly venom, a virus that stirs up all evil... And yet beneath this veil of ominous significance an entirely different one rises with the sun. All these ridges arranging themselves, this whole assortment of geological beds rolled into plateaus and interrupted by tiers, these abrupt saggings, these smooth stretches sometimes beyond expectation, these zones from pink to purple that balance others from periwinkle to ultramarine by means of transversal beaches gradually becoming nocturnal and fiery, are the most fitting symbol for the structure of the edifice of human culture in the narrow intrication of the parts that make it up, defying all impulses to remove any one of them. Under this movable earth—the soil of that rock crowned with fir trees—runs a subtle

thread that can't be broken and that connects the peaks and some of those peaks are a certain 15th c. in Venice or Sienna, and Elizabethan 16th, a French second half of the 18th, a German Romantic beginning of the nineteenth, a Russian corner of the twentieth. No matter what passions may seem to deny this evidence in our time, the entire foreseeable future of the human spirit rests on this complex and indivisible substratum. (1994: 29-30)

Indeed, this present “substratum” – a Romantic inflected symbol for the whole of mankind suggests that the complexity of nature and of history shall be of utmost importance in rethinking a time to come. The principle of anteriority is therefore of great importance; it is the past which also points towards the production of something new, as in the creation of a new myth.

4- A Theoretical Appropriation of the Past for the Future

Breton's inspiration from the Romantic writers and the importance of a literary past, would later become a point of contention within historical-materialist debates of the literary and philosophical circles in France. In 1947, Sartre's “Qu'est-ce que la littérature” would bring the question of “la littérature engagée” to the forefront of such discussions on the use-value of literature and its capacity to bring about change in the world. Within the limits of Existentialism, Jean-Paul Sartre denounced poetry as unproductive, a type of writing without agency. This stance was in radical opposition to how the surrealists—especially Breton and Bataille—conceived of poetry to be productive. Within his quasi-psychoanalytical biographic portrait of *Baudelaire* in 1944, Sartre criticizes this forefather of surrealism for his conception of art as being primarily an exercise in consciousness and criticizes the poet as saying in *l'Art Philosophique*: “what is the modern conception of pure art? It is to create a suggestive magic

which contains both subject and object, the external world and the artist himself” (qtd. in Sartre: 23). For Breton, this conception of the particular and the universal within a pseudo-romantic landscape was most likely taken quite seriously when writing *Arcane 17*. In the first pages of the novel, Breton equates the first “morning at sea” in with a sense of wonderment which reminds him of Baudelaire’s poetry: “that mixture of joy and apprehension stirred by the immediate fate of Paris, and made up of my approaching and leaving Bonaventure Rock and its birds? It was translated in language much imbued with stanzas of Baudelaire” (1994: 34). Ten years later, Breton explicates in his work, *Art Magique*, the theoretical underpinnings for an art which we see nascent in the 1940s. Formulated by a rhetoric that borrows from the occult, Breton equates magic with art as Baudelaire did, and says that:

Il y a, dans toute forme de magie, a ce qu’il me semble, un paradoxe qui la rend attirante et superficielle: elle prétend être encore pouvoir, initiative et action, alors que, pour se constituer, elle cherche à revenir à ce point d’indétermination universelle qui exclut toute limite, toute forme, tout pouvoir et toute action. Ce qu’elle veut, c’est agir sur le monde et le manoeuvrer, mais à partir de ce qui est antérieur au monde, l’en-deçà où l’action est impossible. Cette contradiction, naturellement, est riche et instructive dans plusieurs des formes qu’elle a prises (OC IV, 116).

Breton specifically outlines the paradox that a work of art can only really be of interest in “reaching back and starting with that which is anterior to the world, beyond where *action* is impossible.” Sartre’s idea of action as something located within the present and only within a specific type of art is rebuffed and Breton’s loyalty to his surrealist interpretation of a

Baudelarian notion of poetry is confirmed. Moreover, Breton's stance also implies a temporal aesthetic once described by Walter Benjamin as the allegorical nature of Modernity. Seen in the figure of Baudelaire's poet who is a chiffonier or rag picker, the collection of historical debris within the modern and industrial city illustrates the paradox to which Breton refers: art is only productive inasmuch as it contains the past—yet how can it act on the future?

We have seen this paradox within the tension created by the *Scrapbook*, where the objects collected are *souvenirs* and refer to a past, yet also point to a future within its formation of a collection that reappropriates and reinscribes new meaning to these objects. The paradox that Breton addresses is thus a common point of contention within discussions between his contemporaries about the possibility of a work of art to “act” on the world—that is, whether or not a work of art is political. Breton did not consider *Arcane 17* nor any of his works to be inherently political; instead, his hope was for a radical change of spirit within an internal working order that ran through the “substratum” of all mankind. The point I want to make here is the idea that Breton philosophically considered art to be powerful for the *future* within its ability to also hold a *past*.

5- “Détournement” as Perceiving Surreality through Negation

This curious relationship to temporality within art attains particular clarity when discussed in terms of the surrealist understanding of daily life, as Michael Sheringham has shown in his study of Surrealism's interpretation of the Romantic notion of “self-evidence.”¹¹⁶ According to Sheringham, surrealism's relationship to daily life can be comprehended through a

¹¹⁶ Also present in Baudelaire's symbolism. See Chapter 2 “Surrealism and the Everyday” in *Everyday life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, Michael Sheringham, p. 79.

phenomenological account of how surreality was based on an experiential practice in attention. That is, rather than transcending the real, surrealism was about “finding it *within* [reality]” (the “it” being the “surreal”) (73). Sheringham cites Arthur C. Danto’s idea of art being a way to modify consciousness and foster new modes of sensibility and explains that within modernity (qua Taylor), “the epiphanic center of gravity begins to be displaced from the self to the flow of experience” thus resulting in a “process of appropriation rooted in perception” (80-5). This process is what Sheringham calls “détournement.”

In the last chapter, we saw that Breton’s practice of reframing items for the purpose of revealing certain topographies within an image. Here, as it is with the *Scrapbook*, and *Arcane 17*, the act of appropriation and procedure of reframing is “the détournement, or change of scale that makes a phenomenon perceptible” (Sheringham 85). Since it is only possible to apprehend the poetic object in detour, or from an oblique stance, then the inflection of an item, the very manipulation of it, becomes essential for the revelation of its proposed image. Détournement is thus a necessary method in the quest of surrealistically apprehending the poetic object. It also seems to be implicit within the very process of Hegelian negation—where a thing is negated in a process that reaches towards its appropriation. As an object is always “recreating itself beyond, where we lose sight of it,”¹¹⁷ the negation of the object can be seen to be in continuous deference, and perhaps compared to a continual détournement.

The process of negation can be situated within the dual temporal nature of art as described by Breton in *Art Magique*; it is only meaningful when it captures the past, but in apprehending the past it then loses its force within the present. This is perhaps why on a practical level, art for Breton is a never-ending process. Breton continuously seeks to reformulate the past

¹¹⁷ My translation. “[...] l’objet, au lieu de se situer une fois pour toutes en deça d’elle-même, se recrée à perte de vue au-delà.” (“Crise de l’objet,” *Le Surréalisme et la peinture*. 355)

for the present, just as he continuously recollects his collection from the *Scrapbook* into *Arcane* 17. Art and poetry are forms of creation that are never truly attainable. Breton states that poetry is an “enemy of patina” and just like the morning star that burns brightly, it “shares a great affinity with this way of behaving” similar to playing hide and seek (1994: 26); it is dynamic, unfettered, capricious and irrational. It is like light – “perpetually on guard, against all that is burning to seize it” it is ephemeral, and a “conductor of mental electricity” (1994: 26-27). As stated in the first section of the novel, it is something which turns away from the devastating effects of the “real” only to find a completely different “reality” (a surreality) which is also a process of connecting to the past, future and present:

never has poetry been so enthusiastically devoured... it is easy to see in this phenomenon the manifestation of that need to take a *detour through the essential*, such as one experiences each time there’s a threat to one’s individual existence or even to the pursuit of one’s personal destiny within the framework of that existence...people’s feelings find [...] a refuge or springboard in the most perfect expressions of what is not real, I mean those where a completely different “reality” has been able to make the eternal, until reabsorbed in the distance, spring forth. (34)

The movement of a “detour through the essential” which Breton describes as a way to attain an alternate reality through poetry, also seems to exemplify Sheringham’s conclusion that an object cannot be perceived but obliquely and therefore it is only in *détournement* that the poetic nature of a thing arises—or that surreality is attained. This too, seems resonant of Breton and Bataille’s preoccupation with myth in contemporary society as a “dead” myth is described as something

“we can *see through* more easily than if it were alive”¹¹⁸ revealing that the negation of something is what reveals its true nature. Is not this “seeing” only possible through its negation as Sheringham implies? Is not the negative operation itself a kind of detour? One which could affirm that Bataille’s elegiac simile of the drowning myths, those “pale transparenc[ies] of possibility” which “vanish like rivers in the sea” (48) is evocative, if not a resonant echo to Breton’s Melusina who rises from the waters of a “new myth” in Breton’s *Arcane 17*.

II. From the Scrapbook to Arcane 17: Recollecting a Collection

1- Introduction

In Part I, I delineated the historical and theoretical context in which *Arcane 17* was composed. Within Part II, I will investigate more closely the fabrication of the original manuscript of *Arcane 17* in relation to the *Scrapbook* and the importance of “daily life” in surrealism. First, as mentioned, I will explore the formal process of re-appropriating object-items from the *Scrapbook*. Then, I will elaborate the theoretical underpinnings of what it means to use the *Scrapbook* as a model for the creation of *Arcane 17*. Such a model will be considered through Roland Barthes’ idea of the “maquette” in *La Préparation du Roman*. In addition, I will begin to formulate my hypothesis on how Breton seeks to recollect an “original” experience from the *Scrapbook*. In reflecting on Maurice Blanchot’s ideas of “l’homme au point zero” (*Amitié*), or the search for a primary source of information or inspiration, I will propose that Breton’s poetic process is one which is contradictory in that it simultaneously seeks to validate the past, while composing a new work of art.

¹¹⁸ See Bataille, “L’absence du mythe” (48).

2- Fragments of the “Real” in Light of Fiction

As Béhar reminds us Breton’s interest in the world at large was about an experiential “immediate reality.” Everyday Breton got up at 5am and wrote till noon to save time to explore the natural surroundings of the area with Elisa in the afternoon.¹¹⁹ What the *Scrapbook*’s contents show us is that Breton was interested in the reality he lived—in what we can call the “immediate.” Mostly articles, post-cards or photographs, the collected items were objects at his immediate disposal. These items seemed to symbolize the reality that he lived, at that specific moment.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the first part of the *Scrapbook* regroups all the items having to do with Breton and Elisa’s stay on the Gaspésian coast, where they resided from August 20- September 21st in a cabin on the point of the Gaspé located in Sainte-Agathe, just near the formidable Rock of Percé. The first 15 pages (front and back), hold a selection of articles, photographs and post-cards which reveal Breton’s interest in the geological history and natural landscape of this unique peninsula.

Nathalie Aubert has commented that this trip to Canada was an important turning point for Breton who at this time turned to nature and the phenomenal universe as a source of inspiration (199). I believe such is exemplified by a photograph within Breton’s archives, one which Elisa took of him stripping a small piece of bark from a white birch tree at some unnamed inland alcove on the Gaspé coast [Figure 29]. I have marveled at what this particular photo illustrates within the context of *Arcane 17*. It is an intimate moment that captures Breton’s personal pleasure of taking a piece of this tree for his own possession. It is photographic proof of

¹¹⁹ See Béhar. *André Breton le grand indésirable*. (“New York”) 407.

Breton's practice of collecting the material world in his everyday life. I have wondered if this particular piece of bark was the very same one he pasted onto page 38 of the manuscript of *Arcane 17*, upon which he drew a star and wrote "Atelier de la déesse" within it [Figure 30].



Figure 29 Photo of Breton peeling bark off of a white birch tree, taken by Elisa in 1944 in Canada. Lot 5320.

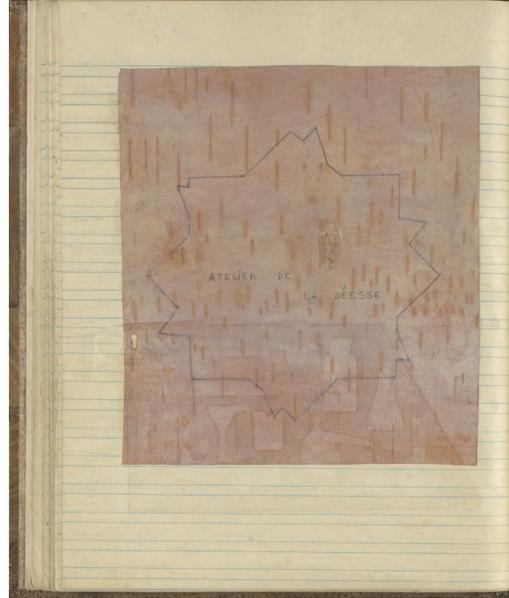


Figure 30 Page 38 of the original manuscript of *Arcane 17*. Pasted on the page is a piece of thin bark with "Atelier de la déesse" ("workshop of the goddess") written within a star, drawn in black ink. Lot 2254.

Within the context of *Arcane 17*, perhaps we can surmise that this work of literature is a kind of fiction that is based on fragments of reality. The experience of collecting them shows Breton's motivation for something other than the appreciation of the singular objects themselves. The idea here is that there was an impulse for something greater than the fragment itself. Philippe Forest, contemporary author and scholar of Roland Barthes relates that André Breton and the surrealists were perhaps at the beginning of what is now called "autofiction"—and what he sees as theorized in part by Roland Barthes in his final work, *La Préparation du roman*. The basic principle of such literature is based on experience. For Forest, experience is "*expérience*"

in French – it is the simultaneous meaning of “experience” and “experiment.” While in the English language, we have the two words to describe the difference between a subject’s engagement with the world, and a temporary alternative engagement with it, in the French language there is no difference and the two meanings hold sway in the same noun. The point that Forest makes is that this type of literature is both recursive to the life of the author and is also a fictional diversion from it; “experience is only available through an experiment.” They are one and the same—just as life and artistic creation are inextricably linked—the motto of the avant-garde. Forest also sees this poetically theorized in Barthes’ work on the preparation of a novel—a series of lectures which Barthes gave at the end of his life, which detail the poetics of “preparing to write a novel.” In this work (as in *Empire des Signes* and *Fragments of a Lover’s Discourse*), Barthes underlines the importance of the fragment and suggests that the genesis of a novel depends on it. Here, the novel is the formulation of a question that a fragmentary experience suggests. Fragments, are the “primary material” of the author, and thus the problem of writing the novel poetically lies in the “conversion du bref au long, du discontinu au continu: de la note au roman” (Barthes 160). Most importantly, for Barthes, the fragment holds the “*c’est ça*”—the same revelation of the real, which Barthes also finds in the medium of photography. Therefore, within the writing of the novel, Barthes suggests that the fragment holds a certain figure of truth that contains a certain “quidditas” and specifically points out two forms of the fragment being held in the haiku or the epiphany. Here, I would like to extend his definition to include other forms that reveal the real—those items collected in Breton’s *Scrapbook*.

Indeed, Breton’s purpose in collecting the fragments of his reality in the *Scrapbook* was actually more about fiction than first perceived. As we will see, it is within the first pages of the

Scrapbook that we find these ideas referred to within the first section of the manuscript of *Arcane 17*. Breton used the collection in the *Scrapbook* to formulate the first part of his novel.

3- Collecting Agates at “Point zero”

It has been established in preceding chapter that agate stones were of great interest to Breton as shown by the first article pasted into the *Scrapbook*, “Les Agates de Percé: Matière d’une nouvelle industrie locale.” Breton had begun to write about agates as early as 1924 (as seen in *Poisson Soluble*) and collected them in piles on his desk at 42 rue Fontaine.¹²⁰ It has even been suggested that Breton’s primary purpose for his trip to the Gaspésie was to collect agate stones.¹²¹ It does not come by surprise that agates appear for the first time within the text of *Arcane 17* as an image of collectors on the beach seen through his window: the seashore is described to be dotted with a “sinuous stippled water line” along which “agate hunters” roam and return to everyday to look for the stones.¹²²

Yet, it is the “recollection” of an item from the *Scrapbook* into the manuscript of *Arcane 17*, which reveals a most curious gesture. On page 22 of the original manuscript composition book of *Arcane 17*, we find a cut-to size blue piece of paper upon which typewritten text appears. The text, showcases two paragraphs copied directly from the first article of the first page of the *Scrapbook*, “Les Agates de Percé: Matière d’une nouvelle industrie locale.” While Breton does not give the title of the article, nor the author’s name which is present on the original

¹²⁰ The agates which figured in the 1955 photos of his atelier show the piles of stones collected from this trips to the Gaspésie, the Lot and Saint-Cirq-Lapopie.

¹²¹ Entry “Agate” written by Henri Béhar in *Dictionnaire André Breton*. 29

¹²² This appears in Breton’s writing on page 14 of the manuscript (page 33 in the text-only novel).

article within the Scrapbook, he did note quotation markings at the beginning and end of the copied section as if to show that the paragraphs were not his. In addition, Breton annotated the section with its original source: the name of the newspaper and publication date, *La Patrie*, 3 September 1944 [Figures 31 and 32].



Figure 31 Page one of the Scrapbook showing the article “Les Agates de Percé.”

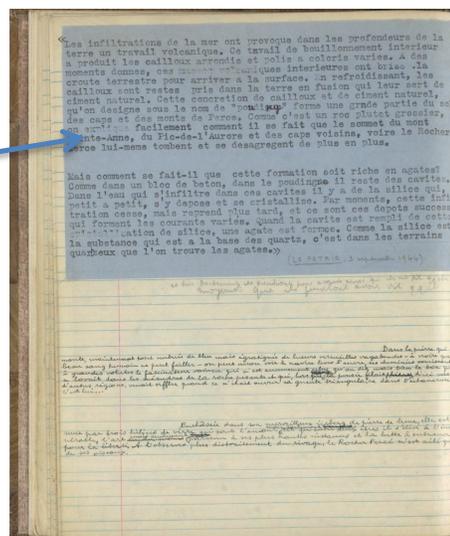


Figure 32 Page 22 of Arcane 17 featuring two sections of the article typed on blue paper. Lot 2254.

What is fascinating is that Breton had already come across this article but desired to recast it yet again within the manuscript in a different format. Why not clip the article itself and use the original within the manuscript? Breton had done this with another article in *Arcane 17*, the entire article of “Retour à la sauvagerie”—an editorial about reforming the education of history in Canadian schools—was clipped and pasted on page 18. In this case however, it is possible that Breton had already pasted the article into his *Scrapbook* and could no longer manipulate it to his liking, or 2. he wished to keep the article in its entirety within the *Scrapbook* for future use. These reasons would indeed prove the anteriority of the *Scrapbook* to the

manuscript—a working template to the novel itself. Yet, even so, why take these words, copy them, reframe them within the manuscript? Why *recollect* this section? The act of re-typing it and regenerating this section of the article suggests that Breton found a particular import to these words—to the fact and the reality of the paragraphs. As discussed in the last chapter, this particular article describes the geological process of the stone and the formation of the Percé Rock. But it is in this specific citation, these two paragraphs, that we find the very description of the *process* by which agates are *formed* through volcanic activity and come to appear on the surface of the earth’s crust:

Les infiltrations de la mer ont provoqué dans les profondeurs de la terre un travail volcanique. Ce travail de bouillonnement intérieur a produit les cailloux arrondis et polis a coloris variés. A des moments donnés, ces masses volcaniques intérieures ont brisé la croûte terrestre pour arriver à la surface. En refroidissant, les cailloux sont restés pris dans la terres en fusion qui leur secret de ciment naturel. Cette concrétion de cailloux et de ciment naturel, qu’on désigne sous le nom de “poudingue” forme une grande partie du sol des caps et des monts de Percé. Comme c’est un roc plutôt grossier, on explique facilement comment il se fait que le sommet du mont Sainte-Anne, du Pic-de-l’Aurore et de caps voisins, voire le Rocher Perce lui-même tombent et se désagrègent de plus en plus.

Mais comment se fait-il que cette formation soit riche en agates? Comme dans un bloc de béton, dans le poudingue il reste des cavités. Dans l’eau qui s’infiltré dans ces cavités il y a de la silice qui, petit a petit, s’y dépose et se cristallise. Par moments, cette infiltration

cesse, mais reprend plus tard, et ce sont ces dépôts successifs qui forment les courants variés. Quand la cavité est remplie de cette cristallisation de silice, une agate est formée. Comme la silice est la substance qui est à la base des quartz, c'est dans les terrains quartzeux que l'on trouve les agates.

This particular section of the article must have fascinated Breton perhaps in the way it specified how these beloved stones came to rise to the beaches of the Gaspé coast—to be collected by himself and Elisa. There is therefore something uncanny about the recollection of this particular item. Breton was, to some extent, recollecting the proposed origin of the stone itself, yet this time within a physical copy of the description of its geological formation. Recollecting the very description of the process by which the agate stones were made reveals a desire to possess the very origin of the thing that is collected. Yet, why were these paragraphs important to the manuscript of *Arcane 17*? Breton did not reuse the citation within the proper text of *Arcane 17*, nor does it appear as the inciteful “generator” of any prosaic rendering.¹²³ Instead of transposing this citation into writing, as Breton did in other instances of his novel, for this particular text, it seems that he wanted to bring the object closer to the novel, to his writing and to the reality of his fiction by manually pasting it onto page 22.

In reflecting on the idea of Breton working off of the *Scrapbook* collection to write his novel, we must consider the notion of copying and mimetic work. In the section on “Parabase, Method, Narrative” from “The Work as Will,” of *La Préparation du Roman*, Roland Barthes introduces his idea on the auto-reflexive and mimetic nature of art creation. Barthes suggests that in the writing of a novel, the method does rely on simulation. We have already discussed the idea

¹²³ See Mourier-Casile for further explanation on these “text-generators” within the manuscript itself.

of how experience and reality are crucial to this kind of auto-fiction that Barthes describes, and in which we have placed Breton's work. Yet, Barthes further suggests a theoretical device of the "maquette," which I believe is manifest in Breton's scrapbook collection and if applied to our discussion of his collecting practices, could be instructive.

The idea of the "maquette" according to Barthes is that an object is produced by and for simulation. It is the creation of something for something else. Thus the act of placing heterogeneous objects into a specific formation within the *Scrapbook*, in order to have them make sense – or "speak" within the novel may seem apparent; the *Scrapbook* is a maquette in that it is produced for the simulation of writing the novel. The desired simulation demonstrated in Breton's recollection of the two paragraphs into the manuscript.

Yet, the process of using the *Scrapbook* as a maquette is one which reveals a deeper set of epistemological problems as such a project seeks to make a world *from* a created world. It is evident in what Bruno Latour has called the problem of the "centre de calcul" (center of calculation) in that information circulates along with the accumulation of relations it comes into contact with and is therefore changing along the way, always in the process of altering its initial meaning and substance (Latour 26). According to Latour, information is a system by which two places are related by a fluctuating inscription—the first is peripheral and the second is a center. Within the example of *Arcane 17*, the *Scrapbook* would be the peripheral source and the novel, the second and therefore center—by way of progression the new location of circulating information also becomes the new center. Within the work of Breton, the *Scrapbook* has in this instance, become the world from which *Arcane 17* is built, and instead of reaffirming a "known" veracity, creates a bond beyond that of its original purpose and import. Thus, Breton is doing something *more* than auto-fiction—something more along the lines of an auto-auto-fiction. That

is, he is writing about his own collection of the world at hand, the world he created of the Gaspé coast. Just as Barthes suggested, the maquette at times, provides a “slippage”—somewhat likened to a *mise-en-abyme*, or the strange but imperious effect of the thing which cannot escape itself. Within the work of Breton, the maquette (the *Scrapbook*) is not only the object of simulation but has a simulative effect on the material to come, like Latour suggests in his theory of circulating information. Just as the article recounts the wonders of the agate stones that Breton collects in the *Scrapbook*, he must recollect the section of the article that delineates the very *origin* of the substance into the manuscript which speaks specifically about the geological origination of the stone. There is a vertiginous movement here, one that cannot resist the desire to auto-reflect and auto-direct. To summarize, the article’s textual content reveals the process that took effect in Breton’s formal creative process: the article describes the *origin* of the creation of the magical stone that was so important to him. The fact that he so diligently clipped out and pasted this article into his *Scrapbook*, and then recollected a specific citation from it symbolizes the very same process of collecting a real agate stone from the tides of a beach. In the words of Francis Ponge, it is the “*pré*” or simultaneous meanings of “meadow” and “pre” which serves as the “prefix of prefixes” in the metaphorical sowing of literary seeds for the fabrication of a poem.

Here then, I would like to propose that there is a curious effect which manifests in Breton’s act of recollecting which relies on the idea of origin—an origin which appears to be present in its ever-receding horizon. Even though Breton has already collected the article which discusses the geological origin and process of the agate stone and may therefore, to some extent represent the origin of an agate stone, he has recollected a section, a specific citation of it again within the novel. As Patrick Greaney has shown within *Quotational Practices*, the specific use of

citation points to something “more than the repeatability of this or that text or image; [it] also indicate[s] the moment of the original’s origination” (6). This origin thus represents something much larger than just that of the newspaper article or even of the symbolic formation of the stone – it represents what origin points to.

Within the essay “L’homme au point zero” in *Amitié*, Blanchot writes about the role of an ethnographer¹²⁴ who must “always return to the sources” thereby revealing a peculiar obsession with a “passion for the origin.” Blanchot explains that this idea of returning to the primary source is an illusion and can be described as thus moving towards “an imaginary line [...] the *degré zero* toward which one could say that man strives, out of his need to attain an ideal landmark from which, free of himself, of his prejudices, of his myths and gods, he can return with a changed expression in his eyes and a new affirmation” (1997: 79). This imagined quest is one which is “necessarily ambiguous” because it searches for a truth or point of origin that simply does not exist. In considering Breton’s method of creation I propose that his recollection of primary sources parallels that of an ethnographer. While in line with a surrealist quest to take hold of every day experience, the repetition of collecting is an example and gesture towards an illusory origin as discussed by Blanchot.

4- Photographic Perspective and Quotation

This illusory origin is also conveyed within Breton’s writing which portrays a will to demonstrate the documentary objects from which his thoughts were inspired. Thus the act to recollect an object which is present in the *Scrapbook* and the original manuscript of *Arcane 17*, also gets written into the text of the novel.

¹²⁴ Specifically Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Within the *Scrapbook* and *Arcane 17*, there are photographs that portray the Percé Rock and the Birds of Bonaventure. The pictures of the “Birds of Bonaventure” within both books also seem to follow a sense of repetition—as the photographed birds on page 6 of the *Scrapbook* echo those prints deemed “les fous à Bonaventure” on page 6 of the manuscript of *Arcane 17*¹²⁵ [Figures 33 and 34]. This goes for the resemblance between the photograph of the Rock of Percé on page 14 in the manuscript *Arcane 17* that also recalls the two inserted between page 4 and 5 as well as the one pasted on page 6 within the *Scrapbook*. It is a fact that the images appearing in the manuscript of *Arcane 17* were photographs taken by Elisa herself during their vacation on the Gaspé coast.¹²⁶ Because the image quality and perspective is similar to those photographs pasted into *Arcane 17* and those located as Elisa’s within Breton’s archives, I propose that the photographs in the *Scrapbook* were also Elisa’s photos.



Figure 33 . Page 6 of *Scrapbook* shows photographs of birds. A few may be Elisa’s.

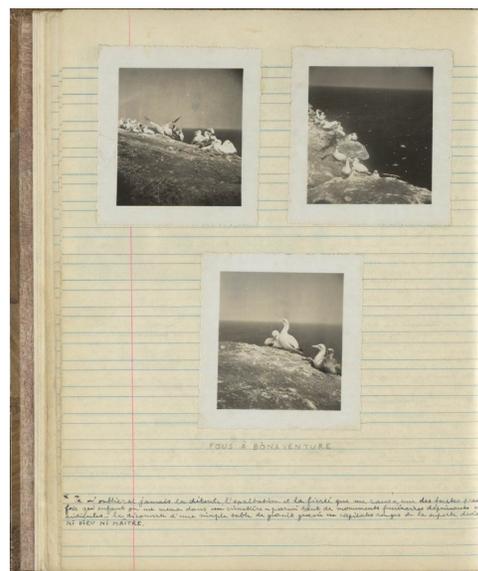


Figure 34 Page 6 of *Arcane 17* shows Elisa’s photographs of birds, “Les fous de Bonaventure”

¹²⁵ It is peculiar that the images of the birds appear on the same page number in both books.

¹²⁶ Identified by the specialists who itemized Breton’s collection for the auction of 2003, As documented by the Breton website: <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/46192>

Beyond the formal resemblance of the photography within both books, and the suggestion that Breton's *Scrapbook* influenced *Arcane 17*, the details within Breton's writing about the Rock of Percé suggest a desire to assert a specific and illustrative veracity of his account to the reader – a quasi “confessional” proof which seeks to link the external “reality” of these collected documents (the prospectus and photograph), with his poetic interpretation in writing. While Breton is not physically recollecting the prospectus and photograph in his writing, he is recasting these documents in a style that seeks to retain the visual imprint of the objects themselves:

C'est d'ailleurs surtout sous cet angle, c'est à dire vu de l'ouest, qu'il s'est désigné à l'attention des photographes. Rocher Percé: 280 pieds de haut à la proue, 250 pieds à l'endroit le plus large, 1420 pieds de long, dit laconiquement un prospectus réclamé et si je ne me déplaçais pas tant à copier ces chiffres, c'est que dans le rapport de telles dimensions je ne serais pas si surprise que se manifestât le nombre d'or, tant dans ses proportions le Rocher Percé peut passer pour un modèle de justesse naturelle. (34)

Breton describes seeing the Percé Rock from a specific “angle” which is designated as the point from which photographers seek to take pictures of the rock too. While he does not specify if he is looking at the rock itself or at a photograph, he implies it. Breton also writes that he has the informational “prospectus,” before him, and suggests that he is copying the dimensions of the Percé Rock from it. Such detail evokes that Breton was writing from the “real” and perhaps had these documents or the whole of the *Scrapbook* laid out on his table, just inches from the composition book in which he was writing about them.

5 – The Total Process

Through these examples, we can better comprehend the complexity and depth of Breton's collecting process within the creation of a work of art. For Breton, the experience is intrinsically tied to a search for an "origin," an illusion of a primordial presence that is revealed in the making of art and literature. According to Blanchot, the creation of art is inherently bound to the mourning of the loss of the sacred in our world—one which represents the imagined origin of life. In the section "Expérience originelle" within his work *L'espace littéraire*, Blanchot addresses the Modernist epistemological shift in the production of art following the Hölderlin-inspired question: what will become of art once everyone comes to agree that the "gods have departed?" Blanchot responds by saying that art will lose the sense that made it speak: the "intimacy of its reserve" (311) wherein neither nature nor what remains to be discovered in the world around us (as modernity has foreclosed on those alternatives) can be replaced—and while we may regret the passing of the divine, without the sacred, art will have no reserve on which to draw, and so it will only rely on itself:

l'œuvre d'aujourd'hui n'a pas d'autre foi qu'elle-même, et cette foi est passion absolue pour ce qu'il dépend d'elle seule de susciter, dont cependant, à elle seule, elle ne peut découvrir que l'absence, qu'elle n'a peut-être le pouvoir de manifester qu'en se dissimulant à elle-même qu'elle le cherche: en le cherchant là où l'impossible le préserve [...] c'est l'impossible qui est sa tâche, et elle-même ne se réalise alors que par une recherche infinie, car c'est le propre de l'origine d'être toujours voilée par ce dont elle est l'origine. (314)

My point here is not to focus on the philosophical hermeneutics of the loss of the divine but to point out that the Blanchotian work of art is inevitably one which cannot but “discover absence” in its production. This negativity is also reflected in Barthes’ production of the novel as, “it’s the will to fulfillment that blazes, that’s indestructible” (xxii). It thus parallels Blanchot’s “œuvre à venir” as the experience of creation is one that is never accomplished. As such, the work of art, “est toujours en défaut par rapport à elle-même” and thus is doomed to continuously repeat a search for its realization, its “original experience” by negating itself for itself. This quest is reflected in Breton’s relaying between the *Scrapbook* and his manuscript for the production of his novel. It is the continuous process of going back to the “original source” to find inspiration for the “book to come.”

III. The Mythical Turn: From the Image to Alchemy of the Word

1- From Original Material to the Mythic Word

The process of appropriating something past for the future thus resonates within the work of Breton on formal and theoretical levels. As we have seen, the collection of the *Scrapbook* becomes the reserve and “original experience” in contrast to the manuscript of *Arcane 17*—as if, at all times there must be a relay movement between two points in order for a *poiesis* to occur. Considering the importance of myth at this moment in time, for the surrealists as well their contemporaries, it is not improbable that Breton’s work of *Arcane 17* was created with the idea of a “new myth” in mind. In *Myth and Meaning*, Lévi-Strauss asserts that all mythology is “dialectic in its attempt to make cognitive sense out of the chaotic data provided by nature” (5). Accordingly, because mythology is also language formed by the binary system that processes experience, it necessarily breaks it into pieces called “mythemes” (as per Jakobson’s linguistic term for “phonemes”) the atomic building blocks of language. Myths, like all things in constant use, thus break and are fixed again, become lost and are found, and the one who finds them and fixes them, the handyman who recycles them is what Lévi-Strauss calls a “bricoleur” or a “rag-and-bones” man.¹²⁷ A “bricoleur” is also someone who collects, renews and reappropriates objects for other purposes—just like Breton. This analogy illuminates what Breton does within the text of *Arcane 17*; Breton is the figure of the collector who “renews” the myth of Melusina in the second part of his novel. While the reappropriation of an object occurs to scientifically prove a point— as in the vein of Blanchot’s ethnographer—it is the bricoleur-poet who places it within a larger picture, a framework that justifies the resourcing of the material from its origin.

¹²⁷ ix, Forward to Myth and Meaning.

2- The Reframing of Melusina for *Arcane 17*

While the first section of *Arcane 17* remains within a temporality close to Breton's experiential reality of being on the Gaspé coast, the second section of the novel delves into an a-temporal interpretation of the myth of Melusina as well as the symbolic order of *Arcane 17*. It is as if Breton sought to reframe his particular experience in the Gaspé within a more universal story – the folklore legend of Melusina. It is through this second section of the novel that Breton affirms a feminist (albeit outdated) stance on the future role of women in the world. Melusina will be presented as the allegorical figure of all women, who instead of being disgraced by betrayal will arise to wield the powers of regeneration as pictured in the scene of the tarot card, Arcane 17.

The original tale of Melusina is the story of one of the daughters of Presine, a mythical fay who married the powerful king of Albania. Melusina was doomed to not be completely human and had to return at the end of every week to the state of a water-spirit— half woman, half water serpent, much like a mermaid. If Melusina married a mortal who had the endurance and will-power to abstain from looking at her on the day of her metamorphosis, she would bring him happiness and help him build a powerful kingdom. But if he succumbed to human curiosity she would lose her hold on mortality and become a creature of the water. By chance, Melusina meets and falls in love with the Count of Poitiers—but just like Orpheus, he fails to keep his promise and looks at her while she is in her metamorphosis (Balakian 1994: 11).

Breton begins the second part of his novel commences *in media res* of this legend, and begins with the first phrase, “Melusina after the scream” (1994: 59) implying that we have entered into to the story just as the Count of Poitiers’ irreversible gaze has fallen on Melusina in her altered state. He sees “Melusina below the bust,” (1994: 59) and she has cried out in horror

as this single gesture has cost her mortality. Yet, within the narrative, the unnamed voyeur is also the narrator who goes on to describe her fish-tale in first-person: “I see her scales mirrored in the autumn sky. Her radiant coil twists three times around a wooded hill, which undulates in waves [...]” (1994: 59). It is therefore as if the narrator and reader were one, embodying the legend of the male figure looking at Melusina after she has been betrayed—all within an ephemeral version of Breton’s Gaspé coast, his landscape and the encroaching “autumn season” during which he wrote these lines.

This beginning of the story thus captures the male gaze as a violent transgression on woman. This was purposeful in that Breton wished to convey his ideas on the power of female creativity. Equating male dominance with wartime, and feminine art with a prosperous post-war society, Breton suggested the key to better world was through the support and promulgation of “Woman” who had been unjustly dispossessed. While his perspective is severely out of date, not to mention reductive and sexist in the face of present day feminism, Breton’s attempt to voice his opinions on the role of woman was provocative and radical in his time. He suggested that “woman must find herself, [...] learn to recognize herself through the hells to which she is doomed by the *view* that man, in general, has of her” (1994: 60). Indeed, Breton was focusing on the “view” or image of woman in society that had been misunderstood, misjudged and misrepresented. Throughout this second section of ARCANÉ 17, Breton’s writing floats in and out of different worlds: the reinterpretation of Melusina in his present-day moment leads to philosophical meditations on the political and aesthetic implications of a future world that would “restore [the] power to the hands of woman” (62), along with his own personal confessions of his love to Elisa. Yet, what seems most fundamental to this second section is how this all feeds into a central moment in which Breton gives a poignant *ekphrasis* of the card of Arcane 17, and the

female figure pictured on the tarot card all within the figure of the “view” of a “window”—thus suggesting that the future will profit by a change in *perspective*.

After writing about the Melusina who is divested of her mortality, the “child-woman” who shall “rise again,” along with a number of references to iconic historical female figures in art and literature who Breton admired, such as Bilqis (the queen of Sheba), Cleopatra, the sorceress of Michelet, Bettina and Moreau’s fairy the narrative comes to a turning point (1994: 64). Breton now reimagines a Melusina who has *not* been betrayed and who is mortal again: “from head to toe, Melusina has become a woman again” (1994: 66) and it is this version of Melusina which will make an appearance in his room, within his present reality. It is apparent to some extent that we are with the narrator, in his lodging and it is nighttime. He is alone and feels a sense of apprehension: “I run my hand over my forehead. Deceitful night” (1994: 66). At the same time, Melusina has “reclaimed the empty frame which even her image disappeared from in the middle of the feudal period. But little by little the wall inside the borders of the frame is hollowed out, fades away. The frame is none other than that of a window looking out on the darkness. That darkness its total, one might say its that of our own time” (1994: 66). The “frame” which Melusina has been described to be portrayed in, is simultaneously the window within the narrator’s room. While the following passages are complex in their poetic diversions, the story suggests that the narrator is watching the window which is empty and like “a black cube” (1994: 67), awaiting an impending transformation within it: “All the magic of night is in the frame, all of night’s enchantment” (1994: 67). Finally, the darkness is pierced by light: “little by little by a brightness spread out in a garland, like a convolvulus of light attached to the two transversal edges at the top [...] the image gradually focuses” (1994: 68). What follows is nothing less than

the phantom-like emergence of a living scene as pictured upon the tarot card, Arcane 17, within the frame of his window:

[...] the image gradually focuses into seven flowers which become stars while the lower part of the cube remains empty. The two highest stars are of blood, they represent the sun and the moon; the five lower ones, alternating yellow and blue like sap, are the other planets known to the ancients... a much brighter star is inscribed in the center of the original septenary and [...] it is the Morning Star. The landscape doesn't light up till the very instant it appears, and at that instant life brightens again and immediately below the luminous blaze [...] a young woman is revealed, nude, kneeling by the side of a pond, and with her right hand she spills into the pond the contents of a golden urn, while her left hand empties onto the earth an equally inexhaustible silver urn. Alongside that woman, who beyond Melusina, is Eve and now is all womankind, the leaves of an acacia rustle to the right while to the left a butterfly flutters on a bloom. (1994: 68)

While the whole of Breton's narrative swims between dream and reality, the fantastic and his present-day experience within the Gaspé coast, the narrative here seeks to suture the two together in what I suspect is one of the most "surreal" moments of the entire book: Breton attempts to impose the figure of Melusina upon the woman of the tarot card in a rendering of the scene as a tangible organic reality. The metaphor of a "frame" which is also a "window" looks upon the black night, and strongly evokes Breton's famous autobiographic anecdote from the first Manifesto: "Il y a un homme coupé en deux par la fenêtre" (31). The surrealist themes of

somnambulance and a dream-reality, which Breton attributed to Freud are also at work within this specific scene. Indeed, the window here serves as a threshold that stands between reality, and an ideal imagined unconscious world of dream-like proportions. In the next phase of this renewed myth, Breton will reappropriate the image from the tarot card of Arcane 17 and place Melusina within it.

3- Looking through the Window: Arcane 17 in *Ekphrasis*

Within the next phase of the narrative, this specific *ekphrastic* operation at work, now recounts the scene as living. Breton's writing seeks to bring to life the very image on the object he collected into his original manuscript on page 32: the scene of Arcane 17, the tarot card [Figure 35]. The *ekphrastic* mode of this passage, which is initiated through the metaphor of a "frame," recalls Baudelaire's "tableaux parisiens" – poetic portraits of the world, framed like paintings. In particular, Baudelaire's poem entitled, "Les fenêtres" is evoked in which the poet concludes that a closed window, a "trou noir" (just like Breton's "cube noir") is more interesting than that of an open window. The poet proceeds to see within the window, a woman of whom he will "retell her story, or more so, her legend" which is exactly what Breton does of Melusina. Breton even references Baudelaire, and the mode of *ut pictura poesis*, stating that the "window which had pivoted on its axis [...] blurred by the images Baudelaire filled Morning Twilight with, returns and lands in front of me, then slowly unveils itself" (1994: 75). It is here, that the window continues to reveal the living scene, but now allows for sound to penetrate the viewer. Two anthropomorphized streams begin to talk from the frame, within the tarot card: "The murmur has now given way to two clear, alternating voices. That this is what the streams say." While the left hand stream speaks words of destruction and declares that it "burns," "boils," and

“rouses”, the right hand stream confesses a role of regeneration in that it “obeys” and “brings confidence” in the “light of love” (1994: 76). The two streams, through the rhetorical figure of *prosopopoeia*, thus give voice to good and evil, evoking the forces at work within the circle of life. The next few sections continue to describe other elements within the scene: the “butterfly who turns” and “reveals its wing” as well as the “star” that “reclaims its dominant position among the seven planets in the window” (1994: 77). The narrator “waits for everything to return to its original serenity [and] the young woman continues to tilt her two vases over the ground and over the water, with her back to the thorny tree” (1994: 81). Yet, the scene will end soon, and the narrator declares: “the scene is changing... what’s going on? The acacia comes so close it almost occupies the whole field of vision [...] Amazing! It’s walking toward me, it’s going to turn me upside down: I’m dreaming” (1994: 81). It is here, that the “living scene” of the netherworld of Arcane 17 closes, and while Breton will refer to those elements again in the following sections, the image as an allegorical performance has come to an end.

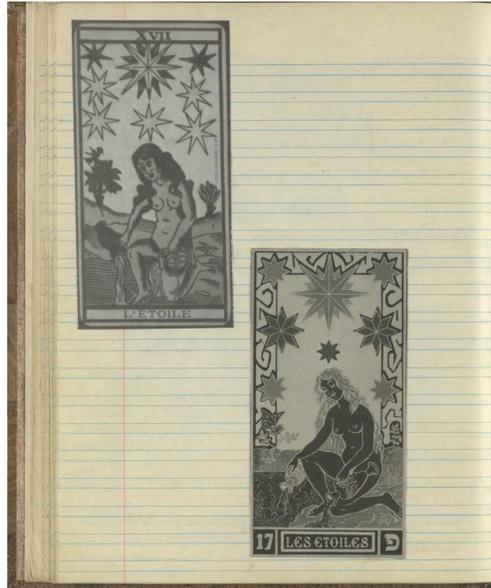


Figure 35 The tarot cards collected into the page 32 of the manuscript book.

4- Alchemy of the Object as Word?

The writing of this scene may fall into the same practice of recollecting objects within the original manuscript of *Arcane 17*. As we have seen, the recollection of an object from the *Scrapbook* into the manuscript of *Arcane 17* accompanies the desire to capture an experiential feeling of origin and truth. It is the reproduction of this feeling that Breton exposes within the very process of composing his novel. As we have seen in the last section, Breton wishes to bring to life the very tarot card(s) that he collected within his original manuscript, on page 32. Breton depicted the scene of the tarot-card within his *prose*, and thus directly transformed the original image-object in words, for the composition of his novel.

The implication of writing about objects within the context of collecting has been discussed as an act of ownership within Chapter 2. As a reminder, the act of writing is analogous to the act of possession as defined by Ackbar Abbas' reading of Walter Benjamin. Yet, to further

elucidate this hypothesis for the purpose of this chapter, the operation of writing about objects as a possession illustrates the very Hegelian act of negation that is implicit within language which modern linguists and twentieth-century philosophers have long debated. According to Saussure, language is a system of “arbitrary” signifiers. Therefore, to some extent language negates the very phenomena that it represents in words. Stéphane Mallarmé intimates as much in his “Crise de Vers” with the evocation of the word flower as the consequential sonorous recovery and material disappearance of the thing itself: “I say: a flower! and beyond the oblivion to which my voice relegates any shape, insofar as it is something other than the calyx, there arises musically, as the suave idea itself, the one absent from every bouquet.” If we are to accept that we negate the phenomenal objects we speak of with words, but that writing about them is also a way of (ephemerally) repossessing the objects, we come to a curious conclusion of a cyclical dialectic of negation. Within the case of Breton, the very act of writing is perhaps an act of negation and appropriation at the same time—a repetition of presence and absence, which seeks to represent the very thing it negates.

For Breton, poetry was a way to recover loss in the post-war world and the reinterpretation of the myth of Melusina, along with the reappropriation of tarot card transposed in *ekphrasis* follows suit. To some extent, this regenerative process described by Breton seems to also justify the formal process of collecting apparent through the entire genesis of this novel. Just as Breton has collected the scrapbook, then appropriated items from the *Scrapbook* to the manuscript, such a process represents the physical manifestation of a proposed regeneration as a “condition” to the very creation of a work of art: “et la mort corporelle même, la destruction physique de l’oeuvre n’est, en l’occurrence, pas une fin. Le rayonnement subsiste, que dis-je” (1971: 63). Breton explicitly writes of a dialectical view of the world as implicit in the “natural”

order of life wherein the death and negation of something is also the point of a new beginning: “Tout doit... mourir mais... cette mort même [est] la condition du renouveau... ce a quoi a travers les obscures métamorphoses, de saison en saison le papillon représente ses couleurs exaltées” (1971 : 63). The cycle of negation – the fact that “tout doit... mourir” is elaborated in the metaphor of a butterfly, which also stands as an image-sign for the work of the graphic and regenerative force of writing: “the butterfly is the R of the papillon which also stands for renewal” (1994: 78). Here, the butterfly is not only the quintessential animal who may represent death and rebirth, but the actual image of its wing for Breton, appears as the letter “R”, the first letter of the first word to a better world – a world of “Renewal”. For Breton, then, the world is a world of signs – which must be translated or appropriated from *image* to *poetry*. Breton repeatedly suggests that poetry is at the source of regeneration, and *words* (like people) will “make love” and create liberty—“liberté – comme créateur constant d’énergie” (1971 : 106). Does Breton in fact propose the material nature of words as the source of regeneration?

Blanchot, in his essay “Réflexions sur le surréalisme” in *La part du feu* (1949), writes about this very essence of a materiality in surrealist writing. While Blanchot adamantly critiques the notion of an “immediate self” present in the work of Breton and his early automatic writing as one which is ultimately cartesian, he celebrates the surrealists’ notion of emancipation in writing—not in the sense that the self is immediately revealed in writing (the self that is liberated through the word), but rather that words and liberty together

ne font plus qu’un [...] je me glisse dans le mot, il garde mon empreinte et il est ma réalité imprimée; il adhère a ma non-adhérence. Mais d’un autre cote, cette liberté des mots signifient que les mots deviennent libres pour eux-mêmes. Ils ne dépendent

plus exclusivement des choses qu'ils expérimentent ils agissent pour leur compte, ils jouent et, comme dit Breton, "ils font l'amour. (93)

Blanchot cites Mallarmé saying that language has nothing to do with the subject—"c'est la rhétorique devenue matière" (94) implying that the words themselves have a sense of agency in their polysemic play. This aspect of polysemy within Mallarmé's texts such as "Crise de Vers" is discussed by Derrida to be a "polysemy which continues to make a sign" and a kind of liberation of energy within the word (116)—very similar to what Breton calls the "recreation of constant energy" by way of "words" that will "make love." Nevertheless, what Blanchot celebrates in his essay is that Breton understood that created freedom is not freedom (as Sartre suggested) and that literature is not literature without its *inexplicable* sense. Blanchot thus celebrates the surrealists for their undeniable and stubborn will for a freedom that is not created, but comes from external forces. Here, while Blanchot perhaps refers to an experiential "external" presence of words in the Mallarmean sense, I suggest that it also can be reflected in the recollecting of the Arcane 17 tarot card within prose, which we see in Breton's original manuscript of *Arcane 17* as explicitly described within the second section of the text. Blanchot suggests that "literature must have an efficacy and meaning which are *extraliterary*... literature must be free, that is committed" and I suggest that this element of the "extraliterary" was perhaps also present within Breton's gesture of collecting and along the lines of liberating the "polysemic" properties of his collected *objects* within his writing—his own interpretation of Mallarmé's "creuser le vers" as a phenomenal process which sought to release the alchemic powers of objects as words.

Breton's invocation of the material nature of words seems a direct reference to Mallarmé's infinite use of polysemy within his poetry, which is also located within a sense of

temporality as suggested by Derrida. Derrida refers to Mallarmé's polysemy as a kind of "disintegration," where meaning is always located and deferred from the past. He specifies this as a post-mortem operation on the word itself: "Mallarmé knew that his 'operation' on the word was also the dissection of a corpse; of a decomposable body each part of which could be of use elsewhere." Derrida quotes Mallarmé himself as saying "If life nourishes itself from its own past, or from a continual death, Science will trace this fact in language" (*Les mots anglais*, 901). The idea of a continual death for new life is the same temporality which Breton has espoused all through his novel; the taking of something past for the creation of the future. Let us recall Breton's conception of poetry: "Tout doit [...] mourir mais [...] cette mort même [est] la condition du renouveau [...] ce à quoi à travers les obscures métamorphoses, de saison en saison le papillon représente ses couleurs exaltées." It seems as though Breton is continuing a Mallarméan tradition in his own poetic appropriation, negation and reinscription of objects for the production of his novel, *Arcane 17*.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to shed light on a lesser-known work of Breton's oeuvre within the context of the late 1940's during his exile in North America and the phase of Surrealism which precedes Breton's return to Paris. It brings due scholarship to *Arcane 17*, which has been considered for the most part to be an implicitly textual work. Yet, as we have seen, this book is based on the concept of regeneration and incorporates "extraliterary" elements. By exploring instances where Breton recollects items or ideas from the *Scrapbook* into the original manuscript of *Arcane 17*, we find that Breton's very practice of collecting is part and parcel of a dual temporality—where the past is revisited consistently for the creation of the work

at hand, and presumably for a desired future. Such temporality is not only apparent within the material process of recollecting, reusing and reappropriating items from the *Scrapbook*, but is inscribed within the philosophical principles which Breton espouses in the novel. It is also present within the larger theoretical framework of negation as implied by the concepts of Barthes and Blanchot.

Yet, while this study has sought to shed light on the collecting practices of Breton, it has shown that the poetic process is one which leads towards a very literary end—that is, Breton sought to put these items into writing and to some extent, transform them into the graphic word. This is seen within his choice to eliminate all images of the ephemeral items in the original version to be published with Brentano's in New York on November 30th 1944. Instead of celebrating the heterogenous nature of the text-image version in his final copy for the press, Breton chose to publish the text alone. Why?

I have considered the historical facts of this manuscript in search of an answer. The original copy of *Arcane 17* was given to Elisa Claro as a gift. Dedicated to her on the 3rd of January in 1945 the manuscript, originally written in a composition book was later rebound and exquisitely covered by Lucienne Talheimer (Talheimer 49). The book thus remained a one of a kind, a private memento, kept by Elisa at 42 rue Fontaine until the auction of 2003. Yet, beyond the personal reason for the physical displacement of the work from public circulation, there must have been a decision made by Breton on why he did not wish to publish any images in this novel as it marks a specific formal difference from the succession of previous works such as *Nadja*, *Les vases communicants* and *L'amour fou* where he explicitly played with the formal experimentation of using photographs as inter-textual devices for narrative. The difference between these former works and *Arcane 17* is the nature of the image-objects used. While in the

previous works, the photographic object is the only image object incorporated within the novel, it is also highlighted as a kind of documentary proof—or ‘replacement’ for writing. However, in *Arcane 17* the photograph is not the only form of inter-textual image, nor were the photographs initially taken for the purpose of the book. While Breton did write about the photograph, and his surrealist theory of it, he did not specifically write about the use of ephemeral objects and perhaps it is for the simple reason that Breton had yet to theorize such that he did not consider it for publication, or more practically, he did not consider his collecting to be an artistic procedure. Yet, if the photograph as a substitute for writing in his previous novels, in his last, *Arcane 17*, it is the inverse: it is the image-object upon which writing relies. The negation of the material world thus seems to be in favor of the material fabrication of poetry.

CONCLUSION

As I have shown in the preceding chapters, Breton's practice of collecting often entails the process of compiling items and acquiring objects for the use of poetic exploitation, and literary production within daily life. In chapter two I have shown how Breton's interest in collecting the oceanic sculpture, Uli, seemed to generate writing and reflection about the sculpture. Breton stated that the desire for possessing such oceanic objects was specifically a "surrealist" practice. Within the context of my case study of the sculpture, Breton's interest in the desire of possessing this object thus led to the allegorical production of rhetorical figures in the name of Uli. In chapter three, my focus changes from the use of an object as text-generator to an archival study of a literary collection of ephemeral items composed within Breton's *Scrapbook*. Because this object has not been previously investigated nor appears in any prior scholarship seriously devoted to this work, I have given the details on this collection through a close reading of the book's items. I also suggest that it is a collection in relation to what I see as a development of Breton's *découpage* and layout practices. This chapter sets up the following chapter which focuses on how Breton's experimental novel, *Arcane 17*, is based on the collection of the *Scrapbook*. These last two chapters then work together to show how Breton's creative work was also dependent on the appropriation and collection of ephemeral material, such as paper clippings, postcards and other small items.

I have chosen these specific case studies for the chapters of my dissertation because they show the unequivocal and direct process of collecting objects or paper materials for the production of art and writing. Yet the practice of collecting in Breton's work reaches beyond this scope to suggest a comprehensive practice within most all of his literary work. However, because

of the vast and non-specific nature of the collecting practices within these micro-collections—my archival research presented in this conclusion suggests more of a tendency that supports my overall hypothesis, rather than specific case studies.

Preparatory Dossiers

Just as we saw in the genesis of *Arcane 17* from the *Scrapbook*, Breton's archives contain other more diffuse collections specific to each of his major experimental novels. In the holdings of the Jacques Doucet library in Paris, and in the virtual database of the Breton collection, there are work dossiers and preparatory items that correspond to the novels of *Nadja* (1928), *Les vases communicants* (1932), *L'Amour fou* (1937) as well as *Arcane 17* (1947).¹²⁸ The fact that these remnants exist, and that Breton preserved them show the importance and value he attributed to the work he devoted to each of these major books in his career. While some of these dossiers were compiled retroactively to his death (those of *L'Amour fou* and *Arcane 17*), within the organization and conservation of his manuscripts upon the itemization of his collection in 2003, the dossier of *Nadja* and in part, the physical compilation of notes for *Les vases communicants* were instead found as folders within his atelier and thus reveal the tangible result of Breton, the collector. My investigation of these dossiers shows that Breton was careful and meticulous about the whole project of writing a book. Just as he used material from the *Scrapbook* for the conception and writing of *Arcane 17*, these dossiers and remnants reveal meditated compilations devoted to the creation, drafting and editorial work of writing. In the following sections I will delineate the dossiers' contents and archival remnants in relation to the novels, focusing on the example of *Nadja* within a closer reading of the literary text itself.

¹²⁸ The dossier comprises notes on *Ajours* which was added to the 1947 edition.

Arcane 17 (1947)

The holdings of the *Arcane 17* archives contain, above all, numerous pages of notes, drafts of manuscripts and 4 reproductions of Matta's drawings for the Surrealist Tarot cards used to illustrate the first edition of the novel. Included in the volume of preparatory notes are: 1 page of typed notes on the myth of Mélusine; 1 page of notes hand written by Breton on the « Court de Gebelin » with a drawing of the 17th tarot at the bottom-left hand side of the page; 1 page of hand-written notes on Oswald Wirth; 24 pages of notes handwritten by Kurt L. Seligmann (most notably on Hebrew Characters, the figure of Isis and research on Arcane images) of which 17 are written on paper printed with his own personal letterhead. These last notes (those of Seligmann) contain various annotations written by Breton in blue crayon and therefore show Breton's reflections on, and perhaps appropriation of Seligmann's writings. In addition to the preparatory notes are also more specific pieces of writing and drafts of sections of the novel including: 5 pages of Breton's manuscript drafts of sections of the novel as well as proofs of the ending section, "Ajours" and Breton's essay, "Lumière froide".¹²⁹

L'Amour fou (1937)

The items preserved for the novel, *L'Amour fou* are catalogued within the Breton database and contain: one manuscript draft of the beginning of the second part of the novel, entitled "pouvez-vous dire...du nécessaire" hand-written by Breton which is dated from 1933, four years prior to the completion and publication of the final version of the novel.¹³⁰ The date and fragmentary nature of this draft may imply that this was written without forethought to the

¹²⁹ For consultation see catalogue numbers BRT 97-100; BRT 120 within La Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet in Paris.

¹³⁰ Lot 2179

novel, and was later incorporated in it as the novel came to fruition. The notice in the Breton collection database emphasizes the numerous corrections and redactions which took place on this draft, pointing out the meticulous nature of Breton's writing, and habit of reviewing and rewriting sentences.¹³¹ Also included within the preparatory items found in the collection are a series of 11 photographs (some reproductions, some original), which were used to illustrate the 20 images printed in the book.¹³² A few of these photographs are annotated on the back, revealing the page number within the novel to which the image corresponds.

Literary Collections

Whereas the items discussed in relation to the two aforementioned novels show that Breton accumulated and preserved items which he used in the creation and writing of his literary work, the items I am about to discuss were collected and or assembled together within the construct of a dossier, or a contained space by Breton himself. This gesture, to place items within a space specified as "other" suggests a direct gesture towards the relationship between items, and hence points towards the creation of a literary collection.

¹³¹ <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100144940>

¹³² Lots 5407 (Portrait by Picasso, Gallery Kahnweiler); 5145 (Spoon-Shoe, Man Ray); 5406 (Post card of the Martiane Puerto beach, Anonymous); 5289 (Sculpture of Aeneas carrying his father, Man Ray); 5404 (Object from which a stream of milk..., Man Ray); 5405 (Suburbs of Prague, Unknown); 5147 (Drawing of the "airplane-swallowing" gardens of Max Ernst, Unknown); 5146 (Painting by Cezanne, Vizzavona); 5286 (Poem-object of "Me, her", Man Ray); 5148 (The Great Australian Barrier, World Wide Photo); 5287 (Quai of Flowers in Paris, Brassai).

Les vases communicants (1932)

Items collected in relation to the work of *Les vases communicants* are a compilation of photographs, comprehensive notes on Freud's *La Science des Rêves* from 1931 along with the original copy of Breton's book, as well as a newspaper article about the publication of Breton's novel.¹³³ The photographs collected were found in two envelopes annotated by Breton as "Documents Relatifs aux Vases Communicants" and "Photos *Les Vases Communicants*."¹³⁴ The images preserved in these envelope collections are not photographic reproductions of paintings, drawings, sculptures, objects, post-cards and photographs of natural landscapes as in the case of *L'Amour fou*, but original photographs that Breton took (or had taken by those around him) of himself, his family and his travels. However, not all of the photographs in these envelopes were used for illustrating the novel. Only 2 of the 12 photographs in this collection were used for the 7 illustrations within the book thus suggesting perhaps that Breton had at one point conceived of using more images from his personal life than were decided upon for the final publication. The two photographs used from these envelopes were: the photograph of the "ideal palace" of the post-man on horseback ("Au 'palais idéal' du facteur cheval") and the photograph of "Casino Eden" ("À Eden casino"). Interestingly, one of the other photographs within this collection, which was omitted from publication, closely resembles another that was published: "At the bend of the little bridge," (published) the same subject as "Bridge on a river" (unpublished).¹³⁵ One photograph even shows Breton "writing *Les vases communicants*" in Castellane, under an arch, hard at work writing on what looks like to be a dining table.

¹³³ The article is a glowing short review on the novel, author and date unknown, included in BRT 73, Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet.

¹³⁴ Lot 2172; <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100061950>.

¹³⁵ See photograph online for comparison.

The notes on Freud's *La Science des Rêves* span the entirety of 19 pages all within the confines of a child's composition book.¹³⁶ Breton often used such "cahiers d'écolier" to take notes or draft manuscripts and several of them can be found in his archives. These "cahiers" featured a specific subject, figure or animal on the cover in colored illustration, with a description on the back. This particular notebook featured "La girafe." For the most part, these illustrations have no direct relation with the content of Breton's writing. However, in this case, one could make the argument that such an animal, exotic in nature had something to do with the possibility of dreaming, especially considering the emphasis Breton gave to Freud's idea of a "dream within a dream" in his written notes. While the notes which Breton took in this cahier can be traced directly to passages within *Les vases communicants*, thus showing the direct impact of Breton's reading of Freud on this novel, I will not go into the details of that genesis here. What I find more interesting is how this cahier was preserved alongside Breton's own copy of *La Science des Rêves*, signed by Freud and dedicated to Breton. The book alongside the notes, in addition to the article-clipping post-publication of the novel, signals a similar gesture of representing the origin of an idea or image, along with its copy, as seen within creation of *Arcane 17*. Yet, within the journals *Littérature*, *Littérature la nouvelle série* and *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, this particular tendency reaches its greatest exemplification.

Revue Truffées (Stuffed Journals): Littérature (20 issues, March 1919-August 1921), Littérature la nouvelle série (13 issues, March 1922- June 1924) and Le surréalisme au service de la révolution (6 issues, July 1930-May 1933)

Breton was the main editor of these major surrealist journals, and he kept a published, bound and recovered copy containing all issues of each journal within his personal library. For

¹³⁶ BRT 73, Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet.

the most part, these copies were prized mementos, as the binding of the issues was accomplished by a skilled craftsman, and with luxurious materials.¹³⁷ In particular, the copy of *Littérature la nouvelle série* remains a beautiful example of such fine work done by the book-binder, Paul Bonet. Bound in Moroccan leather, the body of the album is black, with the edge of the binding carefully painted in gold. Along this edge the name of the journal is spelled vertically, with each letter highlighted by alternating colored pieces of leather. The binding also holds the dates of the publication, and specifies the total number of issues (13 issues, from March 1922- June 1924).¹³⁸ These recovered journal-albums, bound with care, could in themselves constitute micro-collections of the journals as each one contains the complete series of issues published. The fact that this bibliophilic practice was indeed “surrealist” as noted by the famed book-binder artist, Lucienne Talheimer—who bound and recovered Breton’s manuscript, *Arcane 17*— suggests the practice as common, especially for André Breton.¹³⁹ Yet what makes these albums so extraordinary is the fact that they are “stuffed” or “truffled” (“*truffées*”) with the original documents that make up their editorial content: glued, taped or placed within the very pages of the journals are the letters, manuscripts, notes, drawings and photographs which served as the primary substance of the journal’s printed page. These items are not just placed haphazardly in the journal, nor are found at the beginning or the end of an issue, but are meticulously preserved *in front, back or next to* the printed copy of the original text, image or item. For example, in the first issue of *La nouvelle série* (March 1922), we find 10 original items. Among these treasures

¹³⁷ Luxurious bindings were common at this time, fostered by a kind of “bibliophilia” among the surrealists. See Brown, “L’au-delà du livre surréaliste, le réseau bibliophilique” in *Mélusine*, n.31.

¹³⁸ BRT 162 at Doucet. See also <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100253511>

¹³⁹ See Talheimer.

are: the hand written poem by Benjamin Péret, “Ma main dans la bière” taped next to the printed version; a manuscript text by Louis Aragon entitled “Revue Rhénane”; the original essay “Un bon mouvement” by Philippe Soupault as well as a hand-written letter from Giorgio de Chirico to André Breton sent from Rome, beginning with “My dear friend”—a rare testament to the friendship held between these two men before their falling out soon after. In particular, this letter holds a special resonance in relation to the printed reproduction of his *Cerveau de l’enfant* of which the original painting hung in Breton’s atelier for many years (only to be relinquished in exchange for the prized oceanic sculpture “Uli”, but with regret as expressed by his annotated list for the book project “Quelle est ma chambre au bout de voyage”). These few examples show to what extent Breton valued these items, giving foresight to the eventual possibility that these manuscripts would one day be valuable to a larger public as well.¹⁴⁰

While *Littérature and Littérature la nouvelle série* were preserved as “revues truffées,” found as such within the atelier in 2003 and acquired by the Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet, the journal, *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution* was acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale and was taken apart and rebound under the direction of Antoine Coron, the conservationist of rare books within the “Grande Réserve.” This journal, rebound by the contemporary Renaud Vernier, student of the École Estienne from 1968-1972, is also a beautiful work of art, but was accomplished post-auction in 2003. The journal is now divided in multiple dossiers: one for each of the printed issues, and one for each of the authors who contributed original manuscripts to the journal. It is unfortunate that the trace of Breton’s hand has been lost in this example, as suggested by the digitization of the issues prior to auction.¹⁴¹ In relation to the other examples of

¹⁴⁰ See Graham, *La Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet* (2007).

¹⁴¹ See the collection of issues online, <http://www.andrebretton.fr/work/56600100720921>

such directed and intentional placement, and the fact that the Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet took pains to preserve the journal albums of *Littérature* as found, I would argue that *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution* would have shown the same meticulous archival practice of placing the original next to the copy in this version too.¹⁴²

Trace and the Copy

Thus far, a unique tension has been identified within Breton's collecting practice. Breton seems, at times, to straddle the practice of archiving along with the practice of collecting. As we have just seen within the examples of the "stuffed" journals, Breton's tendency is to place the original item with the copy. Yet within the compilations in relation to the novels, Breton's collecting practice seems to consistently combine items which relate to each other in specific ways, and for the development of something creative beyond the items themselves. This tendency contradicts the archival tendency, which is also one that can be categorized as a more traditional model of collecting.

The traditional model of an archive seeks to "trace" history and substantiate it through a work's original substance, the primary manuscript documents. According to Paul Ricoeur, who interprets the definitions of the archive from the *Encyclopaedia Universalis* and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, an archive is a set of organized documents that is produced by an entity or person for the purpose of conservation and as means to trace the original history that the document represents (66-67). This tendency to "trace" history then seems to be in opposition to Breton's desire to create and poeticize items collected in view of something larger than the

¹⁴² During a short informal interview with Antoine Coron in 2011, I asked why this reshuffling of the journal had been done in relation to the other revues truffées. He responded: "Il y a eu passé 40 années depuis la mort d'André Breton et si vous croiriez à l'importance des placements vous êtes bien idéaliste."

history itself. While normally an object appropriated is favored and valued independently, then put to rest within a collection, Breton's surrealist collecting practice does not stop here. He seeks a perpetual movement for his collected items in which they are used again— their signification never at a stand still, their placement always in question. Perhaps we can therefore view these stuffed journals as fragmentary proof of Breton's focus on the allegorical nature of objects to both point to a past and represent the future.

Within chapter four I explored this tension as appearing within the experimental novel, *Arcane 17*. While Breton collected items in his *Scrapbook* and seemed to be interested in the thematic nature of “origin” itself with respect to his focus on the primordial aspect of Agate stones in the collection, this was done repeatedly for the creation and writing of his novel. Within the following close reading and analysis of *Nadja*, I will return to the idea of collecting in view of surrealist literary production, focusing on the use and “collection” of the photograph.

Nadja (1928)

The materials preserved in relation to Breton's celebrated novel, *Nadja* were placed in a brown folder that Breton annotated himself, with green lettering at the top of the folder that spells “NADJA.” Within the folder, Breton kept the 27 original letters (dated from October 9th, 1926- March 4th, 1927), which Léona Délcourt wrote to Breton during their relationship. Along with the letters are the drawings which Nadja composed of various things, some of which are photographically reproduced within the novel itself. Included with the materials related to the novel, but not contained in the folder, are the corrected proofs of the 2 versions from 1927 and 1963, along with the original typed manuscript of the novel as translated into English for publication with Hours Press, edited by Nancy Cunard. In addition to these original items and

textual proofs are a series of photographic proofs for the book's illustrations: 39 reproductions for the 48 images that would appear in the 1963 version of the novel.¹⁴³

Written in 1928, *Nadja* is a classic of Surrealist literature and is often thought to be the text that best expresses the surrealist mentality and attitude. It is written in the style of a memoir and tells the story of a romantic relationship between Breton, the narrator, and a woman, who calls herself "Nadja." The book recounts their encounters over a number of days with emphasis on the peculiar occurrences and marvelous coincidences that take place—specifically within the theoretical beginnings of what Breton will later define as "objective chance." Within the context of collecting, the novel of *Nadja* may take on numerous interpretations and has been called a "textual collection" by Abigail Susik.¹⁴⁴ In my close reading and analysis of the novel here, I will build on Susik's statement to discuss *Nadja* as a "textual collection"—but I will go beyond the structural implication of this statement to specifically discuss Breton's poetic of collecting which we have explored throughout this dissertation.

As a textual collection, that is a collection of "texts," the novel is composed of writing and photographs. The novel can be divided into two sections and each contains a series of elements. These sections can be clearly divided by their content, and thus appear independent from each other. They therefore may be considered as micro-collections in themselves. However, I propose that they also function together, much like other manifestations of Breton's practice of collecting. Because the use of the photograph in *Nadja* is so defined, and holds a specific place in the genesis of the novel, I will consider Breton's idea of the photograph in relation to the novel as a textual collection.

¹⁴³ BRT 43-50, Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet.

¹⁴⁴ "The Surrealist Collections Conference," Georgetown University, 2011.

The first section of the novel (pages 13-18) contains a series of commentaries and quotations from authors and artists in which Breton cites inspiration from the following: Victor Hugo (13); Flaubert (14)¹⁴⁵; Gustave Courbet (15); Giorgio de Chirico (15-16); J.K. Huysmans (17) and Lautréamont (18). The formation of a collection in this case is simple; it is an accumulation of Breton's preferred literary and artistic figures. As the story seeks to define the character of Breton himself, and answer the preliminary question of "Qui-suis je?" this first section seems to act as a prelude or origin to the second section which will begin to focus on Breton's own life, and pivotal transformation in relation to the character of Nadja, along with the experience of "objective chance."

In the second section, the novel begins to recount a narrative in the form of a series of episodic experiences that are paired with a series of illustrations (page 20-end). Each episodic event that is recounted seems to generate Breton's narrative of self-discovery through the 1920's Parisian landscape, and is made visual through one of the 48 photographic reproductions of documents, drawings, people and objects whose presence in the novel illustrate these particular moments. This second section, which can be considered as a series of these events, is then also a kind of collection, in which each event is paired with a photograph, which offers a tracing of its visualization.

Breton's declared use of photography was initially born of his "anti-literary" sentiments, embedded in his rejection of the 19th century novel. In the Surrealist Manifesto of 1924 he clearly outlined a rejection of what he believed to be superfluous descriptions and denounces the

¹⁴⁵ Apparently between Breton's rejection of Flaubert in the 1924 manifesto and the writing of the novel *Nadja*, Breton had time to reflect on the work of Flaubert, and here celebrates his use of "extra-literary" elements within his writing.

style of Dostoyevsky, Flaubert and Proust where “each one has his own little ‘observation’”¹⁴⁶ (Manifesto 16). Breton wanted to do away with style altogether and explained that the tone adopted for the narration of *Nadja* was to be that of a “medical observation” – and “above all that of neuropsychiatry” which was seen to “keep trace of all examination and interrogation with no regard for style” (8). In this vein, Breton embraces a style of writing based on life-events which he sees as nothing more than the “true facts” and endeavors to write *Nadja* as if inhabiting his text like a “house made of glass”¹⁴⁷ with translucent walls (18). His goal is “to relate [...] the most remarkable events of his life”¹⁴⁸ and to document the “real” in writing instead of what he saw as “pretending” in fiction (19).¹⁴⁹

In the first edition of *Nadja* published in 1928, Breton does not directly speak of the images and there is no didactic explication of visual art in the text.¹⁵⁰ Yet the idea of the photograph, and what it represents in his writing and the global conception of his work exists as stated in *Surrealism and Painting* published by Breton the same year: “the photographic proof [...] is of [an] emotional value which [...] is one of the most precious *objects* of exchange”

¹⁴⁶ “chacun y va de sa petite ‘observation’” (Manifesto, 16).

¹⁴⁷ “maison de verre” (18)

¹⁴⁸ “relater [...] les faits les plus marquants de [s]a vie” (19)

¹⁴⁹ Breton, the narrator, criticizes novelists as those who “prétendent mettre en scène des personnages distincts d’eux-mêmes” (17).

¹⁵⁰ Although Breton was proud of having written the original draft in just under a month in August of 1927, the novel would not be published until 1928, with the help of Emmanuel Berl. After completing the text Breton employed Jacques A. Boiffard to do take most of the photos (other photographers include Henri Manel, Pablo Voita, Valentine Hugo, André Bouin), and he would also ask Blanche Derval and Lise Meyer to help him prepare the photographic illustration of the book. In December of 1927, after his encounter with Suzanne Muzard, Breton would edit and rewrite some of the ending sections of the text.

(52).¹⁵¹ In 1962, and in the second edition of the book, Breton added a preface that gives the specific explanation that “the abundant photographic illustration has the goal to eliminate all description”¹⁵² (8). Breton’s use of the photograph in *Nadja* thus can be mainly understood as a scientific object used for documentary reasons. While the use of images would radically develop over time to become essential to surrealist art, photography in this moment was prescribed as a supplement to writing—a supplement that would provide an instant visual understanding of what could be drawn by hand.¹⁵³

Even though Breton’s original idea of the photograph was purely functional, Breton would continuously rethink and repurpose the image throughout the history of the book. It is curious that it is not until Breton begins his narrative in relation to meeting Nadja (which happens twenty pages into the book) that the photographs also begin to appear imbedded within the text. Because the narrative of his episodic experiences is also the search for marvelous instances, just like in the event of objective chance, this surrealist theoretical precept of finding material objects which correspond to an internal desire seems part and parcel of the appearance of the photograph in the text itself. Through the use of photographs, it seems as if Breton is recollecting the objective nature of the episodic event, attempting to lay a material claim to the moment of objective chance experienced. Just before the first photograph appears, Breton

¹⁵¹ Translation by author: “L’épreuve photographique prise en elle-même, toute revêtue qu’elle est de cette valeur émotive qui en fait un des plus précieux *objets* d’échange (et quand donc tous les livres valables cesseront-ils d’être illustres de dessins pour ne plus paraître qu’avec des photographies?”(52)

¹⁵² “l’abondante illustration photographique a pour objet d’éliminer toute description.”(8)

¹⁵³ Fox Talbot originally called the technology “photogenic drawing” and used the phrase “words of light” in 1839 to describe the new medium. See North. 4.

addresses the reader, and explains that he is about to relate only the most important and curious events in his life by which he also wants to make “sparks” which will allow for sight:

[...] from the smallest to the most important event, [...] the idea that has introduced me to a world as such [...] is that of a sudden coming-together, petrifying coincidences, reflexes prevailing over all other mental possibility, [like] cords struck on a piano, lightening bolts that make us *see*, but then *see*, if they weren't even more sudden than the others (19).¹⁵⁴

Breton elucidates that he will only tell us the most important episodes of his life – those which are sudden important encounters and petrifying coincidences, but what is most striking in his explanation is that his metaphorical figure for these textual episodes, *lightening* is contingent on our ability “to see.” The verb “to see” (*voir*) is repeated here – a textual imaging of the natural phenomena which usually strikes more than once and a semantic repetition implying an impending and second sight which exaggerates the first. It seems as if Breton is unconsciously suggesting in this introductory statement to his story that the consequence in telling of an important episodic event in the text necessitates a kind of visualization of this episode and or the appearance of the photograph.

¹⁵⁴ My translation from “[...] je n’ai dessein de relater, en marge du récit que je vais entreprendre, que les épisodes les plus marquants de ma vie *telle que je peux concevoir hors de son plan organique*, soit dans la mesure même ou elle est livrée aux hasards, au plus petit comme au plus grand, ou regimbant contre l’idée commune que je m’en fais, elle m’introduit dans un monde comme défendu qui est celui des rapprochements soudains, des pétrifiantes coïncidences, des réflexes primant tout autre essor du mental, des accords plaques comme au piano, des *éclairs qui feraient voir, mais alors voir*, s’ils n’étaient encore plus rapides que les autres.” (19)

This discursive statement which defines Breton's desire to "see" the event, seems to justify Breton's use of the photograph as a re-presentation of a specific episode. Yet what makes Breton's specific interest in the photograph even more interesting with the context of collecting, is that many of these episodes often have objects as subject matter. This is due to Breton's interest in the finding of an object as eliciting a specific realization of an unknown desire, as stipulated by his theory in "objective chance." The photographs too, then are representations of these objects that hold a special meaning.

The tendency to a picture an object within surrealist photography has been discussed by Walter Benjamin as a means of coming closer to "reality" through its reproduction. While this seems contradictory, what Benjamin suggests is that photography held the capacity to dispel an object's "aura." For Benjamin, "aura" is defined as "a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance of semblance of distance, no matter how close the object may be" (2006: 61). Aura here then is the romantic tendency to view an object or thing as "autonomous," full of mystery and worthy only of contemplation. Benjamin thus touches upon the same argument that Bürger takes up within his theory of the avant-garde that surrealist art was an attempt to radicalize and go beyond this cultural tendency to view art and cultural objects as independent of everyday life. Within the essay "A Short History of Photography," published only 3 years after *Nadja* came out, Benjamin talks about how surrealist photography took after Atget's photography of Paris which "initiates the emancipation of object from aura" (61). Benjamin discusses this "pumping aura out of reality" in terms of possession and collecting: "everyday the need to *possess* the object in close-up in the form of a picture, or rather a copy, becomes more imperative" (61). Within the context of *Nadja* it seems that we can discuss the use of the

photograph as a surrealist means of coming closer to reality. This reality though, necessitates the collecting of an object through its *copy*.

Benjamin's statement both illuminates and problematizes Breton's own collecting practice. Breton's initial desire within *Nadja* to relate only "the facts" and see "reality" for what it is, through the rejection of literary fiction, and the use of photography as a kind of means of objective "observation" seems to parallel a Benjaminian interpretation of the photograph as an antidote to aura. Benjamin's collection of the copy favors an objectivity in search of reality—a kind of practice that dispels the aura and autonomy of an object rather than celebrates it. In this sense, the use of photographs in *Nadja* can be argued to specifically be the result of a collecting practice that is also a kind of revolutionary praxis to bring back the meaning of everyday life.¹⁵⁵ Yet, the implication of Benjamin's statement seems more complex. The repetitive and continuous "need to possess" the reproduction of a thing also seems to be born of the desire to possess the thing itself. Coming closer to reality of the thing through a copy thus seems to contradict the very nature of why a collector desires to "possess" an object in the first place.

Perhaps we may extend Benjamin's theory beyond the text itself to comment upon Breton's atelier collection and his production of this very novel. In the novel, Breton speaks specifically about his real-life activity of flea-market hunting as a "quest of those outdated,

¹⁵⁵ While perhaps this interpretation holds true for the most part there may be an exception. In 1963 Breton would change some of the original images, and would include the only "photo-montage" of the entire book: a collage made from cut-up portraits of Léona Delcourt, the real name of the character who called herself "Nadja." This notorious image is the only representation of the woman to whom this book is dedicated. It is an image of her enigmatic "fern-like" eyes, mirrored and repeated in four strips, referencing Breton's poetic portrayal of the beginning of their failed relationship. Since photo-montage is the act of combining fragments whose meaning may be doubled, changed or repeated in different ways resulting in more than a purely documentary illustration, does the use of the photograph here dispel aura, or exacerbate it?

fragmented, unusable and almost incomprehensible objects that can't [be found] anywhere else, [the quest as] almost perverse in the sense that [when I find it (the object)] I hear it and love it" (55). Breton's personal desire to collect these objects thus seems to fall within the traditional category of a collector who wishes to possess the object itself. The irregular, shellacked, white cylinder object found at the flea market as something that immediately strikes him as mysterious and desirable. The bronzed glove is also a desired serendipitous replacement for a sky-blue glove that a visitor left on the table (57). Yet these objects which appear as photographic reproductions within the book were Breton's real possessions. Breton's desire to document the objects of his life through photographic reproductions in the novel seems to exemplify Benjamin's idea of the necessity to possess a copy while also desiring the real thing itself. This contradiction is reflected within the relationship between Breton's personal atelier collection and those objects from this collection that appear within the novel.

Closing Remarks

Eight months before André Breton's death in September of 1966, Albert Skira, Breton's friend and longtime colleague within the world of publishing dedicated to the avant-garde, wrote to him about a book project which would reveal, in the poet's own words, the importance and history of his personal collection at 42 rue Fontaine. Breton had been the first to suggest such a book for Skira's collection, "Les Sentiers de l'Art," while visiting together in the privacy of Breton's atelier—what Skira called Breton's "isoloir merveilleux"—in January of 1966. The project so struck Skira as a wonderful idea, one that would possibly end in the publication of one of the "plus beaux fleurons de ma carrière d'éditeur," that after a single letter exchange, Skira drafted a contract for Breton to sign in less than 20 days. According to the contract, the book was

to showcase 16-24 objects in color, be no less than 50 pages long in text, and completed by the end of December that year. Inspired by Xavier de Maistre's *Voyage au bout de ma chambre*, Breton decided on the antithetical title *Quelle ma chambre au bout de voyage* and drafted a list of 54 items, focusing on a selection of objects which would be the subject of his written meditations. This annotated list— conserved in Breton's archives at the Library of Jacques Doucet in Paris— is the only remnant of this book to be. Debilitated by illness soon after the contract was signed, Breton was unable to compose the draft envisioned by his outline and took with him to the grave an explanation of his objects, leaving us to explore the relationship between his collection and his life through his writings posthumously.

In this context, my dissertation has endeavored to ask some of the questions posed by the lacunae of this unpublished work and explored others which have sought to analyze Breton's relationship to objects and writing. Through an investigation of specific objects and literary works from Breton's collection, I have shown Breton's collecting practice as a specifically surrealist process of creation. Yet, my study is but a preliminary exploration of Breton's poetic of collecting. The literary collections within Breton's archives discussed within this conclusion reveal new sources to study and question. These last remarks thus bring closure to my dissertation, while inviting future scholarship on the topic.

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APPENDIX TO THE SCRAPBOOK

The following is an inventory of the *Scrapbook* as I consulted it in the BK, 2011. Corresponding images are found at www.andrebretton.fr.

Page 1: Inside cover of the book, blank.

Page 2: First individual sheet blank except for bottom notation: “Scrap book no.531 containing 30 10x 12 1/2 inch sheets for extra sheets ask for Filler No. 531-F consisting of 20 sheets. Made in the USA.” Bottom of page also shows accession stamp to the Bibliothèque Kandinsky. Stamp reads: “Archives MNAM, 10590 – pages numbered by MNAM.”

Page 3: Newspaper article. Header of news page with article title and publication title preserved: “Les Agates de Percé: matière d’une nouvelle industrie locale” from *La Patrie*, Dimanche 3 septembre 1944. “Texte et photos par Eugene Stucker”. The article is cut and pasted entirely on one page. With 2 images: each feature 2 children (1 illustrating 2 girls and 1 illustrating 2 boys) searching for agates on the shores of Percé.

Page 4: 3 colored scenic postcards of the canadian coastline placed in an off-set vertical layout. Explanatory headlines written in both French and English starting from the top card: Card 1 entitled “vue emotionnante à Marsouins P.O. – A thrilling View at Marsouins, P.O. – P.B. 42”, Card 2 entitled “Curve after curve along the Rugged Gaspé Highway, P.Q. – G. M. 17, Tournant après Tournant, le long de la route escarpée, de Gaspé”. Card 3: “Le Rocher de Percé et la ville,

vue de la colline du Sud-Ouest. Percé Rock, P.Q., and Village from S.W. Hillside. – p.W. 5 “.

While the first two cards picture only the coastline, the third pictures the Percé Rock in the distance.

Taped in binding between the two pages is an individual item: panoramic photograph of the Percé rock formation found in Card 3 of preceding page (Page 4). Provenance of photo unknown- possibly Elisa Breton's, but could have been a copy bought at a store. POV from sea or seashore. Boats and ocean in frame.

Page 5: Newspaper article. “Le Rocher Percé: Joyau de la Gaspésie” from same newspaper as Sheet 3: *La Patrie*, dated Dimanche, 10 septembre 1944. “Texte et photos par Eugene Stucker.”

Both articles seem to be from the same columnist, and weekly column about the Gaspé.

Featuring two photographs, both of specific arch formations of the Rocher Percé. First photograph features an arch still intact. Caption from first photograph reads: “Voici comment le Rocher Percé est ... percé. L’arche a une hauteur de 60 pieds. Son creusage a été effectué par la poussée des vagues qui, y rencontrant de la pierre moins résistante, ont fini par la désagréger et par ‘percer’ le Rocher de part en part.” Second photograph features a collapsed arch. Caption from second photograph reads: “Cette vue, prise de l’est à l’ouest, fait voir à gauche le bloc qui est séparé de la masse principale du Rocher. La séparation n’était qu’une arche il y a un siècle. Mais le haut de l’arche est tombé le 17 juin 1845.”

Page 6: Newspaper article, continuation and images. Last section of preceding newspaper article continues on top left of this page: “vrai musée de fossiles marins.” Page contains 4 images: 1

placed directly to the right side of article features the Percé rock from what seems to be the hull of a boat. 2 below the small section of text, features two images of the same subject (seabirds – namely Gannets- lining the side of a rock wall) and from the same perspective, one B and W (photograph) the other in color (purchased image? not photographic paper). Then the last and bottom photo is a close up of Gannets (taken by Breton or Elisa?).

Page 7: Two news or magazine clippings. Origins, dates unknown. Left hand: A French song about the war (*Le Chant des Partisans*) complete with musical score and lyrics. This item is placed next to a survey which features an image of men walking into a church and reads at the top: “How often do we go to religious services? A survey of U.S. Public Opinion.” Percentages are listed below with 45 % 4 or more times a month; 20% being 1-3 times a month; 17% being 1-11 times a year and 18 % being less than once a year and never.

Page 8 – 9: Newspaper article. Page 8: Title and header from newspaper page cut and pasted in 6 separate lines as to preserve source and origin: “La nature envahit une ville fantôme du lac Saint-Jean. Une cité morte garde ses rues et ses maisons désertes depuis 1927.” from page “10” of “Le Petit Journal, 24 septembre 1944”. Peribonca, Lac-St-Jean, 23. – (Spécial au Petit Journal par Phyl LaFerrière). “Il existe quelque part au lac St-Jean, à mi-chemin entre Chambord et Roberval, une petite ville abandonnée, une cité morte, où depuis 1927 n’habite âme qui vive. Cette ville s’appelait autrefois St-Georges de Val-Jalbert. ». Page 8: two photographs – one of “M. J.- Arthur Simard, qui voici, est le gardien de la cité morte de Val-Jalbert. Il est chargé de prévenir la destruction, par les vandales, de cette ville abandonnée. (Photo du “Petit Journal”). Second photograph header reads: “Voici l’école St. Georges telle qu’elle nous apparaît

aujourd'hui dans son grad état d'abandon. Avant sa fermeture en 1927. Cette institution comptait huit classes et recevait plus de trois cents élèves. On peut encore juger de l'aspect affrayant que présentat cet immeuble, il y a dix-sept ans. (Photo du "Petit Journal"). Page 9 four photographs and three headers: first top "Voici l'aspect que préseentent deux rues désertes de la cité morte. A gauche, nous apercevons le côté nor de la rue Dubuc. A droite, c'est la rue St. Georges. Nous y remarquons a gauche l'hotel abandonné et, a droite (au premier plan), le bureau de poste, Les herbes et les fleurs sauvages ont envahi ces avenues qui, avant 1927, bourdonnaient d'activité. Aujourd'hui, le silence et le mystere regnent sur cette ville abandonnée et qui se meurt sous les intempéries des saisons. (Photo du "Petit Journal"); "Cette photo nous fait voir l'ancien moulin de Val-Jalbert qui employait jadis plusieurs centaines d'ouvriers et de techniciens. On aperçoit aussi la magnifique chute Ouitchouan, d'une hauteur de 210 pieds, don't les eaux alimentaient l'usine de pulpe aujourd'hui délaissé. (Photo du "Petit Journal"); "Le monument apparissant ici dans un charmant décor champetre n'est autre que la statue de saint Georges, qui se dresse encore la ou, il y a dix-sept ans, se trouvait la pace de l'église. (Photo du "Petit Journal").

Page 10: Hand written by Breton for reference in upper right hand corner, "France Amérique 2 juillet 1944." to the right of the clipped article heading: "Deux Hommes entre les Hommes Roosevelt et De Gaulle" par Georges Duthuit. Breton also emphatically marked two exclamation points on each side of this header with blue pencil. In addition to the exclamation points on each side of the header, he underlined in red pencil certain words and sentences of the article. The last section of the article extends beyond the page on the lower right hand corner and must be flipped

down to read. I have transcribed it here, as it was not included for digitization in the catalogue, nor Breton website:

“... le maintenir dans la ligne shakespearienne, pendant que les villages de la Normandie flambent, a débarquer d’un navire de guerre pour un tour de visite sur un plage de son pays.”

Page 11: Magazine clipping, origin unknown. “Chanson de l’université de Strasbourg” par Louis Aragon. André Breton Breton’s hand writing: exclamation point in blue crayon next to the following stanza :

“Les fils de Strasbourg qui tombèrent
N’auront pas vainement péri
Si leur sang rouge refleurit
Sur le chemin de la patrie
Et s’adresse un nouveau Kléber.”

Page 12: Article. Origin unknown. “Gide jugé par Aragon.” Par Louis Aragon.

Page 13: 2 articles, side by side. Both annotated to be from the paper *Le Jour* by Breton. On the left: Montréal, samedi 20 janvier 1945 “Quand M. Aragon...” de Félicien Mondor. On the right: Quand Salvador Dali partait a la conquete de l’amerique... de E.-Ch. H. (Le Jour must have been an easy to get North American journal because in Arcane 17 the article “Retour à la sauvagerie”

on the page 18 of the original manuscript was indicated that the article was “extrait du journal” of *Le jour* (Montréal 4 novembre 1944).

Page 14: Two articles. Left “Why I Became a Communist” by Pablo Picasso from “New Masses” 24th October, 1944. Right : “Joan Miro’s First Pictures.” Origin Unknown.

Page 15-16: Exhibition catalogue. List of works exposed at the Pierre Matisse gallery in NY from Jan. 9- Feb. 3 1945.

Page 17: Article. “Nouvelles D’André Breton” de Guy Gillequin. “11-1-45”

Page 18: “De Gaulle Foes paid by U.S., Paris is told” from “The New York times”. Origin, date unknown.

Page 19-20: Exhibition Catalogue for Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Cornell and Yves Tanguy. “Through the big end of the opera glass.” “Opening Tuesday, Dec. 7th. Julien Levy Gallery. 42 East 57, NY. Image of upside-down cherub printed above text. Back side shows a chessboard “White to play and win” – “Look through from other side against light.”

Page 21: Back page/ continuation of catalogue. Print by Joseph Cornell, Print by Yves Tanguy.

Page 21: Article. “Levy’s Gambit” under the “Art” section in “Newsweek” dated December 25th, 1944. Article discusses surrealists and chess playing. 2 images: 1 of Max Ernst playing

chess with stylized men, 2 image of painting by Kay Sage: “spook on a springboard”. *Last page of glued articles in Scrapbook.*

Loose Press Clippings found stuffed in Scrapbook:

(1) Article/essay. “Letter from France” by Lincoln Kirstein. From section “Books and the Arts” of *The Nation*. “Somewhere in France, December 3.” pp. 103-106.

Summary: All three entire pages are preserved on which this article appears. It recounts, with detail, the numerous goings on in the world of art and literature just after the end of the war. It reports that “the real intellectual, moral and artistic rebirth is bound to be slow in coming, why not? [...] it is an error to think that suffering on the scale endured by France is “good” for the artist. It kills art and paralyzes artists so that their experiences are still-born so far as serving subject matter.” Kirstein reports the messiness of rebuilding the institutions of the press and the literary world after the war: the collaborating writers of the war, were now being purged and “everyone, it seemed had behaved badly except a few close friends. It was just like 1938”.

Going through the well-known writers of the day, Kirstein reports that Gide had been sending his journal of the arrival of Americans in Algiers, and adds his name to the roster of the writers of the resistance. That Aragon denied that Gide had the right to call himself a Frenchman since apparently Gide had taken advantage of some aspects of the German occupation. Kirstein goes on to list the journalists and writers who had committed crimes, being a part of the Vichy press: Stéphane Lauzanne was shot, De Brassilach awaiting trial, Drieu de la Rochelle unsuccessful at suicide, De Montherlant, pretends to be a political idiot along with Céline and Sacha Guitry.

Paul Morand, Gaston Bergery political figures have flown to Turkey, René Benjamin in prison, Bernard Fay of ill repute. On the other side, Kirstein pays homage to those authors lost: Max Jacob died in Drancy, Saint-Pol Roux, Jacques Decour and Jean Prévost died by German Bullets. Mathias Lubeck, André Julien de Breuil and Jean Desbordes killed by vichy Militia. Saint-Exupery is lost, Malraux fighting for family in a hostile area. The Academie Francaise repoped with a formal purging of Pétain from its roster, as well as Abel Bonnard. The caricaturist Sennepe has published his recent drawings; one shows Maréchal with two bottles of Vichy water under his arm, beggin pardon for bothering two Gestapo agents who are dismembering a nude. Kirstein reports the end of the NRF, and the filling of the gap with weeklies and magazines and announces the launching of *Les Temps Modernes* (named after Chaplin's film first titled *La Condition Humaine*) headed by a Jean Paul Sartre. Kirstein notes that the presses have constraints on them—there is a rationing of paper “which has almost amounted to censorship—it is a political issue” and recent reform laws now require paper sto declare its actual ownership and circulation. Kirstein also reports that the communist press, *L'Humanité* has a large metropolitan readership and the biggest daily is the *Figaro*. Kirstein then goes on to feature updates about the most notable French authors such as Paul Valéry who has written a “troisieme faust”; Gide who is publishing his “Imaginary Interviews”; Mauriac who is working on the scenario for a Resistance funded film; Aragon who is publishing “*La Diane Francaise*” and his novel “*Aurélien*”. Aragon is lauded here and is called “The victor hugo of the Resistance”. Continuing updates on authors include Vercors; Malraux; and Jean Paulhan. Kirstein writes about the literature which kept them through the war. Kirstein also states that “It is curious to observe that the innovations of the surrealist imagery and idiom of the late thirties have been appropriated quite undiluted to serve as the academic voice for the official homage verses which are in as

much demand today as the memorial wreaths deposited at the walls of executions in prisons and at the foot of statues whose pedestals alone remain.” Kirsetin notes that the renaissance includes a republication of loved works under the NRF – a series of “classics” including Melville, Woolf, Huxley, D.H. Lawrence. On stage, Noel Coward, E.O’Neill and Chekhov. Also quite interestingly, a reprint w/ Les éditions du chene of the Bayeux tapestry as the original was recently shown undamaged in the empty louvre.”

Side Note: on the ending page is a review of Joyce’s posthumously published “Stephen Hero” with New Directions in 1944, intro by Theodore Spencer. Review by Delmore Schartz.

(2) Magazine section. “The Talk of the Town”, *The New Yorker*. Jan. 27, 1945 pp. 15-18.

Four pages containing random anecdotes compiled for “The Talk of the Town”. “notes and comment” contains pithy anecdotes. Images and cartoons featured on each page. about the “liberation of the lungfish” held in the Bronx by the NY Zoo; a story about finding a fragment of a radio script and its ensuing stage directions for the tooting of a nostalgic train; the decline of the price of newspapers reporting “victory over france”; a very surprising story about an American Navy Officer coming across a copy of the New Yorker while riding a camel on an oil preserve in Iraq etc. It also includes a lengthy article/interview about pre and post war “Dada” and Dr. Charles R. Hulbeck (Hulsenbeck), progenitor of the movement who is now a Pschoanalyst on 88 Central Park West in NY. I am sure Breton appreciated this article for its illustration of the movement as well as the character sketch done of Hulbeck. The last page features an article about Cambodia (French Indo China) as well as an announcement of Orson Welles’ new foray into oration at the city center.

(3) Article. “Un poète de la libération” by André Rousseaux. Le Figaro. Date unknown. Article paying homage to the young poet Jean-Claude Diamant-Berger. Author Rousseaux poses question of literature at the beginning of article, as an all powerful thing. “La seule littérature qui compte vraiment pour nous désormais est celle qui ne se contente pas de survivre a tous les hommes que nous avons vus mourir. Elle est la vie elle-même, la vie qui ne meurt pas. Elle est la communication qui nous reste avec des ames qui ont passé parmi nous et qui nous sont éternellement présentes... l’avenir de ce jeune homme, c’est votre liberté.”

Note: Underneath article is an advert for “une enquête du figaro littéraire” – asking people to contribute in answering the following questions: “sommes nous en période révolutionnaire? Comment définiriez-vous cette révolution? quels destins promet-elle a l’activité purement littéraire ?”

(4) Page of Articles. *Figaro* (section littéraire), 6 janvier, 1945. One entire page clipped out featuring 3 articles: “Les derniers moments d’Henri Bergson” by M.N.; “Souvenirs de Stavelot et de Malmedy” by André Billy ; “Romain Rolland au Panéthon.” author unknown.

(5) Article “Romain Rolland” by Jean Guéhenno. *Figaro*, 2^e édition, samedi 3 janvier 1945, n. 121, 6, 119 année. 2 francs. (as seen on back of article).

Extract: “J’ai sous les yeux une lettre qu’il m’écrivait le 18 mars, 1929: “ Chacun, disait-il doit tâcher de saisir l’appel de la voix intérieure, et quand il est certain de l’avoir nettement entendue, lui obéir. Mais ou que vous entraîne la votre, gardez intact votre indépendance. Même dans la

guerre ne vous liez à aucun parti. Soyez à celui ci ou a celui la un libre allié volontaire qui ne s'engage jamais au delà d'une activité donnée et limitée. Sinon, le bien que vous pourriez faire à la cause choisie serait, a bref délai, annihilé et souillé. Il n'est pas actuellement un parti en Occident auquel on puisse faire crédit. Il est bien qu' 'Europe' s'efforce de défendre partout et en dehors de tous les partis l'humanité. Si elle le fait, elle assurera une place unique dans toute la presse du monde entier. Car cette place, aucune revue, aucun journal ne la prise. La vois intérieure lui commandait a lui de servir la paix [...] il croyait comme Goethe que le souvenir doit nous former éternellement, qu'il n'y a point de passer vers quoi il soit permis déporter ses regrets, mais seulement une éternelle nouveauté qui se forme des éléments grandis du passé, et que la vraie " Sehnsucht" doit être toujours créatrice et produire à tout instant une nouveauté meilleure encore."

(6) 2 pages of magazine. *Tygodnik Poliski* (The Polish Weekly)¹⁵⁶, No. 7 (112). Strona 7-8. Date not printed. 1 large photographic reproduction of procession (celebration of the fallen on the battlefield), including Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard and Pablo Picasso at Pere Lachaise cemetery. 1 page of various poems "Józefa", including "Violetta."

¹⁵⁶ "Polish Weekly" ("The Polish Weekly") - Polish weekly in New York in the years 1943-1946. "Polish Weekly" a continuation issued in 1941 in New York magazine "Weekly Review of Literary Writers Circle of the Polish". The publication was edited Jan Kazimierz Wierzyński Lechon. The magazine also featured authors Joseph Wittlin, Tadeusz Kazimierz Sowicki, Arthur Miedzyrzecki, Zdzislaw Broncel, Vaclav Iwaniuk, Michael Choromański, Stanislaw Vincenz. "Polish Weekly" published literary texts, literary criticism, essays, chronicles the events. Much space is devoted activities of the 2nd Polish Corps. (Taken from wikipedia, Jan. 15, 2015, url: ; based on book reference, Jerzy Święch: Literatura polska w latach II wojny. Wyd. VI - 2 dodruk. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2010, s. 326-328, 386, 448, 473, 572, seria: Wielka Historia Literatury Polskiej.

(7)1 page, handwritten by Breton. 1 page (in-4, 1 f. recto; 28x 21,5 cm) of blue colored paper with list of titles of prefaces and published texts (dated around WWII) done in Breton's handwriting in green ink. Perhaps destined for the publication of an anthology or some other review, this list, seemingly written little before or after the end of WWII, lists a number of Breton's publications since the time of *Minotaure*. We see clearly that the main subject of this list is painters from the 30s and 40s. Reviews cited: *Minotaure*, *Le Figaro*, *View*, *Art in Australia*, *London Bulletin*, *Le Monde libre*. At the time of acquisition, this document was found placed inside the *Scrapbook* (BK call number, Centre Pompidou, 10590).

Transcribed from page:

« Cils et sillons_ les cils et la grille_cils ou la voyante »

P.- Préface :

Préface en positions objets Ratton – catalogue

Crise de l'objet --- cahiers d'art

Préface Brauner catalogue

Phare de la mariée --- *Minotaure* n. 6

Trahison verbale : automatisme de la variante ? Cahiers d'art

D'une décalcomanie sans objet - *Minotaure* n. 6

La Merveilleuse coudre le mystère *Minotaure* n. 9

Préface Paalen Catalogue

Des tendances récentes de la peinture surréaliste ... *minotaure* n. 12-13

Souvenir du Mexique ... Minotaure n. 12-13

Préfaces Mexique ... Catalogue

Prestige D'André Masson ... Minotaure 12-13

Réponse a une enquête ... Le figaro 1940

Picasso poète revue belge Cahiers d'art

Interview ... View ... n. 7-8

Originalité et liberté ... Art in Australia

Portrait de l'acteur A.B --- Manuscrit

Vie légendaire de Max Ernst View n. 9

Prologue (Tanguy) ... London Bulletin

Ce qui Tanguy voile et révèle ... View N. 10

Préface (wilfredo lam) genèse et perspective artistique du surréalisme. Art of n.... centre

Prolégomènes à un 3 manifeste VVV n. 1

Situation du surr. entre les 2 guerres VVV n.2-3

Lumière noire ... le monde libre

Préface (Aimé Césaire)

Préface (Enrico Donati)

Silence d'or Modern Music