

Women **IN**
DADA

ESSAYS

ON

SEX,

GENDER,

AND

IDENTITY

edited by **naomi SAWELSON-GORSE**

Women **IN**
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edited by **naomi SAWELSON-GORSE**

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PREFACE

naomi SAWELSON-GORSE

Dada was a male domain.

—Valerie Preston-Dunlop¹



In the historicizing and mythologizing trajectory of the Dada logos, several “origins of the word” implicate female gendering in which the signification of the female is ultimately a “wet-nurse” whose primary biological and aesthetic functions are as the male artists’ muse.²

Some claim that the word was “discovered” by opening a dictionary at random, others that it means a rocking-horse. [Hugo] Ball leaves the question open. “In Rumanian dada means “yes, yes,” in French a rocking-horse or hobby horse. To Germans it is an indication of idiot naivety and of [a] preoccupation with procreation and the baby-carriage . . . the Kru Africans call the tail of a sacred cow “dada.” In a certain part of Italy a die or cube and a mother are called Dada. “Dada is a wet-nurse.”³

Missing from this list are the connotations of its obvious meaning: the reference of Dada to the male parent, the father, the patriarch.⁴ Certainly, such definitions are implied, for either to deny “meaning” of the logos “dada” or to inscribe it as female is to create from “nothingness.”

Dada embodied the male as a term and a movement; and, as Tristan Tzara, one of Zurich Dada’s most prolific pamphleteers, proclaimed, it represented an idea, an ideal, and even a Zeitgeist:

Dada is a new type; a mixture of man, naphthaline, sponge, animal made of ebonite and beefsteak, prepared with soap for cleansing the brain . . . Dada existed before us (the Holy Virgin). . . . The journalists who say that Dada is a pretext are right, but it is a pretext for something I do not know. Dada has penetrated into every hamlet; Dada is the best paying concern of the day. Therefore, Madam, be on your guard and realize that a really dada product is a different thing from a glossy label. . . . Such, Madame [sic], do we prepare for Dadaglobe; for you need to look no further than to the use of articles prepared without Dada to account for the fact that the skin of your heart is chapped; that the so precious enamel of your intelligence is cracking; also for the presence of those tiny wrinkles still imperceptible but nevertheless disquieting.⁵

Tzara's statement, published in the sole issue of *New York Dada*, which appeared in April 1921 and was edited by Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, is as disturbingly misogynist as the journal itself.⁶ Both proposed that the female—unless catholicized, sacredly and mysteriously unsoiled as the Holy Virgin herself—was to be ridiculed on the one hand and, on the other, usurped by appropriation. Whichever instance, the male dominates. According to Tzara, male domination is embedded in binary difference: female concerns are superficial, bound in commodifications of bodily vanity (such as skin cream and nail polish) in direct opposition to those of the male in the intellectual sphere, particularly the innovative.

Paul Haviland, a participant in New York Dada circles, pushed the notion of the male's ascendancy and the female's subjugation even further: the ultimate controlling force of the male is procreative.

Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs which act; lungs which breathe; a heart which beats; a nervous system through which runs electricity . . . The machine is his "daughter born without a mother." That is why he loves her.

And he continued, echoing Francis Picabia's mechanomorphic images in the same issue of *291*:

*He has made the machine superior to himself. That is why he admires her. . . . But the machine is yet at a dependent stage. Man gave her every qualification except thought. She submits to his will but he must direct her activities. Without him she remains a wonderful being, but without aim or anatomy. Through their mating they complete one another. She brings forth according to his conceptions.*⁷

The female—a mindless, bodiless entity totally dependent upon male direction for consummation in “his” conceiving—exists only for male desire. “Her” corporeality is only possible by the “He” who is the creator of this “machine superior to himself.”⁸

The paradoxical irony of Dada is slippage. This movement of absolute rebellion was also one of repression. While no one person represented Dada, while no one meaning defined it, misogyny prevailed in a consistent way. For all their avant-gardism in shedding aesthetic precepts and bourgeois tenets, male dadaists maintained the status quo of the patriarchal socio-cultural judgments and codifications regarding gender of the late nineteenth-century bourgeois society in which they were born, and, in most instances, of Catholic upbringings. Viewed from this perspective, their female colleagues were to be seen not heard, were to be nurturers not usurpers, were to be pleasant not rancorous. Sophie Taeuber, for instance, was described by one of her male dadaist contemporaries as “usually obviat[ing] the necessity of speech with one of her shy or thoughtful smiles,” and Hannah Höch as “a quiet” or a “good girl” with a “slightly nun-like grace” and a “tiny voice” who “made herself indispensable” by providing “sandwiches, beer and coffee” to “her masculine colleagues” of Berlin Dada.⁹ Female dadaists were thus coddled by their “masculine colleagues”—who far outnumbered them—as Dada’s Mamas,

a male artist's muse, sexual partner, sometimes even wife, as in the case of Taeuber and Gabrielle Buffet.¹⁰ Even when a female dadaist attempted to resist such subservience and assert her singular identity, as did Emmy Hennings and Juliette Roche, she was never considered a full-fledged member (rather, like so many others, relegated as the "wife of"). Höch, the sole female participant in Berlin Dada, encountered a similar situation, as did others in far-flung Dada. Situated even further afield by her male contemporaries was the transmutable Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, acclaimed as the true American dadaist by Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson, the lesbian couple who ran *The Little Review*, even though, or perhaps because, she was a German émigré. And so too was the English expatriate Mina Loy, whose *Parturition* talked of "Mother I am" and absented the Father; her irksomeness was eventually inscribed by a thermometer, a sexually female gendered typography that Man Ray would employ to inscribe Katherine Dreier as well.

To recuperate the gender layering that was embedded within the historical context of Dada is the purpose of this volume. For in the era of the aesthetic battles of Dada and the nationalistic ones of World War I, the female (figuratively and literally) was also a battleground. Legislative debates and decrees, street demonstrations and penal incarcerations over natalism and birth control, limited and universal suffrage, a declining male population and an expanding female work force, and the emergence of the New Woman and Freudianism, among other issues, were all significant in affecting not only the Euro-American socio-political spheres in general but the dadaist enterprise in particular. Far from peripheral to Dada (meaningful only in regard to female dadaists' lives and works), or of no consequence (evidenced by its absence in most histories of the movement), the changing dynamics of the role and position of women in Euro-American modernist society were critical to the personal and professional relationships of the dadaists, their artistic and literary productions, and the establishment and the projection of Dada's historicism and

mythology. The female is not a subtext in Dada. As the reification of the Other to Dada's Boys' Club, the female is an index. The coda is the female as the threat, the feminine as desire. While the female appears frequently as a freakish fragment, such as in Man Ray's *dadaphoto* and his photographs of the Baroness, the feminine is often incorporated into the male, as in Marcel Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy*, which effectively denies her existence and individuality.¹¹ *He* becomes the alluring one as *she*.

Given these circumstances, what were the female dadaists' strategies? The essays in this volume explore the complexities of those multifarious strategies and the complicated implications of sex, gender, and identity in Dada and its aesthetic and historical legacies. The title of the volume, *Women in Dada*, and the arrangement of essays into seven groups (which are somewhat arbitrary because the themes and subjects transgress their pigeonholes), reflect that gender-bound strategies traverse the biographies of individual dadaists, the particular geographical sites of Dada manifestations, and the notion that "women" can be defined solely biologically or specifically gendered female. Thus, more is discussed here than resurrected biographies of the movement's female participants or reinscriptions of their names and artistic productions into its history.

The first section, "The Female Dynamo," historicizes contemporary feminist practices that remark on Dada's male-dominated legacy. The early twentieth-century fetishistic adulation by Europeans of the athletic and energetic "young American girl," who was epitomized by the gunslinging Annie Oakley, and filmic personalities such as the madcap adventurous Pauline and forever pubescent Mary Pickford, found its way into the literary sexual machinations of Alfred Jarry and mechanomorphic sparkplug of Francis Picabia, among others. Transplanted to American soil, especially New York, the gendered machine as a portrait—loaded also with references to "exoticism" and "primitivism"—became a primary vehicle to define and describe sexual polemics. That machine still continues to mystify what feminist practices seek to uncover. "The Male Men-

ace” investigates how the contestations of natalism, abortion, and marriage were primary considerations that infused dadaism. Indeed, Suzanne Duchamp’s *Give me the right right to life* (1919), a plea for her own procreative control, must be read in conjunction with pro-natalist, anti-abortionist proclamations such as by Jean Crotti (*Solution de continuité Wrong*, c. 1916). “Feminine/Masculine Performativities” examines the apparati of the *flâneur* and dandy, and how cross-dressing and homosexuality were critical dadaist discourses, while the essays in “(En)gendering the Text” remark on how the commodification of women in journals (as subjects and producers) mediated these terrains as well. “Masking Race Matters” traces the racially charged aspects of “primitivism” to Dada, turning white Euro-American colonialist and imperialistic notions of the Other into disguises through such emblematic significations as the mask and the fetish. “(Auto)biographic Narrativity” reads the lives and works of female dadaists through different lenses of personalization and externalization. And “Mediating Personae” explores how the public and private spheres affected interpretations of self. Finally, the bibliography provides a selected gathering of sources on Dada, related feminist discourses, and individual female dadaists.

NOTES

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1. Valerie Preston-Dunlop, “Notes on Bodies in Dada,” in *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics* (Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada, vol. 1), ed. Stephen C. Foster (New York: G. K. Hall, 1996), p. 175.
2. The mythologizing of the origins of Dada’s terminology as a logos erupted into “a Homeric struggle over the ownership of the trademark,” which is discussed in the first full-scale history of Dada by one of its participants, Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), pp. 31–32. Of course, the dadaists continually emphasized that the word “dada” had no meaning. See, for example, Tristan Tzara’s statement “DADA MEANS NOTHING” in his “Dada Manifesto 1918,” trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2d ed., 1989), p. 77.
3. Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 32. Tzara, in his “Dada Manifesto 1918” (p. 77), offers a slightly different version, and adds that dada means “a nurse both in Russian and Rumanian.”

4. See also David Hopkins, "Questioning Dada's Potency: Picabia's 'La Sainte Vierge' and the Dialogue with Duchamp," *Art History* 15, no. 3 (September 1992): 320, wherein he states that "Dada as a term clearly has masculinist implications."
5. Tristan Tzara, "Authorization," *New York Dada* (April 1921): 2.
6. *New York Dada*, from cover to cover, is the male's retort to female dadaists and feministic discourse. This is especially apparent in comparing the cover, illustrated with one of Man Ray's photographs of Duchamp as Rose Sélavy (the ultra-feminine), with the illustrations on the last page, two of Man Ray's photographs of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (the masculinized female, known only for being biologically female because of the nipple that appears; the cropping, as if a Roman bust, makes the fragmentation and distortion of the female even more appalling by lopping off one breast). Thus the recto (male=main framing page/sheet/leaf) to the verso (female=subsidiary page/sheet/leaf).
7. Paul Haviland, "Statement," 291, nos. 7-8 (September-October 1915): n.p. It is ironic that as World War I raged on the battlefields of Europe, with the machine as the instrument of destruction that new technology had brought, male dadaists (such as Francis Picabia and Man Ray) as well as the Italian Futurists applauded the machine. However, by gendering the machine female (i.e., irrational), the male still had control, ordering chaos by reason and intellect.
8. Haviland's sexual polemic (eerily akin to rape) was visualized by Man Ray's construction, *dadaphoto*, a version of the touched-up photograph that appears in *New York Dada*.
9. Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, pp. 45, 132.
10. Buffet's historical position has been marginalized as the most insightful explicator of Dada; this, even though her writings about Dada have appeared in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, and in *Paris-New York* (1977). A discussion on her intended for this volume was not able to be completed, which, unfortunately, further under-

mines her importance. Similarly, essays on female artists, writers, and performers involved in several European Dada centers were not ready for publication; thus, the emphasis in this volume on New York Dada was both unintentional and unforeseen.

11. Nancy Ring, in her dissertation "New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913–1921" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1991), proposes that "gender confusion" was essential to these male dadaists' manifestations (p. iii). It is interesting to note that the majority of the signed interviews with Duchamp during his first couple of sojourns in New York were conducted by women, such as Margery Rex and Bessie Breuer.

THE *female*

dynamo



LA JEUNE FILLE AMÉRICAINNE AND THE DADAIST IMPULSE

elizabeth HUTTON TURNER



From its inception, a childlike spirit guided the dadaist impulse. This dadaist sprite possessed the verve and authenticity of the “innocent eye” sought by John Ruskin and Charles Baudelaire in the nineteenth century.¹ And, thanks to Freud, more was known or at least appreciated in the early twentieth century about childhood’s innocence of morality and frank sexuality. Shedding traditional constraints, even Romanticism’s Nature itself, this new child—heir apparent to Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Emile*²—lured the dadaists into playful exploration of a mechanized world, where they would follow every whim, press every button, turn every crank. These escapades and uncensored outrages spoke to the aspirations of a generation that, in pursuit of newness for its own sake, valued the impulsiveness, spontaneity, and destructiveness of youth.

This youthful mentor had no given name and no history, not even in the real or imagined childhoods of Europe. Marcel Duchamp referred vaguely to a “phare enfant” or headlight child.³ Yet its gender and place of origin were known full well by Jean Cocteau, Alfred Jarry, and Francis Picabia, who embraced the figure plainly as *la jeune fille américaine*. Her proving ground, like the dadaists’ own, was best approximated in the “vast but still unexploited possibilities in the United States.”⁴

Who was she? Why was she necessary? What purpose did she serve?

La jeune fille américaine had a particular presence among the Parisian avant-garde's earliest speculations about an alluring, exotic New World. Known through the vast network of transatlantic transport and communications that brought American images, inventions, marketing ideas, and personalities abroad, she personified a modern American spirit—widely admired but as yet not widely emulated. In her freedom from convention, in her caprices and her almost comic innocence, she differed from the typical male artist's muse or *femme fatale*; neither a Gibson Girl nor even John Singer Sargent's *Madame X*. The *jeune fille*'s beauty and allure did not arise from a particular pose or proportion.

Cocteau offered the best description of her when he observed:

*The United States . . . evokes a girl more interested in her health than in her beauty. She swims, boxes, dances, leaps onto moving trains—all without knowing she is beautiful. It is we who admire her face, on the screen—enormous, like the face of a goddess.*⁵

During World War I (more likely than not the time Cocteau first saw her) the face “on the screen” was that of silent movie idol Mary Pickford (figure 1.1). Though her angelic face and ringlet curls looked the very image of Victorian innocence, Pickford's screen persona was more like that of a little hellion. She engaged in fisticuffs with bullies, assaulted villainous authorities, suggested squatters resort to poaching, threw out a meddling parent who tried to marry her off, claimed an illegitimate child, and charged off in nightrides against land speculators. She suggested something entirely modern to European audiences, curls and all.

Pickford's film persona drew upon an active, agile, athletic female type first hailed abroad in the performances of Annie Oakley, who traveled with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. Characterized in the press variously as “Little Sure Shot,” “innocent of any man slayer device,” and a “model of self reliance,” Oakley had, according to one headline in the

1.1

Mary Pickford. Collection of Dwight Blocker Bowers.



1.2

Annie Oakley. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming, P.71.1212, Vincent Mercaldo Collection, clippings, Annie Oakley Clipping Books, McCracken Research Library.

Paris *Herald*. “Frenchmen Smitten at First Sight.”⁶ Oakley’s success was attributed as much to her frontier American upbringing as to her unmatched skill with a gun (figure 1.2). Her love of firearms began when she was “a toddling child,” Europeans were informed.⁷ Whether riding a galloping pony and shooting targets across the Champs de Mars or participating in matches at exclusive men’s clubs, Oakley proved her skills unsurpassed in Europe. Self-described as an “American original,”⁸ Oakley’s freedom from gentility was considered refreshing by royalty who came to pay her homage. She, however, claimed that she wanted no part of Old World conventions and remained unimpressed by foreign titles and goods, including French gun powder.

The spirited young poet Jean Cocteau enlisted the help of the American girl to unite the outdoor world with that of the music hall. Leaving sheets of notes about the *jeune fille américaine* with composer Erik Satie in May 1916, Cocteau had hopes of collaborating with him on what Cocteau termed a new “ballet réaliste.”⁹

Cocteau based *Parade*’s libretto and image of the *jeune fille* upon American popular sources. His American Girl inhabited travel-book settings—“Pullman cars which cross the virgin forest . . . the Hudson and its docks . . . my room on the seventeenth floor”¹⁰—echoing sites in Jules Huret’s tour guide *L’Amérique moderne*. Her *Steamboat Ragtime* dance, “cranking up and driving a Model T Ford, peddling a bicycle, playing cowboys and indians, snapping the shutter of her new Kodak,” displayed a ready use of the mechanical-like advertising icons on the pages of popular magazines such as *Harper’s* and *Century*. As in the silent movie serial, *Perils of Pauline*, then popular in Paris, Cocteau’s American Girl narrowly escaped danger, performed amazing stunts “riding a horse, catching a train, . . . driving away a robber at gunpoint, playing cowboys and indians, . . . almost drowning, and finally relaxing at the seashore.”¹¹

In the performance of the *jeune fille américaine* in *Parade*, realized by Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in May 1917, the ballerina Marie Chabelska

wore a readymade sportswear outfit, looking very much like an American school girl, characteristically out and about (figure 1.3). The American girl archetype was one of four in an exotic sideshow company that included a Chinese magician and two acrobats, a not too surprising combination for Parisian audiences accustomed to the well-established routine of the American Girl at the Théâtre Forain since the turn of the century.

True to all her popular allusions, the sideshow dance of the American Girl was musically framed by sirens, dynamos, typewriters, airplanes, and express trains, meant to serve as a lure—an advertisement—for something unknown but definitely modern on the other side of the curtain. What surprised the audiences of *Parade*, however, were the strenuous demands of the American Girl's pantomime. In ever increasing extremes of orgiastic activity, running and jumping with each bar of music, the American Girl beckoned her audience. In the words of her onlooking manager, the sideshow's hawker, the audience was entreated to "Enter . . . the most beautiful spectacle in the world. Enter . . . the most beautiful theater in the world. Enter the most beautiful stage in the world."¹²

Goaded to perform, the pace was furious, so much so that some who attended performances at the Théâtre Châtelet feared she would be hurt or molested by the other actors.¹³ Though the American Girl eventually collapsed in exhaustion and the sideshow ended with no takers for the main attraction, she quite successfully epitomized Cocteau's desire for a free-wheeling intercourse between artistic performance and the paraphernalia of modern life. The performance also revealed, perhaps in ways unanticipated by Cocteau, the *jeune fille's* power to unnerve French audiences through her sheer lack of physical inhibitions. Therein lay perhaps her greatest attraction for Jarry and, as well, Picabia.

The physical culture of the *jeune fille* was a uniquely New World phenomenon as she was explained and portrayed in turn-of-the-century French travel commentary. De Varigny's *La Femme aux Etats-Unis* (1893) and Urbain Gohier's *Le Peuple du XX siècle* (1903) described young Amer-



1.3

Marie Chabelska as "The Little American Girl" in Jean Cocteau's *Parade*, 1917. Alb. Ph. Kochno, 26, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. All Rights Reserved.

ican girls as markedly different from their European counterparts. Unrestricted in both hearth and home, encouraged to go out and about at an early age, they had a freedom and ease in adult company because they had not been confined to a nursery, according to these authors. Their intellectual vigor and good health, suppleness and grace reflected American society's unprecedented opportunities for young women, which afforded various ways to prove themselves, whether through sports or in college.¹⁴ Indeed, de Varigny credited the American girl's passion for sport and movement to the creation of a new sensibility, one that resulted from and was well-suited to the rapid changes presented by locomotion and the machine.¹⁵

Jules Huret's *L'Amérique moderne* (1911) highlights these aspects of a young American woman's healthy mind and body within educational institutions. Devoting an entire chapter to Smith College activities, those that were illustrated in photographs ranged from psychology, philosophy and literature to basketball and anatomy. And at a Boston girls' school, Huret showed girls playing hockey and doing gymnastic exercises. Huret, however, found this mind-body emphasis equally ironic and disturbing: what could girls engaged in the wild chases of basketball or hockey possibly have to say about the French poet Alfred Musset's matters of the heart?¹⁶

For other observers, including playwright Alfred Jarry, there was no such concern. Exaggerated, quasi-academic social commentary proved grist for the milling mind of the brilliant student from Laval who challenged and scrutinized all conventions through an absurd science of opposites he called pataphysics. In *Le Sûrmaie* (The Supermale), Jarry's self-proclaimed modern novel, the author used the well-studied persona of the intelligent, willful, agile American girl to commit a sacrilege that ultimately victimizes romantic love.

The heroine, Ellen Elson, is the daughter of William Elson, American chemist and famous inventor of Perpetual Motion Food. Jarry tells us she

is a motoring enthusiast known to go out without her father but not her father without her. One fateful evening she stands as “a little slip of a girl” among the adult dinner guests at André Marcueil’s château within earshot of her host’s outrageous assertion: “The act of love is of no consequence since it can be performed indefinitely.”¹⁷ Inspired by the adults’ incredulity, the *jeune fille* takes the dare and resolves to put Marcueil and his hypothesis to the test. For two days, like marathoners striving for a record, and before a committee of onlookers, Marcueil and the *jeune fille américaine* engage in “Assiduous lovemaking.”¹⁸ In the end, Marcueil and the *jeune fille* prove they can exceed mere physical limitations through sheer force of will without recourse to William Elson’s Perpetual Motion Food. However, Marcueil—now supermale—is ultimately destroyed (actually melted), the victim of an untested love inspiring machine, which William Elson had built to assist his daughter’s pursuit of Marcueil. The *jeune fille* survives. Incredulously, impervious to any emotional or psychological consequences of the events, she keeps one of the *sûrmales*’ glass tears in a ring as a keepsake.

In 1913, more than a decade after *Le Sûrmales*, Picabia, like a character in one of Jarry’s invented realms, found himself for a short time in the midst of what the artist called “the cubist, futurist, city.”¹⁹ Intoxicated by the speed, rhythms, surging crowds, and heights of New York, Picabia found the *jeune fille américaine* “‘Going north on Fifth Avenue,’” where, as the *New York American* captioned, the “Subtle Perfume of Femininity is Impressed on the Brain.”²⁰ For Picabia, the energetic presence became an immediate point of departure for numerous improvisations. In his drawing of 1913, *New York*, the perspective of the avenue and the verticals of the architecture are overlaid by rounded surging forms punctured by triangles that dart about like arrows throughout the composition as if mapping out his heated pursuit of the energetic, but elusive modern American spirit—a spirit William James believed was “caught in the pulse of the machine.”²¹

Upon his return to Paris, Picabia retained and augmented this pictorial dynamism in two large oil abstractions. As Picabia told a reporter, they represented his “memories” of New York.²² Yet *Udnie (jeune fille américaine: danse)* and *Edtaonisl (ecclésiastique)*, as listed in the 1913–1914 catalogue of the Paris Salon d’Automne,²³ contain no references to either New York’s Fifth Avenue or the Battery at rush hour. Instead these two works seem like opposing landscapes of centrifugal and centripetal forces of glancing, translucent forms pulsing in ever tighter or wider configurations. The images hover on the verge of chaos, inscribed with invented words—“Udnie” and “Edtaonisl”—decoded by a few familiar ones. Picabia offered little explanation save for the reference in the exhibition’s label copy to “jeune fille américaine: danse.” That was authentic enough for the critic Guillaume Apollinaire to praise Picabia for his “imagination . . . in contact with nature.”²⁴ Certainly, the analogy of the dancer was most clearly associated in the mind of the critic with a seemingly well-suited model for an artist who compared his own method of formal abstraction to musical interpretation.

Though various explanations were attempted by Picabia’s contemporaries, as well as recent scholars, to identify who Picabia’s *jeune fille* was and what was particularly American about her, she and her national characteristics are still unclear. Can we know her name? Perhaps he glimpsed her qualities among the dynamic young women who often frequented Alfred Stieglitz’s 291 gallery around that time, such as artist Katharine Rhoades or Stieglitz assistant Marie Rapp or writer Agnes Meyer. He could and would not find them in his French-born wife, Gabrielle Buffet. In retrospect, Picabia’s wife connected *Udnie* and *Edtaonisl* with a specific encounter or situation between a scandalous star of the American music hall, Npierzchowska, and a voyeuristic cleric on board the transatlantic steamer back to Paris when the couple was returning home.²⁵ If taken as metaphors for Picabia’s expression, the two paintings then may be said to recreate the seduction that Picabia saw as the opposition between “pure

sensibility” and “pure thought”—terms often connected with purely abstract painting in Paris salons of 1913 and 1914.²⁶

Had images such as *Le Sûrmaie*'s André Marcueil viewing the departure of Ellen Elson in her red car, seeming “like a lewd and fabulous god carrying off the girl,”²⁷ in effect prepared Picabia to see mechanical-human analogies coupled with absurd sexual fantasy and wonderment? Until he returned to America in the summer of 1915, Picabia languished like an adolescent lover kept at bay. His pent up passions visualized in the painting *Je revois en souvenir ma chère Udnie* (I See Again in Memory My Dear Udnie) coil in tangled growths around electrical plugs and sockets.

Picabia himself did not describe the *jeune fille américaine* with any further specificity until two years later when he arrived in New York with a radically different approach. Shedding the mysteries of Orphism, he raised a new paradigm—a mechanical drawing of a spark plug—which he entitled *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity) (figure 1.4). Unlike his 1913 portrait of *Udnie*—whose scrambled, anagrammatic title pretends *nudité*—the 1915 portrait is stripped of all artistic pretense. It is not disguised in a ruse of painterly energy. It needs no subtitle to explain the word-play, but clearly identifies the *jeune fille américaine* as a catalyst for modernization analogous to a mass-produced interchangeable part, the great facilitator of Henry Ford's revolution that mobilized America. Whether to take this suitor seriously became a matter for debate in the American press. The critic for the New York *Evening Sun* saw the spark plug as harsh criticism “intended to show the young American girl is a hard, unchangeable creature without possibilities.” Yet another declared “Picabia has fallen in love with the scientific spirit which is America, he thinks.”²⁸ Those who understood the extent Picabia's American conversion—his reach into mass media as well as new imagery—would have looked for more pedestrian and salacious sources, such as the 1914 ad-

1.4

Francis Picabia, *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity), 1915 (from the cover

of 291, nos. 5–6 [July–August 1915]). Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

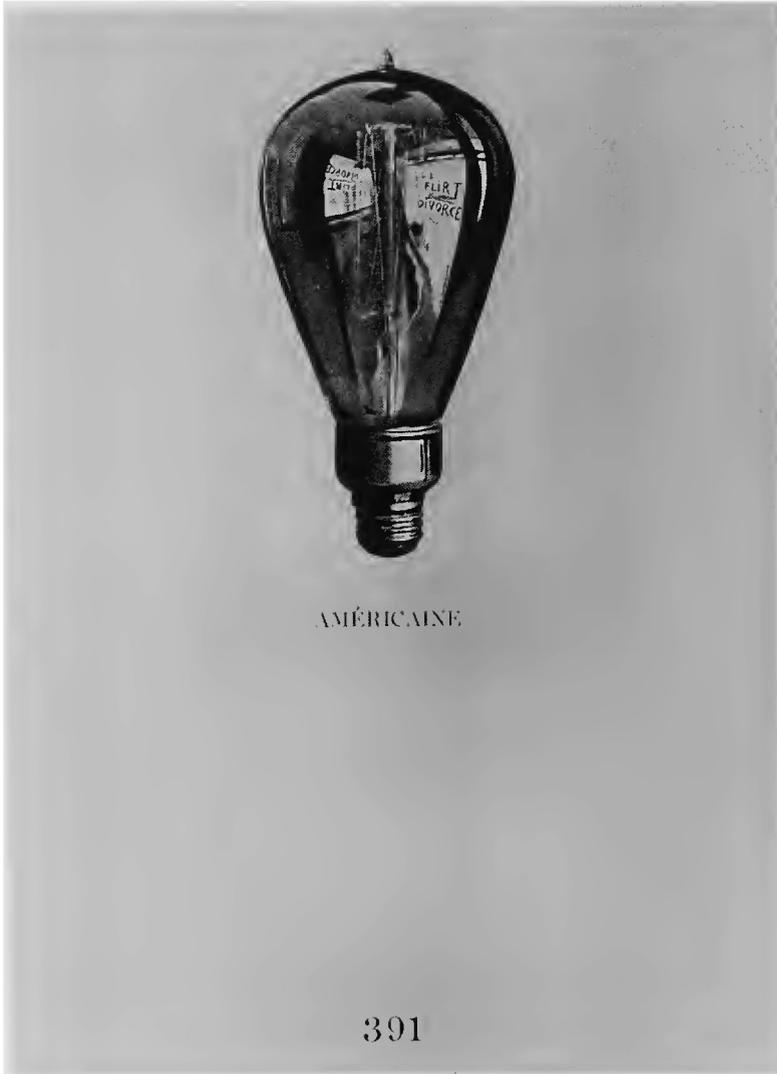


vertisement for the Red Head Priming Plug, which William Homer has noted.²⁹

If the intent of such a popular association was salacious, then it was also equally pragmatic. Why not adopt the most effective visual language of this machine-age culture? The commentary that accompanied the publication of Picabia's *jeune fille* in the summer issue of *291* clearly stated this very point: "Any effort . . . which does not possess the radiation of advertising remains practically ignored."³⁰ So it was that Picabia's mechanical *jeune fille*, like Jarry's Ellen Elson accompanied "only by the purr of the auto engine," arrived on the scene to demonstrate yet again the power of interjecting unexpected American sources to ignite the artistic pump.

Though her insignia FOR-EVER guaranteed perpetual satisfaction and activity, the difference between Picabia's initial exhilarating spark-plug of 1915 and his 1917 light bulb, *Américaine* (American Woman) (figure 1.5), emitting the words "flirt" and "divorce,"³¹ reflects a wealth of experience and frustration with new realities of modern life—not the least of which included a 1917 liaison with Isadora Duncan. The American dancer who once led "an army of girls" on a quest for self-expression also led Picabia toward the demise of his own marriage.³²

After World War I, vestiges of *jeune fille*'s profile may be discerned in the French avant-garde's search for and unqualified celebrations of American artists abroad who actively engaged new technologies. In 1924, Louis Aragon astutely observed that it was the Americans' turn to play with mythic/popular America, "the country of skyscrapers and cowboys, railroad accidents and cocktail shakers."³³ Indeed, the Parisian avant-garde delighted in Man Ray's "painting with light" (his cameraless photographs like a sorcerer's apprentice upsetting the scene). And in 1933, it was Man Ray—just as he was giving up his love affair with the silent cinema—who seemed to garner the last vestiges of the *jeune fille*'s exhilaration when he photographed her wide-eyed reclining visage sprinkled



1.5

Francis Picabia (1879–1953),
Américaine (American Woman), 1917
 (from the cover of *391*, no. 7 [July
 1917]). Photograph courtesy William
 A. Camfield. © 1997 Artists Rights So-
 ciety, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

with glass tears, no doubt an elaboration upon Jarry's *jeune fille* who kept a glass tear as a memento from her failed experimentation with the love inspiring machine that killed the object of her affection.

In truth, from a broader cultural standpoint, the Parisian avant-garde's romance with the madcap *jeune fille américaine* ended with a widening exposure to the Americanization of Europe. Plucked from the realms of entertainment, travel guides, advertising, and movies, the *jeune fille* was, after all, a male fantasy, a ready and willing female conforming to men's desires, a youthful sexual alter-ego for the Old World weighed down by tradition. No social taboo, no question of style or technique, no spatial frame could constrain her. Indeed, Cocteau, Jarry, and Picabia permitted her to demolish them all. The seduction was over. What would happen to her next was not their concern.

NOTES

This essay is a revised version of the author's paper, "The Jeune Fille Americaine and the Parisian Avant-Garde, 1900–1917," presented in a session chaired by Wanda Corn on "Americanisme: The Old World Discovers the New," at the annual meeting of the College Art Association in San Francisco, CA, February 1989.

1. See Roger Shattuck, *The Innocent Eye: On Modern Literature and the Arts* (New York: Washington Square, 1986).
2. For an overview, see Jonathan Fineberg, "'Es war der Briefträger,'" in *Mit dem Auge des Kindes: Kinderzeichnung und moderne Kunst*, ed. Helmut Friedel and Josef Helfenstein (Munich: Lenbachhaus, Kunstbau; Bern: Kunstmuseum, 1995), pp. 14–37.
3. Marcel Duchamp, *Notes*, trans. Paul Matisse (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983), n. 109. See also John Golding, *Marcel Duchamp: The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 47. I thank Jonathan Fineberg for these references.
4. Shattuck, "The D-S Expedition," in *The Innocent Eye*, p. 73.
5. Qtd. in Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau: A Biography* (Boston: Nonpareil, 1986), p. 166. See also Richard H. Axson, *"Parade": Cubism as Theater* (New York and London: Garland, 1979).
6. "Little Sure Shot," *Brighton Gazette*, 1 August 1889; "Notes from Paris. A Circus Violet," *Truth*, 23 May 1889; "Buffalo Bill à Lyon; Miss Annie Oakley," *Le Petit Lyonnais* (undated clipping); and "Frenchmen Smitten at First Sight by the Charms of Wild West Beauty," *New York Herald* (Paris ed.), 12 May 1889. Annie Oakley Clipping Books, MS6, McCracken Research Library, Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming (hereafter cited as AO/BBHC).

7. "The Wild West," *New York Herald* (London ed.), 19 May 1889, MS6 AO/BBHC. Oakley asked Thomas Alva Edison to make her an electric gun because of her impatience and dissatisfaction with existing firearm technology.
8. This remark is often ascribed to Oakley. See, for example, François Hoffmann, "Annie Oakley," unidentified clipping, MS6 AO/BBHC.
9. See Jean Cocteau, "'Parade': Ballet Réaliste," *Vanity Fair* 9, no. 1 (September 1917): 37, 106.
10. Jean Cocteau, libretto for *The Little American Girl*, qtd. in Axsom, "Parade", p. 237.
11. Jean Cocteau, libretto for *Steamboat Ragtime*, qtd. in Axsom, "Parade", p. 46.
12. Cocteau, libretto for *The Little American Girl*, qtd. in Axsom, "Parade", p. 44.
13. Cocteau, "'Parade': Ballet Réaliste": 35.
14. C. de Varigny, *La Femme aux Etats-Unis* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1893), pp. 302–320; Urbain Gohier, *Le Peuple du XX Siècle aux Etats-Unis* (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1903), pp. 8–9, 29–32.
15. De Varigny, *La Femme aux Etats-Unis*, pp. 305–306.
16. Jules Huret, *L'Amérique moderne*, vol. 1 (Paris: Pierre Lafitte, 1911), p. 89.
17. Alfred Jarry, *The Supermale (Le Sûrmale)*, trans. Ralph Gladstone and Barbara Wright (New York: New Directions, 1977), pp. 21 and 1, respectively.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
19. Francis Picabia, "How New York Looks to Me," *New York American*, 30 March

1913, magazine sec., p. 11, qtd. in Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), p. 19. For a reproduction of Picabia's article, see Virginia Spate, *Orphism: The Evolution of Non-Figurative Painting in Paris, 1910–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), p. 316, figure 244.

20. Picabia, "How New York Looks to Me," in Spate, *Orphism*, pp. 316–317.
21. William James, qtd. in Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), p. 118.
22. See William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 60.
23. Salon d'Automne (15 November 1913–5 January 1914), cat. nos. 1675 and 1676. See Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 59.
24. Guillaume Apollinaire, *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews, 1902–1918*, ed. LeRoy C. Breunig, trans. Susan Suleiman (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 324.
25. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, *Aires abstraites* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1957), p. 33. See also Spate, *Orphism*, p. 328.
26. Francis Picabia, letter to Alfred Stieglitz, 16 June 1913, and Marius de Zayas, letter to Stieglitz, 30 June 1914, qtd. in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, pp. 59, 68.
27. Jarry, *The Supermale*, p. 28.
28. Robert J. Cole, exhibition review, *Evening Sun*, 12 October 1915, qtd. in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 83; and "Many Enjoyable Paintings in Modern Gallery—Woman's Work," unidentified newspaper, qtd. in Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 62.
29. William Innes Homer, "Picabia's *Jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* and Her Friends," *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 1 (March 1975): 112 (figure 5), 115.

30. Marius de Zayas, "New York n'a pas vue d'abord," *291*, nos. 5–6 (July–August 1915), qtd. in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 75.
31. *Américaine* was published on the cover of *391*, no. 7 (July 1917).
32. "Miss Duncan (California Girl) Sets Fashionable Europe to Dancing Bare-foot," *San Francisco Examiner*, 17 July 1910, Archives for the Performing Arts, San Francisco. According to Edgard Varèse, when Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia left New York, her husband began "girl chasing." Among those who Picabia reportedly went after was Isadora Duncan, so Louise Norton stated. See Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 73.
33. Elizabeth Eyre, "Letters of Elizabeth," *Town and Country* 80, no. 3883 (15 February 1924): 30. I am grateful to Betsy Fahlman for bringing this reference to my attention.

THE CONSTRUCTED SELF: GENDER AND PORTRAITURE IN MACHINE-AGE AMERICA

barbara ZABEL



The genre of portraiture is, as Richard Brilliant has noted, “especially sensitive to changes in the perceived nature of the individual in Western society.”¹ It is not surprising, therefore, that in an era dominated by machines, mechanical symbolism intruded more aggressively into the realm of self-representation than any other genre. Artists who participated in New York Dada, such as Francis Picabia, Marius de Zayas, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, and Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, are among the artists who made the earliest and most substantial contributions to the genre of machine-age portraiture. Significantly, their portraits generally have little, if any, recognizable relationship to their subjects. No longer based on mimesis, these new portraits, usually called “object portraits,” feature words, images, shapes, and sometimes even found objects juxtaposed so as to signify distinctive attributes of each individual. Such portraits, which are more constructed objects than semblances of their subjects, attest to the effect of mechanization on the artists’ consciousness.

These machine-age portraits raise key questions about the role of the machine in creating—and gendering—ideas of personal identity during and just after World War I. Do these works represent the dehumanization—even the erasure—of self, in Linda Nochlin’s words, “the loss of the

tradition of the self in an age of mechanical reproduction?"² Or does the mechanical provide a new basis for image making—indeed, for understanding human existence—in the modern world? In other words, do these works present technology as impoverishing the human spirit, or as infused with human attributes and meanings? And most significantly, why were the European and especially the American avant-gardes so intent upon defining self in terms of technology in this period?

Technology was a realm in which the United States excelled, and, as Lisa Steinman points out, "Many disciplines tried to borrow the prestige of science and technology in order to declare a place for their own work in an American context."³ In order to validate their art—and to valorize themselves—artists embraced a machine aesthetic whose attributes of efficiency, structure, and construction derived from the engineered environment, from structures like bridges, factories, and skyscrapers. Artists accommodated themselves to this changing environment and to new myths of American identity by appropriating basic principles from that manmade environment. My use here of the term "manmade" is intentional, for although individual machines were often characterized as female, the engineered environment was largely masculinized.

The new hero of these years was unquestionably the designer of that environment, the engineer, who became "a symbol of efficiency, stability, functionalism and power," and thus, as Cecelia Tichi notes, "enacted the values of civilization" and embodied culture itself.⁴ Given the elevation of such values, it is understandable that this new world of engineering and machines would pose a challenge to artists and writers alike. The poet William Carlos Williams, for instance, referred to the poem as "a machine made of words."⁵ And Man Ray frequently constructed his works so that machines and human anatomy became anatomical analogues of each other. Artists of the avant-garde thus inscribed the dominant machine culture into their works, and in the process gendered the enterprise of art and of identity construction.

The European Francis Picabia was certainly one of the first artists to recognize and to alert the American avant-garde to the centrality of the machine in American culture. “Almost immediately upon coming to America,” Picabia stated, “it flashed on me that the genius of the modern world is machinery, and that through machinery art ought to find a most vivid expression.”⁶ Picabia responded to this challenge with his machine-portraits published in Alfred Stieglitz’s journal *291* in 1915.⁷ All five portraits feature various machine parts, most with automotive functions such as gear shifts, combustion chambers, camshafts, and sparkplugs. Rather than subject such objects to his own artistic handprint or style, Picabia appropriated the language of industry. More like “blueprints for production” than traditional portraits, these images encode the masculine world of engineered mass-production.⁸

Picabia’s unorthodox portraits represent their subjects through implicit correspondences between machines and individual personalities. The complex network of component parts in *De Zayas! De Zayas!*, for example, recently decoded as the electrical and lubricating systems of an automobile, alludes to de Zayas’s role in generating ideas and in keeping things running smoothly as editor of the journal *291*.⁹ In another work in the series, a self-portrait titled *Le Saint des saints*, Picabia suggestively superimposes an automobile horn on a cross section of a combustion chamber, suggesting male sexuality and parodying his own reputation as a womanizer. It is precisely this drive to unmask analogies between individuals and machines that announces the radical transformation of identity-construction in the machine age.

Inspired by Picabia’s object-portraits, Paul Haviland, a contributor to *291* and another of Picabia’s portrait subjects, also explores this crucial idea of metaphoric resemblances. “We are living in the age of the machine,” Haviland declared in 1915. “Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs which act; lungs which breathe; a heart which beats; a nervous system through which runs electricity.” Haviland goes on to

describe the machine as being “yet at a dependent stage. . . . She submits to his will but he must direct her activities. . . . Through their mating they complete one another.”¹⁰ Assertions of the conflation of the human and the mechanical suggest that the dadaists saw the relationship as one of interdependency, as extending rather than threatening human impulses. Such artistic gestures constitute a process of recovery—the recovery of the human within the realm of the machine. Philip Fisher, for one, sees great significance in “this effort to free from inside man-made things the fact of their humanity.” He makes a case against the standard reading of the loss of the human in “our entanglement with objects.” Citing the implicitly figurative welded-steel sculpture of Pablo Picasso and David Smith, he argues that “any combination of materials could be joined to create a sign of the human figure.” Indeed, Fisher sees this kind of artistic recovery as a “fundamental act of connection,” a connection essential for survival in a manmade world.¹¹

For the New York dadaists, the terms of this recovery were highly gendered—and quite regressive. Picabia’s machine-portraits reveal his passion for automobiles, which especially in the early literature of automobile culture by Octave Mirbeau and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, among others, are often characterized as female love objects. As Marinetti so graphically puts it in his founding statement of Italian Futurism: “We went up to the three snorting beasts, to lay amorous hands on their torrid breasts.”¹² And throughout his essay, Haviland refers to man’s machine creation as “she” and endorses the subjugation of women in traditional gender roles: “*she* submits to his will . . . *he* must direct her activities” (emphasis mine). Such a gendering of the machine as female ultimately served a patriarchal need to assert control over machine culture by linking it with something closer to the natural world. Haviland’s statements assert the essentialist notion of women as more thoroughly rooted in nature. At a time when technological values were ascendant in American culture, the dadaists used traditional constructs of the feminine to medi-

ate between the realms of technology and nature.¹³ In their attempt to infuse human values into the increasingly threatening realm of technology, the New York dadaists fell back on traditional gender constructs. The dadaists' humanizing of the machine came at the cost of reinscribing conventional gender ideology.

This mode of gendering content is further amplified in another work in Picabia's 291 series, *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a Young American Girl in a State of Nudity) (see figure 1.4). Here a sparkplug (inscribed "FOR-EVER") is extracted from its automotive function to define the generic "young american girl" as a perpetual "kindler of flame," according to Picabia's wife, Gabrielle Buffet.¹⁴ Picabia shared an obsession with the *jeune fille américaine* among the Parisian avant-garde; for such writers as Alfred Jarry and Jean Cocteau, the young American girl became the personification of the new century, an image of artistic liberation.¹⁵ Much like women's fashions of the time, the straight-edged silhouette of the sparkplug is altogether lacking in "feminine" characteristics, rendering Picabia's *jeune fille américaine* remarkably androgynous. Yet she is also highly charged erotically. In radical defiance of traditional feminine guise and demeanor, the machine-woman asserts a manly appearance and an active sexual role. In this work, then, Picabia may be responding to the erosion of traditional gender positions. His machine-woman acknowledges a new machine aesthetic and with it the blurring of gender distinctions in this era of the New Woman.

Picabia's portrait of a young American girl does not, however, altogether affirm this new liberated woman. Numerous social forces, including the demand for an expanded labor force during World War I, encouraged women to enter domains traditionally occupied by men. In greatly escalating numbers, women asserted their independence, and in the process threatened male hegemony in the work force and destabilized normative gender roles. Such transgressions gave rise to fears of a "newly autonomous female type."¹⁶ While Picabia's conception of the *jeune fille*

américaine reflects the breakdown of categories—human/mechanical, male/female—it also signals a double threat, the threat of control by the machine and by the liberated female.

The new models of identity-construction posited by Picabia significantly influenced the American avant-garde, none more strongly than Man Ray, whose works were likewise highly conflicted responses to machine culture. While in 1915 Picabia characterized himself as an automobile horn in *Le Saint des saints*, three years later Man Ray turned a photograph of an eggbeater into a self-portrait by titling it *Homme* (Man), punning his own first name. Male identity is also inferred by the phallic shadow cast by the beater's handle. On one level, both artists identify with the essence, or the function, of the objects they represent—Picabia with the horn's capacity for announcing presence, attesting to the artist's bombastic personality, and Man Ray with the beater's ability to stir things up, alluding to his anarchistic spirit. However, Picabia's conflation of horn and combustion chamber invokes far more sophisticated mechanical processes than a simple hand-powered eggbeater. Man Ray's household tool displays a closer kinship with Marcel Duchamp's chocolate grinder than Picabia's automobile components. Also a self-portrait of sorts, the chocolate grinder for Duchamp signified onanism; as the artist himself stated, "The bachelor grinds his chocolate himself."¹⁷ Both hand-manipulated contraptions thus encode male masturbation; paradoxically, however, they were extracted from the distinctively domestic (that is, feminine) domain of the kitchen.

Such a ransacking of the domestic to define identity raises ambiguous questions: does this kind of appropriation suggest a valuation of that "feminine" realm, or does it represent an intrusion into that arena as a means of assuming authority over it? Where Picabia had asserted control—and his male identity—via a bulbous automobile horn, here Duchamp and Man Ray have formed more ambiguous self-images via female-identified devices.¹⁸ As if to underscore such ambiguity, Man Ray titled a

later print of the eggbeater *Femme* (Woman). This dual identification of the eggbeater as both “man” and “woman”—self and other, machine and human—suggests not only simple identity confusion but also a strategic positioning of the self in relation to the dominant, and highly mechanized, world view. As such, *Homme* and *Femme* both adopt and criticize that view.

In their search for self-identity, Man Ray and the New York dadaists borrowed not only from the domain of the mechanical and the “feminine,” but also from another closely related realm—the “primitive.” Arguably, our ability to see anthropomorphic configurations in mechanical objects as diverse as eggbeaters, chocolate grinders, and sparkplugs is conditioned by our awareness of tribal artifacts. As James Clifford points out, African sculpture is often characterized by “a segmented stylization suggesting a strangely mechanical vitality.”¹⁹ Recognition of “affinities” between the diametrically opposed phenomena of the mechanical and the tribal served the avant-garde in much the same way as did the machine/woman interchange. In this paradoxical fusion of value systems, an understanding of the “primitive” is inevitably shaped by Western values (patriarchal and colonial), while the technological is tempered by the “primitive.” For the avant-garde, the recognition of the hand-crafted and “primitive” within the mass-produced and mechanical thus served not as a means of retreating from modern civilization but rather as a way of coming to terms with it.

The merging of the technological and the primitive served the avant-garde in reasserting the spiritual dimension of self-identity. This is apparent in an early, some would say “proto,” dadaist work by Marius de Zayas, an abstract caricature of Alfred Stieglitz executed around 1912. This charcoal drawing features the photographer as a series of circles paired on either side of a vertical line and accompanied by mathematical symbols. As attributes of Stieglitz, the circular forms allude both to eyeglasses and to camera lens. Yet we know through his writings that de

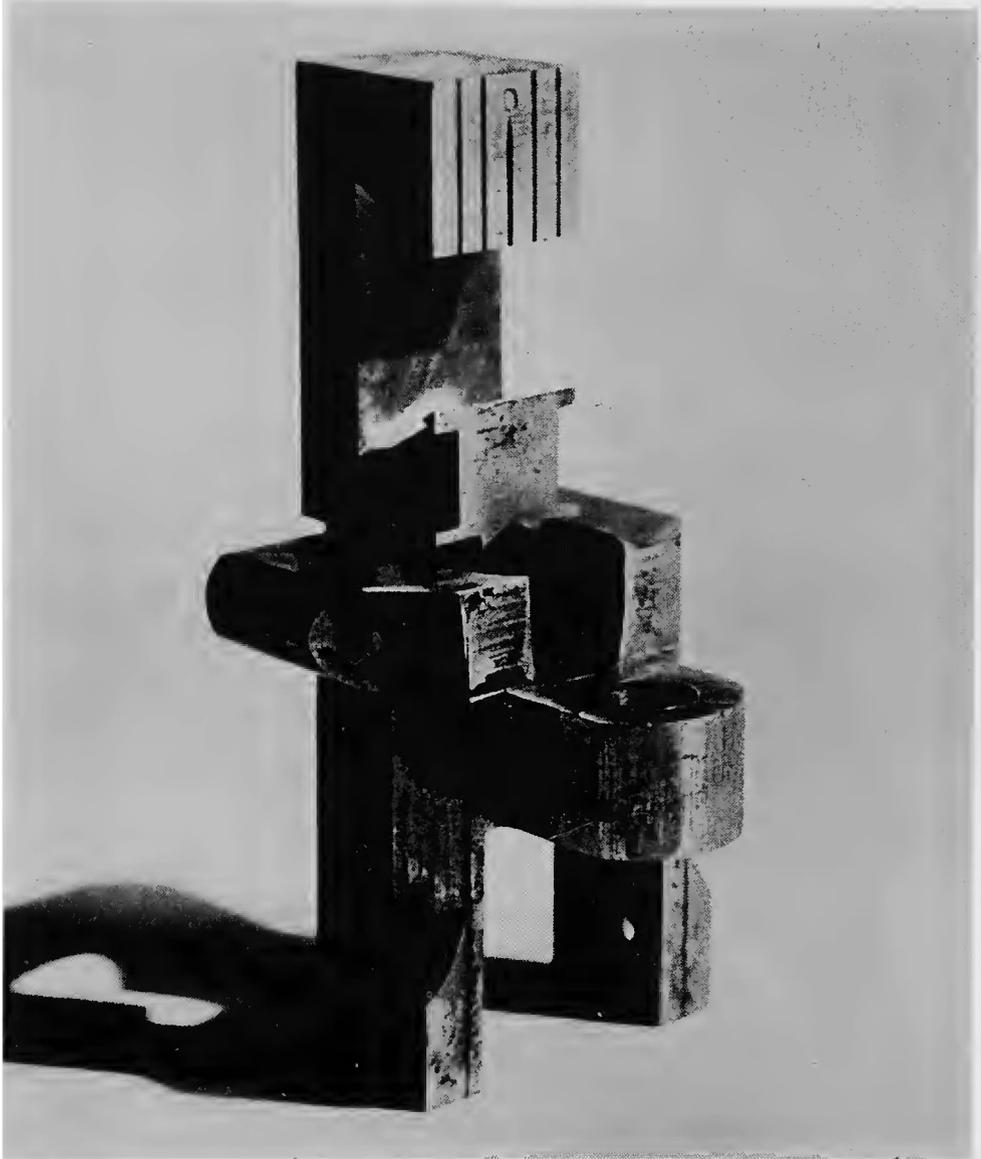
Zayas was fascinated with primitive art, and that his specific inspiration here was a “Soul-Catcher,” an artifact from Pukapuka in the Pacific that de Zayas had seen in the ethnographic collection of the British Museum.²⁰ By conflating the technological and the primitive, de Zayas underscores the spiritual dimension of Stieglitz, the photographer’s special ability to transfer the spirituality of primitive ritual into modern terms; in other words, to capture souls with a modern machine. De Zayas seems to be saying that identity construction in the modern era is determined as much by the spiritual as the mechanical or mathematical. The primitive thus provides the avant-garde a means of redeeming the machine from impersonality and the self from dehumanization.

Such a redemption, however, is problematic in that it depends on a fundamentally essentialist view of the primitive, the notion that tribal artifacts express an elemental kinship with nature and basic human instinct as well as with the realm of the spirit. As such, the “primitive” is closely allied with essentialist conceptions of the “feminine.”²¹ In spite of the redemption of the human implied by this doubled identification of self, attempts to see the self in terms of both the “feminine” and the “primitive” also posit an uneasy imbalance in a series of implied oppositions, such as pragmatic/spiritual, mechanical/tribal, civilized/savage, culture/nature, and—crucial to the argument presented here—male/female. This implicit privileging of the one over the other constitutes more an assertion than a critique of Western and masculine authority. For example, Man Ray’s earliest machine-assemblage, *Self-Portrait* of 1916, features the artist’s signature in the form of an imprint of his hand, centered below two electric bells and above an electric buzzer. The three mechanical elements signify eyes and mouth, but also (female) breasts and genitals. Where the technological elements resemble a kind of mask-like face, or segmented body, the handprint invokes prehistoric cave paintings. Like the prehistoric hunter, Man Ray leaves the imprint of his hand to imply control over his prey. In this updated narrative, such a gesture signifies

male mastery not only of technology, but also of the domains of the primitive and the feminine.

Man Ray's *Rebus* of 1925 (figure 2.1) even more forcefully encodes the "feminine" and the "primitive" in machine-age portraiture. In this photograph of a metal section of a dismantled rifle, the artist produces an effect of resemblance by exploiting a visual pun. He has photographed the object so that it strikingly resembles an African carving (figure 2.2), and thus has reconfigured a mass-produced object as a modern fetish. As the title indicates, the image is also a rebus, a puzzle consisting of pictures of objects or signs whose names suggest words. In so far as the object resembles a man, the object itself puns the artist's first name, while the first syllable of the title, pronounced in French (Man Ray's adopted language), puns his last name.²² Although undoubtedly a self-portrait, *Rebus* is an ambiguously gendered one. While we are tempted to see this object as a seated male to solve the rebus, we can also read the protuberant shapes as signs for two breasts above an extended belly. (Interestingly, a tradition exists among African cultures for such a collapsing of gender distinctions; for instance, certain Dogon figurative carvings feature characteristics of both sexes. However, where the tribal sculptures' assertion of dual sexuality encapsulates the creation myths of the Dogon people, such an abrogation of gender distinctions by Man Ray represents an egocentric gesture of self-definition.²³)

At the time of his resurrection of this mechanical element, Man Ray was living in Paris (where he had relocated in 1921); therefore the French language—the fact that in French rifle (or carbine) is a feminine noun—may provide an additional key to the meaning of *Rebus*. Although the cultural meanings of objects are not necessarily determined by their grammatical classification (as masculine, feminine, or neuter), this language-based designation does carry more weight in languages other than English and may not be entirely irrelevant here. More to the point, perhaps, are the gendered allusions of the mechanical element itself.



2.1

Man Ray, *Rebus*, 1925, photograph.

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Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

**2.2**

Seated Male Figure, Baule, Ivory Coast,
wood, 15 1/4 in. Private collection.

Photo: Jerry L. Thompson, courtesy
the Museum for African Art, New York.

Rebus presents the part of a rifle that needs special care in oiling the chamber for smooth insertion of ammunition. Even though the basic configuration of *Rebus*, along with its status as a self-portrait, initially point to masculine gender, Man Ray enlists both form and language to undercut that gender affiliation to suggest a more equivocal self-identity. Through a double collapsing—of the tribal and the mechanical, of the female and male—Man Ray devised a language for constructing a new identity for the machine age. This work becomes yet another gesture bolstering Fisher’s contention that such resemblances constitute an acknowledgment that “the object world in general exists as a rebus, spelling and re-spelling the human name.”²⁴ That this “human name” is made more human by its identification with, and consequent subordination of, principles of the “feminine” and the “primitive” attests to the enormity of the threat of machine-age dehumanization.

Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (figure 2.3), a close relative of Man Ray’s *Rebus*, further embellishes on the contradictions implicit in such mechano-tribal portraiture. Unlike *Rebus*, this found object is not a machine part but a piece of plumbing. However, Duchamp’s engagement of the domain of mass production to explore identity construction raises similar questions regarding machine-age portraiture. From its first public unveiling (behind the scenes) at the inaugural exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists in 1917, *Fountain* elicited anthropomorphic and gendered readings. Contemporaries variously characterized the upside-down urinal as “the legs of the ladies by Cézanne,” “a lovely Buddha,” and as “Madonna of the Bathroom,” and underscored the sensuality of the object.²⁵ Even though a urinal is an object of male use, its smooth, pristine curves evoke female forms, and its cavities suggest female sexuality. Furthermore, as William Camfield observes, in converting a banal urinal into a fountain, the artist transformed a receptacle for human waste into “a fountain of life-giving water,” an object of male use into a metaphor for female generativity.²⁶ Through such an inversion of meaning, Duchamp not only served avant-



2.3

Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917, photograph by Alfred Stieglitz (published in *The Blind Man*, no. 2 [May 1917]: 4). Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris/Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

garde discourse, but also imbued a mass-produced object with human meaning.

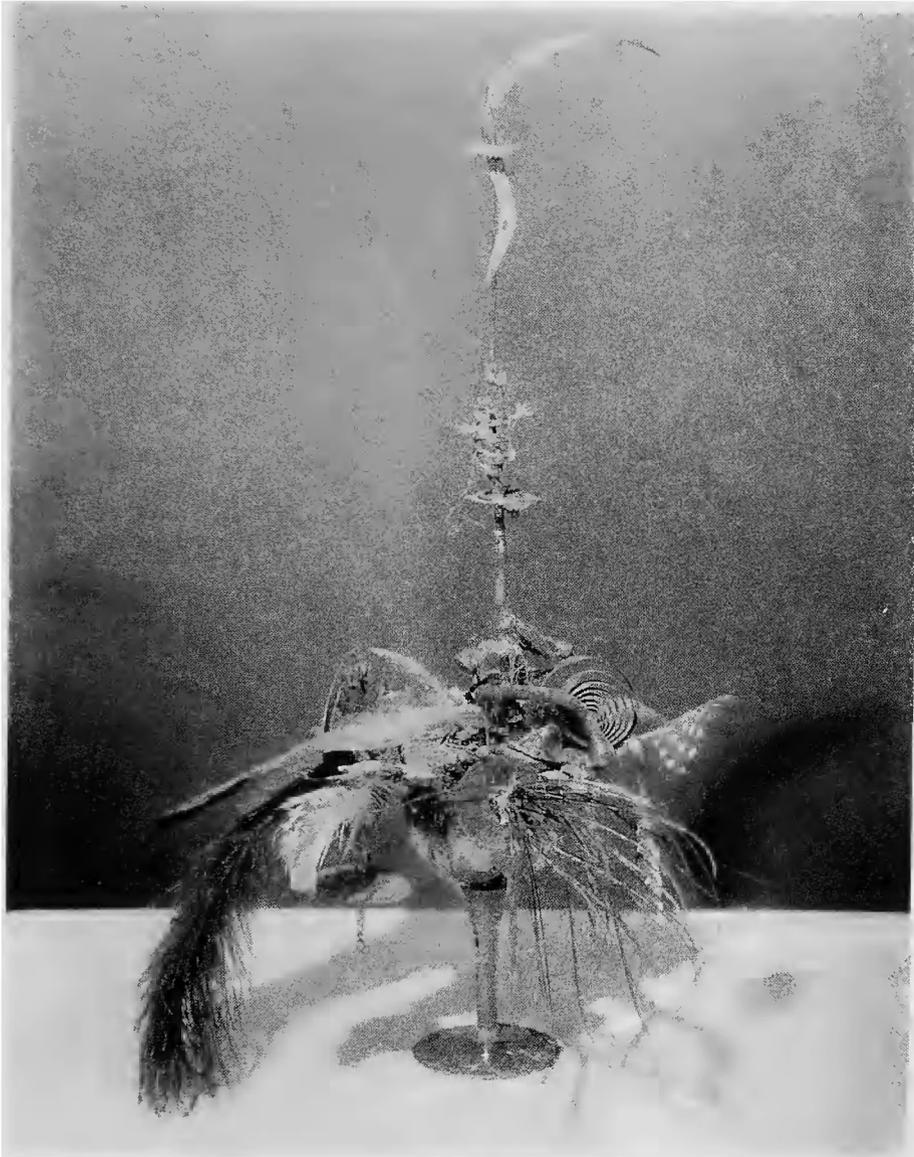
Like *Rebus*, Duchamp's *Fountain* can be read as a self-portrait. Bruce Nauman's later tribute to Duchamp, *Self-Portrait as Fountain* of 1966, a reenactment in more literal terms of Duchamp's ironic attempt at self-definition, lends some credence to this idea. But more germane to such an identification is the resemblance between the inverted urinal and certain black African masks. The dominant features of *Fountain*—the ovoid shape, sunken cheeks, protruding tube-like mouth, and even the perforations—also characterize some black African masks. Furthermore, both the urinal and the mask are decontextualized in similar ways. Just as Duchamp has detached an ordinary urinal from its original function as a bathroom fixture, he likewise stripped the tribal artifact of its function in tribal ritual.²⁷ Both modern and tribal artifacts are extracted from their normal contexts to effect a radical redefinition of art, as well as of the self. Duchamp's conflation of the technological and the tribal discloses his dual identity: as ultra modern (like American plumbing) and, at the same time, as ultra primitive (like African sculpture).²⁸ Once again, it is the primitive that mediates the artist's relationship to the technological, in this case, the overwhelming modernity of New York.

What of the portraiture done by female artists associated with New York Dada? Are similar contradictions to be found in their works? Although quite a few produced images in the genre of portraiture—Florine Stettheimer, Katherine Dreier, and Beatrice Wood among them—none executed portraits significantly informed by machine ideology. An exception is Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, a German national living in New York during the teens, who established close links with the New York dadaists. She participated in their activities, wrote poems, made art objects, and assisted other artists in selecting objects (notably Morton Schamberg and very likely Duchamp). Freytag-Loringhoven also embellished her own androgynous figure with an assortment of found objects.

She wore spherical metal tea infusers and iced tea spoons as jewelry, a coal scuttle lid as a hat, and, in a gesture invoking Picabia's 291 portraits, fashioned a battery-powered taillight as a bustle, explaining, "Cars and bicycles have tail lights. Why not I?"²⁹

Known only through a photograph taken by Charles Sheeler, Freytag-Loringhoven's *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* of around 1920 (figure 2.4) suggests provocative connections to both *Rebus* and *Fountain*. Freytag-Loringhoven's portrait is a sculptural assemblage consisting of mechanical gears, clock spring, and fishing lure embellished with feathers, chicken bones, and other materials. In dressing—or cross-dressing—Duchamp in this way, Freytag-Loringhoven seems to be defining him in her own androgynous mode while at the same time alluding to Duchamp's female persona, Rose Sélavy. She thus establishes a linkage between self and other, male and female. Given Freytag-Loringhoven's infatuation with Duchamp this feminized parallel between herself and Duchamp may project a bit of wishful thinking. In a poem titled "Love—Chemical Relationship" she proposed such a union between "Un Enfant Français: Marcel (A Futurist)" and "Ein deutsches Kind: Else (A Future Futurist)."³⁰ More pertinent, disintegration of the boundaries between self and other illustrates a problem inherent in all portraiture—how it tends to collapse into self-portrayal.

The feathers and the general disposition of objects in *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* also lend a tribal dimension to this intriguing assemblage. While the machine parts stand for Duchamp's preoccupation with making machine art, the feathers and bones transform the portrait into a machine-age tribal headdress. The conflation of the technological and the primitive, the embrace of both the mechanical and the ritualistic, can be seen as another recovery of the human in machine-age portraiture. Yet, unlike Man Ray's *Rebus* or Duchamp's *Fountain*, here the handmade and the organic predominate. The feathers and bones seem to engulf the gears and clock spring, subordinating the mechanical. The work thus



2.4

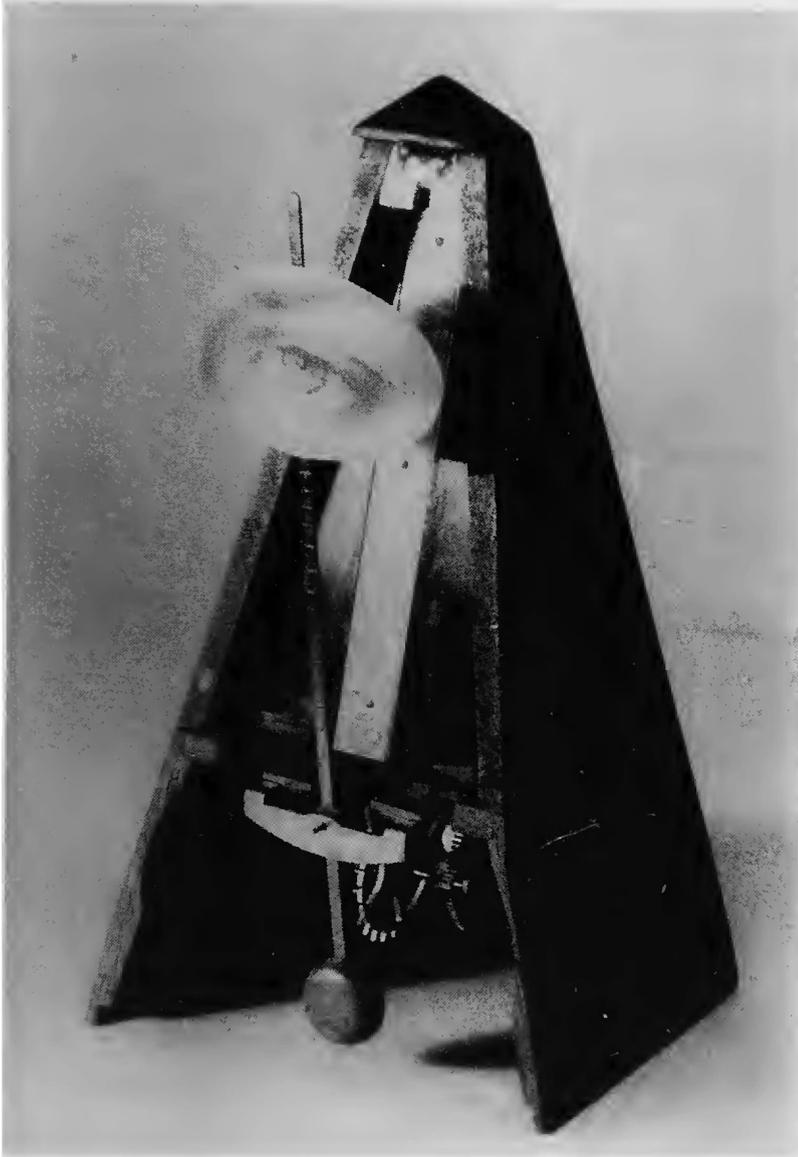
Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, c. 1920 (from *The Little Review* [Winter 1922]: 40a).

Photo: Charles Sheeler.

takes on overtones that challenge the dominant machine mode to a greater degree than works by male artists.

Scholars of Dada now generally agree that Freytag-Loringhoven was the principal artist behind the creation of *God* (see figure 3.3), a sculpture conceived in 1917 and once attributed to Morton Schamberg.³¹ A piece of plumbing stuck in a miter box, *God* is as ironical and irreverent a commentary on the preeminence of the machine in modern America as any work produced at this time. As such, it stands out as a testament to Freytag-Loringhoven's subversive spirit (and is just as *unlikely* a work by Schamberg). This representation of god as a section of plumbing continues the dialogue begun by Picabia and Haviland in 1915, regarding the implied equation: god = man = machine. However, unlike their conception of the machine as female, Freytag-Loringhoven's machine is unquestionably male (that is, phallic); and by extension, god is masculine. The female principle is not, however, entirely banished in this commentary on male prevalence. The sculpture possesses the iconic force of a tribal fetish, and as such engages the female principle as one akin to the primitive. Freytag-Loringhoven's portrayal of god as a primitive fetish in effect humanizes each element in the tripartite equation and undermines the idea of technology strictly defined as a male creed.

Unquestionably, Man Ray's *Object of Destruction* (figure 2.5) best personifies the paradoxical appropriation of the mechanical and the tribal to explore modern identity. It also offers the strongest critique of the modernist, machine-age agenda. First executed in c. 1923, the work consists of a metronome with a photograph of a human eye attached to the end of its swinging arm. Given Man Ray's propensity for punning and puzzles, the eye can be read as the first-person pronoun to establish the work's autobiographical dimension. The artist appears in synecdoche, and this part-image of the self takes on a multileveled symbolism. The disembodied eye could indicate Man Ray's own sense of detachment as an American in Paris; or, it might signify the eye of the mind and, by



2.5

Man Ray, *Object of Destruction*, c. 1932,
metronome with photograph. © 1997
Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society,
New York/ADAGP, Paris.

extension, visionary insight; or, the eye could simply stand for vision itself. But when considered in conjunction with the metronome—essentially a mechanical conductor that sets the tempo in the production of music, a mechanical monitor of human artistic production—the eye and the work itself comment on how the machine has come to control the artist, determining identity and setting the tempo of life. The effect of the unyielding stare of the eye, as it relentlessly measures time, is disconcerting. Its intense psychological reverberations mark this work as a powerful indictment of the role of the machine in determining self-identity.³²

However, Man Ray's foregrounding of the eye suggests additional readings regarding the persistence of the human as well as the ambiguous gendering of identity in the machine age. Significantly, Man Ray extracted the eye for *Object of Destruction* from photographs of women: Alice Prin (Kiki) for the first version (1923), and Lee Miller for the later version (1932).³³ As in *Rebus*, Man Ray invokes the female in his attempt to define self in the context of machine culture. Yet the female presence remains enigmatic: does she function as the very soul of the machine, as a humanizing agent in a creative partnership with the machine? Or is her entrapment within the machine a sign of her subjugation? Through metaphoric portrayal, woman is again enlisted in the attempt to retrieve the human from within the manmade world. In this case, however, the process of retrieval bears explicitly violent overtones. The fact that a woman's eye is presented as disembodied, as severed from her body, suggests the mutilation and fragmentation of the female body. Ultimately, the mundane metronome is thereby transformed into, or recoded as, a machine of torture.

This torture machine is not, however, without figurative referents. Once again, Man Ray challenges the viewer to read human form into found objects, and, as in *Rebus*, it is African sculpture that encourages this reading. For this version of *Object of Destruction*, Man Ray removed the lower front housing so that the mechanical inner workings and the

“legs” of the metronome would be visible. This stripped-down metronome resembles an African yoke mask, which typically features leg-like shoulder supports. This “affinity” with African sculpture goes beyond apparent resemblance. Rather than render the tribal object entirely in Western terms, Man Ray has invoked something of the object’s indigenous role. Such masks were carved for specific uses in tribal ceremonies that involve ritual and movement, uses typically “rendered invisible” in Western appropriation of tribal artifacts.³⁴ Though Man Ray clearly does not try to reenact, or even evoke, specific aspects of tribal ritual, he does not entirely banish signs of the original context of tribal artifacts. If put into action, the metronome establishes a repetitive movement and insistent beat invoking the trance-like ritualistic ambiance of African dance.

Once registered as a whole figure, this primitivistic machine-woman refuses all agendas of submissiveness. Unlike many of Man Ray’s later photographs of women who are deprived of sight and action, this machine-woman actively engages the viewer, denying subjection to the masculine gaze. Rather than invite a voyeuristic scrutiny, she returns the gaze with hypnotic intensity, insistently making her presence both felt and heard. She provokes admiration as well as fear. Presented as autonomous, she is also manipulative, even castrating. The revolving teeth-rimmed gears, given their position relative to the other “body” parts, take on a distinctly menacing presence. The portrait of the male artist as “bachelor machine” is effectively recast as the portrait of the female artist as *vagina dentata*.³⁵

This rather brutalizing transgression of gender identities is the key to the powerful resonance of this work. More than any other object discussed here, this modified metronome refuses modernist agendas regarding the feminine and the primitive. While Man Ray has again created an image that embodies both self and other, male and female, the technological and the tribal, in an oppositional schema that implicitly privileges the former at the expense of the latter, he does not try to resolve them into

a new unity. By presenting polarities *as* polarities, Man Ray generates an uneasiness, indeed a disruption of expectations. The result is an utterly unsettled construction of modern identity. Here, rather than use art as an attempt to establish a definitive self-identity in the perplexing age of machine ascendancy, the artist uses the genre of portraiture to point to this era's crisis in cultural identity. The work becomes a critique of the modernist tendency to attach consummate importance to the machine while also romanticizing the primitive. Furthermore, it represents an ultimate refusal to fuse the two together in a Western model of duality or complementarity.

The possibilities of self-representation were vastly complicated and enriched by the advent of the machine. With its paradoxical mix of conflicting impulses, portraiture in the machine age signified a crisis in cultural identity. While many avant-garde portraits seem to resolve the crisis by denying, or at least diminishing, difference, others—perhaps the more powerful portraits—acknowledge difference. And while many portraits seem to erase gender by doing away with clearly recognizable human features, these portraits are nevertheless saturated with gender codes. Similarly, while some portraits mediate the technological through embracing the primitive, such a strategy ultimately absorbs or recuperates the primitive into a Western patriarchal and colonialist narrative.³⁶ A decoding of such portraiture thus reveals the avant-garde's attempt to forge a new identity through an unabashed appropriation of the other. In some cases this appropriation constitutes a challenge to the existing order; in others, a reinforcement of traditional gender positions and Western notions of primitivism. The construction of modern identity reveals itself as a complex mix of ambiguities and contradictions determined by an avant-garde in search of human meaning in the increasingly inhuman world of the machine.

NOTES

1. Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 8.
2. Linda Nochlin, "'Response' to T. J. Clark, 'The Look of Self-Portraiture,'" *Yale Journal of Criticism* 5, no. 2 (1992): 121.
3. Lisa M. Steinman, *Made in America: Science, Technology, and American Modernist Poets* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 2.
4. Cecelia Tichi, *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 98.
5. William Carlos Williams, *Selected Essays* (New York: New Directions, 1969), p. 256. Williams first made this comment in his introduction to *The Wedge* (1944).
6. Francis Picabia, qtd. in "French Artists Spur on an American Art," *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, sec. 4, pp. 2–3; rpt. in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), p. 131.
7. *291*, nos. 5–6 (July–August 1915): 1–5: *Ici, c'est ici Stieglitz foi et amour; Le Saint des saints; De Zayas! De Zayas!; Voilà Haviland; and Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité.*
8. Molly Nesbit discusses Duchamp's adoption of industrial models in "Ready-Made Originals: The Duchamp Model," *October* 37 (Summer 1986): 53–64; and "The Language of Industry," in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Thierry de Duve (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1991), pp. 351–384.
9. Gerald Silk, "The Automobile in Art," in *Automobile and Culture* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), pp. 77–78.

10. Paul Haviland, "Statement," *291*, nos. 7–8 (September–October 1915): n.p.

11. Philip Fisher, "The Recovery of the Body," *Humanities in Society* 1 (Spring 1978): 141, 145–146.

12. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism [1909]," in *Selected Works*, ed. R. W. Flint, trans. R. W. Flint and Arthur A. Coppotelli (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), p. 40.

13. For a seminal discussion of the nature/culture opposition, see Sherry B. Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 67–87.

14. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp [1949]," trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2d ed., 1989), p. 258.

15. For further discussion of the *jeune fille américaine*, see Elizabeth Hutton Turner, "*La jeune fille américaine* and the Dadaist Impulse," in this volume. William I. Homer argues that the subject of Picabia's portrait is Agnes Ernst Meyer, an inspirational figure for the *291* circle. See Homer, "Picabia's *Jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* and Her Friends," *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 1 (March 1975): 114–115. However, since the portrait remains unnamed, Turner's interpretation of the *jeune fille américaine* in broader terms is more convincing.

16. David Hopkins, "Questioning Dada's Potency: Picabia's 'La Sainte Vierge' and the Dialogue with Duchamp," *Art History* 15, no. 3 (September 1992): 323.

17. Marcel Duchamp, note from *The Green Box*, in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1989), p. 68.

18. This link between Man Ray and Duchamp has been observed by Nancy Ring, in her more extensive discussion of the appropriation of “female” objects by male artists. See Ring, “New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913–1921” (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1991), pp. 29–30, 130–131.

19. James Clifford, “Histories of the Tribal and the Modern,” *Art in America* 73, no. 4 (April 1985): 170.

20. Willard Bohn, “The Abstract Vision of Marius de Zayas,” *Art Bulletin* 62, no. 3 (September 1980): 435. See also Douglas Hyland, *Marius de Zayas: Conjuror of Souls* (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1981), cat. no. 23, pp. 104–105.

21. For further discussion of how conventional tropes of the primitive become feminine tropes, see Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990). See also Whitney Chadwick, “Fetishing Fashion/Fetishizing Culture: Man Ray’s *Noire et blanche*,” in this volume, for a discussion of Man Ray’s construction of female sexuality as “primitive/irrational/other.”

22. Francis Naumann first identified this photograph/object as a self-portrait in “Cryptography and the Arensberg Circle,” *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 9 (May 1977): 128.

23. For an example of a bisexual figurine from Mali, Dogon, see Susan Vogel, *African Aesthetics: The Carlo Monzino Collection* (New York: The Center for African Art, 1986), p. 8. I am indebted to my colleague Rebecca Leuchak for directing me to the creation myths of the Dogon people.

24. Fisher, “The Recovery of the Body”: 146.

25. Louise Norton, “Buddha of the Bathroom,” *Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917): 6;

and Beatrice Wood, *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood*, ed. Lindsay Smith (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2d ed., 1988), p. 30.

26. William A. Camfield, "Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*: Its History and Aesthetics in the Context of 1917," in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1989), p. 83. See also William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston, TX: Menil Collection, 1989). For a discussion of "fantasies of masculine filiation," see Hopkins, "Questioning Dada's Potency": 317–333.

27. Dickran Tashjian writes that Duchamp's selection and display of his readymades in New York were not unlike an anthropologist's collecting and displaying of tribal artifacts. See Tashjian, "New York Dada and Primitivism," in *Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt*, ed. Stephen C. Foster and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (Madison, WI: Coda, 1979), p. 144.

28. Wanda Corn mentioned this duality in a discussion of how Duchamp deliberately selected a urinal as a means of suggesting what art should look like in such a technological culture: "An Icon Revisited: Marcel Duchamp's 'Fountain'" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the College Art Association, San Francisco, CA, 16 February 1989).

29. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, qtd. in Louis Bouché, "Autobiographical Notes," unpub. ms., Louis Bouché Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (microfilm roll 688, frame 700). See also Robert Reiss, "'My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in *New York Dada*, p. 87.

30. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Love—Chemical Relationship," *Little Review* (June 1918): 58–59.

31. As Francis Naumann points out, Schamberg is probably only responsible for taking a photograph of the object. See Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), p. 171.

32. At least, this is how I interpreted the work in an earlier essay, “Man Ray and the Machine,” *Smithsonian Studies in American Art* 3, no. 4 (Fall 1989): 67–83.

33. Elizabeth Turner had given 1923 as the date of the version illustrated here, which would suggest that the eye is Kiki’s. See Turner, *American Artists in Paris, 1919–1929* (Ann Arbor, MI, and London: UMI, 1988). However, as Turner recently observed, the eye looks more like Lee Miller’s than Kiki’s, which would suggest a later date of 1932.

34. Edward Said argues for “opening the culture to experiences of the Other, . . . the recovery of a history hitherto either misrepresented or rendered invisible.” See Said, “Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community,” in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, WA: Bay, 1983), p. 158. See also Hal Foster, “The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious of Modern Art,” *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 45–70.

35. For a discussion of *vagina dentata* imagery in Man Ray, particularly in *Le Cadeau* (Gift) of 1921 (with its row of tacks), and even earlier in *Femme* (Woman) of 1918 (with its line-up of clothespins), see Peggy Elaine Schrock, “With ‘homage and outrage’: Man Ray and the dangerous woman” (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1992), pp. 50–63. Schrock also sees *Object of Destruction* as evoking the fear of the *vagina dentata*; however, where she sees the pendulum itself as the instrument of destruction (likening it to a guillotine) (p. 77), I view the gears below as more convincing symbols of (male) destruction.

36. Said, “Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies and Community,” p. 158; and Foster, “The ‘Primitive’ Unconscious”: 62.

A BOX, A PIPE, AND A PIECE OF PLUMBING

margaret A. MORGAN

THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES

Modern enterprise was the business of masculinity. The rhetoric of modernity championed masculinist productivity, industrialism, science. And for each “masculine” term, there was a “feminine” counter-term. In modernity, production is to consumption as hard science is to art. Yet the gendered encoding of such terms is fluid, operating in a series of relative hierarchies. Within its own purview, modern art made its claim for a little manhood by subtending the ostensibly feminine/primitive spheres of the decorative and the body. Thus, the familiar tropes—woman, oriental, primitive—took central place in the rhetoric of modernism precisely in order to provide its contingent masculinity with a foil by which to reflect an otherwise diminutive and fugitive image. As widely divergent as modernist practices are, from geometric abstraction to modernist architecture to Dada and Surrealism, each pits its protagonists against their Other: the feminine/the unconscious/the primitive.

The masculine figure that haunts them all, ostensibly universal but always deferred, is fraught with its own undoing: imperfect, incommensurable, and all the more vociferous for falling short of the mark. It can be argued that the very nature of modernism—a sequence of crises, the new supplanting the old—is in part a function of its ambition’s ineluctable failure. Each version of this idealized modern man propelled the present into the future in a vainglorious attempt to ward off the inevitable: the

fallibility of masculinity, the contingency of rationalism, the ordinary disorder of the modern world.

The rhetoric of the machine age bespoke these often traumatic relations. Yet the operation of machines, from cars to bicycles to sewing machines, also held the promise of bodily power—enabling, empowering, multiplying. Forgive the apparent sentimentality: from the point of view of the other end of modernity, in which machines are digitized, where a Bandaid won't fix your car in an emergency, where work is less often of the mechanical kind, where labor is less unionized and more home-based, out-sourced, service-oriented, and increasingly specialized, the waning pleasures still to be had in the name of some rather old fashioned notions of work beg consideration. Certainly the notion of work has shifted in relation to shifting notions of masculinity, utility, beauty, and the feminine. From Dada to early modernist architecture to American modernist painting to this postmodern period, "work" and "woman" have been labile motifs. These tropes, however, have other aspects than the most conspicuous and justifiably disparaged ones. In the lived experience of modernism, in the identifications of the "rank-and-file reader," there are surfeit pleasures, identifications, appropriations, of which there is not adequate account. Using art history as my readymade, I will invert its imagery, the better to expose this surfeit. Minor images from these annals occur throughout this essay: a box, a pipe, and a piece of plumbing. I say "images" because while they might exist as material things, it is as condensations that they circulate, accruing meaning over time and, by association, as they recede into a past constantly reinvented by its future.

Cut to the real world. There is a hydroelectric power plant in Southern California, its two turbines driving waters along the California aqueduct. The newer of the two is sheathed in a shining metal carapace, its power expressed in the monumentality of its seamless form. Yet its streamlined exterior guarantees no more efficiency than the uncovered counterpart that sits alongside it. Indeed, the unsheathed turbine is eas-

ier for maintenance crews to repair since its workings are more accessible. And unsheathed it is gorgeous in its nakedness, its function apparent, vivid, exposed. It is a beautiful thing to behold because to behold it is to understand it. In seeing you glean how it works. This turbine has not been encased in a smooth metal housing that stands in for functionality; rather, it just functions, no more and no less useful for its lack of a modernist carapace. Neither is it digitized so that its workings unknowable to the novice, built in the 1920s as it was. In the fearful state of machinic ignorance that characterizes everyday experience of recent technology, there is pleasure in the revelation of mechanical function. And here I paraphrase Albrecht Wellmer: modernist beauty rests upon a design's embodiment of purpose, a kind of functionalism for functionalism's sake, beauty as function *visibly apparent*.¹

THE PRIVY OF THE PLUMBER

This beauty, inspiring revelation rather than awe, is more accessible to the layman and the tradesman than to the connoisseur. Indeed, I would argue the assignation "beautiful" stands in for their pleasure, the quotidian pleasure of seeing something work: of understanding the mechanical relations of bodies, organic and inorganic, in concert, in space. As with turbines in a power plant, pleasure resides in the satisfactions of a kind of curiosity.² *I look to see how it works, in looking I understand. My understanding gives me pleasure.* I am neither blinded by a shining modernist surface nor overwhelmed by its latter-day circuitry. And in understanding the mechanics of the form I presume a certain confidence in the mechanics of my own physical form and this is reassuring, especially given the doubt cast upon it (bodily surety) by everything else.

There is indeed an intimate pleasure in the small everyday epiphany of understanding-by-observing a mechanical thing in action or in the simple technologies of employing just the right amount of leverage or

pressure to an object. This is part of the pleasure of tradespeople selecting objects in hardware stores or of changing your own tire or replacing the brake pads. It is part of the pleasure artists take in seeing and understanding exactly the surface, object, texture, word, that they want. I think of the material existence of many a late twentieth-century artist: jack of all trades, and if master of none, then at least mistress to bodily capability, one who understands the aesthetic dimension of and the pleasure derived from plumbing, plastering, wood-working, welding, building.³ Who better to experience this than the lay person, the amateur, the artisan, worker, plumber, carpenter. And it is precisely this physicality and pleasure in the reliability of physical form that is discounted in the measured relations between modernity and modernism, as if beauty, pleasure, and utility were as irreconcilable for these “minor” subject positions as for the major ones. Hence the pleasures of leverage instead of brute force, or the reliability of a plumb, or the brevity of the plasterer’s stroke: such things are discounted in the ideology of functionalism.

This discounted pleasure is understood as aesthetics, the “beauty” of a well-heeled functional object: the handle of a modern door, the evenly mudded wall, the turn of a faucet, the pour of a teapot, and so on. And this precisely because the pleasure I describe is situated in subjects—the worker, the amateur, the hobbyist, the woman—whom the discourses of modernism conventionally absent.

SMOOTH BOX

Interestingly, what might be called my fantasy of unalienated subjectivity runs from tradespeople to artists to Adolf Loos’s coachman. In “The Luxury Vehicle,” Loos argued that the coach builder “towers over the man of arts and crafts,” because the coach builder recognizes the inherent beauty of the form of his coach, in its coach-ness, with neither “glistening splendor” nor “rich decoration” nor “shiny gilding.”⁴ Loos rationalized

his sentiment from the standpoint of economics, arguing that ornament, last relic of a former age dominated by the aristocracy and the clergy, was a scourge on society and a waste of human resources. Positing the artisan as representative of workers in general, Loos argued that

The producers of ornament must work twenty hours to earn the wages a modern worker gets in eight. . . . The lack of ornament means shorter working hours and consequently higher wages. . . . If I pay as much for a smooth box as a decorated one, the difference in labour time belongs to the worker.⁵

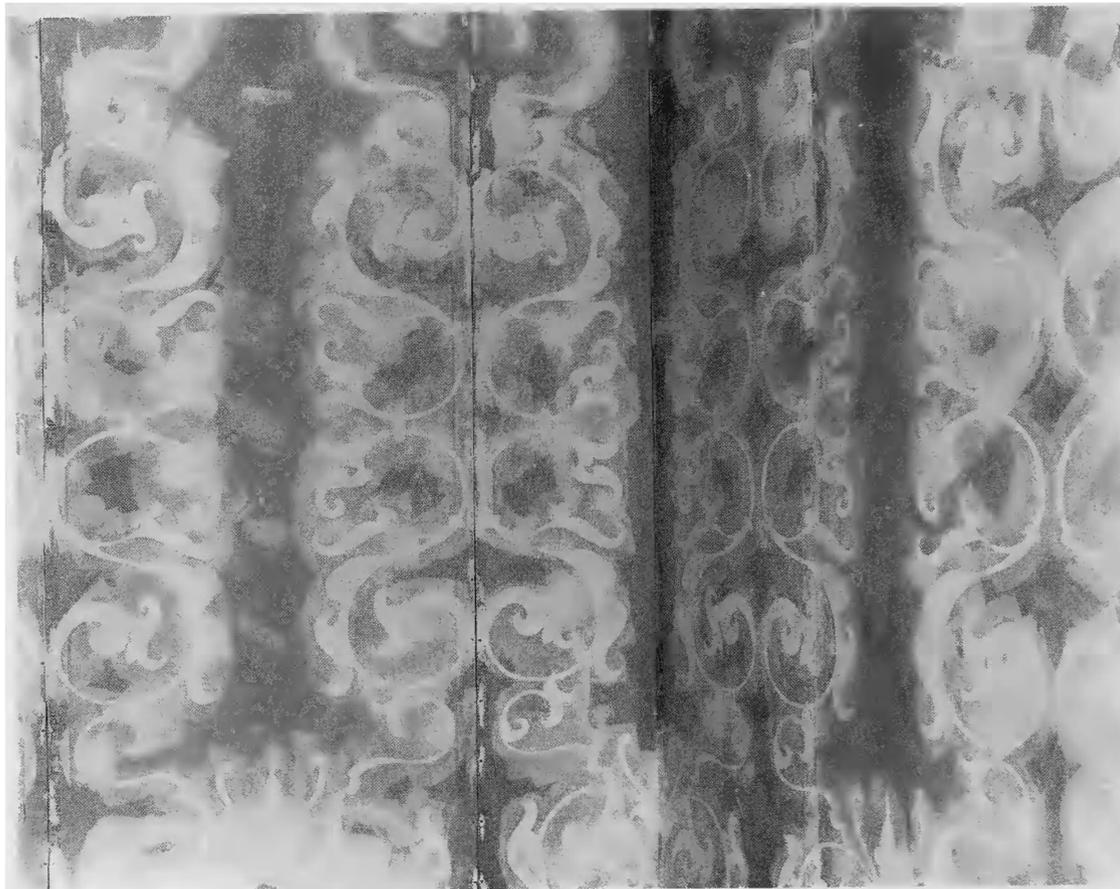
If the difference belongs to the worker, s/he is owed a lot of back pay. Loos misconstrued the nature of modern deskilling. Just three years after his piece was published, F. W. Taylor published his groundbreaking *Scientific Management* for maximizing the exploitation of unskilled (immigrant) labor. The emancipatory implications of some artisans' workshops were hardly akin to the growing profit margins of the assembly lines, factories, and mills of the working classes in general. Although Loos invoked modern labor, modern workers were still hidden inside his Pandora's Box, a very smooth box indeed.

Loos's observation does, however, suggest the confluence of decorative form *as* content—a direct correlative of undervalued labor. Frills, decorative effects, shiny fabrics—the more labor intensive the better—have at least since the Renaissance been trophies that signify the power held by a ruling class. So, too, the bourgeois of the nineteenth century prided himself on the fussy decorating and needlework of his busy wife. But by the beginning of the twentieth century, a burgeoning industrialist class was to supplant the old bourgeoisie as dominant social order. Vilified for its modesty and the decorousness of its domestic lifestyle, the bourgeoisie, like the aristocracy before it, was “feminized” and its femininity used to condemn it. So goes the now familiar chauvinism of Adolf

Loos, architect and modernist storm-trooper, who decried both the Vienna Secession and the *tchotchkes* that decorated the average middle-class Viennese parlor. To paraphrase Loos, tyrannical decoration, exemplified by the habits of women⁶ and the primitive,⁷ and perpetuated by the waning social orders of European bourgeois culture, was, like “the Indian in us,”⁸ to be overcome. That is, the modern bourgeois man must emulate the worker, the modern bourgeois woman must emulate modern man, and everyone should repress the “primitive within.” In short, modernism has no gender, work has no race, and class is a matter of style. Now if modern beauty is function incarnate, and the “real” connoisseurs of beauty the working users of functional objects—coachmen, cobblers, plumbers—then Loos’s version of this contest, this jockeying for aesthetic preeminence at the turn of the last century, was a contest of a “work aesthetic” across the bodies of (bourgeois) women and non-Europeans. At the level of the symbolic, it became an opposition that pitted class against gender and race. For Loos, the beauty of functionalism lay not in the pleasure of understanding I outlined earlier, but rather in its rhetorical value as an authenticating device for his ideal modernist Vienna: white, workerist (though not proletarian), repressive, and masculine.

COMPOUND FRACTURE

For Mara Lonner such functionalist beauty goes awry. In a gesture that retorts to the strictures of modernist architecture and to the limits of minimalism’s conceit, Lonner makes of functionalism an excess. Her recent work, *Code/Structure/Surface* (figure 3.1), involves the preparation and finishing of gallery dry walls. This is work indeed. Anyone who has attempted “mudding” knows this apparently simple task belies the skill it requires, the kind of bodily exactitude of which I spoke earlier. Anyone whose mudding is worth its salt stands back up on the completion of a



3.1

Mara Lonner, *Code/Structure/Surface*, 1996, 5/8 in. sheetrock, dry wall screws, joint compound, and City of Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety nailing schedule, overall dimensions 10 × 55 ft. Collection of the artist; photo: Tony Dyreck.

job well done, with pleasure, a hint of the self-congratulatory and a fetishist's eye to the precision of the detail. And anyone in the vicinity will crowd around, admiringly, partaking of the finish—the dry wall screw's regular intervals, the spare use of mud, the proper submergence of tape, the soon-to-be seamless surface—all this with the delectation of a connoisseur.

Many an exhibition would do well to receive as much concentrated attention as its bare gallery walls receive between shows. Coded as “guy work,” it is engendered with the modest bravado of a minor player in the scheme of modern production. It is valorized for its ostensible masculine prowess, the stamina it takes to produce an even and continuous *drag* of compound. Here Lonner claims her own drag. True to her readymade role as preparator, and as good as any guy, she fills the screws and levels the seams. She uses her tools with the precision of one who takes pleasure in these measured tasks. But instead of a brevity of knife pulls, this preparator has compounded her task: from the regulation arrangement of filled holes and cracks (her joints are up to code), she has fashioned an elaborate motif based on a nineteenth-century architectural detail. Cut from the wall then filled with compound, the design festoons the dry wall in lavish curlicues. In its repetitions it exceeds proprietary bounds.

In Lonner's piece, structure and ornament are no longer the discrete term and counter-term of modernist architecture. Instead, *Code/Surface/Structure* sullies the terms and points to the fetishization implicit in the smooth white gallery wall. No longer neutral, the crack in its code is the implication that this labor of love is also an object of desire. As the architectural theorist, Mark Wigley, observes:

[C]learly the white wall is far from neutral or silent. For the modern architect, it speaks volumes. Indeed, nothing is louder. The white wall is precisely not blank. Its apparent passivity is but the curious effect of a whole set of coordinated actions by the discourse, a concerted campaign that

*began as soon as the majority of architects started to reach for cans of white paint.*⁹

Lonner points to the “whole set of coordinated actions”: the pleasure of the transformation of physical form; the beauty of an invisible surfeit made apparent; the structure of a formal design; the surface appearance of structural form, the confusion of codes—feminine/masculine, surface/structure, ornament/architecture. In Lonner’s economy the incised marks invite speculations on the motives of the dry wall finisher, whose labors function to embellish the architecture precisely so that it may appear unlabored, free of interference: neutral. It is as if the preparator’s subjugated desires can only irrupt onto a surface soon to be painted over, the “crime of the ornament” committed in the non-time of the gallery’s after-hours and inevitably, destined to invisibility. These incisions, presented to the gallery audience, mark the abject of modernist architecture: that which makes it impossible for viewers comfortably to accept the notion of its form being whole, finite, and stable. Such is the intimate experience of the artist/preparator, that double office so familiar to late twentieth-century artists, who, undervalued and under-employed, must ply their skills in no less than the maintenance of the mythical clean, white cube, their own labor the very thing that shores up the space in all its indifference. They do not save the hours promised by Loos for “making the box smooth.”

The notion of the gallery as clean white cube is in Lonner’s piece literally undercut, decorative form *as* content embedded into its walls. Only the nonstructural dry walls are decorated: they, for all their histrionic formalism are, structurally speaking, superfluous. The intrinsic becomes extrinsic. Lonner makes the gestures of modernism contingent and the austerity of minimalist form a hyperbole. *Code/Structure/Surface* functions as an interstice, as if midway in preparation before the opening—

or is it after the close?—gorgeous for being uncovered, it is in a state of becoming, incomplete until the moment it is painted over, the white paint its final dénouement.

CLOSETS AND LOW-BOYS

As closed as a white cube sits the wardrobe in the Turnowsky apartment in Vienna, designed in 1900 by Adolf Loos. A truculent form, its austerity is tempered only by the very fineness that makes it austere. According to Loos's dictum, it is beautiful for being utterly functional. Yet its utility is not emphasized in its art historical representations. It is usually photographed with its doors shut tight. A smooth box, a Loosian *Etant Donnés*, it does not disclose itself. Repression gathers force in its exterior contours. Our restricted view gives the object its charge, its closed form speaking volumes on its symbolic weight. The closet, a gentlemanly apparatus, is a place within which to stack upon orderly stack the accoutrements of bourgeois masculinity. It is a place to maintain the disguise of assorted accessories, appendages and particulars that, piece by prosthetic piece, make a man whole. If one were privy to the view inside the closet, one might find small shelves, each rack labeled with its designated article—"Shirts," "Socks," "Ties," "Collars"—awaiting the particulate matter of manhood. This "low-boy" would be full of good quality serge trousers, worsted and wool, twill shirts, jackets of gabardine, plain bowler hats and collars of a simple, starched whiteness.

In the twentieth century, work rules and the style of the modern bourgeois man is practical, plain, and workman-like. Like the sheathed turbine of the hydroelectric power plant, this garb is a cover-up, a masquerade, bourgeois propriety in the guise of workerist affect. Bourgeois propriety drives much of the history of modernism, determining the personal styles of even the most nihilistic of dadaists and outrageous of sur-

realists. Consider the images of Man Ray's photographs of the *Surrealist "Centrale"*: almost always men, jacketed, suited, tied, and on occasion smoking a pipe. Consider even Rose Sélavy, her Chaplinesque cross-dressing an affront specifically to bourgeois propriety. Consider, too, Tristan Tzara, author of many Dada manifestoes, who had Loos design his Paris house. How did that unlikely interloper, "not at all modern,"¹⁰ live with his modernist home? There are indeed many instances in which these distant relatives make of each other strange bedfellows. For even though Dada is an impulse toward negation—"Dada is nothing; . . . nothing is good, nothing is interesting"¹¹—and modernist architecture an embracing of the modern, they share many things. Both affect urbanity. Both have the same fixations: plumbing, bicycles, pipes, and the like. Both disavow what might be called *artifice*. For the modernist architect, the form could only be the form, the material the material; for the dadaist, the readymade rendered the old order of thing and representation redundant. Thus, a wall is a wall, not a decoration, and an object is an object, not a picture of an object, meaning situated in the form itself.¹² Finally, Dada and modernist architecture both employ that persistent tropeic "feminine" as a device for articulating their otherwise different positionalities. In Dada, "she" is the erotic, the unconscious. In architecture, "she" is the decorative. The symbolic oozes into any ostensible indifference, like water seeping through porous rock into an empty breach. That is, the objects and walls do not only function as objects and walls but as signifiers of power, authenticity, prowess, genius—undermining, against even the best of intentions, the very rhetoric that sustains them. Such semantic shifts provide the very interstices that have given feminists in more recent years a place from which to speak, the undoing of the dominant text of its own accord, providing a break in an otherwise totalizing and totalized form.

A CASE IN POINT

In the dramaturgy of modernism, the “smoking pipe”—be it René Magritte’s representational query or Marcel Duchamp’s signature accessory—functions as a loaded gun. A vestige of gentlemanly entitlement, it is placed on the set in the early scenes of the play, only to be—in order to be—taken up in the final act and fired. A metonym for the humidors, dens, tabacs, and smoking chambers of the city, the pipe represents the places where modern men could congregate in neat and homosocial intimacy, outside the banter and brash competition of their modern masculine lives. The pipe is a comfort, a mother’s nipple, an oral stimulant, a pacifier, a teat by which, in the mind of this reader at least, the Belgian surrealist, the French dadaist, and the Viennese architect could allow themselves to touch. With lips pursed around the apparatus they have in common, Magritte, Duchamp, and Loos gesture toward each other. Their mouths against the contour of the shaft, they whisper words that we outside their chambers cannot hear. Rooms with no view, the sounds in these boxes are not meant for our ears. Such is the manly interiority to which those outside their exclusive quarters are not privy.

Magritte’s famous negation, *This Is Not A Pipe*, employs no arbitrary signifier. The picture of the pipe and the word for the pipe are stained with the presence of another absent object: the smoking gentleman, he with his regular habits, his tidy manner, and his declarative speech, who fails his own representational systems. Uncontainable by the finitude of word or image, his repression irrupts. In Foucault’s description, both word and image are eroticized:

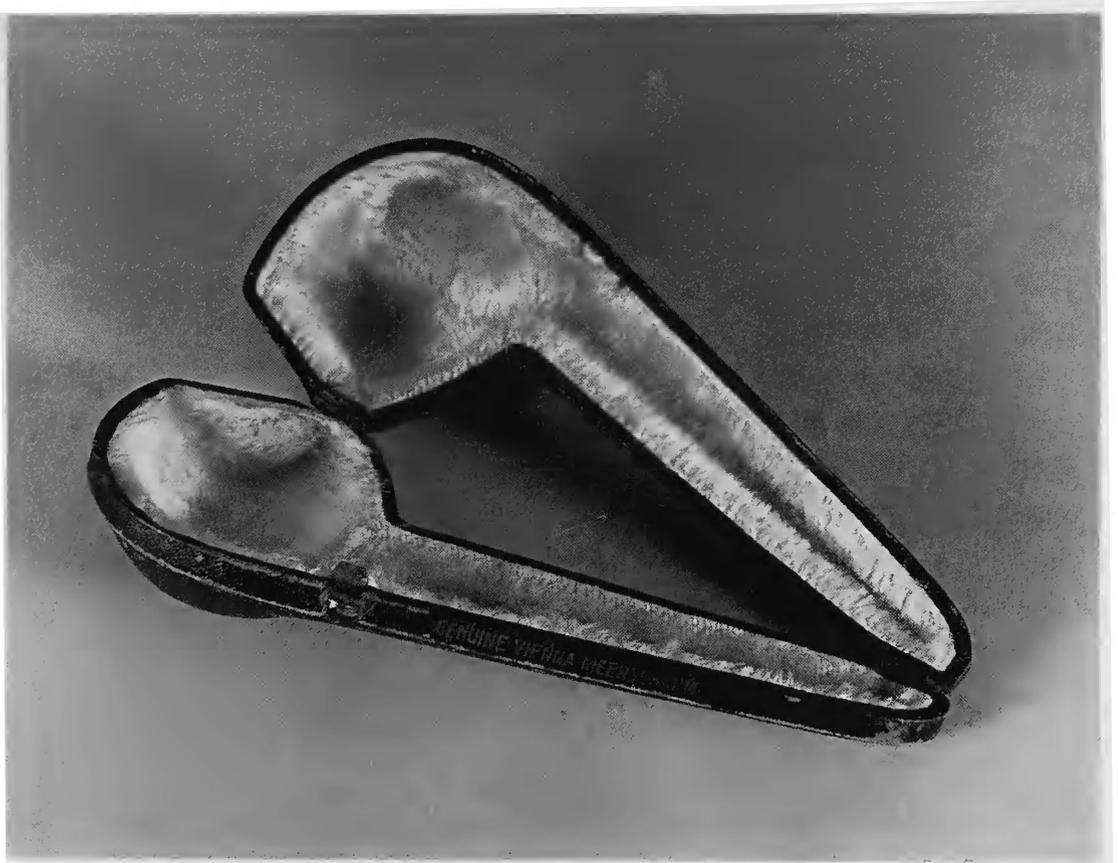
*[L]etters placed beside one another, arranged and shaped so as to facilitate reading, assure recognition, and open themselves even to the most stammering schoolboy. [They] do not claim to swell, then stretch, becoming first the bowl, then the stem of the pipe.*¹³

Millie Wilson's *Pipette* (figure 3.2) takes up these associations, linguistic and erotic, rhyme and reason. Unassisted, her "little pipe" is actually no pipe at all, for in the case of *Pipette*, we don't have the thing itself, only its housing and the silhouette it makes, a form in absentia. It is defined by its absence. Like the negative space so championed in modernist painting, the pipe case, without its object, is wherein meaning lies: its *nothing at all* is everything. The case is still labeled for the pipe it should enclose: "Reinforced Genuine Vienna Meerschaum," it reads. Heat resistant, bolstered and white, the clay-like substance, Meerschaum, is the choice of pipe-smokers. The label's meaning tilts. It is a veritable cud for rumination. Europe. A pipe. Three men. The words conjoin again the figures of Adolf and Marcel and René. This pipe is a gentlemanly apparatus indeed. Discarded and disavowed, the pipe in *Pipette* returns, strangely apparent, no less familiar for being uncanny, denatured. But the ghostly pipe is supplanted, its casing attaining its own objecthood, accruing meaning, situating desire. Made of leather, lined with fur, its fringed whitish interior is sexualized, genital, it invites the viewer to insert a finger, or three. Its opalescent lining is rubbed here and there, a little worn and stained with the intermingled juices of the smoker and the smoked. Neither smooth nor glistening nor closed, this box is *used*.

Multiplying a feminine that overtakes its masculinist definitions, Wilson's readymade supersedes Meret Oppenheim's remark that

*men, since creating patriarchy, that is since the devaluation of the female, projected the femininity inherent in themselves, which is regarded as being inferior, onto woman. This means for the women that they have to live their own femininity plus the femininity projected onto them by the males. They are therefore females squared.*¹⁴

Squared, to the next power, a geometric progression, Oppenheim's projection of woman as man's cube makes a pun of early modernism's dissec-



3.2

Millie Wilson, *Pipette*, 1996, pipecase,
4 1/2 × 2 1/4 × 1 3/4 in. Collection of
the artist; photo: William Short.

tions of “woman,” its *nudes descending staircases*. In her famous *Breakfast in Fur*, Oppenheim takes a teacup, already assigned to the feminine, to be surreally, doubly so. Yet if the feminine is only defined negatively as that which is not-male, Wilson inverts the very impossibility of “female” as a discrete assignation. She invokes a double negative, all the more insistently to assert a female, sexual, presence. *Pipette*, the feminine and the diminutive, produces a double entendre. For it is also the name of the chemical apparatus used to transfer small measures of liquid or gas, a Duchampian gesture if ever there was one.¹⁵

Wilson’s tool channels the substances of bachelorhood to her own cross-dressed purposes. *Pipette* is double trouble: opening onto itself, hinged together, like Irigaray’s metaphoric lips, these labial halves continuously touch each other, making of “nothing” a (w)hole. The little pipe that dares speak its name is a doubling up of the “not one.” It rubs. It causes sparks. Like a woman loving a woman, its transgression lies in its simply existing. *Pipette* at once confirms the Dada object’s passivity—it is what it is—but confounds its feigned disinterestedness: no blasé urbanity can be traced in this very interested readymade. Emphatically, this is *not* a pipe.

MODERN PLUMBING: IS THIS NOT A PIPE?

Consider another story of a pipe that stands in for gentlemanly comportment:

Let no cultivated reader despise these details (lavatories, sinks, sewers and manholes). There is no truer sign of civilization and culture than good sanitation. It goes with refined senses and orderly habits. A good drain implies as much as a beautiful statue. And let it be remembered that the world did not reach the Minoan standard of cleanliness again until the great sanitary movement of the late nineteenth century.¹⁶

With such sentiments did Adolf Loos concur. Beauty, of the modern, functional kind, was to be found in the elbows, nipples, and sweats of household plumbing; culture in the canals of the sewers; belief in health and hygiene. In the twentieth century, the engineer would succeed the leisure classes and the plumber, “pioneer of cleanliness,” would educate the academies.¹⁷ According to Loos, the plumber, “quartermaster of culture,” was an ideal representative of utility and hygiene, and hygiene and utility were the great leaps forward.¹⁸ Thus, the artists of the twentieth century would be best served by discarding their salons, their easels, their muses, and their pictorial conventions. Instead, they should take up their pipe wrenches and their rationalism, emulate the plumber, and look to the industrial *Zukunft*.

Plumbing is a handy device. It is the thing that allows modern urban dwellers to distance themselves from their bodily functions by making bodily waste as easy to ignore as possible. It serves to shore up the fantasy of discrete individual subjectivity, the body its definitive non-porous sack. Shit, moving from inside to outside as it does, betrays this finitude; but with modern plumbing, it is cleanly whisked away and need never touch the psychic sides of the anxious modern denizen. At the same time, precisely because plumbing is the thing that articulates this contest of subjectivity against itself, plumbing is also marked as the very site of such anxiety, its drains, sinks, faucets, and flushes accruing the displaced charge otherwise attached to excreta.

Sticky with psychic goo, plumbing constitutes the abject in architecture: it occupies architecture’s uncanny non-space, the place of our greatest uncertainty. To this day the bathroom is the setting for the vilest of Hollywood’s murders and the most monstrous of tabloid madmen. To control plumbing is to control the floodgates of subjectivity and by extension to dominate the social, a feat that inspires adulation in the modern world.

It is hardly an exaggeration to summarize the history of four hundred years by saying that the leading idea of a conquering nation in relation to the conquered was in 1600 to change their religion; in 1700 to change their laws; in 1800 to change their trade; and in 1900 to change their drainage.¹⁹

Within the domestic sphere, middle-class women—as mothers, homemakers and housekeepers—internalized these beliefs in the name of more efficiently maintaining their households. They were extolled for emulating the plumber and the engineer and thereby overcoming both their feminine fear of the abject, alien, masculine parts of the house, and their feminine penchant for artifice.

[The cellar's] dark, damp spaces were weird, forbidding and uncanny; she would as soon have thought of mastering the mechanism of the engine in her husband's factory as of studying the proper construction of a foundation-wall, a cellar-bottom, or a cold-air box. She was a tender wife and loving mother. . . . [But to] the woman . . . whose divinely appointed mission it is to "guide the house," a new sphere of usefulness and efficiency opens with the knowledge that in sanitary matters an ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure.²⁰

Interestingly, this motherly advice for the modern homemaker by Mrs. H. M. Plunkett in 1885 implies a kind of reasonableness, an empowerment, a bodily capability that may well have informed the consciousness of middle-class women who would soon seek the vote. The new woman's enterprise is efficiently to go beyond the bourgeois finery of the upper floors of her home and, with confidence in sensate experience, seek out every loathsome damp spot, uncover all the uncanny recesses, the structural flaws, and the leaky plumbing that inevitably betray the finest of decorating, the tawdry masquerades of feminine beauty. In the mind of

Mrs. Plunkett a failure to ferret out the flaws in one's pipes is a sin, plumbing modern purity's most conspicuous icon: "'Be sure your sins will find you out,' applies with peculiar force to the plumber; an ill-compacted joint will proclaim itself in a leak that will ruin a frescoed ceiling or a satin-covered suite in quick time."²¹

A GOOD DRAIN IMPLIES AS MUCH AS A BEAUTIFUL STATUE

New York dadaist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven²² mis-takes Mrs. Plunkett's plumbing morality. In her sculptural piece of c. 1917 the Baroness takes an unassisted plumbing trap, inverts it, mounts it on top of a miter box and names it *God* (figure 3.3). The readymade once attributed to Morton Schamberg is now assigned to the artist considered by her contemporaries to be "the first American dada. . . . [T]he only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada."²³ *God*, renegade object, impetuous construction, pipe on a box, is pivotal. In it are collapsed the motifs of plumbing, work, construction, the box, and the death of belief but for the anxious displacements of modern subjectivity. *God* is a construct and plumbing is god. The miter box, a guide for saw blades, the carpenter's friend, the implement for the construction of true form, is the base of it all. But this assisted readymade is no Brancusi. Nor does it have the elegance of gleaming porcelain. Eighty years after its emergence as a work of art, it has not collapsed into the beautiful. It stubbornly remains an ungainly object, a bit like the figure of the Baroness herself. Sacrilegious, impulsive, intelligent, she was all that was parodic, anarchic and truly, fabulously ridiculous in Dada.

The Baroness challenged all notions of propriety, taste, juridical law and *good sense*. In Greenwich Village, along with more soberly attired feminist dress reformers with whom Adolf Loos sympathized, the Baroness chose to thumb her nose at the corsetry of the day by donning not a demure faux medieval robe but a coal scuttle. On other occasions she



3.3

Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Morton Schamberg, *God*, c. 1917, wooden miter box and cast-iron plumbing trap, 10 1/2 in. high. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

shaved her head and painted it vermilion; decorated her breasts with tea infusers; sported a birdcage as a necklace, a live canary its jewel; appeared naked but for two tomato cans tied across her nipples; wore postage stamps as rouge; made bracelets of curtain rings; and adorned her person with waste paper baskets, safety pins, vegetables, and cutlery. In response to inquiries about her “little black dress” with its battery-powered taillight, she simply retorted: “Cars and bicycles have tail lights. Why not I?”²⁴ From coal scuttle to waste paper basket, from bicycle to back-seat driver, the Baroness’s appropriations encapsulated the dynamics of modernity. Yet hers is a minor story in the annals of Dada. Impoverished, eccentric, a petty thief, she apparently made little distinction between art and life, something for which perhaps her male counterparts could never forgive her. If, as Man Ray said, “Dada . . . is the tail of every other movement,”²⁵ then the Baroness has pinned the tail on the Dada.

Loos considered the tubular metal of a bicycle frame a compelling form, the practicality of the bicycle a mark of its beauty.²⁶ For Duchamp, though there is no beauty as such, no taste, good or bad, only the perfectly passive “just selectedness” of ordinary objects, his chosen objects are stubborn and, against the best laid plans, persist in gaining charge, meaning, authority, beauty. Thus a bicycle or, indeed, a bicycle wheel on a stool—that interdiction of function, that improbable balancing act—collapses at the level of the metaphoric. In its elegant simplicity, there is a figure that haunts the bicycle, an absented cyclist. And if a woman in pantaloons is the cyclist, we can focus on the spokes of the motionless wheel and imagine her pedaling feet. (Remember, women were only beginning to be seen on the streets of the city riding bikes in pantaloons, great spectacles of feminine machine power as they no doubt were. The Baroness’s query, “Why not I?” is vindicated.)

In this ethos fascinated by the machine, beauty and utility are conflated, so that evident function is deemed beautiful and elegance of design

a guarantee of efficiency. If to speak of beauty is still to speak of the feminine, what are the implications for women of this linking between the machinic, the functional and the feminine? What, then, constitutes the beautiful woman? Is she functional? Does she tick? Is she the pared-back embodiment of good working order? Traditionally, feminine beauty has been described in terms of porcelain. In the thirteenth century, porcelain was the shell artists would use to hold their colors, its smooth and luminescent interior surface a fine container for pigment. By the mid-seventeenth century, its fineness and fragility were equated to woman. As quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “[S]he is herself the purest piece of Purslane . . . that e’re had liquid sweetmeats licked out of it” (Brome). What porcelain visage might be imagined, for instance, in the fascinations of the toilet bowl? Is there a trace of the fetishized porcelain doll in the smooth finish of the “Madonna of the Bathroom”? Inverted, does the urinal that negates its function become a cipher for feminine beauty? For Loos, “Beauty in form,” what might be attributed to a cupboard or a cup or a building, is assigned that other object—woman:

The Indian says, “This woman is beautiful because she wears gold rings in her nose and ears.” The man of high culture says, “This woman is beautiful because she does not wear gold rings in her nose and ears.” To seek beauty only in form and not in ornament is the goal toward which all humanity is striving.²⁷

If the beauty of a woman lies in her unadorned form, what function does her lack of adornment signify? For what is she used? Is the modern woman a function of her physical form? Is her essential subjecthood a function then of biology? Can we trace in such modern aesthetic concerns the construction of an essential womanhood? The figure of woman is no more and no less an essential subject than modern man is a universal one. The paradigm for both genders essentializes what is perceived to be

native to each: in man, his universality, a tall order indeed; in woman, her biology.

TWIN RISERS

It is May 1917. In a world transfigured by urban life, technological change, modern warfare, labile subjectivity, the mutability of culture, the machinations of capital, New York, with its profit margins, its peacetime, and its porcelain, is fast becoming the capital of the twentieth century. The First World War is accelerating New York's cultural ascendancy as European intellectuals seek refuge on American shores. New York, however, still looks to Paris for affirmation and inspiration and Duchamp is that city's unofficial attaché. That is, of course, until *Fountain* (see figure 2.3): euphemistically a bathroom fixture, pseudonymously R. Mutt's art, indignantly an insult and an outrage, subjected to "quality control" by the Society of Independent Artists. By their vociferous protestation, the Independents confirm a truth too ignominious to admit: the centerpiece of American cultural ascendancy is indeed its toilet.

The dadaists, however, seemed all too well to understand this: "As for plumbing, that is absurd, the only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges."²⁸ So, too, believed Adolf Loos, expressed by his advocacy of hygienic modern culture:

*A home without a room for bathing! Impossible in America. The thought that at the end of the nineteenth century there is still a nation with a population of millions whose inhabitants cannot bathe daily seems atrocious to an American.*²⁹

Like the Baroness and Loos, Duchamp had touched upon one of the major distinguishing features of the new modern cities of the United States—their plumbing—and in so doing articulated the changed flow of art his-

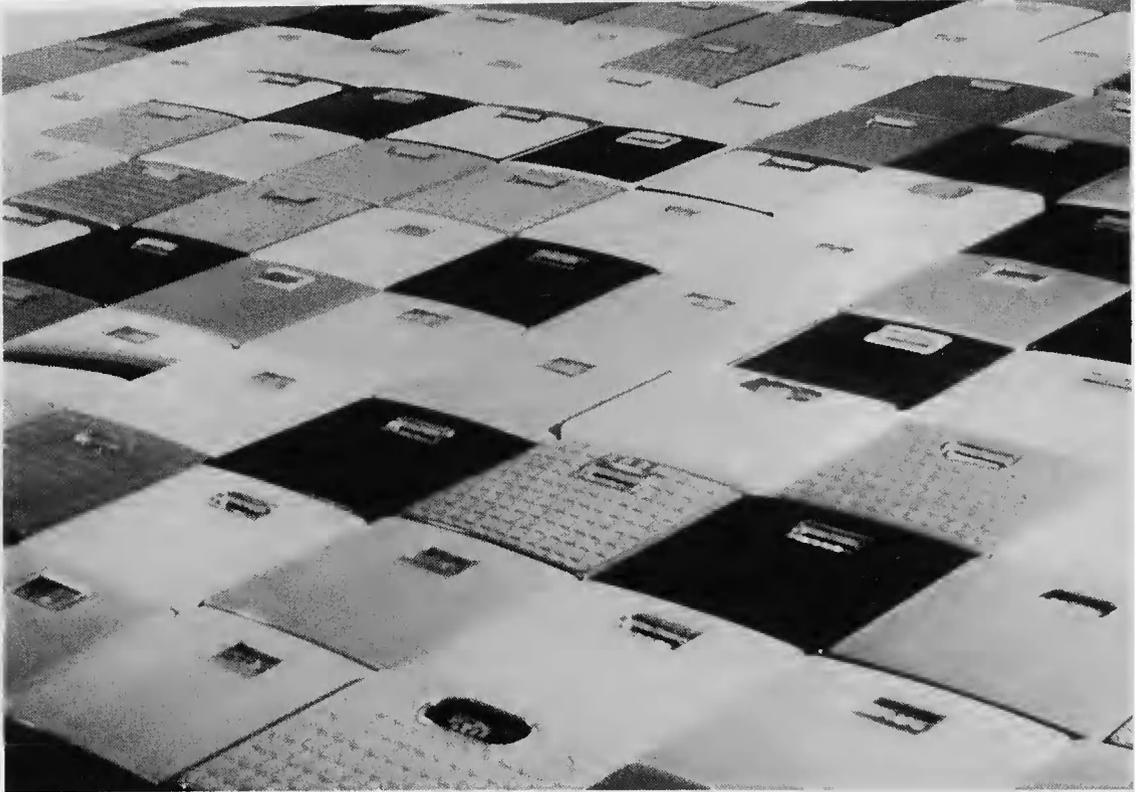
torical narrative. In the story of modernism, the two figures, the dadaist and the designer, may be deemed polar opposites, their strategies incompatible. Yet both shared a recognition that the new (American) urbanism would change the nature of modernism itself. And both partook of that motif, plumbing, with all its inflections and connotations.

OFF THE SCALE

In the bathrooms of the postmodern, the body has replaced the face. Invoking another Magrittian image, the visage is all body, and in the beauty-stakes of the late twentieth century functionalist aesthetics collapse into a single, ubiquitous term: “health-and-beauty.” Late modern subjects have inherited the notion that the well turned functioning body is, for its own sake, beautiful. Almost definitionally, such bodies go to the gym. At once affirming modernism’s tenet that functionalism is beautiful and compensating for its sometimes alienating effect on bodies, the honing of physique has become a national pastime. Aerobics, aquarobics, abs, gluts, and tummy classes, weights, weight loss, marathons, classes for seniors, classes for thighs, classes for backs, high impact, low impact, balance, sweats, sprints, step classes, stretch classes. All this for the functioning body as project. Hard work. A woman is not now beautiful but for the fact that she *works out*. And a man, too, must don his fitness, his form functioning to make him handsome. Like the suntan of the office worker, exercise is inversely proportional to physical labor. The hygienic body—buffed, worked and hyper-functioning, observed, controlled, tallied, hewn at the gym, modified by the surgeon—is beautiful for embodying the absence of *work*, fitness for fitness’s sake. Duchamp’s *Nude* is now a stair-master. Loos’s moderns in their practical clothes and sensible shoes are now pared still further back to an essential subjecthood in lycra. Lost in the flashing gadgetry of the gym and the bathroom and the clinic, one’s

bodily presence is dispersed, particularized into distinct muscle groups evidenced only by digital outputs of resistance and caloric consumption.

The gym and the clinic are to the postmodern as the bathroom was to the modern. Annetta Kapon's readymade *Floor Scale* (figure 3.4) articulates the contemporary version of functionalism as beauty. In Kapon's installation, a grid of bathroom scales runs from wall to wall, transforming the gallery into an inescapable "weight machine." The apparatus of the bathroom is multiplied like the phobias of an anorexic. Thus sensitized, the floor measures the presence of every viewer, triggering tacit obsessions with body and body image, each onlooker a participant in the bizarre, because denatured, private ritual of seeing if one's body *measures up*. The visitors to *Floor Scale*, like stationary bicyclists going nowhere, like gym bunnies all in a row, are caught in the interplay of self and image of self, a different dilemma of object and representation. Surveillance is internalized, there are no mirrors or instructors, no monitors but the monitor of self-doubt and a measure of selfhood in ounces and pounds. But with each gesture or movement the gauges' needles jump; feet traversing more than one scale at a time wreak havoc on their mechanical sense, producing a vertiginous sea of conflicted messages. The scales' erratic little dials are an endless dissatisfaction, an irritant, their shifting inconstancy a testimony to the elusiveness of the body's ontology. True to latter-day clichés of the feminine, distortions of self-image tip and swing, like the gaze of a woman who stares at the tiny, distant dial at her feet, in front of her toes, beyond her foreshortened body, hers a gaze that runs over the object in question only to find it always, ineluctably, too much or not enough. The gazing woman is, as Tania Modleski puts it, "at once only body and no-body."³⁰ In Kapon's too tight grid, however, every viewer is put into that place of the feminine. One size fits all. Kapon's *Floor Scale* collapses such neatly gendered distinctions into the mandatory and the general. *Weighing in, you are automatically implicated.*

**3.4**

Annetta Kapon, *Floor Scale*, 1991,
bathroom scales (each 10 in. square),
overall dimensions variable. Courtesy
Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Mon-
ica, California.

The gallery becomes a mechanical apparatus by which the ostensibly neutral position of the viewer, any viewer, is called into question. That is, the gallery's ideal viewer—the thoughtful, quiet kind, an “educated eye”—is undone, and exchanged for undeniable, albeit inconstant, corporeality. If the gallery viewer is denied the privilege of invisibility, so too is the gallery itself. By conflating the gallery with the bathroom/gym, their shared clinical aspects are made apparent. Ostensibly a wide open space, the clean white gallery is often more closed than a closet, its semblance of the communicative a sham. By making a gallery fixture of bathroom accessories, the gallery becomes animated, a crude automaton synthesized of many parts, creaking, swaying, and wavering under the movement of every participant. Its architecture is grown to hyperbole, histrionic, disavowing those wishing to fit neatly, categorically, into its defining measures. Modernist neutrality no longer possible, the gallery as floor scale is a grumpy and undignified judge, the impunity with which it measures an absurdity. The little dials with pointing needles in this parquetry of scales articulates systemic paranoia, not only at the level of the body but at that of the high cultural, each step in the gallery a measure of one's worth. The grid of minimalism goes haywire and in double quick time *Floor Scale* works out the kinks.

TAKING PLEASURE

In apprehension, necessarily human, no object or image is without its attachments. A body is never so distant nor so completely enveloped by its skin as some would like to believe. A container full of cavities and crannies, the body readily attaches to things. Machines make good prostheses, their forms only knowable for the bodies that touch them, their meanings situated in that sensation. I have tried to suggest that the modern is not as monolithic as it might seem, that its pleasures are manifold and that desire seeps into its discourses with the insistence of osmotic

fluid. I repeat: as with turbines in a power plant, pleasure resides in the satisfactions of a kind of curiosity. *I look to see how it works, in looking I understand. My understanding gives me pleasure.* If a dominant text does undo itself of its own accord and in its gaps and slippages feminist readings take hold, find pleasure, and make sense, then therein lies my pleasure. The works of Mara Lonner, Millie Wilson, and Annetta Kapon appropriate strategies from Dada, and in so doing pique my curiosity. Incidental, ancillary, minor figures to the annals of the modern, they produce re-readings of the dominant text that speak to the limits of functionalist rhetoric. Like fingers running across a body, they make ripples of sensation without function or utility, replete and working in other ways.

NOTES

Thanks to Ken Gonzales-Day for his contributions to the final draft of this essay.

1. Albrecht Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics and Postmodernism*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 108.
2. References throughout this essay to notions of “feminine curiosity” are adapted from Laura Mulvey’s work, especially her *Fetishism and Curiosity* (London: British Film Institute, 1996).
3. This is not to discount the material aspects of physical labor, the very real bodily stresses incurred in the back and neck for example, but rather to allow for the “non-art” spheres of the aesthetic.
4. Adolf Loos, “The Luxury Vehicle,” in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays, 1897–1900*, trans. Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1982), p. 40. Loos’s essay was first published in the *Neue Freie Presse*, 3 July 1898.
5. Adolf Loos, “Ornament and Crime [1908],” trans. Harold Meek, in Ludwig Munz and Gustav Kunst, *Adolf Loos, Pioneer of Modern Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), p. 229.
6. See Adolf Loos, “Ladies’ Fashion,” in *Spoken into the Void*, pp. 98–103. Loos’s essay was first published in the *Neue Freie Presse*, 21 August 1898.
7. See Loos, “Ornament and Crime,” pp. 226–231.
8. Loos, “The Luxury Vehicle,” p. 40.
9. Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Archi-*

ecture (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1995), p. xiv. See also Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Los Angeles: Lapis, 1976).

10. Tristan Tzara, "Lecture on Dada," in *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics*, ed. Herschel B. Chipp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 386.

11. Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in Margery Rex, "'Dada' Will Get You if You Don't Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here," *New York Evening Journal*, 29 January 1921; rpt. in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), p. 140.

12. See Benedetto Gravagnuolo, *Adolf Loos: Theory and Works*, trans. C. H. Evans (London: Art Data, 1995), p. 71.

13. Michel Foucault, *This is Not a Pipe*, trans. James Harkness (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 25 (my emphasis).

14. Meret Oppenheim, qtd. in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), p. 144 (my emphasis).

15. Thanks to Wesley Phoa for bringing this to my attention.

16. J. C. Stobart, qtd. in Abel Wolman, "The Sanitary Engineer Looks Forward," *Water and Sewer Works* 93, no. 11 (November 1946): 412.

17. Adolf Loos, "Plumbers," in *Spoken into the Void*, p. 49. Loos's essay was first published in the *Neue Freie Presse*, 17 July 1898.

18. Ibid.

19. A. Lawrence Lowell, qtd. in Wolman, "The Sanitary Engineer Looks Forward": 409.
20. Mrs. H. M. Plunkett, *Women, Plumbers, and Doctors; or, Household Sanitation* (New York: Appleton, 1885), p. 10. Thanks to Andrew Perchuk for bringing this text to my attention.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
22. Thanks to Amelia Jones for first bringing the Baroness to my attention.
23. Jane Heap, "Dada," *Little Review* (Spring 1922): 46; see also Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), p. 168.
24. Recollection of Louis Bouché, qtd. in Robert Reiss, "'My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in *New York Dada*, p. 87.
25. Man Ray, qtd. in Rex, "'Dada' Will Get You if You Don't Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here," *New York Evening Journal*, 29 January 1921; rpt. in *New York Dada*, p. 141.
26. In his article, "Glass and Clay," first published in 1898 (in *Spoken Into the Void*, pp. 35, 36), Loos states: "When an object was made so practical that an object could not be made any more practical, then [it was] as beautiful as a machine, as beautiful as a bicycle" (my emphasis).
27. Loos, "The Luxury Vehicle," p. 40.
28. "The Richard Mutt Case," *Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917): 5. On the authorship of this article and other questions related to it, see William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston, TX: Menil Collection, 1989).

In the context of Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Baroness's *God*, and given the Baroness's feelings of adoration as well as rivalry toward Duchamp, she would quip: "[Duchamp] came to *this country*—protected—carried by fame—to use its plumbing fixtures—mechanical comforts." Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, qtd. in Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 173.

29. Loos, "Plumbers," p. 46.

30. Tania Modleski, "The Incredible Shrinking He(r)man: Male Regression, the Male Body, and Film," in *Feminism without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Post-feminist" Age* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), p. 103.

THE MALE

m e n a C e

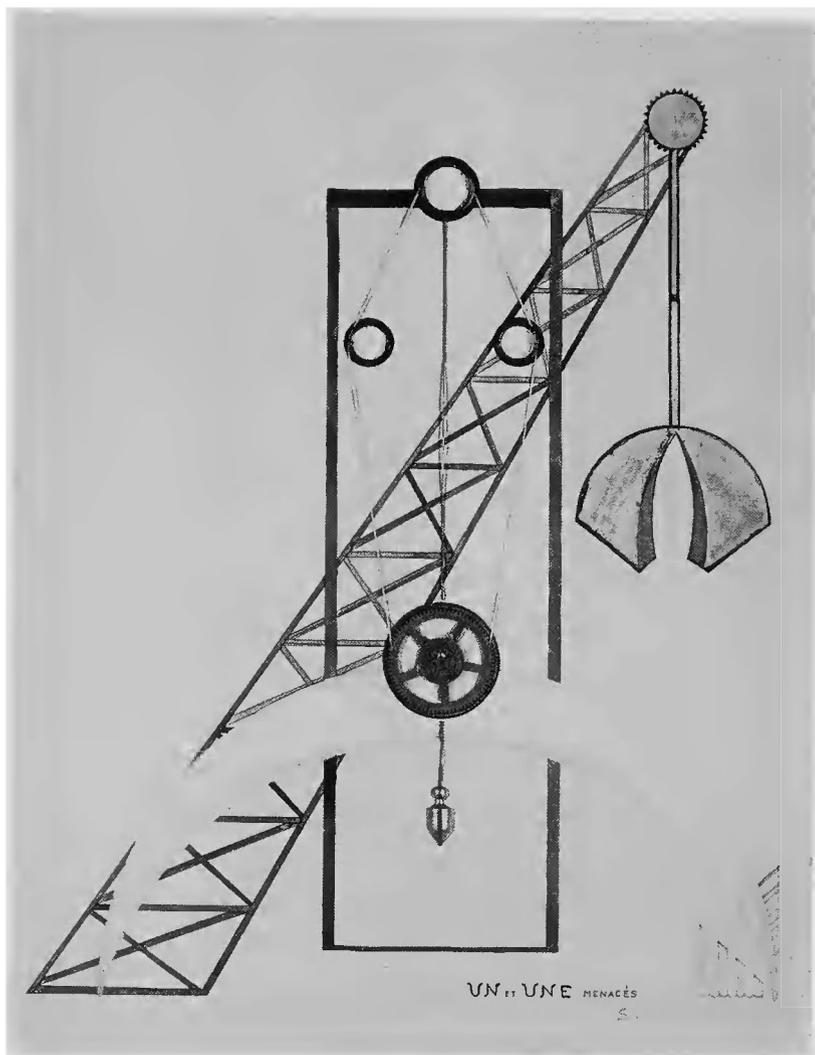
SUZANNE DUCHAMP AND DADA IN PARIS

william A. CAMFIELD



Eighty years ago in Paris, during the last months of 1916, Suzanne Duchamp (1887–1968) created a remarkable mixed media work that she titled *Un et une menacés* (A Menaced Male and Female) (figure 4.1). It is an eye-catching composition of geometric and mechanical forms—metal rings, plumb bob, clock gear—that presumably refer to or represent the “menaced male and female.” It was a radical departure for Duchamp and a work unmatched anywhere in Europe during 1916. At that date, only five other artists had produced anything resembling it, all of them working in New York: her brother, Marcel; his friend, the French artist Francis Picabia; her future husband, the Swiss artist Jean Crotti; and two Americans from Philadelphia, Man Ray and Morton Schamberg, who were also recent converts to that mechanomorphic style initiated by Marcel Duchamp in 1913–1914. This style nourished Suzanne Duchamp’s art production from late 1916 through 1921 in a small but significant body of work that both coincides with the historical phenomenon of Dada and has been associated with Dada since 1920. As the only woman who participated as a visual artist in Dada in Paris, her work holds its own in that male company, and—excepting Marcel Duchamp, Picabia, and Crotti—her work preceded by three years the efforts of all other dada artists in Paris, and, for that matter, the dadaists in Germany.

Despite the aesthetic and historical significance of her art—doubled by the rarity of her presence in an almost all-male club—Suzanne



4.1

Suzanne Duchamp, *Un et une menacés*
(A Menaced Male and Female), 1916,
watercolor, clock gear, metal rings,
plumb bob, and string on paper,
70 × 54.5 cm. Collection of Jean-
Jacques Lebel, Paris.

Duchamp has been marginalized in the history of Dada, not only around 1920 but now, after an outpouring of studies on Dada and on women in art since the 1960s and 1970s. French author and critic André Salmon set a precedent early on in his preface to the text that accompanied *Exposition des Oeuvres de Suzanne Duchamp et Jean Crotti* (Paris 1921). He devoted four pages to Jean Crotti but only tacked on four perfunctory lines about Suzanne Duchamp at the very end. It got worse in early histories of Dada where she was often omitted entirely.¹ And, in more recent publications where she is accorded any attention—from Robert Lebel’s 1959 monograph on Marcel Duchamp to the most contemporary studies of Dada—she is frequently featured as the “sister of Marcel” or the “wife of Jean Crotti.” Virtually the only exception to this void of critical analysis is the 1983 exhibition catalogue for *Tabu Dada: Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp*.² Given these conditions, this volume on “women in Dada” provides a welcome opportunity to revisit the work of Suzanne Duchamp and her place in Dada.

Suzanne Duchamp was born on 20 October 1889 in Blainville, near Rouen, to Eugène and Lucie Duchamp. She was the fourth of six children and the fourth among them who chose to become an artist. The children were clustered chronologically in pairs, with Marcel and Suzanne constituting the middle pair. Much has been made by some authors of the fact that they grew up together and remained close throughout their lives. Suzanne was a frequent model in Marcel’s drawings until 1904 when he followed his brothers Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon to Paris in order to study art. Suzanne began her studies the following year at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Rouen. Through 1912, she painted in styles that look like the intimist paintings of Vuillard and conservative essays in Fauvism and Cubism. Her knowledge of avant-garde developments came through contact with a local organization, the Société Normande de Peinture Moderne,³ and through her brothers, especially Marcel. He corresponded with Suzanne about her paintings⁴ and visited Rouen on a number

of occasions, including her wedding on 24 August 1911 to Charles Demares, a pharmacist in Rouen. For their wedding gift, he gave them a curious painting titled *Young Man and Young Woman in Spring* (1911) that Arturo Schwarz seized in the 1960s as the cornerstone of an alchemical interpretation of the *Large Glass* (see figure 6.2).⁵

Little is known about Suzanne during 1913–1915. Only a few paintings are documented, signed with her maiden name after she and Demares divorced on 21 February 1913. Not long after the declaration of war with Germany in August 1914, Suzanne began to work as a nurse's aid in Paris, and apparently ceased to paint until 1916 when she appeared as the author of *Un et une menacés*. Ultimately, Marcel was the source of this rebirth in her work, but Jean Crotti was the carrier.

Marcel, exempted from military service by a medical condition and bored with wartime conditions in Paris, sailed to New York in June 1915. He left behind in his studio two manufactured objects later designated readymade sculpture (a bicycle wheel and a bottle rack), and he carried with him several works related to the *Large Glass*. It appears that neither his sister Suzanne, nor such colleagues as Crotti and Picabia, knew much (if anything) about these works; but in New York, Marcel's objects and ideas were instrumental in transforming the art of a handful of American and European artists, including that of Picabia and Crotti, who also reached New York during the summer of 1915 as a consequence of the war.⁶ Within two months, Picabia shifted from the strange abstract compositions he called "psychological" abstractions to a mechanomorphic style in which he combined cryptic inscriptions with actual and fanciful machine forms, proclaiming machinery to be the form "most brilliantly plastic and fraught with symbolism."⁷ Over the winter of 1915–1916, Crotti also transformed his art into a form of machine symbolism. His *Virginité en déplacement* (Virginité in Displacement) of 1916 is evocative of the bride in the *Large Glass*, while his *Les forces mécanique de l'amour en mouvement* (Mechanical Forces of Love in Movement), also executed that

year, reflects Marcel's use of glass and machine objects as well as themes of a sexual nature expressed in forms and colors symbolic of love, the ideal, and hope.⁸

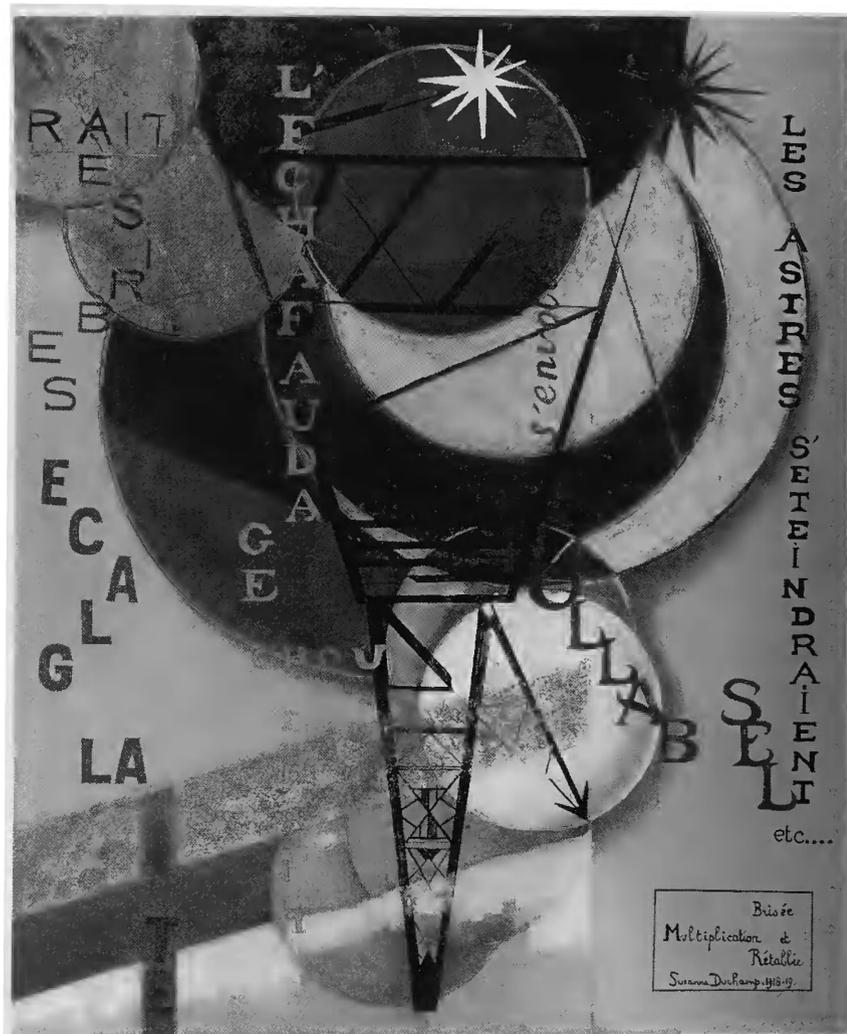
When Jean Crotti and his wife, Yvonne Chastel, returned to Paris in the fall of 1916, he carried this new style with him, but not the love and hope proclaimed in *Mechanical Forces of Love in Movement*. His marriage with Chastel was disintegrating and one obstacle to reparation was Yvonne's love for Marcel. To complicate matters further, Jean and Suzanne had struck up a romance while Jean was conveying to her news of Marcel and the work they were producing in New York. When the divorce was made final in December 1917, Yvonne returned to New York and subsequently accompanied Marcel to Buenos Aires in August 1918. There, in 1919, they received news that Suzanne had married Jean.⁹

As manifest in *Un et une menacés*, Suzanne was a quick student when it came to developing her own version of an art of private symbolism based on mechanical drawing, machine forms, appropriated objects, and cryptic inscriptions. As in the work of Marcel, Crotti, and Picabia, the meaning of her symbolism is not evident without knowledge of her intentions. Inasmuch as she provided no programs, interpretation becomes an exercise in judgment and analysis regarding forms and inscriptions within the art object and the relationship of those forms and inscriptions to the conditions of her life in both its intimate, personal dimension, and in the larger social context.

In *Un et une menacés*, it strikes me that we have two likely sexual references to both the male and female. For the male, we have the erect form that resembles the arm of a crane and the pendant plumb bob. For the female, we have the grasping pincers hanging from the crane and the circular clock gear, a round form viewed here as a generic female reference in many societies.¹⁰ If the crescent moon-shaped form is read as a pair of human legs, then both the female circle/gear and the hanging male thing/plumb bob are located in the groin. This speculation on the sexual

identity of several elements does not take us very far, however. Other readings are possible, some forms are not accounted for, and we are still left with neither the identity of the menaced male and female, nor the threat they face.¹¹ Has Suzanne made a general statement about male-female relationships? Or, given the stressful wife-sister-brother-friend entanglement going on in the Duchamp and Crotti families, might this be a reference to herself and Jean, Jean and Yvonne, Yvonne and Marcel, or Marcel and herself?

Suzanne and Jean produced art sporadically until 1919–1920, probably as a consequence of her continued employment as a nurse and Jean’s business trips that often kept them apart. The conditions of their life at this time may account for the subjects of two of her paintings: *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés* (Radiation of Two Solitary Beings Apart), made between 1916 and 1920, and *Multipliation brisée et rétablie* (Multiplication Broken and Restored), 1918–1919 (figure 4.2).¹² Across the bottom of the latter is what appears to be the silhouette of a city skyline and a band of textured metallic paint that suggests a silvered mirror. It is overlaid with colored balloons that, in ascending order, go from relatively bright gold, blue, and pink to larger balloons in more somber colors of dark green, brown, and silver. The scaffolding of a construction resembling a radio tower (inverted and fragmented) overlays the balloons, and four inscriptions rise and fall over all the forms. In translation, “And the Mirror Shattered” ascends on the left; “The Scaffolding Crumbled” descends in pink letters along the left side of the broken tower; “The Balloons Flew Away” rises through the balloons; and “The Stars Went Out” descends on the right from its origin near two starbursts in the upper right. The broken forms and preponderantly drab colors of this composition are commensurate with the inscriptions that speak of loss and destruction, but to what do these forms and descriptions refer—to the broken relationships in the Duchamp-Crotti families, or to conditions of life in France during the last year of the war and its aftermath? Though



4.2

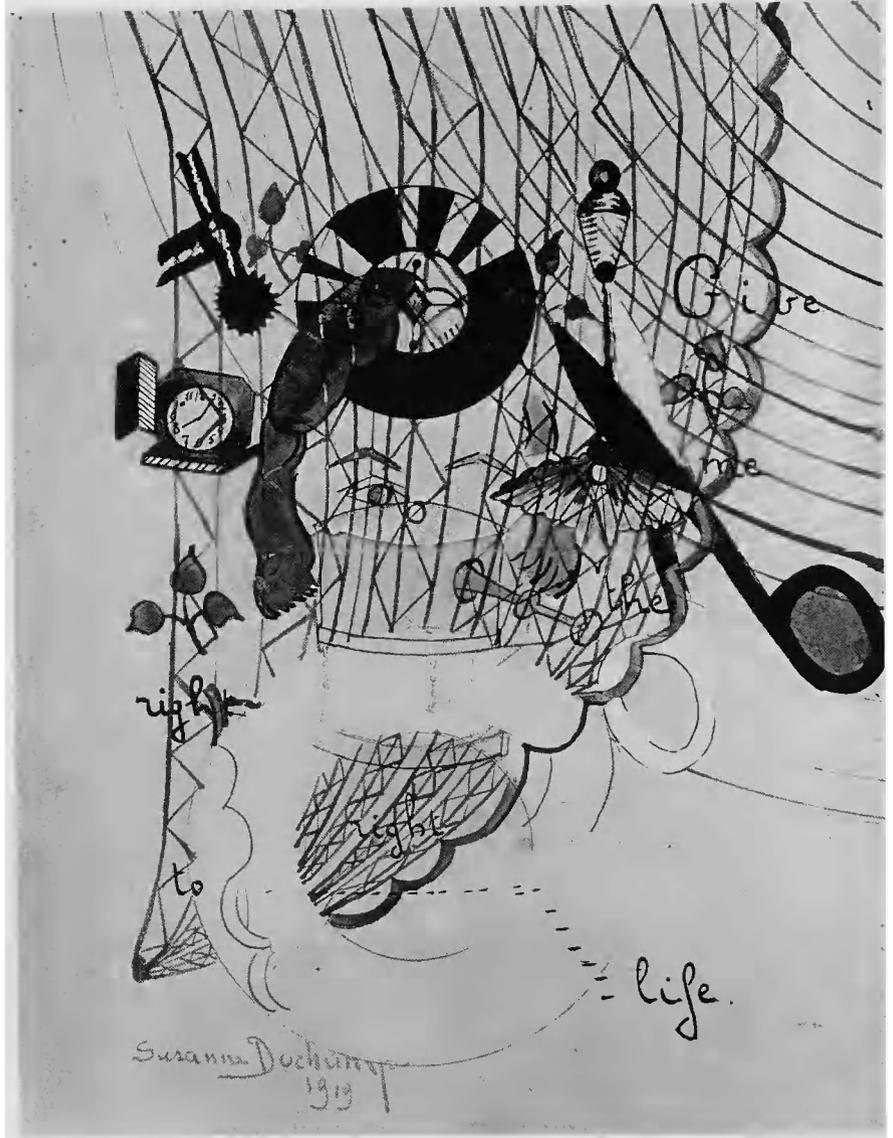
Suzanne Duchamp, *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* (Multiplication Broken and Restored), 1918–1919, oil and collage with silver paper on canvas, 61 × 50 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, gift of Mary P. Hines in memory

of her mother Frances W. Pick, through prior acquisitions of Mr. and Mrs. Martin A. Ryerson, H. J. Willing, and Charles H. and Mary F. S. Worcester, 1994.552. Photo © 1996, The Art Institute of Chicago. All Rights Reserved.

France was victorious in the war, approximately six million Frenchmen had been killed and wounded, great swaths of Northern France were devastated, the economy was in shambles, and socialist/communist upheavals in Germany and Russia had sent chills throughout Europe.

What I take to be Suzanne's practice of addressing personal and social conditions in her art seems to include a feminist statement in a curious self-portrait of 1919 titled *Give me the right right to life* (figure 4.3). She centered herself in a deliberate network of lines and objects that include a clock, scissors, lamp, three-leaf sprigs, a knob projecting from a cylinder, and arcing lines from the upper right corner arranged in rays to suggest energy of some sort. Any interpretation of this drawing must be provisional for it is not even possible to identify all of these objects much less ascertain their relationships. But the title indicates that the objects have something to do with the quality of Suzanne's life, with her demand for the "right" right to life.

The social context for demands regarding women's rights in post-war France is better documented than Suzanne's personal convictions about such rights. Insofar as I know, she was not engaged in any feminist activities. Among the relatively meager documents on her life, Suzanne's contemporary letters to Picabia and his companion, Germaine Everling, attest to a quiet person and a deferential wife, not an activist.¹³ But we can assume that she was fully aware of feminist concerns given their prominence in public life and her husband's memorable contact with the New Woman in the United States—the suffragists, birth controllers, and advocates of free love who flourished in New York during his sojourn there.¹⁴ Women's problems in France included the fact that they did not have the right to vote, were treated as minors in the French Civil Code, and, after enjoying greater social and economic opportunities during the war, were being urged to serve God and country by resuming traditional maternal roles. The French government, concerned about a century of declining birth rates and the numerical superiority of the Germans, initi-



4.3

Suzanne Duchamp, *Give me the right right to life*, 1919, watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper, 23.8 × 18.1 cm. Private collection.

ated an aggressive pro-natalist campaign marked by such actions as creation of a Conseil Supérieur de la Natalité in 1919 and the *Exposition nationale de la maternité et de l'enfance* in 1921. Although family planning was practiced extensively in private, propaganda in favor of contraception was prohibited by a law of 3 July 1920, and abortion was a felony.¹⁵

In this context, it is noteworthy that Suzanne and Jean had no children, particularly inasmuch as Jean—raised in a very devout Catholic family—had created an intriguing work that is ostensibly an anti-abortion statement.¹⁶ The issue of family planning, including abortion, has not emerged in other Duchamp-Crotti documents, but Suzanne's position seems clear enough in her self-portrait. With anti-bourgeois values worthy of a dadaist, she claims *her* right to decide in the form of the scissors, poised to cut the cord of a hanging lamp, and in the title, largely inscribed around the scissors.

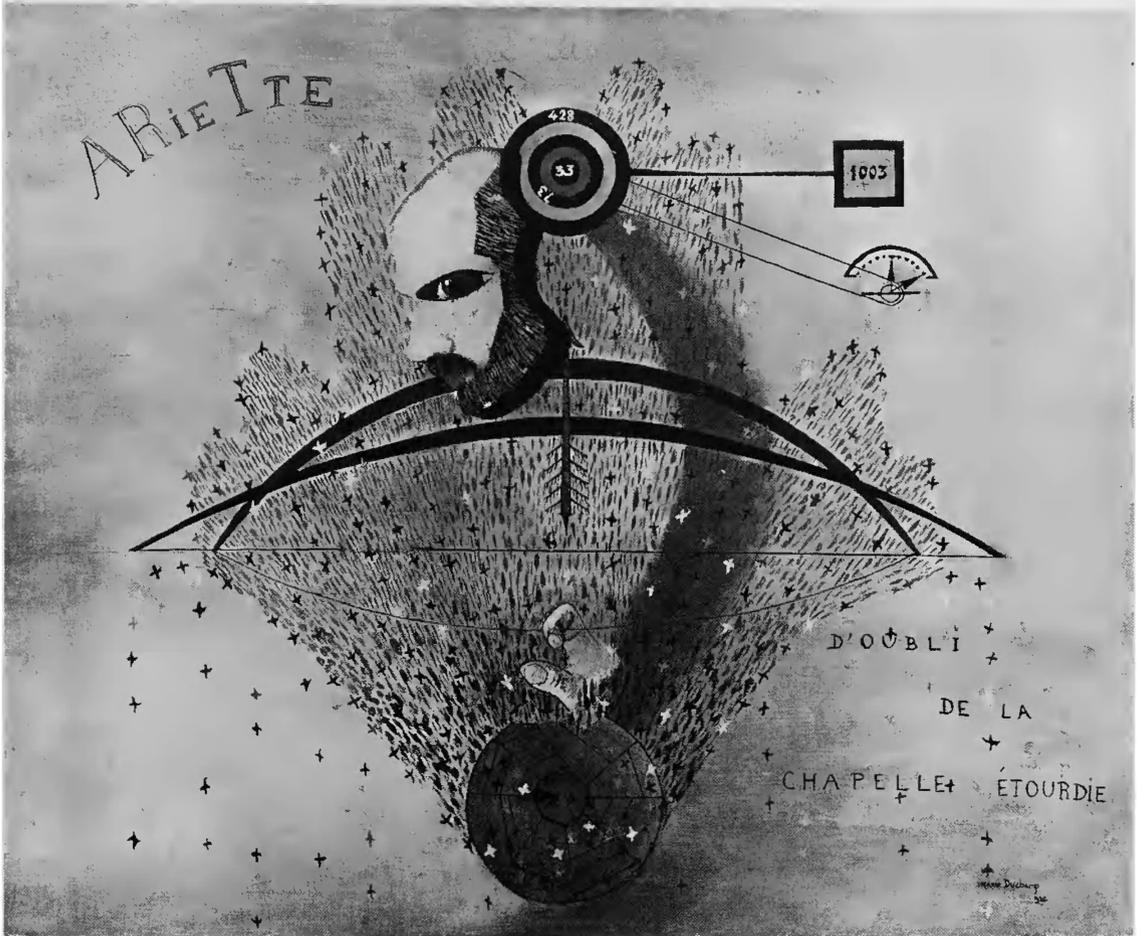
As Dada burst on the scene in Paris early in 1920, Suzanne's work of 1916 to 1919 came to be identified with that bourgeois-baiting phenomenon. Dada was little known in Paris until Picabia, Tristan Tzara, André Breton, and colleagues joined forces there in January 1920. They used the postwar reopening of the Salon des Indépendants as the first arena for a Dada Matinée and exhibition,¹⁷ and from then until June, Dada rocked Paris with a barrage of exhibitions, publications, and public spectacles perceived as an assault on French culture, taste, language, logic, and morality.¹⁸

Paintings by Suzanne and Jean figured prominently at the Salon alongside works by Picabia and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes. Suzanne exhibited *Un et une menacés*, *Multiplication brisée et rétablie*, and a watercolor portrait. Jean submitted three works, including *Les forces mécaniques de l'amour en mouvement* and *Virginité en déplacement*, while Picabia showed six works, five of which dated from 1915 in New York. It merits observing that many of these works predated Dada as a phenomenon with a name, and few of them were done with any notion they were

dadaist. That condition notwithstanding, the Salon des Indépendants fixed these works as the principal visual image of Dada in Paris.

From the beginning, Picabia dominated critical reception of dadaist art in Paris. He was known as one of the leaders of the movement; he had already generated several scandals, and he continued to excel at provocative art, writings, and gestures. Suzanne and Jean, on the other hand, distanced themselves somewhat for reasons that were never articulated but probably reflected both their reservations about the rowdier nature of Dada and the discomfort of two gentler, less intellectual souls among the likes of Breton, Tzara, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, and Ribemont-Dessaignes. Suzanne and Jean did not participate in further Dada exhibitions or public manifestations until the spring of 1921. Even then they chose to concentrate on their own two-person exhibition.

That exhibition was held at the Galerie Montaigne¹⁹ and was dominated by new works, including Suzanne's *ARieTte d'oubli de la chapelle étourdie* from 1920 (figure 4.4). Interpretation of this work is simultaneously invited and thwarted by its complex of images and a polysemic title that precludes a single, reasonably satisfactory translation. "Arietta about the forgetfulness of the absent-minded chapel" is an awkward approximation, but the enlarged letters ART in "ARieTte" suggest other word combinations, and no translation clarifies the obscure relation between the title and the forms in this work.²⁰ The head in the upper center is a portrait of her husband, Jean, made of wood, paint, and a glass eye affixed to the canvas. A drawing for this painting²¹ identifies the bluish circle at the bottom as a celestial ball filled with golden stars and a spider web. In the painting, the stars have been propelled out into a field encompassing Jean. He and the blue orb below are also linked by a gray arc and by a bow and arrow shot by a woman's hand (Suzanne's?) at a target overlapping Jean's head. While Suzanne has deliberately linked the male and female realms of this composition, she has also set them in opposition. The target—which is associated with Jean's head and given append-



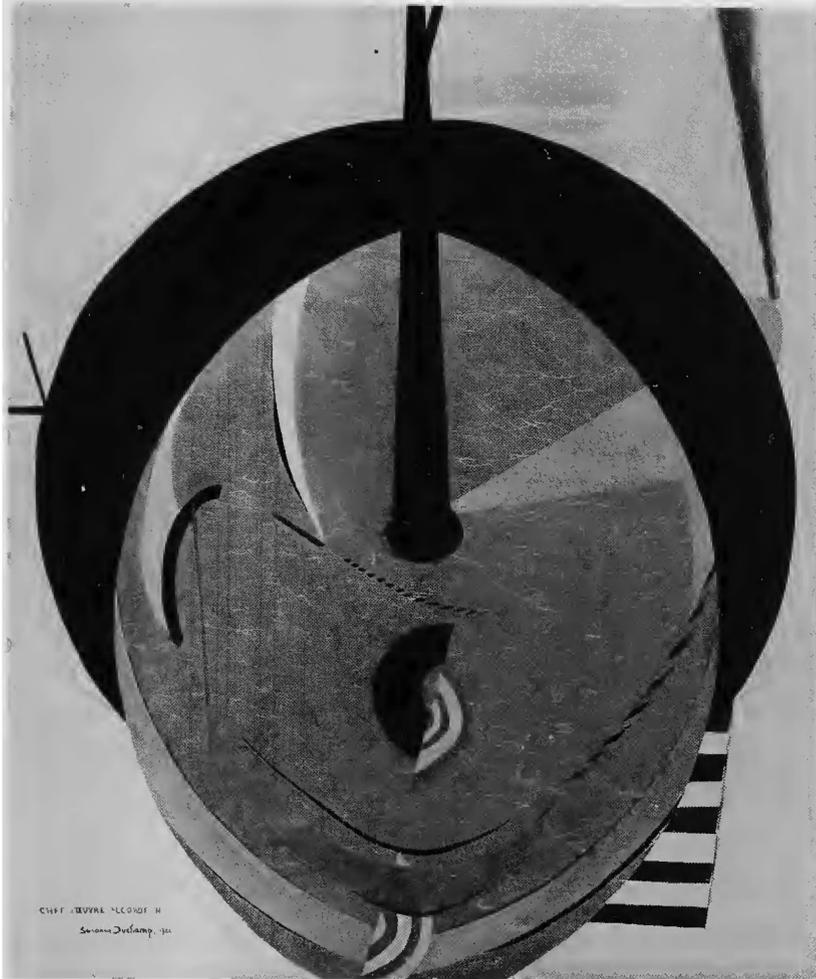
4.4

Suzanne Duchamp, *ARieTte d'oubli de la chapelle étourdie* (Arietta about the Forgetfulness of the Absent-Minded Chapel), 1920, oil, wood, and glass eye on canvas, 54.2 × 65 cm. Private collection, Switzerland.

ages with numbers and a gear—implies a more calculating, intellectual character for him, although the numerical values in the target rings are illogical and reversed compared to conventional targets. In the lower realm, “woman” is portrayed perhaps in two conventional forms: woman as a symbol of enticement or entrapment in the spider web, and woman as inspiring muse in her role as both origin and agent of the arrow and the star field that activate the cerebral “man” (namely, her husband, Jean).

This particular work and the entire exhibition at the Galerie Montaigne have generally been viewed as Suzanne and Jean’s major contribution to Paris Dada, but the word “Tabu” on the cover of the catalogue heralds a radical change in the aim and style of their work over the winter of 1921–1922. Jean attributed that change to a mystical experience he had in Vienna the previous year, on 12 February 1921.²² Thereafter the couple’s relationship to Dada was tenuous until the summer of 1921 when they openly allied themselves with Picabia, who had renounced Dada that May and was busily ridiculing anyone who attempted to prolong it.²³ Those attacks on Dada notwithstanding, Picabia, Suzanne, and Jean continued to exhibit works that bore the look and spirit of Dada and were so perceived by the critics through the 1922 Salon des Indépendants.

By the fall of 1921, however, Suzanne and Jean were calling their work Tabu, not Dada. In Jean’s canvases, Tabu was characterized by more abstract, geometric compositions evocative of planets, orbits, and trajectories in outer space. In his manifesto for Tabu, he attributed a religious function to these paintings that dominated his career for about one year.²⁴ Suzanne was less engaged with this new direction. There are no texts by her and few documented works, albeit two interesting painting/collages, one titled *Solitude Entonnoir*, the other *Chef d’Oeuvre: accordéon*, 1921 (figure 4.5). Both titles pose challenges for the translator. As observed by Lesley Baier, passages of parallel bands and sensations of movement in *Chef d’Oeuvre: accordéon* suggest the form and function of the musical instrument,²⁵ but “accordeon” may also be employed as an adjective



4.5

Suzanne Duchamp, *Chef d'Ouvre: accordéon* (Accordion or Wrinkled Masterpiece), 1921, oil, gouache, and silver leaf on canvas, 99.8 × 80.9 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, gift of the artist to the Collection Société Anonyme.

meaning wrinkled or crumpled, which could refer here to the wrinkled surface of the silver leaf that defines the large, central ovoid shape. Accordingly, we may be presented with an “Accordion Masterpiece” or a “Wrinkled Masterpiece,” but neither title illuminates the content of this very deliberate and baffling composition. Baier proposed additional references: the petit bourgeois connotations of the accordion, a human face whose features have been rearranged, and “the interaction of male (central spindle) and female (ovoid).” Although each of these suggestions has merit, none is finally convincing, leaving us with an image that is bold, baffling, and droll in about equal measures.

If Dada is broadly conceived as a form of expression critical of bourgeois taste and values, *Chef d’Oeuvre: accordéon* belongs to that movement in form and content despite Suzanne’s use of the word “Tabu.” But Suzanne’s paintings after 1922 are the antithesis of Dada. By the fall of 1922, her work had shifted again in style, this time into a highly simplified figurative mode that by 1923 had evolved into a naïve style blending aspects of the paintings of Raoul Dufy and the Douanier Rousseau. Her works reflect not a critique of bourgeois society but participation in a pervasive, nostalgic trend toward traditional forms and values in postwar France. Suzanne’s subsequent work appeared even more conservative, contributing further to her marginalization as a dadaist that began among the dadaists of Paris themselves in 1920.

What, finally, are we to make of Suzanne Duchamp’s place in Dada and the histories of Dada? Without question her art was a personal and significant contribution to the public image of Dada, but she was not a central member of the group, not an active participant in their social gatherings, public manifestations, and publications. Instead, she (and Jean) worked quietly at some remove from the aggressive painters and poets of the inner circle of Dada in Paris.

I have no accurate way of measuring to what extent Suzanne’s distance from that inner circle was her choice, a product of her intrinsic

nature as opposed to the imposition of external conditions—her identity as the sister of Marcel Duchamp, her pairing with Jean Crotti (who was also outside the inner core of Dada), the marginalization of women within Dada, and the entire cultural-psychological marginalization of women within the patriarchal society of France. I assume all of these considerations count. Beyond that, she as well as Jean paid a price for their alliance with Picabia who eventually alienated all of the dadaists, some of whom went on to write and/or influence the early histories of Dada. Those histories omitted Suzanne Duchamp (and Jean Crotti). That omission persisted through the 1960s in studies that still color our concepts of Dada. Reconsideration of Dada is in order so that our thinking about all of Dada may be enlarged, including the opportunity to savor an artist like Suzanne Duchamp, who happened to be the only female artist among the dadaists in Paris and whose work remains fresh, personal, puzzling, and private.

NOTES

1. There is neither reference to Suzanne Duchamp nor reproductions of her work in such historic publications as Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes's *Histoire de dada* (Paris: La Nouvelle Revue Française, 1931); Georges Hugnet's "L'Esprit Dada dans la peinture," *Cahiers d'Art* (1932 and 1934); the Museum of Modern Art exhibition catalogue for *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (New York, 1936–1937); Robert Motherwell's anthology, *The Dada Painters and Poets* (New York, 1951); and William Rubin's hefty book, *Dada and Surrealist Art*, and his catalogue for *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* (New York, 1968). Jean Crotti was also excluded from these publications.

2. *Tabu Dada: Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp, 1915–1922*, ed. William A. Camfield and Jean-Hubert Martin (Bern: Kunsthalle, 1983). Other venues of this exhibition were the Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

3. The Société Normande de Peinture Moderne was founded by Pierre Dumont in Rouen in 1909. See William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 21.

4. For Marcel Duchamp's letter to Suzanne Duchamp regarding her paintings at the 1912 Salon des Indépendants, see Francis M. Naumann, "Affectusement, Marcel: Ten Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti," *Archives of American Art Journal* 22, no. 4 (1982): 4–5.

5. See Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Abrams, 2d rev. ed., 1970); and Arturo Schwarz, "The Alchemist Stripped Bare in the Bachelor, Even," in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), pp. 80–98. Schwarz identified the nude figures in Duchamp's wedding gift painting as Marcel and Suzanne. He argued that their pairing was equivalent to the alchemical concept of the marriage of a king and queen whose union symbol-

ized a return to the primordial unity of the original androgyne and attainment of the “philosophical gold” of alchemy, in which the dualities of life—the above and below, male and female, sun and moon, etc.—are brought into a harmonious whole. Because Schwarz’s thesis is wholly focused on Marcel Duchamp, it need not occupy us further at this point beyond registering the subject of alchemy and his stress on the special sibling relationship between Marcel and Suzanne.

6. Picabia was on a military supply mission to the Caribbean when his ship docked in New York. See Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, pp. 71–72. Crotti and his wife, Yvonne Chastel, went to visit his brother in Columbus, Ohio. See William A. Camfield, “Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp,” in *Tabu Dada*, p. 10.

Marcel introduced Suzanne to his concept of readymades in a letter of c. 15 January 1916. See Naumann, “Affectusement Marcel”: 5.

7. Francis Picabia, qtd. in an anonymous interview, “French Artists Spur on an American Art,” *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, sec. 4, p. 2; rpt. in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), p. 131.

8. Crotti’s symbolic concepts for colors, forms, and materials were reported in an interview with Nixola Greeley-Smith, “Cubist Depicts Love in Brass and Glass; ‘More Art in Rubbers Than in Pretty Girl!’” *Evening World*, 4 April 1916, p. 3; rpt. in *New York Dada*, pp. 135–137.

9. For more information on these affairs, see Naumann, “Affectusement, Marcel”: 7–13; and Camfield, “Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp,” pp. 16–18.

Marcel, unable to attend Suzanne’s marriage, sent instructions for an *Unhappy Readymade* as a wedding present. Suzanne made a painting of *Marcel’s Unhappy Readymade* (1920) from a photograph of the readymade, a geometry book hanging on the balcony outside their apartment. See Camfield, “Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp,” in *Tabu Dada*, pp. 20–21, 38–39.

While in Buenos Aires, Marcel also received news of the death of their brother, Raymond Duchamp-Villon (9 October 1918).

10. Naomi Sawelson-Gorse has observed that in a drawing for *Un et une menacés*, the gear is more clearly gendered female by its flower-like form, a form remarkably similar to flower patterns in the dress she is wearing in a Man Ray photograph of 1924. For illustrations, see *Tabu Dada*, figures 32a and 55.

11. Nothing in Suzanne's career indicates an interest in alchemy, but, in this instance, if one reads the pale yellow crescent as a moon, alchemical references are suggested by the colors of this composition (yellow and gold, silver, a reddish hue, black, and white) and by forms that may be viewed as moon/female and sun/male.

12. For an interpretation of *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés*, see Camfield, "Jean Crotti & Suzanne Duchamp," p. 18.

13. See the letters from Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti to Francis Picabia and Germaine Everling, *Dossiers Picabia*, vol. VI, nos. 225 and 556; vol. VIII, nos. 214, 585, and 734, in the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris. Additional letters and other documents regarding Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti exist in the estate of Alexina Duchamp (Villiers-sous-Grès) and the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

14. On these subjects, see, for example, Van Wyck Brooks, *The Confident Years: 1885–1915* (New York: Dutton, 1952); and Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976).

15. For more on these topics see Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), chapters 4 and 5; and Anne-Marie Sohn, "Between the Wars in France and England," in *A History of Women in the West, V: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Françoise Thebaud (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 114–116. My thanks to Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for recommending these sources. See also Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and*

the First World War, 1914–1925 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 191, 281; and Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 20–21.

16. Crotti's work, *Solution de Continuité* (private collection; illustrated in *Tabu Dada*, figure 13), is a shallow, glass-faced box that contains forceps and coils of wire terminating in oval glass beads that look like spermatozoa. Some of the beads surround a circular form that is cupped by the forceps, implying the removal of an impregnated egg cell. Prominently stenciled on the inner face of the glass are the words "Solution de / Continuité / Wrong." "Solution de continuité" has several meanings in chemistry and medicine, including reference to a separation of parts that, in this context, is relevant to abortion. I am grateful to Dominique de Menil for this reference. The spacing of the stenciled words permits different readings by the viewer, but given the forms in the box, I think the intended sequence is "Solution de Continuité Wrong," with "Wrong" as a judgmental interjection.

An extended interpretation of this work is not possible here. I have attributed a date of c. 1916 to this work on the basis of other glass box constructions by Crotti that year, but it is conceivable that he made it later, closer in time or contemporary with Suzanne's drawing, *Give me the right right to life*.

17. The Salon des Indépendants ran from 28 January to 29 February 1920. The Dada Matinée was held on 5 February. Suzanne and Jean were listed among the 391 presidents of Dada in *Bulletin Dada*, which was distributed as a program.

18. On Dada in Paris, see Michel Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris* (Paris: Flammarion, 2d ed., 1993); and Camfield, *Francis Picabia*.

19. *Exposition des Oeuvres de Suzanne Duchamp et Jean Crotti*, held from 4 April to 16 April, showed thirteen works by Suzanne, while Jean exhibited thirty-two.

20. I am grateful to two colleagues at Rice University, Jean-Louis Menin and Bernard Aresu, for help in translating titles used by Suzanne Duchamp, especially

in this painting. Menin proposes “Art d’oubliette de la . . .” as a reworking of the title based on the enlarged letters ART and a combination of the remaining letters of “ariette” with “oubli.”

21. Illustrated in *Tabu Dada*, figure 30.

22. Jean Crotti, “Tabu Dada” in *Courants d’air sur le chemin de ma vie. Poèmes et dessins, 1916–1921* (Paris: Leblanc et Trautmann, 1941), n.p. Crotti did not elaborate on the nature of that experience in Vienna.

23. Picabia proclaimed his separation from Dada in the newspaper *Comedia* (11 May 1921, p. 2). Suzanne and Jean did not join the Salon Dada at the Galerie Montaigne in June, but Jean did contribute to *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, published as a special issue of Picabia’s magazine *391* (no. 15 [July 1921]: 3), devoted to insulting his former Dada colleagues.

24. Suzanne and Jean distributed a Tabu handbill at the 1921 Salon d’Automne, where Suzanne exhibited *Chef d’Oeuvre: accordéon* (1921). The “Tabu” manifesto was published in *The Little Review* (Spring 1922): 45.

25. Lesley Baier, “Suzanne Duchamp,” in *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Robert L. Herbert, Eleanor S. Apter, and Elise K. Kenney (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1984), cat. no. 243, pp. 246–247.

BEATRICE WOOD, HER DADA . . . AND HER MAMA

paul B. FRANKLIN

I am debating with myself whether I shall place myself in some good man's hands and become a mother, or if I shall become wanton and go out in the world and make a place for myself. Somehow I think I shall become a wanton. It is more to my taste. At least I think it is.

—Djuna Barnes¹

The great question that has never been answered and which I have not been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is "What does a woman want?"

—Sigmund Freud²



The notion of an independent feminine sexuality expressed by Barnes and Freud also informs the life and work of Beatrice Wood. At 105 years old when she died in March 1998, Wood (b. 1893) was the last surviving member of the loosely knit social network of artists, writers, and art aficionados who made up New York Dada (1915–1923). Art historians have paid little critical attention to Wood's early drawings, paintings, and writings because they do not appear to be truly Dada in style, media, or

content. Such an erroneous appraisal, however, attests to the skewed vision scholars have heretofore employed in writing the history of this (anti)art movement.

Traditionally, the history of Dada tells the tale of male artists and writers grappling with the moral bankruptcy of modern civilization in the aftermath of World War I. In this gendered narrative, men's experiences—whether in the trenches or in the art studio—have taken precedence over those of women. If and when women gained entry into this exclusive Boys' Club they did so as artistic muses rather than as active participants. The hypermasculine and confrontational rhetoric espoused by most male dadaists successfully muted the voices of these female muses and marginalized many of their Dada sisters who dared to call themselves artists. Similarly, critics who derided Dada often did so in gendered terms that evinced the pathological and perverse influence of women on the shape and direction of modern art. The syndicated columnist W. B. Seabrook, for example, reported that certain American art critics believed the “queer canvases” of Dada artists to be the product of “sheer insanity” and the movement itself to be inspired by the wild antics of a young, neurotic, Bohemian woman in Prague who worked as a go-go dancer in a cabaret.³ Bombastic proclamations like this have contributed to the continued devaluation of women artists and feminine aesthetics in the history of Dada.

In this context, Beatrice Wood presents an especially interesting case study. Over the years, she contributed to her own peripheral position in New York Dada, repeatedly claiming that her sexual liaisons with Marcel Duchamp and Henri-Pierre Roché were more consequential than her output as an artist. In 1978, for example, during a lecture titled “Life as Dada” and delivered at the Philadelphia Museum of Art during the opening of an exhibition of her drawings, she modestly professed, “What is Dada about this lecture is that I know nothing about Dada. I was only in love with men connected with it, which I suppose is as near to being

Dada as anything.”⁴ In the span of two sentences, Wood deftly transformed herself from an ignorant and somewhat innocent bystander in the history of Dada into the very embodiment of the movement itself. Such strategic and sophisticated naïveté makes Wood a “natural-born Dadaist.”⁵ As such, her oeuvre supplies several answers to Freud’s query “What does a woman want?” answers that she and many other women artists of her generation were able to voice, in part, because of the liberating impulse of Dada.

As the title of her Philadelphia lecture suggests, to Wood, Dada is a phenomenon of life and the living rather than a set of abstract aesthetic principles. This conviction echoes those of her male dadaist counterparts who attempted radically to recontextualize art within the realm of lived experience, hoping to dissolve the boundaries between the two. To its adherents, Dada signified life free of the moral, political, and aesthetic strictures at the heart of bourgeois capitalist culture. Even Tristan Tzara, the self-proclaimed philosopher and promoter of the movement, who promulgated numerous ribald and absurd declarations regarding Dada, suggested:

*Dada is life without carpet-slippers or parallels. . . . What interests a Dadaist is his own mode of life. But here we approach the great secret. Dada is a state of mind. . . . Freedom: Dada Dada Dada, a roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies: LIFE.*⁶

In the late 1910s, while her male cohorts strove to *épater le bourgeois* through their Dada manifestoes and public performances, Wood was already deeply entrenched in her own private struggle against one particularly strident member of this rearguard—her mother (figure 5.1). A refined, status-conscious, late-Victorian lady, Carrara Wood devoted herself to molding her daughter into a perfect specimen of upper-middle-



5.1

Beatrice Wood photographed with her mother, Carrara Wood, and brother, Jefferson. Formerly Beatrice Wood Archive, Ojai, California.

class femininity. Wood's rambunctious spirit, however, clashed dramatically with her mother's intentions: "Determined I should remain a virgin, perhaps forever, she dressed me in lace, taught me to curtsy and to remain silent unless spoken to. As my dear but rather passive father stood by, my mother and her two sisters, my aunts, attempted to turn me into a porcelain doll."⁷

In this relentless battle to domesticate her femininity, Wood consistently defied her mother. She secretly indulged in the writings of Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Maupassant, Flaubert, Colette, Freud, and Wilde, all of which described the exciting yet frightening possibilities of love and desire. These authors also sparked in her a yearning to escape the materialistic trappings of her mother's bourgeois world and become an artist. Carrara Wood tried to quell her daughter's raging bohemian spirit by satiating it. On several occasions between 1911 and 1914, she sent Wood to France to study art and acting. Temporarily free from her mother's overbearing authority, Wood discovered that drawing and painting provided a means by which to explore and express her budding desires as a sexually maturing yet inexperienced young woman.⁸

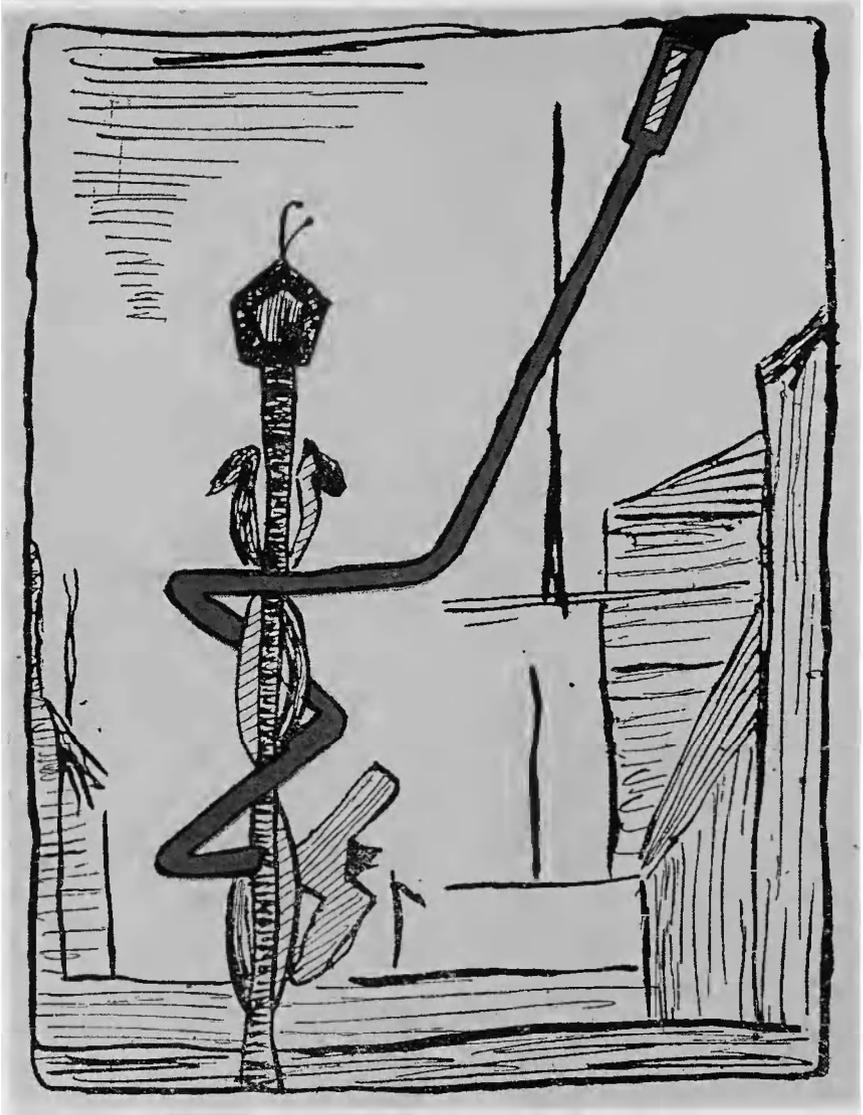
With the outbreak of World War I, Wood returned to New York to live with her parents. As she searched for work as an actress, she continued to draw and paint, much to her mother's chagrin.⁹ Then, in 1916, she began to associate with the artists, writers, and art lovers who frequented the apartment of Walter and Louise Arensberg, two wealthy American patrons and collectors of modern art. Thanks to the persuasion and encouragement of Marcel Duchamp and Henri-Pierre Roché, two Arensberg *salonnards* who later became her suitors, Wood soon came of age sexually and artistically.

Wood first met Duchamp in September 1916 while visiting the French avant-garde composer Edgard Varèse in a New York City hospital where he was laid up with a broken foot. Nearly fluent in French,¹⁰ Wood tried to converse with both men but to no avail, for they were engrossed

in a discussion about modern art. Unwilling to fade into the background and, as she remembers, “much more interested in finding out what it was [like] to lie horizontally than to use a paint brush,” Wood tried to shift their attention away from art and onto herself.¹¹ To this end, she abruptly interrupted Duchamp and Varèse and flippantly dismissed modern art as farcical: “Anybody can do Modern Art, just lines and dots,” she proclaimed, to which Duchamp rejoined, “Go home and try.”¹²

Determined to defy Duchamp, Wood returned home and created *Mariage D'une Amie* (Marriage of a Female Friend), a playful yet disturbing drawing (figure 5.2). Duchamp was deeply impressed by her effort and arranged for the drawing to be reproduced in *Rogue*, a short-lived avant-garde magazine edited by Louise and Allen Norton.¹³ Set within a roughly sketched frame, *Mariage D'une Amie* depicts a tall, thin, pole-like structure topped by a hollow pentagonal crown with two antennae, all of which give it a humanoid appearance. Two other serpentine forms, dark and light in tone, appear to sprout from its base and coil symmetrically up the trunk of this biomorphic figure, much like human limbs. A second, taller and thinner form is wrapped around the torso of the former as if imprisoning it in a passionate or savage embrace. The rough gestural lines in the drawing suggest lust and physical aggression. As reproduced in *Rogue*, accents of red augment the black and white tones of *Mariage D'une Amie*. Localized solely within the contours of the taller, thinner, encircling form, the red aptly suggests both sexual excitation and violence.

Francis Naumann claims that Wood sketched *Mariage D'une Amie* as a personal homage to her childhood school friend, Elizabeth Reynolds, who had recently married Norman Hapgood, an editor of *Collier's* magazine and *Harper's Weekly*.¹⁴ According to Naumann, the difference in size between the two figures represents the disparity in age between the newlyweds at the time of their marriage (Hapgood was twenty-seven years older than his bride). If this is indeed the case, then their size difference is also a gendered one: the diminutive, curvaceous, feminine figure of



5.2

Beatrice Wood, *Mariage D'une Amie*
(Marriage of a Female Friend) (from
Rogue 3, no. 3 [December 1916]: 4).
Photograph courtesy Francis M.
Naumann.

Reynolds is immobilized and entrapped by the hard-edged, towering, jagged, phallic figure of Hapgood. While *Mariage D'une Amie* seems to reinscribe the misogynistic stereotypes of feminine submission and masculine dominance, it also appears to acknowledge the suffocating price a woman had to pay during this epoch when she entered into the contract of marriage, a contract that often forced her to sever precious bonds previously forged with other women. Wood's homage to Reynolds is tinged with animosity and sadness at the loss of her closest friend to a man.¹⁵ The landscape in which "husband" and "wife" reside, a landscape distinctly undomestic in its exteriority and barrenness, provides a dramatic foil to the rich and fruitful friendship these two women shared. Reynolds's marriage undoubtedly highlighted Wood's own struggle to negotiate between her desire for male companionship and her determination to forge an independent identity as a woman and an artist. In this context, it is no surprise that *Mariage D'une Amie* presents matrimony as a less than holy sacrament for women.

In both her life and work, Wood recognized that wedded domestic bliss was a heterosexual male fantasy in which many women, including herself, desperately strove to believe. She contends that "[n]othing endangers a woman more than all the delicious shit; that a man loves only her, thinks only of her, will never look at another woman. As these golden words fall from any man's lips, I dissolve and become a dead duck!"¹⁶ Ironically, through her relationship with Duchamp, who explained to her the difference between sex and love, Wood began to break free from the bourgeois Victorian notions imparted to her by her mother regarding women's roles in love and marriage.

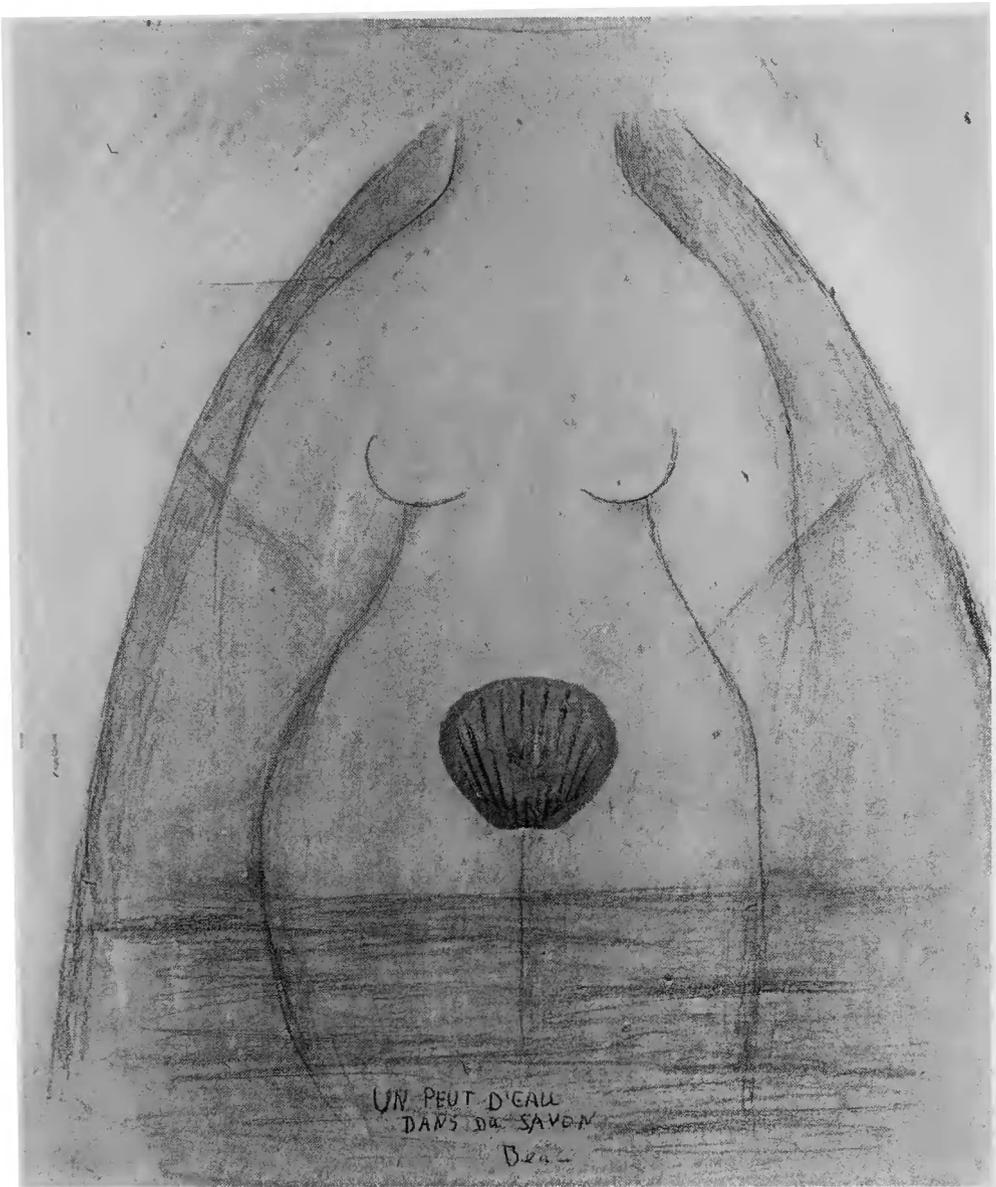
Knowing full well that Carrara Wood disapproved of her daughter's artistic aspirations, Duchamp invited Wood to use his studio. She seized this opportunity at every possible moment. Like a conscientious art teacher, Duchamp scrutinized Wood's new work at the end of each visit, indicating the pieces he liked and disliked. Through Duchamp's critical

guidance, Wood learned to trust her artistic instincts even when they did not appear to be entirely explicable.¹⁷

Even though Wood developed a forte for drawing, she still occasionally painted. In early 1917, two of her canvases caught Duchamp's eye. Following his suggestion, she submitted them to the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, which Duchamp helped organize. Opening on 10 April 1917 at the Grand Central Palace, this monumental and scandalous show enabled Wood to display her work in a large public forum for the first time.

One of these paintings, *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* (A Little Water in Some Soap), 1917, represents a headless, idealized, nude torso of a white woman who, depending on one's perspective, is either standing in water or lying in a bathtub (figure 5.3).¹⁸ Wood originally painted a piece of soap over the figure's pubic area. Aware of the potentially risqué nature of this bold combination of humor and sexual explicitness, Duchamp suggested that she attach a real piece of soap to the canvas instead of an illusionistic copy.¹⁹ Wood followed his advice and nailed a decorative cake of green soap in the shape of a scallop shell over the nude's "tactical" position, thereby transforming the painting into a truly Dada object.²⁰ This, along with the seemingly grammatical slip in the title ("A Little Water in Some Soap" rather than "A Little Soap in Some Water"), ensured that her canvas would not go unnoticed by visitors to the exhibition. In fact, *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* attracted more attention, critical and otherwise, than almost any other work of art exhibited at the Independents' show.

Many of those who attended the exhibition were either morally outraged or pleasantly amused by Wood's decision to introduce a bar of soap—a cheap, mass-produced object from consumer culture intended for use in the privacy of the bathroom—into the pompous and sacred realm of the fine arts. Through such a tactic, Wood successfully corrupted the highly revered classical genre of the female nude. Her scandalous



5.3

Beatrice Wood, *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* (A Little Water in Some Soap), 1977 replica of 1917 original destroyed in 1938; colored pencil, graphite, and

soap on cardboard, 27.9 × 21.6 cm. Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, gift of Francis M. Naumann, 96.1369.

gesture possessed a particular potency in the context of the Independents' show because, as one New York journalist reported, of all the artistic styles and genres on display in the galleries, "Nudism seems to claim the largest number of votaries."²¹ Crowds gathered in front of Wood's painting, often laughing at its drollery. Certain men even tucked their calling cards into the picture frame, perhaps imagining the voluptuous female figure to be a self-portrait of the artist and hoping that Wood would be interested in one of them as a potential "suitor."

Critics almost categorically rejected *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* as a reprehensible and distasteful joke. Harvey M. Watts, for instance, commenced his review of the Independents' show with a vehement diatribe against the painting, describing it as "the keynote of the childish whim, the unbridled extravagance, the undisciplined impudence and immature ignorance and even derangement that have been allowed full and free fling" in this jury-free exhibition.²² The immature air Watts detected in Wood's canvas was a direct expression of her nascent Dada spirit, which thrived on playful naïveté and scoffed at proper bourgeois civility. As Wood declared at the time of the exhibition: "The emotions of a jeune fille can be acquired at home. I am out for red blood. I want to return to the ecstasy [*sic*] and wild imaginings of childhood!"²³

Ultimately, the controversy surrounding *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* stemmed from the overt and highly parodic commentary it offered on the hallowed institution of the female nude in Western art. Headless and armless, Wood's representation of the female body was streamlined to include only its bare sexual essentials—breasts and vaginal area. Furthermore, her strategic placement of the bar of soap did more to call attention to the stark reality of female sexual difference than to mask it. Such an act defied the representational edicts of the female nude in Western art and presented a serious affront to bourgeois decorum since, as T. J. Clark confirms, this genre proffers a cultural site where

*the [female] body is revealed, given its attributes, brought into order, and made out to be unproblematic. It is the frankness of the bourgeoisie— here, after all, is what Woman looks like; she can be known in her nakedness without too much danger. That is because her body is separate from her sex. Her sex, one might say, is a matter of male desire.*²⁴

Wood not only refused to allow viewers to displace or dissociate the female nude from her sex, she actually represented Woman as synonymous with her sex much as Gustave Courbet did in *Origin of the World* (1866) or as Duchamp would later do in *Etant Donnés* (1946–1966). However, the irony, humor, and playfulness of Wood's painting (not to mention the fact that the artist was a woman) set it apart from these two other works, both of which are debatably misogynistic.²⁵

Critics like Watts probably viewed *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* with such disdain because it unabashedly and humorously postured itself as a direct descendant of Sandro Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1485), one of the most sanctified nudes in the canon of Western art. The scallop shell-shaped bar of soap, the water, and the idealized bodily proportions of Wood's figure all allude to this treasured icon of the Italian Renaissance. Such a reference would not have been lost on visitors to the Independents' show, especially considering that, between 1900 and 1920, Botticelli and his work experienced a renaissance among both common and scholarly audiences in Europe and America.²⁶

The mythological figure of Venus (Aphrodite) would have offered Wood an important role model in her ongoing struggle to break free from both the suffocating stronghold of her mother and the bourgeois moral etiquette she espoused. According to myth, Venus was born on a scallop shell that arose out of the sea in a wave of foam produced after Cronus castrated his father, Uranus, a miraculous generation suggested in the iconography of Botticelli's painting. Venus was not only the Roman god-

ness of love, but also of beauty and fertility. Her marriage to the god Vulcan (Hephaestus) did nothing to inhibit the free expression of her sexuality. She birthed numerous illegitimate children by other gods and male mortals, including Hymenaeus (Hymen), the god of marriage.²⁷

Un peut d'eau dans du savon uncannily intimates Venus's mythological birth and life. The scallop shell upon which she was born functioned as a surrogate womb, a role it plays in Wood's painting as well. Made of soap, this surrogate womb also is capable of producing foam similar to that from which Venus sprang to life. In this context, the foam—the result of the union of soap and water—undoubtedly signifies feminine orgasm rather than male castration. The latter phenomenon, however, is alluded to by the shape of the cake of soap itself; the shell of a scallop is hard and opens and closes like a mouth or a pair of scissors. Wood's Venus, therefore, appears inviting but also threatening. She is at once a seductive beauty and a potentially castrating bitch, ready and willing to devour any man who does not obey.²⁸

Like Wood's other early work, *Un peut d'eau dans du savon* contains an autobiographical element that bridges the gap between art and life, a central tenet of Dada. While not explicit in the painting itself, any visitor to the Independents' show would have quickly discerned the self-referential content of the work after consulting a copy of *The Blind Man*, a short-lived Dada periodical edited by Wood, Duchamp, and Henri-Pierre Roché and available at the exhibition for ten cents. This publication included an article by Wood recounting a dream in which she literally becomes part of *Un peut d'eau dans du savon*. The dream sequence commences when Wood takes on the identity of Venus and concludes with her miraculous metamorphosis into the scallop shell-shaped bar of soap, the *vagina dentata*—the ultimate signifier of female sexual difference:

Once I jumped into a picture and sat still, looking like a Chinese god while men passed. I am worth \$800 dollars [sic], I thought and I laughed. And I was a piece of soap with nails in my back stuck on a canvas. A big flood came and swamped all the first floor, and the canvases began whirling on the ground . . . blue arms and green legs floated past, and I said to myself: those are the art-critics. As I was a piece of soap, I, too, must melt.²⁹

As a vamp born without a mother to censure her actions, the liberated life of Venus undoubtedly would have appealed to Wood, whose own mother did nothing but meddle in her affairs. Furthermore, Venus's self-confidence and sexual aggressiveness attracted Wood as she endeavored to navigate the waters of her budding sexuality without drowning and without soap.

The example of Venus did not fully prepare the young, innocent Wood for the difficulties she soon would face in her quest for love and sexual fulfillment. One of her most poignant and formative romantic encounters was with Henri-Pierre Roché, a French art collector, diplomat, journalist, and amateur art dealer who came to the United States in October 1916. In February 1917, two months after befriending Duchamp, Roché met Wood through the Arensbergs.³⁰ Before long, she and the two Frenchmen became inseparable, "un amour à trois," as she later described their friendship.³¹

Roché courted Wood, eventually seducing her with his continental charm and sophistication. As her first true lover, he, in Wood's words, transformed her "from a good little girl into a bad one."³² However, it was Wood who first persuaded the Frenchman to engage in sexual relations, an action originally intended to spite her mother, who accused her of being in love with him. Roché initially balked at the idea, having discov-

ered Wood to be a virgin. Thinking the inexperienced *ingénue* desired to marry him, he was surprised when she professed “I have never believed in marriage.”³³ Their affair lasted several months but came to an abrupt end in the summer of 1917 after Wood discovered that her paramour was also sexually involved with Alissa Frank and Louise Arensberg, two of her closest friends.³⁴ Even though Roché’s infidelity devastated Wood, their relationship left an indelible mark on her life and art.

Like Duchamp, Roché encouraged Wood to pursue her artistic ambitions. She did so with particular fervor after their breakup in order to ease her pain and sorrow. As a result, she created numerous drawings that commemorate real and imaginary aspects of their amorous interlude. *Dieu Protège Les Amants* (God Protects Lovers), 1917, portrays a bearded male deity descending from the heavens with his arms outstretched as if to envelop the two lovers and either to shield them from the outside world or usher them into a new one. The figure of Roché, who was tall and lanky, displays a pole-like torso on top of which sits his egg-shaped head.³⁵ He towers over the short, curvaceous figure of Wood who, with her eye wide open and a knowing smile on her face, occupies the center of the drawing.

Following the precedent set by both Duchamp in *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) and Francis Picabia in his machine portraits, Wood experimented with the inclusion of text in her drawings, especially French words, which she often inadvertently misspelled. In a typically Dada gesture, Wood inscribed the non-word *pipan* on the abdominal region of her body in *Dieu Protège Les Amants*. While she claimed in her later years that it signified nothing more than Dada gibberish, *pipan* more likely is a phonetic transcription of *pipant*, the present participle of the French verb *piper*.³⁶ In standard French, *piper* has various meanings including “to acquire,” “to win,” “to cry out,” and “to chirp.” In French argot, however, *piper* translates as “to gratify sexually by way of fellatio.”³⁷ The two arm-like forms that emanate from Wood’s body in the drawing just so happen

to cross over and touch Roché precisely in the area of his penis. Perhaps Wood is about to *pipe* her lover while God, shielding them from public exposure, looks on with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye.

Wood strategically abdicated responsibility for the naughty and potentially incriminating sexual act to which she elliptically alludes in *Dieu Protège Les Amants* by announcing her innocence from the outset. Next to *pipan*, she included the French word *ingénuité*, meaning “naïveté” or “lack of sophistication.” While Wood chose to initiate herself into the joys of sex and love with Roché, she did so with a cleverness that enabled the older Frenchman to convince himself that he was in control. Such games of seduction and entrapment were, and remained, the foundation of her interactions with men. Wood always performed brilliantly as the consummately naïve sophisticate, the ingenious *ingénue*.

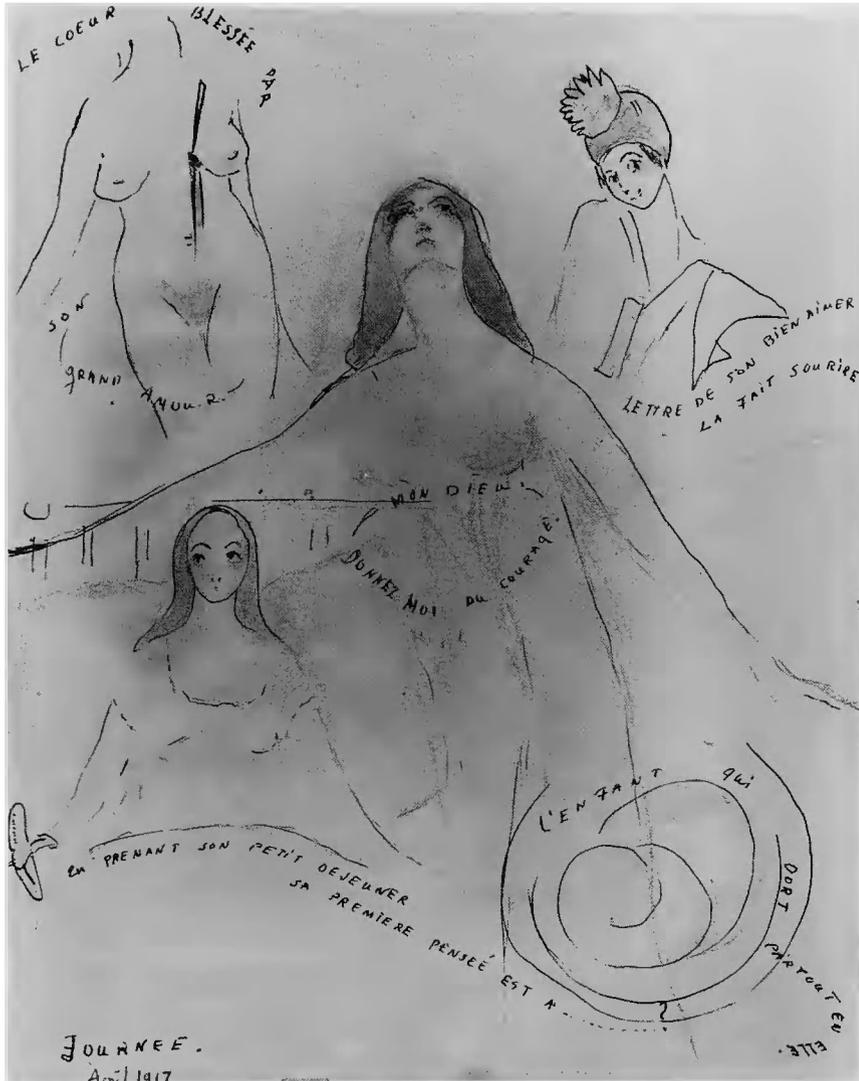
The games continue in *Dieu Protège Les Amants* with the juxtaposition of *pipan* and *ingénuité* with the word *conventions*, which Wood inscribed vertically along the trunk of Roché’s body. An English cognate, *conventions* refer to customs or socially accepted attitudes. Roché embodied two such conventions in his romance with Wood: at the outset, he desired to preserve her bourgeois reputation by refraining from sexual intercourse and, in the end, he cheated on her. Ironically, Roché, the gentlemanly Don Juan, appeared rather conservative, conventional, and even stereotypical in his assumptions regarding women and his treatment of them. Wood, in her disdain for marriage but desire for sexual intimacy, postured herself as the liberated bohemian who stood apart from and clashed with social customs. She proudly described herself in such terms only two years before her death: “I’m a monogamous woman in a polygamous world . . . immoral but virtuous.”³⁸

While *convention* implies a widely accepted social attitude, it also denotes an agreement or covenant between individuals. Holy matrimony, a sacred contract sanctioned by the State and signed before God, is both a social convention *and* a covenant, one that preoccupied Wood consis-

tently from her early adulthood. Even though she espoused an intellectual contempt for the bourgeois institution of marriage, Wood's upper-middle-class background conditioned her to desire such a coupling. In this context, *Dieu Protège Les Amants* functions as a pendant to *Mariage D'une Amie*; it is a fantastical wedding portrait of a marriage that never was, at least according to social convention.

At the same time that Wood's breakup with Roché hardened her to the realities of the male sex, it also brought her a clearer understanding of her own body and sexuality. As she struggled to answer Freud's question, "What does a woman want?" she realized, in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" and that motherhood was one of the most tangible means to this end.³⁹ During and after the Great War, natalist campaigns promoted motherhood as every able-bodied woman's duty and destiny, the key to the moral regeneration of every nation. Mary Louise Roberts notes that "the mother was a living testimony to the principles for which the *poilu* had died: she made that death worthwhile."⁴⁰ Furthermore, in the 1910s, many feminists claimed that a woman could become a whole person only through motherhood. Ellen Key, a Swedish writer whose ideas greatly influenced the early American feminist movement, argued that women "never attain their full humanity until through love they have given their husband a child."⁴¹

Wood was caught up in this postwar maternal call-to-arms. In 1917, she produced two poignant drawings, *Journée* and *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!*, both of which directly address the theme of motherhood. *Journée* (Day) is a *mélange* of four individual sketches (figure 5.4). While Wood did not recall what inspired the work, it appears to record both the heartache she endured after her affair with Roché ended and her fear of pregnancy as an unwed mother.⁴² Pregnancy, in fact, presented a very real threat to a sexually-active woman like Wood, especially during this epoch when free love and birth control were popular topics of public debate inside and outside Greenwich Village bohemian circles.⁴³



5.4

Beatrice Wood, *Journée (Day)*, 1917,
watercolor and ink on colored paper,
8 3/4 × 11 in. Private collection.
Photograph courtesy Francis M.
Naumann.

In the upper left corner of *Journée*, a headless, nude, white female torso, much like that in *Un peut d'eau dans du savon*, is framed by the sentence "le coeur blessé par son grand amour" (her heart is wounded by her great love). Overwrought with despair too grave to bear alone, the female figure has stabbed herself with a dagger in an attempted suicide.⁴⁴ The slight leftward shift of her body aligns the knife and the dripping blood with her vaginal area in an upward displacement suggesting violent sexual penetration or menstruation, an iconography reminiscent of artistic representations of the death of Lucretia.

A similar, albeit more humorous, displacement occurs in the lower left corner of the drawing. Here, a woman sits in bed wearing a maternity gown and clutching a banana, an object pregnant with its own sexual signification. "En prenant sa petit déjeuner sa première pensée est à . . . ?" (Having her breakfast, her first thought is of . . . ?) runs along the edge of the bed sheets. The question mark refers to the nameless and fatherless unborn child inside her ("l'enfant qui dort partout en elle") who lies insulated in a roughly sketched, free-floating womb that hovers in the lower right corner of the drawing. In the upper right, the image and text suggest the possibility of a reprieve for the young, abandoned, pregnant woman who is smiling after having received a letter from her lover ("lettre de son bien aimer la fait sourire"). In the end, however, the yearning plea from the massive female figure in the center of the drawing, a kind of *misericordia*, makes it abundantly clear that the only dependable and trustworthy father is God the Father: "Mon Dieu! Donnez-moi du courage" (My God! Give me courage).

The four sketches contained in *Journée* illustrate dramatic moments in the cycle of one woman's pregnancy. While the female figures are not true likenesses of Wood, she undoubtedly conceived of them as self-portraits. The narrative of the drawing, therefore, refers not only to Wood's loss of Roché as a lover but also to her longing to be pregnant. Social stigma aside, pregnancy would have been an extremely effective

means deployed by Wood to salvage her relationship with the Frenchman by burdening him with the responsibility of fatherhood. Linda Gordon maintains that “Women get pregnant ‘accidentally on purpose’ as a way of punishing themselves. But they are also protecting themselves and sometimes punishing men. In reproduction men share the costs of male supremacy and women’s resistance to it. . . . Pregnancy is woman’s burden and her revenge.”⁴⁵ *Journée* powerfully embodies this double bind.

The agony and isolation of pregnancy depicted in *Journée* provide a sharp contrast to the plenitude of motherhood as whimsically portrayed by Wood in *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* (Beatrice and Her Twelve Children!) (figure 5.5). In this drawing, Wood envisions herself as the mother of a dozen children. She cradles her youngest in a look of dazed amazement, as if stunned by her own fecundity; these children are neither random nor anonymous progeny. As the names appended to each of them indicate, they are the products of Wood’s imaginary illicit sexual liaisons with various members of the Arensberg circle: Duchamp/“Totor”; Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia/“Mme. Picabia”; Harrison Reeves/“Reeves”; Roché/“Pierre” (depicted four times); Alfredo Sidès/“Sides”; Walter Arensberg/“Walter”; Louise Arensberg/“?”; Arthur Cravan/“Craven”; and Joseph Stella/“Stella.” Giving birth twelve times would have been highly improbable for Wood at the tender age of twenty-four. The absurdity of such a scenario suggests that childbirth and motherhood themselves possessed a particular Dada resonance for Wood.⁴⁶ The vision of sexual promiscuity and maternity as Dada probably emanated from Wood’s conception of her artistic creativity as a direct outgrowth of her sexual liberation. As she wrote to Roché after their falling-out, “Now I am convinced virginity is stupid! One goes through life with the idea of virginity, instead of sleeping with men when they have the desire. The more we exist outside the system, the more creative we are.”⁴⁷ For a young woman from a proper bourgeois family, twelve illegitimate children certainly would have placed Wood “outside the system” and beyond the pale of social respectability.



5.5

Beatrice Wood, *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* (Beatrice and Her Twelve Children!), c. 1917, watercolor, ink, and pencil on paper, 8 3/4 × 10 3/4 in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, gift of the artist.

Gleeful at such a prospect, Wood pictures herself as the Mama of Dada in *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!*, adopting both the “good” and the “bad” traits of womanliness and motherhood. Imitating the Virgin Mary, the paradigm of the virtuous woman and the perfect mother, Wood embraces her youngest child while the rest play peacefully around her. Such a saintly demeanor, however, cannot compensate for her harlotry and lasciviousness. In fact, Wood’s fanciful sexual depravity appears so far “out of the system” as to include lesbianism. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia presumably “fathered” the little girl seated in the lower right corner. Roché, in fact, imagined (and possibly even fantasized) that Wood and Louise Arensberg engaged in a lesbian affair.⁴⁸ The product of this deviant dalliance stands in the upper left corner of the drawing in the form of an ambiguously gendered figure curiously covered in question marks.⁴⁹

Gender ambiguity is central to *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* if one considers it from a slightly different perspective. While these twelve children may be the result of Wood’s imaginary sexual forays with various members of the Arensberg circle, they also may represent these individuals themselves, immaculately conceived like Jesus, Venus, or their Dada cousin, *Fille née sans mère* (Girl Born Without a Mother), c. 1915, by Picabia. In her maternal narrative, Wood vitiates the revered binaries of masculinity-femininity and male-female, bleeding one into and out of the other. For example, the ambiguously gendered figure of Louise Arensberg stands next to her husband, Walter, who is portrayed cross-dressed as an adult woman. Harrison Reeves appears as a happy-go-lucky boy jumping rope while wearing a dress and a bow in his hair. Roché, in three of the four instances where he appears, is also depicted as a cross-dressed boy. On the left, as a *fillette*, he is positioned next to Cravan as his “girlfriend,” their queer (in every sense of the word) coupling echoed in their matching his-and-hers sailor suits. Behind Wood, the pubescent Roché stands with “her” head bowed, shyly accepting what, by deduction, are homosexual advances from Sidès.

While the play with gender in *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* elicits a comical effect, it also echoes certain theories that circulated during this epoch concerning the genetic foundations of sexual deviance and moral degeneration. Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many eugenicists believed that children inherited both their physical and behavioral traits from their mothers.⁵⁰ Perhaps Wood's imaginary sexual perversion—both heterosexual promiscuity and lesbianism—precipitated the “genetic defect” of transvestism in half of her illegitimate offspring. The subversive potential of transvestism, however, extends even further. According to Marjorie Garber, “transvestism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself.”⁵¹ The flippant gesture toward cross-dressing and gender inversion in *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* calls into question bourgeois logic, rationality, and propriety, a fundamental strategy of Dada. Wood was not alone in recognizing transvestism as a dadaist trope. The most notorious example of transvestism as Dada appeared in 1921 when Duchamp adopted the queer persona Rose Sélavy and enlisted Man Ray to photograph him in drag as the coquettish starlet (see figures 6.3 and 7.2). Their subsequent editorial decision to place one of these photographs on the cover of their periodical *New York Dada* illustrates the importance of gender deviance in this insurgent (anti)art movement.

The fantasies of transvestism, pregnancy, and motherhood that Wood visualizes in *Journée* and *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* derived from her affair with Roché, a relationship that exhibited classically Freudian characteristics. Freud argued that the figure of the father occupies the center of a girl's psychosexual development. The father provides her with the means by which to contain the traumatic psychic reality of her own sexual difference. In the Freudian oedipal drama, a girl forsakes her longing for a penis and her anger at her mother for not being able to provide her with one by sublimating these feelings into a desire to occupy

her mother's position in the family romance and bear her father a child, a symbolic and psychic extension of his penis. Freud contended that a girl "slips—along the line of a symbolic equation, one might say—from the penis to a baby."⁵²

The tenderness, understanding and guidance in life and love that the older Frenchman provided Wood made him more like an admiring nurturing father than a lover. Roché, in fact, was fourteen years older than Wood (an age difference akin to that between Reynolds and Hapgood) and, as such, Wood described him as a "vieux-papa" and a "teacher."⁵³ Wood's fantasy of bearing Roché four children, illustrated in *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!*, seems to have emanated from a longing, in Freud's words, "to receive a baby from her father as a gift."⁵⁴ The symbolic possession of the penis of her father-lover further reveals Wood's yearning to stabilize her position as the primary object of Roché's desire, an ambition she soon realized was impossible.

In the Freudian trajectory, a girl's oedipal desire for her father only emerges after she breaks her infantile pre-oedipal attachment to her mother, the first and most significant bond in her life. A daughter's craving to be impregnated by her father, therefore, also signifies a longing to align herself, physically and psychically, more closely with her mother in an attempt to reconstitute that original connection.⁵⁵ Roché, "whose love was paternal," performed equally as a mother figure and a father-lover to Wood.⁵⁶ His benevolence and tutelage filled a void in Wood's life created in the wake of her highly fraught relationship with her mother.⁵⁷

The fantasies of motherhood pictured by Wood in *Journée* and *Béatrice et ses douzes enfants!* were thus inspired as much by her relationship with her mother as they were by her involvement with Roché. Because of the intensity and formative importance of the pre-oedipal mother-daughter bond, its rupture inevitably results in hostility and hatred on the part of the daughter toward her mother, feelings that may haunt a woman her entire life.⁵⁸ Wood appears to have assumed the phan-

tasmatic role of Mother in these drawings as a means of reconciling the endless pain and disappointment that her rebellious nature caused her own mother. This (over)identification forms the foundation of many mother-daughter relationships, at the heart of which lies “matrophobia,” a phenomenon in which a daughter outwardly protests that she is anything like her mother because inwardly she realizes with chagrin how closely she identifies with her.⁵⁹ Such was the case with Wood: “She [her mother] loved me so much and believed I was a special, talented person who had to be protected. The last thing I wanted was her protection. Yet it was difficult for me to completely defy her for I truly loved her. . . . We both suffered terribly, but perhaps my mother more, for she suffered the anguish only a mother can feel.”⁶⁰ While the love of Duchamp and Roché as well as the anti-bourgeois tenets of Dada enabled Wood to escape the clutches of the overprotective, prudish Carrara Wood, her mother’s legacy unequivocally continued to haunt the form and content of her art and life. The omnipotence of such a feminine influence, however ambivalent, cannot be underestimated for, as Virginia Woolf insisted, a woman artist “thinks back through her mothers” during the process of artistic creation (a process often likened to that of giving birth) even when those mothers may also have been her male lovers.⁶¹

At the conclusion of her fanciful story “The Diary of a Dangerous Child,” instead of surrendering herself to a man and becoming either a mother or a wanton woman, Djuna Barnes decides to “run away and become a boy.”⁶² Appropriating masculinity in the hope of acquiring male privilege was a common tactic of survival and resistance for American and European women artists and writers of Wood’s generation. More often than not, such gender-deviant women have elicited a greater critical response from their male counterparts than their dutifully feminine sisters because they posed a putatively greater threat to patriarchy. This partly explains the fact that the accolade “Mama of Dada” was bequeathed to Beatrice Wood only *after* it was first bestowed upon Gertrude

Stein.⁶³ The deceptively naïve, childish and decoratively feminine style of Wood's oeuvre as well as its blatantly autobiographical content have resulted in its marginalization in the history of Dada, an end that also has befallen the work of many of her female contemporaries. As I have argued, however, it is precisely the fusion of art and life through the combination of aesthetic and autobiographical elements that makes Wood's work distinctively Dada. Her struggle to explore and express her feminine sexual identity in the face of her mother's relentless protestations initiated a personal critique of bourgeois Victorian morality similar to the institutional critique offered by her male dadaist compatriots. In her life's work, Wood consistently laid bare Freud's question "What does a woman want?" by *living* the answer as the Mama, Daughter, and Lover of Dada:

*In a way, my life has been an upside-down experience. I never made love to the men I married, and I did not marry the men I loved. I do not know if that makes me a good girl gone bad, or a bad girl gone good. All I know is that I have loved five men—and that I shock myself. . . . Life certainly is Dada!*⁶⁴

NOTES

I would like to thank David VanGilder, Annie Blais, David Getsy, and Nicolas Jasson for their invaluable advice and assistance in the preparation of this article. I humbly dedicate my essay to Beatrice Wood who, at 100 years old, managed to seduce me with her charm and wit, and who, at 102, graciously read an earlier version of this piece with coy and girlish approval.

1. Lydia Steptoe [Djuna Barnes], "The Diary of a Dangerous Child," *Vanity Fair* 18, no. 4 (July 1922): 56.
2. Sigmund Freud, qtd. in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth, 1955), p. 468.
3. W. B. Seabrook, "Did You Ever See Family Portraits Like These?" *Saint Louis Star*, 24 July 1921, qtd. in Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), p. 213.
4. Beatrice Wood, *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood*, ed. Lindsay Smith (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2d ed., 1988), p. 166.
5. Katherine Dreier, *Western Art and the New Era: An Introduction to Modern Art* (New York: Brentano's, 1923), p. 120. Dreier coined this term to describe American dadaists.
6. Tristan Tzara, "Manifesto of Mr. Antipyrine," "Lecture on Dada" and "Dada Manifesto 1918," trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2d ed., 1989), pp. 75, 25, and 82, respectively.
7. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 3.
8. Of these early years, Wood recently recalled: "Because I was overprotected

and had no little boyfriend, my energies went into drawing” (letter to the author, 21 June 1995).

9. Wood made her acting debut in New York on 11 December 1916 as Eglantine in Jules Moinaux’s *Les Deux Sourds* at the Garrick Theatre. One critic noted that “she speaks French wonderfully well for an American” (“New York Girl Makes Debut at Théâtre Français,” undated newspaper clipping, formerly Beatrice Wood Archive, Ojai, California). Wood’s theatrical experiences assuredly influenced her artistic production. Unfortunately, an analysis of this relationship is beyond the scope of the present essay.

10. Although she lived in France and was involved in the French theater in New York, Wood’s knowledge of the French language was learned phonetically. Thus, the titles of many of her works reveal mistakes in French grammar.

11. Wood, letter to the author, 21 June 1995.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Wood’s drawing appeared in the last issue, *Rogue* 3, no. 3 (December 1916): 4.

14. Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 113.

15. Wood recalls that Reynolds “was a great influence in my life and remained so until she died. . . . [H]er friendship stood by me during my bleakest moments.” See Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 13.

16. Wood, letter to the author, 5 November 1995.

17. Regarding her visits to Duchamp’s studio, Wood remarks: “I would draw 8 to 12 sketches, he would place them on the floor and most of the time remark; ‘Bad, bad, bad.’ But occasionally a ‘Good!’ would drop from his lips. The goods, of

course, were unconscious scrawls that had no meaning for me while he ignored my efforts at designing flowers or beautiful ladies with blond hair” (letter to the author, 21 June 1995).

18. Naumann (*New York Dada*, p. 180) observes that this figure is standing, “emerging from the waters of her bath,” while Wood (*I Shock Myself*, p. 32) describes the piece as a “woman in a bathtub.” This disparity probably results from the fact that the original canvas was destroyed in a flood in Wood’s California home in 1938 and recreated by her in 1977 using colored pencils on cardboard.

19. Duchamp probably encouraged Wood to incorporate an actual cake of soap in her painting based on his own concurrent interest in the sexual connotations of soap bubbles. As one of his early notes indicates, he contemplated employing soap in the construction of his *Large Glass* which itself is a treatise on eroticism and sexuality: “Soapy water + strong tea = in varying doses—brown yellow, light greenish.” In his 1939 book of puns and word games, *Rose Sélavy*, Duchamp wrote “Le meilleur des savons est le savon aux amendes honorables” (The best soap is honorable amends soap). See *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1989), pp. 76, 110. In 1924, Man Ray photographed Duchamp with his head and face covered in shaving soap, an image Duchamp later incorporated into his *Monte Carlo Bond*—a work signed by Rose Sélavy. In this photograph, with his hair sculpted in the shape of horns, Duchamp is Rose Sélavy as a Semitic Jew—Rose Levy—a money-grubbing gambler out to make a fast buck on the roulette wheel.

20. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 32.

21. “Art Novelties Draw Society Fold to Show of the Independents,” *New York American* 10 (April 1917): 7.

22. H[arvey] M. W[atts], “‘Greatest Ever’ In Art Shows: Independent Artists in New York Cover Miles of Walls With Canvases,” *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 10 April 1917, p. 5.

23. Beatrice Wood, "Why I Come to the Independents," *Blind Man*, no. 1 (10 April 1917): 6.

24. T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 130.

As if unable to conceive of such a provocative work outside the domain of male artistic production, one anonymous New York critic ("Duchamp Resigns from 'Independents,'" *American Art News* 25, no. 27 [14 April 1917]: 1) actually misidentified "Jeff Mutt" as the author of *Un peut d'eau dans du savon*, mistaking it for Duchamp's *Fountain*, a mass-produced urinal which he submitted to the Society of Independent Artists under the pseudonym "R. Mutt" and which the jury (of this non-juried show) promptly rejected from the exhibition.

25. Wood was always highly conscious of the power and pleasure of the female nude in Western art. Throughout her oeuvre—from her early drawings to her more recent figurative ceramic work and drawings—she almost always represents the generic female body in the nude and the male body in full dress. Her justification for this difference is highly revealing: "Probably the men in my drawings were clothed was [sic] an unconscious admission that it was the way I usually saw them. I think that the male nude body is beautiful, but in spite of arguments to the contrary, the female nude body is more beautiful. I mean this aesthetically, because on the bed nothing can touch a nude male body unless it be a sweet pussycat!" (Wood, letter to the author, 21 June 1995).

26. See Michael Levey, "Botticelli and Nineteenth-Century England," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 23 (1960): 291.

27. See Jane Davidson Reid, "Aphrodite," *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1990s*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 112, 144.

28. Duchamp and Man Ray attempted to signal a similarly contradictory feminine sexuality in their 1921 film, *The Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Shaves*

Her Pubic Hair, which recorded Man Ray shaving the lathered pubes of the notorious queen of Dada. Botched in processing, only one and a half frames of the film survive, collaged to a letter sent by Man Ray to Tristan Tzara in June 1921 (now in the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris). In her hairlessness and her pose, the Baroness displays a striking similarity to the female body as represented by Duchamp in his upright figure study (1948–1949) for *Etant Donnés* and in the final assemblage itself (1946–1966).

29. Beatrice Wood, “Dream of a Picture Hanger,” *Blind Man*, no. 1 (10 April 1917): 7.

30. See Jacques Caumont and Jennifer Gough-Cooper, “Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy, 1887–1968,” in *Marcel Duchamp: Work and Life*, ed. Pontus Hulten (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993), entry for 4 December 1916; and Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 233, n. 3.

31. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 25.

32. Wood, letter to the author, 28 May 1995.

33. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 19.

34. Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 111.

35. The formal characteristics of Roché’s head in *Dieu Protège Les Amants* bear a remarkable resemblance to those of Duchamp in Jean Crotti’s 1915 wire and lead sculpture *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp (Sculpture Made to Measure)*. First exhibited in 1916 at the Montross Gallery in New York and subsequently displayed at the Independents’ show in April 1917, the piece may have been familiar to Wood. Jean Clair also notes the corporeal likeness between Roché and Duchamp: “Roché, curiously, was rather similar physically to Marcel Duchamp: tall, thin and lean, with a high forehead” (“Préface,” in Henri-Pierre Roché, *Victor* [Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée nationale d’art moderne, 1977], p. 7; author’s translation).

Stylistically, *Dieu Protège Les Amants*, with its curving, criss-crossing, and dotted lines, and watercolor washes, echoes earlier drawings by Duchamp, particularly *Virgin, No. 1* and *Virgin, No. 2*, both of 1912.

36. Wood, telephone conversation with the author, 12 September 1995.
37. Jean-Paul Colin and Jean-Pierre Mével, *Dictionnaire de l'argot* (Paris: Larousse, 1990), p. 485.
38. Wood, letter to the author, 1 February 1996.
39. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Knopf, 1953), p. 249.
40. Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 129.
41. Ellen Key, *Love and Marriage*, trans. Arthur G. Chater (New York: Putnam's, 1911), p. 194.
42. Francis M. Naumann, "The Other Side of Beatrice Wood: Drawings, Tiles and Figurative Ceramic Sculpture," in *Intimate Appeal: The Figurative Art of Beatrice Wood* (Oakland, CA: Oakland Museum, 1990), p. 29.
43. See Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Grossman, 1976), p. 206.

In the same issue of *Rogue* (December 1916) in which *Mariage D'une Amie* appeared, Louis Weitzenkorn published a prose poem titled "Birth Control," describing a working-class woman's desire to use prophylactics after having borne ten children.

44. In an untitled poem printed in the second number of *The Blind Man* ([May 1917]: 13), the American futurist painter Frances Simpson Stevens, with whom Wood was acquainted, focused on the bloody reality of female suicide. As the co-editor of this publication, perhaps it was Wood who selected Stevens's piece for publication.
45. Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, p. 408.
46. Wood's understanding of motherhood and childbirth as Dada is supported by various definitions of the word itself. Hugo Ball, the founder of the *Cabaret Voltaire* and a central figure in Zurich Dada, wrote in his diary on 18 April 1916: "In Romanian, *dada* means 'yes, yes,' [and] in French 'rocking-horse' or 'hobby-horse.' For Germans, it signifies a foolish naïveté, [a] joy in procreation and an attachment to the baby carriage." See Ball, *La fuite hors du temps: Journal 1913–1921*, trans. Sabine Wolf (Monaco: Rocher, 1993), p. 131; author's translation.
47. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 35.
48. Roché, *Victor*, p. 45.
49. Perhaps the child with whom Wood is preoccupied in *Journée*, similarly denoted by a "?", also belongs to Louise Arensberg. Clara Tice, in her 1917 drawing *Who's Who in Manhattan* (*Cartoons* 12 [August 1917]: 178–179), employed the curvaceous, feminine form of the question mark in her depiction of Louise Arensberg. Tice pictured Arensberg in profile, among other notable New York women, sporting a chic hat from which a plume extends in the shape this punctuation mark. I thank Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, who discusses Tice's drawing in her unpublished doctoral dissertation, "Marcel Duchamp's 'silent guard': A critical study of Louise and Walter Arensberg" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1994), for directing me to this source.
50. Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Rights*, p. 120.

51. Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 17.

52. Sigmund Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex [1924]," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols., ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth, 1966–1974), 19:178–179.

While Freud's theories, especially those pertaining to female sexual development, are highly problematic in certain respects, I invoke him herein as a cultural marker and historical palimpsest. Wood, along with her New York contemporaries, avidly read Freud's writings during the late 1910s and took his theories regarding sexuality quite seriously. On 31 January 1917, Wood wrote in her diary that she "read dreams" at the Arensberg's salon and later added to this entry: "When they heard one dream, they wanted more. It was at a time Freud was top discussion. Walter [Arensberg] in his fine library had all of Freud's [*sic*] books. I read through them, and after other authors too" (Wood, qtd. in Molly Nesbit and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, "Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg," in *The Duchamp Effect*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon [Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996], p. 170.)

53. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, pp. 20, 64.

54. Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," p. 179.

55. Freud, "Femininity," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 22:133–134.

56. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 143.

57. Such an emotional substitution is not unusual. Adrienne Rich notes that a woman who has felt unmothered "may seek mothers all her life—may even seek them in men." See Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1986), p. 242.

58. Freud, "Femininity," pp. 121, 134.
59. Rich, *Of Woman Born*, pp. 235–236.
60. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, p. 33.
61. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1957), p. 101.
62. Steptoe [Djuna Barnes], "The Diary of a Dangerous Child," p. 94.
63. Samuel Sillen begins his review of Stein's *Everybody's Autobiography* by proclaiming, "The mama of dada is going gaga." See Sillen, "Obituary of Europe And Gertrude Stein," *New Masses* 25, no. 11 (7 December 1937): 22–23.
64. Wood, *I Shock Myself*, pp. 170 and 165, respectively.

 *feminine /*

MASCULINE

performativities

"WOMEN" IN DADA: ELSA, RROSE, AND CHARLIE

amelia JONES



In his 1918 Dada manifesto, Tristan Tzara stated the sources of "Dadaist Disgust": "Morality is an injection of chocolate into the veins of all men. . . . I proclaim the opposition of all cosmic faculties to [sentimentality,] this gonorrhoea of a putrid sun issued from the factories of philosophical thought. . . . Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is Dada."¹ The dadaists were antagonistic toward what they perceived as the loss of European cultural vitality (through the "putrid sun" of sentimentality in prewar art and thought) and the hypocritical bourgeois morality and family values that had supported the nationalism culminating in World War I.² Conversely, in Hugo Ball's words, Dada "drives toward the in-dwelling, all-connecting life nerve," reconnecting art with the class and national conflicts informing life in the world.³ Dada thus performed itself as radically challenging the apoliticism of European modernism as well as the debased, sentimentalized culture of the bourgeoisie through the destruction of the boundaries separating the aesthetic from life itself. But Dada has paradoxically been historicized and institutionalized as "art," even while it has also been privileged for its attempt to explode the nineteenth-century romanticism of Charles Baudelaire's "art for art's sake."⁴

Moving against the grain of most art historical accounts of Dada, which tend to focus on and fetishize the objects produced by those associated with Dada,⁵ I explore here what I call the *performativity* of Dada: its

opening up of artistic production to the vicissitudes of reception such that the process of making meaning is itself marked as a political—and, specifically, gendered—act. I suggest that it was in New York that Dada, before it knew itself as such, challenged bourgeois morality in the most aggressive way through the opening of art to the erotic exchange of interpretation, in particular via the *sexualization* or *eroticization* of the subjects and objects of art. Per Marcel Duchamp's well-known pun, "eros, that's life,"⁶ the New York dadaists—in particular Duchamp himself—eroticized "everyday life"; they charged the art-making and viewing processes with an eroticism that necessarily exposed the invested and thus politicized aspects of meaning and value production, including those relating to the determination of artistic subjectivity itself.⁷ This erotic politicization, enacted most powerfully through dramatic self-performances, worked in explosive antagonism to the veiled bourgeois moralism, utopian formalism, and romantic sentimentalism that (as Tzara noted) had reigned previously in the European art world.

The New York Dada artists who enacted the sexualization of "everyday life" through performances of themselves signaled the dislocation of the subject during a period of devastating international war. Furthermore, these enactments marked the incursion not only of war but commodity culture into bourgeois life in the Western world at the beginning of the twentieth century. They sexualized and particularized the subject of the artist, performing themselves into the forbidden realms of "sentimental" femininity, feminized masculinity, and queer sexuality. The most radical Dada act, I argue through these performative self-enactments, is the queering and/or feminizing of the conventionally masculinized, heterosexualized, and generally veiled figure of the artist.

In particular, I interpret here the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's bizarre, sexually ambiguous self-performances in the streets of New York and Duchamp's masquerade as a woman, "Rose Sélavy," in the well-known series of photographs by Man Ray⁸ as dramatic

performances of Dada. Charles Demuth's images of non-heterosexualized male desire mark another point of resistance to the more conventional, institutionalized notion of Dada (via its objects) as a critique of bourgeois institutions.⁹ As such, I argue that these artists' confusion of gender and overt sexualizations of the artist/viewer relationship challenged post-Enlightenment subjectivity and aesthetics far more pointedly than did dadaist paintings and drawings, which only partially addressed the divisions that privileged art as separate from life in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century romantic imagination.

Woman/machine

*Having recently arrived in the U.S., going AWOL from his French Army assignment, Picabia reconnected with like-minded Marius de Zayas, a Mexican-American caricature artist, poet, and impresario whom Picabia had met in Paris. De Zayas's Modern Gallery opened with a show of works by Picasso, Braque, Stieglitz, as well as a group of paintings and mechanical drawings by Picabia. One of these, *Viola Elle*, was also reproduced alongside de Zayas's own mechanical negotiation of the feminine, *Femme!*, in the avant-garde journal 291.¹⁰*

Francis Picabia, *Viola Elle*, 1915 (see figure 9.2)

Here she is, an incomplete tubular machine: "she" is simply the HOLE of the target, whose reaction to the shot wad of fire from the gun initiates her own continual penetration.

Marius de Zayas, *Femme!*, 1915 (see figure 9.1)

A Woman! comprising a man's anxious desires. Her sassy arm proclaims its debt to its male author—"I see . . . how she loves to be a straight line traced by a mechanical hand"; she is, naturally, "harebrained" (her "cerebral atrophy" a function of her brute physicality), and her dadaism is articulated through male desire: she "exists only in the exaggeration of

her jouissances [orgasmic pleasures] and in the consciousness of possession. . . . I see her only in pleasure."¹¹

Woman/machine: for the Euro-Mexican avant-garde imagination, the signifier of Americanized industrialization and commodity culture, with its terrifying (emasculating?) mechanization of sex.

The eroticizing thrust of New York Dada arose in relation to a number of interrelated forces. In New York, Dada was largely a French importation, inspired primarily by the enigmatic erotic/aesthetic energies of Duchamp and the bluntly sexual mechanomorphic imagery of the French/Spanish/Cuban expatriate Picabia. Along with the French artist Jean Crotti, and Arthur Cravan, an English pugilist/writer/magazine impresario (and supposed nephew of Oscar Wilde), these artists left an increasingly barren Parisian art scene and a Europe torn asunder by war to come to the "New World." All of these relatively flamboyant artists were exoticized/eroticized in the eyes of the more puritanical and conservative members of the American art scene. Escaping World War I, the male immigrant artists generally saw New York City as a site of renewal for their artistic (or, as the case may be, anti-artistic) impulses: "If only America would realize," Duchamp opined, "that the art of Europe is finished—dead, and that America is the country of the art of the future."¹²

Europe was perceived as a wasteland, both in terms of its literal devastation and in terms of the very attitudes of nationalism that had led to war—attitudes that many artists perceived in terms of an anti-individualism damaging to artistic creation. In Europe, stated French émigré painter Albert Gleizes in 1915, the "individual is being crushed, or welded into a vast instrument to be swayed by the despots who control all destiny there today."¹³ The United States, conversely, was at least initially fantasized as the fresh, newly acculturated land of individualism, where the creative impulses of the artist would presumably be nurtured

or left alone rather than stifled, compared to the sentimentalized, feminized, and bourgeoisified cultural scene in Europe.¹⁴

Gleizes's observations mask a more specific set of concerns: clearly, World War I traumatized European masculinity in particular (a masculinity already weakened by the mushrooming bureaucracy of the increasingly alienating capitalist regime). As Klaus Theweleit has suggested in *Male Fantasies*, his brilliant study of fascist masculinity, the very nationalism endemic to the war and its aftermath (including the rise of fascism in Germany) was itself a masculinizing reaction against the perceived "feminization" of culture by the commodification of everyday life. Masculinity during this period took its armored, militaristic shape in opposition to the threatening flows of capitalism, themselves metaphorized through the bodies of Jews, women, and communists.¹⁵

As I have argued at length elsewhere in relation to Rose Sélavy, during this period commodity culture itself became associated with femininity. Women were the primary consumers in an expanding market economy during World War I. Female bodies became the purveyors of commercial value in increasingly ubiquitous print advertisements, such that broad anxieties about the collapse of individualism and the corresponding threat to masculinity were often articulated by male artists and by popular culture in relation to the gender-ambiguous figure of the "New Woman" or *garçonne* (girl/boy).¹⁶ The dangerous, even masculinized eroticism of the New Woman marked the collapse of the boundaries between male and female—and those separating the "separate spheres" that had kept "proper" women out of the public arena in nineteenth-century Europe.¹⁷

In the case of New York Dada, artists such as Picabia and Man Ray articulated their antagonism toward bourgeois culture largely in terms of mechanical tropes that encoded the anxieties of this threatened masculinity in relation to American industrial capitalism. This encoding had a

particular resonance in terms of gender: while critics could claim a masculinizing function for the shift of culture from a decadent, depleted Europe to the “virile” site of American culture (one critic remarked that “This shifting of field from Europe to America implies a ceaseless alertness which proves art virile and assertive”¹⁸), Picabia and Man Ray articulated the forms of the Americanized machine as explicitly *feminine*.¹⁹ The feminized machine imagery of these two artists might be interpreted, per Theweleit’s formulation, in relation to the masculinist desire to *contain* the threatening flow of femininity and the de-individualizing tendency of machine-driven commodity culture (even within a culture that was supposed to nurture masculine individualism).²⁰

The New Woman bore the attributes of both women (she was, after all, anatomically female) and men (she was threateningly independent, sexually in charge, even—perhaps—a lesbian, and so doubly dangerous to the heterosexual masculine matrix of sexual difference). The Americanized New Woman, mapped onto the feminized machine image, figured the threat of industrial capitalism and the bourgeoisification of culture to Western masculinity.²¹ It is only with Duchamp that the machine enacts a two-way, bi-gendered flow, mapping gender as *an effect of* social processes rather than their predeterminate foundation.

Phallic Woman

*Man Ray (1890–1976), American-born son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants, finally finding a niche for himself as avant-garde artist (moving from New Jersey, where he had consorted with a motley group of anarchists and artists, to New York), immediately becomes attached to the glamorous Europeans Duchamp and Picabia. Like them he’s supported somewhat by Alfred Stieglitz and staunchly by Katherine Dreier: two older Americans of German background and temperament who take pleasure in the shenanigans of these young male proto-dadaists.*²²

Man Ray, *Catherine Barometer*, 1920 (figure 6.1)

An almost-woman-sized construction consisting of a metal tube attached to a color chart on top of a washboard, nestled on a base of steel wool and labeled "SHAKE WELL BEFORE USING, Catherine Barometer." The rod promises to measure the wetness of the air (dryer today?) against the range of colors, associated more closely with aesthetic than meteorological pursuits. The older woman patron, an artist as well and certainly a "New Woman" of sorts, is reduced to signifiers of domestic labor, steel wool standing in for her pubic region, which inappropriately—and terrifyingly—sprouts an industrial-strength metal phallus. As phallic woman, this barometric measure of Catherine (deliberately misspelled?) measures also the artist's anxiety about being a "kept Man [Ray]," dependent on his wealthy and somewhat imperious (if also, Man Ray would suggest, somewhat aesthetically clueless) backer.²³

Performative Gender/Machinic Subjectivity

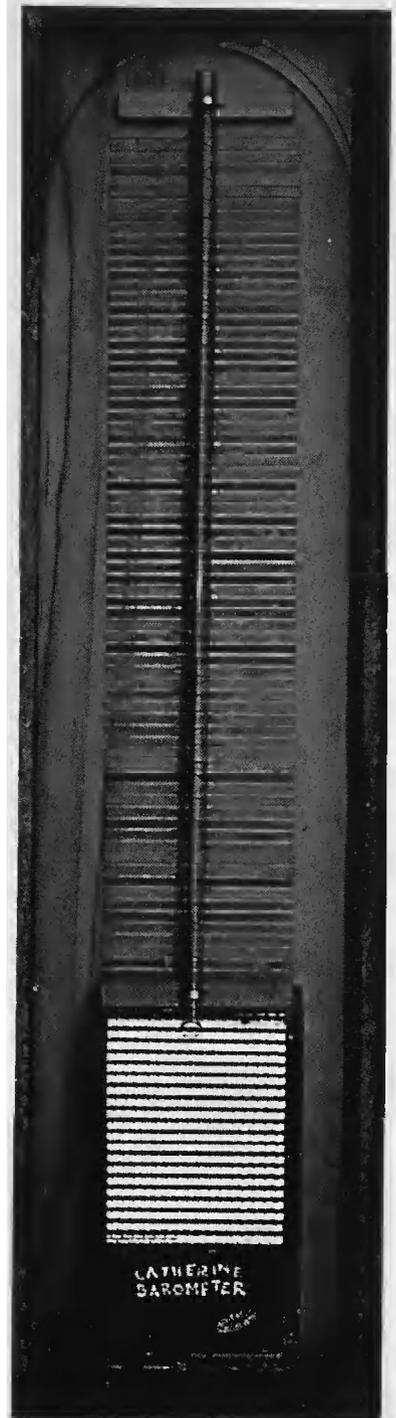
*Duchamp (1887–1968), the sexy (to U.S. eyes), slender, Frenchified avant-gardist was famous via his *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912; shown at the Armory Show in 1913) before he ever hit these shores in 1915.²⁴ Seemingly beloved by all, he produced effect both through his work and, at least as important, through his presence in New York (intermittently from 1915 to his death in 1968): "The life of Duchamp more than that of any other artist makes up part of his oeuvre."²⁵ Duchamp's subjectivity is gendered but performative, dislocated, yet still fully authorial; it is moving toward the loosened, decentralized machinic subjectivity ("processual and singularizing") of the postmedia, postmodern age.²⁶*

Marcel Duchamp, *Large Glass (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even)*, 1915–1923 (figure 6.2)

Huge mechanized "portrait" of the impossibility of consummation, the breakdown of conventional hierarchized gender relations and hetero-

6.1

Man Ray, *Catherine Barometer*, 1920,
washboard, tube, and color chart.
Private collection. © 1998 Man Ray
Trust/Artists Rights Society, New
York/ADAGP, Paris.





6.2
 Marcel Duchamp, *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (le Grand Verre)* (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even [Large Glass]),

1915–1923, mixed media on glass. Philadelphia Museum of Art, bequest of Katherine S. Dreier. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris/Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

sexual erotic exchange. The Bride, puffed up, waiting, exhaling her wistful, milky cloud above the strict horizon line dividing her definitively from the bachelors (this line is also the clothes stripped off in the haste to consummate). Aided by the chugging wheel of the gliding water mill/chariot, and the flaccid mechanics of the coffee grinder, the bachelors stand, sadly, in “uniforms and liveries” (hackneyed ex-soldiers hoping to cop a feel or a look), spewing impotent and “illuminating” love gas through the sieves. The gas dazzles downward into liquid (“splash!”) then upward through the oculist witnesses, who look on, oculae providing a transfer point for the now intertwined subject/object relations of the Mariée and the Célibataires (the two sides of the self as well as of the self/other dyad).

Through its performative, proto-machinic enactment of gendered subjectivities, Duchamp's *Large Glass* explores rather than represses the ambivalence that structures the engagements and clanking “flows” of industrial/erotic energies, an ambivalence that threatens always to rupture their clear path to “production” (which utopically seeks to replace the mess of procreation).²⁷ While Duchamp thus maps without congealing capitalism's dangerous freeing of libidinal flows and gender boundaries, Man Ray and Picabia rather faithfully trace and reify the anxious lines of a projected female body/machine-as-container-of-the-uncontrollable-flows-of-commodity-culture: the iron-bodied “Catherine” with her impotent phallus defuses the “feminization” of culture during the Victorian era and subsequent periods²⁸; Picabia's mechanical “girl born without a mother” images both replace women's role in procreation with a model of god-like creation and ensure that the “girl” will be around for the whims of the remaining world of men.²⁹

Woman/Commodity

Man Ray's dadaist objects are violently ambivalent on a conceptual/

ideological level (if also aesthetically rather clumsy); tellingly, they conflate gender politics and the complex politics of commodity culture.

Man Ray, *New York or Export Commodity*, 1920

Metal ball bearings in glass olive jar. Domestic container filled with hard, ungiving metal spheres (paradoxically, these little turgid balls grease the machinery, making it flow; here, they clog the orifice of the phallic jar). Stuffed jar/olives, pistons thrusting in and out—New York itself as a commodity (feminized) to be exported as so much cultural “stuff” to reinvigorate the European spirit.

Man Ray, *Homme (also known as Femme)* 1918

Open, penetrable cage of thin metal whose purpose—beating eggs (chicken ova, unfertilized)—is domestic. Yet, hanging downward from its gears and handle, it is sac-like (doubled: two sacs) and vaguely phallic. Man Ray couldn't decide on its “gender.”

How radical are these objects and pictures that pretend to destroy the aesthetic and its bourgeois pretensions?—to join art irrevocably to life itself? Displayed and honored as objects of visual and contemplative pleasures (connoisseur's delights) the objects inform New York Dada, a “movement” constructed more or less retrospectively by European dadaists and their followers (including museum personnel and art historians)—a movement that itself becomes a greased wheel in the machine of art history and its institutions. Perhaps the best lesson, taught by the *maître* Duchamp, is that in fact there is no way out of the circuits of desire that commodity culture puts into play. The modernist subject is irrevocably destabilized by the very mechanics of capitalism that were engineered precisely to support and sustain its Cartesian dream of centered intentionality. In view of this state of affairs, Duchamp apparently decided to celebrate the very “feminization” of subjectivity—its opening to gen-

dered and sexualized flows—that patriarchy fears as a consequence of the commodification of everyday life.

Duchamp, in fact, served as a desired object for many of the artists now termed New York dadaists. In the United States, as a seemingly sophisticated French artist with his finger on the pulse of the Parisian avant-garde, Duchamp—in his own quiet way—triumphed. Both as an object of artistic/spectatorial/art historical desire and as a performer of (from an American point of view) an unconventional “masculinity,” Duchamp challenged the structures of the art world so profoundly that, by the early 1960s and beyond, he was taken increasingly frequently as the heroic (if coy and not typically masculine) “origin” of postmodern art in the United States.³⁰

Through his very life-as-art and art-as-life, Duchamp demonstrated art-making and art interpretation to be components in a circuit of erotically invested desires, with meaning itself contingent on the sexually inflected exchange between the subjects and objects of art. While it was Freud who remarked that the struggle for meaning between subjects/objects is necessarily an “erotic” exchange (“we [know] none but sexual objects”³¹), it was Duchamp who extrapolated this in terms of the process by which art comes to have meaning. As he stated in his well-known speech of 1957, “The Creative Act”: “[T]he phenomenon which prompts the spectator to react critically to the work of art . . . is comparable to a transference from the artist to the spectator in the form of an esthetic osmosis.”³²

Man/Woman/“Eros”

Duchamp portrays himself in a complex array of gendered and obliquely eroticized subjectivities, the most famous of which is fixed in the group of photographs taken by Man Ray, soon thereafter to join the discursive field Duchamp labeled “Rose Sélavy.”

Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray, *Rose Sélavy* (see figure 7.2) and cover of *New York Dada* (c. 1920–1921) (figure 6.3)

Duchamp's performance as a bourgeois female (New Woman? garçonnette?), object of male/female desires, flamboyantly transgresses masculine fears of the incursion of femininity. Pictured on the (imaginary) commercial product, "Belle Haleine" (beautiful breath) perfume and, in turn, on the premiere issue of New York Dada, she gives value (through her celebrity appeal) to both "products." She is also multiply fetishized: photographic image as fetish; woman-as-image as fetish; woman-as-commodity as fetish; perfume and magazine as commodity fetishes; Duchamp/author as fetish; New York Dada as art historical fetish. An endless exchange of values of the most mutable kind.³³ The art-making/viewing system is itself marked as an economically and erotically based system of exchange. We are made subjects of, drawn into, Duchamp's engendering play of himself as subject and object of art.³⁴

Along with Rose, Elsa (the Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, 1874–1927)—a quintessential New Woman who was fiercely independent of her bourgeois German family, and masculine in her lack of “feminine” shame and her writerly and performative self-confidence—unhinged the European masculinity that sought to confirm itself elsewhere.³⁵ Having moved to the United States just before the war, trailing after her lost love (ex-husband Felix Greve), settling in New York around 1913, Elsa (*née* Ploetz) married the Baron Leopold von Freytag-Loringhoven, who gave her not much more than her impressive name (captured by the French while attempting to return to Germany to fight in the war, he killed himself in prison camp). All-too-fully financially independent (a true Germanic *garçonnette* and extremely poverty-stricken), the Baroness began to make a meager living through the *pose*—as an artist's model—and through shoplifting.



6.3

Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, *Belle Haleine-Eau de Voilette*, c. 1920–1921, gelatin silver print, 22.3 × 17.8 cm. Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California, 85.XM.386.3. © 1997 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

The Baroness, a maverick writer with a wicked crush on Duchamp, performed herself in dramatically unglued personifications: she moved throughout the city with shaved and painted scalp, wearing headdresses made of bird cages and wastepaper baskets, celluloid curtain rings as bracelets, assorted tea balls attached to her bust, spoons on her hat, a taillight for a bustle.³⁶ The Baroness's fixation on Duchamp ("*Marcel is the man I want*"³⁷) marks her perception of their compatibility as artistic transgressors: both *performed* Dada in the deepest way. Rather than represent Dada concepts—such as the eroticized woman-as-machine of Man Ray's and Picabia's numerous works—the Baroness lived them, and it is thus not incidental that in 1922 she was identified as the embodiment of Dada itself: "the first American dada . . . she is the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada."³⁸

Given the Baroness's perhaps too total identification with the anti-aesthetic, boundary-breaking nonsense of Dada, it is perhaps grotesquely fitting that, while Picabia, Man Ray, Jean Crotti, and others went on to more or less successful careers making objects (with Duchamp reserving himself for posterity³⁹), the Baroness self-destructed, dying at the early age of fifty-three after returning to Europe in the 1920s and living in abject poverty for several years. Performing herself across boundaries—as peniless woman-for-sale, New Woman-artist, mannish lover-of-Duchamp, outlandishly androgynous streetwalker, a proud feminist dependent on male support⁴⁰—she became increasingly unbounded and ultimately "disappeared," a victim of, in her words, "my true honest love nature—and my unfitness to deal with the world—*unprotected*."⁴¹

Too Strictly "Sex"

An artist and writer too, the Baroness took the ultimate risk of riding the almost invisible line between subject and object, woman as artist and woman as object (body as commodity). "I was too strictly 'sex'" the Baroness wrote in her stunning (if schizophrenic) autobiography.⁴² The line

finally disappeared when she returned to Europe and died, probably from insanity- or depression-induced suicide.

Man Ray, *Baroness*, 1920 (figure 6.4)

She is mannish, hatted, grim expression looking off as if to say, "What do I owe you now?" Her feminine brooch fights with the masculine hat and houndstooth jacket—who's to say which will win out, if either?

Letter from Man Ray to Tristan Tzara showing a photograph of the Baroness, 1922

The anatomically female body bared shamelessly, crotch shaved, arms defiantly splayed for maximal viewing effect, legs strongly planted and firm. Here, she's Man's letter "A" of "l'Amérique," the garçonne who seems American (because of her scary independence?) even though she's not. The Baroness's body (her performed self) signifies American-ness/Dada/the stripping bare of the bride of capitalism.

Baroness, *God*, c. 1917 (in a photograph by Morton Schamberg)
(figure 3.3)⁴³

The penis/phallus, ultimate signifier for the transcendent ruler of all, is contorted into a pretzel of plumbing (the site, after all, through which passes the detritus of the basest of human functions). Brilliantly turning the tables on the woman-as-machine trope, the piece insists on the link between industrialism and masculinity (yet there's that sensuous, feminine curve to these pipes . . .).⁴⁴

As Francis Naumann has discovered, the Baroness made a plaster cast of a penis that she used to shock all the "old maids" she met.⁴⁵ One could argue that this fake penis signaled the Baroness's adoption of phallic attributes (as New Woman), but also that it exposed the penis as phallus, as a *transportable* rather than a fixed, biologically determined

**6.4**

Man Ray, *Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, 1920, photograph. Papers of Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries. © 1997 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

guarantor of phallic privilege.⁴⁶ It was for this transgression as well, perhaps, that the Baroness, who violently transgressed conventional notions of Euro-American femininity, had to disappear: for, even within Dada itself, such a blatant, parodic symbolization of the continuing (if threatened) privilege of the male artist could not be allowed. It was imperative that the New Woman, per Picabia or Man Ray, be contained within the anxiety-reducing mechanomorphic forms of the machine image, not parading freely through the streets wielding a phallus clearly detached from its conventional role as guarantor of male privilege.

The Baroness's performative (rather than biological) penis/phallus, along with Duchamp's erotically invested *garçonne*-esque *Rrose* (eros, in the feminine, as commodity) were, I am suggesting, the ultimate weapons against the bourgeois norms that Dada in general thought of itself as radically antagonizing. This is so even though (or perhaps precisely because) these performances surface and exaggerate the commodified, feminized subject rather than repress the de-masculinizing effects of modern life on the conventional, iron-clad figure of the artist (itself an exaggerated version of the mythical, Cartesian, modernist subject).

There were, however, other penises that were equally disturbing to the anxious masculinity seeking to assert its borders during this period, confirming that this masculinity took its shape not only through its othering of femininity but also through its opposition to the homosexual. Penises not erected in the direction of heterosexual penetration deeply challenged the assumptions embedded in conceptions of artistic creation.

Charles Demuth (1883–1935) dressed the part of a dandy-aesthete and admired Oscar Wilde and des Esseintes, the aesthetically saturated and hedonistic hero of Joris-Karl Huysmans's *A rebours*; at the same time, frequenting nightclubs with the always congenial party-goer Duchamp, Demuth was deeply connected to the dadaists and other avant-gardists practicing in New York in the teens and twenties. Providing a link between

the nineteenth-century decadents and the erotically inclined, but generally heterosexist and often patriarchal New York dadaists, Demuth played out his sexual desires in tender, erotic watercolors, which have been largely (and strategically) erased from historical accounts of New York Dada.⁴⁷

Queer Subjectivities

Two “misfits” linked in perversion: Elsa, a slightly crazed German immigrant, flaunting her ambiguous yet voracious sexuality and her anomalous subjectivity (as woman-model-artist/writer); and Charlie, a homosexual man forced by art history into the heterosexualizing/heterosexist male model of the modernist artist, presenting objects that inscribe sexualities profoundly disruptive to the structures of art production and reception that were left undisturbed by the women/machines of Picabia and Man Ray.

Charles Demuth, *Turkish Bath*, c. 1915 (figure 6.5)

A narrative, illustrative version of forbidden contortions of the heterosexual matrix of “proper” sexual difference. The image (with its febrile line and puckered paper patches of scrumptious flesh) is gloriously steeped in male-to-male desires. Playing on the long tradition (à la Ingres) of the exotic female/Other presented in titillating, lesbianized contexts for heterosexual, European, male viewing pleasure, Charlie—like Elsa, like Rose—turns the bourgeois morality that continues to plague much of Dada ass-backward.

Finally, then, the merging of art and life is at least momentarily achieved—through a polymorphous eroticization that has been remarked upon but largely downplayed in art historical accounts of the period.



6.5

Charles Demuth, *Turkish Bath*, c. 1915,
watercolor and pencil on paper, 8 × 10
1/2 in. Private collection; photograph
courtesy Owen Gallery, New York.

There are at least two interesting lessons to be learned from an investigation of the sexualized explorations of the “women” of New York Dada: first, that art history resists accommodating the most extreme (and, notably, least commodifiable) examples of the avant-garde into its normalizing narratives; second, artists who *performed* rather than *illustrated* the sexualization (feminization/homosexualization) of modern subjectivity in capitalism pose more intense challenges. Taking the examples provided by the mutability of Elsa, with her transportable penis/phallus, Marcel/Rose’s “femininity,” and Charlie’s homoerotic opening of the male body to male desire, we might begin to rethink how these most extreme sexualizations of the artistic subject have permeated contemporary artistic practice—and what this influence means in terms of the historical linkages between the global disruptions and explosive incursions of capitalism during the teens and twenties and those of the 1960s and beyond.

NOTES

This is a revised version of “Eros, That’s Life, or The Baroness’ Penis” from the exhibition catalogue *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), reprinted here with permission. I am grateful to Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for her generous research assistance on this project.

1. Tristan Tzara, “Dada Manifesto 1918”; rpt. in *Art in Theory 1900–1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, ed. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford and Cambridge, U.K.: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 252–253.

2. These sentiments were particularly strong among the German dadaists. As German dadaist Richard Huelsenbeck argued, the war revealed German Expressionism to be a “large-scale swindle” mobilized on the part of Germany to legitimate its nationalist war-mongering policies leading up to the war: “art (including culture, spirit, athletic club) . . . is a large-scale swindle. And this . . . most especially in Germany, where the most absurd idolatry of all sorts of divinities is beaten into the child in order that the grown man and taxpayer should automatically fall on his knees when, in the interest of the state or some smaller gang of thieves, he receives the order to worship some ‘great spirit.’ I maintain again and again: the whole spirit business is a vulgar utilitarian swindle. In this war the Germans . . . strove to justify themselves at home and abroad with Goethe and Schiller. Culture can be designated solemnly and with complete naivety as the national spirit become [*sic*] form, but also it can be characterized as a compensatory phenomenon, an obeisance to an invisible judge, as veronal for the conscience.” Huelsenbeck, “En Avant Dada: A History of Dadaism [1920],” trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2d ed., 1989), p. 43.

3. Hugo Ball, “Dada Fragments [1916–1917],” trans. Eugene Jolas, in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 54.

4. This has been substantiated by its subsequent institutionalization in text-

books and museums, beginning with Alfred Barr's 1936 exhibition, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and including Motherwell's excellent anthology cited above (n. 2), which first appeared in 1951. More recent contributions include Francis M. Naumann's comprehensive *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), and the 1996 exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York*.

5. The exception to this focus on the *objects* produced by Dada is in performance studies or history of performance art, where Dada is now conventionally discussed as one of the origins of performance art. See, for example, RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (New York: Abrams, rev. ed., 1988); *Dada Performance*, ed. Mel Gordon (New York: PAJ, 1987); and Annabelle Henkin Melzer, *Dada and Surrealist Performance* (Baltimore, MD, and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994). The latter two sources focus exclusively on European Dada. It is important to note that these histories are marginalized by mainstream histories of art in general because performance is not generally considered in surveys of modern art. I am interested in a broader notion of *performativity* that goes beyond the official, theatrical performances of Dada.

6. From the self-adopted feminine name, Rose Sélavy. I discuss Rose Sélavy at length in my book *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See especially chapter 5, "The Ambivalence of Rose Sélavy and the (Male) Artist as 'Only the Mother of the Work.'"

7. This emphasis on the investments of interpretation radically challenges the traditional, loosely Kantian, connoisseurial basis of art historical value judgments. In Kantian terms, interpreters of aesthetic value must remain disinterested in relation to their objects. I expand on this activation of spectatorial desire in relation to body art in my book, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming). Much of this argument, including that relating to the complex dynamic of masculinization of the modernist artist, is taken from this book.

8. While Francis Naumann argues that these photographs of Duchamp should *not* be labeled “Rose Sélavy,” since, strictly speaking, they were completed before Duchamp adopted this particularly modified version of “Rose,” I feel it ultimately makes more sense to label them as such since “Rose” replaced “Rose” in Duchamp’s conceptualization of this figure as early as 1921. See Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 228, n. 59. All of Duchamp’s subsequent articulations of Rose Sélavy after this point (in writings and other pieces) thus recontextualize the photographs. Furthermore, at least one of the best known versions of the photographs was given to Samuel S. White in 1924 and signed by Duchamp, “lovingly Rose Sélavy, alias Marcel Duchamp” (this photograph is now in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art).

9. While Demuth is tangential to New York Dada as it is generally defined, his works, especially his non-homoerotic pieces, have been discussed in accounts of Dada’s history; see, for example, Naumann, *New York Dada*. It is thus notable that these particular images have not found a place in histories of New York Dada. Another person who would figure interestingly in such a discussion is Arthur Cravan, whose hyper-masculinity (as a boxer) inflected his compulsive self-display in gender-specific ways. On Cravan, see Roger Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus’: Arthur Cravan Undressed,” in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), pp. 102–119.

10. 291, no. 9 (November 1915): 2–3.

11. *Ibid.*: 2 (author’s translation).

12. Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in “The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man Surveys Us,” *New York Tribune*, 12 September 1915, sec. 4, p. 2. Or, as Picabia put it, “The war has killed the art of the Continent utterly” (qtd. in “French Artists Spur on an American Art,” *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, sec. 4, pp. 2–3; rpt. in *New York Dada*, p. 131).

13. Albert Gleizes, qtd. in “French Artists Spur on an American Art,” in *New*

York Dada, p. 130. Gleizes, who was far more conservative aesthetically than either Duchamp or Picabia, had come to the United States during the war.

14. The limitations of such a dream were made manifest in American culture after World War II, when the discourse of individualism was mobilized to aggrandize white, male artists in the service of state interests. See Max Kozloff, "American Painting During the Cold War," and Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," in *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, ed. Francis Frascina (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 107–123, and 125–133, respectively; and Andrew Perchuk, "Pollock and Postwar Masculinity," in *The Masculine Masquerade: Masculinity and Representation* (Cambridge, MA: MIT List Visual Arts Center, 1995), pp. 31–42.

15. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols., trans. Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 and 1989).

16. See my chapter "Rose Sélavy in Context: The New Woman, The Advertisement, and the Photographed Woman as Fetishized Commodity," in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, pp. 160–173.

17. Prostitutes were the only women who roamed the streets unescorted or purveyed their own "business" activities outside the home.

18. Words of the anonymous author of "French Artists Spur on an American Art," in *New York Dada*, p. 129. Paradoxically, the European artist-immigrants to New York touted the United States—which was beginning to emerge as the world center of industrial capitalism—as more nurturing of a masculinized individualism. Thus, Picabia perspicaciously observed that American culture epitomized the next stage of industrialism, far beyond the lingering archaisms of European culture. In Picabia's words, American culture inspired him to see that "the genius of the modern world is machinery. . . . It is really a part of human life—perhaps the very soul" (*ibid.*, p. 131).

19. This point and much of the following section is indebted to Caroline Jones's excellent article, "The Sex of the Machine: Mechanized Bodies in Early Modernism," unpub. ms., 1995. For different, less critical views of dadaist machine imagery, see Willard Bohn, "Picabia's 'Mechanical Expression' and the Demise of the Object," *Art Bulletin* 92, no. 4 (December 1985): 673–677; and John I. H. Baur, "The Machine and the Subconscious: Dada in America," *Magazine of Art* 44, no. 6 (October 1951): 233–237.

20. I do not by any means wish to imply that Picabia and Man Ray were fascists. Rather, per Theweleit, I want to point out the broad applicability of this model of anxiety vis-à-vis feminine flow to Western bourgeois masculinity during World War I and the period immediately following. The case is further complicated in that Man Ray was an American; however, he yearned from the early teens onward to fit into the European avant-garde (as introduced to him through Stieglitz's efforts and through art classes). Also, it is clear that masculinity held a similarly anxious place in American culture, although the Europeans may not have viewed it that way.

21. This threat is made clear by a French journalist's account from 1925: "The innocent young thing . . . of yesterday . . . has given way to the *garçonne* of today. . . . Add to this sports, movies, dancing, cars, the unhealthy need to be always on the move—this entire Americanization of old Europe, and you will have the secret to the complete upheaval of people and things." See M. Numa Sadoul, writing in *Progrès Civique*, 13 June 1925, p. 840, qtd. in Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," pp. 21–22.

Duchamp put a more positive spin on this dynamic, commenting in a 1915 interview that "The American woman is the most intelligent woman in the world today—the only one that always knows what she wants, and therefore always gets it" ("The Nude-Descending-a-Staircase Man").

22. On Man Ray, see Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988); Neil Baldwin, *Man Ray: American Artist* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1988); and *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art,

1988). On Katherine Dreier's relationship to New York Dada, see Ruth L. Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 9 (May 1977): 97-101.

23. For this reading of *Catherine Barometer* I am indebted to Caroline Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," pp. 18-20. See also Nancy Ring's study of Dreier's role as a patron in her "New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913-1921" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1991).

24. As one writer put it, "two years before his arrival in New York, America discovered Marcel Duchamp. When he came, at last in 1915, a pre-fabricated fame awaited him" (Robert Allerton Parker, "America Discovers Marcel," *View* 5, no. 1 [March 1945]: 32).

25. Pontus Hulten, "Preface," in Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, *Plan pour écrire une vie de Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, 1977), p. 9 (author's translation).

26. Félix Guattari, "Regimes, Pathways, Subjects," trans. Brian Massumi, in *Incorporations*, ed. Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (New York: Zone, 1992), pp. 29, 36. From this point of view, it is certainly no accident that in his signature novel of cyber-punk fiction, *Neuromancer*, William Gibson includes a description of the 'Net "cowboy" Case's encounter (through the eyes of a woman he is "riding" via "simstim") with Duchamp's *Large Glass*. It is also no accident that this encounter involves a woman seeing as a man (a man who sees through a woman's eyes, limited in what he can see through her physical movements): Case "stared, through Molly's incurious eyes, at a shattered, dust-stenciled sheet of glass, a thing labeled . . . 'La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même.' She'd reached out and touch this, her artificial nails clicking against the Lexan sandwich protecting the broken glass" (*Neuromancer* [New York: Ace, 1984], p. 207). At the same time, the *Large Glass* is clearly an object of some nostalgia for Gibson, who places it within the laby-

rinthine, technologized yet nostalgically material aristocratic family estate of Straylight.

27. Guattari (“Regimes, Pathways, Subjects,” pp. 26–29) outlines the rationalization of labor power à la Taylor as a key element of capitalist production, linked to the instrumentalization of human organs and faculties and the fetishization of profit.

28. On this Victorian-era feminization of culture, specifically in the American context, see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor, 1988).

29. See Picabia’s 1916–1918 gouache painting *Girl Born without a Mother* and his 1918 book of drawings and poems, *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère* (rpt. Paris: Allia, 1992). Note especially the drawings *Polygamie* (p. 19) with its “vagin printanier” (vernal vagina); *Égoïste* (p. 23) with its “Américaines” (New Women?) and “femmes paysages” (female landscapes); and *Hermaphrodisme* (p. 67) with its visible sperm, oviduct, and sexual apparatus.

30. Duchamp’s desirability is confirmed not only through the obsessive references to his work and persona in art historical accounts of contemporary art but also through his appeal to other artists, including many women. He was the subject/object of numerous portraits by female artist admirers, including several by the Baroness and Florine Stettheimer, notably the latter’s elaborate play on the mutable engendering of Marcel/Rose, an abstract portrait by Dreier, and a number of drawings by Beatrice Wood.

31. Sigmund Freud, “The Dynamics of Transference [1912],” trans. Joan Riviere, in *Therapy and Technique*, ed. Phillip Rieff (New York: Collier, 1963), p. 112.

32. Marcel Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1989), p. 139.

33. For a more extensive discussion of this dynamic of fetishization, which derives from the work of Abigail Solomon-Godeau, see *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp*, pp. 164–168.
34. The continuing significance of Duchamp's self-engendering gesture for what we now call postmodernism is abundantly clear. See, for example, Andy Warhol's *For Rrose Sélavy and Belle Haleine* (1973), in which, wearing a showman's striped jacket and a huge Afro wig, this decidedly queer artist sits on bleachers surrounded by a bevy of showgirls (or are they "men" in drag?). For an illustration of this photograph, see *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), p. 227.
35. Born in Northern Germany in 1874, the Baroness ran away from home at the age of eighteen to live on her own. See her autobiography in *Baroness Elsa*, ed. Paul I. Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue (Ottawa, Ontario: Oberon, 1992).
36. These descriptions are drawn from Robert Reiss, "'My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in *New York Dada*, p. 86; Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 169; and the editors' introduction in *Baroness Elsa*, pp. 9–10.
37. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, qtd. in Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 172.
38. Jane Heap, "Dada," *Little Review* (Spring 1922): 46.
39. Duchamp slowed his production of art drastically after the Dada period. This "silence" increased his mystique for the American art world.
40. In her autobiography, the Baroness writes, "[M]y feminine pride demanded of me to find a lover to provide for me" (*Baroness Elsa*, p. 53).
41. *Ibid.*, p. 69.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 104. The other side of the Baroness's story, at least as she tells it, is her immersion in her sexual relations with men (her endless tales of, in her words, her "unsatiated sexhunger" [p. 188]). The entire autobiography is a series of sexual exploits that avoid constructing her as Other or victim only through their tone of passionate self-aggrandizement and sexual insatiableness ("I was ever conscious of my quality, even before my lover," she writes [p. 51]).

43. The attribution of this piece has been debated. I accept here Francis Naumann's typically thorough attribution of the piece to the Baroness, with Schamberg responsible for the well-known photograph of it.

44. *God* has its counterpart in Duchamp's 1917 *Fountain*, which presents the obverse to the Baroness's impossibly looped yet still rigid phallus—a urinal shaped like a womb, ready to embrace the "piss" ejaculate of every male passerby, yet, turned sideways, unable to drain it away.

45. Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 173.

46. On the phallus as transferable attribute, see Judith Butler's chapter, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 57–91.

47. Demuth's homoerotic watercolors have been analyzed to some extent in relation to his career. See Barbara Haskell, *Charles Demuth* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1987); and Jonathan Weinberg's important book, *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993). Much of my description of Demuth derives from Weinberg's account. However, as I noted earlier, texts on New York Dada, even when they include Demuth (who might be said to be marginal to the movement), do not tend to discuss his homosexual erotica.

On Demuth's affinity to *des Esseintes*, see Kermit Champa, "Charlie Was Like That," *Artforum* 12, no. 6 (March 1974): 54–59. It should be noted that Weinberg

(*ibid.*, pp. 48–50) is critical of Champa for using such tropes of decadence to align Demuth simultaneously with homosexuality and late nineteenth-century decadence as a deviant. I am foregrounding these particular aspects of Demuth's persona precisely to highlight the way they position him relative to the artists who are more often celebrated as Dada artists. While I would, unlike Weinberg, insist on retaining Demuth's "deviance" (for his work and persona have clearly created problems for those art historians eager to read Dada as part of a heroic, and implicitly, heterosexualized, masculine avant-garde), I am obviously looking at this "deviance" in a positive rather than negative light.

DANDIES, MARGINALITY, AND MODERNISM: GEORGIA O'KEEFFE, MARCEL DUCHAMP, AND OTHER CROSS-DRESSERS

susan FILLIN-YEH



Two photographs made at nearly the same time in the 1920s, and in the same city, New York, offer the image of the dandy to twentieth-century viewers. Studied singly and in their interrelationships, both Alfred Stieglitz's photograph of painter Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986) dressed with uncompromising and elegant simplicity in an oversized man's hat, dark suit jacket and white shirt open at the neck (figure 7.1), and Man Ray's photograph of dadaist Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) in drag (figure 7.2) are alluring. As happens generally with portrait photographs, each of these photographs is a collaboration. In even the most ordinary of such photographs, the sitter poses her/himself for a photographer who in turn also has a visual agenda. But with these photographs, the situation was intensified, for photographer and sitter were partners in invention. These photographs function as more than simple portraits; they are agents in the construction of new artistic, cultural and sexual meanings, even of personal narrative.

O'Keeffe once alluded to Stieglitz (1864–1946) and their passionate love affair when speaking of his photographs of her.¹ Her comment, made in the 1970s, was an unprecedented one, a rare admission that her sexual life had a life in her art. As for the Duchamp/Ray collaboration, it insinuated the image of Parisian *femme fatale* into the New York art world of



7.1

Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe; A Portrait*, 1921, palladium print. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Alfred Stieglitz Collection.



7.2

Man Ray, *Marcel Duchamp as Rose Sélavy*, 1920–1921, gelatin silver print, 21.6 × 17.3 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Samuel S. White, III, and Vera White Collection. © 1997 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

the early twentieth century. That personage, an elegant, alluring, and mysterious woman, at ease in a public space, had earlier been a central figure in nineteenth-century European literature and art (in the writing of Charles Baudelaire and in paintings by Gustave Moreau, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and others). The *femme fatale* is central to what Christine Buci-Glucksmann has termed “l’archéologie de la modernité.”² As Mary Ann Doane has pointed out, the *femme fatale* is a nexus for new, early twentieth-century ideas about modernity and urbanization (she inhabits a new urban space of dance halls, streets, and restaurants), she figures in Freudian theory, and is central to the new reproductive technologies of photography and film. A “sign of strength in an unwritten history” of many feminisms, the *femme fatale*, as Doane has discussed her epistemology, carries with her the power of masquerade, a privileged, distanced, and disruptive anti-knowledge behind a cool facade.³

The photograph of Duchamp charts the profound ambivalence about sexual difference characteristic of the late nineteenth century, for it is the image of a disguise, laced with witty subterfuge. Duchamp borrowed his fashionable hat with its wonderful patterned headband from a friend, Germaine Everling, and it was Everling who posed for the hands. Duchamp finished his creation by retouching Man Ray’s photograph, softening the focus to exaggerate the shadowy, sultry image of a *femme fatale*’s mysterious and elusive mobility.

But downtown Greenwich Village bohemia “in the know” recognized another kind of mobility: androgyny. They recognized Marcel Duchamp cut loose from conventional notions of gendered individuation to present himself as the woman he named Rose Sélavy—a woman with veiled and shadowed eyes who has posed as if resting her elbows on a café table. Duchamp, so the image read to his audience, was double gendered, and—seemingly—changed his sexual aspect as easily as he changed clothing. And what of O’Keeffe? If the politics and mores of life in avant-garde circles influenced her dandyism, she also brought with her to New York

by 1907 the disposition for cross-dressing not uncommon among middle-class young women born in the last decades of the nineteenth century (figure 7.3).⁴

These images of gender doubling and role reversal—one of a man in the guise of a woman, the other of a woman in Baudelaire’s modern man’s immaculate linen and stark black suiting (that “garb . . . of the modern hero,” Baudelaire wrote, which has “its own beauty”⁵)—once shaped an ambiance and evokes it for us now: Greenwich Village in the 1910s, where aesthetic experimentation, feminism, and other kinds of political activism flourished in a new climate of personal liberation, liberated sexuality, and at least the beginnings of a new sexual freedom for women.⁶

These photographs of artists all dressed up, with, as one might say (and as their work attests), everywhere to go, are versions of a specialized expression of artifice, a modernist icon/pose/mode: the dandy. Defined conventionally as male—but also as female, embodied in the dandyism of turn-of-the-century Gibson Girl shirtwaist fashions—the dandy was coolly elegant, detached but intensely aware of self and situation. As perhaps the best known among other artists they knew, O’Keeffe and Duchamp, as well as Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944), took up and deliberately altered that dandy’s image inherited from the nineteenth century, re-fashioning it to their own needs and a new avant-garde art.⁷

It is hardly surprising that the model of Baudelaire’s dandy translated so easily from French into English, from Paris of the boulevards, to the newer and rawer avenues and cross-streets of New York of the 1910s. Clothed in his “‘eternal black suit,’” the dandy, a product of his *fin-de-siècle* history, transcended it.⁸ Whether or not avant-garde artists in New York knew of the Baudelairean dandy’s connections with utopian socialism, the Eight and Ashcan School painters, as well as artists of the Stieglitz and Arensberg circles, were predisposed to a vision of artistic identity as being of the moment, and of modernity as heroic. And lively models for dandyism existed: Stieglitz in his well-known black cloak⁹ and Du-



7.3

Georgia O'Keeffe in men's formal wear at a New York Art Students League costume ball, 1907; photograph courtesy Lila Howard.

champ (both as male and as female) with his consummate elegance (O'Keeffe once remarked on it¹⁰). The dandy's persona was seen as a vehicle for breaking with convention: New York artists shared Baudelaire's dandy's "burning need to create for oneself a personal originality."¹¹

Why was it that the dandy's image had such cogency for avant-garde art production in New York in the early twentieth century? It may be that the persona of the dandy is especially suited to urban modernism, beginning with Baudelaire's Paris, because, as we know it from his pronouncements, the type so clearly emerges as a composite: the dandy, stroller, observer, "the passionate spectator," and the "painter of modern life" who can be identified as "the perfect *flâneur*."¹² In the 1930s, Siegfried Kracauer commented on Baudelaire's thinking: "On the Boulevards, the dandies lived, so to speak, extraterritorially."¹³ Kracauer's exile's empathies for dandyism surface in Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*/dandy, composedly present but "out of place," as Benjamin puts it, on city streets.¹⁴

Kracauer's and Benjamin's glosses on Baudelaire can suggest ways of looking at art produced earlier in the century in New York; Duchamp, O'Keeffe, and Stettheimer each made work that draws attention to congruencies between the persona of the dandy and a climate of shifts and dislocations, that is, the paradox of the invigorating and empowering loss of belief in the certainties of past traditions, and the intellectual and aesthetic loss of place within accepted conventions, that is generally assumed in modernism's beginnings.

Perhaps we need to remind ourselves that, as with postmodernism now, modernism was once defined not in relation to formal concerns,¹⁵ but rather was structured in cultural terms, and was oppositional. New York art circles in Greenwich Village forged pragmatic definitions of modernism which were later submerged in 1960s discussions of self-contained and purified modes of modernism applied mostly to painting.¹⁶

Greenwich Villagers in the teens were proud of their distance from bourgeois life and conventional politics and celebrated their marginality:

it was much more interesting where *they* were.¹⁷ Thus it is no surprise that the attempts of New York modernists to relocate these new worlds within the shifting boundaries of their own art seem to inscribe the strolling dandy's fascination with boundary lines and moving across them, her/his familiarity with being marginal, "out of place," which also created a *new* place to stand.

Representations of dandies in nineteenth-century paintings make marginality explicit. They are rendered visible to us now in images of their up-to-the-minute fashion statements, exemplified by those *declassé* artists and intellectuals in self-defining dress,¹⁸ whose presence Baudelaire pointed out in the work of Constantin Guys, Eugène Lami, and Gavarni, and which we have learned to recognize in paintings by Tissot, Caillebotte, and Manet. Manet's barmaid of the *Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, beautiful in her black Parisian dress, is their female equivalent. T. J. Clark has described this woman and other dandies, compelling personalities whose elegant appearance punctuated nineteenth-century images of urban capitalism: elegance, masking, and self-construction loosened their class ties.¹⁹ If the Folies-Bergère barmaid is a person whose demeanor, as Anne Hanson has noted, is blunt and indifferent, at the same time, as Clark writes, her face has a "character [that] derives from its not being bourgeois, and having that fact almost hidden."²⁰ With their class status disguised by their fashionable appearance, both barmaid and *flâneur* had a new, if tenuous and chancy, social mobility; with their class not quite identifiable, some managed to transgress class lines. A concept that illuminates their new, late nineteenth-century freedom of motion is that of the "shifter," a free floating linguistic sign like "he/she, or this/that,"²¹ a word that takes on specific meaning only when used in context.

The notion of a "shifter" is useful in explaining another aspect of the fit between dandyism and modernism, between dandyism as self-image and dandyism as self-defining artistic strategy, as absorbed into the ethos of New York's avant-garde. It is not only that the avant-garde

encouraged shifting sexual freedom. There was also a significant distinction between New York's avant-garde and earlier ones: its many women artists. The notion of the "shifter" goes a long way in suggesting why the persona of the dandy was such a useful one tactically for women of the avant-garde in the early modernist period—and why female dandies abounded in early modernism.²² For if, like the men, avant-garde women relished their place apart from conventional art institutions, they differed from them in being *doubly* displaced, that is, intensely aware of the need to negotiate, to assert individuality within what was still *male* avant-garde culture.²³ O'Keeffe wrote in 1930: "I have had to go to the men as sources in my painting because the past has left us so small an inheritance of women's painting."²⁴ Stettheimer once commented ironically on a male photographer's arrogance, and his female subject's artistic revenge. Although the protagonists are unnamed, they are clearly Stieglitz and O'Keeffe.²⁵

The presence of women put new pressure on androgyny. In a climate in which women's images and actions as independent artists were without precedent, they made themselves up as they went along, defining themselves in new—and shifting—contexts. Thus images of women as dandy took on meanings that empowered them. They posed a challenge to the dominant mode of male discourse by using its own symbols against it. The early twentieth century inherited such images as photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston's c. 1896 self-portrait, where she shows herself smoking a cigarette, which mimics and flaunts male attributes and body language, and undermines the view that stereotypic male behavior was unnatural for a woman.²⁶ Although Johnston chose to show herself in women's clothing, her constructed pose was that of a cross-dresser, and her image operated then in the sense that Susan Gubar has discussed it: "cross-dressing becomes a way of ad-dressing and re-dressing the inequities of culturally-defined categories of masculinity and femininity."²⁷ And, as Sandra Gilbert has written, "Feminist modernist costume imagery

is radically revisionary in a political sense, for it implies that no one, male or female, can or should be confined to a uniform, a single form or self."²⁸

Female cross-dressers sometimes functioned as sex symbols for nineteenth-century men who attempted to eroticize and thus possess independent women or who repressed homosexual fantasies. But the New York avant-garde also had the examples of middle-class professional women.²⁹ Dr. Mary Walker wore men's clothing as a Civil War doctor, and described its importance to her: it gave her the power to do her job. "While bodies are caged in the petticoat badge of dependence," she wrote, "minds and souls . . . cannot command themselves."³⁰ Her choice of men's clothing for freedom of action was a tactic taken up by early feminists such as Mme. Bernard Trouser, who lent her name to her sartorial invention, pants for women—"trousers."³¹ Women in Greenwich Village may have had warm feelings for the stories of earlier women in the art world, for example, the French painter of animal subjects, Rosa Bonheur, who obtained permission from the Préfecture of the City of Paris to wear men's clothing when she needed to visit barnyards and stables.³²

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century images of female cross-dressing in America included photographs of fresh-faced, wholesome-looking beauties like the popular actress Maude Adams, who was famous at the turn of the century for playing men's roles on stage. These images, and similar Gibson Girl advertising images of women in men's hats and shirts, almost suggest a utopian vision of sexual equality, if only in consumerism. The photograph of O'Keeffe costumed in men's formal attire for a 1907 New York Art Students League ball (see figure 7.3) can be placed within a tradition of snapshots depicting high-spirited friendships among middle-class young women who wore men's clothing. The hijinks recorded in this picture evoke O'Keeffe's youthful self, and anticipate Stieglitz's photograph of her.

Markedly absent in O'Keeffe's photograph is the expression of pain Gubar has discovered in many well-known late nineteenth- and early

twentieth-century images of women dressed like men, as for example, in a self-portrait of 1923 by expatriate painter Romaine Brooks.³³ The image is startling in its similarities to Stieglitz's photograph of O'Keeffe, but it offers very different emotional messages. Brooks presented herself against a background of charred, bombed-out ruins, and her painting reveals obvious signs of strain in her shaded eyes and face and tense posture. The pose may suggest Brooks's sympathies with Radclyffe Hall, who constructed an ambivalent and troubled fictional characterization of Brooks in her book, *The Well of Loneliness*. As Gubar has noted: "Hall wrote about the frustration of a girl born to a father who treats his daughter as the son he wanted. Since this is only a slight exaggeration of the psychology of what growing up female can be in patriarchy . . . Hall's analysis of her sense of freakishness repeats itself" in many women's biographies.³⁴

But O'Keeffe's steady gaze, like Duchamp's masquerade, is confident. We recall that in Duchamp's image as Rose Sélavy even the name he made up for his alter-ego was an exuberant joke, a pun: Rose Sélavy translates as "love—that's life," if the double "r" in Rose is rolled out French style and pronounced "eros," and Sélavy is anglicized and interpreted as "c'est la vie." And as with O'Keeffe's, the image gives us Duchamp's own wonderful good looks. His genuine allure as a woman departs from the nineteenth-century tradition of men dressed up as women who often look as gawky or deliberately awkward as New York Ash Can School painter John Sloan once did in 1894 when he dressed up as "Twillbee," the victim/heroine of a popular Victorian pot-boiler, in a theatrical spoof of George Du Maurier's *Trilby*.³⁵ Even Duchamp allowed himself to look awkward in one particular Man Ray/Duchamp collaboration of 1921, a perfume bottle label for a Duchamp readymade, *Belle Haleine-Eau de Voilette* (Beautiful Breath-Veil Water), in which the image-makers leave no doubt that Duchamp really *is* a man (see figure 6.3).

Images of the androgynous body multiplied in New York's avant-garde circles in a climate linking the artist's body and artistic radicalism. Both Stieglitz circle artists, many of whom explored organic imagery, and dadaists, who took the mechanical world as a point of departure, constructed androgynous images as a format for unconventional, intimate portraits. Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (Large Glass)*, 1915–1923 (see figure 6.2), opened the possibilities for this new bridging, even for a new mode of sexuality. The *Large Glass*, which offered contemporaries transparent images of the activities of amorous robots, featured “bachelors” who were dandies of sorts. Even though Duchamp provided a different identity for each of them, all of the bachelors wear abstracted versions of what is clearly the same generic “morning” coat.³⁶

Their suiting is proper wedding attire and more. Duchamp characterized it as a “livery of uniforms,” a phrase that vividly evokes Baudelaire's comments on the modern hero.³⁷ As with Baudelaire, Duchamp's list of professions even includes an undertaker (the others being a priest, department store delivery boy, *gendarme*, *cuirassier*, policeman, flunky, busboy).³⁸ And if, as with Baudelaire, who observed that “A uniform livery of affliction bears witness to equality,” Duchamp's bachelor dandies in their “livery” are representatives of Baudelaire's “public soul,” their representations are also Baudelairean because they are “the outer husk.”³⁹ Duchamp's construction in the *Large Glass* seemingly took Baudelaire literally, for in his eccentric system, the uniforms are empty clothing,⁴⁰ clothing, that is, as a receptacle, which waits for an identity to be supplied. It is amusing to suppose that viewers of the glass, spectators who for Duchamp functioned as part of the tableau, offered their own diverse identities to the bachelors much in the way one poses for a joke to be photographed with one's head poking through a caricature painted on a billboard at a carnival. Even more than this borrowing though, there is

the fact that in Duchamp's eccentric system, the bachelors are "moulds" and they are "hollow." Their liveries have the possibility of filling with mysterious essences that Duchamp invented ("illuminating gas," "provisional color") and called "eros' matrix."⁴¹

Duchamp's is far from the only double gendered image produced in New York avant-garde circles in the 1910s and 1920s. Paintings by Florine Stettheimer suggest how readily the implications of Duchamp's practices found acceptance. Stettheimer's 1923 *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (see figure 16.5) even documents Duchamp in his dandy's doubled manifestations. Stettheimer painted Duchamp seated facing his alter ego, Rose Sélavy, whom she chose to represent as a stylish female sylph who balances with impeccable poise on a stool at the top of a spring in a Rube Goldberg-like contraption that Duchamp manipulates.⁴²

Stettheimer's paintings bring us New York in the 1920s and 1930s, taking in Greenwich Village and 42nd Street, downtown bohemia, the upper crust, and popular culture; they offer a new mix of subject matter for, as Linda Nochlin has pointed out, Stettheimer populated her paintings of the city with personal friends, a "shifting" dandy-esque world of public and private.⁴³ A lively participant in New York cultural life, whose pictures contradict the once conventionally held ideas that she was a recluse, Stettheimer gave parties that indexed the contemporary art scene.⁴⁴ Carl Sprinchorn's informal group portrait of art world guests at a party at the Stettheimer sisters' apartment includes Charles Demuth, Arnold Genthe, Carl Van Vechten, Isabel Lachaise, and Georgia O'Keeffe.⁴⁵

Stettheimer herself was no stranger to the tactics of cross-dressing and dandyism. In androgynous self-portraits, among them *Portrait of Myself* (1923), and in her cameo appearance in *Family Portrait No. 2* (1933), the one gendered aspect of Stettheimer's imaged self-construction enriches, plays against, and almost, but not quite, hides the other. Stettheimer's self-portraits offer new images of the androgynous body. *Portrait of Myself* (see figure 16.4) gives us Florine in her female persona in diapha-

nous flaming red, doubling as male in the black beret she wears, an accessory borrowed from among the attributes of the nineteenth-century romantic male artist. A garland of flowers encircles, while concealing, the point of sex. Later, in *Family Portrait No. 2* (see figure 16.2), she is male in her black painting clothes—actually fashionable lounging pajamas modeled on a man’s suit. Except she also has on high-heeled red shoes. As with the earlier portrait, it is the accessory that gives doubled gender to her image.

Stettheimer was highly conscious of resorting to disguise. As one of her poems describes it:

*Occasionally / A human being / Saw my light / Rushed in / Got singed / Got scared / Rushed out / Called fire / Or it happened / That he tried / To subdue it . . . / Never did a friend / Enjoy it . . . / So I learned to / Turn it low . . . a protection.*⁴⁶

But even “turned low,” Stettheimer’s cross-dressed self-images in paintings, personifications of a consummate dandy, offer evidence of the very acceptability of role and rule changes in the New York art world of the 1910s and 1920s, among a crowd that prized personal and artistic leeway and room to maneuver.

Duchamp’s famous urinal, R. Mutt’s *Fountain* (1917) (see figure 2.3) was, as William Camfield has argued very convincingly, known in Stieglitz and dadaist circles both as a male (Buddha) and a female (Madonna).⁴⁷ Influenced by Duchamp, Man Ray’s dadaist readymades also embodied the new dadaist aesthetic in which sexual tensions and ambiguities resulted in a charged personal imagery. One of his readymades, or claimed object, was a kitchen utensil, an egg beater with quotidian but fundamental associations with food, even life (birth, the egg), and scrambled destruction. He photographed it and then called identical prints of the same photograph *Woman*—and *Man*.⁴⁸ A Man Ray and Duchamp collaborative

photograph, *Rotary Glass Plates*, offers us Duchamp subsumed within the transparent body of a machine.⁴⁹ This machine and other dadaist mechanomorphs were almost invariably defined as female in the iconography of New York Dada. “Man has made the machine in his own image,” wrote Dada participant Paul Haviland in 1915, and went on to describe *her* lungs, *her* limbs, etc.⁵⁰ In a climate where both men and women sought to define themselves in terms of the other sex, Haviland’s comment apparently seeks to annex some perceived notion of female power; it hints at sexual tension perhaps cranked up a notch because of the presence of an active, female, avant-garde. “[W]hy,” as Alice Jardine wondered in another not dissimilar context, “[did] all of these guys want to be women?”⁵¹ Along with anthropomorphic dadaist representations possessing an ambiguous and doubled sexuality, Stieglitz circle artists also produced their own images of elusive and mysterious doublings that unfold into their opposites, or are bisexual or androgynous. O’Keeffe and Arthur Dove made paintings of plant and organic life whose recurrent themes reenact the dandy’s personae: shifting images—sexually charged, but without a fixed gender—are particularly modern. These are paintings of unmistakable but indefinable sexual content, whose sexual valences are impossible to pin down. Even if one were to apply the Freudian biologically based theories of gender often resorted to in avant-garde circles in the 1910s, the shapes in such paintings are simultaneously phallic and womb-like.⁵²

Freudian definitions were not always taken seriously in the Greenwich Village art world, and were often misapplied. Perhaps they lost credence because they had become popular and overused so quickly. In 1915, Susan Glaspell and George Cram Cook of the Provincetown Players even wrote a play, *Suppressed Desires*, that spoofed the use of Freudian definitions and was billed as a Freudian comedy. And Alfred Stieglitz repudiated Freudianism as *passé* in a well-publicized exhibition statement of 1921.⁵³ Even so, Freudian ideas were part of a common language in the

New York art world throughout the 1910s and 1920s, and beginning in the 1910s, O’Keeffe’s art was often defined in essentialist Freudian terms. These were definitions she was reluctant to accept (“I would hear men saying, ‘She is pretty good for a woman; she paints like a man.’ That upset me.”⁵⁴)

Photographs documenting O’Keeffe’s paintings raise other quite obvious questions about the climate for criticism in New York in the 1910s and 1920s, questions like, “Whose Freudianism?” or, “Who is doing the interpreting?” If phallic suggestions in O’Keeffe’s sculpture and drawings in the 1910s seemed inescapable to her viewers then, still it’s useful to remember that it was Alfred Stieglitz who took the photographs that encourage this reading, and that O’Keeffe and Stieglitz often disagreed on her work’s meaning.⁵⁵ O’Keeffe’s own statements about her work deny a specific essentialist sexual content.⁵⁶ Sexual images in O’Keeffe’s art offer us a pervasive sexuality, one that floats loose from ties to fixed notions of gender; her imagery also shifts terms constantly to construct and reconstruct images. It is useful to recall that O’Keeffe’s life-sized, breakthrough, abstract drawings of the 1910s were charged with unusual somatic resonances: she drew some of them while “crawling on the floor” over them.⁵⁷ These drawings were among O’Keeffe’s first to take their cues from the generative forces in plant life. O’Keeffe, who designed Arts and Crafts movement art education programs when she taught in Texas public schools, adapted in particular the image of the budding, sprouting plant in her abstractions.⁵⁸ While reminding us that flowers are double sexed, the sexuality in O’Keeffe’s flower imagery randomizes human impulses and anatomy, as for example in *Two Calla Lilies on Pink*, 1928 (figure 7.4). What is one to make of the petals in *Two Calla Lilies on Pink*? Are they female? And the yellow protrusions from the flower centers—are they phallic?

Serial painting ensembles in black and white, which are typical of O’Keeffe’s work beginning in the 1910s, pare away form to conflate a shift-



7.4

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Two Calla Lilies on Pink*, 1928, oil on canvas, 101 cm. × 76 cm. Philadelphia Museum of Art,

bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe, Alfred Stieglitz Collection. © 1997 The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation/Artists Rights Society, New York.

ing and charged bisexuality with the studied presentation of the dandy's self-making. O'Keeffe, who had read Charlotte Perkins Gilman's articles on simplified clothing for liberated women in *The Forerunner*, in the 1910s began to dress exclusively in black or white, paring down and refining her wardrobe at about the same time she reduced her palette.⁵⁹ In the *Shell and Old Shingle* series of 1926, successive paintings—significantly—lose their green pigment to leave us with the colors of a dandy's white linen and stark, black suiting.⁶⁰ A suite of black and white paintings of c. 1930, brought together for an exhibition at Stieglitz's gallery in 1932, is another celebration of the absence of color.⁶¹ In these paintings, elegance alone remains. Stripped to the barest edge of legibility, they etch vibrating outlines with the rudiments of a flickering and pervasive human and vegetal sexuality.

It is instructive to compare the aesthetic dandyism of O'Keeffe and Stettheimer. If at first the two seem to have little in common, each carried over the dandy's artifice and shifting ambiguities from her person to her art. Unlike O'Keeffe, Stettheimer played with ultra-feminine tropes as if with masks, revamping the clichés of the feminine: jewels, flounces, lace. She claimed cellophane as an artistic material in stage sets she created in 1934 for the opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, written by Gertrude Stein with music by Virgil Thomson.

Stettheimer's deceptively naïve imagery offers us an art that is dense, packed. She destroyed spatial illusion in order to leave room for *things*, describing her paintings in poems that read like lists: they are non-hierarchical with a lateral spread. Here Stettheimer describes herself in terms of objects, a set of desires:

*... I like slippers gold
I like oysters cold
and my garden with mixed flowers
and the sky full of towers*

and traffic in the streets
and Maillard's sweets
and Bendel's clothes
and Nat Lewis hose
and Tappé's window arrays
and crystal fixtures
and my pictures . . . ⁶²

All this abundance would seem to be quite different from O'Keeffe's stripped-down sensibility. Yet in both we find an art crafted out of excess—in Stettheimer's, an extreme materiality; in O'Keeffe's, an extreme reserve.

Perhaps the best way to suggest the importance of the dandy's persona as an artistic tactic in the art of O'Keeffe and Stettheimer is to compare paintings both made in the 1920s and 1930s in which startling objects float in the sky. In O'Keeffe paintings, these are mostly flowers (figure 7.5), though she also chose bones and cow and deer skulls.⁶³ These paintings take on new meanings when compared with Stettheimer's *Family Portrait No. 2*, where numerous things, including a chandelier and its near look-alike in the form of a glowing and crystalline image of the Chrysler building, are suspended. As with O'Keeffe, Stettheimer levitates silk flowers, crafted emblems of a stereotyped femininity.

These dislocated objects also have undergone disconcerting scale changes. Literally ungrounded, enormous, they are observed as spectacle, as panoply. And with this vision, artficed, ambiguous, and shifting, we are returned to the elegant and strolling *flâneur*/dandy, who takes on an artist's body. Stettheimer's self-image spells it out for us. If, in *Family Portrait No. 2* (as in other paintings), Stettheimer identifies herself as a painter—her mannish painting pajamas separating her from her jeweled and begowned family—she also assumes the *flâneur*'s aloof location at



7.5
Georgia O'Keeffe, *Summer Days*, 1936,
oil on canvas, 91.4 × 76.2 cm. Whitney
Museum of American Art, gift of Calvin

Klein, 94.171. Photograph © 1997 Whitney
Museum of American Art, © 1997
The Georgia O'Keeffe Foundation/Art-
ists Rights Society, New York.

the margins of her own painting, which offers her the most complete view of the panorama she has constructed for us.

Such dandyism in the work of both artists is a dandyism of locations, both psychic and physical, and a resultant dandyism of vision. In each case, objects have been drawn very close: the giant flowers and other floating things have been pushed to the foreground, nearly into our space. At the same time, the imagery, which looms against glowing skies, crowds the canvas. Stettheimer and O’Keeffe both suggest that certain things cannot be contained within boundaries, and so, psychologically, their images seem to push viewers back, displacing them. Thus, the viewers of Stettheimer’s and O’Keeffe’s paintings are brought to share the vision of the modernist artist, the *flâneur*/dandy “out of place,” who privileges the view from the sidelines in images of distancing and dislocation while investing them with insight—and, perhaps, with the glamour of the unattainable.

It is the dandy’s consciousness of self and position which made that persona so useful an appropriation for all sorts of modernist dandies and cross-dressers, and especially for women artists. The dandy is inscribed in Stettheimer’s dense narrations, in O’Keeffe’s resonant severities, and the destabilizing spatial disjunctions seen in both. Each in her own way gives us images of modernism’s mobile spaces in a vision of a world no longer grounded in certainty, no longer marked out in traditional perspective or rules of painting—or in clichéd sexual roles. If, as one might argue, modernism and the dandy constructed each other, women artists of New York’s avant-garde shaped that construction to their own purposes as specially suited to their own paintings.⁶⁴ The visual imagery of dislocation that these early modernist dandies mapped out has come down to us now in a shifting, sometimes recalcitrant, subversive and provocative masquerade.

NOTES

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1. Georgia O'Keeffe, "Introduction," in Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O'Keeffe, A Portrait by Alfred Stieglitz* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), n.p.
2. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *La raison baroque: De Baudelaire à Benjamin* (Paris: Galilée, 1984), p. 34.
3. Mary Ann Doane, *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 1, 3, 33–43. Although female masquerade has been conventionally discussed as reification and as a norm of femininity, I subscribe here to the alternate reading Doane's analysis provides as a destabilizing tactic and a way of breaking with clichés.
4. See Martha Banta, *Imaging American Women: Idea and Ideals in Cultural History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987); and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg,

Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 245–296. See also Doane's discussion in *Femmes Fatales* (pp. 24–25) of Freud's and Cixous's ideas about female transvestism, including "mastery over the image" and "the ease with which women can slip into male clothing." For an exemplary analysis of the cultural and political resonances of 1920s clothing in France, which sheds light on the American version of the phenomenon, see Mary Louise Roberts, "Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women's Fashion in 1920s France," *American Historical Review* 98, no. 3 (June 1993): 657–684. As Roberts points out, "Fashion was not 'politics' as we are used to conceiving of it, but the debates over its meaning . . . were profoundly political" (p. 684). My thanks to Jacqueline Dirks for giving me the Roberts article.

5. Charles Baudelaire, "Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life," in *The Mirror of Art: Critical Studies*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1955), p. 127.

6. O'Keeffe's art took shape in Greenwich Village circles that included Emma Goldman, Neith Boyce, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. A letter of 25 August 1915 from O'Keeffe to Anita Pollitzer reads: "[T]hen 291 [the Stieglitz Gallery publication] came and I was so crazy about it that I sent for Number 2 and 3—and I think they are great—they just take my breath away—it is almost as good as going to 291 [Gallery]. I subscribed to it—it was too good to let it go by—and I had to have the *Masses* too. I got Jerome Eddy [*Cubists and Post-Impressionism*, 1913] a long time ago and sent for Kandinsky. . . . I got Floyd Dell's *Women as World Builders* a few days ago and got quite excited over it" (Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University [hereafter cited as Beinecke]). See also *Lovingly, Georgia: The Complete Correspondence of Georgia O'Keeffe & Anita Pollitzer*, ed. Clive Giboire (New York: Touchstone, 1990), p. 15; and Jack Cowart and Juan Hamilton, *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987), p. 143. For a study of Greenwich Village in the 1910s, see June Sochen, *The New Woman: Feminism in Greenwich Village, 1910–1920* (New York: Quadrangle, 1972); and for the decade in

general, see also *1915: The Cultural Moment. The New Politics, the New Woman, the New Psychology, the New Art, and the New Theatre in America*, ed. Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1991).

7. Among materials basic to the study of the dandy's persona and cultural and political context are Baudelaire, "Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life," pp. 126–130; Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life [1869]," in *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), pp. 1–40; Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1976), pp. 155–200; Ellen Moers, *The Dandy, Brummell to Beerbohm* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960); Siegfried Kracauer, *Orpheus in Paris: Offenbach and the Paris of His Time* (New York: Knopf, 1938), pp. 60–78; Valerie Steele, *Paris Fashion: A Cultural History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 79–96; Sandra M. Gilbert, "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 391–417; and Susan Gubar, "Blessings in Disguise: Cross Dressing as Re-Dressing for Female Modernists," *Massachusetts Review* 22, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 477–508. See also Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

8. Steele, *Paris Fashion*, p. 92.

9. Stieglitz wears his cloak in Florine Stettheimer's 1928 portrait of him. For another example, see Marius de Zayas's caricature of Stieglitz, which has the double allusion of a cloak and a camera cover cloth, illustrated in Douglas Hyland, *Marius de Zayas: Conjuror of Souls* (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1981), cat. no. 23, pp. 104–105.

10. O'Keeffe described a studio tea party where Duchamp was present, perhaps in the summer of 1921. See Roxana Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe: A Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 246 and 584, n. 26. See also Calvin Tomkins, "The Rose in the Eye Looked Pretty Fine," *New Yorker* 50, no. 2 (4 March 1974): 44.

11. Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," pp. 27–28.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
13. Kracauer, *Orpheus in Paris*, p. 68.
14. Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," p. 172.
15. See Hal Foster, "Postmodernism: A Preface," commenting on Rosalind Krauss's 1979 essay, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle, WA: Bay, 1983), p. xiii.
16. For a survey of critical attitudes, see Penirah R. Y. Petruck, *American Art Criticism, 1910–1939* (New York and London: Garland, 1981).
17. John Sloan's etching, *Arch Conspirators*, 1917, set on top of the Washington Square Arch, commemorates a New Year's Eve party at which Greenwich Villagers including Sloan and Duchamp decided as a joke to declare the Village an independent nation and secede from the United States.
18. Steele, *Paris Fashion*, pp. 90–92.
19. T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (New York: Knopf, 1985), pp. 205–258.
20. Anne Hanson, *Manet and the Modern Tradition* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 204; Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life*, p. 253.
21. Roman Jakobson, "Shifters, Verbal Categories, and the Russian Verb," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 2 (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), pp. 130–136.
22. For a lively personal account, see Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War: An Autobiography* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1930).

23. For an informative article on “free love” and sexual inequity see Ellen Kay Trimmerger, “Feminism, Men, and Modern Love: Greenwich Village, 1900–1925,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review, 1983), pp. 131–152. For the (most often male) critical reception of O’Keeffe, see Barbara Buhler Lynes, *O’Keeffe, Stieglitz and the Critics, 1916–1929* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).
24. Georgia O’Keeffe, qtd. in “Is Art Life? Is Life Art? They Disagree: Radical Writer and Woman Artist Clash on Propaganda and Its Uses,” *New York World*, 16 March 1930.
25. See Parker Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer: A Life in Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1963), p. 90; and Barbara J. Bloemink, *The Life and Art of Florine Stettheimer* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 136–137. See also Donna Graves, “‘In Spite of Alien Temperature and Alien Insistence’: Emily Dickinson and Florine Stettheimer,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1982–Winter 1983): 26. *Crystal Flowers*, a volume of Stettheimer’s poems, was published after her death by her sister, Ettie, and privately printed in 1949.
26. For an illustration, see Pete Daniel and Raymond Smock, *A Talent for Detail: The Photographs of Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1889–1910* (New York: Harmony, 1974), p. 31.
27. Gubar, “Blessings in Disguise”: 479.
28. Gilbert, “Costumes of the Mind”: 395.
29. My discussion focuses on middle-class experience. Working-class and farm women sometimes worked in men’s clothing. See Steele’s discussion of “Women in Trousers,” in *Paris Fashion*, pp. 162–176; and Julie Wheelwright, *Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed As Men in the Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness* (London: Pandora, 1989).

30. Mary Walker, qtd. in Gubar, "Blessings in Disguise": 481. For an utterly compelling, funny, and useful account of George Sand's life, see Carolyn G. Heilbrun's discussion, quoting Ellen Moers, in *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York and London: Norton, 1988), pp. 33–37.
31. For illustrations, see Banta, *Imaging American Women*, pp. 35–36, figures 32–33.
32. For a bibliography on Bonheur, see Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society* (New York: Thames and Hudson, rev. ed., 1996), pp. 430–431.
33. See Adelyn D. Breeskin, *Romaine Brooks* (Washington, D.C.: National Collection of Fine Arts, 1986), cat. 18, p. 75.
34. Gubar, "Blessings in Disguise": 489–490.
35. See Banta, *Imaging American Women*, pp. 268, 270, figure 5.62. For a contemporary image, see "At Last a Male/Female," *New York Times*, 6 October 1987, sec. D, p. 36 (an advertisement for a media consulting firm, Whittle Communications).
36. Marcel Duchamp, *Notes and Projects for The Large Glass*, ed. Arturo Schwarz (New York: Abrams, c. 1969), pp. 144–156.
37. Baudelaire, "Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life," p. 127.
38. Duchamp, *Notes and Projects*, p. 144.
39. Baudelaire, "Salon of 1846: On the Heroism of Modern Life," p. 127.
40. I am indebted to Nina Felshin for the useful term.
41. Duchamp, *Notes and Projects*, pp. 146, 148.

42. Duchamp appears in earlier Stettheimer paintings: *La Fête à Duchamp* (1917) and *Picnic at Bedford Hills* (1918). For illustrations, see Henry McBride, *Florine Stettheimer* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1946), pp. 12, 15, 27; this catalogue was produced for Stettheimer's memorial exhibition at the museum, where Duchamp was "Guest Director" (p. 6).
43. Linda Nochlin, "Florine Stettheimer: Rococo Subversive," in *Florine Stettheimer: Manhattan fantastica* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995), pp. 97–116. Nochlin's essay first appeared in *Art in America* 68, no. 7 (September 1980): 68–83.
44. A contemporary account is given by Marsden Hartley, "The Paintings of Florine Stettheimer," *Creative Art* 9, no. 1 (July 1931): 18–23. For illustrations of these parties, see McBride, *Florine Stettheimer*, pp. 12, 14.
45. See Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, illustration following p. 146.
46. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 42.
47. William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston, TX: Menil Collection, 1989).
48. Among the publications that have reproduced this image is Arturo Schwarz's *New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (Munich: Prestel, 1973), pl. 71.
49. *Ibid.*, pl. 77.
50. Paul Haviland, "Statement," *291*, nos. 7–8 (September–October 1915): n.p.
51. Alice Jardine, "Opaque Texts and Transparent Contexts: The Political Difference of Julia Kristeva," in *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 103.

52. Among Dove's paintings that exemplify the category are: *Based on Leaf Forms and Spaces*, 1914; *Penetration*, 1926; and *Dancing*, 1934.
53. Alfred Stieglitz, "A Statement," published in the catalogue for his exhibition in 1921 at the Anderson Galleries in New York. For a facsimile reprint, see *Photography: Essays and Images, Illustrated Readings in the History of Photography*, ed. Beaumont Newhall (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1980), p. 217.
54. O'Keeffe, qtd. in "Is Art Life? Is Life Art? They Disagree."
55. For examples, see Stieglitz's photograph of O'Keeffe with a rare sculpture of 1917, and his photograph of the sculpture with her painting, *Pink and Blue Music*, both in the Wastebasket Collection, Beinecke.
56. Sarah Greenough gives an excellent synopsis of O'Keeffe's ideas in her essay "From the Faraway," in *Georgia O'Keeffe: Art and Letters*, pp. 136–139.
57. O'Keeffe described making drawings by "crawling on the floor till I have cramps in my feet" in a letter to Pollitzer, 13 December 1915, Beinecke. See also *Lovingly, Georgia*, p. 103.
58. See Susan Fillin-Yeh, "Innovative Moderns: Arthur G. Dove and Georgia O'Keeffe," *Arts Magazine* 58, no. 10 (June 1982): 68–72; and also my unpublished paper delivered at the Women's Caucus for Art, College Art Association annual conference, 1983.
59. *Black Lines* (1916), and *Black Diagonal* (1917) are examples. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "The Dress of Women," *Forerunner* 6 (1915): 163, 192, 220, 250, 329. Gilman, "a smart old girl," as O'Keeffe once called her, sought to merge feminism and socialism (O'Keeffe, letter to Pollitzer, 27 November 1916, Beinecke). See also *Lovingly, Georgia*, p. 216.

60. For illustrations, see Georgia O'Keeffe, *Georgia O'Keeffe* (New York: Viking, 1978), pls. 47–52.
61. For an installation photograph, see *America and Alfred Stieglitz: A Collective Portrait*, ed. Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Dorothy Norman, Paul Rosenfeld, and Harold Rugg (Garden City, NJ: Literary Guild, 1934), pl. XXVIII.B.
62. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 23.
63. See, for example, *Ram's Head—White Hollyhock—Little Hills, N.M.* (1935) and *From The Faraway Nearby* (1937).
64. There are very interesting parallels in this respect between O'Keeffe's art and the painting of her contemporary, Canadian artist Emily Carr, active in Vancouver.

(en) **GENDER**ing

the **text** 

LOVE AS COMMODITY: KURT SCHWITTERS'S COLLAGES OF WOMEN

dorothea DIETRICH



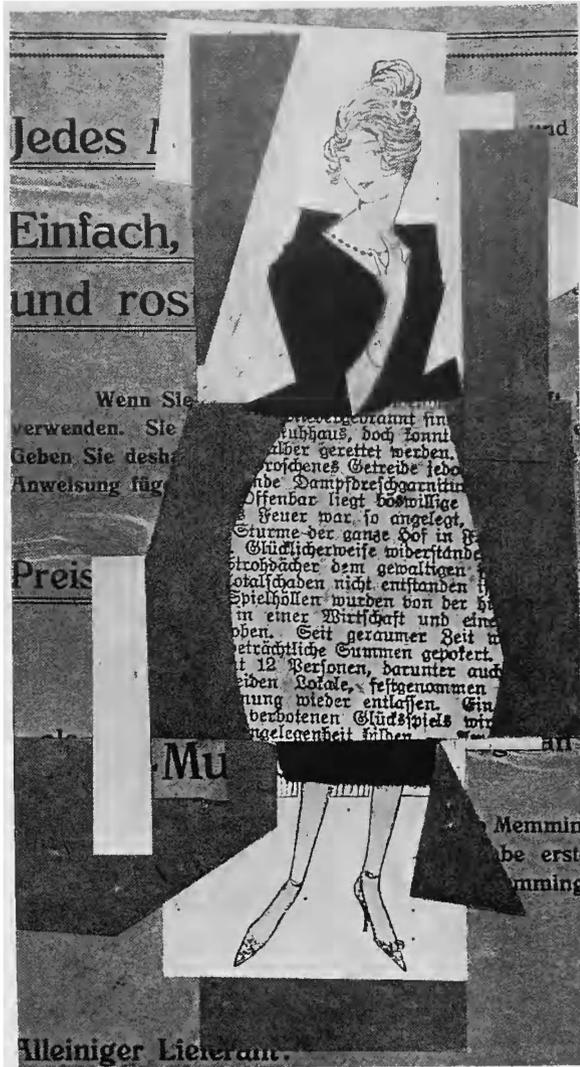
Between 1920 and 1923, Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948) executed a group of collages, about twenty in number, that depict women as modern mass cultural representations via the mannequin, the fashion plate, film, and even pornography. Calling attention to the cultural suppression of individuality in favor of the creation of types, this collage series comments on the commodification of life—especially of social relations—in Weimar Germany. Love was no longer described as desire for the beloved, but as desire for the commodity. Yet, these collages also betray Schwitters's ambiguous attitude toward modern women and in doing so, offer testimony to the multifaceted nature of modernism in Weimar Germany. In this group of works, we find another example of the conflicting political, social, and cultural trends—simultaneously embracing and rejecting the new—that characterized life in the Weimar Republic in general and Schwitters's work in particular.

Schwitters's pre-Weimar representation of women focused almost entirely on his wife, Helma, whom he had married in 1915. She served as his model for several genre paintings and a series of psychologically probing renderings, for example, *Vision* (Vision) and *Trauernde* (Mourning), both 1916–1917. The thickly brushed oil portrait, *Helma Schwitters mit Blume* (Helma Schwitters with Flower) of 1917, typifies the painting of Schwitters's pre-collage period. Although the figure is somewhat stylized,

particularly in the gesture of holding a flower, Schwitters's emphasis on facial expression, above all the eyes and the mouth, clearly reveals his effort to capture the sitter's personality. Based on an earlier artistic model, Paula Modersohn-Becker's *Selbstbildnis mit Kamelienzweig* (Self-Portrait with Camelia) of 1906–1907, this somber portrait of Helma was self-consciously placed in an art historical context.¹ Thus Schwitters described painting generally and ratified his own work specifically as part of an artistic genealogy.

Not so his *Mz. 180, Figurine*, a collage of 1921 (figure 8.1). Although there is a vague and, most likely, chance resemblance to the portrait of Helma in the prominence of the figure's gesture, all similarity ends there. Inspired not by an artistic precursor but by contemporary popular culture, *Figurine* illustrates a radical break within Schwitters's earlier production and comments on a changed relationship between the artist and his product. This relationship is brought into sharper focus by the text fragment "Alleiniger Lieferant" (exclusive purveyor) in the lower left, where one would expect to find the artist's signature. Schwitters's evocation of exclusivity ironically addresses the traditional status of the artist as the creator of unique objects; adopting the language of commerce as well as prefabricated and mass-produced materials in order to construct an object rather than craft a painting, he contradicts the message of uniqueness and authenticity that a signature implies. The artist playfully likens himself here to a merchant, a deliverer of goods that could be duplicated on demand. At the same time, Schwitters seems to be making an autobiographical pun, subtly pitting himself as the creator and sole purveyor of Merz against the more numerous products of Dada, and in so doing, salvages the status of the artist as a special being.

This small collage is expressive of Schwitters's conflicting needs. It tellingly reveals his self-conscious modeling of his artistic persona and indicates that Schwitters investigated his artistic precursors in light of the changed conditions of modern artistic production. Schwitters's re-



8.1

Kurt Schwitters, *Mz. 180, Figurine*, 1921, collage, 17.3 × 9.2 cm. Marlborough International Fine Art. Photo: Prudence Cumming Associates, London. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

making of Helma into a paper doll parallels his contemporaries' fascination with dolls and mannequins and is also reminiscent of the work of his expressionist forebears, particularly of Gustav Klimt, who wove his representations of his female models into a tapestry of abstract designs and in the process denatured his sitters and robbed them of their individuality. In keeping with postwar aesthetics, Schwitters, however, shifts his focus from the decorative to the machine-made. His urgent search for a new way of relating to social reality—his quest for modernity—expressed itself in an increased formalism, and he, like Klimt, extended his quest for dominion to the female body.² Schwitters's substitution of a mannequin for a live model, his wife Helma, points to many issues that preoccupy him in his construction of femaleness. If the artist is here a merchant, his product is not a specific woman but rather a type and, more pointedly, a commodity whose exchange value is implicitly revealed by the artist's exploration of substitution and repetition. Even the title confirms that Schwitters is no longer concerned with the representation of individuality: the word "figurine" does not describe a person, but a mannequin, a manmade and infinitely reproducible product stamped by machine. The collagist has rendered the woman harmless.

Schwitters evokes a paper doll cut-out in this collage, not only in his use of paper fragments but in his arrangement of forms. He cut the head and limbs from an illustration of dress patterns, a feature recently added to the new woman's page of the local newspaper, the *Hannoverscher Kurier*. A bit of newsprint, its outline shaped not by the artist's brush but by a pair of scissors, creates the fabric of the skirt. The final image is a seemingly arbitrary composite, one of many possibilities available to the artist.

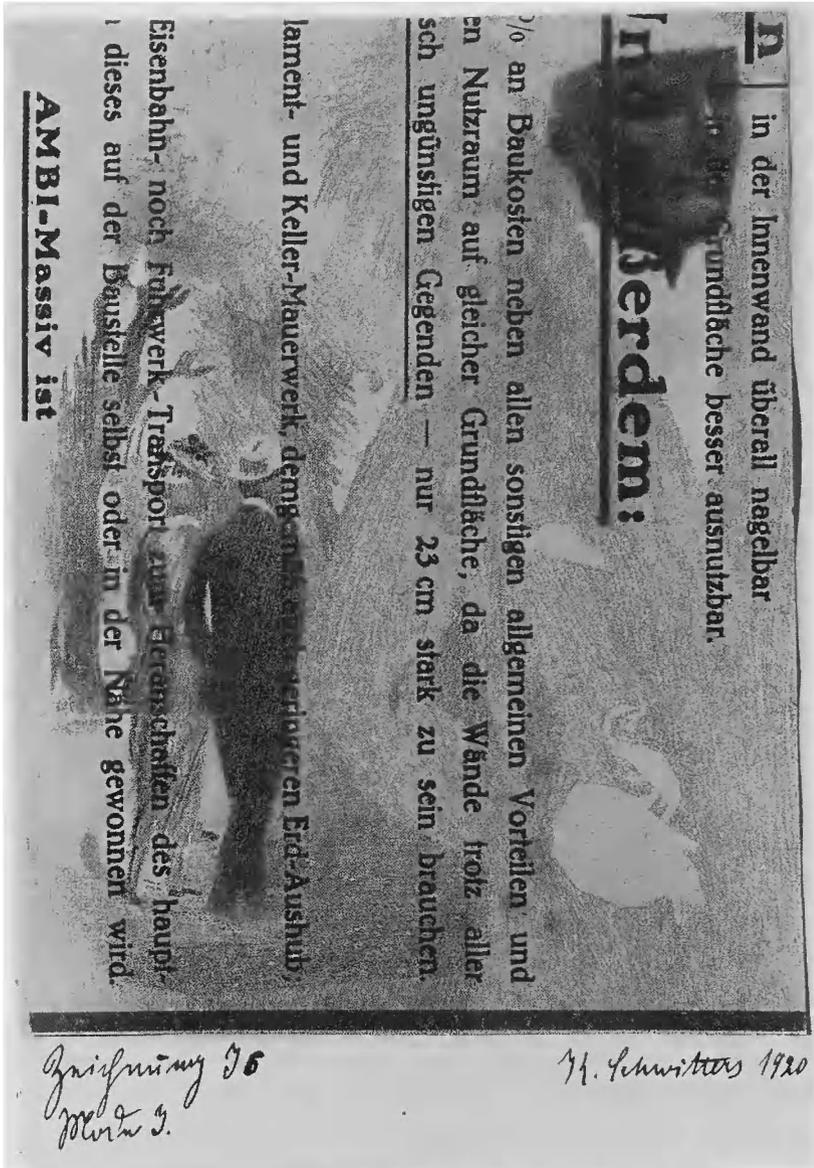
Schwitters even invites the viewer to participate in the completion or elaboration of his *Figurine*, with a directive written below the collage: "Papier ist die grosse Mode. Besatz Holz. Ecken abrunden" (Paper is big in fashion. Trimming wood. Round off the edges). In the period of short-

ages after the war, paper had become a scarce commodity and was thus as desirable as any fashion item. For the artist Schwitters, moreover, paper was “big in fashion” indeed, because found and reused pieces had become his primary material. His call for an act of substitution, the wooden trimming instead of the usual fur or lace, is in jest but identifies his *Figurine* as utterly contemporary. By inviting the viewer to collaborate in this emphasis on appearances and fashion, Schwitters characterizes this modern woman as a decorative doll for the use and pleasure of others—hardly an improvement over her historic status in society.

Schwitters’s implicit representation of woman as a paper doll finds a more explicit parallel in a contemporary cartoon, Karl Arnold’s *Die Dame der eleganten Welt zum An- und Ausziehen* (A Lady of the Elegant World to Dress and Undress), which was published in the satirical magazine *Der Simplicissimus* in 1921.³ The caricaturist surrounds a paper doll with numerous items of elegant apparel, ranging from lingerie to coat and hat and including all the necessary accessories to complete a fashionable modern look. Clearly, Arnold is implying that the identity of a woman of leisure is a matter of role-playing, of construction, and that it can be changed as readily as a costume. Each change of clothing defines another role, but one assumed only at the level of appearances: promenading, riding, entertaining. These activities, Arnold suggests, are interchangeable, and their function is limited to providing visual and theatrical pleasure. Arnold denies woman real presence or functions in society, for he reduces the ostensible wearer of these different fashions to the status of a paper doll, dressed by someone else for another person’s enjoyment. His society lady is a plaything without individual identity. Women, according to both Arnold’s and Schwitters’s representations, can try on new roles, but only those fashioned for them by somebody else; denied expression of an interior or intellectual life—of personal needs or desires—they derive their identity only through the activity of others.

With *Zeichnung 16, Mode I* (Drawing 16, Fashion I) of 1920 (figure 8.2), Schwitters elevates reproduction to artistic status. The work is a readymade image, apparently a trial print salvaged from the Molling company, a local printer, and taken over unaltered; he turned it into a work of art by giving it a title and signing and dating it.⁴ As such it is inspired by Marcel Duchamp's readymades and partakes in the contemporary discussion about the function of art in a period dominated by mechanical production and reproduction.⁵ Schwitters called his readymades "i-drawings" and described the limits of his role in their creation: "The only act of the artist in the case of *i* is the metamorphosis of a given object by singling out a part that is rhythmic in itself."⁶ Schwitters's i-drawings are thus his most rigorous collages. In the case of *Zeichnung 16*, Schwitters effected the metamorphosis of the image by cropping the found object to reveal its most meaningful part. Schwitters's characterized the production of i-drawings as formulaic as the writing of the letter *i*, yet his singling out of a significant detail reintroduced the possibility of content within a "rhythmic" fragment. He further emphasized this possibility by giving the work a descriptive title, "Fashion I." Stressing the role of the artist as selector of significant passages, Schwitters, almost in spite of himself, reintroduces the traditional perception of the artist as possessing a trained eye. His selections are not random, but the result of artistic acumen. As is so typical of his collages, Schwitters worked here with multiple layers of meaning, which is precisely the issue: the contradiction between stated goal and actual pictorial solution.

In his choice of the readymade image and fashion as subject matter, he reveals a fundamental conflict between innovative and traditional approaches to art making and reasserts artistic traditions within the new methods. By definition, fashion embodies the forever new and thus points to the modern, but fashion also, as Georg Simmel observed, "renders possible a social obedience"⁷; it perpetuates the commodification of women



8.2

Kurt Schwitters, *Zeichnung 16, Mode 1*
(Drawing 16, Fashion I), 1920, i-
Zeichnung, 14 × 10.3 cm. Marlborough

International Fine Art. Photo: Prudence
Cumming Associates, London. © 1997
Artists Rights Society, New York/VG
Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

and thereby reinforces traditional social values. In addressing the modern woman as the wearer of fashion rather than as the newly emancipated citizen she had become in Weimar Germany, Schwitters suppresses woman's newfound political and social prominence.

Zeichnung 16 uses a lithograph depicting a fashionably attired man in the foreground and an equally elegant couple strolling under trees in the background. Superimposed over the image is a fragmented text, printed sideways, so that it appears on first glance simply as a pattern. This readymade i-drawing, transforming into a postwar idiom the theme of urban man that Schwitters had already depicted in 1918, delineates the drastic change collage initiated in his work. In an earlier work such as *Z. 42, Der Einsame* (The Lonely One), 1918, the artist portrayed a state of deprivation—the isolation felt by a man without a companion in an urban crowd. He conveyed this emotion in an expressionist manner with angular lines and heavy shading that articulate distinct areas in the composition and contribute to a profound sense of separation and lack of communication. In his i-drawings, Schwitters reinterpreted the psychology of social relations in terms of the contemporary preoccupation with both fashion (the image) and cost-effectiveness (the text). The formal presentation of the elegantly dressed couple and single male, in conjunction with the superimposed text reporting on calculations of construction costs, accentuates Schwitters's concern with questions of artistic form and effectiveness. The theme of fashion itself draws attention to Schwitters's abandonment of his past and his own new “clothes” as an avant-garde artist.

Obviously drawn to this lithographed image that served as the ground for *Zeichnung 16*, Schwitters used it again as the support for a collage in 1920: *Mz. 158, Das Kotsbild* (The Vomit Picture) (figure 8.3) In this work, however, the focus shifts to the relationship between the sexes and reveals in rich complexity how Schwitters perpetuated politically conservative views of women. Using a larger section of the lithograph



8.3

Kurt Schwitters, *Mz. 158, Das Kotsbild*
(The Vomit Picture), 1920, collage, 27
× 19.5 cm. Photograph © Sprengel Mu-

seum, Hanover. © 1997 Artists Rights
Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst,
Bonn.

than in *Zeichnung 16*, Schwitters both manipulated and obscured the image with the application of collage elements. The man who stood in the right foreground of *Zeichnung 16*, here Janus-faced in an accident of the printing press, forms the vertical axis of the composition. He is surrounded by visual and textual references to women that range from a glimpse of erotically exposed ankles and faces casting alluring glances to references to women's professions. Although woman is shown as ever-present and tempting in her pictorial manifestations, the collage's text fragments point to her more threatening aspects, which elicit feelings of anxiety and disgust. The word "Frauenberufe" (women's professions), directly below the domineering image of the man, is surrounded by such words as "Kots" (phonetic spelling of "Kotz," vomit) and "Hundehalsbänder, speziell runde und halbrunde Würger" (dog collars, especially round and half-round choke collars), evoking gagging and choking. In addition, the collage abounds with references to money, all of which are tied to the representation of woman: the centrally placed bank note with its repetition of two female heads, the word "Pfennig" (penny) and a torn bill under the transparent paper layered beneath the words "Anna Blume," and several discount coupons ("Rabattmarken") along the left margin of the composition.

The name Anna Blume refers to Schwitters's poem "An Anna Blume" (1919), his parody of love poetry, and evokes the many paradoxical qualities of its heroine and Schwitters's complex relationship with her.⁸ In the poem Schwitters links Anna Blume to the mechanical ("Anna Blume has wheels"); in *Das Kotsbild* he relates Anna's mechanical properties to the collage process itself, creating a clear visual equation between the female, the modern, the mechanical, and the artistic process. In the poem, Anna also symbolizes desire; but the name came to symbolize Schwitters's own success, for the poem had propelled him almost overnight to international fame. Schwitters skillfully exploited the fame of his best-known product and began to advertise his visual works with references to Anna

Blume, glued stickers with Anna Blume's name on walls, trams, and any other surfaces, and formulated the equation "Kurt Schwitters = Anna Blume." In the collage, various text fragments (including the Anna Blume sticker) evoke commercial exchanges with references to price, receipt, and the good value of a product. Such references, in a work where ready-made images are substituted for the traditional craft of the painter, imply that for Schwitters the completed transition from a precapitalist to a capitalist society was mirrored in male-female relationships, now reduced to a matter of commodity exchange.

"Frauenberufe" refers to the working woman, or New Woman, and points to a pressing social and political dispute that functioned as another barrier to the equity between modern men and women. During the war, women were incorporated into the work force in ever-increasing numbers to fill men's positions. In 1913, women formed 22 percent of the industrial work force; by 1918, their ranks had swelled to 35 percent.⁹ Women had gained suffrage with the birth of the Weimar Republic in 1918, but public opinion about the role of women in the new society was decidedly mixed. The German women's movement itself was conservative, advocating moderate and gradual change so as not to arouse opposition.¹⁰ But even the low-key approach to women's rights created strong opposition within the conservative population. After the war, sentiment against women focused especially on women in the labor force and the professions, when women were pressured to give up their jobs to provide work spaces for the returning veterans. "Frauenberufe"—women's jobs—were exchanged for "Männerberufe"—men's jobs. Those women who chose to keep their positions were increasingly seen as posing a threat to men, preventing them from regaining their "just" place in society and thereby subverting their masculinity.

In Schwitters's collage, the word "Kots" and the reference to choke collars in connection with "women's professions" powerfully allude to women as dangerous beings who need to be dominated. Although women

were capable of providing pleasure, company, and status (the strolling couple), Schwitters, too, described them as potentially threatening, repeating an age-old metaphor that had found new credence in recent avant-garde literature, such as Frank Wedekind's *Lulu* or Oskar Kokoschka's short play of 1909, *Murder, Hope of Women* (prominently presented in *Der Sturm* in 1910 with Kokoschka's own illustration on the cover page of a woman brutally stabbed by a man¹¹). Schwitters similarly evokes images of domination and brutality by making another reference to animals, this time to animal hides—the “useful,” butchered animal—in the words “Sämischgares Rindleder” (chamois cowhide).

Through his mix of images of women as the embodiment of love and desire along with signs of commodity exchange, Schwitters links fashion and women to prostitution. This link is underscored by the specific representation of women in the collage as prefabricated types whose bodies and individual features are arranged for visual consumption and pleasure. Man projects a solid identity: his carefully delineated, realistically modeled face, doubled to survey both left and right, asserts his governing presence in the composition. Women, in contrast, hover in the margins of the image; they are line-drawn fragments cut from fashion plates, without any suggestion of three-dimensional presence. The only “complete” female figure is accompanied by a man, as if it were he who had given her presence. Lacking man's completion and solidity, women are represented only as abstracted and fetishized visions of the male imagination.

Schwitters's women however, resist marginalization and abstraction, leading him to grapple time and again with their power and menacing qualities, as in the small untitled collage *Mz. 163* (1920). The collage itself is an abstract design, but Schwitters affixed a subtitle to it, following his Merz number and recorded under his signature: “Mit Frau, schwitzend” (with wife/woman, sweating). On the most immediate plane, these words refer undoubtedly to collaboration, but they also suggest a powerful subtext that reveals women as simultaneously enticing and danger-

ous, capable of producing in the man a psychological and physiological state of anxiety. More significantly among the text fragments in *Mz. 163*, one word stands out—the Dutch “Beroemde” (famous)—calling to mind Schwitters’s occasional characterization of Anna Blume as “die Berühmte” (the famous). A comparison between *Mz. 163* and *Figurine* thus reveals an act of substitution that we shall witness again in other collages: Schwitters replaced his wife Helma with his own construction, either in the form of Anna Blume or the figurine.¹²

Schwitters gives us a less threatening but equally ambiguous view of women and the role of tradition in a later collage, *Die Handlung spielt in Theben und Memphis zur Zeit der Herrschaft der Pharaonen* (The Action Takes Place in Thebes and Memphis at the Time of the Rule of Pharaohs), c. 1921–1922 (figure 8.4).¹³ This more rectilinear work is dominated by a selection of heads offering a cross section of the representation of women in Western art since the late Middle Ages. It includes one of the sculptural angels of Reims cathedral and the madonna from Stefan Lochner’s *Madonna in the Rose Bower*. Schwitters contrasts these art historical images with those of several decoratively coiffured women culled from contemporary fashion plates. Although the collage appears at first to represent the development of women and the changes in their status through time, there is a curious similarity between the appearance of the old and the new woman. They have the same elongated, delicate features, regardless of whether they represent a madonna or a modern woman. Halo, crown, and hat frame the head in the same decorative manner. Through profile, three-quarter view, or downcast eyes, each avoids engaging the eye of the viewer. Even the gaze of the most contemporary figure at the lower right is screened by a veil. Using iconic representations of women—the madonna and her modern counterpart, the mannequin—Schwitters shows that they are products of the artist’s and, by implication, society’s imagination, and that they are related in their artificiality and universality as models of values and behavior.



8.4

Kurt Schwitters, *Die Handlung spielt in Theben und Memphis zur Zeit der Herrschaft der Pharaonen* (The Action Takes Place in Thebes and Memphis at the Time of the Rule of the Pharaohs), c. 1921–1922, collage, 16.2 × 20 cm. Private collection. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

Schwitters, who was an avid moviegoer and even considered making films himself, endowed this work with a filmlike sense of unfolding time. He adapted the film technique of cutting from frame to frame to create the impression of episodes, distinct moments in time. These separate incidents are contrasted by the sense of continuity, the forever unchanging representation of women. Schwitters here gave visual form to what his contemporary, the philosopher Ernst Bloch, termed *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (non-synchronicity)—by which he meant the experience of time as somehow asymmetrical, the sensation of being at two places or in two different periods at the same time. Bloch thought that the news media in general and photographic imagery in particular could create a sense of simultaneity of totally unrelated realms of experience. Schwitters evoked simultaneity with the disparate and contrasting images imprinted on the individual collage elements; but where for Bloch, non-synchronicity could fuel a desire for a better future, for Schwitters these traces of different cultures only served to reinforce a sense of continuity in male-female relations.

That Schwitters is concerned with the imaging of women—particularly in the modern media and film—as yet another episode in the history of representation is indicated by the scene in the upper left of the collage, which shows a woman on a movie set performing for the camera. Although film, the modern mode of reproduction, will make her look real and lifelike, her image will in fact be as contrived and encoded as that of the other women in this collage. Significantly, both the crew and onlookers are male. In this collage, as in others in the series, Schwitters represents women as directed by men and performing for male visual pleasure; woman is given a narrowly defined realm for her activities, whereas man is shown in command, actively defining the spaces in which he moves. A photograph, included in the lower center of *Die Handlung spielt . . .*, enhances that impression. It depicts a group of contemporary men, some in uniform, holding on to their hats in a gust of wind but moving freely in

the street. Schwitters's mixing of images of modern women and madonnas discloses a sense of continuity in man's perception and representation of women, a continuity that belies the modern era's supposed subversion of tradition. The text—"the action takes place in Thebes and Memphis at the time of the rule of the Pharaohs"—transports us back to ancient Egypt, but also forward to contemporary mass culture. These references create a link between past and present that underscores the sense of continuity created by the representation of women in this collage. In pointing to continuity, Schwitters demonstrates that he, too, is engaged in the age-old artistic pursuit of the construction and reconstruction of tradition. Even though Schwitters had declared his own break with the artistic traditions of the past with the collage medium, this particular collage indicates that the break was not complete; his perspective is one of historical connectedness, rather than rupture. Although Schwitters depicts modernity as an infinite succession of newly created images, these images are products of tradition that reflect the same stereotypes active in earlier periods.

Schwitters's representation of women as undifferentiated is indicative of a perception of women commonly held in this period. It was not only Otto Weininger who in his popular 1903 treatise *Geschlecht und Charakter* (Sex and Character) described women as fundamentally different from men. It was a view of woman deeply embedded in the social psyche of the period. One finds it expressed not only in mass cultural journals, but also in scholarly texts. For example, the sociologist Georg Simmel—an acute observer of modern life—asserted in his essay, "Prostitution": "Women in general are more deeply embedded in the species type than are men, who emerge from the species type more differentiated and individualized."¹⁴ It comes as no surprise, then, that Schwitters set forth a similar view of women in his collages, while reserving for men a dominant position as observers and surveyors of goods.

Schwitters's linkage of superficial fashion to women's identities and professions, coupled with his dual view of men as both controlling and threatened, disparages the modern woman's new status. Much like his contemporary Simmel, who observed that fashion, because of its emphasis on the ever new, is "an aesthetic expression of the desire for destruction,"¹⁵ Schwitters seized upon fashion to sabotage Weimar women's struggle for greater independence. In addition, the various processes of production evoked in the collages—the call for the viewer to complete the image, the reaffirmation of the artistic act in designating a readymade image as a work of art—reveal Schwitters's bid for the survival of certain artistic traditions with their emphasis on male authority.

However profound the change in their formal arrangement and medium, these works suggest that Schwitters's avowed break with tradition was only superficial. In fact, he seems to have redirected his destructive impulse from tradition to signs of modernity. Equating modernity with the political and cultural aftermath of the November Revolution and the founding of the Weimar Republic, and describing it as liberating, he must nevertheless have felt threatened by the chaos engendered by political events. Freedom was achieved at the expense of traditional order and societal organization, which generated a sense of personal destabilization. Schwitters looked to art to bolster his dominion. His own anxieties and ambiguous feelings about modernity were shared by many of his contemporaries and reveal a striking consonance between conservative and progressive attitudes. Schwitters was by no means alone in expressing the experience of loss through the female body.

In the modern period, while the machine was heralded as the purveyor of progress, debates about mass culture also focused on mass culture's inferior status in comparison to traditional, or "high" culture. Technological advances and changing sociopolitical structures threatened the survival of high culture, which was predicated on the notion of the unique work of art—the masterwork as the expression of artistic

genius—and a cultural elite that saw its own elevated status reflected in the rarefied work of art. The modernist work of art, it has been argued, in spite of its effacement of “content” (the erasure of subjectivity and authorial voice) perpetuated the separation between “high” and “low” culture, as it claimed autonomy and separation from the realm of mass culture and everyday life. Theodor Adorno, for example, formulated the notion of the “great divide,” the presumably necessary and insurmountable barrier separating high art from popular culture in capitalist societies.¹⁶

As the female is seen as the quintessential embodiment of loss—according to Freud, the castrated male—she became a ready symbol for modernity and mass culture. In the discourse about mass culture, the female fulfilled two functions: in symbolizing castration anxiety, she represented the fear of fragmentation and loss of male authority; but in representing that fear through the female body, she, as a fetishized object, also offered the possibility of the reassertion of male authority. In Schwitters one rarely finds direct statements about the political and social concerns of his time. Instead, one detects his involvement with commonly shared concerns in little verbal asides, typically in puns. In his study of jokes, Freud has demonstrated how punning permits a playful engagement with a particular topic while ensuring a controlling distance. Schwitters’s phrase, “Das Weib entzückt durch seine Beine, ich bin ein Mann, ich habe keine” (Woman enchants with her legs; I am a man, I do not have any)—a jocular transformation of Freud’s theory of castration anxiety—seems innocent enough, but reconfirms the condition of loss or lack.

In one of his watercolor drawings, *Aq. 38 (für Dexel)*, 1918, Schwitters drew on Anna Blume’s other existence as “komisches Tier” (strange animal) to express castration anxiety with the prototypical image of a *vagina dentata*. The watercolor depicts an animal’s head, its mouth threateningly opened to reveal its large fangs. The head is repeated once more, so that the two sets of fangs dominate the composition. Below, the ani-

mal's enormous claws are perched over a head that is quickly recognized as the male profile of his *Aq.* watercolors. This head is repeated, too, but as one continuous phallic form, ending just between the animal's claws. The animal is without any doubt Anna Blume's stand-in, for it is surrounded by several of her attributes: the church, superimposed as an icon over the animal's jaw; the number 31; and the windmill above its head. The whole image forcefully conveys a powerful threat, a sense of turbulence and chaos. Significantly, Schwitters dated the drawing 1918, although its high number within the sequence of watercolor drawings that he gave the classification "Aq.," would suggest a later date of 1920.¹⁷ Whether he misdated the image consciously or unconsciously, his dating forges a suggestive link between the threat expressed in this image and a particular date. The year 1918 brought, of course, the end of the war, the proclamation of the Weimar Republic, and the violent street fighting between radical and reactionary forces that followed—events often referred to as the November Revolution. Schwitters dated his decisive break with his artistic past and his new beginning as a collage artist to this period. The date of 1918, then, gives the drawing added poignancy because it links the experience of political chaos and loss of tradition to the female body and castration anxiety.

Indeed, Schwitters in his 1930 autobiographical statement described the November Revolution and his artistic reorientation not only in terms of liberation but of loss: "Then suddenly the glorious revolution was upon us. I don't think highly of revolutions. . . . It is as though the wind shakes down the unripe apples, what a shame. . . . [Merz] was like an image of the revolution within me, not as it was, but as it should have been."¹⁸ He ascribes to his collage project, to Merz, a corrective function: Merz was to embody the "good" revolution ("as it should have been"); it was conceived as an agent of control that would undo the damage of uncontrolled revolutionary change and create order out of chaos. In the collages of women, Schwitters symbolically represents the act of control

in his derision of women (dog's choke collars = women's professions) and espousal of tradition through the elevation of artistic power: the ability to manipulate form and to create an image according to his own desires.

The theme of control in relation to women and modernity is further developed in a small collaged work of 1923, for which the artist used a promotional postcard of one of his earliest paintings, a religious work entitled *Stilleben mit Abendmahlskelch* (Still Life with Chalice), 1909. The still life, which survives only in a photograph,¹⁹ depicted a vase, a bottle of wine, a chalice, and an open bible arranged on a table. In the collage, Schwitters effected a revealing substitution: he replaced the bottle of wine with the cut-out illustrations of a woman's head gleaned from a now familiar type of fashion plate. He then inscribed the pages of the book in his own handwriting, maintaining the grammatically incorrect "Dir": "Ich liebe Dir, Anna" (I love you, Anna), words from his poem "An Anna Blume." The placement of the modern woman on Schwitters's altar next to the inscriptions identifies her as a representation of the fictitious beloved, of Anna Blume herself. The religious painting has thus been transformed into a celebration of earthly love and desire as well as a private discourse about self-representation.

The symbolic representation of the body of Christ has been replaced by the fragmented representation of a woman and the sacred text transposed into a ritualistic refrain, written to conjure up an icon, Anna Blume, who has become a fetish and as such fills the void left behind by the demise of religion. In linking fashion, religion, and Anna Blume as the icon of his remarkable success at the beginning of his postwar career as a modernist artist, Schwitters brings the adulation of the commodity to its proper conclusion as the celebration of his own artistic prowess. Using his own earlier work as the basis of the collage, Schwitters ultimately declares himself the maker and transformer of images. In control of transformation itself, he holds a position of power, if only a tenuous and threat-

ened one, in a period of shifting political and cultural values. However, the word “Hummel” (bumblebee) placed so prominently above Schwitters’s altar to Anna Blume—and therefore also to himself—parodies both the religious tradition underlying Schwitters’s image as well as his own self-adulation. The word formed part of a popular insult addressed to water carriers who, with their two buckets suspended from their shoulders, were thought to resemble a bumblebee carrying pollen. The refrain, “Hummel, Hummel” evoked the response “Mors, Mors” (in Northern German dialect the word for buttocks) from the water carrier, who would point to his bottom. In this small collage, Schwitters, then, found a way to shock and amuse by simultaneously breaking down and asserting the power of icons.

To clarify the processes of transformation and substitution, it is useful to take another look at Schwitters’s portrait of his real-life beloved, his wife Helma. *Vision* (1917) depicts his wife with an inward-directed glance in a moment of religious transcendence. Being shown in a moment of private contemplation, she does not engage the viewer’s or even the artist’s eye, and as such is removed from visual consumption. By elevating the modern woman, the mannequin, to the status of religious icon, Schwitters removes her too from the possibilities of sexual consumption to the safer realm of religious adulation. Schwitters directs his distancing effort at both a real woman, Helma, and his modern fabrication, the mannequin, defusing either female’s threat. Schwitters finds control in the act of substitution; subjecting even his own work to transformations gained from substitution manifests an enduring need to reassert his own artistic power.

Schwitters formalizes his typical processes of substitution, transformation, and control in regard to modernity and the representation of women in one of his large *Merzbilder*, the *Konstruktion für edle Frauen* (Construction for Noble Ladies) of 1919 (figure 8.5). This work is dominated by the circular forms of metal lids and wooden wheels and a promi-



8.5

Kurt Schwitters, *Konstruktion für edle Frauen* (Construction for Noble Ladies), 1919, mixed media assemblage: wood, metal, paper, cardboard, and paint, 102.9 × 83.8 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, M.62.22; purchased with funds provided by Mr. and

Mrs. Norton Simon, the Junior Arts Council, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick R. Weisman, Mr. and Mrs. Taft Schreiber, Hans de Schulthess, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Janss, and Mr. and Mrs. Gifford Phillips. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

ment vertical and two diagonals created by some wooden slats. Schwitters inserted into this composition one of his own oil paintings, an earlier portrait of Helma.²⁰ He titled his postwar assemblage “construction,” and indeed, the work’s individual components with their obvious reference to the world of machinery construct a specific place for the woman, who is also once again identified with a piece of “past” (outmoded) art. She is inserted into the composition as the only illusionistic element, and the structural elements are literally superimposed on her. In other words, Helma, or women in general, are made subordinate to a manmade structure, a symbol of technology as controlled by men.

Helma loses her identity and is transformed into “Anna,” a transformation clarified by a little pen drawing of the same year, titled *Konstruktion*. Here we see the same wheels and wild diagonals that characterized the larger assemblage. Schwitters then inscribed the work with two names: Anna Blume and Franz Müller.²¹ Not only has Helma become Anna, but Helma’s real-life husband, Schwitters, has also been replaced by a pseudonym composed of the most generic first and last names. Once again, the creation of substitutes comments on the anonymity of modern life, although it also allows Schwitters to distance himself and to systematize his private emotions. Helma has been transformed into a fetish; love, no longer a threat, can be safely consumed in the form of desire.²² Yet Schwitters’s image is typically ambiguous. It is dedicated to “noble women,” thus expressing an act of admiration. Schwitters, then, plays off fear and admiration; similarly, the possible reference to St. Catherine in the combination of female imagery and machine/wheel (see, for example, also Max Ernst’s *Katharina Ondulata* of 1920) suggests both an adulatory and a destructive impulse.

Fashion plays an important function in the substitution of a fetish for the desired object. Simmel defined envy as an integral part of the language of fashion. He declared that “the fashionable person is regarded

with mingled feelings of approval and envy” and that this envy included a “species of ideal participation in the envied object itself,” which leads “to a quiet personal usurpation of the envied property.”²³ The representation of fashion enabled Schwitters to address his desire for the new while at the same time asserting his wish for ownership and control. As these desires are acted out for the most part in rather inconspicuous collages and veiled in irony, Schwitters’s ambiguous relationship with the modern (i.e., mass culture) and his assertion of control are not immediately apparent. As we have seen, however, the mechanisms of playful substitution and exertion of control are present in his small and large works alike.

In *Damenkonfektion* (Woman’s Ready-to-Wear), a small collaged postcard of 1921, Schwitters once more links the themes of fashion and desire. For this occasional work, Schwitters used a photo of himself, a promotional postcard printed by his publisher. Instead of giving his correspondent the full benefit of his face, Schwitters covered up his eyes with the large print of the word “Damenkonfektion” and surrounded his head with pieces of cut-out text referring to items of women’s clothing, such as blouses and aprons. He then covered the bottom part of the postcard with another fragment of text, from which one can gather that “today is the day of his life in which he celebrates that which the hand of man could create and has created.” The text ends again with a reference to commerce: “I have decided to sell cheaply these outstandingly beautiful wares.” Significantly, Schwitters cut the text so that it ends with an adulation of the commodity: “schöne Ware—sehr billig abzugeben” (beautiful wares, sold cheaply). By covering his eyes with the word for another commodity, “Damenkonfektion”—that is, by literally putting “Damenkonfektion” into his line of sight—he declares the predominance of the commodity but also puts himself into a special relationship to it.²⁴

This relationship is clarified by his addition of the name Anna, printed in red, referring once again to his heroine of desire, who at the

same time represents modernity. In placing “Anna” next to the word “Damenkonfektion,” Schwitters relates fashion, consumption, and modernity. Much as *Damenkonfektion* is the product of a designer, so Anna is a construction and attests to the artist’s mastery. In all of these collages, the ever-present threat of the modern woman—and modernity—underlies the images. Fragmenting the woman and then reconstructing her according to his own desire affords ultimate control over her—and repeats, of course, the countless similar acts of representing the female through brutal deformation and mutilation typical of early twentieth-century modernist art, from Pablo Picasso’s *Les Femmes d’Alger* (1907) to Marcel Duchamp’s or Francis Picabia’s representations of woman-as-machine; putting her over his eyes as an abstract construct implies the ulterior motive of controlling her through sight, the most powerfully ordering sense of all.

This small collage shows Schwitters’s constructive use of play. The simple gesture of substitution allowed him to “try on” women’s clothes, to try on modernity. Schwitters repeated—and intensified—the play in another collaged postcard, *Anna Blume* (1921), in which he employed the same publicity photograph but superimposed only an Anna Blume sticker over his eyes. Here, then, Schwitters takes on Anna Blume’s identity to see the world through female eyes. This masquerade extends male identity to include its other, the female self. It is reminiscent of Duchamp’s contemporaneous creation of an alter ego, his *Rose Sélavy*, who, albeit in a more teasing and intellectually more sophisticated manner, also embodied eternal desire: “Eros, c’est la vie.” However, Schwitters’s play took place only within the relatively safe realm of art, not as a public masquerade. A third collaged postcard, *Wheel* (1921), created again with his publicity photograph, completes the connection from fashion to modernity. Here Schwitters simply drew a wheel over his forehead. His eyes are left uncovered; no longer does he look at the world through the signs of fe-

maleness—or modernity. There is no masking, no playful trying on of new roles, only the intimation that technology has been brought under control and internalized. Placed directly over his forehead as a small and clearly delineated form, the wheel is now associated with rational thought and intellectual empowerment.

In a series of substitutions, Schwitters effected a transition from the experience of the female and the modern as threat to their sublimation in the fetishized object and final subjugation through incorporation. In actuality, this transition did not develop according to the chronology of the works, for the three postcards were not executed in the sequence suggested here, and thus do not support the notion of a linear development. The self-portrait with the wheel was, in fact, the earliest in the series, dating from 5 March 1921; it was followed by the altered postcard with the Anna Blume sticker of 27 May 1921; and *Damenkonfektion* was the last in this series, dating from 4 November 1921. Similarly, the other representations of femaleness do not follow a neat temporal development indicative of greater or lesser acceptance of modernity. Rather, there was a constant back and forth between different positions, reflective of Schwitters's search for identity in a period of shifting cultural and political values.

During the 1920s, Schwitters increasingly embraced abstraction, but even during this time of his most ardent identification with the dominant modernist style, the subterranean chambers of the *Merzbau*—the “Lustmurderer Cave” or the “Grotto of Love”—became the hidden staging grounds of his male modernist anxiety. His collages of women and the hidden grottoes of the *Merzbau* share one important facet: Schwitters's assertion of control through the act of playful substitutions. Here, modern studies of children's play may help us to see Schwitters's characteristic play in its larger significance. The psychologist Donald Woods Winnicott, who studied the function of play in children, described playing

as an organizational activity expressive of a need for control: “Organized nonsense is already a defense just as organized chaos is a denial of chaos.”²⁵ In Schwitters, playful substitutions operate as a mechanism of control over the chaos of modernity.

Schwitters formalized the theme of control in a larger work of 1921, *Mz. 239, Frau-Uhr* (Woman-Watch). Instead of using small cut-outs of women’s heads, he carefully cut out and glued down the entire image—which is nevertheless only a truncated representation—of a provocatively reclining female nude, presumably gleaned from a pornographic magazine and clearly suggestive of all the reclining nudes of past art from classical water nymphs to Ingres’s *odalisques*. Superimposed on the divan against which she leans is a man’s hand stretching out from a sleeve that bears the imprint of an allusive male name, “Herr Erich Stock” (translated as “Mr. Eric Stick”), evocative of Schwitters’s fictional hero, Alves Bäsensiel (translated as Alves Broomstick). Its emphasis on the phallic power of masculinity is reinforced by additional imprints on the sleeve—“Herrn,” “Inhalt,” and “Hannoverscher Verlag” (Men, Contents, Hanover Publishers)—which similarly engage issues of male authority and authorship. The male hand holds a pocket watch over the woman’s body, literally superimposing his time on her. We are thus made to understand that the nude woman is a natural object of desire on whom man, significantly clothed, constructs his concepts and over whom he commands.²⁶ A symbol of tradition, this nude in Schwitters’s collage is the foundation and the shard upon which time or modernity was building its new structure. This impression is underscored by the tags hanging from the man’s sleeves, tags that seemingly tell us the exact date and time of an encounter that nevertheless remains timeless: “Sonnabend 5” (Saturday 5).

This collage, the most aggressive expression of male control in Schwitters’s work, is one of his very few photomontages. For most, photographic material played a minor role in his collages, as opposed to the

emphasis on the photographic in Berlin Dada. Here Schwitters exploits the so-called objectivity of the photographic image to reassign woman emphatically to her traditionally ascribed status not only as an object of male desire, but as the object of men's making. Woman, here, is seen as she usually has been in the history of representation, through the eyes of the male creator of images.

The issue of control brings a curious, if revealing, focus to Schwitters's series of women and fashion imagery. Although such works as *Die Handlung spielt . . .* and *Figurine* in part questioned stereotypes about women, *Frau-Uhr* openly stresses the persistence of traditional behavior and power relationships. In method and subject matter, Schwitters described the modern woman in ambiguous terms, at times in terms of desire, and at other times in terms of a threat that, like modernity with its chaos, must be confined. Drawing on the themes of fashion and prostitution, Schwitters was able to comment simultaneously on modernity and the persistence of traditions. An observation made by Simmel suggests why Schwitters may have seized upon fashion to represent the paradox of the persistence of tradition within modernist innovation. "Fashion as a phenomenon," Simmel said, "is immortal. Only the nature of each individual fashion is transitory. The fact that change itself does not change endows each of the objects which it affects with a psychological appearance of duration."²⁷ Schwitters drew repeatedly on subject matter that symbolized continuity in the guise of the new. It permitted him to articulate his need for control in a historical moment characterized by chaos, the absence of control, and the loss of tradition. Simultaneously embracing and rejecting modernity for the empowerment and disempowerment it had engendered, Schwitters focused in this series of works on the female body in order to reaffirm control. He disassembled his beloved, Helma, and her modern equivalent, the mannequin, to reassemble both according to his own needs and desires. In the process, he proclaimed

man the creator of his environment. In so doing, Schwitters expressed a desire for a traditional, patriarchal power structure. In this sense, his work both mirrored and illuminated the social and political changes that characterized life in the Weimar Republic. History has shown that many of the social changes brought about by the November Revolution were not, in fact, fundamental because they permitted so many of the old norms to survive. Schwitters's collages suggest that, in art as in politics, control is maintained through adherence to tradition.

NOTES

This essay is a revised excerpt of “Refashioned Traditions,” from the author’s book, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Traditions and Innovation* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and is reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

1. Paula Modersohn-Becker’s work, including the *Self-Portrait*, was exhibited to much acclaim at the Kestnegergesellschaft in Hanover in 1917; the exhibition was accompanied by the publication of her letters and diaries. See John Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1985), p. 386, n. 21.
2. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (New York: Vintage, 1981), p. 267.
3. Karl Arnold, “Die Dame der eleganten Welt zum An- und Ausziehen,” *Der Simplicissimus* 26, no. 33 (1921): 436.
4. For an account of Schwitters’s paper-salvaging operations at the Molling factory in Hanover, see Kate Steinitz, *Kurt Schwitters: A Portrait from Life*, trans. Robert Barlett Haas (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 38–39.
5. Elderfield points out that Schwitters’s *i*-drawings lack Duchamp’s anti-aesthetic intent (*Kurt Schwitters*, pp. 188–189).
6. Kurt Schwitters, “Die einzige Tat des Künstlers bei *i* ist entformeln . . . ,” *Merz* 8/9 (April–July 1924): 85, trans. in Elderfield, *Kurt Schwitters*, p. 188. Schwitters chose the letter “i” for these “drawings” to indicate the quickness of their production and cited a refrain taught to children when learning to write in the old-fashioned German script: “rauf, runter, rauf, Pünktchen drauf” (up, down, up, top with a dot).
7. Georg Simmel, “Fashion,” trans. in Donald N. Levine, *Georg Simmel: On Indi-*

viduality and Social Forms (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 305. Simmel's 1904 essay was originally published as *Philosophie der Mode* (Berlin: Pan, 1905).

8. See Dorothea Dietrich, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 70–82.

9. During the war, of all the Western industrialized nations, Germany sustained the largest proportional increase of women in the industrial labor force. In March 1917, women first outnumbered men at work, and their number grew until the end of the war. The increase was particularly steep in defense-related industries. Krupp Industries, for example, which hired no women in 1913, reported 28,302 of them on payroll in 1918; roughly three-fifths of the metal industries in Rhineland-Westphalia introduced women for the first time into the labor force during the war. In light industry women predominated by up to 75 percent in many plants during the war, and in those of heavy industry, they often reached 25 percent. Backlash was evident as early as the winter of 1917, when the war ministry, preparing for demobilization, established guidelines for women to relinquish their jobs to returning veterans. With the worsening economic situation of the early 1920s, tension between the sexes over jobs increased. Women were either sent home or released into the economic custody of their husbands or fathers or brothers, placed in domestic service, or retrained in some traditionally “feminine work” like sewing. Those women who retained their jobs suffered a revived discrimination in wages. See Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz, “Beyond *Kinder, Küche, Kirche*: Weimar Women in Politics and Work,” in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review, 1984), pp. 48–49.

10. See Richard Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894–1933* (London and Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976).

11. *Der Sturm* 1, no. 20 (14 July 1910): 155.

12. Schwitters's decision is reminiscent of the behavior of Oskar Kokoschka who, after having been rejected by his mistress Alma Mahler-Werfel, redirected his lost control to a life-size effigy of his former lover, which he carried around town.
13. The collage is untitled, but as is true of most of Schwitters's untitled collages, it is referred to by the text contained on a paper fragment in the collage. Elderfield (*Kurt Schwitters*, p. 77), dates it to c. 1918–1919, but the inclusion of a film still and the reference to Ernst Lubitsch's film, *The Love of the Pharaohs*, released in 1921, suggest a date of c. 1921–1922.
14. Simmel, "Prostitution," trans. in Levine, *Georg Simmel*, p. 123. The essay was first published as part of *Philosophie des Geldes* (Leipzig: Dunker & Humblot, 1907), pp. 413–418.
15. Simmel, "Fashion," p. 311.
16. See Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Post-modernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 53–54.
17. *Aq. 37, Industriegebiet*, for example, is dated 1920. More remarkably still, no other drawing in the *Aq.* series is dated 1918.
18. Kurt Schwitters, "Kurt Schwitters [1930]," in Friedhelm Lach, *Kurt Schwitters. Das Literarische Werk*, vol. 5 (Cologne: DuMont, 1981), p. 535; trans. in Werner Schmalenbach, *Kurt Schwitters* (New York: Abrams, 1967), p. 32.
19. Illustrated in Dietrich, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters*, figure 77.
20. Gisela Zankl-Wohlthät suggests, correctly I believe, that the inserted portrait represents Helma. See Zankl-Wohlthät, "Gedanken zum Frühwerk von Kurt Schwitters," in *Kurt Schwitters 1887–1948*, ed. Joachim Büchner and Norbert Nobis (Han-

over: Sprengel Museum, 1986), p. 35. She also points out this *Merzbild* was reproduced in horizontal format in *Der Ararat. Glossen, Skizzen und Notizen zur neuen Kunst 2* (1921): 19. If indeed meant to be horizontally formatted, the portrait would be in the upper right and the superimposed slats could then be read as a large letter “A.”

21. Franz Müller was the main character of Schwitters’s planned collaborative novel, *Franz Müllers Drahtfrühling*, which he began to write with Hans Arp but never developed beyond the first fragmentary chapter.

22. This treatment of desire is reminiscent of his watercolor drawing, *Aq. 1, Das Herz geht vom Zucker zum Kaffee* (1919). That composition shows a strong similarity to the *Konstruktion für edle Frauen*, with its overlapping circular forms and slashing diagonals. Above all, Schwitters substituted a fetish for the female: desire has been rechanneled from the woman’s body to the coffee pot.

23. Simmel, “Fashion,” p. 304.

24. Schwitters’s references to commerce and “schöne Ware” are also typically self-deprecating and playfully veil his ever-present concern with the marketing of his own work and his acute awareness of the art market. His notebooks are stocked with newspaper clippings about the financial success of artists like Hans Thoma and Wilhelm Leibl and artist recipients of grants or prizes. That his own collage work did not measure up in monetary value to the work of these naturalist painters must have been only too obvious to him. One is tempted to speculate that his continued pursuit of his own naturalist painting skills may have been in part the result of his obsession with Thoma’s financial success.

25. Donald Woods Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), p. 56.

26. Carol Duncan, in her important article on the sexist implications in expressionist and cubist paintings, observes: “More than any other theme, the [female]

nude could demonstrate that art originates in and is sustained by male erotic energy. This is why so many 'seminal' works of the period are nudes. When an artist had some new or major artistic statement to make, when he wanted to authenticate to himself or others his identity as an artist, or when he wanted to get back to 'basics,' he turned to the nude" ("Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting," in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard [New York: Harper & Row, 1982], p. 306). Schwitters's work shows that this prewar artistic attitude extends into the post-war period.

27. Simmel, "Fashion," p. 319.

VISUALIZING WOMEN IN 291

willard BOHN



A few months after World War I erupted in Europe, a group of Alfred Stieglitz's colleagues and supporters gathered in New York to discuss the possibility of publishing a journal devoted to the latest tendencies in modern art. Among those attending were Paul B. Haviland, the American representative for Haviland china manufactured in Limoges, France; Agnes Ernst Meyer (1887–1970), who worked as a newspaper reporter; and Marius de Zayas (1880–1961), a caricaturist and the author of several books on art, who eventually became the editor of the new review. In deference to Stieglitz, who agreed to finance this promising venture along with Haviland and Meyer, the collaborators decided to name the journal after the photographer's art gallery located at 291 Fifth Avenue.

Appearing in March 1915, the first issue of *291* was followed by eleven others in rapid succession. "In design and content," William Homer declares, "there was no periodical in America more advanced than *291*."¹ For that matter, Homer continues, it was unparalleled anywhere in the world as a total work of art. Yet despite the journal's undeniable visual appeal and its unusually interesting contributions, it failed to sell as well as its sponsors had anticipated and ceased publication early in 1916. Eight months later, in an attempt to sell the remaining copies, de Zayas published an advertisement for *291* in Stieglitz's other review, *Camera Work*. Since *Camera Work* was an older, well established journal, de Zayas hoped to interest a wider audience among its readers. Continuing the poetic experiments begun by Guillaume Apollinaire and the Italian Futur-

ists, de Zayas stated, the poems in *291* represented experiments in “psychotype, an art which consists in making the typographical characters participate in the expression of the thoughts and in the painting of the states of soul, no more as conventional symbols but as signs having significance in themselves.”² Although this pronouncement contained several interesting insights, it was formulated very much after the journal had ceased to exist. For one thing, both the term and the definition of “psychotype” were borrowed from an article by Amédée Ozenfant, published in the French journal *L’Elan* in February 1916.³ Besides Apollinaire’s “Voyage” in its first number, only one other poem appearing in *291* exploited typographical effects to any extent, de Zayas’s *ELLE* (She) in the November 1915 issue (figure 9.1).

Unlike compositions in previous issues, *ELLE* consisted entirely of verbal phrases spread across the page to form an abstract portrait. Since the phrases were printed in many different typefaces, the overall visual effect was quite striking. Indeed, as Dickran Tashjian declares, the typography espoused the shock tactics adopted by Dada and aggressively attacked the viewer.⁴ These tactics were repeated in a drawing that was paired on the same page with de Zayas’s composition, Francis Picabia’s *VOILÀ ELLE* (Behold Her) (figure 9.2), which combined two different objects to create a fantastic love machine. Formerly associated with Cubism, the French painter was destined to become one of Dada’s leading practitioners. As William Camfield has shown, Picabia’s mechanomorphic drawing represents a pistol aimed at a target, which is connected to it by mechanical linkage so that, once the trigger is pulled, the pistol will continue to fire indefinitely.⁵ Since these objects are clearly intended to function as sexual symbols, the portrait depicts a woman with nymphomaniacal tendencies, a woman with an insatiable need for sex. This interpretation is reinforced visually by a cable running from the target to a furnace in the background: as each bullet strikes the target, it not only causes the pistol to discharge again but also increases the temperature

FEMME!

TU VOUDRAIS BIEN TE LIRE DANS

CE PORTRAIT

ELLE N'A PAS LA PEUR DU PLAISIR
DE VOIR BRÛLER À LA PÉPÉRIERIE

JE LA VOIS DANS SA PENSÉE
et comme elle aime à être
tracée par une main mécanique

TOUTES LES INTOXICATIONS—

ELLE N'A PAS FAIT SON ÉCOLE D'AMOUR DANS LA
CITRUCURCH

ELLE n'est

QUE DANS L'EXAGÉRATION DE SES
JOUISSANCES ET DANS LA conscience de la possession—
EXCLAVE QUI SE LIBÈRE liberté dans l'ESCLAVAGE

ELLE JOUIT AVEC
LES ENDRITOITS
OÙ IL A VÉCU

PAS D'INTELLECTUALISME
PAR LE MIRROR DE NON MALÉ

pas de forme

LE SACRIFICE SADIQUE DES SAINTS
atrophie
CAUSÉE
PAR

CÉRÉBRALE
MATÉRIALITÉ
PURE

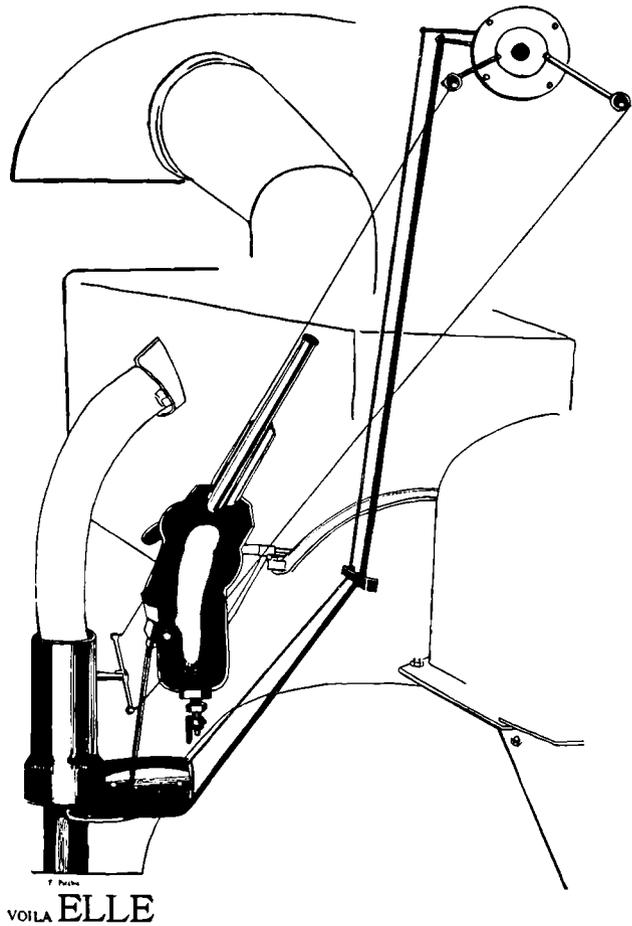
JOUISSANCE A DÉCHIRER SON ÊTRE SOCIAL



ABSENCE ABSOLUE DE CILICE

ELLE

M. DE ZAYAS



9.1

Marius de Zayas, *ELLE* (She), c. 1915, visual poem (from *291*, no. 9 [November 1915]: 2).

9.2

Francis Picabia, *VOILÀ ELLE* (Behold Her), c. 1915, mechanomorphic drawing (from *291*, no. 9 [November 1915]: 3). © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

of the “furnace.” To this day, the identity of the woman in question remains unknown.

A contemporary critic reported that “according to the artists’ sworn word these works were portraits of the same woman made at different times and in different places ‘without collusion.’”⁶ Nevertheless, the resemblance between the two works is so marked that it cannot possibly be coincidental. Situated at the intersection of caricature and mechanical drawing, they portray the same woman in an identical manner. Not only are the titles virtually the same, but the language chosen by both artists is French. Both works feature a vertical upright surmounted by a horizontal crossbar, both have a prominent diagonal extending from lower left to upper right, and both employ curved elements (on the left) to connect the vertical with the diagonal. Finally, de Zayas’s phrase “une ligne droite tracée par une main mécanique” (a straight line traced by a mechanical hand) describes the hand holding the gun in Picabia’s drawing and its mechanical linkage. The two long wires in Picabia’s work are evoked by another of de Zayas’s expressions as well: “une force ductile à la vivification” (a ductile force leading to invigoration). Although the two men may not have actively collaborated, de Zayas plainly modeled his composition on his friend’s. Following the procedure pioneered by his abstract caricatures, de Zayas sought a symbolic object to represent the lascivious woman and settled on Picabia’s love machine.

Whereas de Zayas was accustomed to depicting both the person and the symbol visually, *ELLE* also required him to evoke them verbally. Like Picabia’s scandalous invention, therefore, the unknown woman is represented at the pictorial as well as the linguistic level. In contrast to her verbal portrait, which is elaborated in considerable detail, only traces of her physical presence remain. As far as one can ascertain, she is turned sideways to the viewer and is portrayed in a standing position. The vertical upright appears to represent her body, the two curved lines her exaggerated breasts, and the two short lines (at a 45 degree angle) her feet.

Since each of the curves is intersected by a diagonal near its lower end, another possibility also comes to mind. Perhaps the curved lines represent the edges of her dress and the diagonal lines her two arms. She may be lifting her dress to keep it from touching the ground (or may be holding onto it on a windy day). Or, given her lascivious temperament, she could be exposing her feminine “charms” deliberately. The reason her head is not visible, one eventually perceives, is that she is wearing a hat with a veil. The triangular outline indicates that the hat is secured by a cloth band, or perhaps by the veil itself, which is tied under her chin. Aside from that, all we know about her hat is that it displays the three primary colors: *ROUGE*, *BLEU*, *JAUNE* (red, blue, yellow).

The beginning of de Zayas’s composition—if it can be said to have a beginning—is rather ambiguous. “Femme!” he exclaims, “Tu voudrais bien te lire dans / ce portrait” (Woman! / You ought to recognize yourself in / this portrait). From this Tashjian deduces that it attacks the female sex, that it portrays the archetypal modern woman “whose emancipation is matched by the arrangement of the words on the page—a reminder of the Futurist slogan, ‘les mots en liberté.’”⁷ However, we will see that de Zayas admired modern women, and valued their independence.

Like Picabia’s drawing, *ELLE* is a scathing denunciation of one woman in particular who is consumed by her vices (“noyée par le vice”), which are enumerated in no special order. Not only is she concerned wholly with carnal gratification, but she suffers from “atrophIE CÉRÉ-BRALE” because of her devotion to material things. Since the woman pursues “toutes les intoxications” (every intoxication), including opium and cocaine, it is no wonder that she is burned out. One of the things that makes her such an *HURLUBERLU* (scatterbrain) is the way she handles alcohol. Rather than *IVRE* (drunk), or even *IVRE BONNE* (good and drunk), she is not content until she has become *IVRE MORTE* (dead drunk). As one soon discovers, the phrase “elle n’a pas la peur du plaisir” (she is not afraid of pleasure) is a radical understatement. She exists only

insofar as she is possessed by her love of exaggerated pleasure, de Zayas tells us, and in her consciousness of that possession. Paradoxically, since she can find freedom only in pleasure she can never really be free. While she thinks of herself as an *ESCLAVE QUI SE LIBERE* (slave who succeeds in freeing herself), her liberty is just another form of slavery (“liberté dans l’ESCLAVAGE”).

Among other things, her addiction to pleasure is illustrated by her excessive indulgence in sex. As de Zayas wryly observes, “Elle n’a pas fait son école d’amour dans la littérature” (She has not learned so much about love from reading books). Indeed, the handwritten message at the lower right reveals that she could write a book about love herself. Ostensibly clipped from a love letter, it reads: “Mais je vous aime et / vous devez bien m’aimer / un peu” (But I love you and / you should try to love me / a little). According to one critic, the words *LE SACRIFICE* *sadique des saints* (the saints’ sadistic sacrifice) permit us to identify her as a *femme fatale*. Since Picabia referred to himself elsewhere as “le saint des saints,” Tashjian suggests that she is a modern Salomé who has won the French artist’s heart, which is certainly possible.⁸ The allusion is complicated by the presence of several puns involving breasts (*des seins*) and/or drawings (*dessins*). Similarly, one suspects the expression refers to a practice evoked at the lower right: “absence absolue de cilice” (absolute absence of hair shirt). Viewed from this angle, *LE SACRIFICE* *sadique des saints* serves as much as anything to define *cilice*. The saintly individuals who adopted this article of clothing, de Zayas seems to be saying, were engaging in a sadistic (or masochistic) form of self-sacrifice. “Absence absolue de cilice” represents a colossal understatement. Although the woman may be described as an apostle of immorality, no one would ever confuse her with a saint.

The typographic experimentation in *ELLE* was the exception rather than the rule in *291*. The poem was atypical with respect not only to its form but in its thematic treatment as well. While *291* was a far cry from a

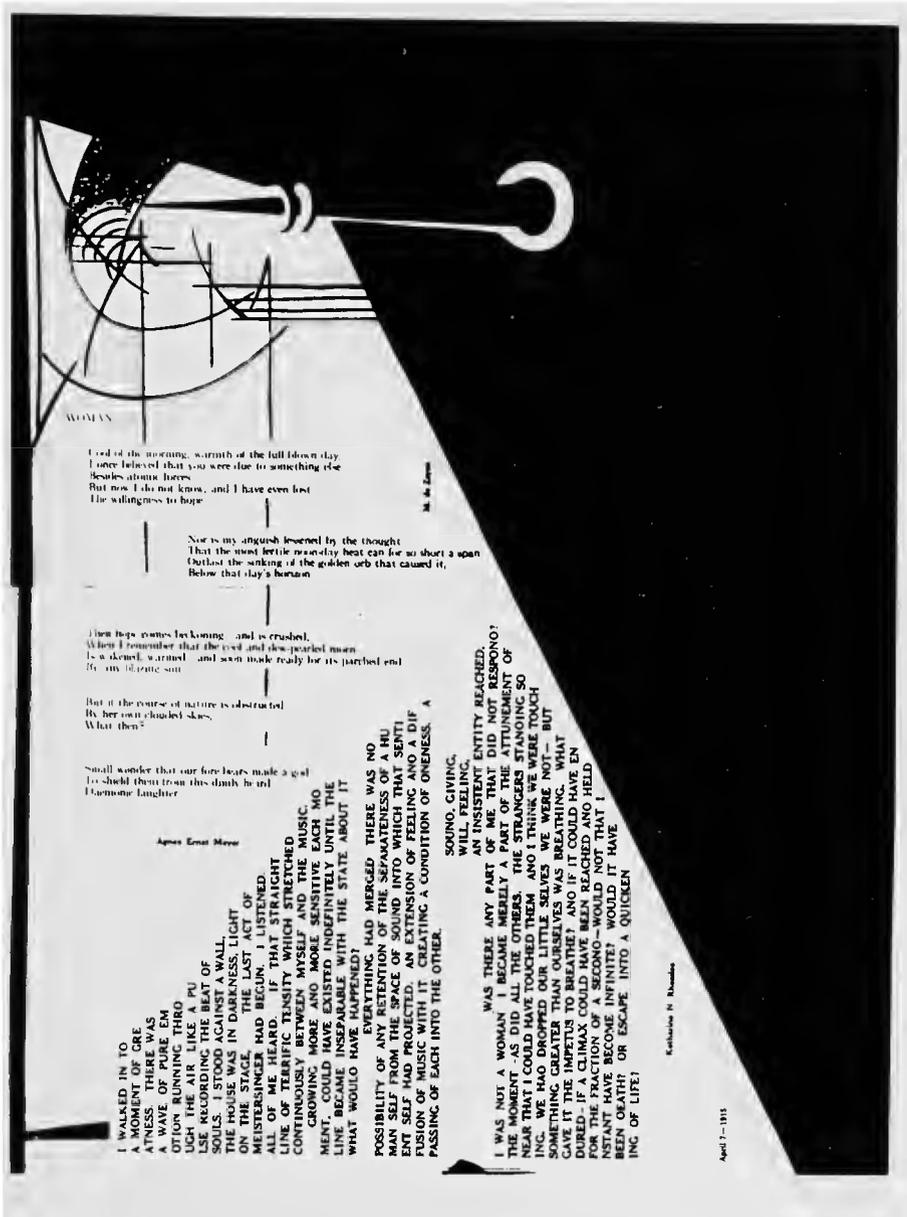
feminist journal, it was sympathetic to women's causes and genuinely interested in women's contributions to art and literature. Among other things, women were featured prominently in the review and played an active role in its development. In addition, *291* was unusually receptive to women who wished to explore the female condition, female identity, or their own personal situations. Nowhere is this more evident than in the realm of visual poetry, which benefited repeatedly from female inspiration. The second issue contained a fascinating example of poetic collaboration by de Zayas and Agnes Ernst Meyer titled *Mental Reactions*.⁹ Conceived as a *poème simultané*, the text was provided by Meyer, who juxtaposed her interior reflections with her physical surroundings, and the pictorial components by de Zayas.

Essentially an abstract composition, the poem's design illustrates and interprets an extended meditation on what it means to be a woman. Although the events that Meyer recounts also involve other people, everything is filtered through her consciousness. As the title indicates, the emphasis is not on the events themselves but on her reflections about them (and about herself). Since the poem also records her reactions to an attractive man at a social gathering, it actually revolves about two poles. For if its subject is ostensibly Meyer's thoughts, the subject of those thoughts turns out to be a flirtation. The electricity that passes between her and the unknown man is the pretense for her reflections and the poem's *raison d'être*. The challenge here is to recontextualize Meyer's thoughts and to reconstruct her vantage point. Is she looking at herself through the man's eyes, one wonders, or is she imposing her own gaze on him? In order to grasp the complexities of the situation, more information is needed about Meyer herself, such as who she was and what she represented.

We know, for example, that Meyer was a dedicated participant in *291* activities.¹⁰ She was known to her colleagues as "the Sun Girl" not just because she worked for the *New York Sun* but also because she possessed

a radiant personality. Her marriage to the wealthy banker Eugene Meyer, Jr., in 1910 enabled her to become an influential patron of the arts. Indeed, many of the paintings she and her husband collected were eventually acquired by major museums. Some years later, they purchased the *Washington Post*—currently owned by their daughter, Katharine Graham—and transformed it into a major newspaper. In 1915, Meyer was twenty-eight, had been married five years, and had become accustomed to her new lifestyle. Although she was not ostentatious, she clearly enjoyed the luxury and privileges that came with wealth. One begins to understand her predicament in *Mental Reactions*: eyeing the handsome man with whom she has been flirting, Meyer is briefly tempted to have an affair. Somewhat reluctantly, she admits it is not worth risking her marriage, that her security and comfort are more important than a romantic fling. Her decision is validated toward the end of the poem, when she decides the man has only been toying with her. While one could criticize Meyer for capitulating to society's hypocritical demands, for perpetuating phallogocentric structures, she analyzes her feeling with impressive lucidity. Her text is remarkable not only for its relentless honesty but for acknowledging that women are sexual beings as well as men.

291's third issue, published in May 1915, included *Woman*, another instance of interartistic collaboration (figure 9.3) involving de Zayas, Meyer, and Katharine Nash Rhoades (1885–1965). As before, the collaborators were all members of the Stieglitz circle and had known each other for several years. Together with Meyer and another member, Marion Beckett, Rhoades was affectionately known as one of “the Three Graces” by her colleagues. Like their associates at *291*, they were familiar with the latest experiments in Europe and sought to introduce avant-garde aesthetics to America. Unfortunately, Rhoades has become such an obscure figure today that it is difficult to evaluate her significance. Although she was an active poet and painter, few traces remain of either activity. We know, however, that some of her poetry appeared in *Camera Work* and



9.3

Marius de Zayas, Agnes Ernst Meyer,
and Katharine Nash Rhoades, *Woman*,
c. 1915, visual poem (from 291, no. 3
[May 1915]: 2-3).

that one drawing was reproduced in *291* in April 1915. In addition, her paintings were exhibited at Stieglitz's gallery the same year, where they attracted a certain amount of attention. Judging from the reviews, they consisted of straightforward portraits and landscapes rendered in a fauvist manner.¹¹

By contrast, Rhoades's drawing in *291* was largely abstract and highly advanced for the period. Resembling one of de Zayas's abstract caricatures, the enigmatic design may be related to an article published elsewhere in the issue and titled "Motherhood a Crime."¹² The article recounts how a woman who bore an illegitimate child was driven to kill herself from shame. The drawing seems to depict an egg and a determined spermatozoon separated from each other by an ambiguous object, perhaps a pistol as H. Nichols B. Clark suggests. Seen in this light, it can be interpreted as "a strongly feminist [statement], attacking conventional social codes as the basis for a needless suicide."¹³ In 1915 Rhoades also met Charles Lang Freer (whose collection of Oriental art is now in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C.), and subsequently became his secretary and research assistant. Although she continued to paint, she devoted more and more of her energy to religious interests as time went on. Convinced that her earlier paintings were hopelessly amateurish, she eventually destroyed nearly all of them.

In contrast to *Mental Reactions*, the composition of this other collaborative effort simply juxtaposes verbal and visual elements without attempting to create an organic whole. For this reason, Tashjian observes, it is slightly less successful.¹⁴ It remains a highly ambitious effort, nonetheless, to create a collaborative poetics and an interartistic synthesis. Occupying two full pages, the composition is divided into three sections. On the left is an untitled prose poem by Rhoades whose lines are arranged to form a triangle. Possibly deriving from Walt Whitman's "A Patient, Noiseless Spider," as Tashjian suggests, it points to the drawing on the right and provides a visual counterbalance. Beginning "I walked in

to / a moment of gre / atness,” the poem is written in an autobiographical mode verging on the confessional. Paradoxically, although it takes place in a public setting, the work relates a highly intimate experience. Entering an opera house during the final act of *Der Meistersinger*, Rhoades experiences a wave of emotion and “a condition of oneness” with the music and the audience around her: “I was not a woman,” she confides, “I became merely a part of the attunement of / the moment—as did all the others.”

Reflecting Rhoades’s mounting emotion, the horizontal lines grow longer and longer until, once the opera has reached its climatic moment, they grow shorter and shorter. Thus the poem manages to chart the rise and fall of Wagner’s music as well as Rhoades’s emotional response. And yet the visual seismograph does not tell the whole story, which turns out to be more intimate than she perhaps intended. For if the poem recounts a mystical attempt to merge with the infinite, it just as surely describes a psychosexual encounter. At first Rhoades informs her readers that she was totally possessed by the music, that it aroused her in every possible way (“Was there any part of me that did not respond?”). However, she later admits that her sexual response was less intense than the chart would indicate: “If a climax could have been reached and held / for the fraction of a second,” she exclaims in frustration, “would not that i / nstant have become infinite? would it have / been death? or escape into a quicken / ing of life?” While erotic overtones can be detected throughout the poem, the reference to life quickening in the womb, i.e., to impregnation and birth, makes the elements of sex and female experience explicit. Whether Rhoades is referring to Wagner’s music, whose climax she would have liked to prolong, or to her own physiological response, the poem ends on a note of erotic yearning. Although she has experienced musical fulfillment, she is still unfulfilled sexually.

The second poem, written by Meyer and sandwiched in between the first poem and the drawing, also occupies a triangular space. Composed in something akin to free verse and divided into five stanzas, the

work requires the reader to rotate the text ninety degrees before it can be deciphered. The poem appears to be titled “Woman,” but this seems rather misleading. As the reader quickly discovers, the poem has absolutely nothing to do specifically with women. It is preoccupied with existential concerns and is written in a metaphysical mode. While Tashjian feels the work is “explicitly pessimistic,” many readers would probably argue that the author is simply being realistic.¹⁵ To be sure, Meyer is filled with anguish at the idea of a world without intrinsic meaning, but she employs images that derive from nature poets like Wordsworth rather than from the prophets of doom. Far from depressing, her vision is consistently lyrical and is enlivened by a love of natural beauty.

Seen from the vantage point of the late twentieth century, the poem seems surprisingly modern. Despite its early date, it exhibits not only a post-Nietzschean view of existence but one that reflects the latest scientific developments. As much as anything, the work chronicles a double loss of innocence mirroring the transition from the previous century to the present one. When she reached adulthood, Meyer reveals, she adopted a pervasive scepticism that replaced the religious faith of her childhood. During the same period she also witnessed the triumph of modern science, which replaced earlier methods of interpreting the universe. As the first stanza attests, her personal development paralleled that of society at large:

*Cool of the morning, warmth of the full-blown day,
I once believed that you were due to something else
Besides atomic forces
But now I do not know, and I have even lost
The willingness to hope.*

Despite this last assertion, the third stanza reveals that Meyer has not banished hope from her emotional repertoire. In fact, “hope” proves

to be the key word in the text, providing a kind of ontological fulcrum. Not only the poem but the rest of her life hinges on whether this gesture can be justified. “Then hope comes beckoning—and is crushed,” she cries, evoking the conflict that still assails her soul. If the hesitation between assent and denial reflects a nostalgia for her childhood, and the knowledge that those years can never be recaptured, it also expresses her yearning for a rational universe and the impossibility of discerning a divine plan. No sooner does hope beckon than it is sabotaged by Meyer’s rational mind and her image of the modern world. The initial impulse succumbs not only to her objective assessment but also to her anthropological perspective. “Small wonder,” she adds, “that our forebears made a god / To shield them from this dimly heard / Daemonic laughter.”

Partially framing the two poems, de Zayas’s visual design occupies nearly half the total composition. Extending from the lower left to the upper right, where it loses itself in a profusion of tangled lines, the drawing divides the (double) page into two sections. Except for an intrusive curved element, the bottom half is painted solid black. Although this prevented de Zayas from doing much else with the area, it allowed him to make a dramatic visual statement. It was evident immediately that the composition embodied a radical new aesthetic, that it was both audacious and advanced. Several years earlier, following his introduction to Cubism, de Zayas had invented a new style of portraiture which he called “abstract caricature.” Drawing on his experience at the *New York Evening World* and on his conversations with Pablo Picasso, de Zayas adopted a two-step approach to abstraction, first choosing an object of some kind to represent his human subject and then simplifying and/or decomposing the object until it was unrecognizable.¹⁶ According to all indications, this approach is exactly the procedure he followed here.

Although de Zayas’s portraits are difficult to decipher, his method, which derived from analytical Cubism, is highly systematic. In portrait after portrait, he analyzes not only his subjects’ appearance but also their

personality and their accomplishments. The artist himself described his method as follows:

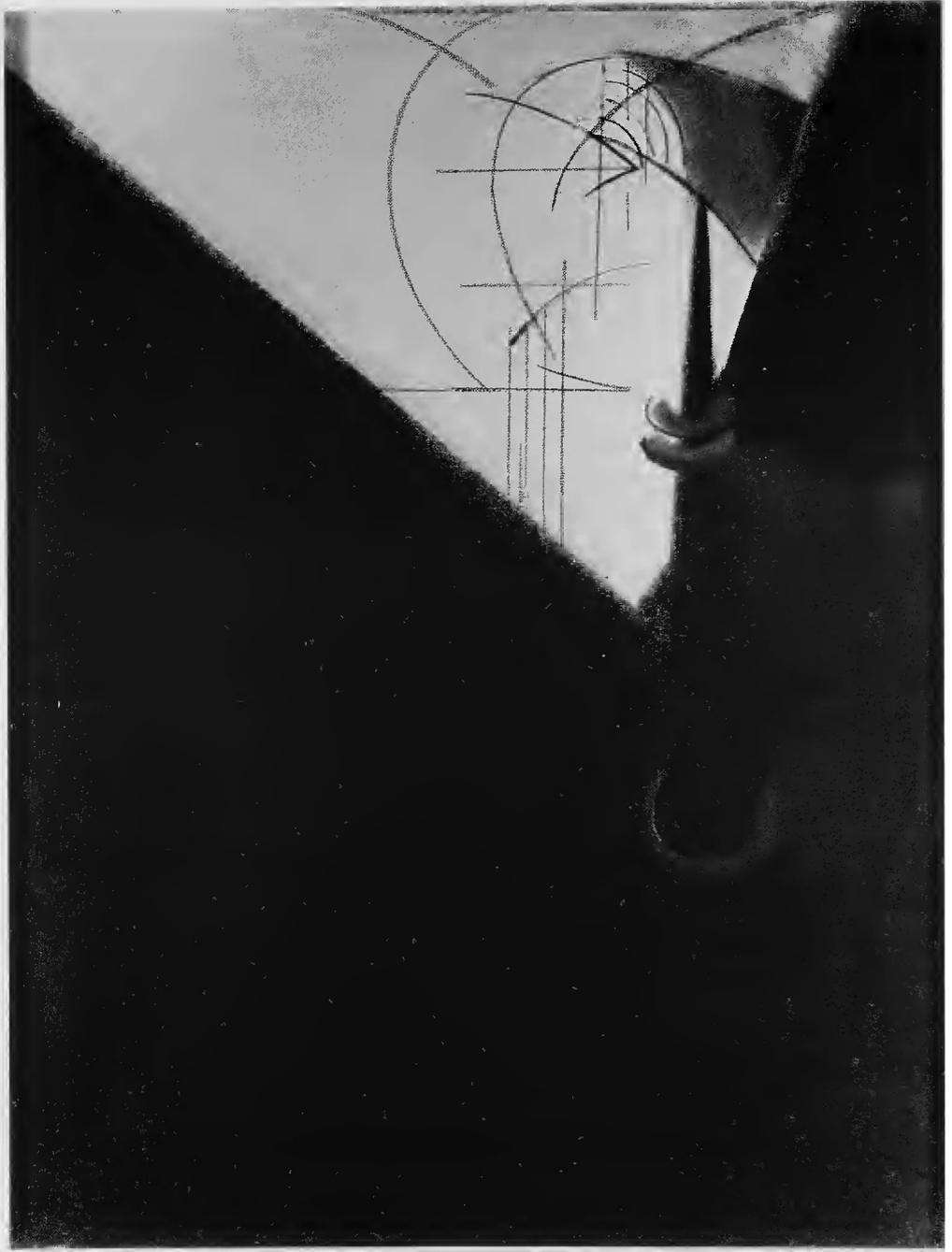
1. The *spirit* of each individual was to be represented by algebraic formulas,
2. his *material self* by “geometric equivalents,” and
3. his *initial force* by “trajectories within the rectangle that encloses the plastic expression of life.”

According to de Zayas, the spirit was composed of Memory (acquired knowledge), Understanding (the capability of learning, intelligence), and Volition (the regulation of physical desires, vices, and virtues). By 1915, however, he had decided to substitute verbal phrases for algebraic equations. “Material self” in de Zayas’s vocabulary referred to the individual’s physical appearance. Finally, “initial force” was defined as that which “binds spirit and matter together.” Represented by a line or “trajectory,” it charted the subject’s passage through life relative to the “evolution of humanity.” The trajectory was also supposed to relate personal knowledge to progress and conclusive achievements.

This, then, is the theoretical framework underlying de Zayas’s drawing in 291. Doubly removed from reality, the design alludes to an individual and to a symbolic object simultaneously. The first question that arises concerns the proper angle from which to view the composition. Is the work aligned along a vertical axis like Rhoades’s poem, or is it lying on its side, like Meyer’s text? On the one hand, one eventually realizes that *Woman* is the title of de Zayas’s drawing rather than of the poem it appears to introduce. Presented with two autobiographical accounts by women who shared certain concerns but possessed radically different sensibilities, the artist chose to create a portrait of the female sex. This

observation suggests that the design should be rotated counterclockwise ninety degrees. On the other hand, the fact that de Zayas's signature conforms to the horizontal axis suggests it does not need to be rotated. That the second conclusion is probably correct is indicated by the discovery of a portrait of Rhoades by de Zayas (figure 9.4), that is practically identical to *Woman*. The 291 drawing is twice as wide since it must accommodate the two poems; otherwise, the only difference concerns the main diagonal, which rises at a forty degree angle in the Rhoades portrait until it reaches the upper left-hand corner. Thus the circular tangle of lines is framed by a solid black, V-shaped mass occupying two-thirds of the picture.

Although Douglas Hyland remarks that "this caricature is one of the most hermetic," it is possible to crack at least part of the abstract code.¹⁷ Following a procedure that he had utilized previously, de Zayas seems to have based his drawing on a photograph taken by Stieglitz (now in the collection of the Freer Gallery of Art) showing Rhoades leaning against a doorway (to her right) and looking serenely at the camera (figure 9.5). Apparently dressed in black, she is standing with her left arm folded across her chest and her hand resting against the doorjamb, at shoulder level. In other words, her head and upper torso are framed by the acute angle formed by her arm, only part of which is visible. All of a sudden one perceives de Zayas's visual strategy. The black V-shaped mass in the drawing refers to the color of her dress and to her unusual pose. The descent and subsequent ascent of her "trajectory" may indicate that de Zayas was impressed by her artistic ability which, following a period of decline, had radically improved. In addition, the two rings encircling the pointed object on the right may signify two buttons on her dress. Whatever their explanation, the circular forms at the top clearly depict Rhoades's head. With a little effort one can discern the outline of her head, her hairline, her eyebrows (the two intersecting lines), her nose, her mouth, and even part of her chin. The shaded area at the upper right





9.4

Marius de Zayas, *Katharine N. Rhoades*, c. 1915, abstract caricature, charcoal on paper, 60.4 × 44.1 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, 1949 (49.70.186). All rights reserved, the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

9.5

Alfred Stieglitz, *Katharine N. Rhoades*, c. 1915, silver print, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer Papers, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; photograph courtesy Freer Gallery of Art.

probably represents a shadow in the background, also visible in the photograph.

While the photograph offers us evidence of Rhoades's physical presence, it is useless at the symbolic level. Since we know almost nothing about her, we are reduced at this point to pure conjecture. It seems likely, for instance, that the "fishhook" and the pointed object in *Woman* comment on various aspects of Rhoades's character. Interestingly, the possibilities shift back and forth as the focus changes from figure to ground and back again. Since the curved white shape in *Woman* resembles an upside-down question mark, de Zayas may have found some of her behavior puzzling. At the same time, it could conceivably represent a fishhook or even the handle of an umbrella. In this case, the concentric circles would represent the umbrella's fabric and the straight lines its ribs. Rhoades would be portrayed as a *femme fatale* in the first instance and as a protective shield in the second. By contrast, as soon as the white recedes into the background, the sharp object becomes a dagger emerging from the solid black area. Or, more likely, a giant pin poised to puncture somebody's balloon (represented by concentric circles). In either event, de Zayas seems to be hinting at some sort of contretemps between the young woman and a male admirer—perhaps the artist himself. Although Rhoades appears to be the aggressor, she may merely be adept at repulsing unwanted advances. Or again, the drawing may allude to a drama involving unrequited love. Whether Rhoades is about to wound her suitor's vanity or simply to deflate his ego, she is plainly a force to be reckoned with.

These remarks pertain to the initial drawing, not to the visual poem. For the version in *291* no longer depicts Rhoades but rather the New Woman in all her complex glory. While Rhoades may have exemplified the female sex in de Zayas's eyes, *Woman* is clearly intended to be a generic portrait. As much as anything, the new focus is signaled by the change in the main diagonal, which no longer encloses the female figure as it does

in the abstracted portrait of Rhoades. In the 291 version, she has extended her left arm to welcome additional women, as if to embrace other female voices. Sweeping across the page, the diagonal no longer hesitates but climbs assertively toward its goal. De Zayas was clearly impressed by modern women who were accomplishing so much in so many areas. He admired them not only for their achievements, moreover, but also for their progress in securing individual rights.

Since de Zayas left no instructions as to how his design should be interpreted, the preceding analysis is highly tentative. Although the drawing was meant to be an admiring portrait, the image of woman that emerges is somewhat ambiguous. At times the work even seems to perpetuate outmoded patriarchal stereotypes. What are we to make of the question mark, for example, which appears to portray woman as an enigma, as a creature whose motives are unfathomable? How is one to interpret the opposition between the umbrella and the fishhook motifs—paralleling the contradiction between the human shield and the *femme fatale* (if my analysis is correct)—which recalls woman's traditional role in masculine society as either saint or sinner, madonna or whore? These images are offset, in any case, by the enthusiastic diagonal that traverses the composition and by the prominent balloon-and-pin symbolism. In retrospect, the pointed object looks suspiciously like a *hatpin*, which served more than one purpose in those days. Among other things, it was a common device for routing a male attacker. While the clues are far from evident, de Zayas seems to have admired the New Woman's independence and her self-sufficiency. Whatever else one chooses to conclude, she was obviously prepared to handle any situation.

NOTES

1. William Innes Homer, *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1977), p. 194.
2. Marius de Zayas, "291—A New Publication," *Camera Work*, no. 48 (October 1916): 62.
3. Amédée Ozenfant, "Psychotypie & typométrie," *L'Elan*, no. 9 (February 1916): inside front cover.
4. Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde, 1910–1925* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), p. 34.
5. William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 85.
6. "Exhibitions in the Galleries," *Arts and Decoration* 6, no. 1 (November 1915): 35.
7. Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives*, pp. 45–46.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Marius de Zayas and Agnes Ernst Meyer, "Mental Reactions," *291*, no. 2 (April 1915): 3. For an analysis of this composition see Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry, 1914–1928* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 185–203.
10. Most of the following information is taken from Agnes Ernst Meyer's autobiography, *Out of These Roots: The Autobiography of an American Woman* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953). See also Douglas Hyland, "Agnes Ernst Meyer: Patron of American Modernism," *American Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 64–81.

11. H. Nichols B. Clark, "Katharine Nash Rhoades (1885–1965)," in *Avant-Garde Painting and Sculpture in America, 1910–25*, ed. William Innes Homer (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1975), p. 118. In addition to the drawing and collaborative work with Meyer and de Zayas, *291* published two poems by Rhoades: "Flip-Flap" (no. 4 [June 1915]: 3); and "Narcosis" (no. 12 [February 1916]: 2).
12. Rhoades's drawing in *291*, no. 2 (April 1915): 2, is reproduced in Clark, "Katharine Nash Rhoades," p. 119. For an analysis of de Zayas's abstract caricatures, see Willard Bohn, "The Abstract Vision of Marius de Zayas," *Art Bulletin* 62, no. 3 (September 1980): 434–452.
13. Clark, "Katharine Nash Rhoades," p. 118.
14. Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives*, p. 34.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
16. See Bohn, "The Abstract Vision": 439–441.
17. Douglas Hyland, *Marius de Zayas: Conjuror of Souls* (Lawrence: Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1981), p. 120.

FROM ANARCHY TO GROUP FORCE: THE SOCIAL TEXT OF *THE LITTLE REVIEW*

dickran TASHJIAN

Margaret [Anderson] . . . was feminine in the extreme, constantly bubbling over with enthusiasm. A few hours with her entirely changed my first impression and made me realize that underneath her apparent lightness was depth and strength of character to pursue whatever aim in life she might choose.

—Emma Goldman¹



To pay tribute to *The Little Review* is to celebrate the wit, intelligence, and resourcefulness of Margaret Anderson (1886–1973) and Jane Heap (1884–1964) (figure 10.1), whose combined energies sustained their lively avant-garde journal for fifteen years. They ran it across America and onto an international scene from 1914 to 1929, an extraordinary span for a non-commercial venture held together on a shoestring budget.² Among the many avant-garde movements that the editors promoted in *The Little Review* (figure 10.2), Dada played the most significant role in the dynamics of the magazine. Nevertheless, the relationship between Dada and *The Little Review* is hardly self-evident. For starters, the lon-



10.1

"Editors of *The Little Review*: Margaret Anderson, *Photograph by Victor Georg, jh, Photograph by E. O. Hoppe*"
(from *The Little Review* [Winter 1922], between pp. 24 and 25).



10.2

The Little Review (Autumn–Winter
1923–1924), cover.

gevity of *The Little Review* stands at odds with Dada, an ephemeral, self-destructive movement if ever there was one. Yet the sporadic bursts of Dada from, say, 1915 in New York to the early 1920s in Paris, had their own extended life on the margins of international culture, precisely where the editors staked a claim for their journal.

The editors first joined forces with Dada in 1917, when the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (see figure 15.1) strolled into the editorial office of *The Little Review*, recently relocated from Chicago's Fine Arts Building on Michigan Avenue to New York's bohemian quarters in Greenwich Village. This German expatriate, set adrift in Manhattan, was immediately recognized by the editors as an "extraordinary person," who was soon thought to embody Dada itself, in part no doubt because of her outrageous clothing and provocative behavior.³ But the quality of her poetry, the extremities of her bohemian life, even her dramatic performances and sartorial hijinks, do not get to the heart of the mutual attraction among these women. Nor was the Baroness, glorious lightning rod though she was, the sole index of Dada for *The Little Review*.

That Anderson and Heap welcomed Dada to the pages of *The Little Review* at certain key moments suggests a consonance of values and attitudes that animated the editorial policy of the journal. The relationship was all the more complicated because *The Little Review* was not a Dada publication, not even with an issue devoted to Francis Picabia in 1922. Was Dada simply another phase in the course of the magazine or an aberration? Or was it neither? The animating force of *The Little Review* was no less elusive than the complex contradictions radiated by Dada.

In order to gauge accurately this avant-garde magazine and the two indomitable women who ran it, we must clear the decks, set aside certain habits of thought that have blocked our view of this important effort to link American aspirations with proliferating European avant-gardes.⁴ Only then might we see *The Little Review* on its own terms. And only then might we understand—beyond the anecdotal—the play of Dada for the editors

in their magazine and their ambitious cultural role along the margins of an international avant-garde.

Gender and sexual orientation are perhaps the least of the problem, though a problem nonetheless. Although we might like to think of American and European avant-gardists as promoting radical lifestyles along with their art, we have increasingly recognized that most movements in the early twentieth century were male-dominated and patriarchal. Despite feminist convictions, women were often relegated to service roles, among them running little magazines. Scut-work, complained Ezra Pound, who had in 1917 become foreign editor for *The Little Review* in London: "It is bad economy for me to spend a morning typing up stray copies of the *Little Review* for posting, or in answering queries as to why last month's number hasn't arrived. This function could be carried on by a deputy, almost by an infant"—or by the present editors back in New York, he might have added.⁵

Because conscientious editing was time-consuming ("What . . . is the matter with this BLOODYgoddamndamnbastedbastardbitchborn-sonofaputridseahorse of foetid and stinkorous printer????????????"), Pound was eager to relegate the editorial function to Anderson and Heap.⁶ That their writing was restricted to editorials and short essays in *The Little Review* has simply reinforced the notion that they were best left to the daily burdens of turning out a journal for others (usually male) considered more creative than they. Anderson wrote her memoirs only after the journal terminated; and Heap, known as a brilliant conversationalist, was a notoriously reticent writer, whose main legacy, beyond a handful of published essays, are one-liners that often sardonically comment on various essays and letters published in *The Little Review*.

Seemingly by default, then, Pound's efforts on behalf of himself and his coterie abroad have shaped subsequent views of *The Little Review*. Certainly it was Pound who recommended T. S. Eliot to Anderson and Heap, and his initiative brought James Joyce's *Ulysses* serialized to the

pages of *The Little Review*. It was also Pound who urged at the outset of the 1920s that the editors take on Francis Picabia as foreign editor, that they devote single issues to the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi as well as Marcel Duchamp (a project that did not materialize).⁷

While Pound's contributions cannot be denied, an emphasis on him alone erroneously suggests that Anderson and Heap were merely a collective editorial *tabula rasa*, awaiting the imprint of the master from abroad. From this vantage Anderson and Heap simply served as editorial skills for Pound, who wanted his own magazine within *The Little Review*. Since only Pound's correspondence survives, the editors' unfortunately having been lost, we can learn about their role in the collaboration with Pound primarily through inference and indirection. We might reasonably surmise that they at least had the intelligence and good judgment to heed his proposals. Then again, that clashes with the impression that the beautiful Anderson had to be an airhead, as Ernest Hemingway's typically chauvinistic description of her as "flutter-brained." At best, she was thought to have "the enthusiasm and the naiveté" to keep the magazine alive.⁸

Heap was often contrasted to Anderson, but not without another set of stereotypes. The expatriate writer Samuel Putnam, a homophobe, considered the no-nonsense Heap "the power behind the throne."⁹ Of course. The femme lesbian becomes a parody of femininity while her butch lover, with her short hair and "mannish" clothes, assumes all the male prerogatives. Although these were stereotypes that Anderson did not hesitate to exploit in order to manipulate male sponsors to keep the magazine afloat, the editors have been placed in a no-win situation. If Anderson has been portrayed as ditzy, the intelligent Heap has often been written entirely out of the histories of *The Little Review* when her role is not merely minimized.¹⁰

The editorial presence of Pound and the serial publication of *Ulysses* have combined to provide literary historians a way to talk around the apparent eclecticism of *The Little Review*, which was at the very least an

anthology of the international avant-garde during the 1920s. Because Pound was involved with the magazine for a short period of time, it became possible to speak of the phases of *The Little Review*, thereby lending some semblance of chronological order to a magazine that covered all the arts over two tumultuous decades. The Pound phase became canonical at a moment when literary studies preceded art historical or cultural studies into the realm of the little magazine. Everything then fell into place: the rest became mere experimentation.¹¹

A year after *The Little Review* was brought to a close in 1929, the critic William Troy claimed that the editors had placed “their emphasis solely on literary experimentation, without considering the nature or value of the experience available for the artist in America of the period.” Such an assessment was a profound misreading of the agenda that the editors had set for themselves and *The Little Review*. Troy was soon echoed in 1938 by Charles Allen, who would later join Frederick Hoffman and Carolyn Ulrich in writing a landmark study, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography*, published in 1946. Though Allen’s notion that the magazine had sought “an esthetic wonderland” correctly suggested a utopian quest, it really amounted to a bias against formalism that would be leveraged by Hoffman and company against the radical formalism of the avant-garde.¹²

The net result has been to ignore, overlook, or misconstrue the editorial direction of *The Little Review*. Not only must we take the editorial policy seriously, but we must also know where to find it and what it was, not an easy matter since it most often appeared piecemeal, in muted tones, and by indirection. Let us begin, then, with the development of editorial policy—beyond an apparently perverse desire to publish “freakish” experimentation—and the ways that Anderson shaped *The Little Review* with a social agenda. Having been launched a year after European modern art was introduced to Americans at the 1913 Armory Show in New York and elsewhere, the magazine ran during a period when Ameri-

can artists and writers aspired to join the European avant-garde, or, eventually, to organize their own. The editors wanted to take a significant role in that process. By the spring 1922 issue they had adopted a new slogan on their masthead that indicated how they had come over the years to identify their magazine with avant-garde values: “*The Little Review* is an advancing point toward which the ‘advance guard’ is always advancing.”

At the center of this journalistic movement stood Margaret Anderson, whose own evolution went through several phases, beginning with feminism in Chicago, then combined with Emma Goldman’s anarchism, and culminating in the teachings of the elusive George Gurdjieff in a commune on the outskirts of Paris. Her “enthusiasm[s],” as they have been disparaged by various critics, did not constitute “sudden shifts in interest.”¹³ To the contrary, they were predicated throughout on a profound and consistent belief in individualism. Anderson’s development involved the spirited, often painful attempts of a woman to gain radical self-determination by liberating herself from the prevailing conventions of American society early in this century. In turn, her convictions, initially shared with Jane Heap, editorially guided *The Little Review* through Dada in the early 1920s.

Only after the *Ulysses* trial in February 1921 did the two move apart—emotionally, as Anderson took a new lover, but also ideologically, as *The Little Review* was bequeathed to Heap, who took the magazine along the paths implicitly suggested by Gurdjieff’s teachings. Though the two women both studied with Gurdjieff, Heap was the more advanced disciple who managed to put into practice his gnomic precepts for self-realization.¹⁴

In her opening “announcement” for the first issue of *The Little Review* in March 1914, Anderson brought together life, liberty, and art under the umbrella of a militant feminism. “Feminism?” she asked, “A clear-thinking magazine can have only one attitude; the degree of ours is ardent!”¹⁵ Anderson’s feminism centered upon the self, which was to be

liberated from prevailing social constraints in order to explore a broad spectrum of human experiences with a full orchestration of emotion. All her other attitudes—including those concerning art and society—radiated from that feminist center.

With those presuppositions, Anderson became receptive to the anarchism of Emma Goldman, who lectured in Chicago in the spring of 1914. Recognizing Goldman as “the most challenging spirit in America,” and one of the most notorious figures of the radical left, the editor was won over to anarchism. Her conversion was not whimsical. She was predisposed toward Goldman’s reasoned arguments. With Goldman she advocated “individual human freedom” against the repressions of Christian sectarianism, Victorian morality, and governmental institutions. In order to achieve freedom for the individual, Anderson recommended revolution rather than reform.¹⁶

Sympathetic toward American labor radicals who attacked the injustices of corporate capitalism, Anderson became agitated about political causes in *The Little Review*, especially after the execution of labor leader Joe Hill in Utah. In the December 1915 issue, she called for the assassination of Utah’s governor, and asked, “For God’s sake, why doesn’t some one start the Revolution?” She posed some other inflammatory questions: “Why doesn’t some one arrange for the beating-up of the police squad [in Chicago]? That would make a good beginning. Or set fire to some of the factories, or start a convincing sabotage in the shops.” In the same issue Goldman argued cogently against the arms race in Europe.¹⁷ *The Little Review* became a forum for radical issues with an anarchist slant.

Political events and interests continued to heat up in *The Little Review*. In San Francisco during the summer of 1916 Anderson (with Heap, who had joined the editorial staff) was on hand for the bombing that resulted in the false imprisonment of labor leader Tom Mooney. In the September 1916 issue she commented on the railroading, along with a

petition to aid Mooney. The following year Heap wrote against the war. The editors thus took a courageous stand at a time when the United States government tolerated little debate and dissent. After all, in 1918 the government postal service would censor *The Masses*, a politically radical journal, for its anti-war stance; its editors would then be brought to trial, and the magazine hounded out of circulation.¹⁸

With their outspoken views Anderson and Heap obviously found it difficult to separate idea from political action. Anderson's distinction between a philosophical anarchist and the bomb-throwing sort was blurred by her call-to-arms—just as the popular press and the American public narrowly associated anarchism with terrorist attacks and assassinations. But in a more positive sense, Anderson's ideals did not go unrealized. She liked to characterize Goldman, and by implication herself, as a visionary and a prophet, whose ideals might be attained only in the distant future.¹⁹ Yet by writing and lecturing in the face of hostile opposition, Goldman lived her ideas to the extent that she was eventually deported from the United States. In a like fashion, Anderson acted upon her own ideas by publishing *The Little Review*.

If action were to center upon editing and publishing *The Little Review*, Anderson's position on revolution became all the more crucial. What would be the revolutionary role of her magazine? Anderson provided a clue when in 1915 she identified the individual "Spirit" as the motive force of revolution. With this premise she soon rejected outright organized politics and political movements. At best she was talking about insurrection or rebellion brought off by spontaneous combustion. "Spirit," most crucially, was related to personality, and personality to imagination. Thus, in assessing labor radicals Mother Jones and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, she stressed personality over politics, the individual over concerted social action.²⁰

In the process Anderson moved away from Goldman's brand of anarchy without, however, relinquishing the sensibility of an anarchist.

(Janet Flanner was correct in recognizing Anderson as “lawless by nature.”²¹) Ultimately, she sought a cultural revolution that would result in a new sensibility for the individual who, through exercise of will alone, would gain a “heightened inner life,” leading to “ecstasies too dazzling to be shared.” Though Anderson soon conceded that her writing about feeling was vague, she would not renounce the ineffable. By the summer of 1916 she made the ultimate conflation: “Revolution *is* Art,” she insisted without qualification, and it filled life entirely. To create art, which was “the carefully-selected expression of [one’s] personality,” was thus a revolutionary act for Anderson.²²

A year later, Anderson focused entirely upon the artist, for “only [individual] sensibility matters.”²³ Her imagined society would comprise individual artists brought together without institutional restraint. Theirs would be a world of art, for their world would *be* art. As early as 1917 she had asserted the necessity of training new generations to feel. The role of *The Little Review* was to provide a public forum for artists to breed a personal revolution in the sensibilities of its readers. At the time when *The Little Review* had just begun, Charles Demuth said, “‘Let us start a magazine—a gallery—a theatre.’ This is always in the air, seldom: ‘Let us create a moment.’”²⁴ As though attuned to the American painter’s suggestion, Anderson wanted to bridge that gap by making *The Little Review* a publication of moments, initiating conversations between writer and reader as well as among readers.

Despite Anderson’s turn away from Goldman, *The Little Review* could easily have been called “The Anarchist Review.”²⁵ The editor tailored anarchism to serve her feminist needs. Not only was her anarchism inspired by a radical feminist, but it offered a philosophical rationale for the independence that she sought for herself, when as a young woman she made her way out of the familial strictures of her hometown in Indi-

ana, that were no less operative, finally, in big city Chicago, cosmopolitan New York, or even Paris.

The feminist base of *The Little Review* did not rely upon the publication of feminist essays, despite their occasional appearance.²⁶ At the heart of Anderson's feminism, which necessarily involved dissent from patriarchal norms, was the relationship with her lover, Heap, whom she met early in 1916. While Anderson's emphasis upon domesticity in her memoir can be taken as a gendered metaphor for editing *The Little Review*, their gestures of domesticity—making their own clothes and always appearing well-groomed, tenting by Lake Michigan after failing to find an affordable apartment—also served to make conspicuous, even notorious, their vows of poverty in sustaining their magazine.²⁷

Moving through this domestic sphere but overshadowing it was the relationship between the two editors. Their lesbianism became the dominant sign of female independence and self-sufficiency. Setting up a tent in Chicago was one way to advertise their marginality, decorating their apartment in Greenwich Village was another. This was domesticity with a difference. After the initial difficulties of moving to New York, the editors found a basement studio on West 14th Street, “a fair-sized square room for the office” of *The Little Review*, Anderson recalled in her memoir. On West 16th Street, they settled into a four-room apartment, with an undertaker on the first floor and an exterminator in the basement.²⁸

Anderson's account of how they redecorated Heap's room takes on a symbolic significance. Despite having an office for *The Little Review* off premises, Heap's room became the site “where all *Little Review* conversation would take place.” They planned it as “a special, haunting, poignant, dedicated room.” Anderson declared that “in this room the *Little Review* entered into its creative phase.”²⁹ Implicitly, Heap's room became a sacred space dedicated to creativity. Equally important was the shift of cre-

ativity from the office studio a few streets away to their living quarters, a shift that emphasized the “personal” nature of their collaborative project. The editors made certain that they remained the center of attention.

Their decorating efforts in New York had a precedent in the living arrangements that evolved during their 1916 summer sojourn in Mill Valley, California. According to Anderson, their late evening conversations were often disrupted when they retired to their separate bedrooms. By moving their divans adjacent to the fireplace in the living room, they integrated their eating and sleeping arrangements: they dined in their pajamas (to avoid the “brutality” of interrupting their conversation). “There was nothing to do after dinner,” Anderson claimed, “but push the table away, light another cigarette, and when we could talk no more fall off to sleep [on the parallel divans] under the impression that we hadn’t stopped.”³⁰ Here were the conversations that would metaphorically animate *The Little Review*. Despite their “intellectualizations,” these conversations significantly took on an erotic, dream-like aura.

Perhaps also thinking of Heap’s “gold room” back in Chicago, the two women took to redecorating Heap’s room in Greenwich Village. Over several months, they patiently papered the walls with long strips of gold Chinese paper (from a Japanese paper shop), painted the woodwork “pale cream, the floor dark plum, the furniture old mahogany.” Dominating the room, Anderson recalled, “was a large divan hung from the ceiling by heavy black chains. It was covered with a dull-toned blue and on it were four silk cushions—emerald green, magenta, royal purple, tilleul.”³¹ The eclecticism of the decor—a mix of orientalist motifs, the old mahogany furniture—was unified by the aura of exoticism. The divan/swing with its brilliantly colored silk pillows became the immediate center of attention.

While this declaration of bohemianism no doubt would have shocked the bourgeois mothers of Indiana, the room also harkened back to a *fin-de-siècle* decadence, better yet, to an overwhelming impression of

artifice, signaling Anderson's desire to conflate art and life. "Here the poets, writers, painters came to see us, seeking an entry into the *Little Review*," Anderson recalled.³² That the womb-like room where the editors received these callers also served as Heap's boudoir underscored not simply the centrality of conversation for the creative identity of the magazine but also the erotic lesbian relationship that brought together body and mind in intimate conversation, in the first instance here on the divan, ambiguously a bed as much as a sofa.

These feminist and lesbian declarations seemingly went underground with the long-distance editorial participation of Ezra Pound in England and the eventual serialization of *Ulysses*, beginning with the March 1918 issue and ending in federal suppression of its publication in 1921. The sexual orientation of the editors became, however, a crucial subtext in the way that the *Ulysses* episode was unfortunately resolved.

The Little Review was banned from the mails four times because *Ulysses* had been deemed obscene. The process was especially cruel because the magazine was burned after it had been submitted to the mails for its subscribers, after, as Anderson later described, "the care we had taken to preserve Joyce's text intact [a monumental task in itself]; the worry over the bills that accumulated when we had no advance funds; the technique I used on printer, bookbinders, paper houses—tears, prayers, hysterics or rages—to make them push ahead without a guarantee of money; the addressing, wrapping, stamping, mailing; the excitement of anticipating the world's response to the literary masterpiece of our generation . . . and then a notice from the Post Office: BURNED."³³

The story of the *Ulysses* trial on charges of obscenity in 1921 has been most often made the centerpiece of the history of *The Little Review*. Most certainly, this sorry episode appears to be yet another instance of censorship in American cultural history. The federal government through its postal services denied a major novel of the twentieth century access to publication and subsequent readership in the United States. This ele-

mental account conceals, however, an ironic shift in emphasis to the sexual implications of the case from the First Amendment issues pertaining to freedom of expression and the press. Whereas the First Amendment rights of *The Little Review* were at risk for political reasons during the First World War, here they were abrogated because of the sexual content of *Ulysses*, complicated all the more by the sexual orientation of the two editors. What seemed so circumscribed if not private within the editorial boudoir of *The Little Review* took on public consequences.

The frustration of the editors was compounded by the way that John Quinn, a wealthy Tammany lawyer, handled the legal situation. (With his interest in literature and the visual arts, Quinn had become Pound's benefactor and then, almost inevitably, Joyce's and *The Little Review's*.³⁴) He tried to persuade the editors and the author to stop serialization on the grounds that it would be easier to print *Ulysses* in the United States without a previous history of censorship. Otherwise, Quinn advised bowdlerizing subsequent episodes for *The Little Review*. All parties rejected his advice.

The continued publication of *Ulysses* led to the intervention of John Sumner and his Society for the Suppression of Vice. The circumstances could not have been more ironically fitting. After receiving an unsolicited copy of *The Little Review* that contained the "Nausicaa" chapter in which Bloom masturbates, a young woman complained to her father, a prominent New York lawyer who set the legal machinery in motion by contacting the New York district attorney's office, which incited Sumner to issue a complaint against the editors. (As Heap later dryly observed: "If there is anything I really fear it is the mind of the young girl."³⁵) Legal proceedings began in October 1920.

Feeling constrained to defend Joyce, Quinn was nonetheless exasperated by the intransigence of the editors. His frustration was compounded when he discovered that the two editors were lesbians. While the courts attacked the message, Quinn blamed the messengers, whose

alleged sexual decadence led them to a corrupt editorial strategy. The lawyer's enraged tailspin combined with his conservative strategies enmeshed him in a defense that ignored entirely the great constitutional questions involved. He also failed to address the question of literary merits of the novel. To the contrary, as Quinn's biographer has succinctly stated, the lawyer argued that "Joyce's story was not aphrodisiac because it was either incomprehensible, amusing, or tiresome, according to the reader."³⁶ The three judges who heard the case at special sessions were not impressed. The editors were fined and enjoined from printing *Ulysses* in *The Little Review* henceforth.

None of the defendants was satisfied with the decision—not simply because they had lost but because they had differing ideas on how the case should have been argued. For a self-styled anarchist like Anderson, the case dramatized the primacy of the individual over and above the legal machinery of the state. The judicial suppression of *Ulysses* had abrogated Joyce's right of individual expression while previous postal censorship had additionally punished him by denying due process. An injunction against publication implied that the work should not have been written in the first place, calling into question the novelist's integrity and the editors' judgment. Additionally, writing and reading became sexually charged, raising the prospect of moral corruption through contact with "obscene" material. Presumably anything with erotic content could be construed as pornographic or obscene.

One judge at the trial, incredulous that a young woman like Anderson understood what she had published, refused to allow portions of the novel to be read in the open courtroom before her.³⁷ Infantilized by the court, silenced by her lawyer, Anderson felt constrained to make an ironic protest. She fell back on tactics that had proven effective on other occasions by deploying gender stereotypes, this time with a class variation. Tired of remaining "inconspicuous, meek and silent" during the trial, as per Quinn's instructions, Anderson decided "to make as much trouble as

possible" while being fingerprinted. She later recalled how she haughtily insisted upon every precaution to avoid getting soiled: "I finally offered my fingers with the distaste of a cat and it became their responsibility to convince me that there would be no permanent disfigurement."³⁸ Since the court had presumed to protect her innocence from the depredations of *Ulysses*, Anderson assumed the purity of American womanhood with a vengeance. Her exaggerated ladylike behavior proclaimed that it was not the "obscene" Joyce but the police in enforcing the court's edict who soiled and despoiled young women.

In her brief pretense of high-handedness, Anderson could not have been further removed from the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, whose "mere existence" wreaked havoc. "I wouldn't lift a leg for humanity," the Baroness bawled on one occasion of "first-class prima donna talk" during a benefit concert.³⁹ Although the Baroness first adopted *The Little Review*, the editors quickly adopted her. For Anderson, the German expatriate came to represent the logical extreme of anarchism, extolling the individual artist for whom "only sensibility matters." The conflation of art and life took vivid form in the Baroness, who on one occasion appeared with head shaved and lacquered "high vermillion."⁴⁰

Not one to be shy about her sexual desires, the Baroness aggressively pursued William Carlos Williams, the doctor and poet, onto his home grounds in Rutherford, New Jersey. Their relationship, aggravated by his resistance (wistful philanderer that he was), was further complicated by her contempt for American culture at a time that he eagerly declared himself "United Statser" as a poet. They achieved an acrimonious detente in the pages of *The Little Review*, where they sparred over the poetic and the anti-poetic.⁴¹

As Heap later insightfully remarked about the Germans, "The german dadaists are closer to madness than the french. The french still have expiations to make." Heap had the anarchist Baroness on her mind: "The baroness does not belong to the german dadaists," she claimed. "She fails

whenever she trips over her german skeleton and falls into a Goethe-Nietzsche wrestling with God. When she is dada she is the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada.”⁴² That the Baroness was a woman, and androgynous no less, only served to corroborate the longstanding feminist ideals of the editors.

Though the advent of the Baroness signaled *The Little Review's* move toward Dada in 1917, the magazine's Dada phase shifted into full gear only after the *Ulysses* trial. With the Autumn 1921 issue of *The Little Review*, reorganized as a quarterly, Pound became a “collaborator” and Picabia, who had figured so largely in New York Dada during the First World War, became the foreign editor—an association that was fittingly brief for a self-immolating movement. Even though the theme of the Autumn issue was a “protest against the suppression of the Little Review containing various installments of the ‘Ulysses’ of James Joyce,” Picabia's featured presence in the Spring 1922 issue was hardly inflammatory. He himself could offer no rallying cause, and his machine drawings had lost their American context, which had given them their cultural power in the first instance. In *The Little Review* Picabia simply became anthologized, eventually one avant-garde star among many, as Joseph Stella (also associated with New York Dada) and Brancusi, earlier, were featured in single issues of the magazine.⁴³

There was, nevertheless, a logic to the attraction of Dada in the early 1920s. Pound's enthusiasm for Dada and his endorsement of Picabia, but above all the *Ulysses* trial led the editors to Paris Dada: its aggression and subversion seemed to epitomize the protest that the editors wanted to mount against state censorship of the arts. In issues following the Picabia number, the dadaists appeared in full force, Man Ray prominent among them, though the role of Dada in the magazine can be viewed as problematic, despite its anarchism and nihilism in the service of protest. The few Dada manifestoes that were printed—“Dada Soulève Tout,” an advertisement for Tristan Tzara's *Seven Dada Manifestoes*, and

excerpts from "A Rotten Corpse," a protest against the state honor accorded to Anatole France upon his death⁴⁴—did not pertain to specific American problems but stood at one remove, as a kind of symbolic protest. Moreover, the manifestoes were subverted by their ambiguous context in the magazine, falling between editorial statement and reportage.

The editors soon moved beyond Dada. In a telling statement, Heap enthusiastically argued that "Dada has flung its crazy bridges to a new consciousness. They are quite strong enough to hold the few in this generation who will pass over. Dada is making a contribution to nonsense."⁴⁵ Despite her insights, Heap and her partner had their eyes on a "new consciousness," which developed not through Dada but through the teachings of George Gurdjieff. During the winter of 1924 he arrived in New York on tour with his group, instructed in his choreography of Tibetan dance. The editors saw them perform at Carnegie Hall and then joined them at Gurdjieff's Château de Priure in Fontainebleau that summer. Anderson's intense quest for a personal metaphysic gradually took shape under the tutelage of this charismatic guru.

In the meantime, Anderson had fallen in love with Georgette Leblanc, who was on a singing tour in the United States. Discouraged by recent events and exhausted by the myriad chores of editing, Anderson took the occasion to turn *The Little Review* over to Heap as a compensatory gift. These developments inevitably took the magazine in a different direction. Having lost its erotic center, *The Little Review* turned from identity politics to cultural organization. The *Ulysses* trial drove home to Heap the need for collective action among avant-garde artists if they were to prevail against the repressive forces of society. She gradually came to oppose Anderson's ideal of the anarchistic artist, whose independent work and individualism Heap viewed as only so much wasted energy and effort.

Studying under Gurdjieff during the six years that she ran *The Little Review* by herself, Heap took his dicta of self-action and objectification as commands to *act*. She tried to nurture a social context for the avant-garde in the pages of the magazine. Following Gurdjieff, she became an indefatigable impresario. She organized group numbers for the magazine: an American number as early as 1918, an “Exiles” issue in 1923 when American artists and writers had moved abroad, a French number later in the same year, and a cross-cultural issue in 1926, comparing French and American writers of the same generation. These were attempts to get Anderson’s vaunted conversations going. Heap was not above starting a fight if the conversation waivered. “We need fights,” she insisted, “discussion—hot and impolite, jeering and insult to knit the thing together; to find out and bring out a definite creative hardness in this pulp of art in America.”⁴⁶

Heap extended *The Little Review* to nineteen countries in an effort to provide fuller international coverage for the avant-garde. Her energy was not restricted to editing. In 1924 she opened the Little Review Gallery in New York, where she exhibited works by Charles Demuth and Pavel Tchelitchew, among others. She also organized an *International Theatre Exposition* in 1926 and a *Machine-Age Exposition* in spring 1927. Special issues of *The Little Review* resulted from both of these ambitious affairs.⁴⁷

The *Machine-Age Exposition* grew out of Heap’s reaction to a controversy sparked by Dada in the pages of *Broom* over the significance of the machine: was it a destructive or a creative force in modern life, and how should the artist respond to modern technology? Heap took a favorable view. “What belief in the power and function of art,” she mocked, “to be terrorized by the power of plumbing systems and engines.” Yet she also claimed that “the American artist is in a bad way. He has never established his social function in the minds of the public.” As a remedy, Heap

contended that “the modern artist must understand group force” by affiliating “with the creative artist in the other arts and with the conservative men of his epoch; engineers, scientists, etc.”⁴⁸

Heap’s plea for collective action through broad alliances ran against the anarchistic impulses of her partner, whose community of avant-garde “spirits” was clearly a utopian vision of social life. Anderson’s social mission for *The Little Review* was virtually an insurmountable challenge for the editors. Inspired “moments” could not build an enduring community of artists, as Heap noted in her final editorial. At the same time, however, her own argument dramatized the essential dilemma of the avant-garde, caught between the need for movement in order to challenge the conventions of society and the need for resources to fulfill its mission of innovation. After Anderson’s departure, Heap tried to address this contradiction by walking an endless tightrope between stability and change. It was inevitable that the two editors, one retired from the field, dismayed by an apparent lack of inspired conversation, the other fatigued by her efforts to generate vital works of art, decided to close down *The Little Review* in May 1929. In the meantime, the editors gave the avant-garde a run for its money in their “trial-track for racers.”⁴⁹

NOTES

1. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, vol. 2 (New York: Dover, 1970), p. 531. Whereas Goldman was able to adjust her first, sexist impression of Anderson and discerned her intelligence as well as her beauty, others were not. Historian of little magazines, Felix Pollak, for example, claims that Ezra Pound thought of Anderson as “some sort of scatterbrain who didn’t know what she was doing” (qtd. in Mark Olson, John Judson, and Richard Boudreau, “Felix Pollak: An Interview on Little Magazines,” in *The Little Magazine in America: A Modern Documentary History*, ed. Elliott Anderson and Mary Kinzie [Yonkers, NY: Pushcart and *Triquarterly*, 1978], p. 40).
2. The editors published *The Little Review* in Chicago from 1914 to March 1917 (with a summer interlude in San Francisco in 1916), when they moved to New York. From 1921 until 1929 the magazine was published as a quarterly and then sporadically in Paris or back in New York, depending upon Jane Heap’s peregrinations and finances. Despite these uncertainties, *The Little Review* remained resolutely oriented toward the Parisian avant-garde during the 1920s. For accounts of *The Little Review* in Chicago, see Susan Noyes Platt, “*The Little Review*: Early Years and Avant-Garde Ideas,” in *The Old Guard and the Avant-Garde: Modernism in Chicago, 1910–1940*, ed. Sue Ann Prince (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 139–154.
3. Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years’ War: An Autobiography* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1930), p. 177. For an account of the Baroness, see Robert Reiss, “‘My Baroness’: Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven,” in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), pp. 81–101.
4. The insights of some scholars and critics have become increasingly acute and sustained in the past decade. Until recently, the only full-length study of *The Little Review* was the unpublished dissertation of Jackson Bryer, “‘A Trial Track for Racers’: Margaret Anderson and *The Little Review*” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1965). There is now, from a welcome feminist perspective, Holly Bag-

gett's dissertation, "'Aloof from Natural Laws': Margaret C. Anderson and the 'Little Review,' 1914–1929" (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1992). *The Little Review* gets its most serious and extended treatment in published form from Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: "Little" Magazines and Literary History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 60–100. The most graceful published account can be found in Hugh Ford's chapter on Margaret Anderson in *Four Lives in Paris* (San Francisco: North Point, 1987), pp. 227–286. Another, shorter biographical account focusing on Anderson in Paris, is Paula R. Feldman, "Margaret Anderson (1886–1973)," in *American Writers in Paris, 1920–1939*, ed. Karen Lane Rood (Detroit, MI: Gale, 1980), pp. 3–10. See also Abby Ann Arthur Johnson, "The Personal Magazine: Margaret C. Anderson and the *Little Review*, 1914–1929," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 75, no. 3 (Summer 1976): 351–363.

In many respects the above studies have preempted and superceded many of my thoughts about *The Little Review*, which along with my admiration for the journal extend back some three decades. In *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde, 1910–1925* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), I relegated *The Little Review* to a secondary level because I saw the magazine as eclectic and hence for my purposes valuable primarily for its source material about Dada. Since then, I have come to realize that the magazine's eclecticism was but an aspect of its editorial policy, often disguised yet coherent nonetheless, as some of the above studies have made clear. Nevertheless, I want here to discuss *The Little Review* from the Dada angle as a way to emphasize its cultural role, which is only partly clarified by a recognition of its anarchist and feminist positions. The editors were out for bigger game.

5. *Pound/The Little Review: The Letters of Ezra Pound to Margaret Anderson: The Little Review Correspondence*, ed. Thomas L. Scott, Melvin J. Friedman, and Jackson R. Bryer (New York: New Directions, 1988), p. 214. For a discussion of Pound's motives in turning to *The Little Review*, see Scott and Friedman, "Introduction," *Pound/The Little Review*, p. xxv. For a feminist perspective on Pound and the editors of *The Little Review*, see Marek, *Women Editing Modernism*, pp. 85–87, 187–188.

6. *Pound/The Little Review*, p. 181.

7. Heap did use, however, one of Duchamp's rotoreliefs on the cover of the Spring 1925 issue of *The Little Review*.
8. Ernest Hemingway, qtd. in Ford, *Four Lives in Paris*, p. 257; and Felix Pollak, qtd. in Olson, Judson, and Boudreau, "Felix Pollak, An Interview on Little Magazines," p. 40.
9. Samuel Putnam, *Paris Was Our Mistress* (New York: Viking, 1947), p. 38.
10. The editors themselves were also responsible for Heap's erasure, since the desire for conversation drained energy away from writing. Unrecorded conversation resulted in another sort of impermanence. For an extended discussion of Heap's editorial role, see Marek, *Women Editing Modernism*, pp. 75–85.
11. What emerges from these academic assessments was a preference—indeed, a bias—for what has been labeled "high" modernism, exemplified by the poetry of Pound, T. S. Eliot, and Wallace Stevens, as opposed to the writings of William Carlos Williams (or, to put it another way, the painting of Picasso and Matisse and the School of Paris as opposed to the assemblage of Dada and the leftward politics of Surrealism). Unlike *The Little Review* (and *Broom*, published in Paris during the 1920s and enthusiastic about Dada and Surrealism), its counterparts among alternative publications in the 1920s, *Poetry* and *The Dial*, lifted a conservative banner for this "high" modernism.
12. William Troy, "The Story of the Little Magazines," *The Bookman* 70 (January 1930): 480; Charles Allen, "America's Little Magazines. II: *The Little Review*," *American Prefaces* 3, no. 4 (January 1938): 55. Despite an entire chapter devoted to *The Little Review*, Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich levied a mixed judgment on the editors and their magazine, which they praised mainly for its "'service' record" in presenting "an adequate cross-section view of European and American experimentalism." Allen's earlier dismissal of the magazine as an "esthetic wonderland," we learn, had everything to do with a "freakish" experimentalism, and the enterprise was scored for "attitudinizing, erratic editorial whims, and a frequent lack of literary

taste." See Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn F. Ulrich, *The Little Magazine: A History and a Bibliography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 65, 66. Following Hoffman and company with their preferences has been Jackson Bryer, whose 1965 dissertation on *The Little Review* (see above, n. 4) is a model of literary history up through the *Ulysses* trial in 1920. After that point, however, his narrative falls apart because he does not know what to do with Dada, Surrealism, and all the other avant-garde interests of Jane Heap. Even Ford sees this last phase of the magazine as "increasingly narcissistic and frenetic" (*Four Lives in Paris*, p. 251).

13. Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine*, p. 52.

14. Among a plethora of works on Gurdjieff, I found James Moore, *Gurdjieff and Mansfield* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), the most helpful as a scholarly study. The most moving account is offered by novelist Fritz Peters, a nephew of Anderson, and, for complicated reasons, the adopted child of Heap: see *Gurdjieff* (containing *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* and *Gurdjieff Remembered*) (London: Wildwood House, 1976). Anderson herself wrote *The Unknowable Gurdjieff* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963); the title says it all.

15. [Margaret Anderson], "Announcement," *Little Review* (March 1914): 2.

16. Margaret Anderson, "The Challenge of Emma Goldman," *Little Review* (May 1914): 9 and 5, respectively.

17. Margaret Anderson, "Toward Revolution," *Little Review* (December 1915): 5; and Emma Goldman, "Preparedness: The Road to Universal Slaughter," *Little Review* (December 1915): 7-12.

18. Margaret Anderson, "The Labor Farce," and "Facts about the Preparedness Bomb," *Little Review* (September 1916): 17-19, 29; Jane Heap, "The War, Madmen!" *Little Review* (March 1917): 15; and Jane Heap, "Push-face," *Little Review* (June 1917): 4-7.

Although the government engaged in some minor harassment of *The Little Review* for its anti-war stance, the occasion was significant mainly for what it revealed about Anderson. After her call for armed insurrection, some detectives came around to her apartment while she was out. They were intercepted by an influential friend from New York who averted further investigation by characterizing her as a “flighty society girl who meant nothing she said” (Anderson, *My Thirty Years’ War*, p. 75). Although in this instance Anderson was willing to deny this patently false portrait by courting arrest, she was not adverse to employing gender stereotypes when they suited her purpose. For a discussion of Anderson’s gendered strategies, see Marek, *Women Editing Modernism*, pp. 64, 72.

For a brief account of *The Masses* trial, see Hoffman, Allen, and Ulrich, *The Little Magazine*, p. 30.

19. Margaret Anderson, “‘The Immutable,’” *Little Review* (November 1914): 19–22.
20. Anderson, “Toward Revolution”: p. 5; and Margaret Anderson, “‘Mother Jones’ and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn,” *Little Review* (May 1915): 16–18.
21. Janet Flanner, qtd. in Ford, *Four Lives in Paris*, p. 275.
22. Margaret Anderson, “To the Innermost,” *Little Review* (October 1914): 3, 5; “Our First Year,” *Little Review* (February 1915): 6; “A Real Magazine,” *Little Review* (August 1916): 1; and “The Great Emotional Mind,” *Little Review* (January 1917): 3.
23. Margaret Anderson, “What the Public Doesn’t Want,” *Little Review* (August 1917): 20.
24. Charles Demuth, “Between Four and Five,” *Camera Work*, no. 47 (July 1914): 32.
25. In her memoir Anderson describes how she and Goldman increasingly differed over art, aesthetics, and politics during the First World War. A decisive break

occurred when Anderson refused to let Goldman and the anarchists use the *Little Review* office in New York as a meeting place because she feared that the landlord would cause trouble. But Anderson regretted her withdrawal of material support, and she and Heap continued to stand by Goldman and Alexander Berkman during their trial (and subsequent conviction) for sedition during the war (*My Thirty Years' War*, pp. 125–127, 133–135, 189–190, 195–196).

26. Often cited among these essays is Anderson's criticism of Edith Ellis's lecture in Chicago on sex (Ellis was the partner of the sexologist, Havelock Ellis): "Mrs. Ellis's Failure," *Little Review* (March 1915): 16–19. For Anderson, Ellis failed to talk in a forthright manner about homosexuality. See also Marek, *Women Editing Modernism*, pp. 71–72.

27. For an analysis of domesticity and *The Little Review*, I am indebted to Nina Van Gessel, who delivered a paper titled "The Art of Life: Editing Domesticity in Margaret Anderson's *My Thirty Years' War*" at a colloquium on American modernism sponsored by the University of Montreal on 15 June 1995.

28. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, pp. 145, 152.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 128–129.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 152–153.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 175. Fourteen episodes of *Ulysses* appeared in twenty-three issues of *The Little Review*. Prior to *Ulysses*, "Cattleman's Spring Mate," a short story by Wyndham Lewis that appeared in the magazine's October 1917 issue, had been banned from the United States mails. See Jackson Bryer, "Joyce, *Ulysses*, and *The Little Review*," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 66 (Spring 1967): 148–164; and B. L. Reid,

The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 439–458, for accounts of the trial.

34. Besides Reid's biography, *The Man from New York*, see Judith Zilczer, "The Noble Buyer": John Quinn, Patron of the Avant-Garde (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978) for an account of his collecting activities.

35. Jane Heap, "Art and the Law," *Little Review* (September–December 1920): 6.

36. Reid, *The Man from New York*, p. 449. For a fascinating, and revelatory, account of Quinn's "homophobic misogyny" and how it profoundly affected the outcome of the *Ulysses* trial, see Holly Baggett, "The Trials of Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap," in *A Living of Words: American Women in Print Culture*, ed. Susan Albertine (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), pp. 169–188.

37. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 221.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 221–222.

39. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, qtd. in Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, pp. 194–195.

40. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 211.

41. The Baroness, however, was not oblivious to modern life in New York, for she devoted several poems to the cacophony and rhythms of the subway and the advertising blandishments of a growing consumer capitalism. Her poetry is in the papers of *The Little Review*, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. For an extended discussion of the debate between the Baroness and Williams, see Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives*, pp. 99–101.

42. Jean Heap, "Dada," *Little Review* (Spring 1922): 46.

43. Anderson later claimed that Picabia provided only the Picabia number (*My Thirty Years' War*, p. 255), though his presence was felt for several issues. He became foreign editor for the issue just prior to the Picabia number, contributing "Fumigations" (*Little Review* [Autumn 1921]: 12–14). The Picabia number contained eighteen illustrations of his work as well as *L'Oeil Cacodylate*. A year later, for the Stella number, he contributed "Ma Main Tremble" and "Good Painting" (*Little Review* [Autumn 1922]: 40, and 61–62, respectively). In one of his few appearances outside publications that he controlled, André Breton contributed an essay on Picabia for the subsequent "Miscellany" number ("Francis Picabia," *Little Review* [Winter 1922]: 41–44).

44. "Dada Soulève Tout," *Little Review* (January–March 1921): 62–63; an advertisement for Tristan Tzara's *Seven Dada Manifestoes* appeared on the back cover of *The Little Review* (Spring 1923); and "Rotten Corpse," *Little Review* (Spring 1924): 22–24.

45. Heap, "Dada": 46.

46. Jane Heap, "Comments," *Little Review* (Spring 1924): 58.

47. The *International Theatre Exposition* was coordinated by Frederick Kiesler and involved off-Broadway and vanguard theater groups such as the Provincetown Players and the Neighborhood Playhouse.

48. Jane Heap, "Comments," *Little Review* (Winter 1922): 22. For a discussion of *Broom's* position on the machine, see Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives*, pp. 116–142.

Little is known about the *Machine-Age Exposition* beyond the catalogue, which has survived as a special issue of *The Little Review*, Supplement (16–28 May 1927). Newspaper accounts are meager. See "New Architecture Develops in Russia," *New York Times*, 29 May 1927, sec. 2, p. 1. The fullest contemporary account of the exposition can be found in Herbert Lippman, "The Machine Art Exposition," *The Arts* 11, no. 6 (June 1927): 324–326. For the best essay on the exposition, with a much-needed focus on Heap, see Susan Noyes Platt, "Mysticism in the Machine

Age: Jane Heap and *The Little Review*,” 20/1 1, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 18–44. Platt’s emphasis on Gurdjieff’s mysticism as the wellspring for the exposition is certainly plausible, though I have some reservations because it is difficult if not impossible to determine Gurdjieff’s teachings in any precise way, and there were apparently differing views on this guru. A “new consciousness” need not be mystical.

49. Jane Heap, “Lost: A Renaissance,” *Little Review* (May 1929): 5.

m a s k i n g

RACE

matters

FETISHIZING FASHION/FETISHIZING CULTURE: MAN RAY'S *NOIRE ET BLANCHE*

whitney CHADWICK



Man Ray's photograph, *Noire et blanche* (Black and White), 1926 (figure 11.1),¹ juxtaposes the head of his companion and model Alice Prin (Kiki of Montparnasse) and an African mask in a provocative coupling often cited in the growing literature on "primitivism" in cultural modernity. This photographic pairing seems at first glance exemplary of the artist's (and the surrealists') insistent paraphrasing of Lautréamont's dictum that beauty be produced through the chance encounter, the unmotivated collision of disparate realities.² Indeed, Man Ray himself viewed juxtaposition as the key to artistic invention: "I need more than one factor, at least two," he noted. "Two factors that are not related in any way. The creative act for me rests in the coupling of these two different factors in order to produce a plastic poem."³

In this essay I want to investigate the assumptions that underlie Man Ray's statement. I also want to explore some of the questions that arise when, rather than following the lead of earlier critics who often assumed relations of equal significance between images within the frame, we ask instead how these images function as *representations*, how they participate in the consolidation of meanings that can only be identified through difference. I will argue that Man Ray's imagery in *Noire et blanche*,

11.1

Man Ray, *Noire et blanche* (Black and White), 1926, photograph. Collection of Lucien Treillard, Paris. Photo: G. Moy. © 1997 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.



however indebted it is to his abiding interest in formal relationships, gains its meaning not from unmotivated juxtapositions, but from the fact that the specific images and objects he employs are already assigned complex and powerful meanings within social, sexual, and cultural hierarchies. To circulate a mask, which has a complex ritual content at its point of origin, as a studio prop, and to reduce a model's head to an abstract shape so that it, too, may function as an inanimate object, may be as much an ideological function of a European cult of male individuality and control over the bodies of others as it is a result of individual aesthetic judgment. Moreover, the fact that the photograph was originally published in Paris *Vogue* raises other questions about the intersection of the discourses of modernist "primitivism" and those of fashion photography, and about concepts of the fetish that originated in Western Europe and encouraged the deployment of bodily fragments, the displacement of meaning from one image or object to another, and the replacing of natural objects with fabricated ones to mute the realities of difference. During the 1920s, discourses of the fetish—both those deriving from European attempts to "explain" the spiritual power and effect of inanimate objects in African cultures, and those rooted in fashion photography's embrace of commodity fetishism—served to structure meaning in the work of Man Ray and other vanguard artists as surely as did formalist aesthetics.

Critics have often taken *Noire et blanche's* juxtapositions—white woman/black sculpture, France/Africa, modernism/the art of living traditions, the artifice of the fashion photograph/the ritual content of the indigenous object—as unproblematic delineations of the territories and dislocations that mark the surrealist field of vision. Jane Livingston, Rosalind Krauss, Sidra Stich, and others, have gone on to read the image in terms of word and picture play (black/white), or the fragmenting of form that destroys unitary meaning, or as emblematic of the doublings and substitutions that site the surrealist image/object within an oscillating visual field in which meaning cannot be fixed.⁴

Livingston, attentive to the self-conscious theatricality that distances this image from surrealist practices that celebrate unconscious motivation or chance occurrences, sees Man Ray as an essentially formalist *auteur*:

*The posing of Kiki's head, cheek laid horizontally on a flat surface, eyes closed, creates not the illusion but an analogue of the head as a disembodied object, like a decorated egg or a sculpture. . . . The two perpendicular bodies, one living, the other crafted, are meant to play against one another both formally and psychologically. Man Ray was probably more interested in the binary play between the two heads as sculptural counterparts, flesh and ebony, life and art, than he was in the cultural ramifications of "black" and "white," Caucasian and Negroid, though this interplay cannot have escaped him either.*⁵

A subsuming of psychological and/or cultural meaning under formal ordering underlies Livingston's reading of the photograph. She gives a cursory nod to the question of racial difference embedded in Man Ray's photograph, but without developing it. Within this schema, references to ideological formations become remote, distanced, as when critic Jean-Hubert Martin suggests that although the photograph's (and its title's) word play and picture play are hardly unwitting, they have no meaning beyond an unproblematized expression of the social realities of Man Ray's North American origins. He notes, though again without developing the implications of his statement, that "The racial problem had not been erased by the Civil War."⁶

More recently Sidra Stich, while acknowledging the photograph's articulation of difference, absorbs its dislocations into a model of "correspondence" and "reciprocity":

[In] Man Ray's positive/solarized pair, difference inverts to similitude as

*the Black African mask and Caucasian head establish a relationship of correspondence and reciprocity. The photographs set forth new parities that go beyond the standard classifications or Eurocentric ideals. . . . They also call attention to the issue of difference, rejecting a vision of unity that reduces everything to a homogeneity and obliterates the realities and exoticism of otherness.*⁷

Underlying all these readings is the problematic assumption that the doubling of the image in Surrealism—the mechanism that Rosalind Krauss has located as central to Surrealism’s ability to signify reality and unreality at the same moment⁸—indicates contextual as well as formal equivalence, impelling those “relations of correspondence, similitude, and reciprocity” which, for Stich at least, supercede difference.

Critical writing about *Noire et blanche* underscores modernist art history’s tendency to formalize relationships between images and objects on the basis of visual affinities. It also recuperates a twentieth-century vanguard history of decontextualizing and aestheticizing the objects of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas in order to annex them to European aesthetic models, particularly those relating to Cubism and abstraction. Critics whose responses to *Noire et blanche* valorize the photograph’s formal inventiveness, largely ignore its coded perceptions of the black body at a specific historical moment. Yet not only was Man Ray fully aware of the cult of *le nègre* sweeping Paris in 1926, his photograph also articulates parallels between the African body and that of his model and companion Kiki. To track meaning across the territories of gender and race that are encoded in *Noire et blanche* is to confront a set of social and cultural relations that are both ideologically produced and embedded in structures of fantasy and the unconscious.

The dadaists’ and surrealists’ predilection for juxtaposing or superimposing white women with primitive masks has been pointed out by

Marianna Torgovnick, and others.⁹ Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*, however, circulated this imagery within the context of the upscale, mass-marketed women's fashion magazine rather than within the narrower confines of the avant-garde periodicals of the day. Twentieth-century fashion photography's obsessive commodification of the idealized female body, when looked at alongside the aestheticizing of the black African body, and circulation of art objects relating to that body, in Europe and North America during the 1920s, raises further questions about the role of the fetishized image in creating and displacing desire, as well as in obscuring the realities of difference.¹⁰

The belief—shared by many of Man Ray's colleagues and friends at the time—that African masks were fetish objects, and represented the material embodiment of forces, values, and meanings which were discernible through the object's formal elements is a subject to which I want to return. First, however, a little history on the way to more theoretical considerations. Before considering the role of the fetishized object in shaping the content of Man Ray's photograph, we might do well to examine the specific historical contexts that shaped his relationship to the images and objects—including his white model Kiki and the Baule mask—that make up *Noire et blanche*.

The photograph is yet another example in a now widely-recognized history of acquisition and appropriation of objects from the cultures of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas by European and American artists in the first decades of the twentieth century. It is a history that has been replayed and revised, affirmed and contested in numerous exhibitions and publications, at least since Robert Goldwater's *Primitivism and Modern Art* first appeared in 1938.¹¹ More recently, the Museum of Modern Art's controversial exhibition, "*Primitivism*" in *20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984), elicited renewed attention to problems surrounding this history.¹² Although *Noire et blanche* dates to Man Ray's

years in Paris after World War I, his first exposure to sub-Saharan African masks and other works, which had been recontextualized as displays of modern art, took place in New York the previous decade.

The exhibition, *Statuary in Wood by African Savages: The Root of Modern Art*, which opened at Alfred Stieglitz's Photo-Secession gallery at 291 Fifth Avenue in November 1914, was widely, if inaccurately, heralded as the "first exhibition in this country of African Negro sculpture considered as works of art."¹³ Photographs of objects from the exhibition, which included eighteen sculptures from the Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and the Congo, reveal, among a collection of Baule objects, at least one example of a mask similar to that used by Man Ray in his 1926 photographs.¹⁴

It is likely that Man Ray saw the exhibition. Certainly, as a member of the Stieglitz circle at the time, he would have been aware of the extensive press coverage. Whether he was conscious of the dichotomy between the critics' descriptions of the masks and other objects as "savage," and the aestheticized display, which must have rendered them inert and lifeless against blank white walls, is not known. Most of the reviews reiterated the organizer Marius de Zayas's conceptualization of sub-Saharan Africa as a kind of aesthetic incubator for European modernism. Linking the "rudimentary mental and social life of savages" to the "mental and social character" of early humans, de Zayas posited cultural development from an instinctual animism mediated through the sorcerer's propitiating control of the "fetish" to the (so-called) rationalism of the modern European.¹⁵

De Zayas's deployment of the term "fetish" in this context of modernist art rests on a history of the term as a *European invention* which can be traced to cultural interactions between the Portuguese and West Africans in the seventeenth century.¹⁶ Once created, the term was employed to "explain" a category of objects the meanings of which, in their African context, confounded European linguistic reliance on binary oppositions such as animate/inanimate, life/death, and material/spiritual.¹⁷ Its

use may also have enabled Europeans to account for spiritual and material powers exercised by African “priests” but difficult to absorb into European rationalist systems of thought.

Although contemporary European and American critics acknowledged the formal qualities of African sculpture, they relied on terms such as “decorativeness” and “abstractness” to signify the presence of a savage irrationality called forth by the fetish, or “fetichism.”¹⁸ It is this duality of the object—its embodiment of a set of formal values *and* a spirit force, its materiality *and* its deferral of meaning—that permeates the reception of black African works by modern European and American artists from Stieglitz’s New York to Zurich Dada and on to the Paris of Man Ray’s *Noire et blanche*. As James Clifford, Sally Price, and Marianna Torgovnick have so ably shown, the image of primal fear and sexuality, the “dark” side of primitive art, dominates subsequent European and North American writing about black African works throughout much of the twentieth century.¹⁹

With the opening of the Dada Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in 1916, the irrationality associated with African art by European modernists could be acted out in real time and space rather than simply being represented, as in earlier cubist and German Expressionist paintings. Masks came off the wall; they were put on and taken off at will by European performers, and in the process they were assigned new meanings. The participants in Dada performances used African objects, and their dadaist derivatives, as masquerades or costumes, vehicles that enabled the performer to assume alternative selves and temporarily escape the constraints of European rationalism. “[E]ach mask,” wrote Hugo Ball, “seem[ed] to demand the appropriate costume; it also called for a quite specific set of gestures, melodramatic and even close to madness. . . . The dynamism of the masks was irresistible. . . . What fascinates us about these masks is that they represent, not humanity, but characters and emotions that are larger than life. The paralysing horror which is the backcloth of our age is here made

visible.”²⁰ Central to the “emotions” and “horror” which Ball sees released by the assuming of the masks were a transformative madness and an irrational violence.

The self-conscious adaptation of African forms in new contexts, where they are specifically intended to function as more than simply objects, is striking (figure 11.2). A reliance on cultural otherness as a primary means of severing conventions of perception and expression—a paradigm elucidated in Edward Said’s theorizing of the Near East as Europe’s imagined otherness, and the repository of a set of projections formed from the repressed of the dominant culture—characterizes both the dadaists’ and surrealists’ attempts to disrupt the rational order.²¹ Yet, as Hal Foster has shown, a desire to break down cultural and sexual oppositions is often countered by a reactive insistence on reinstating these same oppositions:

*This conflict occurs because the primitivist seeks to be both opened up to difference (to be made ecstatic, literally taken out of the self sexually, socially, racially) and to be fixed in opposition to the other (to be established again, secured as a sovereign self).*²²

To don masks and costumes of African inspiration, whether in Zurich in 1917 or at the Comte de Beaumont’s Surrealist Ball in Paris in 1928, was to shed inhibitions normally held in check and to release the so-called totemic and primitivizing forces associated with the unconscious.²³ With Surrealism, however, these irrational and primitivizing forces were reformulated as signifiers of a female sexuality that functioned to mediate the male surrealist’s celebration of the masculine unconscious. The joining of discourses of cultural otherness with those of sexual difference allowed the acting out of unconscious forces within socially bounded spaces widely, if unconsciously, understood to lie within a domain of white male control.



11.2

Marcel Janco, *Invitation to a Dada Evening*, 1916, charcoal on paper, 73 × 55 cm. Graphische Sammlung, Kunsthaus Zürich. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

Man Ray arrived in Paris in 1921, where he was soon in contact with André Breton's nascent surrealist group, and his work quickly began to respond to the surrealists' cultivation of the irrational, chance, and a convulsive dislocation of any sense of the real world.²⁴ It is Surrealism that systematized Dada's exploitation of irrationality, rewriting it in the language of the Freudian unconscious and establishing woman and her sexuality as the mediating figure between the conscious and the unconscious. The surrealists remained ambivalent about African art, which they saw as too closely associated with the cubists, and preferred the objects of Oceania and the Americas. Yet they were far from immune to the phenomenon of negrophilia, which swept through Paris in the 1920s and which shared with Surrealism a construction of woman and her sexuality as primitive/irrational/other.²⁵

It hardly seems coincidental that *Noire et blanche* appeared a year after the *Revue Nègre*, starring the African American dancer Josephine Baker, opened in Paris, and the same year that Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro published their *Primitive Negro Sculpture* with its ambitious formal analysis of African sculpture and its "fetishes."²⁶ James Clifford and others have rightly argued that modernist appropriations of African forms must be understood within the context of a growing negrophilia that during the 1920s in Paris celebrated black cultural contributions to areas ranging from music, particularly jazz, to sports like boxing:

*During the twenties the term nègre could embrace modern American jazz, African tribal masks, voodoo ritual, Oceanian sculpture, and even pre-Columbian artifacts. It had attained the proportions of what Edward Said has called an "orientalism"—a knitted-together collective representation figuring a geographically and historically vague but symbolically sharp exotic world. If the notion of the African "fetish" had any meaning in the twenties, it described not a mode of African belief but rather the way in which exotic artifacts were consumed by European aficionados.*²⁷

Among those “exotic artifacts” was Josephine Baker, whose physical expression conflated European male fantasies of both female sexuality and the black African body. The *Revue Nègre* opened in the autumn of 1925 and closed in December of that year, with Baker then joining the Folies-Bergère. Man Ray’s professional interest in the black female body as exemplified by Baker is suggested by the fact that after taking pictures of a rehearsal of the *Revue Nègre*, he subsequently arranged to photograph the dancer alone.²⁸

Press coverage of Baker’s performances—in which she danced nearly nude surrounded by attributes of *la vie sauvage*, like strings of bananas or conch shells and jungle animals, was orgiastic in its prose.²⁹ Her dancing, like the masks displayed at Stieglitz’s gallery the previous decade, and the masks worn by Dada performers at the Cabaret Voltaire, called up a fantasy world of possibilities dominated by the image of Africa as “primitive,” “instinctive,” and “irrational.” There is an important distinction at work here, however, as the mask on the wall that had given way to the mask assumed and controlled by the white male dadaist, now became the image through which the black female body was read by its European audience. Baker’s performances, like those of the Zurich dadaists, were just that—performances complete with stage prop bananas and wild animals. They were not, however, read as such, but became part of ideological formulations in which they were taken as the “authentic” or “natural” expressions of a primitive sexuality. It hardly seems surprising that when this irrational “otherness” is fully embodied and functions ideologically it does so within the structures of a European tradition that for centuries constructed femininity as nature/instinct/irrationality. The difference now is the specific deployment of the black body and its artifacts as the feminine.

The association of a “savage” and “primitive” female sexuality with the body of the European woman, whose head is so carefully juxtaposed with the Baule mask in Man Ray’s photograph, was reinforced by the exis-

tence of specific sites in Paris, social spaces in which female sexuality and cultural otherness were joined under the signs of irrationality and exoticism. The Jockey, a nightclub frequented by black musicians and dancers—many of them from the *Revue Nègre*—artists, writers, and other inhabitants of the *quartier*, opened in Montparnasse in 1923 at the end of the street in which Man Ray had his studio at that time. A photograph taken outside the club at its opening (figure 11.3) shows Man Ray, Ezra Pound, Tristan Tzara, Jean Cocteau, and others grouped around the proprietor, an American artist named Hilaire Hiler. At The Jockey, the bartender was a Cherokee, the pianist a black jazz musician, the exterior walls were decorated with painted figures of Mexicans, cowboys, and Indians, and the club's *habitués* revelled in the culturally exotic.

The Jockey was only one of a group of clubs and reviews in Paris in which black entertainers and white vanguard artists and writers mingled. Musicians and dancers from the *Revue Nègre*, including Baker, were frequent visitors at Bricktop's. One of Baker's biographers relates that shortly after the *Revue Nègre* opened, Paul Colin "took Josephine to the Bal Nègre on rue Blomet in Montparnasse, started by colonial soldiers from Martinique and Guadeloupe and now frequented by Paul Morand, [Moishe] Kisling, André Gide, skinny solitary Jules Pascin, and Man Ray with his *volcanic mistress* Kiki."³⁰ It was at The Jockey, however, that Kiki, a young woman known as uninhibited, provocative, entertaining, and in just about every other way the antithesis of the young bourgeois Catholic womanhood of the day so chillingly described in Simone de Beauvoir's memoirs, became one of the star performers and principal attractions, taking her place amidst a constantly shifting crowd of artists, writers, tourists, and performers.

So persuasive did the identification of blackness, cultural otherness, irrationality, and female sexuality (white or black) become in the Parisian vanguard milieu frequented by Man Ray during the 1920s that it cannot be isolated from the meaning of images like *Noire et blanche*. It is



11.3

Henri Manuel, *The Jockey*, 1923, photograph (from Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900–1930* [New York: Abrams, 1989], p. 127, figure 2).

not surprising that contemporary descriptions of *The Jockey*, much like those of the *Cabaret Voltaire*, should rely on images of disruption, dislocation, and frenzy, or that they should stress the sexual innuendo and provocative nature of Kiki's singing and dancing. Moreover, they do so using the images already associated with "primitive" art, as well as with Baker's performances. "Presently there were two men," one participant later recalled. "A huge one with a fierce moustache had joined the yellow-haired one, and the two kicked their legs in unison and chanted like wild tribesmen; soon everyone got into the act, yelling without the encumbrance of music."³¹

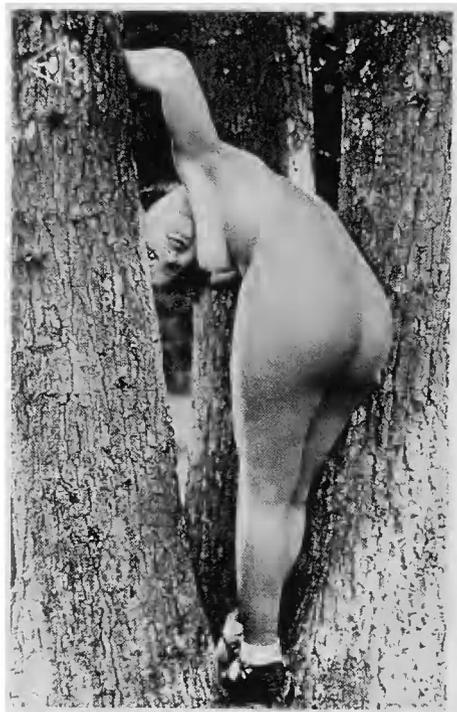
Many of Man Ray's photographs of Kiki from these years self-consciously exploit the dichotomy between conventionalized representations of her nude body identified with icons of "high" art, and others in which her sexuality is constructed as "natural" or "savage" through its identification with the signs I have been discussing. In a well-known photograph of Kiki taken in 1922, her body is draped and arranged like that of the *Venus de Milo*.³² In another, from 1923, the body is voluptuously refigured in nature with ferns and grasses inscribed on a human form presented as a truncated and abstracted marble sculpture (figure 11.4).

Readings of the latter photograph, and others like it, are profoundly shaped by the context in which it circulates. For audiences familiar with the representational conventions of the classical tradition the photograph slides neatly into the formal categories of art. Yet the figurative language and the association between female sexuality and nature—a tradition whose controversial history in modern art can be traced from Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863) to Gauguin and to Matisse's *Blue Nude* (1907)—also reproduces conventions firmly in place in early twentieth-century erotic postcards intended for private circulation and consumption (figure 11.5). In a fairly typical example from the 1920s, probably produced in France or Germany, the body is equally carefully structured



11.4

Man Ray, *Kiki of Montparnasse*, c. 1927, gelatin silver print, 17.3 × 12.9 cm. Collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, California, 84.XM.1000.50. © 1997 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

**11.5**

Erotic postcards, probably France or Germany, c. 1920s (from William Oullette and Barbara Jones, *Erotic Postcards* [New York: Excalibur Books, 1977]).



in relation to the viewing subject and to a “nature” constructed around the hard bark of a tree.

Man Ray’s attraction to Kiki was also based, at least in part, on her sexuality, which he differentiated from middle-class norms on the basis of her uninhibited behavior, and which he associated with her rural origins.³³ As Linda Nochlin and others have pointed out, the class difference between mostly middle-class male artists and the mostly working-class women who supported themselves as professional models assured artists of more or less unlimited access to the bodies of the women who worked for them, but who were not their social or professional equals.³⁴ At least one source reports that Kiki’s fame as a model had been assured as early as 1918, “when Moishe Kisling, a Polish painter . . . noticed her at the Rotonde [and] shouted, ‘Who’s the new whore?’”³⁵ Kiki’s appearance as a model in Paris corresponds with a period during which for a few francs, an artist might purchase an African mask, or a woman’s body. In either case, structures of fantasy and exchange emphasize difference and availability.

Returning to Man Ray’s *Noire et blanche*, one might argue that its formal repetitions—the curve of Kiki’s cheek and the edge of the mask, for example—have been read as equivalencies and reciprocities only because European culture in the 1920s assigned comparable value to both as Other to white men and as signs of the repressed, the unconscious. While one head *is* object, the other is rendered object-like through its mask-like visage and closed eyes. Solarization does not radically alter our perceptions. Rather than read Kiki’s head as “black,” we instead read the mask as yet further removed from the “real” by virtue of the uncanny light that seems to illuminate it from within. The erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious meet in a juxtaposition in which the presence of the African mask produces a visual dislocation of the “natural” body of Western representation. Man Ray’s photograph addresses modernism’s uneasy relationship between the “primitive” and the “civilized” under the

sign of woman's sexuality and the desire of modern man to possess the objects of his desire—whether sexually or culturally Other.

In her essay, "The Dark Continent," Mary Ann Doane argues that the trope of the Dark Continent fuses the unknowabilities of racial and sexual difference, articulating Otherness as a problem of the limits of knowledge and hence of visibility, recognition, differentiation.³⁶ In combining the black mask, and the white mask-like head, Man Ray employs two cultural signs, both of which point to the image's ability to act as a barrier to knowledge. The social function of both masks and fashion photographs rests, in part, on their ability to displace meaning from the unknowable "reality" behind their surfaces to the economies of spiritual life and consumer culture. And although the unknowability of the white woman may have a representational affiliation with blackness, Doane argues, as an exemplar of culture and racial purity she remains situated as the polar opposite since the material experience of the black woman—structured by the simultaneous oppression of patriarchy, class, and race—does not parallel that of white women:

*Nevertheless, what the representational affinity seems to indicate is a strong fear that white women are always on the verge of "slipping back" into a blackness. . . . The white woman would be the weak point in the system, the signifier of the always too tenuous hold of civilization.*³⁷

Man Ray's photograph, unconsciously activating as it does discourses of sexuality and race, and reinscribing their terms within its unique visual frame, powerfully reinforces colonialist ideology. The caption that accompanied *Noire et blanche* when it was published in *Paris Vogue*—almost certainly produced in the magazine's own editorial office in Paris—makes explicit its extraordinary condensation of motifs:

Face of a woman, calm transparent egg straining to shake off the thick

*head of hair through which she remains bound to primitive nature. It is through women that the evolution of the species to a place full of mystery will be accomplished. Sometimes plaintive, she returns with a feeling of curiosity and dread to one of the stages through which evolved white man has passed, perhaps before becoming today the evolved white man.*³⁸

The aesthetic discourse of the fashion photograph and the colonialist discourse of early modernism meet in this image, brought together under the sign of woman's doubling. By 1926, these discourses also shared concepts of the fetish capable of investing formal relationships with highly charged sexual and/or racial meanings.

Man Ray was not alone in articulating such links. During the latter 1920s William Seabrook, a writer and friend of Man Ray, set out on his own obsessive search for the origins of "The Fetich." The journey, relayed in his book *Jungle Ways* (1931), took him deep into the forests of West Africa in the company of the "witch doctor" Wamba, a woman in whom he saw combined similar dualities:

*I have said that with Wamba I seemed to be dealing with two women rather than one, but I think that in reality, absurd as it may appear to present an African jungle witch in such paradoxical guise, she was not only a true sorceress, but a true Negress, true to type and true to the genius of her race—light-minded, sensual, a luxurious, pleasure-loving animal, comic at times, gaily insolent, yet good-hearted—but with another side, another soul, dark and primordial, in continual unconscious deep communication with old, nameless things, demoniac and holy.*³⁹

The play of signifiers that positions woman, her sexuality, and her image at the intersection of desire and fear, and that conflates the perfectly constructed surface and the "primitive" unconscious, underlies representations of femininity within both vanguard art practice and con-

sumer culture in the first decades of the twentieth century. A look at Man Ray's fashion work during the 1920s, and an example of Seabrook's imaginative participation, reveal their keen, if unconscious, grasp of these dynamics.

Man Ray met the French couturier Paul Poiret in 1922 and was soon taking commercial photographs for him. He quickly grasped and adapted the formula for success in his new field—"line, color, texture, and above all, sex-appeal"⁴⁰—often using his new mistress as model. In 1924, Kiki's photograph accompanied an article on models in Paris written by Djuna Barnes and published in the American women's magazine, *Charm*.⁴¹ Other early examples of his fashion work include photographs in which models are posed in front of sculptures, and parallels are drawn between human and sculptural form and the animate is reproduced as inanimate; in others, the forms of the human body or the head are reduced to abstract shapes like that of the egg, or else forms are drawn from different cultural traditions are formally related.⁴² In all of the above, woman is fetishized into a deliberately artificial image, her head perfectly ovoid, her face a perfect mask. In *Noire et blanche*, the process is carried far enough that the black African mask is transformed into a European ideal of female beauty—passive, sculpted, symmetrical, its surface polished and inert.⁴³

What linked fashion's ideal of female beauty and African sculpture like the Baule mask in the Paris of the 1920s may have had less to do with their formal resemblances than with the ways that these relationships reinforced unconscious processes of fetishization which—whether read in Freud's or Marx's terms—secured women and other peoples within systems of exchange produced and controlled by the institutions of capitalism and patriarchy.

Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* belongs within an aesthetic discourse that assigns exchange value to images, objects, and artifacts, which sub-

stitutes the fabricated for the natural, and commodifies images of women and the objects and artifacts of other peoples. For Marx, the term “fetish” was useful in isolating the power of a specific historical institution like capitalism to fix personal consciousness in an objective illusion. As William Pietz summarizes: “[M]aterial objects turned into commodities conceal exploitative social relations, displacing value-consciousness from the true [conditions of production] to the apparent movement of . . . prices and forces.”⁴⁴ Freud, in his well-known essay on the subject, linked the fetish to a fear of castration which is alleviated by arresting the look on an object—generally a piece of clothing or a part of the body other than the genitals—which was, with respect to the moment of the primal glance, somewhere in proximity to the place of the terrifying absence. Accordingly, the threat of castration is subsequently allayed by displacing attention from the real woman (whose lack is always perceived as potentially mutilating) to her image with its illusory promise of wholeness.

It is this that fashion does so well, giving us an image of glamorous, sensuous, glossy eroticism as a sign of woman’s fetishized representation and a means of allaying the threat that her sexuality carries. As Laura Mulvey notes of Josef von Sternberg’s *Blond Venus* starring Marlene Dietrich: “[T]he beauty of the woman as object and screen space coalesce; she is no longer the bearer of the guilt but a perfect product, whose body, stylized and fragmented by close-ups is the content of the film and the direct recipient of the spectator’s look.”⁴⁵ By the time *Blond Venus* appeared in 1932, the tradition of representing woman as an abstract and mechanical object of desire was firmly in place in both fashion and film. “In the world of fashion,” notes Sandra Phillips, “Horst, [Hoyningen-Huené], Blumenfeld, and Lee Miller all treated the beautiful woman as an object. . . . Even Steichen experimented with masks, a tribute to the surrealist spirit, if not to Man Ray directly. The fetishistic appreciation of

gloves and hands, the personal character of objects such as jewelry, and the treatment of woman as a cold, distant, mechanical being were constants in the pages of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*.”⁴⁶

It was but a short step from the 1920s fashion ideal of femininity—mechanized and potentially devouring—to images that articulated male sexual desire through depictions of eroticism, transgression, and the fetishized object. In an undated letter written to Man Ray during this period, William Seabrook proposed “some additional tentative ideas to go along with the black masks.” These included:

*A black priest's robe and priest's shovel hat—straight line such as one sees priests wear in the street. . . . Concealed beneath it a wasp-waist hour-glass corset finished either in some glittering fabric that looks like polished steel, or in black leather-like material to match the mask. . . . Also boots or slippers with fantastically high heels. . . . So if you will be thinking of where you might send me to order these various things, in addition to the two we spoke of yesterday, I will be much obliged.*⁴⁷

A focus on female form abstracted and eroticized dominates both Man Ray's fashion work and the photographs that have been accepted as preeminent examples of his surrealist photography. He frequently returns in both to the conventions of depicting female passivity, often photographing his female models and sitters in attitudes suggesting sleep or death, as in the photographs of Nancy Cunard he took around the same time that *Noire et blanche* was produced. Cunard, a wealthy English poet and publisher and collector of African art, was perhaps best-known for her political involvement in black causes, and for her personal and professional relationship with Henry Crowder, an African American jazz musician. Man Ray's photographs emphasize her signal feature—long arms loaded with African bracelets. In one of these, taken the same year as *Noire et blanche*, she reclines with her eyes closed, assuming, like Kiki, a

place within a fantasized exotic realm accessible only through the dream and the unconscious.⁴⁸ In *Primitive Negro Sculpture*, published the same year, the authors locate the fetish object at the portals of this romanticized locale: “[T]he African fetish is an excuse for dreaming of deep mysterious forests, tom-toms and weird incantations, of dark warriors and women of the tropics.”⁴⁹

The photographs of Cunard, like much of Man Ray’s fashion work, and like his *Noire et blanche*, present a female body as if asleep or in a state of death-like unconsciousness. In *Noire et blanche*, this association is reinforced by the inclusion of the mask alongside the mask-like head, and by the hand that holds and controls the mask, presenting it as if it were an object of reverie or contemplation. The viewer is thus invited to share the dream evoked through these coded signs of female sexuality, allure, and primitive abandon—all carefully contained, however, within visual conventions that secure white European control.

Man Ray’s deployment of the masks points in two directions: toward the European tradition of the death mask with its closed eyes and simplified shapes, and toward modernism’s appropriation of the sub-Saharan masks as “fetish,” embodying human terror in the face of natural forces, mediating between the powers of the living and those of the dead. At the same time, these sources are subsumed under the mask-like abstraction and formal perfection, the symmetrical features, composed expressions, and exoticized body fragments that are the hallmarks of the fetishized images of women. The “threat” is thus both expressed and defused.

As Christian Metz has shown, photographs can also function as souvenirs or keepsakes, fragments of private worlds that call up a whole universe of possibilities. The photograph’s ability to freeze life into an eternal present moment is comparable to the timelessness of the unconscious and of memory. The very qualities of immobility and silence that characterize the photograph also link it to death:

. . . the snapshot, like death, is an instantaneous abduction of the object out of the world into another world, into another kind of time. . . . The photographic take is immediate and definitive, like death and like the constitution of the fetish in the unconscious, fixed by a glance in childhood, unchanged and always active later.⁵⁰

Like the photograph, the fetish is related to death through terms of castration and fear, terms that are implicated in the ways that both fashion photographs and fetish objects have been read and understood.

The associations with castration and death evoked by the fetishized image or object are often alleviated by European man's assertion of security through ownership. Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* not only provokes discussion of the fetish for the reasons outlined above; it also appears at a historically specific moment, the 1920s, which witnessed the rapid deployment of a commodity fetishism. The exoticism of the black African mask and related objects owes much to its circulation as an aestheticized commodity. Man Ray was associated with a community of artists and writers who roamed Paris flea markets in search of objects of cultural and/or psychological otherness. The surrealists among them depended heavily on their ability to evoke the latent content of such objects through European structures of fantasy and dreams.

The 1920s also witnessed an explosive growth in mass-marketed publications aimed at educating women as consumers. Industries that marketed cosmetics and fashion items mushroomed. The "new look"—provided by the innovations of an avant-garde that included Man Ray's fashion photographs with their language of a remote, abstracted femininity that nevertheless signified woman as man's possession and the repository of his fantasies—became ideologically useful as a banner standing for newness and innovation generally as purchasable properties.⁵¹ Or, as critic Marina Vaizey puts it, "the human face contrasted with the sculpted

face; and Kiki with her make up and perfectly arranged ‘sculpted’ hair, as contemporary woman in a social mask as real as the real mask, echoing rituals in both modern life and the apparently primitive life in other societies.”⁵²

In Man Ray’s photograph, the realignments and reconfigurations that allow the images to be read as interchangeable also obscure the meaning of the body as a social system that functions differently in different cultures. In parts of black Africa, masks have little significance as discrete objects and gain meaning only through their use in the dances and rituals which secure a group’s collective identity. Just as they cannot be separated from the bodies or costumes that provide their meanings merely as aestheticized objects. Within European cultures—and specifically within Dada and surrealist art practices—the presence of the mask served to disrupt the bodily wholeness that signifies the Western ideal of universal order and truth. And it played an important role in events designed to act out feelings of anxiety and rupture usually repressed by the dominant culture.

For the surrealists, the eruption of powerful archaic desires loosened the boundaries of rationalism. It was within such marginalities that they understood power to be stored in “primitive” societies. It was here that they sought the radical creative sources of a revolutionary art of dislocation, and it was here that they located the meaning of the mask as fetish. In the end, however, their cultivation of archaic and irrational states occurred outside the symbolic systems that secured their meaning in many non-European cultures. Emptied of the social meanings that validated the fetish in its original context, objects like the surrealist mask often took their place within elaborate masquerades like that outlined by Seabrook in his letter to the photographer. During the 1930s, surrealists from Meret Oppenheim to Salvador Dalí would flirt with fashion design and the fashion industry. But the particular interweaving of cultural prim-

itivism and female sexuality evident in Man Ray's photography owes its dynamism largely to the previous decade's elaboration of links between woman and the "primitive" unconscious.

As a white male American artist living in Paris in the 1920s, Man Ray could hardly be expected to be exempt from the dominant social and cultural ideologies of his day.⁵³ But having seen that his interest in images like those that juxtapose Kiki and the African mask was shaped by forces beyond those of individual artistic choice and formalist aesthetics, we must finally ask whether vanguard artistic productions such as *Noire et blanche* effect any intervention at all into dominant cultural values, hierarchies, and ideologies. Carol Duncan and others have pointed out the problematic relation between vanguard ideology and social practice in early twentieth-century modernism, and there is little reason to think either Dada or Surrealism exempt from such contradictions.⁵⁴

In the end, Man Ray's photographs reproduce ideological formations that reduce sexual and cultural difference to signs within a cultural system of exchange. The substitutions that take place within *Noire et blanche* work not because the images are equivalents, but because they participate in European systems of representation that commodify sexualized looking, and which reinforce dominant hierarchies of power and control over women and over other cultures.

NOTES

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1. The photograph, sometimes called *Composition*, exists in positive and negative versions. The positive version was originally published in Paris *Vogue* in May 1926, and reprinted in the Belgian journal *Variétés*, July 1928. A third, less well-known version employing a vertical format and showing the model holding the Baule mask against her cheek (collection Georges Sakier, Paris), is reproduced in *Man Ray Photographs* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1982), pl. 111.
2. Evan Maurer has called it a “Baule-style” mask from the Ivory Coast, an area that was part of France’s colonial territories in West Africa. See Maurer, “Dada and Surrealism,” in *Primitivism in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, 2 vols., ed. William S. Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 2:539.
3. Man Ray, qtd. in Janus, *Man Ray: The Photographic Image*, trans. Murtha Baca (Woodbury, NY: Barron’s, 1980), p. 9.
4. See, for example, Jane Livingston, “Man Ray and Surrealist Photography,” and Rosalind Krauss, “Corpus Delicti,” in *L’Amour fou: Photography and Surrealism* (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 1985), pp. 135, and 91–95, respectively;

and Sidra Stich, *Anxious Visions: Surrealist Art* (Berkeley, CA: University Art Museum, 1990), pp. 58–59.

5. Livingston, “Man Ray and Surrealist Photography,” p. 135. Discussing the negative version, Livingston notes: “Reversing the black/white binarism through negative printing, which introduces a version of the image in which Kiki’s whitest flesh is rendered electrically dark and the African wood mask eerily bright, reinforces the formal as well as the anthropological tension. This tension is achieved not by simple virtue of exchange, but by its nature as a *technique*, a playfully parlayed act of the demonstrably willful artist.”

6. Jean-Hubert Martin, “Introduction,” in *Man Ray Photographs*, p. 9.

7. Stich, *Anxious Visions*, pp. 58, 61.

8. Krauss, “Corpus Delicti,” pp. 55–111.

9. Marianna Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 102. Torgovnick specifically mentions Hannah Höch and Max Ernst.

10. Psychoanalytic accounts of the construction of sexuality, particularly masculine sexuality, rely on psychic processes encoded in fragments of vision, and on compensatory mechanisms in which parts of the body substitute the missing sexual organ. Particularly powerful are those in which the male child “sees” that his mother has no penis, or catches a glimpse of his parents copulating.

11. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (New York: Harper, 1938). A revised edition was published in 1967 (New York: Vintage), and an enlarged edition in 1986 (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

12. The literature on the subject is too vast to cite exhaustively. Readers are urged to consult the exhibition catalogue, “*Primitivism*” in *20th-Century Art*. For

challenges to the exhibition's reliance on the principles of visual "affinities" between modern art and its non-European sources, see James Clifford, "Histories of the Tribal and the Modern," *Art in America* 73, no. 4 (April 1985): 164–177, 215; Hal Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art," *October* 34 (Fall 1985): 45–70; Thomas McEvilly, "Doctor Lawyer Indian Chief: 'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art at the Museum of Modern Art in 1984," *Artforum* 23, no. 3 (November 1984): 54–56; and Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, pp. 119–137.

13. *History of an American, Alfred Stieglitz: '291' and After. Selections from the Stieglitz Collection* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1943), p. 22. For a similar statement, see Marius de Zayas, "How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York," ed. Francis M. Naumann, *Arts Magazine* 54, no. 8 (April 1980): 109. The exhibition of African statuary, organized by de Zayas, used objects borrowed from the collection of Paul Guillaume, soon to become the most prestigious African art collector and dealer in Paris between the two World Wars, and shipped from Paris. Gail Levin points out that some examples of African art had been exhibited at Robert Coates's Washington Square Gallery the previous spring. See Levin, "'Primitivism' in American Art: Some Literary Parallels of the 1910s and 1920s," *Arts Magazine* 59, no. 3 (November 1984): 101–105. According to Jean-Louis Paudrat, the first exhibition in Paris in which African sculpture was explicitly referred to as such—although the exhibition was not exclusively devoted to such objects—took place at the Galeries Levesque in May and June of 1913. See Paudrat, "From Africa," in *"Primitivism" in 20th-Century Art*, 1:152.

14. See de Zayas, "How, When, and Why": 111. See also *History of an American, Alfred Stieglitz*, figures 158–160; and Gail Levin, "American Art," in *"Primitivism" in 20th-Century Art*, 2:463.

15. Marius de Zayas, *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art* (New York: Modern Gallery, 1916), p. 5.

European constructions of sub-Saharan Africa as the site of a "primitive" past experienced as a state of more or less permanent instinctive terror—mediated only through images and objects that were believed to embody powerful

feelings—quickly became the ideological focus for sustaining a belief in the “advanced” state of European civilization. This point is argued by de Zayas through a string of quotations from Europeans, as in this statement: “The fetishist, says Captain C. Meynier, of the African Negro, has no other moral basis than his instinct, no other rule than the right of the stronger, no other arbiter than the fetish maker, magicians, casters of bad luck. The pagan Negro lives continually in an atmosphere of terror, terror of everything that surrounds him, of his fellowmen, of the obscure divinities who speak to him through the fetish” (ibid., p. 21).

16. William Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, I,” *Res*, no. 9 (Spring 1985): 5–17.

17. Ibid. See also Wyatt MacGaffey, “Fetishism Revisited: Kongo *Nkisi* in Sociological Perspective,” *Africa* 47, no. 2 (1977): 172.

18. Julien Levy would later succinctly define these terms as referring to the “doctrine of spirits embodied in, or attached to, or conveying influence through, certain material objects” (*Surrealism* [New York: Black Sun, 1936], p. 98). Levy’s definition accompanied the juxtaposition of a sculpture from Gabon in the collection of the Trocadero Museum (p. 98) with Max Ernst’s collage of 1920 titled *The Chinese Nightingale* (p. 99). The tone of much of the critical response to the Stieglitz exhibition of 1914 is conveyed by Charles Caffin, whose review in the *New York American* is reprinted in *Camera Work; A Critical Anthology*, ed. Jonathan Green (New York: Aperture, 1973), pp. 299–300; and in de Zayas, “How, When, and Why”: 109–110. An extreme example of the vogue for fantasizing black Africa as the violent and threatening “primitive unconscious” of the West can be seen in Forbes Watson’s review in the *New York Evening Post* (rpt. in de Zayas, “How, When, and Why”: 110): “In the case of these exhibits it was not necessary to explain that they are savages. Savages indeed! The rank savor of savagery attacks the visitor the instant he enters the diminutive room. This rude carving belongs to the black recesses of the jungle. Some examples are hardly human, and are so powerfully expressive of gross brutality that the flesh quails.”

19. See, for example, James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-*

Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988); Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*. Two recent exhibitions that have stressed differences rather than the assimilation of living art traditions to European models are *Exotic Allusions: What Do We Really Mean by Primitive Art?* at the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ, in 1988, and *Art/Artifact* at New York's Museum of African Art in 1988.

20. Hugo Ball, qtd. in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, trans. David Britt (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965), p. 23. For a slightly different transcription, see Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimés (New York: Viking, 1974), pp. 64–65.

21. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

22. Hal Foster, "'Primitive' Scenes," *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): 85.

23. Maurer ("Dada and Surrealism," 2:538–539) notes that "When an African dancer dons a mask for a sacred ritual he also becomes the vehicle of the spirit the mask represents. The mask is therefore a significant element in the process of the transformation of the individual's consciousness from the human to the mythic."

24. For an account of his meeting with the surrealists, see Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), pp. 91–94.

25. This construction is discussed at length by Torgovick, *Gone Primitive*, pp. 85–118 and *passim*. For a more general discussion of Surrealism's relationship to the art of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, see Maurer, "Dada and Surrealism," 2:535–593. Another perspective is offered by Mary Ann Doane in her chapter, "Dark Continents: Epistemologies of Racial and Sexual Difference in Psychoanalysis and the Cinema," in *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 209–248.

26. Josephine Baker sailed for France on 15 September 1925; the *Revue Nègre* opened after several weeks of rehearsals.

Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro's book, *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1926), illustrated with works from the Barnes Foundation collection, was dedicated to Alfred Barnes, the Philadelphia collector and advocate of abstract art and formal analysis (whom Man Ray met during this period). In basing their analysis on the forms of African sculpture, Guillaume and Munro were following the direction established by Carl Einstein in his *Negerplastik* of 1915.

Guillaume, who was instrumental in bringing African art to New York in 1914, had also collaborated with Guillaume Apollinaire on his *Sculpture nègre* (Paris, 1917).

27. Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, p. 136. See also Clifford's "Negrophilia," in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 901–908.

28. Lynn Haney, *Naked at the Feast: A Biography of Josephine Baker* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981), pp. 63–64. For additional information on Baker's relationship to vanguard artists and French couturiers, see William Wiser, *The Great Good Place: American Expatriate Women in Paris* (New York and London: Norton, 1991).

29. "Primitive instinct," "madness of the flesh," "tumult of the senses," are but a few of the hyperbolic phrases that recur frequently. See Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, pp. 97–98. For more on the reception of Baker's performances in Paris, see Phyllis Rose, *Jazz Cleopatra: Josephine Baker in Her Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 22–33; and Jean-Claude Baker and Chris Chase, *Josephine: The Hungry Heart* (New York: Random House, 1993), pp. 3–7.

30. Haney, *Naked at the Feast*, p. 67 (my emphasis).

31. Frederick Kohner, *Kiki of Montparnasse* (New York: Stein and Day, 1967), p. 28. Kohner, who may or may not be a reliable source, also refers to Kiki's performances as full of sexual allusion, finger pointing, etc.

32. Among other publications, the image is reproduced in Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, *Kiki's Paris: Artists and Lovers 1900–1930* (New York: Abrams, 1989), p. 125, figure 6.
33. Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, pp. 115–130.
34. Linda Nochlin, “Women, Art, and Power,” in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1989), pp. 1–36.
35. Moishe Kisling, qtd. in Billy Klüver and Julie Martin, “Man Ray, Paris,” in *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1988), p. 120.
36. Doane, “Dark Continents,” p. 216 and passim.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 214.
38. *Vogue* 7, no. 5 (1 May 1926): 37 (author's translation).
39. William B. Seabrook, *Jungle Ways* (London: George G. Harrap, 1931), p. 58.
40. Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, p. 105. See also Willis Hartshorn and Merry Foresta, “Introduction,” in *Man Ray in Fashion* (New York: International Center of Photography, 1990), pp. 13–14.
41. Published by Bamberger's Department Store. See Klüver and Martin, “Man Ray, Paris,” p. 115.
42. Examples are reproduced in *Man Ray in Fashion*, pp. 45, 46, 63.
43. By the mid-1920s, fashion photography had completed the transformation of the female image into that of the “modern” body, a sleek, streamlined form of extreme artifice. As Peter Wollen notes, this new body was often described in the

explicitly functionalist terms of the machine aesthetic. See Wollen, "Fashion/Orientalism/The Body," in *Raiding the Icebox: Reflections on Twentieth-Century Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 20–21.

44. Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish": 9.

45. Laura Mulvey, qtd. in E. Ann Kaplan, "Fetishism and the Repression of Motherhood in Von Sternberg's *Blond Venus* (1932)," in *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988), p. 52.

46. Sandra S. Phillips, "Themes and Variations: Man Ray's Photography in the Twenties and Thirties," in *Perpetual Motif*, pp. 217–218. Man Ray's deployment of these characteristics can also be seen in the photographs he took of mannequins in the couture section of the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* at the Grand Palais in 1925. The exhibition was presented by André Vigneau of the Siegel mannequin company. The dresses, designed by couturiers like Lanvin and Yvonne Davidson, were displayed on wooden or wax figures. One of Man Ray's photographs was reproduced on the cover of *Le Révolution Surréaliste* 1, no. 4 (15 July 1925).

47. William Seabrook, letter to Man Ray, undated, Man Ray Archives, Paris.

48. Reproduced in *Man Ray in Fashion*, p. 64.

49. Guillaume and Munro, *Primitive Negro Sculpture*, p. 3. The authors go on to define the "fetish" as including "masks, charms, amulets, even living animals, trees, certain acts, in fact anything having a magic power . . . an image in which power has temporarily become lodged through magic rites" (pp. 26, 28).

50. Christian Metz, "Photography and Fetish," in *The Critical Image: Essays on Contemporary Photography*, ed. Carol Squiers (Seattle, WA: Bay, 1990), p. 158.

51. See Stuart Ewen, *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic, 1988), pp. 47–52.
52. Marina Vaizey, *The Artist as Photographer* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982), p. 70.
53. For a somewhat different analysis, see Stephen C. Foster, “Configurations of Freedom,” in *Perpetual Motif*, pp. 242–243.
54. Carol Duncan, “Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting,” in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 293–313.

HANNAH HÖCH'S FROM AN ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM

maud LAVIN



Several critics have argued that the post-Dada works of Hannah Höch (1889–1978) lack the political intensity of those she made alongside John Heartfield, Raoul Hausmann, and George Grosz. Critic Manuela Hoelterhoff, for example, contrasts Höch's work unfavorably with Heartfield's, even denying Höch's work any political meaning:

Hannah Höch continued to devote herself to the photomontage, but her work bears little similarity to Heartfield's. She is certainly a whimsical observer of social conventions, but her ideological commitment is nil. What happened when both of them, presumably accidentally, used the same photograph of a listless, overworked and pregnant proletarian woman in 1930 is fascinating to note. In Mothers, Let Your Sons Live! [figure 12.2] Heartfield montages a photograph of a dead boy with his rifle, right behind the woman. The message is clear—agitate for change! Rouse yourself! Help prevent these kinds of atrocities! In contrast, Höch has no sense of mission. She cloaks the woman's face surrealistically, with a primitive mask, thereby deflecting the impact of the original photograph. La Mère [sic] is possibly an affecting but not a politically engaged image.¹

Although it is true that Höch's work does not convey the explicit and often prescriptive political messages of Heartfield's photomontages, it is

important to recognize that other political strategies were available. Indeed, Höch developed a sophisticated critical language of social commentary concerning the typology and conditions of the modern woman.

The highly political nature of this project is particularly evident in her extended photomontage series *From an Ethnographic Museum*, on which she worked intermittently from 1924 at least until her exhibition in Brno, Czechoslovakia, in 1934. In the example Hoelterhoff cites, *Mutter: Aus einem ethnographischen Museum*, c. 1930 (figure 12.1), the photomontage does, in fact, signify politically on several interrelated levels. By covering the pregnant proletarian mother's face with a tribal mask, Höch allegorically realigned this stereotype of exhausted maternity, associating it with "primitive" art and possibly suggesting the proletarian woman as a kind of Ur-mother. And Höch added a modish, New Woman's eye to one side of the face, again perhaps alluding to a kind of universal femininity. Moreover, the addition of the mask further designates the pregnant, discouraged figure as "Other." In addition, *Mutter* connotes a specific political issue: pregnancy itself, represented in the context of proletarian exhaustion, is a clear reference to the broad-based battle then going on in Weimar Germany over an act called Paragraph 218, which outlawed abortion.² The working-class woman was a prevalent symbol in the fight to legalize abortion since her poverty made unwanted pregnancies and births especially cruel. Höch participated in the campaign to overturn Paragraph 218 by contributing to the *Frauen in Not* (Women in Need) exhibition. And Höch had had two illegal abortions herself (one in May 1916 and the other in January 1918 during her relationship with Raoul Hausmann). Whether linked to a specific political event or not, Höch's works can be described as political in their challenging reconfigurations of contemporary female stereotypes.

In general, the photomontages in Höch's *Ethnographic Museum* series combine signs of collected and categorized ethnographic objects with those of contemporary women. The series, which Höch also called

12.1

Hannah Höch, *Mutter: Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* (Mother: From an Ethnographic Museum), c. 1930, photomontage, 18 × 24 cm. Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.





12.2

John Heartfield, *Zwangslieferantin von Menschenmaterial Nur Mut! Der Staat braucht Arbeitslose und Soldaten!* (Forced supplier of human ammunition! Take courage! The state needs unemployed and soldiers!) (from *Ar-*

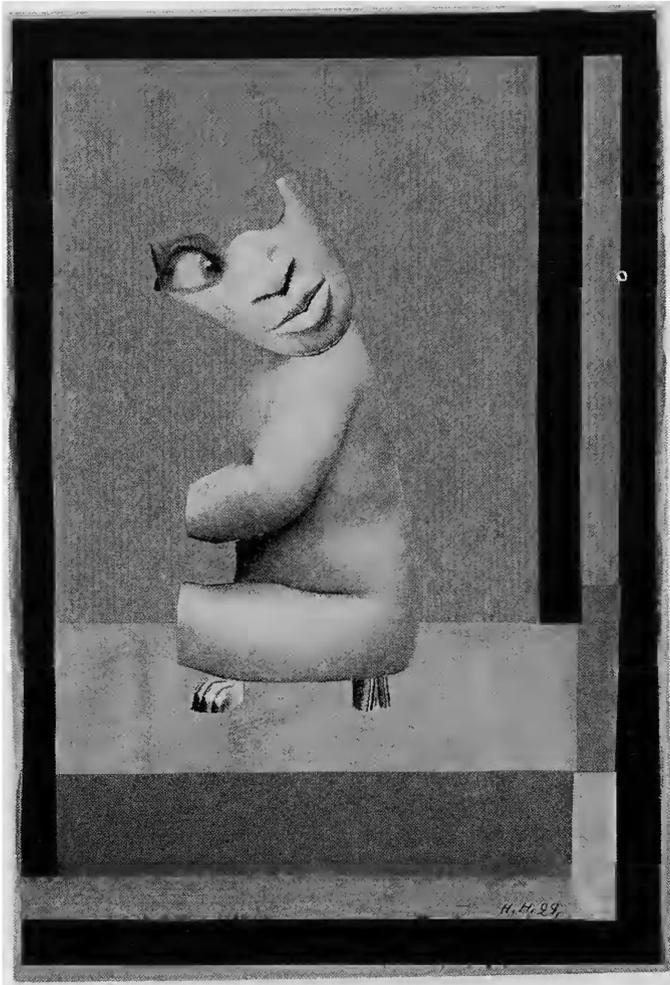
better Illustrierte Zeitung 9, no. 10 [1930]: 183). The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX, 82.59.6.7; Museum purchase with funds provided by Isabell and Max Herzstein. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

“der Sammlung” or “the collection,” consists of eighteen to twenty works made over a period of more than five years. These include: *Masken*, c. 1924; *Entführung*, 1925; *Trauer*, 1925; *Denkmal I (Nr. VIII)*, c. 1925; *Mit Mütze*, c. 1925; *Die Süsse*, before 1926; *Nummer IX (Zwei)*, c. 1926; *Hörner (Nr. X)*, c. 1926; *Der heilige Berg*, 1927; *Negerplastik*, 1929; *Fremde Schönheit*, c. 1929; *Untitled* (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg), 1929; *Untitled* (Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg), 1930; *Mutter*, c. 1930; *Indische Tänzerin*, 1930; *Denkmal II: Eitelkeit*, c. 1930; *Buddha*, c. 1930; *Untitled* (Kunst-Sammlung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland), c. 1930; and possibly other related works.³ It is doubtful that all of the montages of the *Ethnographic Museum* series were ever exhibited together, though Höch included twelve of them in her one-person photomontage exhibition in Brno in 1934.⁴

If Höch’s politics concerning women are legible, her politics on race and ethnography, as represented in the *Ethnographic Museum* series, are less clear. An exploration of the ways her representations of women and ethnography function independently and intersect partially illuminates her intentions. In the series, Höch was not particularly critical of contemporary ethnographic attitudes; instead, she used images of tribal objects and the exhibition format in ethnographic museums almost exclusively to comment on contemporary European gender definitions. Höch never substantively or explicitly challenged contemporary racist or colonialist ideas, although her irony often functions as implicit criticism. If, as Hoelterhoff suggests, some of Höch’s montages are “whimsical,” more are sharply ironic. But even the whimsy Höch employed satirizes the notion of primitivism as somehow analogous to the primordial creativity embedded in the spirit of the artist (an attitude evident in some of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s paintings, for example⁵). As Höch later wrote of the series, “The expansion of ethnographic research at that time only took in the ‘primitives,’ especially Negro art. The German Expressionists manifested

this often in their oil paintings. I enjoyed experimenting in a less serious, but always precise, way with this material."⁶

Höch was careful in this statement to distinguish her intentions from those of the German Expressionists. In the *Ethnographic Museum* series as well as her scrapbook, however, she also participated in the rather derogatory trend toward romanticized negrophilia. In the work Höch referred to as *Kinderkörper Negerplastikkopf* (Children's Body/Negro Sculpture Head) or simply *Negerplastik*,⁷ Höch placed an image of a carved African head over a photograph of a baby's body (figure 12.3). The head is, in fact, an ivory pendant mask from the court of Benin, most likely one now in the British Museum. The great size of the head, in addition to the softness of the body, the wide-open eye Höch added, and the way the head is cocked to one side as if in surprise all give the figure a quality of childishness. Although one eye of the mask is cut out and the other is covered with a woman's large, made-up eye, the scale relationships between head and body are not interrupted; even the truncated arm and leg of the body do not diminish the representation of the figure's childlike proportions. Of course, the implied equation of infantilism with primitivism and Africanness reiterates a familiar stereotype from *Illustrierte* photo-reportage of Africa.⁸ Yet even in this childlike image, there is a critical subtext. Höch used the base on which the figure is perched (composed of a miniature stool on the lower right and a small claw on the lower left) as a frame within a frame. This important device, deployed throughout the *Ethnographic Museum* series, makes an ironic comment on the categorization and display of people as objects. The pedestal, which traditionally presents the wholeness and perfection of an object on display, is used by Höch in these works to showcase her fragmentary, grotesque, and sometimes humorous montages of multicultural fragments. Mocking the ideal of plenitude, with its illusion of homogenization (difference subsumed by wholeness), the discordance of Höch's montages



12.3

Hannah Höch, *Negerplastik* (Negro Sculpture), from the series *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* (From an Ethnographic Museum), 1929, photomontage, 26 × 17.5 cm. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

raises fundamentally political questions regarding the representation of race and gender.

Where Höch diverged from the use of primitivism in the works of the expressionists and other contemporaries is in her ironic focus on Western representations of racial difference and its application to gender politics. To counter such rigid characterizations, Höch created allegories of modern femininity, montages that often overtly criticize aspects of the status and representation of Weimar women. Among the more explicit allegorical critiques in Höch's *Ethnographic Museum* series are *Indische Tänzerin* (Indian Female Dancer), 1930, and *Fremde Schönheit* (Strange Beauty), c. 1929.⁹ In *Indische Tänzerin* (figure 12.4), a woman's head is thrown back and half of the face of an Indian statue is clamped over her mouth and right eye. For a headdress, she wears multiple cut-out silhouettes of knives and spoons. The resulting composite figure is recognizable as a modern woman by her haircut, a trendy *Bubikopf*, the short bangs of which are visible beneath the silverware tiara. The frontality of the sculpture face (positioned parallel to the picture plane) superimposed over the backward inclination of the head juxtaposes oppression and calcification. Certainly the headdress, with its combination of honorific and militaristic connotations, is a double-edged joke; while crowning the New Woman, its use of table settings secures her identity with the domestic emblems of the stereotypic drudgery of a housewife.¹⁰ The source for the face of the woman is a publicity photo of the popular actress Marie Falconetti portraying the title role in Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1928 film, *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (The Passion of Joan of Arc). There are many layers of feminine identity here—film star, heroic maiden warrior, modern woman—all cloaked in the garb of domesticity.

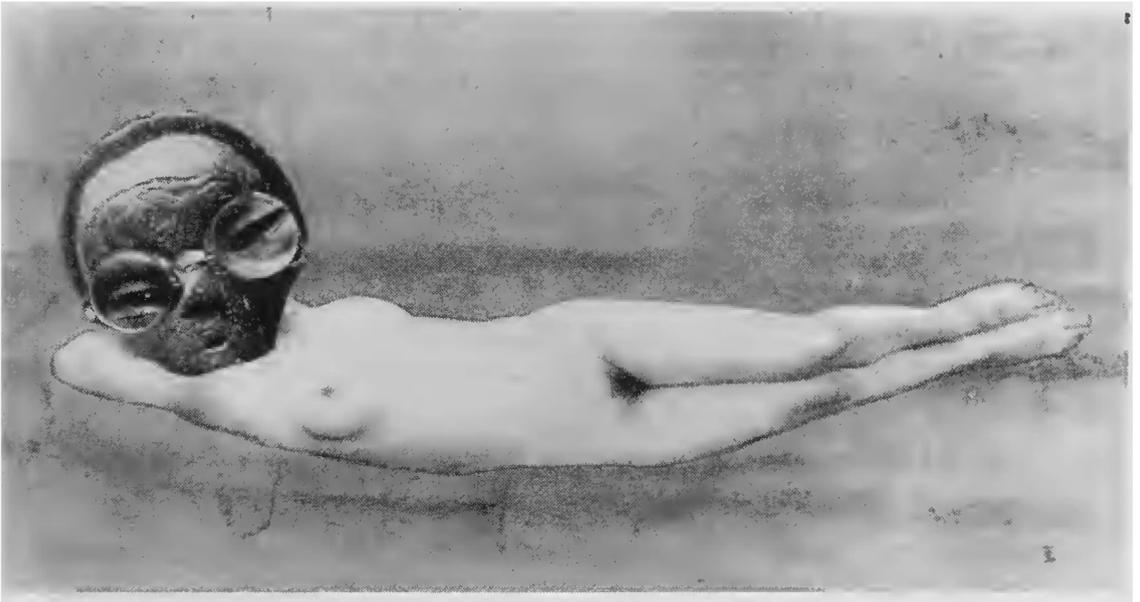
In a similar way, Höch used the photomontage *Fremde Schönheit* (figure 12.5) to question contemporary norms of feminine beauty. A photograph of a young, naked white woman in a traditionally alluring pose—lying on her side with one elbow angled behind her head—is dramatically

12.4

Hannah Höch, *Indische Tänzerin: Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* (Indian Female Dancer: From an Ethnographic Museum), 1930, collage of cut-and-pasted papers and photographs on green paper, 25.7 × 22.4 cm.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Frances Keech Fund. Photograph copyright © 1996 the Museum of Modern Art, New York, © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.





12.5

Hannah Höch, *Fremde Schönheit*
(Strange Beauty), from the series *Aus
einem ethnographischen Museum* (From
an Ethnographic Museum), c. 1929,
photomontage, 32 × 23 cm. Private col-
lection, Paris. Photograph courtesy
Timothy Baum. © 1997 Artists Rights
Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst,
Bonn.

surmounted by a dark, grotesquely wrinkled, possibly shrunken head. To further exaggerate this shocking juxtaposition, Höch added to the face a pair of skewed eyes, magnified by eyeglasses that distort the figure's gaze and in turn mirror the viewer's own act of looking at the figure's eye, face, and body.

Art historian Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff has argued persuasively that Höch's use of montage in *Fremde Schönheit* demonstrates the arbitrariness of all canons of beauty, both familiar and exotic. By rendering beauty strange, she asserts, Höch revealed the representation of beauty as a cultural formula rather than a natural given. By combining the beautiful and the grotesque, Höch blurred the boundaries between different aesthetic categories of representations of the body. Jürgens-Kirchhoff quotes Höch's own statement published in conjunction with a 1929 exhibition in The Hague: "Ich möchte die festen grenzen verwischen, die wir menschen, selbstsicher, um alles uns erreichbare zu ziehen geneigt sind" (I want to blur the firm boundaries that we as people tend self-assuredly to draw around all that we can achieve).¹¹

Through the alienation effect of montage, both the European body and the tribal shrunken head (or grotesque mask) appear strange. Specifically in many of Höch's *Ethnographic Museum* montages and androgynous works, it is the New Woman as icon that is fractured, brought into question, and made to appear as a construction.¹² But the New Woman is not parodied; rather, contemporary femininity is paired disturbingly with the grotesque in such a way that differences and similarities are blurred.¹³ If one interprets *Fremde Schönheit* as a statement about the contradictions and arbitrariness of canons of feminine beauty and operations of the gaze, then one is reading the montage as an allegory; many montages in the *Ethnographic Museum* series lend themselves to such readings.

The use of tribal objects and references immediately invokes the embattled tradition of Western ethnographic interpretation. Poised between scientific "objectivity" and a sort of moralistic storytelling, ethno-

graphic representations are, according to the anthropologist James Clifford, often thinly masked allegories. “Allegory prompts us to say of any cultural description,” Clifford writes, “not ‘this represents or symbolizes that’ but rather, ‘this is a (morally charged) story about that.’”¹⁴ This comparative mode, Clifford points out, is a fundamentally humanistic one, producing “controlled fictions of difference and similitude”¹⁵ in which the standard for locating either the self or the Other is a universalizing humanism. Clifford also describes how many ethnographic writings establish distance through the use of irony: “We note . . . the ironic structure (which need not imply an ironic tone) of such allegories,” he writes. “For they are presented through the detour of an ethnographic subjectivity whose attitude toward the other is one of participant-observer, or better perhaps, belief-skepticism.”¹⁶

What might be perceived as Höch’s humanistic linking of the subjecthood of Western and tribal peoples through montaging body parts (or often ethnographic artifact fragments representing body parts) is made ironic through her use of allegorical displacement. In structure as well as in tone, her exploration of self through a representation of the Other is explicitly ironic. Because of the fluid operations of reading a montage, however—the Blochian flowering of allegory—such a distanced irony is not a static or ever-present element of reception. With corporeal identification, the figure in *Fremde Schönheit* can also seem disturbingly close and grotesque—uncanny. Oscillation is therefore important in Höch’s montages—prompting a disjunctive shift between one allegorical reading and another, allowing different types of identification and distance.

Late in life, Höch recalled that the series *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum* had been inspired by a visit she made with Kurt Schwitters to the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum Te Leiden.¹⁷ This visit took place in 1926, but certain of Höch’s ethnographic montages may have actually been made earlier, predating the idea of the series or collection.¹⁸ Grete König remembers that Höch was interested in ethnography during

the Berlin Dada years: "She had a great interest in Negro sculpture, and in all ethnographic things. That did not have to do with Til. It was from the Hausmann times; she retained a lot from then."¹⁹ Whether or not the series originated with the visit to the Leiden ethnographic museum, the conception of the ethnographic museum as an institution was important to Höch's creation of the series.

It is useful, then, to look back at the Leiden museum as it was in 1926 and to consider the nature and meaning of ethnographic display.²⁰ In 1926, the African collections of the Rijks Ethnographisch Museum Te Leiden (which changed its name in 1931 to Rijksmuseum van Ethnographie and in 1935 to Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde) were housed in the museum building on the Heerengracht. Separate buildings contained ethnographic collections from Africa, the Far East, the South Sea Islands, and other regions. Although catalogues from these years show mainly photographs of isolated objects, they do include pictures of some objects displayed as if in everyday use, for example, placed in and around huts.²¹ One photograph, of Buddhas in the museum garden (an image Höch used in her scrapbook), illustrated an effort to recreate the "spirit" of an anthropological setting.

Occasionally, the museum included life-size mannequins in its anthropological dioramas, demonstrating how various tribes dressed and used tools. Viewers of such anthropological *mise-en-scènes* in the 1920s would undoubtedly have made two associations: with commercial mannequins, usually female, in department store windows and with actual humans once displayed in international expositions, theaters, and even zoos.

Although mannequins were widely used in the 1920s, they were still enough of a novelty to warrant extensive photographic documentation in the mass media and advertising trade journals.²² Their presence in an ethnographic diorama suggests an odd equation between the store mannequin as bearer of commodity fetishes and the museum mannequin as

bearer of tribal fetishes. But in her photomontage series, Höch avoided any simple equation between tribal and commodity fetishism. Instead, these associations are combined with fragments of tribal objects placed on pedestals (referring to the ethnographic museum) and with fragments of Western female bodies (referring directly to shop window displays). Although any framing of ethnographic objects as commodities in Höch's series inevitably raises the specter of nineteenth-century colonialism, these connotations are viewed through various representations of the feminine, particularly the New Woman as mannequin and object of ethnographic inquiry.

The second and more shocking association raised by ethnographic museum mannequins was a bizarre exhibition and zoological practice common in turn-of-the-century Europe, something a 1920s viewer might have remembered from childhood. As cultural historian Sander Gilman has documented, non-European tribal peoples were actually put on display in ethnological settings in zoos in Vienna and elsewhere in Europe, including Germany. Gilman notes that "the 'ethnological' exhibition was a natural extension of the ethnographic museum, placing living 'exotics' within the daily experience of the European." Peter Altenberg's 1897 novel, *Ashantee*, about Africans on exhibit in an Austrian zoo, describes this practice:

*In the zoological garden there stands a cage inhabited by exotic beasts from the Amazon, two pampas hares, sitting quite humanlike on their haunches nibbling the sweets tossed to them by the crowd. Next to this cage are the Ashantis, seen performing a native dance.*²³

A key element in Höch's highlighting these issues of acquisition and display of the Other was the representation of sculptural bases within the montages. In *Entführung* (Abduction), 1925, Höch situated a German New Woman within a distinctly African narrative, represented by a tribal ob-

ject set on a prominent base. The central image, a wooden African sculpture titled *The Abduction of the Virgins*, derives from the German illustrated weekly, *Berliner Illustrirte [sic] Zeitung (BIZ)*.²⁴ In the *BIZ* photograph, the sculpture sits on a base with nothing in the background, suggesting a museum display. It consists of two carved male figures, one carrying a spear, transporting two female figures between them; all four figures ride on an oversized animal statue, probably representing an elephant. Höch carefully cut out the reproduction along the contours of the sculpture, then placed the image on an even larger base, added to the dark blue background three cherry red fruit trees (which look like cartoon versions of jungle foliage), and substituted a New Woman's face for one of the female heads. The New Woman, recognizable by her modern hairstyle, is twisted around so that her head is backwards and her mouth is open as if she is yelling, making the whole narrative slightly ridiculous. The abstract wooden faces of the African sculpture are by contrast placid, expressionless, and facing forward.

It is an ironic joke: the replacement of an image of the Other with one of self. Although inclusion suggests similarity, ironic humor suggests distance and difference, and the composition invokes a shifting between these two attitudes. The pedestal, with its museum connotations, puts the whole scene on display, offers it for containment and categorization, and provides a frame within a frame for the narrative, which is itself about entrapment and abduction.

In other works in the *Ethnographic Museum* series, the pedestal fortifies the allegorical reading of the images, linking the concept of the religious fetish or ethnographic object on display with modern femininity and even androgyny. In *Denkmal II: Eitelkeit* (Monument II: Vanity), c. 1930, a figure poses on a tall base (which stretches from below the frame to above the horizon) in a classical posture of self-display, turned three-quarters in contrapposto, against a background of pink and blue colored papers.²⁵ From the waist down the figure is a seminude female, but its

chest and dwarfed arms are male. This androgynous personage produces a temporarily unsettling oscillation in the gender identification of the engaged viewer.

The head, an African mask, bears a wide, fanned headdress. This dominant photographic image appeared in the June 1930 issue of *Uhu*, where its caption read: "The medicine man: Masked dancer and sorcerer of the African Masai tribe."²⁶ In the magazine, the African image not only provides the seductive photographic illustration of the text; it also draws a parallel between the Western magician and the African medicine man. The photograph is particularly apt: instead of making the African medicine man exotic, it shows him sitting in an everyday pose of rest and contemplation, dressed to practice his trade, with villagers and huts in the distance. It is Höch who made the image exotic by appropriating the medicine man's symbolic headgear and recontextualizing it within the frame of the sculptural monument or museum display. She has also given the figure human legs, which make it appear to display him/herself. Hence the title *Vanity*. If Höch retained any sense of the magical and religious from the original *Uhu* photograph, it is here mixed with parodic commentary on the vanity of monuments and self-display.

The tension that Höch established between self-display (one that follows the patriarchal standards by which women must redefine their bodies as commodities or by which men must embody the phallus-power) and selflessness (according to European myths about African religion as embodied in their art objects) was discussed at the time in terms of transcendence and anonymity. In particular, these ideas were identified with the work of the cultural critic Carl Einstein, author of the first German book devoted to African sculpture, *Negerplastik* (1915), and a member of the same Dada and proto-Dada circles as Höch and Raoul Hausmann. Einstein co-edited the Dada journals *Der blutige Ernst* (Bloody Seriousness) and *Der Pleite* (Bankruptcy) with George Grosz and John Heartfield in 1919. As a tribute to Einstein, Hausmann created an abstract

woodcut cover for his copy of *Negerplastik*.²⁷ Both Hausmann and Höch probably knew Einstein personally. Given Höch's interest in ethnography, chances are that she had read *Negerplastik* and his later *Afrikanische Plastik* (1921).

One idea in Einstein's work that may have engaged Höch was the tension he established between individualism and anti-individualism. In *Negerplastik*, Einstein wrote of African masks:

*With this transformation he [the mask-wearer] becomes a balance to negating adoration. He prays to the god, performs an ecstatic tribal dance, and the mask transforms him into both the god and the tribe. This transformation gives him the most powerful idea of the objective; he incarnates the objective itself and becomes that in which all particularities are destroyed. Therefore the mask only makes sense when it is inhuman and impersonal; that is, constructive and free from the experience of the individual. It is possible that he reveres the mask as a deity when he is not wearing it.*²⁸

Einstein generally disavowed ethnography and in his discussion of African religion saw primitive art as the carrier of a condensed spirituality. He attributed this same spirituality to Western contemporary art.²⁹ In a similar fashion, Höch placed emblematic images in settings that refer to the ethnographic museum, not to their original tribal context. At times she retained their spiritual connotations even while employing them for cultural critique. This is in keeping with Höch's own interest in spirituality, evident from her scrapbook as well as her correspondence with the artists Otto Freundlich and Thomas Ring.³⁰

Einstein describes the function of art within African religion as a single universal practice: "Negro art is, above all else, religiously intended. Artworks are revered, as in any ancient community. The creator fashions his objects to be the divinity or its custodian, that means he

possesses an initial and lasting distance from the object based on the fact that it is or contains the god. His works must be characterized as religious service.”³¹ In *Afrikanische Plastik*, Einstein decries the use of the word “fetish” as vague and meaningless.³² Nevertheless, Einstein retains the concept of African art objects as religious fetishes and links it to his formalist analyses, providing a moral claim for his methodology.

Einstein’s ideas of tribal art as religious fetishes and as embodiments of the magical and the spiritual are addressed throughout Höch’s *Ethnographic Museum* series, most notably in *Denkmal II: Eitelkeit*, c. 1930; *Denkmal I (Nr. VIII)*, c. 1925; *Untitled* (Kunst-Sammlung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland), c. 1930; and *Trauer* (Sadness), 1925. But these ideas vie for importance with her own ironic commentaries on femininity. The “primitive” sculpture is always combined with body parts of modern European women, often with jarring or grotesque results.

In *Denkmal I*, perhaps the most grotesque work in the entire series, the figure’s sculptural trunk (with flattened, stylized breasts) has an amphibious quality. The “monument” has three montaged legs: one is unidentifiable as human, but its “foot” looks like an animal hoof; another is attached from behind and appears to be a trousered leg, perhaps amputated at the knee (extra trouser material is folded upward at the end); the third is a woman’s leg wearing a dancing shoe. The “woman” appears to shrug one shoulder, lurch forward, and look askance. Both tense and flaccid, she digs her chin into her chest and clenches her fist. The face is an abstract sculptural mask, with long, slit eyelids through which eyes are just barely visible, giving the face a mysterious expression. The figure stands on a base or platform. The slinking, ungainly quality of the body is a bitter comment on the heroic pose of the (usually male) figure commemorated in the conventional monument. The standard heroic pose is supplanted here by a self-denigrating one with the head buried in the chest, a shoulder uncomfortably raised, the body misshapen. The effect is one of turmoil, black humor, and an inwardly inflected anger. If it were

not for the barely visible eyes and the tangled posture, this would be merely a grotesque figure without identification for the viewer. But these attributes, together with the New Woman's leg, argue for a reading of this image that involves a threatening degree of closeness to the female viewer.

Trauer, though also a portrait of misshapen femininity, appears less corporeal and more sculptural and is therefore less disturbing. The androgynous, multilimbed figure is displayed frontally, almost symmetrically, connoting the solemnity of a tribal fetish—in this case borrowed as a Western emblem. The cut-out reproduction of a carved head is made visible from the waist down. Two very small white arms and hands, also in scale, dangle from the body's sides and are raised slightly in a graceful gesture. Behind these arms are two larger out-of-scale arms, probably female but unmatched. Layered over the tiny dangling hands, almost obliterating them, is a photograph of a sculptured torso with pendulous breasts and huge, upraised wooden hands. These hands extend beyond the edges of the rectangular background, as if pushing the pictorial boundaries of the composition.

In *Trauer*, the androgyny of the figure seems to indicate not only unstable gender identity but also the Otherness of tribal magic. The body's male and female sexual organs are both marked as tribal (taken from images of tribal sculpture and costume), and together they form part of a fetish figure that seems to stand in front of and overwhelm the European women (signified by the two sets of hands and arms); the smallest figure seems almost completely engulfed. Tribal spirituality and anonymity appear to be adorned with an emblematic expression of sadness, as if, as Einstein would have it, the wearer of the tribal mask embodies the deity of sadness. In *Trauer*, Höch ambitiously combined elements of several different cultures and genders as well as the animate and the inanimate to create an imaginary fetish-like object. Eerily, the actual female limbs,

though adorned by the ethnographic fragments, are superfluous: engulfed, they are both too contained and too excessive.

In *Untitled*, a figure rises up out of a pyramidal base that seems like a skirt or a part of the body. The torso and head are cut from a photograph of a tribal sculpture. The head with exaggerated eyebrows and a tusk through the nose seem masculine. The torso is overlaid with a European woman's nude breasts and arms, perfectly in proportion with the sculpture as if she is wearing them. In this display of sexuality and exoticism, a delicate fitting together of parts, the figure is not grotesque but curious, *fremd*.

At times, Höch's figures or "monuments" seem to play a double role, as weird ethnographic composite fetishes and as psychosexual phallic fetishes. By titling two of the works in the series *Denkmal* (Monument), Höch reminds us of the function of the monument as a psychosexual fetish. And in a work such as *Die Süsse* (The Sweet), made before 1926, a woman seems transformed, playfully, into an ethnographic object and a phallus-shaped fetish. According to Freud's definition of fetishism, the psychosexual fetish is both an object of male desire and a figure of denial. In the fetishist's mind, a woman (or an object standing in for her) is substituted for the missing phallus. This act of objectifying the woman negates her identity as a subject.

Combined with the image of tribal sculptures in Höch's *Ethnographic Museum* series, the female is doubly distanced, doubly marked as Other. And yet, for female viewers, she is also the site of identification, an uncanny identification of the Other as self. *Die Süsse* is one of many works in the series in which Western body parts are montaged with ethnographic anthropomorphized sculpture: a single eye (a familiar sign of fragmented subjecthood), lips, an oversized hand, and tiny legs in dress shoes are added to a wooden sculpture. In *Die Süsse*, the New Woman is presented as a fetish object on display. It is as if the fetishized woman is

dancing on stage, and the bright, multicolored background adds to the theatricality of the display.

The “sweet one’s” legs recall the dancing legs Höch added to figures in Berlin Dada montages to signify dance, Dada, and femininity. The tribal entered into the equation at times, as in Höch’s *Dada-Tanz* (Dada-Dance), 1922, where an affinity is established between an African man and Dada dance by montaging the man’s head and chest with a dress and with dancing legs. In *Masken* (Masks), c. 1924, one of the figures is also dancing. In these early works and possibly in *Die Süsse*, the ethnographic is used to align the Dada “spirit” with the Other and to differentiate it from Western rationality.³³

The few images of men in the *Ethnographic Museum* series tend to be simpler in signification than those of women or androgynous figures. They lack pedestals and so appear without overt museological reference. They seem to be mere caricatures adapted from ethnographic objects in masculine costume. *Nummer IX*, c. 1926, and *Hörner (Nr. X)* (Horns [No. 10]), c. 1926, have anti-militaristic and humorous connotations.³⁴ *Nummer IX* depicts an androgynous pair of standing figures. They wear metal masks, and the one with a moustache carries what appears to be a weapon. This moustachioed figure has female legs and wears women’s evening shoes. Any gender ambiguity here is overridden by the ironic feminization of the man, a ploy often used by Höch in her early Dada works. *Hörner* is more straightforward: it consists of a man’s somewhat childlike face wearing the top half of a stone sculptural head with horns as headgear. The helmet gives the man a Viking appearance. The montage can appear humorous (chubby cheeks and bulbous nose adorned with a too-large helmet) or, like *Indian Dancer*, *Hörner* can be read as a human being adorned with and partially calcified by a heavy-handed gender role (in the case of *Indian Dancer*, a domestic woman, in the case of *Hörner*, a male warrior).

Similarly, in *Mit Mütze* (With Cap), c. 1925, a man wears a military role like a mask. The upper portion of his face, topped by a cap, is montaged with the lower part of a somber stone face, giving him the general appearance of a military or police officer.³⁵ The view is three-quarters, and the man's eyes look to the side suspiciously. There is no pedestal or background. *J. B. und sein Engel* (J. B. and his Angel), 1925, is not from this series but is related in that Höch used a tribal sculpture in it to portray Johannes Baader (most likely) and his "angel" allegorically. And finally in *Der heilige Berg* (The Holy Mountain), 1927, Höch invoked the spirituality believed to be associated with Eastern culture by using two Asian male heads of stone to which she added glasses and what looks like knitted doll clothing for a mocking effect. This pair of male bodies was probably intended as a mild parody of the intense male bonding in the film *Der heilige Berg* that was released in 1927. In this popular film, starring Louis Trenker as a mountaineer and Leni Riefenstahl as the dancer Diotima, the love of the two men (Robert and Franz) for Diotima is a pretext for expressing their love for each other. Their devotion is revealed during their trip up to the mountain, when they establish their loyalty to each other in a melodrama that ends with both their self-sacrificial deaths.

On the whole, although these male portraits comment on masculine roles, they lack the shifting and uncanny repetitions and fetishistic significations of the female features in the *Ethnographic Museum* series. In the museum series, Höch used images of women to formulate allegorical montages that demonstrate complex representations of the contexts of gender politics for Weimar Germany's New Woman by connoting the Other, the commodity, and the psychosexual.

To conclude, I want to return to Höch's *Fremde Schönheit*, which challenges stereotypical representations of the grotesque and the normal, particularly in relation to non-Western cultures. The figure's eyes, which

would usually be the site of identification for the female viewer, are located in the face of a grotesque Other. They are also magnified, suggesting an identification with the disfigured face as well as the conventionally beautiful body. The self is re-presented as the Other—revisited and rendered uncanny. Thus, as in other *Ethnographic Museum* montages, there is a shifting between identification and differentiation with the tribal peoples (and the myths attached to their objects on display). By emphasizing this fluctuation, Höch deviated from the nonambiguous, folkloric representation of African and other tribal peoples in *Illustrierte* and laid the foundation for a critique of racism, even if she did not pursue it further. The series' primary referent is not race, however, but the way race is socially encoded in the ethnographic museum. What concerned Höch in these works is the display of culture marked as different—for the Other as well as the self in Höch's photomontages is the modern European woman.

NOTES

This essay is a revised excerpt from the author's book, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993), and is reprinted here with permission. See also Lavin's essay, "The Mess of History or the Unclean Hannah Höch," in *Inside the Visible. An elliptical traverse of 20th century art: in, of, and from the feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 117–123.

1. Manuela Hoelterhoff, "Heartfield's Contempt," *Artforum* 15, no. 3 (November 1976): 62.

2. Atina Grossman, "Abortion and Economic Crisis: The 1931 Campaign Against Paragraph 218," in *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, ed. Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossman, and Marion Kaplan (New York: Monthly Review, 1984), pp. 66–86.

In Hoelterhoff's article, "Heartfield's Contempt," *Mutter* is dated c. 1925, but the correct date is probably 1930, based on Hannah Höch's dating of a photograph of the work in the Berlinische Galerie Höch Nachlass photofile. In that case it would date from the same year as the John Heartfield montage that uses the same image of the proletarian mother.

3. Despite the roman numerals assigned to several of the works, the order appears haphazard, i.e., there is no overall sequence of signification or organization. It perhaps explains why Höch used the words "collection" and "series" interchangeably to describe the group of montages.

4. The Brno photomontage exhibition, which was organized by the architect František Kalivoda, opened 1 March 1934 and included forty-two works, Höch's largest one-person exhibition prior to her "rediscovery" in the 1960s and '70s. In addition to twelve works from the *Ethnographic Museum* series, it included *Ländliches Brautpaar* (probably the original title of *Bauerliches Brautpaar*), *Liebe, Liebe im Busch*, *Die Kokette I*, *Die Kokette II*, *Der Melancholiker*, *Englische Tänzerin*, *Kind-*

erportrait, Der Sieger, Siebenmeilenstiefel, Der heilige Berg, Die ewigen Schuhplattler, Die Sängerin, Die Gymnastiklehrerin, Buddha, and others. *Buddha* is now missing but is probably the work reproduced on the invitation card in which four naked legs of European women are attached to a sitting Buddha sculpture (illustrated in *Hannah Höch 1889–1978. Ihr Werk, Ihr Leben, Ihre Freunde* [Berlin: Berlinische Galerie, 1989], p. 67). *Buddha* may have been sold in Czechoslovakia.

In correspondence with Kalivoda, Höch wrote that montages from the ethnographic series were exhibited in “Deutschland, Wien, Japan, Haag, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Brussel, etc., etc.” (Hannah Höch, letter to František Kalivoda, Berlin, 10 October 1933, collection Museum Brno). I would like to thank Dr. Lenka Krčálová of the Museum Města Brno for sending me photocopies of the Höch-Kalivoda correspondence and of materials relevant to Höch’s Brno exhibition.

In conjunction with the show, Höch published an article, “A Few Words on Photomontage,” in Kalivoda’s magazine *Středisko* (4, no. 1 [1934]). Höch’s article traced the evolution of photomontage from its popular uses in the 1800s, such as attaching one soldier’s head to another’s body in a postcard image, to the 1919 avant-garde photomontage in France, Germany, Russia, and Switzerland. This flowering of avant-garde works, she wrote, was influenced by the growth of photography in the mass media, particularly reportage, and by the growing popularity of film. She concluded with comments on contemporary photomontage (1933–1934): applied photomontage, which she said dominated advertising and poster images because of its potential for strong design and clear detail; and “free-form photomontage,” an art form “open to the beauties of fortuity.” An English translation is published in Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 219–220.

5. Carol Duncan, “Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting,” in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), pp. 293–313.

6. Hannah Höch, notes for a letter to the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 17

June 1965, Hannah Höch papers, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (hereafter cited as BG HHC) H1760/79 (author's translation).

7. Höch describes the work as “das Baby mit Maske” with a drawing of it in an undated note to herself, BG HHC H2205/79. And in another note to herself, dated February 1941 with postscripts dated November 1941 and April 1952, she calls it “Kinderkörper Negerplastikkopf” with a drawing, BG HHC H1305/79.

8. *Illustrierte* were illustrated newspapers or photoweeklies.

Negerplastik was evidently important to Höch, and she exhibited it often: in *Film und Foto*, at the Philadelphia *Second Annual International Salon of Photography* in 1932, at her one-person show at the d'Audretsch gallery in The Hague in 1934, and probably at her one-person photomontage exhibition in Brno in 1934.

On its inclusion in the Werkbund's *Film und Foto* exhibition (cat. no. 327), see *International Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbundes Film und Foto Stuttgart 1929*, ed. Karl Steinforth (Stuttgart: Deutsche, 1979), p. 63. For evidence of its inclusion in the Philadelphia exhibition, see correspondence marked BG HHC K4261/79. Evidence that the work was exhibited in the 1934 d'Audretsch gallery show is its illustration in a Dutch review of the exhibition: J. B. Van Longhem, “Fotomontage van Hannah Höch,” *De 8 en Opbouw. 14-Daagsch Tijdschrift van de architectengroep “De 8,” Amsterdam en “Opbouw,” Rotterdam* 6, no. 24 (23 November 1935): 267–269. Also illustrated in this review are *Der Melancholiker*, *Die Süsse*, *Deutsches Mädchen*, *Flucht*, and *Siebenmeilenstiefel*.

9. In the Berlinische Galerie Höch Nachlass photofile, Höch wrote on a photograph of *Fremde Schönheit*: “1929 (früher).”

10. In her notes for a letter to the Museum of Modern Art in 1965 (BH HHC H1760/79), Höch lists two places this work was exhibited, Brussels in 1932 (*First International Exposition of Photography*, Palais des Beaux Arts) and Brno in 1934.

11. Annegret Jürgens-Kirchhoff, “‘Fremde Schönheit’—Zu Hannah Höchs Photo-

montagen," in *Da-da zwischen Reden zu Hannah Höch*, ed. Jula Dech and Ellen Maurer (Berlin: Orlanda-Frauenverlag, 1991), p. 128 (my translation).

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 127–137. Jürgens-Kirchhoff's remarks on Höch's androgynous montages are in part a response to my analysis of these works, published in abbreviated form in the Berlinische Galerie's 1989 Hannah Höch catalogue: Maud Lavin, "Androgynität und der betrachtende Blick. Zu Hannah Höchs Photomontagen aus der Weimarer Zeit," in *Hannah Höch 1889–1978*, pp. 146–152. See also Ines Lindner, "Beobachtungen zum Hannah Höch-Symposium vom 16.–19.11.1989 in Berlin," *Kritische Berichte* 18, no. 1 (1990): 92–96. The three essays together constitute a provocative discourse on ambiguity and alienation in Höch's representation of gender, particularly in her androgynous photomontages.

13. Höch continued to explore constructions of femininity throughout her career, as in such later photomontages as *Fremde Schönheit II*, 1966, where a European woman in a full-length evening dress wears a misshapen, grimacing tribal mask; in *Das ewig Weiblich II* (The Eternal Feminine II), 1967, where a photoportrait of a woman is montaged with that of a cat and with images of materials and jewelry; and in *Entartet* (Degenerate), 1969, where a woman's headless torso wears a strapless evening dress and conical nipples that gleam like weapons.

14. James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Allegory," in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 100.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

17. Heinz Ohff, *Hannah Höch* (Berlin: Mann, 1968), p. 34. Höch told Ohff that the visit was in 1925; it was in 1926, however, that she visited Holland with Schwitters.

18. On a photograph of *Die Süsse* in the Berlinische Galerie, for example, Höch

wrote: "Vor 1926 . . . 1930 [crossed out] . . . ist viel früher . . . Vor Holland-Jahren also vor 1926" (Before 1926 . . . 1930 [crossed out] . . . is much earlier . . . Before the Holland years, therefore before 1926) (from the photofile in the Höch Nachlass, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin). On the montage itself, Höch crossed out the "30" and wrote "um 1926." And, although labeled "Aus einem Ethnographischen Museum," *Masken* is dated 1924 (this label was written by Höch on the photograph of the montage in the Berlinische Galerie Höch Nachlass photofile). In a 1965 letter to the Museum of Modern Art (BH HHC H1760/79), Höch states she started the series in 1926, but a number of the works date from 1924 and 1925. It is important to note that Höch often postdated works later in life. Her memory of when she had created a work naturally may not have been precise forty years after the fact. Many *Ethnographic Museum* montages were estimated by her as either c. 1925 or c. 1930.

19. "Die Negerplastik die haben sie sehr interessiert, alle Völkerkundlichen Dinge auch so. Das hängt nicht mit Til zusammen. Das kommt ihr noch von der Hausmann Zeit; sie hat viel davon züruckbehalten" (Grete König, interview with the author, 29 October 1986).

20. Most likely Höch also visited the Berlin Museum für Volkerkunde, the kernel of whose collection had been formed at the beginning of German colonialism in the 1880s. The Berlin collection has been well-catalogued, and it is possible to determine that none of Höch's images came from there. In fact, it appears that in this series as in others, most of Höch's sources are *Illustrierte* photographs. Some may have been a mixture of *Illustrierte* images and Höch's own photographs. As Höch reported to Edouard Roditi: "Later, in 1928, I returned to photomontages, which I have never really abandoned since 1917; but this time I worked in a museum and photographed examples of primitive art which provided me with some of the elements, as in this one [probably *Masken*, here left untitled and dated 1928], of an entirely new series of photomontages, in a style that was entirely my own." See Edouard Roditi, "Interview with Hannah Höch," *Arts* 34, no. 3 (December 1959): 27. Most probably, Höch took photographs in the Leiden museum.

21. *Catalogus von 'sRijks Ethnographisch Museum* (Leiden: Brill, 1926–1932), n.p.

22. See *Gebrauchsgraphik* from late Weimar. For one of the many examples of the mass media fascination with mannequins, see Karl Schenker, "Mannequins oder Wachspuppen?" *Die Dame* 23 (August 1925): 6–9.
23. As quoted by Sander L. Gilman, who notes, "Altenberg's opening vignette provides the expected liberal condemnation of the Ashanti exhibition in the Prater." See Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 110, 111.
24. *BIZ* (21 September 1924): 1095. The caption reads: "Raub der Jungfrauen: Alte Negerplastik von der Elfenbeinküste." The photograph (with caption) occupies the top half of the page and bears no relation to the text underneath.
25. In the Berlinische Galerie Höch Nachlass photofile, Höch dated this work 1929, but I have redated it 1930 based on my discovering that one of its photographic sources first appeared in the June 1930 issue of *Uhu* (see below, n. 26).
26. The photograph of the African medicine man accompanies an article titled "A sorcerer reveals his secret, told by Hans Kafka," which is the story of a Western magician and his trade and is illustrated by drawings by Otto Linnekogel. See Hans Kafka, "Ein Zauberer Verrät sein Geheimnis," *Uhu* 9 (June 1930): 57–64. The photograph, which takes up the entire page 56, is captioned: "Der Medezinmann: Maskentänzer und Zauberer des afrikanischen Masai-Stammes Fot. N.J.T."
27. Timothy Benson, *Raoul Hausmann and Berlin Dada* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1987), pp. 25, 28.
28. Carl Einstein, *Gesammelte Werke* (Wiesbaden: Limes, 1962), 102 (author's translation).
29. Benson notes that Raoul Hausmann echoes these beliefs in his 1921 essay, "Die neue Kunst." See Benson, *Raoul Hausmann and Berlin Dada*, pp. 28, 175.

30. Ellen Maurer has shown that Höch's painting *Frau und Saturn* attests to the astrological and spiritual interests Höch had in common with Ring, and an interest in Eastern spirituality was shared by Höch and Hausmann with other contemporaries in the Dada years. See Maurer, "Symbolische Gemälde Hannah Höch aus den Jahren 1920–30" (master's thesis, Universität München, 1983), pp. 108, 120.
31. These remarks come from the section in *Negerplastik* on religion and African art. See Einstein, *Gesammelte Werke*, p. 88 (author's translation).
32. Carl Einstein, *Afrikanische Plastik* (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1921), p. 7.
33. It is noteworthy that in *Dada-Cordial* (c. 1919), a collaborative Dada work created by Hausmann and Höch, Hausmann incorporated a photograph of African men into his part of the montage.
34. Although *Hörner (Nr. X)* is usually dated c. 1924, I have redated it c. 1926 to follow in chronological sequence *Denkmal I (Nr. VIII)*, c. 1925, and *Nummer IX*, c. 1926. Again, these dates are in any case approximations based on Höch's estimates later in life.
35. There is an accompanying watercolor for this work, *Zwei mit Mütze* (Two with Caps), also c. 1925. On the photograph of the montage in the Berlinische Galerie Höch Nachlass photofile, Höch wrote: "Schon 1925 auf die Internationale Werkbund Turne gegangen." I am not sure to what this refers; the only Werkbund exhibition I know that Höch participated in was the 1929–1931 *Film und Foto*. Perhaps she mixed up the dates. *Mit Mütze* is not listed in the *Film und Foto* catalogue, but it could have been one of the four works designated only as "Porträts."

(a u t o) b i O g r a p h i c

NARRATIVITY

**REGIMES OF COINCIDENCE:
KATHERINE S. DREIER,
MARCEL DUCHAMP, AND DADA**

eleanor S. APTER



On 10 October 1934, Katherine Dreier (1877–1952) began a rather breathless letter to her friend Marcel Duchamp:

Well dear your amazing book has arrived!!!! . . . It is one of the most perfect expressions of Dadaism which has come my way. I was terribly amused at myself—how annoyed I was when I saw all those torn scraps—and of course the glass WAS broken!!!! . . . and then I woke up to the fact—how right Dada is to jolt us out of our ruts. . . . In time I am sure that I will enjoy it.¹

The “amazing book” was, in fact, a box containing loose papers in various shapes and sizes—an assortment of notes, diagrams, and images—dating from 1911 to 1915, all jumbled up. Soon known as the *Green Box* because of its covering in green suede, the title stamped into its cover, *La Mariée mis à nu par ses célibataires, même* (The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even), linked it to Duchamp’s large complex work with the same title, known familiarly as the *Large Glass* (see figure 6.2). The inscription in the deluxe edition of the *Green Box* that Duchamp sent her—“Pour Katherine Dreier”—tacitly acknowledged her status as his friend and patron.²

Duchamp's publication and Dreier's comments about it frame the questions that will be considered here. How and when did "Dadaism" come Dreier's way? How did she respond to it? A painter herself, in what ways did she contribute to it? To what extent was Dreier's relationship to Duchamp crucial for her connection with Dada and her understanding of it?

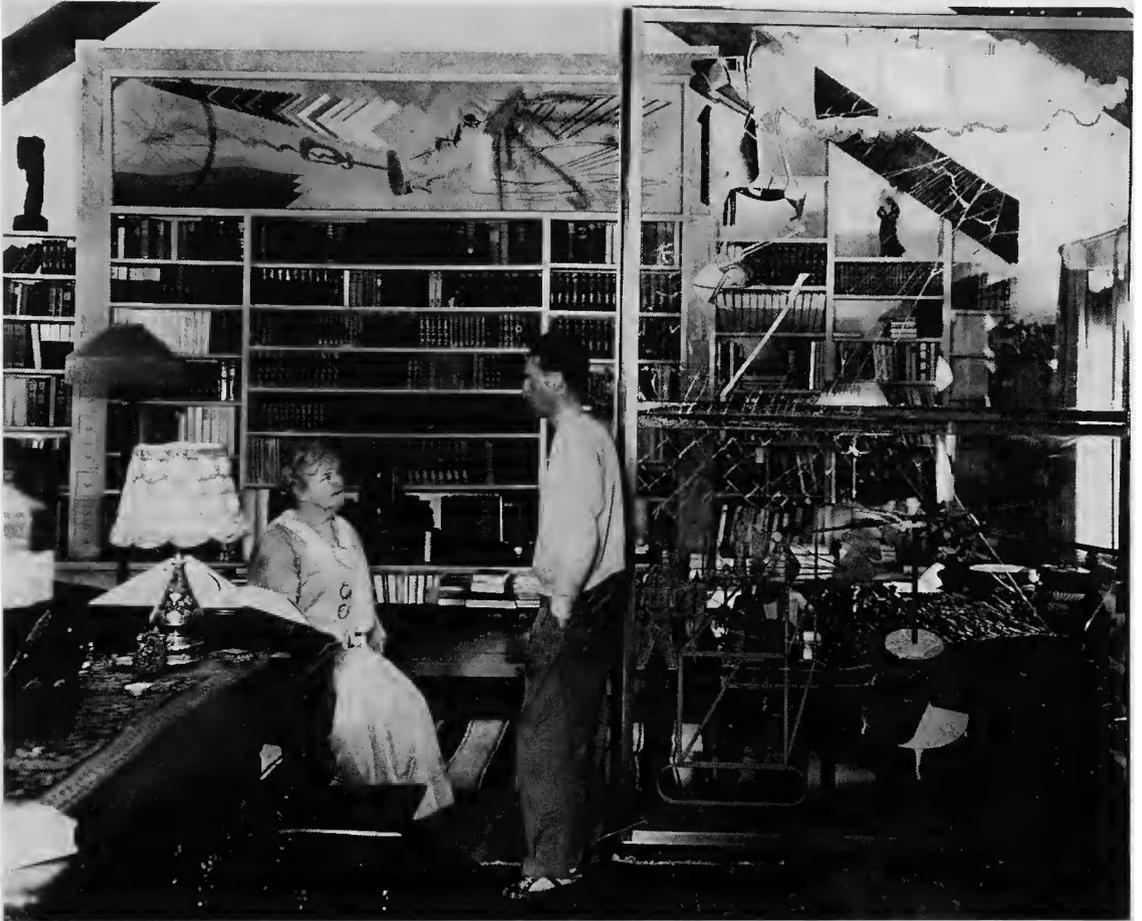
Dreier's first Duchamp acquisition was the oil painting commissioned by her in 1918, *Tu m'* (see figure 13.2), and her eventual collection of Duchamp's works was second only to the Arensbergs'. But Dreier's historical association with Dada had an institutional dimension as well: the Société Anonyme, Inc., an organization that she founded in 1920 with Duchamp and Man Ray as New York's first "Museum of Modern Art."³ Exhibitions and activities of the Société's inaugural season (April 1920 to June 1921) introduced works of art and concepts that brought Dada to public attention. But there is an undertow of implicit Dada as well—in the incongruities between Dreier's intentions and those of her collaborators. Acts of misinterpretation, misreading, cross purpose, and lack of awareness (sometimes embedded in the deliberate double entendre of alternative meanings) add their own Dada dimensions to Dreier's involvement with Dada.

In any case, Dreier's initial reaction to Duchamp's gift was confusion and dismay. By contrast, André Breton hailed the speculations and propositions in "this strange green box" as a "lighthouse to the bride," a verbal guide that illuminated the complex and enigmatic narrative in Duchamp's *Large Glass*.⁴ Stretched like a banner across the top of Breton's 1935 article in the surrealist journal *Minotaure* was a reproduction of *Tu m'*, implying that it, too, was related to notes in the *Green Box*.⁵ To illustrate his detailed analysis of *The Bride Stripped Bare*, Breton used a photograph of the *Glass* taken at its only public appearance: the Société Anonyme's large *International Exhibition of Modern Art* at the Brooklyn Museum, organized by Dreier with Duchamp's assistance in 1926.⁶ Ironically, the *Glass* itself

was in pieces by the time it appeared in *Minotaure*, having shattered in transit some time after the Brooklyn show.⁷ There was further irony. Breton's eulogy of Duchamp—his reference to Duchamp's unique position "at the spearhead of all 'modern' movements"⁸—came at a point when the artist's reputation had faded. Duchamp had virtually turned his back on the art world in the early twenties in favor of an absorbing preoccupation with chess.

By 1934, Duchamp's art production was so intermittent and minimal that his artistic contributions were all but forgotten. Not, however, by Dreier. As early as 1918, she had affirmed her belief that he belonged "to the few whose name will live after," and wished him the pleasure of recognition during his life with the "full harvest" of his gifts.⁹ Neither did she waver in her admiration nor in her efforts to safeguard his reputation. After repeated urging on her part, Duchamp agreed to attempt the repair of the *Large Glass*. He completed the challenging and painstaking restoration in the summer of 1936, working daily for two months at The Haven, Dreier's home in West Redding, Connecticut. A photograph taken at the end of August shows the *Large Glass—La Mariée*—installed in the library united with *Tu m'*, already in place above the wall of books (figure 13.1). The images on the transparent glass surface float or advance into the space behind it; the thin breakage lines in the glass catch the light and produce the effect of a floating web. The two works seem simultaneously at rest and out of place in such an incongruous sanctuary. Unique and unconventional, the works are hard to classify. They convey an air of mystery. Dada-works? Perhaps.

As to the photograph itself, Duchamp stands in full-length profile, thin (almost transparent) and linear, his spine against the edge of his *Glass*, looking directly at the heavy, squarish form of Dreier. Seated just opposite, she returns his gaze, a slight smile on her face. It is hard to read what is passing between them. Their pose is restrained and no doubt belies the exhilaration they shared in having the *Glass* brought back to



13.1

Katherine S. Dreier and Marcel Duchamp in Dreier's library of her West Redding, Connecticut, home, 1936. Photograph courtesy Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

life. In fact, the publication of the *Green Box* and the reconstruction of the *Large Glass* brought about Duchamp's return to public attention.¹⁰

Dreier met Duchamp (1887–1968) in 1916 during the period of his first sojourn in the United States (1915–1918) when New York Dada began to evolve, linked mainly to the activities of the Arensberg circle. Walter Arensberg and his wife, Louise, had assembled an impressive modern art collection and kept an open house in their New York apartment, a sort of revolving door for an array of avant-garde artists and intellectuals that included many French émigrés from the war in Europe.¹¹ On arriving in New York in 1915, Duchamp found himself something of a celebrity as the painter of *Nude Descending a Staircase*, the *succés de scandale* of the 1913 Armory Show. Introduced to the Arensbergs by Walter Pach shortly after his arrival, an instant friendship developed between them. Duchamp, with his slender good looks and seductive charm, ironic wit and intelligence, had wide appeal, and quickly became the key figure in the Arensberg circle. Toward the end of 1916, Arensberg himself, and members of the spirited inner coterie, were prominent among the founders of a new Society of Independent Artists, which proposed to hold annual jury-free exhibitions, offering an open door to freedom of artistic expression as an alternative to the domination of the National Academy's juried selections. This revolt against the Academy required formal organization and sympathizers, including supporters capable of contributing a substantial check. John Covert, a cousin of Walter Arensberg and an aspiring avant-garde painter, recruited Dreier as a director and guarantor for the new society.

Money aside, by 1916 Dreier was an established painter herself. Two of her paintings were included in the 1913 Armory Show, and later that year in New York the Macbeth Gallery gave her a solo exhibition. Her work had not yet incorporated the influence of the more avant-garde art forms that she had come across at the Cologne Sonderbund (in 1912) and at the Armory Show itself, but she was inclined to support artis-

tic innovation and personal expression that went beyond academic conventions.¹²

Born in 1877, Dreier grew up at the tail end of the Victorian era. Her art training had included private study and studio classes in New York and Europe, where she lived at intervals in Paris, London, and Munich. Her father had come to the United States from Bremen in 1849 and from the proverbial modest beginnings rose to be president of an iron and steel distributor, Naylor and Company, located in New York's financial center. Theodor Dreier and his German-born wife raised their son and four daughters in easy circumstances, leaving them with substantial fortunes of their own. The family ethos was both German and American, combining a strong American identity with a sympathetic knowledge of and sense of affiliation to their German heritage, strengthened by fluency in the language and frequent trips to Germany to visit relatives.

Dreier, as the youngest child, remembered being indulged, but nonetheless rebellious in her early years. Adventuresome as well as conventional, she combined Victorian proprieties and romantic sentimentalism with the self-confidence, activism, and willingness to take public stands of a modern woman. She absorbed family values that included a strong sense of social obligation to the less fortunate. The emphasis on individual responsibility and achievement that informed the education of the four Dreier daughters found outlets in commitment to progressive social reform, political activism and woman's suffrage.¹³ Of all the causes in which she was involved, the most important to her was *art*.

Upset by the generally derisive public response to the Armory Show, Dreier was determined to promote the new forms of artistic expression while enhancing public appreciation for it. In 1914 she formed the Cooperative Mural Workshop, which proposed to unite art and artisanship, usefulness and beauty. In the spirit of medieval workshops (as they had been revived in England by John Ruskin and William Morris),

the Workshop produced murals, furniture, and decorative items. The Workshop's credo with its defining emphasis on the spiritual was to be characteristic of Dreier's conception of art throughout her life: "Art is a spiritual quality taking its physical form in balance, line, and color, and will exercise its influence wherever it exists."¹⁴

While the Society of Independent Artists subscribed to a more open-ended approach to art, Dreier was pleased to take part in a project designed to expand opportunities for artists to show their work and engage the public.

In the meetings of the Independents' organizers in the Arensbergs' apartment on West 67th Street, Dreier later recalled that it was Duchamp who "was the one mind which made the meetings alive, and through his charming personality and extreme good looks as a young man, won the interest and hearts of everybody there," no doubt including her own. In her view, she and Duchamp "approached Art sufficiently with accord to become friends," a "strong platonic friendship" that lasted all their lives.¹⁵

As things turned out, Dreier and Duchamp's collaboration in the Independents was short-lived. Duchamp tested the limits of free expression in the now well-documented story of his pseudonymous entry to the inaugural exhibition of a porcelain urinal, signed by "R. Mutt" and titled *Fountain* (see figure 2.3).¹⁶ Its rejection prompted Duchamp's resignation. His "serious disagreement with the ruling spirit of the Society" worried Dreier; although she had joined in the vote to reject, she was quick to admit her own shortcomings for failing to see the originality in the submission of "the piece of plumbing."¹⁷ In an earnest letter urging Duchamp to reconsider, Dreier lauded his personal sincerity, originality, strength of character, and spiritual sensitiveness; but in deploring the contemporary "lack of real appreciation of the beautiful in art or that art ought to be introduced into the simplest objects," she completely mistook his purpose.¹⁸ Placing Duchamp in a tutelary role that would be characteristic of their long association, she suggested that she too might have understood

the originality of the troublesome object if he had brought it to her attention.¹⁹

The Independents' exhibition opened on 10 April 1917, shortly after the United States entered World War I, an event that had little effect on the festive opening or the subsequent celebratory events. The second (and final) edition of the magazine *The Blind Man* exploded with lively polemics and in-jokes instigated by "The R. Mutt Affair." Dreier herself does not seem to have taken part in the Dada goings-on within the Arensbergs' inner circle, some of whose members published the magazine, presumably because she was not invited to do so. In the climate of anti-German feeling, her assertive style was often perceived as stereotypical of Teutonic authority; the advocates of free expression in avant-garde circles were not free of cultural prejudices of their own, and the foreign language spoken by the European émigrés in New York was French. Moreover, whether in the domains of social welfare, general philanthropy, or culture and the arts, non-confrontational gentility was the norm even for activist women, unless of course they were modern bohemians in the style of the carefree seductiveness of Beatrice Wood or the intellectual sophistication of Louise Norton or Mina Loy. Dreier was far from bohemian; her determined self-assurance was more akin to that of Beatrice Webb, the English Fabian socialist, identified with good causes and moral uplift.

Dreier resigned from the Independents in the fall of 1917, ostensibly displeased with the financial reporting to its directors.²⁰ Duchamp, in the meantime, worked away on the *Large Glass*, subsidized by the Arensbergs. Despite his fame in the art world, Duchamp turned his back on commercial success, although he occasionally sold works he had brought over from Paris. He moved easily among charmed and charming social circles, occasionally making two dollars an hour giving French lessons.²¹ By the end of the year, Dreier was one of his pupils. It was early January 1918 when he accepted a commission from her, to paint a mural-sized

panel to fit above a wall of bookshelves in the library of her spacious New York apartment at 135 Central Park West.

Tu m' is widely regarded as one of the outstanding Dada works in America (figure 13.2). It combines serious intellectual concerns, a discourse on painting and the making of art, with elements of wit and parody. By the time Duchamp began *Tu m'*, he was committed to subordinating the visual to the *conceptual*, putting into practice his well-known credo: "I was interested in ideas—not merely in visual products. I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind."²² Like the *Large Glass*, which was still a work in progress when Duchamp began *Tu m'*, Dreier's mural had its genesis in many of the notes found in the *Green Box*.

Tu m' was completed in about six months. It was Duchamp's first oil painting since 1913, and was to be his last. As Dreier's first Duchamp acquisition, *Tu m'* was a preamble to their long relationship. By interrogating it, we can find clues to its several fields of allusions, from the self-referential related to Duchamp's formation and biography, to chance connections and allusions to Dreier, the patron.

Richly colored, *Tu m'* is both aesthetically appealing and perplexing. Its challenge to the viewer to extract meaning and impose sense is immediate. Its title, neither abstract nor descriptive, does not help. Speaking French, in the intimate form of direct address, "Tu m' . . ." (You . . . me), the viewer must supply the missing verb, participating in an open-ended game of alternative completions. The speaker is presumably the artist. The title at the lower left and the artist's name appear in letters so small that we read or hear them as a whisper. Nevertheless, the title inserts the artist's presence, introducing a field of biographical reference that coexists or competes with the seemingly neutral field of visual images depicted on the surface.

Tu m' presents an assemblage of real and painted objects. Ranged across the surface, their visual play with illusion, reality and modes of representation confound the viewer's perception. Other than their over-



13.2

Marcel Duchamp, *Tu m'*, 1918, oil on canvas with bottle brush, three safety pins, and one bolt, 69.8 × 313 cm. Yale University Art Gallery, gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris/Estate of Marcel Duchamp.

lap, the images appear to lack logical connection; they are analogous to the fragmented syntax of the futurists' "words-in-freedom."²³ The directional flow from left to right suggests an enigmatic narrative. But like the notes in the *Green Box*, it is up to the reader/viewer to discover conceptual links.

Three shadows traced in pencil from projections of suspended objects call attention to the viewer's space, which the real objects once shared in *front* of the canvas, reversing the convention of the picture plane as a window opening onto the space depicted behind it. Two traced shadows—the bicycle wheel and the hat rack—are prior Duchamp ready-mades; the third is a corkscrew. A real bottle brush projects from a painted rip in the canvas, held together with three real safety pins. Located along the lines of the *trompe l'oeil* fissure, the long brush appears to plunge outward from the space *behind* the picture plane. When the canvas is properly illuminated, the brush casts a *real* shadow. When lighted from above, the shadow on the canvas surface is virtually indistinguishable from the traced shadows. The real shadow appears on the ceiling when the brush is illuminated from below. In the absence of properly directed light, the real shadow vanishes (nor does it appear in most photographs).

A diagonal range of color samples recedes into the upper left. The foremost yellow lozenge at the center of the canvas is anchored to the surface by a real metal bolt. At lower left, three curving lines, derived from the shapes of another earlier Duchamp work, his *3 Standard Stoppages*, define layered forms that suggest an element of landscape. The stoppage lines appear again on the right, extending from the corners of a foreshortened white rectangle set at an angle beneath the bottle brush. They stream across the right side of the canvas, extending almost to its edge, the third set rendered so faintly that the lines are visible only when the viewer is very close—virtually impossible if the painting is hung at the height of its original location. Taking off from tenuous links to the

stoppage lines, linear bands of divided color segments appear to recede ambiguously into deep space, and are overlaid by multiple circles carefully drawn with a compass. At the center, below the yellow lozenge and ruptured surface, a pointing hand—according to Duchamp, executed and signed by a professional sign painter, “A. Klang”—draws attention to the tilted white rectangle and the protruding brush above it.

As we *name* what the eye sees, the literal identification of the objects and images engages with the pictorial conventions of representation on a picture plane. The verbal-visual interplay is like a rebus. The central location of the hand, its proximity to the brush, and blank white rectangle (as a *tabula rasa*) surrounded by real objects, painted forms, and shadows amid graded colors, measured lines, and conflicting perspectives,²⁴ constitute a verbal/visual display of the tools and techniques of the artist at work. The interplay between illusions and reality creates a visual pun on the *making* of art by the artist as artisan and artificer. In this connection, the sign painter’s hand pokes fun at the sacral value of authenticating signatures, or connoisseurial, authorial attributions of a Master’s *hand*.

If a first reading of *Tu m’* emphasizes the making of a painted work of *art*, we also find allusions to constructed conventions in other domains: systems of measurement shared in art and science, as well as the permeable boundaries of all systems of signification. The centrality of the printer’s directional device, the sign of the sign painter, is a humorous but also a serious literalization of the centrality of the *sign*, whether verbal or visual, heard or read. Duchamp thinks about and plays with degrees of visibility, the barely discernible, traces and echoes, clangs and whispers. He even seems to encourage emanations of the ineffable, latent iconic associations in the viewer’s unconscious, all contributing to his serious game with the instability of perception, the multiplicity of meaning, the flexibility of interpretation.

In his conversations with Pierre Cabanne, Duchamp specified many of the intellectual interests that he played with in the *Large Glass*. They

appear in *Tu m'* as well—a “rehabilitation of perspective,” which he felt had then been completely ignored, and the reintroduction of “the precise and exact aspect of science.”²⁵ But in *Tu m'* Duchamp put a spin on his “scientific” investigations: “It wasn’t for love of science that I did this; on the contrary, it was rather in order to discredit it, mildly, lightly, unimportantly. But irony was present.”²⁶ He played with the laws of science as another way to challenge certitude. His earliest demonstration of this is in the work he named *3 Standard Stoppages*,²⁷ and is forecast in the first note in the *Box of 1914* (later incorporated in the expanded collection of notes in the *Green Box*), under the heading “The Idea of the Fabrication”:

straight horizontal
—If a thread one meter long falls from a height of one meter straight on to a horizontal plane twisting as it pleases and creates a new image of the unit of length.—²⁸

Following his own instruction, Duchamp created three new shapes with strings dropped onto canvas, then preserved their new form by gluing them to the canvas with varnish. The three canvas supports were then glued onto narrow glass plates. The templates he made by tracing each string were used as rulers for the stoppage lines in *Tu m'*, inscribing the permanent residues of a chance operation, “canned chance.”²⁹ Their use on the lower left side of the canvas evokes an earthly landscape; their appearances on the right suggest departure to a more ethereal realm, perhaps the mysterious fourth dimension.³⁰

As he explained to Cabanne, Duchamp’s preoccupations with mathematics, systems of measurement, straight lines, and curves, were extended to speculations on “an invisible fourth dimension, something you couldn’t see with your eyes.”³¹ In what he described as a bit of sophism, he considered whether the two-dimensional shadows projected by three-

dimensional objects were intellectually analogous to perceiving three-dimensional objects as projections from a fourth dimension. Among the notes in the *Green Box* is a recipe for the shadow play of readymades in *Tu m'*:

shadows cast by Readymades.

*shadow cast by 2,3,4, Readymades. 'brought together.'*³²

Elsewhere, part of a long note on “Cast Shadows” begins

probably to relate to the notes on 4-dim'l perspective.

after the bride. . . .

make a picture. of shadows cast

*by objects 1st on a plane.*³³

Rosalind Krauss, in her discussion of the index as a sign that, in contrast to a symbol, establishes its meaning as a physical mark or trace of a particular object or cause, refers to *Tu m'* as a panorama of the index. The readymades appear as cast shadows, indexical traces of their particularity as objects.³⁴ But embedded in the specificity of the shadows' referents as *objects*, is the symbolic reading of the objects *as readymades*, pointing back to Duchamp himself. For an artist who professed to turn away from demonstrations of authorial self-expression, preferring disguises and mechanical techniques that permit self-effacement, even self-erasure, he has in fact reinscribed himself.

Duchamp later described *Tu m'* (rather dismissively) as a résumé of things he had made earlier, a sort of dictionary of previous ideas.³⁵ The wheel in *Tu m'* derives from his 1916 replica of the original *Bicycle Wheel* assembled in Paris in 1913, before Duchamp had the idea of “readymades.”³⁶ The hat rack that reappears in *Tu m'* was chosen as a ready-

made in 1916, and hung from the ceiling of Duchamp's studio (as shown in a 1917 photograph³⁷). The elongated, dematerializing corkscrew, was dated by Duchamp "the first six months of 1918," the interval of his work on *Tu m'*. Duchamp also stated, "One may consider the *shadow* of the corkscrew as a Ready-made rather than the corkscrew itself. No inscription on the corkscrew." Described as a "Provoked Ready-made,"³⁸ it exists as a phantom of itself, in itself.

The indexical traces of the (object) readymades coexist with the actual objects attached to the picture surface. They share the category of specific *thingness*,³⁹ but spin off allusive associations.

The incorporation in *Tu m'* of real objects taken from everyday life provides a provocative connection to the original readymades and suggests that the entire work can be considered an assisted or semi-readymade.⁴⁰ The proportions of *Tu m'*, its high position above Dreier's bookshelves, and the sign painter's hand, call to mind the outdoor signboards placed above shop windows and along the facades of commercial buildings, ubiquitous in the business and theater districts of New York in the 1910s. We can imagine *Tu m'* as a signboard above the *Large Glass* as shop window, advertising peep shows and magic tricks.

Duchamp found a creative space in the interrelationships of objects and words, words and puns. He later told Katharine Kuh:

*I like words in a poetic sense. Puns for me are like rhymes . . . a play on words that can start a whole series of considerations, connotations and investigations. Just the sound of these words alone begins a chain reaction. . . . You know, puns have always been considered a low form of wit, but I find them a source of stimulation both because of their actual sound and because of unexpected meanings attached to the interrelationships of disparate words. . . . Sometimes four or five different levels of meaning come through.*⁴¹

When the levels of meaning called up by sound operate in a multilingual field, as they did for Duchamp, the chain reaction is multiplied.

Considered as an assemblage, the concrete thingness of the objects in *Tu m'*, their material properties, form, and function, create a ripple effect of association through their placement/displacement underscoring the pressure Duchamp exerts against the boundaries of categories of knowing. The interaction of language and thingness adds other variables to re-cognition.

For example, among the “things” attached to *Tu m'*'s surface, the three large safety pins holding together the *trompe l'oeil* tear in the canvas may refer to a lost readymade, a metal chimney ventilator signed and dated in New York in 1915, and inscribed, “Pulled at 4 Pins.” As Arturo Schwarz notes, the title is a literal English translation of the French expression, *tiré à quatre épingles* meaning “well groomed.”⁴² There is a double disjunction, between the readymade and its inscription, and the loss of meaning in its literal translation. The “bottle brush” travels via its functional association with an absent bottle to the readymade of 1914 left behind in Paris, the *Porte-bouteilles*, or in English, “Bottle Dryer,” a low-order homonymic pun on the patron's name.

If we are to believe Duchamp's claim that he had the hand in *Tu m'* painted and signed by a professional sign painter, then the painted hand is itself a coopted readymade. One wonders where Duchamp found the sign painter. One can't help suspecting that he is a relative of R. Mutt, another early Duchampian disguise. If he did exist, and Duchamp *chose* him, Mr. Klang was a lucky find indeed. His loud name, barely visible beside the hand below the large and bolted yellow lozenge at the center, summons up the sounding cosmos of Vasily Kandinsky, whose libretto for *Der gelbe Klang* (The Yellow Sound) was published in the 1912 *Der Blaue Reiter* almanac in Munich. Conceived as a multi-media *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the stage production was to enact the correspondence between various

art forms through the interplay of sound, color, and movement. Perhaps its echo was caught in the phrase fragment tucked into the *Green Box* (published as well in the first selection of notes, the *Box of 1914*: “A World in Yellow”). Kandinsky’s *Klang* summons up a cosmos that differs, of course, from Duchamp’s; but they share a dependence on the power of *sound*—in both the figural and sound-qua-sound senses, whether speech, music, or noise.

Does Mr. Klang’s hand also point back to the ancient tradition of concealing divine mysteries in riddles and disguises? In an interesting essay on the depiction of the hand with a pointing index finger as a rhetorical device in painting, Claude Gandelman finds it an omnipresent “gesture of demonstration” in Italian Renaissance works of the fifteenth century (a high proportion of the designators in quattrocento painting takes the form of St. John the Baptist). Gandelman suggests that the figure of the designator has been transposed from the late medieval stage, where an actor called the expositor designated silent actors in *tableaux vivants*, commenting on their allegorical character. By extension, in painting, the “gesture of demonstration” announces a “showing,” proclaiming that the “painting in its totality proclaims itself to be a *presentation* and not a *representation*,” that is, not a mimetic description.⁴³

Although in *Tu m’* the hand points *within* the picture on a horizontal axis parallel to the picture plane, it signals to the spectator, focusing attention, directing the gaze. Norbert Lynton has remarked that Duchamp was an “iconoclast [who] knew his icons.”⁴⁴ Is Mr. Klang’s hand there to remind us, for example, of Michelangelo’s *Creation of Adam* with its mirror image of the anointing hand of God, also in a central position, bridging Adam’s terrestrial domain and the celestial realm of the Creator? Or perhaps it evokes Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks* (the Louvre version, c. 1485) with its trinity of hand gestures: the extended open hand of the seated Virgin, poised above the pointing hand of the angel, who directs the gaze

to the infant St. John. Placed below the angel's hand, the infant Christ raises his own in a gesture of blessing.⁴⁵

And then there is the painted rip in the canvas, the tear, a rupture on the surface. Making use of this *Ur* emblem of the avant-garde, scholars debated almost sixty years later whether to place Duchamp in the "tradition of the rupture, or the rupture of the tradition."⁴⁶ As a biographical reference it signals Duchamp's rupture with the systematization of the theories and practices of the Puteaux cubists, a group that included his own brothers, Jacques Villon and Raymond Duchamp-Villon.⁴⁷ This break in turn summons up a link to Kandinsky and Munich, for Duchamp placed the scene of his "complete liberation" from his association with Cubism in Munich, where he spent only two months—July and August—in 1912.⁴⁸

Long a center of artistic ferment, Munich in that year was particularly lively. Kandinsky, with Franz Marc, had recently formed *Der Blaue Reiter* (The Blue Rider) when their art and ideas evolved in directions beyond those acceptable to the Munich avant-garde. Duchamp's accounts of his months in Munich omit mention of Kandinsky,⁴⁹ although while he was there he purchased a copy of Kandinsky's influential treatise, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (published in English in 1914 as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*). It was in Munich that Duchamp began a series of studies for the *Large Glass* based on the theme of "The Bride." Discussing the series years later, he recalled: "Replacing the free hand by a very precise technique, I embarked on an adventure which was no more tributary of already existing schools." He established the general plan for the *Large Glass*, with its theme of the "bride stripped bare by her bachelors," expressing his conception of the bride "by the juxtaposition of mechanical elements and visceral form."⁵⁰ Two drawings, *Virgin, No. 1* and *Virgin, No. 2*, were followed by two important oils: *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride*, and then *The Bride*. He also made several studies for the *Glass*, giving them the same title, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*.

What he did not know then, in 1912, was that a bride stripped bare had indeed spent several months in Munich—perhaps the bride he anticipated in one of his specifications for “Readymades”:

by planning for a moment to come . . . [t]he readymade can later be looked for.—(with all kinds of delays). . . . It is a kind of rendezvous.⁵¹

Tu m' is a work in which the readymade and the ready maid meet. Dreier had also been in Munich in 1912. Painted six years later, *Tu m'* might be called a rendezvous after some delay. The tangential connections of Dreier and Duchamp to Munich seem to hover in the imagery of *Tu m'*. For she had gone there to recover from an upheaval in her personal life. Can we discern elements for reading *Tu m'* as an object-portrait of the patron as well as parodic commentary on *Über das Geistige*, with Munich the site of a pataphysical intersection?

Dreier's letters to her family, written from London in 1911, revealed an astonishing secret. She had fallen in love with a fellow American painter, Edward Trumbull, who was then painting murals in the *atelier* of the well-known British artist Frank Brangwyn. Dreier and Trumbull were engaged to be married, and arrangements were made for a summer wedding at the Dreier family home in Brooklyn Heights, New York. Her brother-in-law, Raymond Robins, was to marry them.

The wedding was to occur at half-past five on 9 August 1911, in the German Church on Brooklyn's Schermerhorn Street. But the *New York Times*, which described the bride as socially prominent and the groom as an artist who had lived in London for some time, reported a radical alteration in the wedding plans: “Weds In Haste To See Dying Mother. Edward Trumbull, Artist, and Miss Dreier of Brooklyn Hurry Ceremony on Receipt of Wire[.] Abandon Church Wedding. Bridegroom Leaves Bride to Go to Mother in Detroit.” Informed by telegram of his mother's life-threatening illness, Trumbull and Dreier were hastily married a day earlier than

announced at the bride's home at 6 Montague Terrace, the Reverend Raymond Robins officiating. Trumbull then "bade his bride good-bye" immediately after the ceremony and hurried to the railroad station to catch a train for Detroit.⁵²

Accompanied by Robins, Dreier followed her husband to Detroit a day or two later. On 11 August, a cable from Robins alerted the family to a "situation of the utmost gravity."⁵³ After some delay, the explanation appeared in the press. On 22 August, front-page headlines in the *New York Times* announced that "Miss Dreier Finds She is Not a Wife."⁵⁴ Apparently overtaken by a crisis of conscience at the bedside of his dying mother, Trumbull confessed to his bride that he was already married—to an English flower girl left behind in London. He had convinced himself that an English marriage was not legally binding in America. Printed cards were sent to those who had received wedding announcements.

*The marriage on Aug. 8th of Katherine S. Dreier and Edward Trumbull being void on account of the existence of a former wife of Mr. Trumbull from whom he was not legally free, and the parties not having lived together as husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs. H. Edward Dreier hereby recall their announcement of the marriage sent out before this fact was known. Aug. 22nd, 1911.*⁵⁵

Trumbull's mother recovered, and in her own way so did Dreier. Following the advice of a family friend that she "buckle on her armor," Dreier was soon on her way back to Europe, to devote herself to her art in the hope of transcending this trauma.⁵⁶ After attending the opening of her previously planned exhibition at London's Doré Gallery in October (selections from the show traveled to Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Dresden in 1912), she spent several months in Munich, studying with Gustav Britsch.

Dreier was already in Munich when *Der Blaue Reiter's* first exhibition opened in December 1911, coinciding with the publication of Kandin-

sky's *Über das Geistige*. Dreier later wrote that Kandinsky's book had helped to clarify many of her vague thoughts about art formulated during her intensive period of study in Europe.⁵⁷ Although he was indeed a seminal influence, the clarification of thought that Dreier credits to Kandinsky is not always evident. However, she adopted his vocabulary and found many of his mystical ideas, derived from theosophy, compatible with her own. Among them was the belief that a new era of spirituality was replacing the disintegrating materialism of the nineteenth century; that the artist longing to express his inner life seeks an abstract, non-material mode of expression freed from literal representation, akin to the methods of music; that color and form, even when abstract and geometrical have their own spiritual values expressing inner meaning. Harmonies of form and color arouse a corresponding vibration in the beholder, *ein innerer Klang*. Dreier was attuned to so-called cosmic vibrations throughout her life in her search for the inner spiritual essence that defined the art, and the individuals, she most valued.

Did Duchamp ever know that Dreier, who had made the passage from Virgin to Bride, had been a bride but never a wife? In 1918 did Duchamp know that Dreier had also been in Munich in 1912 to recover from severe shock, emotions stripped bare, *son coeur mise à nu*? We simply don't know. Their months in Munich did not overlap. It was in New York at the Arensbergs (both of whom were also of German ancestry and fluent in the language), that they met. But it is quite possible that gossip about Dreier's misfortune still followed her, whispered behind her back. It is also possible that she confided in him during the six months that he worked on *Tu m'*, when Dreier painted two portraits of him. These questions suggest an alternative way of reading *Tu m'* as a unitary allegorical narrative—that is, as a story.⁵⁸

The tangential intersection of both Dreier and Duchamp in Munich in 1912 inserts a metaphoric fourth dimension, a space where “canned chance” and pataphysical parallels are inscribed in the canvas as an alter-

native narrative, governed perhaps by yet another note from the *Green Box*: “—*Regime of gravity—Ministry of coincidences*. Department (or better): Regime of Coincidence Ministry of gravity.”⁵⁹

That story opens on the left with the partial shadow image of the wheel, an emblem with multiple allusions, among them, of course, the wheel of fortune. As a “Catherine wheel,” it is the emblem of the gruesome death of a martyred saint, whose depiction as the bride of Christ was the subject of many versions of the *Mystic Marriage of St. Catherine*. The other shadow readymades, as screw and rack, provide a trio of references to punishment, pain, or martyrdom, evoking the trauma experienced by Dreier. The coital reference of the extending shaft of the real bottle brush, directly above the tilted rectangle of bridal white, clearly seems to be the *subject* of the pointing hand. A bride and a bachelor about to be married? But the brush extends *away* from the ruptured surface, going in another direction, and the penetration is only an illusion. Safety pins hold the edges together; desire may not be fulfilled, but the surface will hold together. Things will not fall apart. The victim of unrequited love, either as a bride who never became a wife, or a woman in love with a man who would not/could not respond, Dreier remained “the apotheosis of virginity.”⁶⁰ Her attraction to Duchamp no doubt aroused troublesome emotions and he must have replaced her lost bridegroom as the object of her conscious or unconscious erotic attachments. Duchamp’s awareness of this is one explanation of the title. If Klang (in very small letters) is the diminishing echo of the sounding trumpet of inner spiritual urgency, *Tu m’* is the whispered incompleteness of *tu m’aimes* (you love me). Read as *tu m’emmerdes*—you bore me—it may also leave unspoken the irritation that Duchamp, tactful and discreet, felt toward his patron under the circumstances.⁶¹ Another comment on the situation may be hiding behind his later 1920 construction, *Fresh Widow*, the miniature French window made with glass panes covered with black leather, like mirrors shrouded in black to designate mourning. It was the first work that he signed

as “Rose Sélavy” (*rose c’est la vie*), her name shortly changed to the double-r, “Rose Sélavy” (*eros c’est la vie*). Sold directly to Dreier, the title suggests his awareness of her sublimated emotions. After all, the anagram of the French *vierge* (virgin) is *grieve*.

When *Tu m’* is considered as a pendant to the *Large Glass*, they combine to form a permanently unfinished allegory, this time as a miniature *Roman de la Rose*. This thirteenth-century vernacular masterpiece is described as a “massive and centrifugal text, characterized by large-scale digressions and repetitious wordplay [that] defies attempts to control its meaning, to identify a unified message.” A satire on the intellectual issues of its day, its critique of the normative is encyclopedic in scope. Irony directs the complex play to express one idea, and mean its opposite. One unifying thread is the pursuit of the beloved, figured by a rose—itsself emblematic of Aphrodite/Venus, of female sexuality and fecundity. The lover contends with obstacles, including conventions of courtly love, the prescriptions of “Reason,” representing theological and social impediments to the earthy and sexual “Nature.” In the end, the lover penetrates all defenses, “in no uncertain terms, deflowers the rose.”⁶² Does the gesture of demonstration in *Tu m’*, aimed at the coital reference of the extending brush and the fissure, indicate Rose Sélavy in the mysterious center space—again, *eros, c’est la vie*? But unlike the climax in the *Roman de la Rose*, the desire that hovers in *Tu m’* and the *Large Glass*, is forever unconsummated.

One wonders whether the imagery in *Tu m’* was what Dreier anticipated when she commissioned her mural. Her first published observations appeared some years later in her book *Western Art and the New Era*. In it she identifies Duchamp with the modern men “blazing the path for the new era [through] research,” specifying as Duchamp’s contribution “the introduction of the third dimension within the realm of the two-dimensional art of painting.” Referring to *Tu m’* (reproduced in the book

in a photograph showing its installation in her library), she wrote that Duchamp

*introduced his theory of the third dimension by attaching a long wire ice-box cleaner to the picture in such a manner that it became an inherent part of the composition as a whole. Its effect at night . . . unites the picture with the ceiling through the shadow which it casts, and extends the realm of the painting. This was not accident, but forethought.*⁶³

For Dreier, the placement “of the representation of discarded objects, as for instance a bicycle wheel, bedsprings, a corkscrew . . . of which the onlooker is quite unconscious . . . [demonstrates] the power of mind over material objects.” By the time Dreier’s book was published, she was aware of Dada as a distinct contemporary “ism,” and she concluded: “In this picture [Duchamp] renders a higher expression of the theories the Dadaists bring forth, than any expression which was brought to my attention by a Dadaist.”⁶⁴

Reading Dreier reading *Tu m’* leaves little doubt that what she saw in Duchamp was a “scientific” bent and complex mind that struck her as akin to Leonardo’s. She may not have written about Duchamp’s technical experiments or perspective studies, but she was the first to write about Duchamp as a modern Leonardo. In a rather artless manuscript found among her papers, dated 13 October 1920 and labeled “Dee as Leonardo,” she noted a common love of art and science, and “machinery” and revealed a good deal more. The artist-subject is never named in the manuscript itself.

It was the year 1919. He was young,—popular—shy. Many loved him—Few understood him—Many doubted and hated him. . . . He loved the purity of lines which machinery demands. He would spend weeks—

*months—getting a series of curves and circles. Then he would call it art. . . . He had vague recollections of spending years in search of inventing flying-machines—no one at that time had dreamt of. But when and where it was he could not recollect. . . . Then as now he was used to being lonely and not being understood.*⁶⁵

In the same text she refers to a gathering of “the group who hailed him as their prophet,” at which the unnamed “he” took Leonardo’s *Gioconda*, gave her an imperial moustache, and which “The group received . . . with immense applause.”⁶⁶ In Dreier’s manuscript, repentance follows the sacrilegious act. “He” senses his own incarnation. Then, “he stood aghast at his revelation. . . . Once more he fled to be alone.” In equating Duchamp and Leonardo she picked up the sense of an artist outside of his time, a personality used to being lonely and misunderstood. In her own mind she felt she had personal knowledge of the private man as well as his public persona.

In the years following the completion of *Tu m’*, the personal contact between Dreier and Duchamp took place against a background of continuing political upheaval in Europe and the dispersion of Dada to various European centers, but they differed in their response to these events.

Toward the end of the summer of 1918, Dreier and Duchamp left New York for Buenos Aires. As an American, Dreier felt that the war was the tragic consequence of German imperial arrogance and misjudgment. She was also deeply troubled by growing anti-German sentiment, which spread rapidly to include its art, culture, and people. To escape such a painful atmosphere, she arranged to write a series of articles for the *New Republic* on social conditions in Argentina.⁶⁷ Duchamp, who had been in the United States long enough to be classified for military service when America entered the war in 1917 (although his category as a foreigner made it unlikely that he would be called up), later described his decision to leave for a neutral country as the same motive that instigated his

original departure from France in 1915—a “lack of patriotism” and “militarism.”⁶⁸

One can only speculate that even though the pattern of their future relationship was not yet clear, Dreier’s unspoken feelings for Duchamp played a large part in her decision to seek a Buenos Aires assignment—an assignment she nevertheless took seriously. In spite of the obstacles confronting a woman in the rigidly gender-stratified local society, she traveled widely about Buenos Aires and the provinces investigating a wide range of organizations and institutions. Her sympathies in the General Strike of January 1919 were with the workers, at a “time when a new wave of seeking the unattainable swept over the city.” With post-Armistice conditions in Europe in mind, she judged such experiences of violence and confrontation as having no value unless they broke down the walls limiting human vision: “The whole terrible cataclysm through which the world has passed these five years will go for nothing and bring on a greater one unless it has brought the whole world together in a closer understanding.”⁶⁹

In Buenos Aires, Duchamp, in contrast to Dreier, remained relatively uninvolved. Where she did research he became a “chess maniac.”⁷⁰ Because of his absorption in chess, and the presence of Yvonne Chastel who had accompanied him to Buenos Aires, it is unlikely that Duchamp and Dreier saw each other often, although he occasionally referred to her in letters to the Arensbergs.⁷¹

Duchamp took off for Europe in June 1919. Europe was also on Dreier’s mind. She was eager to contact German relatives and have a look at postwar conditions in Germany, where she found that a revolution had indeed taken place. Despite her wealth and bourgeois background, her sympathies were with the social democrats who had toppled the imperial system. She was less frightened than most of her contemporaries by movements that sought to overturn an old order, whether artistic or political. Dreier viewed the war’s massive destruction and the unsettled post-

war conditions in Europe as a liberating opportunity: to surmount the cataclysm brought on by materialism, and follow a path to spiritual regeneration.⁷²

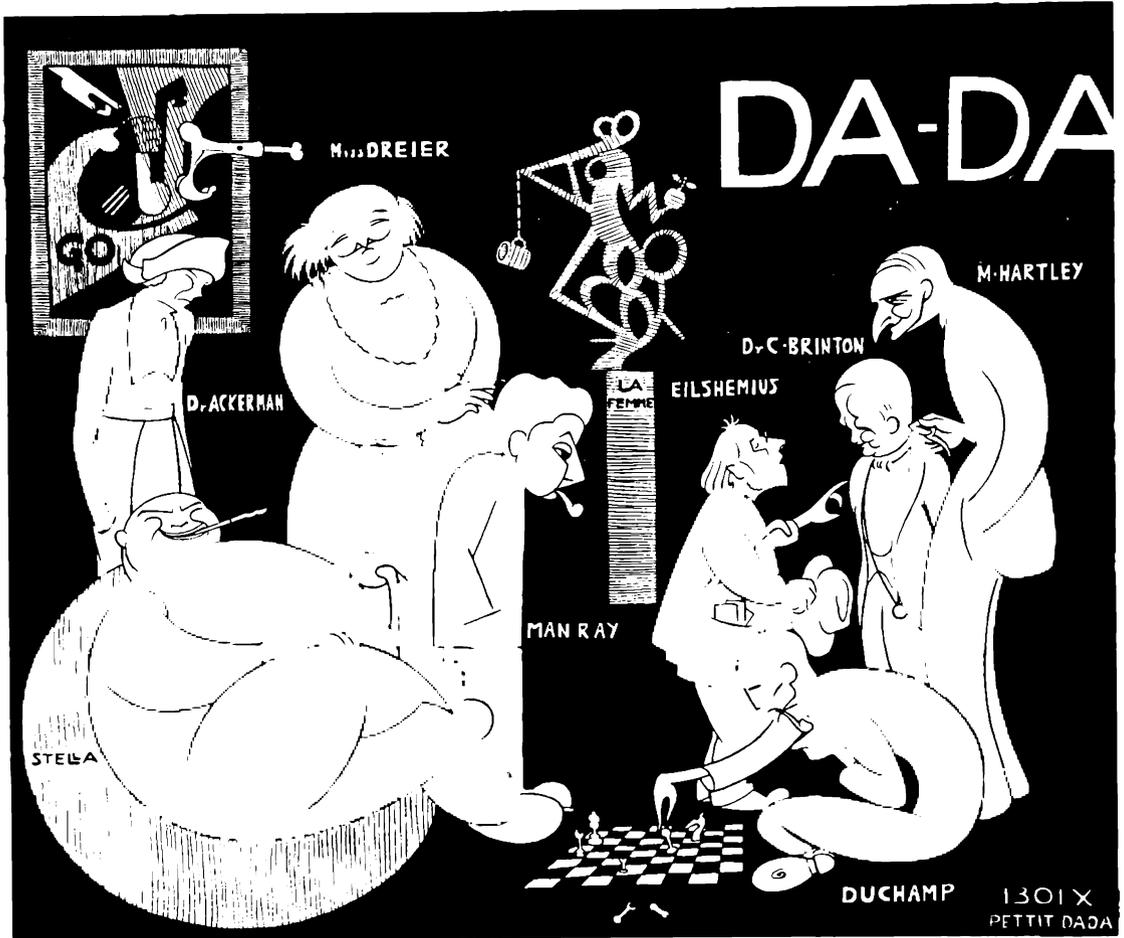
In late October 1919 she came upon a Dada exhibition in Cologne that featured the work of Max Ernst and his fellow dissident, Johannes Baargeld. After meeting Ernst, Dreier asked him to send Cologne Dada publications to her next stop, Paris, which coincided with the beginnings of Paris Dada and where she renewed her association with Duchamp. Eager to see as much as possible of the latest art developments, she assumed Duchamp (in France since early July), would be her guide. He was indeed “very attentive.”⁷³

By early January 1920 both Dreier and Duchamp were back in New York, where the idea of establishing a new, non-commercial gallery to show modern art became the focus of Dreier’s organizing abilities. No doubt the idea was hers, but Duchamp’s collaboration was assured from the start. He served as the new venture’s founding president, Dreier as its treasurer, and Man Ray as secretary.⁷⁴ Man Ray suggested the name, *Société Anonyme*, supposedly unaware that it was the French term for “incorporated.” The addition of “Inc.” to the name formed a humorous bilingual repetition.⁷⁵ The imposing subtitle, “Museum of Modern Art,” was a hope for things to come. Five dollars bought an annual admission card; five cents bought a pamphlet, *The Société Anonyme: Its Why & Its Wherefore*, announcing the founders’ intentions to create order out of the confusion of multiple new art movements by successive exhibitions that would enable the public “to study the serious expressions of serious men.”

Even though a commitment to Dada was not part of Dreier’s initial plan for the new organization, the *Société’s* exhibitions, programs, and publicity in its first season (April 1920 to June 1921) would, nonetheless, introduce the Dada “label” to the American scene.⁷⁶ Before she left for Europe in the summer of 1920 to secure exhibition loans for the fledging

Société, Dreier made arrangements to include a selection of French and German Dada works in a show planned for the following February and March. A large loan was forthcoming from Herwarth Walden's *Der Sturm* gallery that included works by Kurt Schwitters and Paul Klee.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, Ernst put her in touch with the Berlin dadaists and she met John Heartfield and George Grosz, who agreed to lend selected works from the large *Erste Internationale Dada-Messe* (First International Dada Fair) taking place in Berlin. However, Dreier's hopes that the Dada Fair items would be on hand for the Société's February–March exhibition became frustrations. As she explained publicly, the Société “never received them and . . . New York must again wait” for European Dada to hit its shores.⁷⁸ Thus, the Dada “label” came before the works. A journalist who approached the Société stalwarts to throw some light on the matter before the Dada invasion arrived, learned from Dreier that “Dada is irony,” and from Duchamp, that “Dada is nothing; . . . nothing is good, nothing is interesting, nothing is important.” Joseph Stella thought it meant having a good time. Man Ray had the last word, or so he thought: “Dada is a state of mind.”⁷⁹

Instead of a European Dada exhibition, on 1 February 1921, the Société Anonyme opened a show of Alexander Archipenko's abstract sculpture and sculpto-paintings (painted reliefs), many of them standing or seated women, and on 16 February held a symposium in the gallery on “The Psychology of Modern Art and Archipenko.” A black and white drawing by the little known cartoonist Richard Boix is a graphic souvenir of the event (figure 13.3). An assertive Archipenko sculpto-painting bursts out of its frame to point directly at Dreier, who stands with folded arms, eyes closed, wearing a close fitting hat with feathers drooping over her ears, and a hint of a beatific smile. Does she neither hear nor see what is going on? The evening's speakers—philosophy professor Phyllis Ackerman, critic and art collector Christian Brinton, Marsden Hartley, and Man Ray, as well as other Société regulars, Duchamp, Stella, and Louis Eilshemius—sit and stand in characteristic poses. The cartoon is undated; the



13.3

Richard Boix, *DA-DA* (*New York Dada Group*), 1921, brush and pen and ink on paper, 28.6 × 36.8 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest. Photograph copyright © 1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

insertion in bold letters in the upper right, “DA-DA,” may have arisen from the symposium discussion or indicate that Boix, as “Pettit Dada,” has perhaps conflated the scene with a subsequent Société Dada event he attended.⁸⁰

For that next event, those who wanted “to know what a dada is” were invited to hear Dreier’s and Hartley’s explanations on the evening of Friday, 1 April—Fool’s Day. The flyer for the accompanying exhibition at the gallery boasted that “The Dadas Have Come to Town!” But the long awaited Dada works from the International Dada Fair never did arrive, leaving Schwitters as the only designated dadaist in the group show, with the possible exception of Klee. This was a Dada exhibition by default. Dada—whether as a movement or as a “state of mind”—had entered the public lexicon without the emergence of consensus as to what a “genuine” Dada work of art actually was. The Dada label joined other descriptive tags used by critics and the public to deride unprecedented and seemingly inexplicable art forms.

Nevertheless, the talks that Friday evening attempted some kind of consensus. Hartley presented the tenets of Dada as the latest phase of modernism: he stressed the passion for freedom of expression, and freedom from the “commercialists,” its project of clearance opening the way for the individual to rebuild a modern house.⁸¹ Hartley—thoughtful, introspective, intense, his concealed homosexuality plaguing his sense of divided self (his letters to Dreier at this time reveal the severe depression and occasional incapacitation he suffered)—found in Dada a total freedom for individual choice. For him Dada was a joyous dogma that substituted the spirit of comedy for the fatality of dogma of any sort.

Dreier, who regarded Dada as a European movement, recognized that the “ism” was not homogeneous. For her, Dada was an example of one of multiple means justifying the end: to clear away the barriers to enlarged vision—barriers of commercialism, materialism, and cultural prejudice produced by nationality, gender, and class, all of which limited

personal taste. Dreier labeled the dadaists the bolshevists in art, seeking to destroy the weight of the past, by means of cutting irony and laughter “to prepare the ground for construction.” She was either blind to or rejected currents of ironic nihilism and believed that “people are reached by different methods,” and if Dada served to break through the limits of personal taste, it would serve to enlarge the vision of all, to move people from the “personal” to the “universal.” If she did not bracket the New York dadaists as such, to her mind their works were humorous and witty challenges to reigning academic canons, demonstrating the unorthodox use of materials, proposing new ideas that would attract attention and provoke thought. But there is confusion in Dreier’s understanding of Dada’s mingling of high art and popular culture. Misreading the leveling intention, and the ironic elevation of popular culture, she perceived a method to bring “beauty” and aesthetic values into the domain of daily life. She referred to aspects of popular culture like jazz, Charlie Chaplin films, and certain advertising images as examples of a vaguely defined natural American dadaism, even noting that as an American, “as I have always been surrounded by Dadaism, I am not so impressed by it as foreigners.”⁸²

When we review the programs and exhibitions of the Société’s first season,⁸³ Duchamp’s presence is always perceptible but not necessarily visible. His literal imprint remained in the emblem that was adopted as the Société’s logo: his design of a laughing ass who is also a chess knight. Behind the scenes he advised and consented, hanging many of the installations, responding to a range of requests for assistance. He seems to have been in attendance at many of the lectures and symposia, but never gave a public talk himself. He continued to work on his *Large Glass*, built the *Revolving Glass* that almost decapitated Man Ray,⁸⁴ designed the first work signed by Rose Sélavy, *Fresh Widow*, and with Man Ray and other like-minded friends, published *New York Dada* in April 1921, a single-issue

review that, among other contributions, carried authorization from Tristan Tzara to represent Dada in America.

In his year as nominal vice president of the Société Anonyme, Man Ray was active collaborating with Duchamp on the exhibition committee, and was an occasional participant in the lectures and symposia. His photographs of exhibited works were used for publicity, and more than twenty images were used on postcards offered for sale in the gallery. His relationship with Dreier had its ups and downs; on occasion she found him insufficiently reliable in fulfilling assignments. Man Ray responded by constructing a device to predict the variations in her mood, his *Catherine Barometer* (see figure 6.1). Resembling a tall vertical barometer, the title is inscribed on the base of an inverted metal washboard that supports a glass tube mounted against a background of narrow colored paint strips. Years later, Man Ray confirmed its purported function in a few lines from his “Bilingual Biography” of Duchamp: “Société Anonyme Incorporated; Fair, cold but warmer, as indicated by my special device, Catherine Barometer, very reliable.”⁸⁵

Dreier never realized her dream of turning the Société into a permanent museum. The organization had an intermittent life for the most part, arranging and lending works to expositions held at other institutions. Although she used the Société to keep Duchamp in her service, if not by her side, Dreier accepted the limits he placed on her claims to him. She transmuted her feelings into platonic friendship, assuming a semi-maternal stance. She recognized his need for freedom.⁸⁶ In their extensive correspondence, much of it taken up with business of one sort or another, they reveal, as well, unguarded confidences and mutual support, even as he resisted her pressure to keep him productive. Where Dreier was forever the utopian, and viewed Dada as an ultimately serious means to jolt people into social awareness, Duchamp represented Dada’s ambiguity and playfulness. Where she sought solutions, he questioned all normative

conventions, programmatic doctrines, and totalizing solutions of any kind. Duchamp was disinterested in political causes, but he admired Dreier's devotion to their common cause. Like himself, she refused to play the art game for commercial gain.

From the start Dreier saw spirituality in him where others did not, yet there are times when Duchamp himself uses an almost mystical vocabulary and speaks of the ineffable, of transubstantiation, even permutations of the occult as alternative domains to rationalism. In recognizing his gifts, perhaps she saw a combination of mind and spirit, akin to French *esprit* and German *Geist*. Duchamp courted contradiction. His seemingly complacent refusals to contest interpretation of his work are assertions of his "ironism of affirmation."⁸⁷ Dreier may have sensed in him a concealed vulnerability that motivated his preference for avoiding overt commitments. In his relations with her, Duchamp was respectful, sympathetic, and unfailingly reliable in fulfilling her many commissions.

Dreier did not live to see Duchamp reap the full harvest of his gifts. She was very pleased when, in 1952, her friend Rose Fried arranged an exhibition in her New York gallery, *Duchamp Frères & Soeur*, but Dreier was too ill to attend the opening on 25 February 1952. She died a month later, on 29 March. She had lent her own most recent Duchamp acquisition, his gift for her seventy-fourth birthday the previous September. It was an image of the knight as chess piece, inscribed: "To Katherine Dreier, Knight of the Société Anonyme." His salute to a dedicated life offered a symbolic reversal, an emblem of himself. In the tradition of the chivalric amatory code of love as service, but with an ironic inversion of the direction of desire, Duchamp had enacted the role of the "loyal, parfait, gentil Knight."⁸⁸

During the six months that Duchamp worked on *Tu m'* Dreier painted two portraits of him. One was an abstract painting, Dreier's first venture into an abstract style of her own, clearly owing much to Kandin-

sky in its attempt to create a sympathetic harmony of geometric shapes and interacting colors (figure 13.4). She reproduced the *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* in her book *Western Art and the New Era* to illustrate the “new attitude towards portraiture,” in which the artist uses abstract form and color to express the character of his subject:

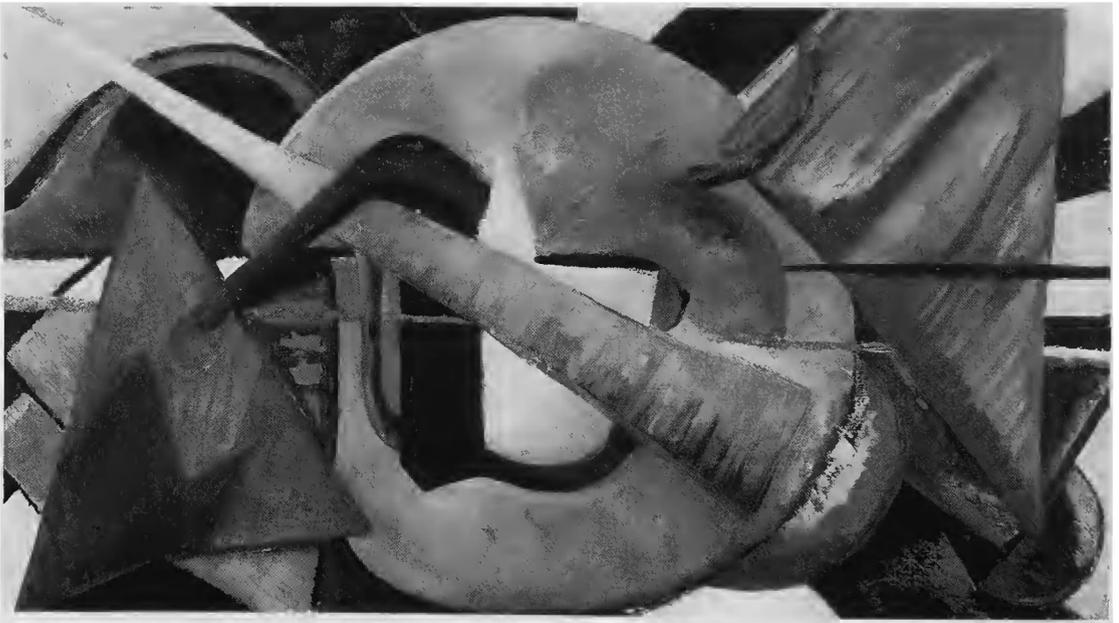
*Thus through the balance of curves, angles and squares, through broken or straight lines, or harmoniously flowing ones, through color harmony or discord, through vibrant or subdued tones, cold or warm, there arises a representation of the character which suggests clearly the person in question, and brings more pleasure to those who understand, than would an ordinary portrait representing only the figure and face.*⁸⁹

She assumed that a knowledge of the psychology of color and its symbolic representation were important in recognizing the subject of the portrait. As a symbolic representation, the composition has certain elements analogous to *Tu m'*. The form that an unknown critic described as a mottled cornucopia with a long pointed end, extends in front of a large central yellow disk; the cornucopia “is caught in the embrace of a dark reddish bar not unlike the handle of a talking machine” extending from the disk above its ambiguous aperture.⁹⁰

Dreier also portrayed Duchamp in a full-length portrait, showing him in a belted coat, pipe in hand, seated on a stool in the corner of a studio (figure 13.5). The stool is almost identical to the one in his own 67th Street studio, supporting the bicycle wheel. As far as we know, the painting was exhibited only once, in New York during 1933. Illustrated in the catalogue, the title appeared as *Triangles—Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*.⁹¹ She painted his shadow on the wall behind him; in the reproduction, and in an early undated photograph, the shadow appears dense and unmodulated. However, a vertical panel floats between the seated figure and the shadow on the wall. (Dreier’s pencil study for the painting

13.4

Katherine S. Dreier, *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1918, oil on canvas, 45.7 × 18.3 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund. Photograph copyright © The Museum of Modern Art, New York.





13.5

Katherine S. Dreier (1877–1952), *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1918 (lost).
Photograph courtesy Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

shows a blank mirror hanging *on* the background wall.) Dreier included the portrait in a list of works in her personal art collection prepared in 1951 for Fiske Kimball, director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, noting that the panel was painted by Duchamp.⁹² Whether Duchamp initiated the collaboration or was requested to do so, we do not know. Perhaps it was an act of kindness, to add interest to the awkward, amateur appearance of Dreier's otherwise unassisted painting. The photograph confirms that Duchamp continued his shadow play, adding a barely discernible spectral figure, neither transparent nor completely opaque, echoing his own form. The panel was signed and dated on the lower right: "Marcel Duchamp 1918."

The work disappeared some time after Dreier's death. One account is that it was thrown out by Duchamp himself when, as her principal executor, he found it in extremely damaged condition in storage at her Milford, Connecticut, home.⁹³ At any rate, the indexical trace preserved in the old photograph shows that Duchamp's lost painting, possibly his last, was a shadow of himself.

NOTES

1. Katherine Dreier, letter to Marcel Duchamp, 10 October 1934, Katherine S. Dreier Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter cited as Beinecke).

2. Duchamp had sent Dreier one of a deluxe roman numeral edition of XX. The letters spelling out the title were formed by holes stamped into the suede. The artist's initials, "M/D," formed by copper bands, were superimposed, one on each side of the box. Dreier's personal copy included a color reproduction under glass of his *Nine Malic Moulds*, the full-scale study on glass of the "Bachelors" who appear on the left side of the *Large Glass*. The inscription, "Pour Katherine Dreier," was also formed by holes punched in the suede hinge that attached the now broken glass to the inside cover of the box.

Rather than the fixed order of later typographic versions, the original unbound collection of loose fragments left it to the reader to alter their arrangement by chance, or deliberate choice, in an attempt to discern thematic relationships. On the later (1960) "typographic rendering" of the box by Richard Hamilton, translated by George Heard Hamilton, see Sarat Maharaj, "'A Monster of Veracity, a Crystalline Transubstantiation': Typotranslating the Green Box," in *The Duchamp Effect*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 60–91.

3. Commenting on New York Dada, Steven Watson in his book, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville, 1991), p. 267, designated Walter Arensberg as the patron, Man Ray its chief American artist, and Duchamp its guiding star, with Katherine Dreier as its "institutionalizer." If this is so, her "institution" was the Société Anonyme. The Société Anonyme was formally dissolved in 1950. The art collection it had acquired was given to Yale University in 1941. See *The Collection of the Société Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art 1920* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 1950); and *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest at Yale University: A Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Robert L. Herbert, Eleanor S. Apter, and Elise K. Kenney (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

4. André Breton, "Lighthouse of the Bride," *View* 5, no. 1 (March 1945): 8; rpt. in Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Grove, 1959), p. 92. The article originally appeared under the title "Phare de la Mariée" in *Minotaure*, no. 6 (Winter 1935): 45–49.
5. A similar layout was used in *View*. Although *Tu m'* and the *Large Glass* were featured in the article, both in Dreier's possession (the *Large Glass* purchased from Walter and Louise Arensberg in 1921), Breton made no mention of Dreier.
6. For a thorough description of the Brooklyn exhibition, see Ruth L. Bohan, *The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition: Katherine Dreier and Modernism in America* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 1982).
7. The *Large Glass* had been in storage after the exhibition, and the damage probably occurred in 1931 when it was sent by truck from storage to Dreier's country home in Connecticut, where she hoped to install it in her library with *Tu m'*.
8. Breton, "Lighthouse of the Bride": 6.
9. Katherine Dreier, draft of note, c. 1918, Dreier Papers, Beinecke.
10. Duchamp's inclusion in Alfred Barr's important exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1936) and *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* (1936–1937), contributed to the artist's renewed recognition. Dreier cooperated with Barr, loaning him works by Duchamp, despite the artist's reluctance to exhibit.
11. For inclusive coverage of the Arensbergs and New York Dada, see Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994); and Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996). See also *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986); and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, "Marcel Du-

champ's 'silent guard': A critical study of Louise and Walter Arensberg" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1994).

12. The color harmonies and atmospheric effects in Dreier's landscape paintings showed the influence of Whistler. Responding with enthusiasm to the work of Van Gogh at the Cologne Sonderbund, she purchased a portrait (*Mademoiselle Ravoux*), and translated *Personal Recollections of Vincent Van Gogh* by his sister Elisabeth du Quesne, published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin in 1913.

13. For Dreier's family background, and biographical information on her, see *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest*; and Bohan, *The Société Anonyme's Brooklyn Exhibition*.

14. *Cooperative Mural Work-shops*, brochure, c. 1915, Dreier Papers, Beinecke. The Workshops ceased operating in 1917.

15. Dreier, statement, c. 1945, Dreier Papers, Beinecke.

16. See William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston, TX: Menil Collection, 1989).

17. Duchamp, letter to Dreier, 11 April 1917, and Dreier, letter to Duchamp, 13 April 1917, Dreier Papers, Beinecke.

18. Dreier, letter to Duchamp, 13 April 1917, Dreier Papers, Beinecke.

19. Ibid. Dreier's admiration of Duchamp appears in a letter to William Glackens, a fellow board member, which addresses the handling of the affair of the "discarded object": "I feel so conscious of Duchamp's brilliancy and originality, as well as my own limitation which cannot immediately follow him. But I have never questioned his absolute sincerity which would always make me want to listen to what he has to say. The very fact that he does not try to force his ideas on others, but

tries to let them develop truly along their own lines, is in essence the guarantee of his real bigness" (Dreier, letter to William Glackens, 26 April 1917, Dreier Papers, Beinecke).

20. Dreier had contributed \$1000 as a guarantor. The scrapbook of clippings she kept of press coverage of Independents' events and critics' reviews betrays a wistful interest in the events in which she was not included.

21. See Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padgett (New York: Viking, 1971), p. 57.

22. Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in James Johnson Sweeney, "Eleven Europeans in America," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art* 13, nos. 4–5 (1946): 20; rpt. as "The Great Trouble with Art in This Country," in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1989), p. 125.

23. The painted title, read with the barely discernible sign-painter's signature, A. Klang, at the center of the canvas, evokes an echo of Marinetti's *Zang-Tumb-Tumb* (Milan, 1914), a description of the siege of Adrianopole in which the title enacts the sound of bombardment.

24. For a detailed explication of the various perspective systems and color relationships in the painting, see the entry for *Tu m'* by Robert L. Herbert in *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest*, pp. 231–233.

25. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, pp. 38–39.

26. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 39.

27. The French title of this work is *3 Stoppages Etalons*; it came from a sign over a shop in rue Claude Bernard in Paris, advertising "stoppages" or invisible mending; fortuitously, *étalon* means "standard" weight or measure, as in *Mètre étalon*, for standard meter.

28. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 33.
29. *Ibid.*
30. The stoppage lines appear in earlier works: *Network of Stoppages* (1914); the drawing *Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries, No. 2* (1914); the glass *Nine Malic Moulds* (1914–1915); and the *Large Glass* itself, where they function as “capillary tubes” carrying love gas.
31. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 40.
32. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 33.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 72 (ellipses in the original). Years later, Duchamp described his execution of the shadows of the bicycle wheel, the hat rack, and the corkscrew: “I had found a sort of projector which made shadows rather well enough, . . . which I traced by hand, onto the canvas” (Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 60).
34. Rosalind E. Krauss, “Notes on the Index: Part 1,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1985), pp. 198–199.
35. See Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 60; Marcel Jean, *The History of Surrealist Painting*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York: Grove, 1960), p. 59; and Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Abrams, 2d rev. ed., 1970), p. 442.
36. See the letter from Duchamp to his sister, Suzanne, “around” 15 January [1916], Crotti Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (microfilm roll 2394, frames 180–181); trans. in Molly Nesbit, “His Common Sense,” *Artforum* 33, no. 2 (October 1994): 94.
- Duchamp told Arturo Schwarz that the *Bicycle Wheel* was a way of “simply letting things go by themselves”; its turning “was very soothing . . . a sort of open-

ing of avenues on other things than material life of every day" (Duchamp, qtd. in Schwarz, *The Complete Works*, p. 442.)

Lawrence Steefel dubbed the wheel "the first 'mobile' sculpture of the twentieth century," observing that in rapid motion, the rotating spokes demonstrate a continuum of transformation, a *passage* from materiality into transparency. See Steefel, *The Position of Duchamp's "Glass" in the Development of His Art* (New York: Garland, 1977), p. 174.

37. For the photograph, see Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, pl. 84.

38. Schwarz, *The Complete Works*, p. 470.

39. On these early readymades as "things," see Nesbit, "His Common Sense": 92–95, 124, 126.

40. Although not generally known until much later, a level of assistance on *Tu m'* was provided by Yvonne Chastel, who helped to paint the diagonal of color samples extending to the left. See entries for 12 April and 8 July 1918 in Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, "Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rose Sélavy, 1887–1968," in *Marcel Duchamp: Work and Life*, ed. by Pontus Hulten (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1993). Chastel was the former wife of Duchamp's friend, and soon to be brother-in-law, Jean Crotti.

41. Marcel Duchamp, qtd. by Katharine Kuh, in *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 88–89.

42. Schwarz, *The Complete Works*, p. 454.

43. Claude Gandelman, "The Gesture of Demonstration," in *Reading Pictures, Viewing Texts* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 16–17, 21.

44. Norbert Lynton, *The Story of Modern Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 134.

45. The close resemblance of Mr. Klang's hand to the angel's hand of Leonardo, and their function in pointing to a "central mystery," was noted by Theodore Reff in his comparison of Duchamp and Leonardo ("Duchamp & Leonardo: L.H.O.O.Q.-Alikes," *Art in America* 65, no. 1 [January–February 1977]: 92–93). It is also interesting to note that a "pointing hand," as in *Tu m'*, was much in evidence in New York in 1917–1918, on the famous war recruiting poster by James Montgomery Flagg. Stern and unequivocal, "Uncle Sam" points directly into the viewer's space, speaking in bold letters: "I WANT YOU for the U.S. ARMY." Discomforted once again by the appeal to patriotism (and the long arm of the recruitment agencies) as he had been in France, perhaps Duchamp deflected this gaze by rotating Uncle Sam's hand onto a less threatening horizontal vector in *Tu m'* in a gesture of displacement. Note also the co-existence of the first and second person pronouns: I—YOU / Tu-m'.

46. See *Marcel Duchamp: tradition de la rupture ou rupture de la tradition?* papers from the colloquium of the same title held at Cerisy-la-Salle, 25 July–1 August 1977.

47. The text that Duchamp regarded as a new orthodoxy was *Du Cubisme*, written by Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger (Paris: Figuière, 1912).

48. Marcel Duchamp, "Apropos of Myself," lecture delivered at the City Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri, 24 November 1964; qtd. in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), p. 263.

49. Years later, Duchamp visited Kandinsky at the Bauhaus with Dreier; and it was Duchamp who, in 1933, advised and helped the Kandinskys to emigrate and resettle in Paris when the Bauhaus was closed by the Nazis.

50. Duchamp, "Apropos of Myself," qtd. in *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. d'Harnoncourt and McShine, p. 263.
51. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 32.
52. "Weds In Haste to See Dying Mother," *New York Times*, 9 August 1911, p. 9.
53. Raymond Robins, telegram to Margaret Dreier Robins, 11 August 1911, Margaret Dreier Robins Papers, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville, Florida; available in Papers of the Women's Trade Union League and Its Principal Leaders, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College, in Margaret Dreier Robins Papers (microfilm roll 22).
54. "Miss Dreier Finds She is Not a Wife," *New York Times*, 22 August 1911, p. 1.
55. The cards were sent by her brother, H. Edward Dreier, and are among the documents in the Robins Papers, University of Florida Libraries.
56. "Seek Artist's First Wife. Assistant D.A. Asks Scotland Yard for Further Information," *New York Times*, 24 August 1911, p. 2; and Mrs. Walter Shirlaw, letter to Dorothea Dreier, 21 August 1911, Dorothea Dreier Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Dorothea and Katherine had both been Walter Shirlaw's pupils.
57. See Katherine S. Dreier, *Kandinsky* (New York: Société Anonyme, 1923), p. 3. Most likely she saw Kandinsky's work in the Munich exhibitions, as well as paintings by Marc and Heinrich Campendonk, whom she also admired. Dreier and Kandinsky met for the first time in October 1922 at the Bauhaus in Weimar. She then arranged to mount his first solo exhibition in America at the Société Anonyme in March 1923, and made him an honorary vice president of the organization. Eventually, Dreier acquired a number of his paintings, the first in 1920 from Der Sturm gallery, the 1913 *Composition with White Form* (or *Storm*).

58. Arturo Schwarz, the first to offer a narrative interpretation, made of it a story of Duchamp's incestuous desire. Schwarz (*The Complete Works*, p. 471) points out that the choice of the three readymades in *Tu m'* "is by no means accidental," and finds a latent narrative in which Duchamp rides the bicycle toward the Bride along a sloping uphill path (the corkscrew). The projecting bottle brush, a clear coital reference, emerges from a *simulated* rip, repaired by *real* safety pins signifying the frustration of Duchamp's incestuous desires for his sister Suzanne, for which he is punished by hanging (the suspended hat rack as the object stand-in for Duchamp). However, leaving aside the distinctly Freudian analysis in the Schwarz narrative, the displacements and condensations emblemized in *Tu m'* allow an alternative reading referring to events (and repressions) in Dreier's life.

59. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 33.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

61. The mural form of the work adds another, less dramatic dimension of association with Dreier. Her first commission as a painter in 1905 was for a mural in a chapel. Moreover, mural panels were a featured production of her Cooperative Mural Workshop; and Edward Trumbull and Frank Brangwyn were working on mural commissions when she became romantically involved with Trumbull.

62. David F. Hult, "Jean de Meun's Continuation of *Le Roman de la rose*," in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 99. *Roman* was immensely popular, and became the most widely read poem of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance. It is second only to Dante's *Divine Comedy* in number of surviving manuscripts.

63. Katherine S. Dreier, *Western Art and the New Era: An Introduction To Modern Art* (New York: Brentano's, 1923), pp. 90, 92. The book was based on lectures she gave during the first season of the Société Anonyme.

Dreier's identification of the "bottle brush" as an "ice-box cleaner" may in fact be correct. Long brushes were standard housekeeping equipment at the time

for removing dust accumulations on the exposed wire coils of the cooling elements in refrigerators; similarly, the overlapping circles to the right resemble the exposed coils of the framed bedsprings used as mattress supports.

64. Ibid., p. 92.

65. This typed, unsigned manuscript of four pages, dated 13 October 1920, in the Dreier Papers, Beinecke, is accompanied by a handwritten cover sheet headed "Glimpses," listing nine titles; the first is "1. Dee as Leonardo—What Was it."

66. Ibid. Without Duchamp's permission, Picabia published *L.H.O.O.Q.* in 391 (12, no. 1 [1920]), with the heading "Tableau Dada par Marcel Duchamp."

67. The articles did not appear in the *New Republic*; they were gathered together and published under the title *Five Months in the Argentine from a Woman's Point of View* (New York: Frederic Fairchild Sherman, 1920). According to Dreier, the reason why the *New Republic* deferred was that "The Armistice of the Great War swept all other news to one side" (Dreier, dedicatory inscription in a copy of her book, *Five Months in the Argentine*, given to Miriam Gabo in 1938).

68. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 59.

69. Dreier, *Five Months in the Argentine*, pp. 171, 186.

70. Duchamp wrote: "I am absolutely ready to become the chess maniac—everybody around me takes the form of the knight or the queen and the outside world has no interest for me other than its transposition into winning or losing positions" (Duchamp, letter to Walter Arensberg, 15 June [1919]; published by Francis M. Naumann, "Marcel Duchamp's Letters to Walter and Louise Arensberg, 1917–1921," in *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century*, ed. Rudolf Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann [Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1989], pp. 218–219).

71. He continued to work on perspective studies for the *Large Glass*, two of which Dreier took back with her to New York in April 1919: the *Handmade Stereopticon Slide*, and the small glass Duchamp titled *A regarder (l'autre côté du verre) d'un Oeil, de près, pendant presque une Heure* (To be Looked at [From the Other Side of the Glass] with One eye, Close to, for almost an Hour); both works a bequest from Dreier's estate to the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The small glass cracked in transit to New York, presaging the fate of the *Large Glass*. It appears in its original state in a photograph showing it hanging (*pendant*—did it hang for almost an hour?) from a balcony in Buenos Aires, though it's unknown whether Duchamp's or Dreier's. Dreier's title for the small glass was *Disturbed Balance*; whether this derived from the fulcrum in the image or the state of her emotions, she kept the work in her personal collection, and used her own title whenever she lent it for exhibition.

72. Dreier at this time supported a politics of transformation that she identified with a generalized radicalism. In later years she responded to Hitler's vocabulary of redemption and regeneration, and calls for national unity. She supported the Nazi party until the late thirties; in this she was completely at odds with her immediate family.

73. Dreier, letter to her sister Mary Dreier, 23 November 1919, Mary Dreier Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College. Duchamp arranged studio visits for Dreier to those of Constantin Brancusi and Alexander Archipenko, introduced her to his brother, the painter Jacques Villon, and took her to visit his family in Rouen.

74. In November, Dreier took over as president, Duchamp head of the exhibition committee, and Marsden Hartley became secretary. Hartley also lectured four times during the Société's first season, and served on its library and publicity committees. Although he had been very much a part of the Stieglitz circle, Hartley viewed the Société Anonyme as "in a very fair way to continue what was so well begun . . . at 291" (Stieglitz's New York gallery that closed in 1917). Hartley, qtd. in

Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde, 1910–1925* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), p. 61.

75. Dreier later claimed the name was a deliberate choice, a pun to show their emphasis was on “Art and not personalities” (Dreier, statement, c. 1945, Dreier Papers, Beinecke).

76. A history of the Société Anonyme would need its own volume, and studies of its contributions to New York Dada are numerous. See *The Société Anonyme and the Dreier Bequest*; Ruth L. Bohan, “Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada,” *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 9 (May 1977): 97–101; and Naumann, *New York Dada*.

Dreier’s ecumenical tastes dominated the Société’s first exhibition, which included a Vincent Van Gogh portrait from her own collection, a heavily symbolist work by Heinrich Vogeler (representing the German artists’ colony at Worpswede), a selection of French and American cubist and abstract works, a Brancusi sculpture Dreier had bought in 1919, and, as dadaists—but without the label—Duchamp’s small glass, *A regarder . . .*, Man Ray’s *Lampshade*, Francis Picabia’s mechanomorphic *Prostitution Universelle*, and works by Morton Schamberg and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes.

77. Dreier was charmed by Schwitters’s work, which she saw at Der Sturm and introduced to America in the Société’s fifth exhibition (autumn 1920). The exhibition flyer listed Schwitters as “German—One of the first Dadas, who . . . refuses to be called a DADAIST.” His effect was almost lost amid the somewhat heavier representations bought or borrowed from Der Sturm.

78. Dreier, lecture, 5 March 1921, Heterodoxy Club (New York), given in conjunction with a two week exhibition there of twenty paintings, including works by Braque, Kandinsky, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Schwitters, and Villon. A manuscript of her talk is preserved in the Dreier Papers, Beinecke.

79. Margery Rex, “‘Dada’ Will Get You if You Don’t Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here,” *New York Evening Journal*, 29 January 1921, in Société Anonyme Scrapbook

(press clippings), Dreier Papers, Beinecke; rpt. in *New York Dada*, pp. 138–142.

80. Boix had paid a five dollar membership to the Société, and may have frequented the gallery on numerous occasions. He executed caricatures of Duchamp and Man Ray in 1920, which are now in the Société Anonyme Collection at Yale University Art Gallery.

81. Surprisingly, there was only minimal press coverage of the Dada symposium, and no reference to Hartley's talk. Although Hartley wrote his lecture, later published in his book *Adventures in the Arts*, it is possible that he never actually delivered it.

82. Dreier, *Western Art and the New Era*, pp. 118–119; and Dreier, lecture, 5 March 1921, Heterodoxy Club (New York), Dreier Papers, Beinecke.

83. The list of artists grouped by the "Schools of Modern Art" in the Société's annual report for its inaugural season (1920–1921) named as dadaists Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, Kurt Schwitters, and Paul Klee, with Marsden Hartley as the sole American. "New York Dada" was not yet a category, and Man Ray and Morton Schamberg were classed with Archipenko, Henri Matisse, and Abraham Walkowitz as "Those Belonging to No Schools but imbued with the New Spirit in Art." Post-Impressionists, pre-cubists, cubists, expressionists (where she listed herself and Kandinsky among a group of little-known German artists), simultaneists, and Joseph Stella as the lone futurist, completed the roster of "schools." See *Report 1920–21* (New York: Société Anonyme, Inc., 1921), pp. 11, 13.

84. See Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), p. 62.

85. Published in *View* 5, no. 1 (March 1945): 32.

Despite the uncertainties of Man Ray's relationship to Dreier, she did like his work, and considered his *Lampshade* one of the best things he had done. Although Man Ray claimed that the construction of its metal replica was his idea, it

was Dreier who suggested that he replace the original paper scroll shown in the Société's inaugural exhibition, with one cut out of tin. See Dreier, letter to Man Ray, 19 January 1921, Dreier Papers, Beinecke.

86. In 1927, when Duchamp married Lydie Sarrazin-Levassor in Paris and sent Dreier a photograph of his new wife (taken by Man Ray), Dreier's reaction was that the bride seemed "handsome" and also very powerful: "Of course I know that if she becomes too powerful . . . out of self-protection you will vanish as you always have." She closed her letter, "Always your most devoted Friend and Adopted-Mother" (Dreier, letter to Duchamp, 25 August 1927, Dreier Papers, Beinecke). Dreier was right. The marriage was brief.

87. As Duchamp expressed it in the *Green Box*, "Ironism of affirmation: differences from negative ironism dependent solely on Laughter" (*The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, p. 30). For comments on Duchamp's principle of contradiction and its relationship to his notes on "Ironism," see Paul Matisse, "Some More Nonsense About Duchamp," *Art in America* 68, no. 4 (April 1980): 82.

88. For discussion of the classic traditions of courtly love as they relate to the *Large Glass*, see Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped Bare*, trans. Rachel Phillips and Donald Gardner (New York: Viking, 1978), pp. 155–165.

89. Dreier, *Western Art and the New Era*, p. 112.

90. The work, exhibited at the Société Anonyme in June 1921, was criticized in an unsigned review in *Town Topics*, 16 June 1921, Scrapbook, Dreier Papers, Beinecke. Another reviewer judged that Dreier's riot in color and design hit the observer in the eye in an instant knockout: "The work out-Duchamps Duchamp and his never-to-be-forgotten 'Nude Descendant un Escalier'" (*Evening World*, 9 June 1921, Scrapbook, Dreier Papers, Beinecke).

91. *Reflections of the Art of Katherine S. Dreier* (New York: Academy of Allied Arts, 1933), n.p. The painting had an added caption: "Painted, New York, 1918."

92. The descriptive entry on her list stated its "present location" as her "Book-Room," with the "Panel on right in picture painted by Marcel Duchamp." The Philadelphia Museum of Art already had acquired the Gallatin and Arensberg collections; Dreier was hoping that Kimball would accept the gift of her sizeable private collection, which he declined.

93. Alexina Duchamp, conversation with Eleanor Apter, Villier-sous-Grès, 2 November 1985.

CLARA TICE, "QUEEN OF GREENWICH VILLAGE"

marie T. KELLER



In March 1915, a young and unknown artist named Clara Tice (1888–1973) found herself caught up in a sudden whirlwind of public attention. Friends had organized an impromptu exhibition of her work, pinning her sketches of athletic female nudes to the walls of Polly's Restaurant, a popular bohemian haunt located in Washington Place in Manhattan. The drawings and their subject matter captured the attention of Anthony Comstock, a former postal inspector and the leader of New York City's Society for the Suppression of Vice, an organization fervently devoted to preserving public morality. On 13 March Comstock—nicknamed "Simon Pure" by his opponents—descended upon Polly's and attempted to confiscate Tice's work.

As his raid was in progress, patrons of the restaurant leaped to the artist's defense. According to an account of the incident in the *New York Tribune*, one of the outraged diners happened to be Allen Norton, editor of *Rogue* magazine, who purchased the offending drawings before Comstock could actually remove them. The *Tribune* saw fit to chronicle the debacle on its front page, creating a minor sensation in the art world and an immediate *cause célèbre* of Clara Tice and her work.¹

Over the course of the next twenty years, Tice was a familiar name among the art critics, publishers, painters, poets, and actors in New York City. She produced a voluminous body of work—paintings, drawings, prints, and books—and her illustrations appeared in many of the avant-

garde publications of the time. Her lifestyle and the art she produced captured the spirit of bohemian New York. Yet today, a scarce twenty years since her death, she is all but forgotten.

Clara Tice was born in Elmira, New York, in 1888. While she was still a child, the Tice family moved to New York City. Her father, Benjamin Tice, a long-time employee of the Children's Aid Society, was appointed superintendent of a lodging house for boys located on West 32nd Street in Manhattan. The entire family—parents and children (Sarah, Clara, and Clifford)—lived above the lodging house in what was then a noisy and untidy district of Manhattan known as the “Tenderloin.”

These lodging houses—or Newsboys Homes as they were known—provided shelter for thousands of homeless boys and girls—many of whom eked out a meager living hawking newspapers on the city's streets. As an “emigration agent” for the Society, Benjamin Tice traveled out west with many of the young charges of the society, finding adoptive homes for them and, subsequently, reviewing their placements.²

Later in her life, Tice recalled that she had been drawing as long as she could remember, always with the encouragement of her parents.³ By family accounts, her mother, Mary Eckenberger Tice, was gifted with a wry and wicked sense of humor, which she exercised more frequently upon her three children than any disciplinary tactics. With the kind of parental nurturing that fostered humor and an independent spirit, Tice encountered none of the familial obstacles usually imposed upon a young woman of that time eager to pursue an artistic career. She briefly attended Hunter College, dropping out when she caught the attention of the painter Robert Henri, who not only accepted her as a student, but in a departure from the custom of segregating classes by gender, permitted her to paint alongside the men. In Henri, Tice found a mentor to guide the development of her unusual graphic style. As a young artist she thrived in Henri's studio. An oil study produced at that time, *Golden Nude*, clearly shows Henri's influence in its coloring and technique. The model's pose,

however—a self-conscious stance, leaning against a wall with one leg bent back and a hand shading her face—captures the figure in the awkward yet natural movement that fascinated Tice.

By February 1910, Henri and a number of his colleagues, including John Sloan, Arthur Davies, and Walter Pach, were actively involved in planning what was at the time a revolutionary concept in American art: an open, no jury, no award exhibition. Tice and another Henri student, P. Scott Stafford, joined this founding group, meeting frequently with the other artists to consider locations and logistics, eventually even contributing financial backing to assure the rental of the hall.⁴ On 1 April of that year, the first exhibition of Independent Artists opened on West 35th Street in New York, attracting over two thousand visitors. So intense were the crowds that extra police were required to monitor the entrances and exits. Tice, represented by twenty-one entries, was one of only two artists who sold work on the opening night. For her, the exhibition marked a rite of passage from student to professional artist. Tice's contributions to promote both the project as well as the concept of the Independents earned her the respect and friendship of many in the forefront of the artistic community. When the exhibition ended, however, so did the public attention, and Tice continued to work quietly for several years, until her career received its 1915 jump-start from the unlikely direction of Anthony Comstock.

The incident at Polly's Restaurant and the publicity it spawned attracted many new admirers to Tice and her art, and soon provided her with a wealth of opportunities. This was the heyday of the "little magazines," low-budget publications that began to appear just prior to World War I. As a rule, they were concerned with topics and concepts far removed from the agendas of the established periodicals, and were typically more involved with radical ideals than profit margins.

One of the best known of these publications was *Rogue*, a review edited by Allen Norton, the patron of Polly's Restaurant who had pur-

chased Tice's drawings during the Comstock raid. The wit and irony inherent in Tice's drawings found a parallel in Norton's own sense of irreverence and must have marked the two as kindred spirits. He further championed the artist by publishing her drawings in his magazine: in the first issue to appear after the incident at Polly's, he reproduced the image of a nude young woman reclining on a bed.⁵ In addition to expressing support for Tice by publishing such an intentionally provocative image, Norton probably also intended to further agitate Comstock. Whether or not he succeeded remains unknown, but what is known is that Tice's career skyrocketed.⁶

The sheer act of censorship implicit in Comstock's attempted seizure also enraged Guido Bruno, the well-known publisher and operator of Bruno's Garret, a gallery/meeting place frequented by Greenwich Village artists and intellectuals. Bruno admired Tice's freely drawn, modernistic figures and, shortly after the Comstock raid, offered her an exhibition in his Garret, located on the corner of Thompson Street at the south end of Washington Square. In mid-May 1915, the gallery was filled with over 250 of Tice's watercolor satires. The theme of the show was "Arabian Nights" and Tice elected once again to exhibit nudes—this time raising eyebrows for her candid portrayals of white and black women frolicking together. As one critic pointed out, these figures of "negres [*sic*] no longer conveyed the idea of comfortable, heavily respectable and safe servitude." Favorably impressed with the freedom of her work, the journalist went on to comment upon the possible repercussions of its candidness, worrying that "a naturalness so unbridled is apt to frighten the citizens of the land of the free."⁷ At the same time, however, the reviewer chastised her for drawing so naturally and rapidly that she neglected to complete the hands and feet of her subjects in a suitably academic manner. Guido Bruno must have anticipated this criticism, for, in a profile of Tice published in his magazine *Greenwich Village*, he explains his admiration for her work and justifies its simplicity:

*Clara Tice has a wonderful gift of seeing, of being impressed and of immediately recording. The movement expressing a whole long story is more important to her than the anatomy of the organ expressing it. . . . Miss Tice is an artist. And even if she does not seem to be interested in the small details like hands or feet or faces, her pictures contain the rhythm of life.*⁸

By now, Tice had significantly distanced herself and her work from any stylistic comparisons to her former teacher, Robert Henri. Indeed, at least once critic, the caricaturist Carlo de Fornaro, expressed considerable surprise to learn that she had once studied with Henri, stating further that no one would suspect it, that she was, in fact, “as distinct in her expression as the Orient is far from Fourth Avenue.”⁹

In July 1915, several of Tice’s works were included in an exhibition of bookplates at the Garret. She created a series of designs based on her now trademark female nudes—images that so impressed Bruno that he dedicated half the exhibition and its accompanying catalogue to her work.¹⁰

Later that year, during one of his regular open-house sessions at the Garret, Bruno further boosted the reputation of his young protégée by staging a mock trial featuring some of the actual drawings confiscated by Comstock. Tice herself designed the invitation, which included a statement that read like a manifesto:

A Supreme Court will meet on Monday, October 18 at 8 o’clock P.M. at Bruno’s Garret in order to acquit Clara Tice of well-founded charges deferred against her. She will be tried—and therefore acquitted of the charges of having committed unspeakable black atrocities on white paper, abusing slender bodies of girls, cats, peacocks and butterflies. Clara Tice is prepared to show all of you that you are wrong. You are welcome

to act as plaintiff, attorney for the defence, witness, as member of the jury, judge or audience.

*Do come!*¹¹

On the evening of the trial, Tice was accused of having murdered art. Bruno acted as judge, prosecuting attorney, counsel for the defense, and jury. Tice herself stood on a coffin lid to defend her art, proclaiming, “Noli contendere.”¹²

Probably also as a result of the incident at Polly’s Restaurant, Tice came to the attention of Frank Crowninshield who had been recently appointed editor of *Vanity Fair*, a magazine devoted to recording the newest events and trends in popular culture as well as more standard coverage of fashion and society. In June 1915, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney was nominated to the magazine’s monthly “Hall of Fame.”¹³ The honor was well-deserved: she had long been an enthusiastic patron of the arts and was herself a sculptor of no small merit. Any kudos meted out by *Vanity Fair*, the mainstream publication of the moment, put an individual in society’s spotlight. Pillar of society though she was, the busy Whitney claimed she scarcely had time to devote to her own artistic pursuits, and could find neither a spare photograph of herself, nor the free moment to pose for this upstart publication. Facing a rapidly approaching deadline, and desperately in need of some likeness of Whitney for his magazine, the editor invited Tice to submit an illustration. With no access to her model, Tice submitted a whimsically sketched caricature of herself with her dog, which Crowninshield published as a portrait of the elusive Whitney.

For its purpose, the presumed “Portrait of Mrs. Whitney” was perfectly sufficient. Whether or not it portrayed the features of its subject was insignificant; it accurately captured her nuance and spirit, and for Tice it marked the beginning of a long and creative relationship with *Vanity Fair* and its charismatic editor. In September, two months after Tice’s

illustration was published, the magazine formally introduced the young artist to its readership. On an entire page, a full-figure photograph of Tice and her dog was published, surrounded by some of the drawings of nude female figures considered offensive by Comstock (figure 14.1). In a brief statement titled “The Blacks and Whites of Clara Tice”—probably penned by Crowninshield himself—the artist is praised for the sense of movement she imparts to her drawings.¹⁴

By this time, a large number of New York’s vanguard artists had already established their home base among the crooked streets, crowded tenements, and seedier brownstones of Greenwich Village, where lower rents, a general spirit of tolerance, and a fervor of creative camaraderie attracted many a painter and poet. Tice eagerly embraced this bohemian lifestyle. By the time her drawings first appeared in *Vanity Fair*, she was already well-known as a Greenwich Village character. Pictures of the artist during those years show a petite young woman, her fringe of bangs and short straight hair framing large intense eyes, a prominent nose, and strong chin. Frequently garbed in a costume of her own design, or an appropriated item of menswear, she proudly claimed to have bobbed her hair long before Irene Castle (who, historically, is more commonly awarded the credit). Tice once confessed that her motives for the hairstyle had far more to do with convenience than with any desire on her part to set a trend. Similarly, while she felt that the fashions of the time—short dresses and rolled stockings—were healthy and comfortable, she took issue with women who thought these styles were immodest and who felt the need to artificially enhance their physical appearance. Beauty, she felt, was not a woman’s best asset; rather, it was her ability to do things.¹⁵

A passionate lover of animals, Tice always had an assortment of dogs and cats in her care. A favorite was the majestic Russian Wolfhound, Varna O’Valley Farm, one of the first of that exotic breed to be whelped in the United States. The gamin Tice, barely five feet tall and never more



14.1

"The Blacks and Whites of Clara Tice"
(from *Vanity Fair* 5, no. 1 [September
1915]: 60). Photograph courtesy the
New York Public Library.

than a hundred pounds, became a familiar figure in Washington Square Park with her giant dog. The image of Varna figured prominently in much of Tice's work at the time and appeared in self-portraits as a veritable appendage of the artist herself. The sleek and elegant body of the Wolfhound was perfectly suited to the linear style of Tice's drawings.

Her works in the period of her involvement with *Vanity Fair* consisted of paintings, drawings, and etchings. Her subject matter was predominantly the nude female figure, usually presented in an undefined setting and often accompanied by insects, birds, and other types of animals. Perhaps because of the nature of the medium, in her paintings the figure was most commonly shown at rest, but her drawings depicted every conceivable type of movement. She worked from a model whenever possible, not requiring a specific pose, but rather instructing her subject to walk about the studio at ease, in a constant state of natural movement. Tice once estimated that she had drawn from five hundred models over the course of her career. She never took them for granted, often crediting a model for the success of a work, and fully empathetic to the difficulties of being on the other side of the easel. Tice once recounted a typical session with a favorite model, a woman named Grace, who posed often for the artist over a thirty-year period:

*The strain of sitting is usually twofold. The model has to assume a steadfast position and to withstand the searching scrutiny of the artist. I much prefer my models to walk about naturally in the nude; this is usually more difficult for them than the set pose. Grace is one of the very few who can do it without tiring either of us. As she walks around the room the details of her body blend into merging lines, and then in a brief ecstatic moment I can see the single determining movement that can be expressed in a single dominant sweep of the pen or brush. The vision and its realization are almost instantaneous.*¹⁶

Her paintings relied upon a palette of pastel and bright colors applied in thin layers, while the drawings were almost always rendered in pen and ink. These drawings constitute the bulk of her work—bold and confident strokes brushed onto the page using a staccato technique, telegraphing maximum information with a minimum of line. The “single dominant sweep of the pen or brush” became Tice’s trademark, easily visible in the four sketches of Vaslav Nijinsky she drew for *Vanity Fair* in 1915.¹⁷ Although her female figures were more frequently sketched as nudes or scantily clad at most, they appear today to be remarkably innocent and asexual, particularly in view of the sinister and immoral qualities heaped upon them by Anthony Comstock and the libertine aspects of sexuality accorded them by other critics. Tice maintained an intentional irreverence in her drawings; even the most academic express an almost fey, cartoon-like quality and an obvious gift for caricature. Tice’s etchings resembled in style her drawings; often hand-colored, they were made for bookplates, greeting cards, and invitations, and some functioned as her “calling cards” as well.

She worked continually, and not always on income-producing projects. With other members of the Village’s cultural community, she collaborated on the organization of many fancy dress balls, most of which benefited local charities. Frequently taking place at Webster Hall, a community center on East 11th Street, these events—with themes like “Insect Frolic,” “Pagan Rout,” and “Apes and Ivory”—provided opportunities for many different factions of the bohemian community to interact and socialize. The outrageous garb—often culminating in nudity—and raucous behavior that came to characterize these affairs helped to enforce public preconceptions of life in Greenwich Village as a bacchanalian romp. Tice designed many of the posters used to advertise these balls (figure 14.2) while her etchings, specially printed for the occasion, served as invitations.



14.2

Clara Tice, *Insect Frolic*, 1923, ink and gouache on board (maquette for poster). Private collection, New York.

When the article on Tice appeared in *Vanity Fair*, it happened to be the same issue in which a brief profile appeared on another controversial figure—the young French artist Marcel Duchamp, whose painting *Nude Descending a Staircase* had provoked a stir at the Armory Show of 1913. Duchamp, who had just arrived in New York a few months earlier, probably met Tice in the offices of the magazine, where she went often to submit her illustrations. Over the course of the next two years, both artists were regular participants in the cultural and social life of Greenwich Village. On 29 September 1916, for example, they attended the *Rogue Ball* where Tice won first prize for her costume and where Duchamp, ironically (considering his stance against juries and prizes), served as one of the judges.¹⁸

It was sometime in early 1917 and probably through Duchamp that Tice was introduced to the salon of collectors Walter and Louise Arensberg. There she met Henri-Pierre Roché, Edgard Varèse, Beatrice Wood, Marius de Zayas, and other members of the Arensberg circle. Meeting these personalities and socializing in their intellectually intense milieu had its effect on Tice's art. Although her work maintained its lyrical and childlike qualities, it also began to reflect the influence of her new colleagues. Some of her illustrations from this period take on an expressionistic style with a more angular deftness of line. Other pieces, like her black and white ink drawing of Edgard Varèse (figure 14.3), approach abstraction.¹⁹

The Varèse portrait marked Tice's contribution to *The Blind Man*, yet another little magazine, this time published by the Dada trio of Duchamp, Roché, and Beatrice Wood in April 1917. Both Duchamp and Roché extended their friendship to Tice and there is some evidence that her relationship with them may have exceeded platonic boundaries. Later, as an older woman, Tice confided to members of her family that, for a brief time in the teens, she had "lived" with Duchamp. On 2 March 1917, Roché, in his peculiarly cryptic French-English prose, recorded in



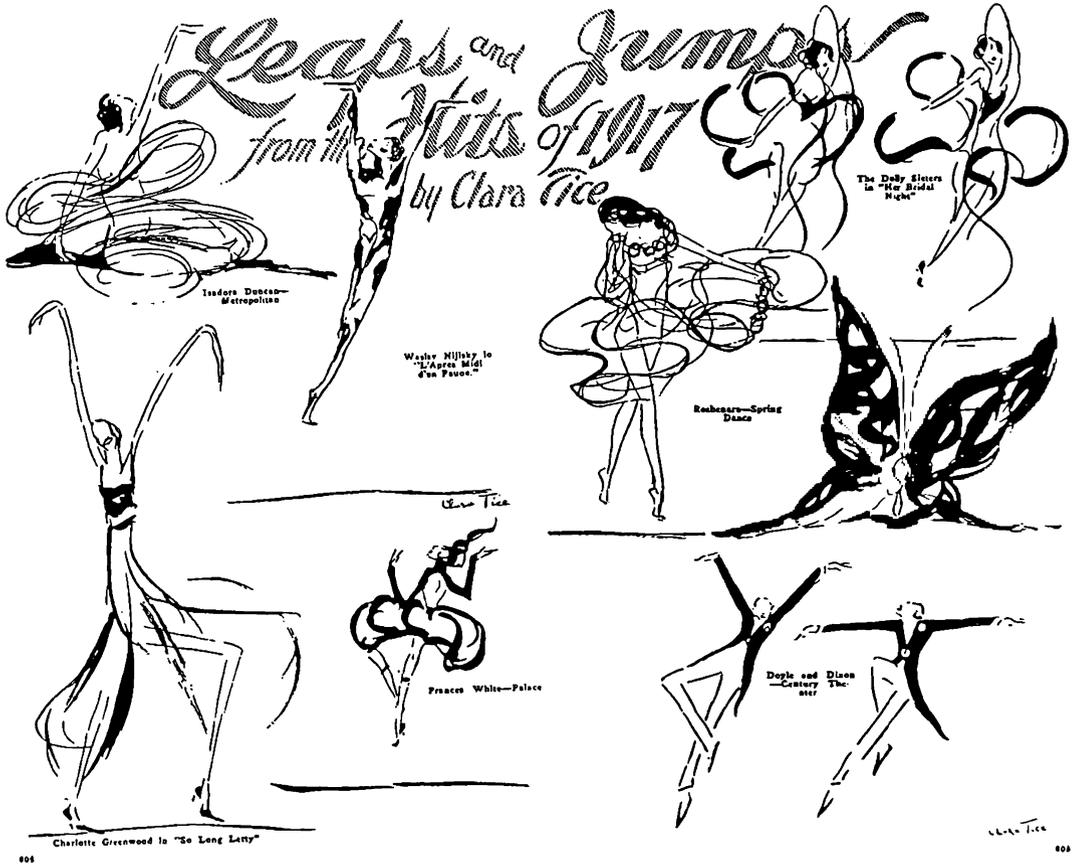
14.3

Clara Tice, *Edgar[d] Varèse en Composition* (from *The Blind Man*, no. 2 [May 1917]: 7).

his diary that he was not in love with Tice but felt affection for her after spending a night at her apartment. Other entries in the diplomat's journals describe evenings spent with her: they went together to the Arensbergs, they dined at restaurants, and attended the opera.²⁰ No doubt fueled by the intensities of collaboration on the magazine, like the ephemeral nature of their professional enterprise, these partnerships with Roché and Duchamp were of brief duration.

In April 1917, Tice participated in the first exhibition of the Society of Independent Artists, showing two works: *Nude and Cat* and *Dancing Nude*. It started a busy year for her. *Cartoons* magazine ran her drawings for seven months beginning with the April issue, in which an article titled "Satirical Fashions" presented Tice's familiar sylvan figures, childlike and spare, adorned in an unlikely variety of habiliment: gloves, boots, stockings, a military hat, boudoir cap, and weird wing-like collar. In *Leaps and Jumps from the Hits of 1917*, which appeared in the next issue, Tice depicted famous dancers who had appeared that season (figure 14.4). The figures here are exaggerated and elongated and, with the exception of her monolithic portrayal of Nijinsky, all sense of movement is achieved through a gestural rendering of the dancers' costumes.²¹

Tice had married P. Scott Stafford in 1911, but the couple separated soon after. With her typical disregard for accepted protocol, she never secured a divorce, eventually using funds set aside for that purpose to buy a horse. She conducted her day-to-day life as any other young single female denizen of Greenwich Village, although her permanent address remained that of her widowed mother, who lived uptown on West 142nd Street. By 1918, Clara Tice had become a major figure among the artistic "stars" of Greenwich Village, which was itself a burgeoning tourist attraction. *Vanity Fair* and other "uptown" publications had painted a romantic picture of the bohemian life to be enjoyed downtown. In December 1918, Frank Crowninshield referred to Tice as "the uncrowned queen of Greenwich Village," and, indeed, whenever a caricature of Village life appeared



14.4

Clara Tice, *Leaps and Jumps from the Hits of 1917* (from *Cartoons* 11 [May 1917]: 604–605).

in a magazine, or quintessential bohemian personalities were mentioned, Tice was invariably included.

Around this time, Tice became involved in the Greenwich Village Theater, eventually designing the program for the first *Greenwich Village Follies* in 1919, and even performing in the production before it moved uptown to Broadway and the Nora Bayes Theater. The *Greenwich Village Follies* proved so popular that a second version of the revue opened in 1920, and then the series continued on Broadway throughout the twenties. The overture curtain to the 1922 *Greenwich Village Follies* at the Schubert Theater was painted by Reginald Marsh and portrayed Clara Tice amid Duchamp, Djuna Barnes, Maxwell Bodenheim, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and many of the other “queer artists” for which the Village had become notorious.²²

Tice was apparently so highly regarded and so instantly recognizable as one of those “queer artists” that her role in the first *Greenwich Village Follies* was simply to play herself. As “Clara,” she stepped out onto the stage at the appointed time, outfitted in one of her typically bizarre bohemian ensembles, and conducted a “quick chalk talk of nudes, bees and butterflies.” She must have experienced some stage fright because she later recalled that she was anxious to complete her scene.

On one evening, when she returned backstage, two guests were waiting for her: one was a good friend, Edna “Cecil” Cunningham, a young actress from St. Louis who was enjoying a successful career on the Broadway stage, and with her was her younger brother, “Harry” Patrick Cunningham, a flyer with the Lafayette Escadrille recently returned from the war. As a result of that fateful meeting, Clara Tice, the “queen of Greenwich Village,” fell in love with a midwestern war hero and joined the Cunningham clan on Pierrepont Street in Brooklyn Heights, where she immediately established a studio.

Harry Cunningham was to be Tice’s lover and companion for the remaining years of his life. She often referred to him as her “husband,”

yet the two never married. Several years younger than Tice, he was also an artist—a painter, designer, and plate-maker—but he soon selflessly devoted himself almost exclusively to assisting Clara in the execution of her work. In an early example of career role-reversals, he pulled proofs for her etchings, hand-colored her mezzotints, stretched her canvases, and organized her work. Since Tice readily admitted that she was not good at cooking, he prepared the meals. Between acting engagements, Harry's sister Cecil functioned as Tice's "manager," identifying herself as such with a personalized calling card hand-etched by Tice.²³

The Cunningham family was large and eccentric. For Tice, their house on Pierrepont Street represented her first real home. Her upbringing in the harshly institutional surroundings of the Children's Aid Society lodging house probably fostered her independent and nonconformist spirit, but provided no sense of permanence. In the Cunningham home, she proceeded to decorate the interior from top to bottom with murals of cavorting animals, plants, and Beardsleyesque figures.²⁴

Probably to avail herself of the opportunity to work from a model, Tice took classes at the Art Students League and continued to contribute illustrations to *Vanity Fair*. In February 1921, she designed the masthead of the magazine, forming the separate letters of the magazine's title with figures of nude women, amusingly captioned: "A Spontaneous New Year's Tribute to 'Vanity Fair' by Some of the Eminent Classical Dancers Who Have Been Featured in its Pages." In the same issue, she is heralded—along with Edna St. Vincent Millay, Willa Cather, and Susan Glaspell—as one of the "Muses of New York's So-Called Quartier Latin, who have Achieved the Highest Distinction in the Arts."²⁵

During the summer of 1921, Tice and Cunningham traveled to his home town of St. Louis. Tice found a summer job at the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. To the staid readership of this newspaper, Tice—who was inevitably referred to as the visiting "Queen of Greenwich Village"—became

an instant celebrity. Headlines such as “She Set the Fashion of Bobbed Hair” introduced her illustrations, which recorded everything from the municipal opera to a Browns baseball game. The local community must have regarded her as a spokesperson for the New York bohemian movement, since she was asked to “interview” herself in one article, and in another proffered her opinions on the lifestyles and philosophy of Greenwich Village.²⁶

In November 1922, the Anderson Galleries in New York hosted a major exhibition of Tice’s work. The show was called *Animals and Nudes* and contained 130 paintings, drawings, and prints. A striking, limited edition catalogue with a red and gold cover accompanied the exhibition.²⁷ Commenting on the exhibition in *Vanity Fair*, art critic Henry McBride compared the action of Tice’s nudes to the dancing of Isadora Duncan and wryly alluded to questions that continually arose concerning the “chasteness” of her figures.²⁸ Caricaturist and critic Carlo de Fornaro described her work in *Arts and Decoration*:

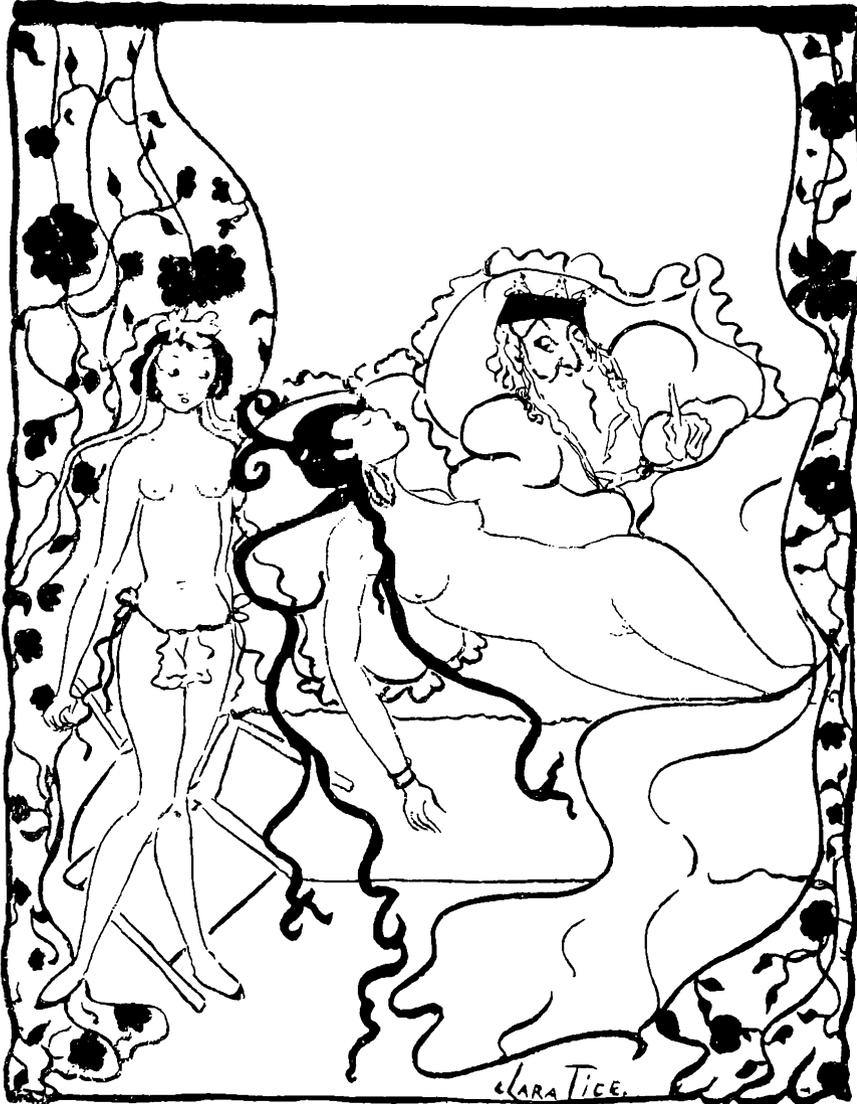
*Clara Tice is one of the few artists who is lifting decorative art from its slough of despond, conventionality and pomposity; she has brought into it her joy of life, the thrill of untrammelled movement, of dashing smartness and her own Gallic conception of clarity and movement.*²⁹

The heady prosperity of the 1920s saw Tice’s work in great demand. The Anderson Galleries exhibition marked the beginning of a decade during which Tice left her mark on innumerable projects in the city. She executed a remarkable mural for the Club Rendezvous on 45th Street, where well-known members of the city’s cultural world were portrayed cavorting on a French beach. When Billy Rose created a luxurious Manhattan dining palace, named for its location the Fifth Avenue Club, Tice designed its menu and another lavish wall decoration featuring forty-five

nymphs painted in silver, rose, and gold. It was so spectacular that Heywood Broun, sitting beneath her exotic painting, altered his customary beverage order. Sending back the beer, he proclaimed, "Under that mural, I can drink only champagne."³⁰

In 1925, Tice's work came to the attention of T. R. Smith, then editor at the artistic publishing house Boni & Liveright. Smith immediately commissioned Tice to illustrate the Arthur Machen translation of *One Hundred Merry and Delightful Tales*, a project that was followed by Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and a series of books for the Pierre Louÿs Society. Louÿs, a French writer and exponent of the literary school of thought professing a belief in "Art for Art's Sake," had a following in the United States for his ribald tales, and Tice's illustrations proved an ideal accompaniment to his texts (figure 14.5). These books presented her with an artist's dream opportunity—no expense was spared on handmade paper, fine typography, and deluxe bindings. She was instructed to disregard reproduction costs, so plates were produced in as many as seven colors, including silver and gold. Some of the volumes even featured original etchings, many handcolored. In spite of their quality, Tice's illustrations were once again seen as prurient and bordering on the pornographic. The writer H. L. Mencken recalled frequent visits to Tice's editor, T. R. Smith, his friend and a constant companion throughout the 1920s. Smith was notorious for his collection of pornography, and Mencken recalled that its "pearl" was a portfolio of original drawings by Tice, which Smith was wont to display in an attempt to impress and titillate female guests.³¹

Tice's interactions with the New York art world at this time were being conducted on a commuter basis. At some point in the late 1920s, she and Cunningham had abandoned New York for the more genteel and rural life found in the environs of South Britain, Connecticut. No doubt Tice's growing menagerie, which had expanded to include a horse, helped to determine this decision, and the money coming in from her many commissions helped to finance the move. Life in this bucolic setting, complete



14.5

Clara Tice, *Close the Curtains!* (from Pierre Louÿs, *The Adventures of King Pausole* [Philadelphia: Pierre Louÿs Society, 1926], opp. p. 54).

now with horses, other animals, and an ample work space, remained idyllic throughout the twenties—that is, until the advent of the Great Depression.

The Depression marked the end of a demand for lavishly printed and illustrated limited edition books. Without the income they supplied, life as Tice and Cunningham had been living it was no longer possible. Once again, they returned to New York, moving in the fall of 1933 to East 51st Street, just in time to mount two more exhibitions of her work, one at the Grand Central Art Galleries and another at the Braxton Art Gallery.³² The two exhibitions probably resulted in few sales, if any. The couple struggled to make ends meet throughout the Depression, living in a number of different apartments and managing to carve out a difficult, though by all accounts, cheerful bohemian existence.

The last major showing of Tice's work in Manhattan was at the Schwartz Galleries on Madison Avenue in 1934. In the afterword to the modest little catalogue that accompanied the exhibition, her old friend and ally Crowninshield once again extolled the virtues of her work, expressing himself in a flowery prose that now somehow seemed to belong to another era:

While the rest of the world is preoccupied with bogies of poverty and unemployment this happily incorrigible artist continues to turn her thoughts toward gaiety. Painter, par excellence, of pleasing indelicacies, she mingles—in these happy antidotes for the depression—zoology, wit, and a diabolical invention. In her nude Amazons, and in those pliant nymphs whose charms are so alluringly set off with animals, she displays a decorative talent which is wholly her own. In mixing her artistic philtres, she combines, in effect, a Gallic respect for the nude with an engaging and childlike candor. The result is a pleasant journey along the borderline of wickedness, an excursion which warms our heart without offending our taste.³³

With the United States about to enter World War II, Cunningham found defense work in Danbury at a machine shop that manufactured airplane parts, and Tice was able to return to her beloved Connecticut countryside. She produced a comic strip for the *Protestant World*, and in 1940, she wrote an alphabet book for children, *ABC Dogs*, which critics described as “a charming children’s book” with “all the lively fantasy for which the artist had long been noted.”³⁴ The book was generally well-received and attracted a flurry of publicity and renewed interest in her work. When an interviewer asked about the war’s effect upon contemporary art, she shrewdly predicted that “Art of the next decade will be reduced to the least common denominator of essentials.”³⁵

Unfortunately, Cunningham died within a few years of their move back to Connecticut and, unable to support herself, Tice was forced to return to the city. She tried unsuccessfully to find an affordable place to live in Manhattan and ended up sharing an apartment with her sister in Kew Gardens, Queens.

Even as her fortunes waned, Tice took pride in the life she had chosen for herself. She compiled notes and prepared an outline for an autobiography, tentatively titled *My Model World*, a book she planned (but never published) as a picture story using the artist’s model as an allegory for various aspects of her own history. She saw the artist’s life as a search for perfection—the perfect line, the perfect color, the perfect canvas, the perfect model—a perfection always under the artist’s control. She condemned both academies and critics, citing their rules and formulae as attempts to limit an artist’s freedom, forcing her to follow the “old masters,” whom she defined as merely rebels of another day.

In simple but elegant prose similar in quality and feeling to her graceful drawings, she expressed no regrets, recounting for the reader the highlights of her life. In one instance, she fondly describes the physical characteristics of a particular model in terms of the materials she would utilize in painting her, remembering the flesh as a “base of Windsor New-

ton rose-madder with overtones of lemon yellow and Alizarin crimson . . . , the eyes slate grey with a no. 1 brush tip of maddox green for the casts, additional burnt sienna to the flesh tint for deepening the breast shadows." Over and over again, however, Tice returned to the satisfaction and happiness she had enjoyed as an artist, eloquently concluding:

There are two great joys of the artist which make him more self-sufficient than anyone else. They are the grueling ecstasy of creation, and the realization that one's artistic productions will be a constant source of delight and pleasure, to the creator—if to no one else. Loved ones change, age does not always smooth away the cares and wrinkles, beauty becomes dumb, men impotent, women sterile; but my pictures can always bring back to me the original exaltation of creation, the freshness and aliveness of my models as I saw them in the perfection of movement.

However strong, her artistic ambitions remained only partially fulfilled, in large part because of an equal desire to live a certain kind of pastoral life, and the very self-sufficiency to which she refers above. By the time she returned to New York the last time, many of her old friends and admirers were gone, the artistic scene had changed considerably, and her failing health made her increasingly dependent upon her family. Although she might have relished a triumphant return from years of self-imposed exile, in the end, the "Queen of Greenwich Village" settled for memories and well-worn souvenirs of her bohemian heyday.

NOTES

My interest in Clara Tice grew out of conversations with Francis M. Naumann about the artist and her work. The subsequent quest for information began with an obituary that appeared in *AB Bookman's Weekly*, which was drawn to my attention by Stanley Jernow, who also kindly put me in touch with the artist's niece, Elizabeth Yoell. Mrs. Yoell, executor of the Tice estate, generously gave me complete access to all the materials in her possession and shared with me recollections of her aunt. My work could not have been completed without the advice and constant encouragement provided by Francis Naumann.

1. "Comstock's Ban Brings Art Buyer," *New York Tribune*, 14 March 1915, p. 1. Comstock's self-appointed role as overseer of public decency and his ardent pursuit of cultural censorship had already established him as a target for the barbs of journalists. See Heywood Broun and Margaret Leech, *Anthony Comstock, Roundsmen of the Lord* (New York: Boni, 1927).
2. I am grateful to Victor Remer of the Children's Aid Society, who graciously searched through old annual reports of the Society in order to supply me with background information on the activities of Benjamin Tice.
3. Unless otherwise noted, all biographical references are derived from *My Model World*, an unpublished manuscript written by Tice in the mid-1940s.
4. *John Sloan's New York Scene*, ed. Bruce St. John (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 398. For a facsimile reprint of the exhibition catalogue, see *The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Exhibition of Independent Artists in 1910* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Center, 1960).
5. This drawing was captioned, "What Book Does this Picture Not Represent?" *Rogue* 1, no. 2 (1 April 1915): 11.
6. Subsequent issues of *Rogue* contained numerous examples of her work. She

also contributed regularly to Guido Bruno's chapbooks, *Cartoon*, *Playboy*, *Pearson's*, and *The Quill*, along with most of the other major newspapers in New York such as the *Times*, *World*, *Globe*, *Evening Mail*, *Sun*, and *Tribune*.

7. "What is Happening in the World of Art," *New York Sun*, 16 May 1915, sec. 3, p. 3. Although unsigned, this review was probably written by Henry McBride, the newspaper's art critic during these years.
8. [Guido Bruno], "Little Talks by the Editor," *Greenwich Village* 1, no. 7 (20 May 1915).
9. Carlo de Fornaro, qtd. in Tice, *My Model World*, n.p.
10. *Bruno's Garret: Fourth Exhibition Book-Plates With Nudes*, July 1915, n.p. The catalogue for this exhibition was drawn to my attention by Roger Conover.
11. Specific information on this event is taken from Arnold I. Kisch, *The Romantic Ghost of Greenwich Village: Guido Bruno in His Garret* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang; Bern: M. Herbert Lang, 1976), p. 38. An original copy of the invitation to the event is in the Artist's File, New York Public Library.
12. She was duly charged and acquitted. Anthony Comstock was not in attendance (ironically, he had died a few weeks earlier). In view of the inadvertent boost to her career his actions had generated, Tice actually lamented his passing for, as she would later reiterate, "he was some press agent" (Clara Tice, "How You Looked to Clara Tice That Day on the Meramec," *St. Louis Star*, 3 July 1921).
13. In January 1914, *Dress and Vanity Fair* was renamed simply *Vanity Fair* and Frank Crowninshield appointed its editor. Under his leadership, the magazine maintained some of its earlier focus on fashion and society, but placed much more emphasis upon contemporary culture. Crowninshield apparently asked Mrs. Whitney to pose for a sketch. The response from her secretary is documented in B. H.

Friedman with Flora Miller Irving, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* (New York: Doubleday, 1978), p. 368.

14. "The Blacks and Whites of Clara Tice: With a Recent Portrait of the Artist," *Vanity Fair* 5, no. 1 (September 1915): 60. Tice became a regular contributor to *Vanity Fair* for the next seven years. Crowninshield made use of the artist's talent for depicting action by dispatching her on assignments to various events ranging from Vaslav Nijinsky's performance with the Ballets Russes to iceskaters at the Hippodrome. Along with her cartoons, Tice herself was featured in *Vanity Fair* during these years. For example, in 1917 the magazine carried a photograph of her in "her familiar radiator costume," which she wore to a "Silver Ball" in December 1916 as well as the Independents' Ball at the Grand Central Palace the following year. In both instances she painted her face, arms, and neck silver. See *Vanity Fair* 7, no. 5 (January 1917): 54.

15. See "Greenwich Village 'Queen' Here Decries Beauty that is Purchased," *St. Louis Star*, 9 June 1921.

16. Clara Tice, *My Model World*, chapter 2, p. 3.

17. "Waslaw Nijinsky: Four Elevated Elevations Sketched from Life by Clara Tice," *Vanity Fair* 5, no. 3 (November 1915): 47.

18. *Rogue* 3, no. 1 (October 1916): 2.

19. Published in *The Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917): 7. For more on the Arensbergs and their circle, see Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915-23* (New York: Abrams, 1994).

20. Henri-Pierre Roché, *Journals*, entries for 25 February, 2 March, 20 and 24 April 1917, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

21. I am indebted to Carolyn Burke for alerting me to the various Tice illustrations that appeared in *Cartoons* and for providing me with photocopies; the articles referred to here appeared in vol. 11, no. 5 (May 1917): 605–606, and no. 6 (June 1917): 859.
22. “So This is That Greenwich Village,” *Greenwich Village Follies*, program, Sam S. Schubert Theater, New York, 1922, p. 35. Unfortunately, efforts to locate a photograph or reproduction of this curtain have been unsuccessful.
23. An original example of this card is in the collection of Elizabeth Yoell, Granby, Connecticut.
24. “Clara Tice Does Decoration for Brooklyn Street Fair,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 22 April 1923, sec. B, p. 2. I thank Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for having drawn this article to my attention.
25. “The Apotheosis of Greenwich Village,” *Vanity Fair* 15, no. 5 (February 1921): 37.
26. The following articles appeared in the *St. Louis Star*: “Greenwich Village ‘Queen’ Here Decries Beauty that is Purchased,” 9 June 1921; “Clara Tice Views the Opera Through the Mist,” 11 June 1921; “Clara Tice Rounds Up the Wild West Show,” 2 July 1921; and “How You Looked to Clara Tice That Day on the Meramec,” 3 July 1921.
27. *Animals and Nudes by Clara Tice: Also Etchings, Gold Points, and Drawings*, Anderson Galleries, New York, 11–25 November 1922.
28. Henry McBride, “Notes on Painting and Sculpture,” *Vanity Fair* 19, no. 4 (December 1922): 32.
29. Carlo de Fornaro, “Action Plus and Art that Pulsates: A Word About Clara

Tice and Her Rapid-Fire Drawings," *Arts and Decoration* 18, no. 1 (November 1922): 14–15.

30. Heywood Broun, qtd. in "Children and Animals Enjoy Living Says Artist Tice," *Bridgeport (Connecticut) Sunday Post*, 8 November 1942, p. 2.

31. H. L. Mencken, *My Life As Author And Editor*, ed. Jonathan Yardley (New York: Knopf, 1993), pp. 327–328. Tice provided illustrations for Boccaccio's *Decameron* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925) and for a number of publications produced by the Pierre Louÿs Society, including *The Adventures of King Pausole* (1926), *Woman and Puppet: A Spanish Romance* (1927), and *Twilight of the Nymphs* (1927).

32. Information pertaining to these exhibitions comes from a notice that appeared in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 17 December 1933, and an undated clipping, source unknown, Artists File, New York Public Library.

33. Frank Crowninshield, introduction to *Clara Tice*, Schwartz Galleries, New York, catalogue, n.p.

34. "Picture Book About Dogs," *St. Louis Star Times*, 10 December 1940; and review of Clara Tice, *ABC Dogs* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1940); rpt. with an introduction by Marie T. Keller (New York: Abrams, 1995). In the early 1950s, Tice published a comic strip for the *Protestant World* titled "Lucy Lou, the Kangaroo." Several examples of the published cartoons are preserved in the papers of Elizabeth Yoell, Granby, Connecticut.

35. Jean Rose, "Children And Animals Enjoy Living, Says Artist Tice," *Bridgeport (Connecticut) Sunday Post*, 8 November 1942, p. 2.

BARONESS ELSA VON FREYTAG-LORINGHOVEN AND NEW YORK DADA

rudolf E. KUENZLI



Performance artist, poet, sculptor, multimedia artist, proto-punk, artists' model, the Baroness was easily the most noticeable and most colorful personality in Greenwich Village in the late teens and early twenties (figures 15.1 and 15.2; see also figure 6.4). To her friends and acquaintances she was the epitome of Dada anarchy, sexual freedom, and creativity. Jane Heap, who with her partner Margaret Anderson edited *The Little Review* (see figure 10.1), saw the Baroness as "the first American dada," and as "the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada."¹ The painter Louis Bouché, for whom the Baroness worked as a model, recalled that "Some said that she was the Original 'Dada.'"² Chronicles of the first American avant-garde include vivid descriptions of her extraordinary appearances in her art-to-wear costumes and anecdotes of her shocking behavior. On her first visit to the office of *The Little Review*,

She wore a red Scotch plaid suit with a kilt hanging just below the knees, a bolero jacket with sleeves to the elbows and arms covered with a quantity of ten-cent-store bracelets—silver, gilt, bronze, green and yellow. She wore high white spats with a band of decorative furniture braid around the top. Hanging from her bust were two tea-balls from which the nickel had worn away. On her head was a black velvet tam o'shanter with a feather and several spoons—long ice-cream-soda spoons. She had enormous earrings of tarnished silver and on her hands were many rings, on



MAN
RAY
OF
LORINGHOVEN
FONTE
FREYTAG

15.1

Man Ray, *Else Baroness von Freytag Loringhoven* (from *The Little Review* [September–December 1920]). © 1997 Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

**15.2**

Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (from *New York Dada* [April 1921], p. 4), Philadelphia Museum of Art: Partial and promised gift of Marion Boulton Stroud in honor of Alexina Duchamp. Photo: Graydon Wood, 1987.



*the little finger high peasant buttons filled with shot. Her hair was the color of a bay horse.*³

To the *Little Review* reception after a benefit concert by Marguerite D'Alvarez, which the Baroness missed because she had to first finish her costume, she wore

*a trailing blue-green dress and a peacock fan. One side of her face was decorated with a canceled postage stamp (two-cent American, pink). Her lips were painted black, her face powder was yellow. She wore the top of a coal scuttle for a hat, strapped on under her chin like a helmet. Two mustard spoons at the side gave the effect of feathers.*⁴

When she gave up her struggle for William Carlos Williams, “she shaved her head . . . lacquered it a high vermilion . . . stole a crêpe from . . . a house of mourning” and transformed it into a dress. “She came to see us,” wrote Margaret Anderson. “First she exhibited the head at all angles, amazing against our black walls. Then she jerked off the crêpe with one movement. ‘It’s better when I’m nude,’ she said.” And the Baroness added: “Shaving one’s head is like having a new love experience.”⁵

Parading half-naked in her spare costumes with her many dogs through the streets of Greenwich Village and helping herself in stores to whatever she needed for her art led to her arrest so many times that she learned to leap “from patrol wagons with such agility that policemen let her go in admiration.”⁶ She lived in two rooms of a cheap tenement with her dogs and heaps of metal, cloth, paper, glass, wire, and whatever else she found in the streets or in shops for her sculptures, multimedia works, and her art-to-wear. Nonetheless, she was a real baroness, having married Baron Leopold von Freytag-Loringhoven in New York in 1913.⁷ But when the baron left for Germany at the outbreak of the war, she found herself penniless in New York.

Between 1918 and 1922 *The Little Review* published twenty of her poems, her two-part review of William Carlos Williams's *Kora in Hell*, her essay "The Modest Woman," her contribution to the magazine's debate on art and madness that was prompted by her poetry, her "Note" on the Independents' exhibition of 1922, Man Ray's photo-portrait of her, and Charles Sheeler's photograph of her multimedia *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*. *The Little Review* printed more poems by the Baroness than by any other poet, and some of her contributions were easily among the most non-traditional and radical writings Anderson and Heap published. Although James Joyce's *Ulysses* appeared (in serial) for the first time in the same issues of the magazine that included the Baroness's poems, the readers' letters focused more on her writing than on Joyce's. Upon publication of the Baroness's "Mineself—Minesoul—and—Mine—Cast-Iron Lover," the "Reader Critic" section of the magazine included the following comment, signed "Helen Rowland with a vengeance!": "Are you hypnotized, or what, that you open the *Little Review* with such a retching assault upon Art ('The Cast-Iron Lover')?" And F.E.R. from Chicago wrote: "How can you who have had the honour of printing Yeats open your pages to the work of the Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven?"⁸ Jane Heap, who selected and published the first of the Baroness's poems, consistently defended her with her characteristic dry wit. Harriett Monroe wrote in her magazine *Poetry*, "The trouble is the *Little Review* never knows when to stop. Just now it is headed for Dada; but we could forgive even that if it would drop Else von Freytag-Loringhoven on the way." Heap reprinted this comment in *The Little Review* and replied: "[We] do intend to drop the baroness—right into the middle of the history of American poetry!"⁹

For Monroe as well as Heap the Baroness's writings were Dada, and for Monroe at least even an extreme form of it. They were not the only ones who saw her as *the* Dada poet in America. In a 1920 essay titled "The Russian Dadaists," Louis Lazowick stated: "America has its Else von Freytag-Loringhoven, France its Tristan Tzara, and Russia its Alexander

[sic] Krutchenich [sic].”¹⁰ Similarly, John Rodker began his “‘Dada’ and Else von Freytag von [sic] Loringhoven”:

*Paris has had Dada for five years, and we have Else von Freytag-Loringhoven for quite two years. But great minds think alike and great natural truths force themselves into cognition at vastly separate spots. In Else von Freytag-Loringhoven Paris is mystically united New York. . . . It is possible that Else von Freytag-Loringhoven is the first Dadaist in New York and that the Little Review has discovered her.*¹¹

Having been frequently published by the influential *Little Review* and having been regarded as *the* Dada writer in New York, it seems curious that until very recently the Baroness has remained a marginal figure in chronicles and critics’ accounts of the early American avant-garde. She has at best been treated as an entertaining sideshow, and anecdotes of her activities seem to be repeated for the critics’ as well as the readers’ comic relief. Since mostly male critics wrote the first histories of modernism and the avant-garde, they tended to focus on male writers and artists and paid little attention to the women’s contributions.¹² For Arturo Schwarz, New York Dada consists of Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray; female writers and artists are merely footnotes.¹³ Francis Naumann adds Walter Arensberg as “major protagonist” to Schwarz’s triumvirate in his recently published *New York Dada, 1915–23*. Although he includes a very informative essay on the Baroness, she is not one of the “major protagonists,” but is placed in the category of “Others,” since she was neither American nor French.¹⁴

The position of female writers and artists within predominantly male avant-garde movements was, according to Susan Suleiman, that of a double marginality.¹⁵ These movements situated themselves at the margin of a given dominant culture that they criticized; yet within these movements women tended to be further marginalized. The subject position of

a female artist or writer within these avant-garde groups became a crucial question: was she to accept and imitate male fantasies about women and their roles, or was she to respond to and critique these male libidinal constructions and thus situate herself at the margins of these movements? The doubly marginal position of the Baroness in New York Dada largely resulted from her having invented her own position as a creative subject. Her insistence on being respected as writer and artist, her refusal to masquerade as a subservient lover, and her frank expression of her own desires and needs made her troublesome and even threatening to men in this group. An account of the Baroness's own analysis of her relationships with Marcel Duchamp and William Carlos Williams reveals important aspects of the struggle of nonconformist women artists in avant-garde movements.

Several of the Baroness's poems published in *The Little Review* are about Duchamp—or M'ars, as she called him—whom she initially greatly admired and passionately loved.¹⁶ Her early *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (see figure 2.4), a metallic gear and clock spring intermixed with feathers and twigs in a wine glass, and a cog-wheel and feather on top of what looks like a section of a fishing pole with lure, seems to be a celebration, a toast to the one she loved.¹⁷ When Duchamp remained detached and did not respond to her passionate advances, she tried to transform herself into the asceticism of Duchamp-M'ars, as she wrote in a letter to Margaret Anderson: "I am almost through—in a certain sense—like M'ars is—I am beginning to crystallize which looks like death—like in M'ars it is—extreme wisdom—as is death. Emotions have done their actual work— one is lonely detached." And she added Duchamp's phrase in quotation marks, "*Nothing matters*' it is right." Her later *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, which she executed in pastel, depicts a sardonically and detachedly smiling Duchamp smoking his pipe, surrounded by a chess figure and a bicycle wheel.¹⁸ The first poem *The Little Review* published by the Baroness, in June 1918, expresses the same theme of asceticism.

Titled “Love—Chemical Relationship,” and subtitled “Un Enfant Français: Marcel (A Futurist) / Ein deutsches Kind: Else (A Future Futurist),” the poem describes Duchamp’s change to a world of motionless glass (referring to his work on the *Large Glass*), which the speaker also wants to reach:

*Thou now livest motionless in a mirror!
 Everything is a mirage in thee—thine world is glass—glassy!
 Glassy are thine ears—thine hands—thine feet and thine face. . . .
 SO long must I love it until I myself will become glass and everything
 around me glassy.
 Then art thou I! I do not need thee any more—!
 So BEAUTIFUL will I be like thou thineself art,
 Thou standest beside me—and art NOTHING beside me!
 Yet today I still must love mine LOVE—!
 I must bleed—weep—laugh—ere I turn to glass and the world around
 me glassy!¹⁹*

By transforming herself through this “chemical relationship,” she hoped to transcend her passion and her joy in life, and to join Duchamp in the cerebral, deathlike world of his *Large Glass*. In becoming Duchamp, and Duchamp becoming she, there would be no need for “I” and “Thou,” since they would be one.

Although she felt that she was Duchamp, or as she put it in a letter, “M’ars Teutonic,” she sensed vast differences in their being accepted and supported. In a letter to Anderson and Heap, the Baroness explained her difficulty in finding a patron, whereas Duchamp had found generous support: “And M’ars came to *this country*—protected—carried by fame—to use its plumbing fixtures—mechanical comforts—so he takes you as you *are!* He merely amuses himself. But—I am he—not yet having attained his height—I have to fight.” In this passage she also pointed to the basic

difference between her and Duchamp. For the Baroness, life praxis and art were one; she made no compromise with American life and its social conventions. She challenged these cultural norms through her art and her writing, but also through her “artistic clothes” and her daily interactions with people. Although she loved Duchamp and greatly admired his wisdom and nonconventional art, she sensed an inconsistency between his challenges to American society in his art, and his accommodation to that same society in his life. In several poems and in letters to Heap, the Baroness pointed to this difference as the reason for Duchamp’s distancing himself from her, since she constantly rebuked him for having accepted and become part of the shallowness of American society. She wrote to Heap: “He [Marcel] likes *frivolous* people—persons of low degree—no quality—vulgar blood—sophistication for lack of vitals—*they do not demand quality from him*—they do not *judge* him—he does not need to feel ashamed—*he can stand himself* and at same time is kept—fed—lulled—petted—called: ‘A nice boy’—and forgets. *That is all he wants to be.*” She, on the other hand, demanded quality from him, but she saw that in wanting to be kept by these people, “he cannot afford my nobility—my strength—my blood—my despair—belief.” According to the Baroness, Duchamp did not have the strength to break out of the comfortable societal norms and codes because he had accommodated himself to them. She wanted to shake him, trouble him, and wake him up from his having accepted the shallowness of American culture, but he did not want to change, and he did not want to help her, because she felt that he was jealous of her strength: “Marcel *knows* I am artist—he often *likes* my things—*I needed help*—*he could have helped me*—with his *influence*—*Did he? Never!*”²⁰ She sensed that it was her pride, her strength that he envied. They both came from Europe to America. Duchamp, according to the Baroness, succumbed to the mediocrity and superficiality of American culture. She knew that she was stronger than Duchamp. In a letter to Heap she stated: “*I have all possibilities*—I am Teutonic and female and

alive—he is Gallic and only male. . . . I have my full power—I am amazone.”

The Baroness quite possibly regarded Duchamp's readymade *Fountain* (see figure 2.3), a porcelain urinal signed “R. Mutt 1917,” which was rejected at the first Independents' exhibition, as yet another indication of Duchamp's accommodation to American values. Yet in the same year, quite possibly responding to *Fountain*, the Baroness, assisted by Morton Schamberg, created her own readymade by also using a plumbing fixture.²¹ Titled *God* (see figure 3.3), it consists of a cast-iron inverted plumbing trap in a miter box. Given the scandalous relationship between title and work—God as a trap, as a plumbing trap—this work would most certainly also have been rejected for the Independents' exhibition. Although *Fountain* and *God* both employ plumbing fixtures, they seem to have had quite different functions. Whereas Duchamp, as one of the directors of the Independents, chose and entered the urinal in order to test the supposedly jury-free principle of the exhibition, the Baroness's work seems intended yet again to expose America's shallowness. In her essay “The Modest Woman,” in which she defended Joyce against a “modest woman's” critique of his preoccupation with bodily functions, the Baroness wrote: “America's comfort:—sanitation—outside machinery—has made American forget own machinery—body! He thinks of himself less than of what should be his servant—steel machinery. He has mixed things!”²² The Baroness thus depicted plumbing as the Americans' God. And in her disappointment with her former “God” Duchamp embracing American plumbing as art, she might have seen in her work *God* yet another portrait of Duchamp: the God of Plumbing, but also the God who was a trap for her.²³

The Baroness's relationship with William Carlos Williams is only slightly better documented than her relationship with Duchamp. Critical studies of Williams's work make only passing references to the Baroness, and then most often to anecdotes about the boxing blows between

them.²⁴ This neglect is surprising, since Williams was probably the only male avant-garde writer who acknowledged that she had a great influence on his work. In addition to the chapter on the Baroness in his autobiography, he wrote an essay about her, explicitly describing what she meant to him:

We say "she." It expresses what—all I am willing or care to say. She is there. I run from here when her image which I saw once in inspiration and had photographed on my spirit, a purity I have never had equalled in me. That is remarkably fast in me. Nothing even approaches it. It is curiously so. Even my worst behavior seems somehow an attachment of that purity. Whatever I say here is firm if that is firm. The Baroness was that to me—but she was schooled in a tougher school than mine—She was like Cortez coming to Montezuma and she wanted to do the same stupid thing he did. Destroy.

. . . The Baroness to me was a great field of cultured bounty in spite of her psychosis, her insanity. She was right. She was courageous to an insane degree. I found myself drinking pure water from her spirit. I found it so that is all. . . . And so I find it. Her image which gave my young immature instincts the fact. Living. Actual. I offer it.

Although she taught him to live in the present, to strive for purity in expression, he shamefully resisted her: "I could resist the Baroness' siege—with difficulty, tormented—helpless to end it—It is a mean boast. She was poor, unhappy. I wanted to lift her up—couldn't—up for what I knew she was—."²⁵

In her letters addressed to *The Little Review* and in her review of Williams's *Kora in Hell*, which is less a review than a collage of the ideas she expressed in her letters, the Baroness attempted to analyze the reasons for his inability to accept her. Her review, tellingly titled "Thee I call

‘Hamlet of Wedding Ring,’” criticized a discrepancy in Williams, which was not unlike the one she pointed to in her critique of Duchamp: the gap between his revolutionary work and his conservative, bourgeois life praxis. Williams’s clinging to his home on “Rich Road” in Rutherford, New Jersey,²⁶ his children, his wife, and his profession as a doctor signaled for the Baroness his concession to social norms and codes. She labeled him a coward, a weakling, a “Hamlet of wedding ring,—chasing ghost of honeymoon bliss,” who hypocritically defended the institution of marriage while at the same time advocated any number of sexual relationships with other women, which he needed in order to write. These women had a use value for him; he saw sexual intercourse as providing “a corridor to a clarity.”²⁷

Yet the Baroness diagnosed Williams’s weakness as being very different from that of Duchamp. While she saw Duchamp as a great “aristocratic” European artist who succumbed to the shallowness of American values, she recognized Williams and his works as products of this democratic culture. Moreover, she believed her analysis of Williams served a larger function: to expose “the case of the American man.”²⁸ Following Nietzsche’s argument about *ressentiment*, the Baroness claimed that American male brutishness was the result of lack of culture.²⁹ The male brute, especially when he was intoxicated, resented everything. Her example was Hamlet of Wedding-Ring, whom she imitated talking to his wife Floss in a drunken stupor: “‘WhatshallforFlosh—agh? eckshishtensh—eck—eck—eck—shish—damn! life damn! wife damn! art damch!!! Hells-hotashhell—.”³⁰ Without culture, only fake civilization could exist, in which she saw Williams as an experimenter, a juggler with words, to create something new for newness’s sake, but devoid of any stand, point, or aim.³¹ Not having convictions or serious goals, Williams’s writing hysterically acted in order to avoid significant action: “Squirms—thrashes—blasphemes—howls—telling himself—us: it—be music!—.”³² And she

pointed to the basic discrepancy in Williams's life: "Husband *or* artist—W. C."³³ "Helmet cocked at angle of daredevil romance," she depicted him going

*towards land of adventure after business-hours—
yoked by neurasthenia
poisoned by "loved ones"
pestered by sex
W. C. attacks art—
When has time.*³⁴

Sensing that *Kora in Hell* was Williams's pathological scream for release from societal restraints, the Baroness reminded him over and over that "Art [is] no infirmary for emotion-starved—passion-crippled—soul injured males," but balance, strength in joyful abandonment,³⁵ qualities that recall Nietzsche's notion of "joyful wisdom."

The Baroness's review of Williams's *Kora in Hell* was arguably the most outrageous item *The Little Review* published in all its years of existence. Never had a male writer been so excoriated by a female critic. Anderson, who considered it "one of the most intelligent pieces of criticism that has ever come to us," edited out the redundancies in order to shorten it and make it even more powerful. Yet upon the Baroness's violent disagreement with the revisions, Anderson reluctantly agreed to print the original version.³⁶ The editors of *The Little Review* were very much part of the exchanges between the Baroness and Williams. According to Anderson, Williams

acted like a small boy and wrote her [the Baroness] insulting letters in which his panic was all too visible. He said such stupid things in these letters (all of which, including her infinite pages of replies, we had to hear

*read aloud in a strong voice), and gave her such opportunities to refute all his ideas, that we began to despair ever of getting out the next number of the L.R. We had no time left, after listening, and no space left after putting the letters on file.*³⁷

Just below the conclusion of the second part of the Baroness's review, the editors placed Ezra Pound's parody of the Baroness-Williams style of verse, which he wrote under his pseudonym "Abel Sanders." His poem supported the Baroness's censure of Williams's conflict between bourgeois husband and father and avant-garde writer:

*. . . Kaiser Bill reading to goddarnd stupid wife anbrats works of simple domestic piety in Bleibtreu corner of Hockhoff'sbesitzendecke before the bottom fell out. Plus a little boiled Neitzsch on the sabath. Potsdam, potsdorf potz gek und keine ende. Bad case, bad as fake southern gentleman tells you everymorn that he is gentleman, and that he is not black.*³⁸

Williams's own published response to the first part of the review appeared in the Summer 1921 issue of *Contact*, a magazine he coedited. Thinly disguising himself as Evan Dionysius Evans and using the third person, Williams described the initial inspiring meetings with the Baroness: "He looked into her eyes and she into his across the Atlantic Ocean-white porcelain table while she talked and he listened till their heads melted together and went up in a vermillion balloon through the ceiling drawing Europe and America after them."³⁹ Yet he dismissed the subsequent exchange of letters as a comedy routine: "I want you, Evan Dionysius Evans, she had hissed. Well, you can't have me, he said, like that. Then I'll publish the letters, she whispered. Be sure you don't miss any, he rejoined. You said you loved me, she replied. What a good memory you

have, he answered. It flashed across his mind that they might possibly get the act put on at The Palace."⁴⁰ And Williams ended his account of their relationship with the full force of brutality: "The third letter was composed in a moment: You damned stinking old woman, it ran, you dirty old bitch—or something of the sort."⁴¹

It is his admiration and hatred, his love-panic response to her that the Baroness tried to analyze in her letters. Far from destroy Williams, she wanted to help him in his crisis, and he knew it. But she demanded respect and to be treated as an equal. In one of her letters to him she wrote:

*Why are you so small—Carlos Williams?
Why do you not trust me to help you?
All I ask is respect due me!
Without that—you have to give me that—
without my insisting upon that—I could not help you!
You would disgrace me—and you have enough of disgrace.
You want pride. And—because I am proud and you not—
you love and hate me. You desire me in truth:
You envy me!*

Williams expressed his love-hate feeling toward the Baroness most tellingly and revealingly in a letter to Heap of 21 January 1928, upon hearing of the Baroness's death:

Did the Baroness kill herself or just die? Carnivorous beast as timid as a rabbit. I admire her still and couldn't go near her. It's a loss to have her gone, a loss I'm damn glad of. What the hell, she had a rare gift. I never thought her insane. This is ridiculous, talking this way—for I understand she had deteriorated like hell toward the end. But this small tribute has been in me several months, now it's out.

Williams was attracted to her purity, strength, pride, and especially to her courage, which he knew he did not have. “She was,” as he put it, “courageous to an insane degree.” She dared to make art and life one, without any compromises. While he admired her harshly judging American values and challenging social taboos, he feared her freedom from social codes. Her courage and her strength were a threat to his accustomed male role of being in command. Her lack of inhibition and modesty, her directly expressing her own needs, desires, and passion emasculated him. She seemed to him a “carnivorous beast” that might drag him away from his home and family into a horrendous dionysian dance. The Baroness’s condemnation of his hypocrisy certainly challenged Williams to confront the tension between his bourgeois life and his life in the avant-garde, and to explain his cowardice. In his essay about the Baroness, he wrote:

The thing it has been late for me to learn is that men are selfish liars—this must of course include myself. . . . It seems that I myself have deceived [my friends], I did not want to go the limit as they thought I should. . . . Surely I have wanted to give everything—Perhaps my saving has been that I have actually done, selfishly, myself, what I pleased, as my fault has been that I have seemed to promise too much, more than I could fulfill. But I expected their generosity to understand that.⁴²

Williams’s love-hate, admiration-fear attitude toward the Baroness was shared by most male members of the New York avant-garde. George Biddle, for whom “the Baroness . . . had validity,” definitely quaked when the *femme fatale* kissed him: “Enveloping me slowly, as a snake would its prey, she glued her wet lips on mine. I was shaking all over when I left the dark stairway and came out on 14th Street.”⁴³ Reticent Wallace Stevens, who applauded one of her new art-to-wear outfits, fled when she approached him. For years he avoided going below 14th Street.⁴⁴ And even Hart Crane, who felt that the Baroness was “right. Our people have no

atom of a conception of beauty—and don't want it," was afraid to retrieve a typewriter that he had lent her.⁴⁵

The Baroness intimidated these male avant-garde writers and artists through her uninhibited life praxis, which challenged their accommodating, secure bourgeois lifestyles. In the Baroness's eyes, these men were all cowards who, while producing unconventional works, still insisted on a conventional lifestyle and traditional gender roles. Her refusal to become wife or mother or to masquerade as subservient lover threatened these men's traditional, self-interested constructions of women.

The Baroness could not find men who had the courage to step out of their traditional roles. In one of her letters she wrote: "*Where are here men? Fools—fat fools—lean fools—vulgar fiber made—stupid with cowardice! See Chanler—! Simply another Carlos Williams.*"⁴⁶ And she swore on a postcard dated 15 April 1922, "I ain't going no more to fall in no love with no man that don't love me none. Resolution final by me." Having scared away these men of the avant-garde with her uncompromising notions of uninhibited life and love, she drew a graveyard of penises and wrote a poem titled "Graveyard surrounding nunnery" (figure 15.3):

*When I was
Young—foolish
I loved Marcel Dushit
He behaved mulish
(A quit)
Whereupon in haste
Redtopped Robert came
He was chaste
(Shame!)
I up—vamps fellow—
Carlos—some husky guy
He turned yellow*



WHEN I WAS
 YOUNG - FOOLISH -
 I LOVED MARCEL DUSHIT
 HE BEHAVED MOLISH -
 (A QUIT.)
 WHEREUPON IN HASTE
 RED TOPPED ROBERT CAME -
 HE WAS CHASTE -
 (SHAME!)
 I UP - YAMPS FELLOW -
 CARLOS - SOME MUSKY GUY -
 HE TURNED YELLOW -
 (FI!)
 I GO TO BED - SAINT -
 CORSE - ANGEL - NUN -
 IT AINT E.V.F.L.
 (FUN!)

15.3

Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Grave-
 yard surrounding nunnery," ms.,
 Papers of *The Little Review*, University
 Archives, Golda Meir Library, Univer-
 sity of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

(Fi!)

I go to bed—saint—

Corpse—angel—nun—

It ain't

(Fun.)

In contrast to the men's response of fear, the women who knew the Baroness saw her as a champion of a New Woman who had strength and not feminine weakness, pride and not feminine modesty.⁴⁷ They admired her as a female writer and artist who uncompromisingly attempted to create her own subject position. Nonconventional women were the Baroness's patrons. Heap and Anderson, who promoted female writers in *The Little Review*, were the only ones who published the Baroness's work while she was in New York.⁴⁸ According to Anderson, the Baroness was "perhaps the only figure of our generation who deserves the epithet extraordinary."⁴⁹ Berenice Abbott, whom the Baroness often severely criticized, let her stay for a time in her apartment and considered her "perhaps . . . the most influential person . . . in the early part of my life."⁵⁰ And Djuna Barnes became the Baroness's major supporter and admirer, agreeing to become her literary executor and biographer. For years, she attempted to edit the Baroness's unpublished poems, and even enlisted her friend Peggy Guggenheim to help her type them for publication.⁵¹

Since Barnes never completed her edition of the Baroness's poems, only a small number of the poems she wrote between 1902 and 1927 has been published, most of them appearing in *The Little Review*.⁵² Although she wrote poems in both German and English after 1913, she composed her disruptive Dada poems only in English, while she lived in America. Her German poems of the Greenwich Village period, however, are mostly rhymed and traditional in the manner of Goethe and Heine, such as "Das Finstere Meer (an Vater)," written in five rhyming quatrains, which appeared in the September-December 1920 issue of *The Little Review*. Heap

noticed this difference between her English and German poems and astutely commented: "The baroness does not belong to the german dadaists. She fails whenever she trips over her german skeleton and falls into a Goethe-Nietzsche wrestling with God."⁵³ The reason for this difference is not that she had a better command of German than of English, but that she hated the shallowness of the American language, which in her view was an integral part of America's superficiality and lack of culture. The Baroness's dadaist poems therefore disrupt American language and form part of her attempt to transform American culture through everything she did: her sculpture *God*, her essays and reviews, and her shocking costumes. Williams sensed that all of her activities in New York amounted to a critique of culture when he wrote: "High into the air the old lady bounced herself, turning and turning head over heels in the dawn and at noon as at night till dripping with holy nectar from the stars, naked as the all-holy sun himself, she mocked the dull Americans."⁵⁴

In her Dada poems she seems to use at least four strategies to disrupt and transform American language, poetry, and culture. The first consists in charging words with a high degree of passion and emotion, a practice which recalls August Stramm's futurist-expressionist word sequences. She writes in short units, one or two words, separated by line breaks, dashes, and exclamation points. She sacrifices syntax to the importance of isolated words, which are nevertheless interlinked in a semantic field:

to rest—

no!

ripple—glide—quiver:

Nile

river!

*overflow!*⁵⁵

Maxwell Bodenheim focused on this passionate, emotional aspect of the Baroness's poetry in his defense of "Mineself—Minesoul—and—Mine—Cast-Iron Lover," her epic poem about her relationship with Robert Chanler:

*Else von Freytag-Loringhoven's "Cast-Iron Lover" holds a half-inarticulate frenzy—the sensualist frankly screaming over his flesh. . . . It is refreshing to see someone claw aside the veils and rush forth howling, vomiting, and leaping nakedly. . . . [I]t is a blessing to come upon an unconscious volcano now and then. Never mind the delicate souls whose sanctimonious "art" is violated; their perfumed dresses need an airing on the nearest clothesline. They suffer from a hatred for nakedness, for anything that steams, boils, sweats and retches. . . .*⁵⁶

Her second strategy is to inject a good dose of dignity and aristocratic tone into the all too democratic American language, and especially the language of poetry. Particularly in her poems to and about Duchamp she uses the archaic forms "Thou," "Thine," "Mine," which to her ear convey a sense of nobility. In this sense she was a right-wing Nietzschean, who sharply distinguished between the vulgar herd and the lofty artist. Having lived with the Nietzsche worshipper Felix Paul Greve for ten years she became steeped in that philosophy. She had little use for democracy, and therefore insisted on her title of "Baroness," even though only acquired through marriage.

Her third mode of criticizing American language consists of using it exactly as she finds it, and exposing it as the shallow advertising language of commodity culture. She wrote a series of poems under the collective title "Subjoyride," which she called her "ready-mades" in poetry. These poems consist of a collage of advertisements, which according to her are the dominant form of American language and poetry, since they are popular, vulgar, and consumer-oriented. These collages transform "Sense into

Nonsense,” as she subtitles some of them; they perform and reveal the nonsense of American sense:

Subjoyride
Ready-to-wear
American Soul Poetry
 <*The right kind*>
Lux Kamel hands off the
Better Bologna's Beauty—
Get this straight—Wrigley's
Pinaud's Heels for the wise—
Nothing so Pepsodent—soothing
Pussywillow—kept clean
with Philadelphia Cream
Cheese.
They satisfy the man of
Largest Mustard Underwear—
No dosing
*Just rub it on—*⁵⁷

Not even *The Little Review* had the courage to publish this or other similar collage poems by the Baroness.

Her final strategy is to avoid the American language altogether by writing sound poetry. Her “Klink—Hratzvenga (Deathwail) / Narin—Tzar-issamanili (He is dead!),” which was published in *The Little Review*, is very effective when read aloud. The only English words, given in parentheses in the title, create a semantic field within which the sounds of the lament are felt by the listener:

Arr—karr—
Arrkarr—barr

Karrarr—barr—

Arr—

Arrkarr—

Mardar

*Mar—dóórde—dar—*⁵⁸

The Baroness's Dada activities were limited to her stay in New York. They were directed against American prudishness, the American man, vulgarity, greed, mediocrity, consumerism, and shallowness. While in New York, the Baroness believed that true poetry was possible in what she considered the highly cultured German language. This might be the reason why her German poems are relatively traditional. She saw no need to disrupt and transform the language of high culture, the language of Goethe, Heine, Nietzsche, and Wilhelm Busch, her favorite satirist. She therefore quoted Goethe in German in her review of Williams's *Kora in Heil* and held him up as the ideal poet, against whom Williams and all of America appeared vulgar in her eyes.

The Baroness hated American language and culture to such a degree that she desperately wanted to go back to Germany. She wrote in one of her letters to *The Little Review*: "All America is founded on greed—l—alone—do not belong here—as I say—: I can not fight a whole continent!" Finally, in 1923, she returned to Germany, only to be completely disappointed. Her lofty notions of high German culture were shattered by the grim fight for survival in postwar Berlin. Struggling to feed herself by selling newspapers and living in poor-houses, German culture and German language seemed to her now a hollow facade, much worse than American shallowness. She wrote to Barnes from Germany: "*German is obtuse! I hate—almost loathe their language—... German is not concise—not precise—it is yawning—it wears useless flabbing coattails and performs overpolite bourgeois movements, compliments, bows, silly,*

meaningless—masking true clumsiness—! No Djuna—the American is at least no pretender of some culture that is long since down at the heels.”⁵⁹ Yet instead of joining Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch, George Grosz, and the other Berlin dadaists in exposing the hollowness of German culture, the Baroness spent much of her time in Germany translating her German poems into “American language,” as though she wanted to preserve them in what now ironically appeared to her a superior, more genuine and honest medium.

NOTES

1. Jane Heap, "Dada," *Little Review* (Spring 1922): 46.
2. Louis Bouché, "Autobiographical Notes," unpub. ms., Louis Bouché Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (microfilm roll 688, frame 700).
3. Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War: An Autobiography* (New York: Covici, Friede, 1930), p. 178.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 194.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
7. Born Else Hildegard Ploetz in Northern Germany in 1874, she received some training in acting and painting in her early twenties, lived with several artists, was briefly married to the architect August Endell, and lived for ten years with the writer and translator Felix Paul Greve, with whom she left Germany and came to Kentucky in 1909. Upon Greve's leaving her and settling in Canada in 1912, where he changed his name to Frederick Philip Grove and became an acclaimed writer, Elsa moved to Cincinnati, and from there to New York, where she met and married Baron Leopold von Freytag-Loringhoven in 1913. At the outbreak of World War I, the Baron embarked for Germany and left the Baroness penniless in New York. She moved to Greenwich Village, worked as an artist's model, and befriended the editors of *The Little Review*, in which her writings appeared. In 1923 she returned to Germany with a ticket paid by William Carlos Williams and others, and after three years of utter poverty, moved with the help of Djuna Barnes and Berenice Abbott to Paris, where she died in 1927, at the age of 53. For a succinct account of her life, see Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), pp. 168–175. See also Robert Reiss, "'My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven,"

in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), pp. 81–101; and Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville, 1991), pp. 269–271, 337–338. The Baroness's autobiography, which she wrote between 1923 and 1925 for Djuna Barnes's project of publishing the Baroness's poetry, was edited by Paul I. Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue under the title *Baroness Elsa* (Ottawa, Ontario: Oberon, 1992). This autobiography covers only the years from her birth in 1874 to 1904. And again, covering only her early life, Felix Paul Greve published two novels that closely retell her life up to 1900: *Maurermeister Ihles Haus* (1906) narrates her childhood and adolescence, and *Fanny Essler* (1905) gives an account of Elsa's life in Berlin in the 1890s. These two novels are available in English translation: Frederick Philip Grove, *Fanny Essler* (Ottawa, Ontario: Oberon, 1984), and *The Master Mason's House* (Ottawa, Ontario: Oberon, 1976). See also Irene Gammel's "'No Woman Lover': Baroness Elsa's Intimate Biography," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 20, nos. 3–4 (September 1993): 451–467. Gammel reads the Baroness's autobiography as a critical response to Greve's/Grove's novels about her life.

8. *Little Review* (October 1919): 56.

9. Harriet Monroe, "Our Contemporaries: New International Magazines," *Poetry* 19, no. 4 (January 1922): 227; *Little Review* (Spring 1922): 46 (where Monroe's comments are slightly modified).

10. Louis Lazowick, "The Russian Dadaists," *Little Review* (September–December 1920): 72.

11. John Rodker, "'Dada' and Else von Freytag von [sic] Loringhoven," *Little Review* (July–August 1920): 33. In a letter sent from Cleveland to Mathew Josephson, Hart Crane also suggests that the Baroness might be the "keystone" of Dada: "I hear 'New York' has gone mad about 'Dada,' and that the most exotic and worthless review is being concocted by Man Ray and Duchamp. . . . What next! This is worse than The Baroness. By the way I like the way the discovery has suddenly been made that she has all along been, unconsciously, a Dadaist. I cannot figure

out just what Dadaism is beyond an insane jumble of the four winds, the six senses, and plum pudding. But if the Baroness is to be a keystone for it,—then I think I can possibly know when it is coming and avoid it” (Crane, qtd. in John Unterecker, *Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane* [New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969], p. 193). Crane, who lived for a time above the offices of *The Little Review*, knew the Baroness very well and imitated her heavily accented speech and her gestures to the amusement of his friends. See Unterecker, *Voyager*, p. 135; and Charles Stephen Brooks, “A Visit to a Poet,” in *Hints to Pilgrims* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921), pp. 92–102.

12. See, for instance, *The Gender of Modernism: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), and her *Refiguring Modernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

13. Arturo Schwarz, *New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (Munich: Prestel, 1973).

14. Naumann writes in his preface (*New York Dada*, p. 6): “I decided the text for this book should be organized in such a way as to isolate the major protagonists of this period and their accomplishments. Since there were four figures that fit into that category—Walter Arensberg, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Man Ray—the resultant structure coincidentally mirrors the approach used in two books that were intended to characterize other, tangentially related periods in history: Roger Shattuck’s *The Banquet Years* (Henri Rousseau, Erik Satie, Alfred Jarry, Guillaume Apollinaire), and Calvin Tomkin’s *The Bride and the Bachelors* (Duchamp, John Cage, Jean Tinguely, Robert Rauschenberg).” Naumann gives here a misleading account of his book’s structure and approach. Whereas Shattuck and Tomkins neglect any mention of female writers and artists, Naumann has made a great effort to include them in his account of New York Dada.

15. Susan Rubin Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), especially chapter 1, “A Double Margin: Women Writers and the Avant-Garde in France.”

16. The Baroness states in an undated letter to the editors of *The Little Review* that Marcel Duchamp encouraged her to send her poems to them. The Baroness's letters and manuscripts of poems that she sent to *The Little Review* are in the papers of *The Little Review*, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. Quotations from unpublished poems or letters, unless noted otherwise, are taken from the manuscripts in this collection.

17. Charles Sheeler's photograph of *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* was published in *The Little Review* (Winter 1922): 40a. A much better reproduction of this work appears in Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 174.

18. This portrait is reproduced in color in Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 171.

19. *Little Review* (June 1918): 58–59.

20. Duchamp could have helped her more than he did; but he helped her by suggesting she send her poems to *The Little Review*, and by often comforting her. The Baroness wrote to Jane Heap: "Also—it is explainable—that he respects me—and—even off and on—alone—private—in middle of night—likes my society—my seriousness—my honesty—my trouble—since I have learned not to touch him—nor suffer from restraint—It is his real self—that *then* he entertains—in gentle—almost *wistful* fashion—Then I love him—then he is beautiful—simple—honest—*then* he is my gentle beautiful quietly passionate mother. *You do not know him thus!* What *you* know—is—Marcel in frivolous hysteria of cheapness—that is—why I ever—with determination of wisdom—have kept myself from meeting him *anywhere* or with *anybody*—not to hurt my heart—my pride—*He is cheap then*—he sells himself to those who *wish* easy frivolity."

21. Naumann (*New York Dada*, p. 128) was the first to attribute this work to the Baroness: "Based on our knowledge of the other works by the Baroness from this period, it is logical to conclude that she probably came up with the idea of combining the extraneous elements in this sculpture, as well as of assigning the unusual title, while Schamberg was probably responsible only for mounting the assembly

and for recording the work, as he did in a small photograph . . . which he carefully signed . . . and dated '1917.'

22. "‘The Modest Woman,’" *Little Review* (July-August 1920): 38. This essay is the Baroness's response to a comment by Helen Bishop Dennis about Joyce's immodesty of writing about "natural functions," which appeared in the May-June 1920 issue of *The Little Review*, pp. 73–74.

23. Probably unaware of the Baroness's interpretation of her sculpture as yet another "Portrait of Marcel," Walter Arensberg and Duchamp had a high regard for *God*. Arensberg made it part of his collection, and Duchamp "appropriated" it by placing it among his own readymades in the initial installation of the Arensberg Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1954. See William A. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (Houston: Menil Collection, 1989), p. 59.

24. A great exception is Dickran Tashjian's *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde, 1910–1925* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), especially pp. 99–101.

25. William Carlos Williams, "The Baroness Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 35, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 282–283. The typescript of this essay is in the William Carlos Williams Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

26. Williams reports in his essay "The Baroness Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven" (p. 281): "The Baroness looked at the house I lived in and said, looking also at the sign on the street corner, Ridge Rd.—Ah, Rich Road. It was meant as a cutting rebuff to my pretensions. . . . These are the things which injure."

27. *Ibid.*: 283–284. See also William Marling, "'Corridor to a Clarity': Sensuality and Sight in Williams' Poems," *Twentieth-Century Literature* 35, no. 3 (Fall 1989): 285–298. Williams defended marriage, but also the need for extramarital affairs in his "Prose about Love," which *The Little Review* published in the June 1918 issue,

the same issue in which the Baroness's first poem, "Love—Chemical Relationship," appeared. It is quite possible that Williams's "Prose about Love" alerted the Baroness and made her want to meet this author, in order to debate his hypocritical notions of love.

28. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 210.
29. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Thee I call 'Hamlet of Wedding-Ring.' Criticism of William Carlos Williams's [sic] 'Kora in Hell' and Why," *Little Review* (January-March 1921): 48–60, and (Autumn 1921): 108–111.
30. *Ibid.*: 49.
31. *Ibid.*: 50.
32. *Ibid.*: 54.
33. *Ibid.*: 108.
34. *Ibid.*: 108–109.
35. *Ibid.*: 111.
36. See Anderson's statement in *The Little Review* (September-December 1920): 59.
37. Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, p. 210.
38. Ezra Pound, "To Bill Williams and Else von Johann Wolfgang Loringhoven y Fulano," *Little Review* (Autumn 1921): 111. Although Pound thought of the Baroness's writing as "3/4 arf an'arf," he suggests that Williams's *Kora in Hell* is in part written in her style: "Billy Sunday one harf/Kaiser Bill one harf/Elseharf Suntag, Billsharf Freitag." Pound also notes that there are other similarities between them:

both critique American culture, and both seem to be steeped in Dada. Just below his imitation of Baroness-Williams, he adds a parody of a Dada poem and writes next to it, vertically: "dada/deada/what is deader/than dada."

39. William Carlos Williams, "Sample Prose Piece. The Three Letters," *Contact*, no. 4 (Summer 1921): 10. These four pages of Williams's account of their relationship call for a closer investigation of Williams's contradictory attitude toward the Baroness.

40. *Ibid.*: 13.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Williams, "The Baroness Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven": 281. Some of his poems of this period also address this conflict. See his *Collected Earlier Poems* (Norfolk, VA: New Directions, 1951). And in several journal entries of late February and early March of 1928, after he learned of the Baroness's death, he again explains to himself that he rejected her because he was afraid of her freedom: "It can fairly be said that I chose my environment. It can be said that I chose it in order to keep myself from going too far, as a brake to the great liberalities" (Williams, journal entry, qtd. in Paul Mariani, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* [New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981], pp. 163–164).

43. George Biddle, *An American Artist's Story* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), p. 140.

44. Williams often reminded Stevens of his fear of the Baroness. He even included Stevens's encounter with her in his tribute upon Stevens's death. See William Carlos Williams, "Comment: Wallace Stevens," *Poetry* 87, no. 4 (January 1956): 234.

45. See Unterecker, *Voyager*, pp. 215 and 135, respectively.

46. “Chanler” refers to Robert Winthrop Chanler (1872–1930), flamboyant scion of the Whitney clan, and descendent of Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts and Peter Stuyvesant, the last Dutch governor of New York. He studied art in Europe for twenty years, became a well-known decorative artist, married the notoriously temperamental opera diva Lina Cavalieri in 1910, and although he settled every penny and every square foot he owned upon this singer, she was unable to take possession of it after their divorce in 1912. Chanler’s decorative screens of animals were a great success at the Armory Show in 1913 (see Milton W. Brown, *The Story of the Armory Show* [New York: Abbeville, 2d ed., 1988], pp. 130–131).

The Baroness refers to Robert Chanler in this letter and in her poem “Graveyard surrounding nunnery.” Her longest poem, “Mineself—Minesoul—and—Mine—Cast-Iron Lover” (*Little Review* [September 1919]: 3–11) is quite probably about her relationship with Chanler, and so seems to be “Metaphysical speculation—logic—consolation concerning love to flame-flagged man” (*Little Review* [May 1919]: 71–72).

47. In her essay, “‘The Modest Woman’” (p. 38), the Baroness defines pride as lack of modesty.

48. On Anderson and Heap as promoters of women writers, see Jayne E. Marek, *Women Editing Modernism: “Little” Magazines and Literary History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), p. 100; and Holly Baggett, “‘Aloof from Natural Laws’: Margaret C. Anderson and the ‘Little Review,’ 1914–1929” (Ph.D. diss., University of Delaware, 1992), especially chapter 7.

49. Anderson, *My Thirty Years’ War*, p. 177.

50. Berenice Abbott, in conversation with Hank O’Neil, c. 1975, qtd. in Robert Reiss, “‘My Baroness,’” p. 82.

51. See Phillip Herring, *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes* (New York: Viking, 1995), p. 112. Barnes also wrote the announcement of the Baroness’s death

and published it with excerpts from the Baroness's letters to her in the February 1928 issue of *transition*. Peggy Guggenheim's collaboration in typing the Baroness's poems is mentioned in the Baroness's letters to Barnes, which are, together with the manuscripts of poems, in the papers of Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries.

Herring (p. 112) mentions that Barnes included a description of the Baroness already in her journalistic piece of 1916, "How the Villagers Amuse Themselves." Lynn DeVore argues, that Barnes's character Robin in *Nightwood* is modeled after the Baroness. See DeVore, "The Backgrounds of *Nightwood*: Robin, Felix, and Nora," *Journal of Modern Literature* 10, no. 1 (March 1983): 71–90.

52. *Broom* published her poem "Circle" (4, no. 2 [January 1923]: 128); *transatlantic review* the poems "Novembertag" (in German and English) and "Enchantment" (2, no. 2 [1924]: 138–140); and *transition* the poems "Café du Dome" and "X-Ray" (no. 7 [October 1927]: 134–135), in addition to publishing excerpts from her letters to Barnes, the death announcement, and a photo of her death mask (no. 11 [February 1928]).

Her first published poems, which she collaboratively wrote with Felix Paul Greve, appeared under the name Fanny Essler, the pseudonym Greve used in his novel about Elsa, in *Freistatt* (1904–1905). See *Poems/Gedichte by/von Frederick Philip Grove/Felix Paul Greve und Fanny Essler*, ed. Gaby Divay (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Wolf, 1993), pp. lxvi–lxxvi.

53. Heap, "Dada": 46.

54. Williams, "Sample Prose Piece. The Three Letters": 12.

55. "Blast," *Little Review* (September–December 1920): 48.

56. Maxwell Bodenheim, "The Reader Critic," *Little Review* (November 1919): 64.

57. This unpublished poem is one of the manuscripts the Baroness sent to *The*

Little Review, now in the papers of *The Little Review*, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee.

58. The quoted lines are only part of the poem published in *The Little Review* (March 1920): 11–12. Again, Maxwell Bodenheim's defense of this poem is astute. He recognizes that the Baroness attempts to overcome the deficiencies of the American language in this sound poem when he writes: "Else von Freytag Loringhoven's 'Klink—Hratzvenga' has the virtues of many languages and the deficiencies of none, since she can create sounds for shades of meaning that have no dictionary equivalents" ("The Reader Critic," *Little Review* [April 1920]: 61).

59. Letters of the Baroness to Djuna Barnes from Germany (1923–1926), held in the papers of Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries.

MEDIATING

 **personae**

FLORINE STETTHEIMER: HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

barbara J. BLOEMINK

*The world is full of strangers
They are very strange
I am never going to know them
Which I find easy to arrange.
—Florine Stettheimer¹*



An early biographer, Parker Tyler, who only met the artist briefly quite late in her life, described Florine Stettheimer (1871–1944) as “virtually ageless” and “giving the impression of being self-created,” which he felt was central to the Stettheimer “legend.”² According to this legend, Stettheimer (figure 16.1) was an eccentric, fragile spinster who lived with her mother and two sisters until her late sixties and whose primary mention in the history of art is as a salon patron between the wars.

This view of the artist, which curiously developed during her lifetime, has been so pervasive over the decades since her death that it has overshadowed her extensive creative production. Closer examination of Stettheimer’s work reveals her to have been an intelligent, caustic woman and a hardworking, driven artist who consistently fought for the time and opportunities to express herself visually.

Given the barriers inherent in her lifetime against a wealthy, older woman making serious work, it is surprising that Stettheimer produced more than 150 paintings that are bold, highly inventive, and unerringly



16.1

Florine Stettheimer, c. 1915–1918. Florine Stettheimer Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York, gift of Ettie Stettheimer, 1967.

reflect the lifestyles and interactions of many influential art figures during the period between the World Wars. In addition she wrote biting ironic poetry, designed highly original furniture and picture frames, and was responsible for the stage design and costumes for *Four Saints in Three Acts*, one of the most important avant-garde theatrical productions in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, because so many of her private musings and diary entries have been destroyed, we may never know much about Stettheimer's personal frustrations, longings, aspirations. Instead, we are left with the disparity between her extant work and the artifice of the Stettheimer "legend."

How did this "legend" come about? What purpose did it serve? Why did Stettheimer collude with friends and acquaintances to disseminate it to a larger public?

A crucial aspect of Stettheimer's life was her creation of a separate social persona to interact with others and so provide an invisible shield for her private self-as-artist. This protected her from the world's "strangers" and enabled her to find the time and emotional space to make her work. In her influential book, *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun notes that "women are well beyond youth when they begin, often unconsciously, to create another [persona or life] story."³ Such was particularly the case for women like Stettheimer, growing up in late Victorian society. Born in 1871, into a socially prestigious, matriarchal family with numerous and continuing familial obligations, it was difficult if not impossible for Stettheimer to concentrate on being an artist. In order to produce her work, Stettheimer was forced to construct a double life, carefully marshaling her time and energy for her painting, while concurrently interacting socially in her roles as dutiful daughter, sister, and salon patron. Her commitment to serious art-making is evident from early in her life; lacking, however, a script of recognizable career stages for women such as herself, Stettheimer was forced to seek out male models and inventively piece together formal art training, maintaining a running battle to find the

opportunity to work on her art. As Linda Nochlin astutely observes, “for a woman to opt for a career at all, much less for a career in art, has required . . . adopting, however covertly, the ‘masculine’ attributes of single-mindedness, concentration, tenaciousness, and absorption in ideas and craftsmanship for their own sake.”⁴ For Stettheimer, adapting “masculine” attributes, as well as adopting overtly manly styles of dress, was a cultural strategy that helped her manage her double life and thus undermine the dominant social categories of gender that marginalized serious women, professional or not. In turn, by mocking the conventions of her social class in her work, Stettheimer, in a highly subversive manner, drew attention to the artificiality of the social order in which she lived.

The artistic self that Stettheimer developed represents her most dadaist act, and in all probability, her close friend Marcel Duchamp provided Stettheimer with an appropriate emulative model of an artist maintaining a viable social role quite separate from one’s creative activities. From the beginning of their friendship in 1915 and throughout the next decade, Duchamp and Stettheimer spent many hours discussing art-making and art theory, and there is evidence of mutual influence between the two artists, particularly in terms of gender role-playing. Despite the difference in the appearance of their work, the two shared many similarities. Stettheimer, like Duchamp, was essentially a private person, raised in a European environment. Both artists were *flâneurs*, using personal elegance and aloofness as a way of distancing themselves from others.

Duchamp shared with Stettheimer an understanding of the Janus-headed dilemma of the artist as observer: needing to separate oneself in order to look objectively, and yet still be tied closely to the elements of one’s life in order to allow the distancing necessary to create meaningful work. In conversations Duchamp later noted “I’ve had anything but a public life,” and, “I was never interested in looking at myself in an esthetic mirror. My intention was always to get away from myself, though I knew perfectly well that I was using myself. Call it a game between ‘I’ and ‘me.’”⁵

Similarly, in numerous conversation-piece paintings from 1915 to 1935, Stettheimer consistently included herself in the composition *outside* the main action of the scene. In works such as *Picnic at Bedford Hills*, *Sunday Afternoon at the Country*, *Natatorium Undine*, and *Love Flight of a Pink Candy Heart*, she is the observer rather than the participant, looking on rather than interacting.

Stettheimer, moreover, consciously controlled viewer's and friends' perceptions, rarely revealing to anyone—except perhaps Duchamp, the art critic Henry McBride, and later Pavel Tchelitchew—her committed, artist-self. Although she spent most of her life living in close quarters with her sisters Ettie and Carrie and their mother, Stettheimer kept herself and her work separate, never allowing her family members to see her paintings until they were finished. She maintained her New York Beaux-Arts studio from the 1890s to her death as her only private domain. This caused much resentment among her sisters, who could come there only by invitation and who felt it allowed Stettheimer to escape from handling her share of family responsibilities. As Stettheimer observed in a poem about the familial conflicts that arose as a result of her longing to work in what isolation she could secure:

*Tame little kisses
one must give
to Uncles Nephews
and Nieces
And to friends
who say you are charming
one does likewise
nothing alarming.*⁶

Stettheimer created a specific persona to interact with the world, willfully shrouding her private self to such an extent that there is little

chance it will ever be revealed.⁷ During her jealousy guarded private hours, she read voraciously. As her youngest sister, Ettie, recalled, Stettheimer “must have read everything concerning art published in English, French and German up to that time.”⁸ When Stettheimer had the opportunity to paint, she drew upon her wide background and knowledge of art history, European decorative arts, contemporary theater, and theories of modernism to create a new style she deemed appropriate for New York in the new century. The choices she made—in everything from her clothing to her creative output—reflect her commitment to her profession, and how consciously she worked to consolidate future critical perception of herself as an artist to be taken seriously.

To an even greater extent than Duchamp, whose creative work was supported by a small allowance from his father, friends, and an occasional French lesson (including to the Stettheimer sisters), Stettheimer was financially independent. This was key in making it possible for her to even consider art-making as a career; and it allowed her to manage carefully how and where she gained her art instruction.⁹ In the 1890s, after spending most of the previous twenty years in Europe and receiving art lessons in the German tradition, Stettheimer returned to New York to attend the Art Students League for instruction in the alternative French academic tradition. Her choice of the League was also undoubtedly based on its liberal policies toward women, who made up one-third of the institution’s founders and a large percentage of its board. Perhaps as important, the Art Students League offered its female students life drawing classes with nude models. It was the first New York art institution to do so and only the second such class offered at all in the United States. Because the careful and prolonged study of the nude model was considered essential for the production of significant work, the general exclusion of women artists from this study hindered their attainment of professionalism. (Most women artists were taught anatomy by drawing from plaster casts of antique statuary.¹⁰) After graduation from the League, Stettheimer re-

turned to Europe where she studied with various tutors in Italy and France but was constantly forced to abandon her art for social and familial obligations.

With the outbreak of war in 1914, Stettheimer, her mother Rosetta, and her sisters fled Europe and settled permanently in Manhattan. The war brought many changes in societal thinking about the benefits and risks of individual freedom and a new, more fluid sense of personal identity within shifting contexts. For women, particularly for those able and willing to take advantage of the opportunities these afforded, it was a singularly liberating period of enormous growth, self-awareness and independence, especially in light of the public debates over feminism and gender roles.¹¹

Even with the persistent call for women to bear children for repopulation, many women began to chafe against the confines and rigidity of traditional social roles. Unmarried status became not only a viable but a preferred option for numerous financially-able women.¹² Marcel Duchamp often referred to Stettheimer as a “bachelor,” conferring on her the French term *bachelier* (a word play on the gender implied in academic advanced degrees) to connote a “New Woman” as well as acknowledge her choice not to marry or have children and so take precious time away from her work.¹³ As a popular American magazine noted in 1895, “[T]he only woman at the present time who is willing to be regarded as a mere breeding machine is she who lacks the wit to adopt any other role and now she is the exception rather than the rule”¹⁴—a comment Stettheimer (and her sisters) would have applauded. In 1901, art critic Marius-Ary Leblond commented on a growing phenomenon in France popularly called “Femme Nouvelle” to denote the vastly increasing number of women who were choosing professions over marriage. He described the New Woman as living a full life, “a complete and powerful one, equal in intensity and output to that of a man. . . . She lives by herself and has an . . . individual-

ity that contemporary painting . . . is beginning to translate into frank and self-confident gestures. . . . She is the New Woman of the streets of the great cities.”¹⁵ In 1916 Ettore Marroni wrote in *Vanity Fair*: “The small circle of a man’s arm does not constitute the orbit of the world. . . . A man’s whisper of love is not all the poetry and music of the universe.”¹⁶ In numerous other articles in the American media, the New Woman justified her decision not to marry by pointing out that marriage (as conventionally defined) was little better than slavery. Stettheimer’s (as well as her sisters’) decision never to marry was a direct result of their father’s abandonment of their family when the artist was very young. Consequently, an unusually strong bond formed between the mother and the sisters and endured for over sixty years.

The decision by the three Stettheimer women to never abandon their mother adversely affected their lives by its restrictions, binding them into an increasingly hermetic existence against which Florine constantly struggled. At the same time, the father’s desertion freed the Stettheimer sisters from believing that matrimony or romantic love should represent the ultimate aim of their lives, thus enabling them to pursue alternative, individual goals. In a *New Yorker* article in 1946 one of the Stettheimers stated, “Being unmarried women . . . we don’t have to fit into any categories,”¹⁷ demonstrating that they were well aware of the greater freedom granted by their unmarried status. Another result of their father’s disappearance was that it fostered among the sisters a highly cynical view of men as husbands. In a sardonic poem Stettheimer wrote for her own pleasure, she observed:

*Sweet little Miss Mouse
Wanted her own house
So she married Mr. Mole
And got only a hole.*¹⁸

Tellingly, following a meeting in the 1890s with her old friend Marie Glanz, Stettheimer wrote in her diary: “Her husband is very unattractive, but most husbands are!”¹⁹

By age twenty-five, Duchamp himself was already known among his friends in Paris as “the bachelor” because of his attitudes against marriage. As he later observed to Pierre Cabanne: “There was a budgetary question that came into it, and a very logical bit of reasoning. I had to choose painting, or something else. To be a man of art, or to marry, have children.”²⁰ By never marrying (although sharing with her sisters a romantic interest in numerous men during her youth), Stettheimer similarly circumvented traditional societal constrictions imposed on women. She and her sisters surrounded themselves with male friends who were either married or homosexual, acting out a flirtatious game of maidenliness until well into their seventies. For Stettheimer in particular, the lack of encumbrances of a husband or children allowed her to focus on her work; her preference for gay and married male friends, rather than suitors, enabled her to concentrate her conversations on art, not courtship, marriage, or children. Stettheimer was not trying to subvert the existing social-sexual order as much as she was struggling for her own autonomy as a psychological, social and political being.

One solution was to control her own image, particularly within her art, thus manipulating how outsiders and posterity would eventually assess her and her work. Throughout her career, Stettheimer used self-portraits to influence how she wanted to be perceived and remembered. Among the earliest visual portrayals of Stettheimer as transgressive artist can be found among the drawings she executed for a ballet, *Orphée of the Quat'z Arts*, which she wrote and designed in Paris around 1912 after seeing Vaslav Nijinsky dance in the Ballets Russes production of *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. The figure of Georgette, *Orphée's* main protagonist, un-

doubtedly served as a metaphor for Stettheimer's desire to mediate between the disparate worlds of high society and bohemia, and the dual roles the artist lived between her social life and her work. The action of *Orphée* takes place late in the evening of the annual artists' ball when art students in costume parade decorated floats through the streets of Paris. In Stettheimer's libretto, the reveling artists stop a carriage carrying an aristocratic man and his elegant daughter Georgette. The artists lead Georgette and her father from their fiacre and engage them in spontaneous bacchanalian dancing. A group of artists remove Georgette's elaborately fitted clothing and drape her in a diaphanous sheath and flowers. The change in clothing symbolizes a liminal cultural space in which the upper-class Georgette can temporarily transgress the social boundaries that normally restrict her behavior. For a brief period, dressed in this bohemian masquerade, Georgette moves with ease among the artists and becomes one of them, as Stettheimer herself must have wished to do. However, just as Stettheimer could not break entirely free of her family obligations in her real life, in the ballet, when the sun begins to rise, Georgette is helped back into her original clothes and she and her father depart.

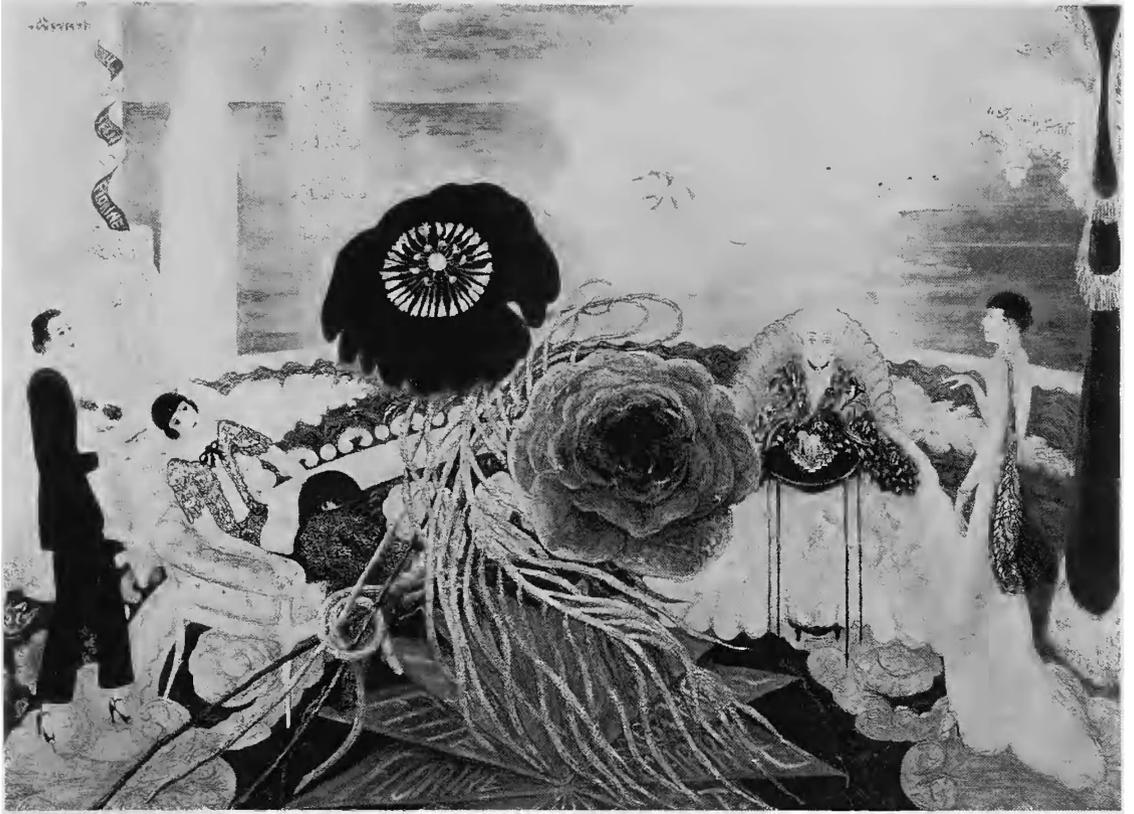
In most self-depictions, Stettheimer chose to portray herself in artist's full working regalia, holding a palette and paintbrush. In the mid-1890s, in keeping with the Rococo Revival sweeping France, Stettheimer designed a four panel plaster and gilt screen, which she decorated with rococo designs that included separate portraits of herself, her sisters Etie and Carrie, and her brother Walter. Each figure is portrayed in its most characteristic pose and attributes, and every aspect of each panel reflects the siblings' personalities. In her own screen portrait, Stettheimer wears an artist's beret and harem pants with voluminous hip pockets, the functional effects of which are somewhat offset by the addition of red high-

heeled shoes. In one hand she holds a paintbrush, in the other a palette, and her stance and wide-eyed facial expression are those of an artist stepping back to view her subject from a distance.²¹

A few years later, she painted another self-portrait in which she is again holding brushes and palette, but is standing in front of a Chinese screen. Wearing a white smock and a turban to protect her hair and to keep it off her face as she is working, Stettheimer glances out at the viewer with her characteristic dark, rounded features and pale skin. The expression on her face is guarded but direct, affirming her place as an artist by portraying herself with the same form of self-assertion as past artists, from Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun to Gustave Courbet.

Stettheimer followed this pattern of artistic attributes repeatedly in her self-portraits over the next few years. In a painting of the estate the Stettheimers rented in the summer of 1915, her sisters and mother gather in the front garden circle, while Stettheimer, wearing a sun hat, painting smock, and harem pants, is shown painting the scene at an easel. In another work, *Painter and Faun*, she appears again wearing smock and white pants over red high heels, resting against the side of a tree, her paintbrush and palette in her hands. A small faun, her artist-muse and reminder of Nijinsky's artistry, sits by her side. In the painting, Stettheimer gazes to the right as if she is studying the scene before painting it on the canvas visible at the left edge of the composition.

In one of her most significant works, *Family Portrait No. 2* (figure 16.2), Stettheimer objectively and ironically memorialized her immediate family members as ageless icons, forever frozen in characteristic poses. She used over-sized flowers in the foreground to draw an analogy between transitory beauty and innate character, and behind each woman in the painting Stettheimer placed architectural elements alluding to their personalities. She chose as correlatives to her own persona the RCA Building and Radio City Music Hall (sites of popular entertainment), the tall, hard, elegant silhouette of Cleopatra's Needle (a gift to the city from



16.2

Florine Stettheimer, *Family Portrait No. 2*, 1933, oil on canvas, 117.4 × 164 cm. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, gift of Miss Ettie Stettheimer. Photograph copyright © 1997 the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

the Egyptian government), and an arranged swatch of cellophane trimmed with gold fringe (characteristic of her studio decor and stage sets for the opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*). In painting her own image below these familiars, she dispensed with the elaborate finery in which she depicted her mothers and sisters. Instead, she represented herself in a sleek black-velvet pantsuit, an outfit her friends recall she often wore in her studio. The only concessions to vanity in her image, beyond her continuing choice to paint herself in her mid-thirties rather than her true age of sixty-two, are the omnipresent red ankle-strapped high heels above which towers her lanky body. The persistent appearance of these accessories indicates that Stettheimer's choice of male-coded clothing (whether harem pants or velvet pantsuit) is less an attempt to depict herself as male as it is to usurp the power and context of male-coded clothing, while remaining very much a female. In the painting, she rises on her high heels and rests slightly back on her haunches, surveying the scene before her like a painter about to commit it to canvas. Emotionally distant from the rest of the composition, she assumes her habitual role as observer.

Stettheimer's repeated depiction of herself in pants, whether stylish harem pants, baggy white pantaloons or the black velvet pantsuit, served multiple purposes: wearing pants granted the artist far greater flexibility and freedom of movement when painting or carrying canvases around the studio than wearing skirts or dresses. In addition, pants carried a political implication. Stettheimer's frequent choice to represent herself in some form of trousers undoubtedly reflects similar sentiments to those of Dorothy Sayers, who answered those who criticized her for wearing male clothing by stating: "If the trousers do not attract you, so much the worse; for the moment I do not want to attract you. I want to enjoy myself as a human being."²²

In the same way that Stettheimer consciously used clothes to express her political and social beliefs, in one of her most defiant works she

depicted herself as a six-foot long female nude and hung it prominently in her New York Beaux-Arts studio for years (figure 16.3). Remarkably, none of her friends recognized it publicly as a self-portrait, probably because they would have had trouble associating the fragile, reticent, middle-aged woman with whom they interacted socially with the bold, life-sized nude. To further emphasize this “blindness,” Stettheimer included her nude self-portrait in another painting, *Soirée*, in which various members of her family as well as friends are gathered in her studio, but pointedly do not glance at the nude personification of their host that is hanging on the wall in the background.

Throughout Western art, artists have painted and sculpted nude females in provocative poses to accentuate and display their physical attributes for the delectation of male viewers. In most examples of the genre, the nude has been created by male artists as the focus of male sexuality. Stettheimer was obviously aware of this history when she painted her nude self-portrait as well as when she composed the following poem:

*Must one have models
must one have models forever
nude ones
draped ones
costumed ones
“The Blue Hat”
“The Yellow Shawl”
“The Patent Leather Slippers”
Possibly men painters really
need them—they created them.*²³

As in Manet’s *Olympia*, to which her painting was a direct response, Stettheimer’s rendition features a full-sized nude with legs crossed at the

**16.3**

Florine Stettheimer, *Nude Self-Portrait*,
c. 1915–1916, oil on canvas, 47 × 67 in.
Art Properties, Columbia University of
the City of New York, gift of the Estate
of Ettie Stettheimer, 1967. Photo: John
D. Schiff.

FLORINE STETTMEIER

ankles, reclining on a white bed covered with a fringed shawl. Like Manet's Victorine, Stettheimer actively gazes out at the viewer. However, unlike most male depictions of the nude in which the female's physical sites of sexuality are depicted in great detail, in Stettheimer's self-portrait her body is rendered in vague, light brushstrokes. The artist instead reserved her most detailed treatment for the hands, feet, and face, locations of character and personality rather than anonymous sexuality. In place of the challenging, economically driven stare of Olympia, Stettheimer's facial expression is knowing and quizzical, taunting the viewer to recognize her facial features above her nude body, as though she is consciously turning herself into an object of sight in order to record visibly a consciousness of the gap between ideology and experience. Stettheimer's depiction of herself as a recumbent nude is not only an iconic deprecation of the genre, but also a blatant differentiation by the artist between the self she showed to others and her true self which is invisible.

Although many of her friends described her as perpetually youthful, most of Stettheimer's significant work was created when she was between forty-five and seventy years old. Then as now, particularly for women, middle-age presented significant obstacles to gaining credibility as a serious artist without courting dismissal as an eccentric or a dilettante. Stettheimer was clearly aware of the dilemma of the creative, mature woman as she mordantly acknowledged in her poem, "Civilizers of the World":

*They like a woman
to have a mind
they are of greater interest
they find.
They are not very young
women of that
kind.²⁴*

For Stettheimer, chronological age was something she controlled, at least for posterity. Although she knew and befriended most of the significant contemporary photographers of her time—including Edward Steichen, Alfred Stieglitz, Baron de Meyer, Arnold Genthe, and Cecil Beaton—she never allowed them to photograph her. Carl Van Vechten, a close friend of Stettheimer's, noted that she “refused even to be photographed by me, although [her sisters] Ettie and Carrie both accepted that ordeal with alacrity.”²⁵ Instead, Stettheimer relied on her painted imagery in which, throughout her life, she consistently depicted herself as slim and youthful, generally around thirty-five to forty years old. Friends remembered the artist as “ageless—never anything but young—we might all grow older, more lined and worn with years, but not Florine—she was always young and fragile.”²⁶ The word “fragile” is interesting in that it is not consistent with Stettheimer's artistic production. As her sister Ettie recalled:

*To live this dedicated life [as an artist] that she loved Florine . . . never was . . . much of a party person. . . . Whatever enjoyment she derived from these often visually attractive occasions was largely in connection with the use she might make of them in her work. It was her work, first and last, that she enjoyed, planning her next painting, experimenting technically, doing research for it and finally painting it. For these exacting steps in production she took care of her delicately made body and strengthened it into an effective tool, and when outside events did not interfere with her absorption she was content.*²⁷

It is fascinating how Stettheimer, in constructing her public identity, managed to balance the differentiation between her social self and the private artist-self who worked every minute she could steal from social obligations. The two roles were quite contradictory, causing even her friends to have difficulty justifying the seeming discrepancies in her char-

acter. For example, Georgia O’Keeffe, struggling to write a eulogy to Stettheimer, ended up creating an equivocal portrait of the woman/artist, noting that Stettheimer was “perfectly consistent with any of her inconsistencies” and describing how Stettheimer was “gentle, understanding, sympathetic and kind but she was also extremely acid and sarcastic.”²⁸

Marsden Hartley, for whom Stettheimer and her sisters provided financial sponsorship, wrote an often quoted, if simplistic, description of Stettheimer’s work as “quaint,” terming it “the ultra-lyrical expression of an ultra-feminine spirit” and “chamber music meant to be heard by special sympathetic ears.” By exaggerating the “delicate, fanciful” aspects of her work and neglecting its caustic humor and insight, Hartley furthered the general perception of Stettheimer as an eccentric, fey woman whose work necessitates “an ultra-refined experience in order to enjoy what it contains.”²⁹

Stettheimer enjoyed this characterization of her work, as it suited her public role, allowing her to keep the less saccharine side of herself and her work hidden in plain view like her nude self-portrait. To reinforce this duality, Stettheimer played subtle Duchampian games in several of her paintings. In one of the earliest conversation-pieces of 1917, *Fête à Duchamp*, Stettheimer painted her family members and friends celebrating the birthday of the French artist. The composition is complex and multifaceted, showing different events and times of day on a single canvas. The figure of Stettheimer, like those of the other celebrants, appears several times within the composition but most prominently at the middle left, dressed in the characteristic embroidered white smock and harem pants that she is also wearing in one of her rare extant photographs (see figure 16.1). Facing forward to greet Duchamp and Francis Picabia, who are entering the garden, Stettheimer’s figure is not easily distinguished in the painting. However, she included an inscription (in red) that runs vertically next to her figure and into the flowers of the entrance bower. The inscription, the Latin word *pinxit*, translates as (he/she) “painted it,”

and was often used on Old Master paintings as a distinguishing mark accompanying the name of the artist. It is altogether fitting that Stettheimer included the insignia in this painting of her friends on a most leisurely and social occasion, as it stands as a reminder that despite the frivolous subject matter, someone—in this case, Stettheimer herself—had to actively *work* to create and capture it for posterity. O’Keeffe, more than Hartley, was aware of the underlying reality that, although Stettheimer was small and slimly built, “her work showed hard work—long painstaking hard work . . . the many large, bright colored canvases stand there to tell us that the bright-eyed leisurely little person we saw must have been very busy much of the time we were not around.”³⁰

Stettheimer’s imaging of herself as artist and her commitment to visual perception went far beyond the appropriation of articles of male clothing such as pants or artist’s beret. Whether as a nude model whose direct gaze belies her passive position or a surreal, weightless being whose persona resides purely in the mind, Stettheimer continually presented herself as monogamously bound to the life of the visual. Following World War I, the emergence of Surrealism and its appropriation of Freudian psychology and psychoanalysis strongly influenced artists such as Stettheimer who were committed to visualizing all that was modern. There was greater tolerance toward sexual difference prior to World War II; and as George Chauncey has observed, gender relations were far less polarized and more relational than they were to become after 1945. Many members of marginalized groups managed multiple identities and social networks that were more integrated or at least accepted into the complex mix that made up New York cultural society.³¹ New York bohemia from the 1910s through the 1930s developed a reputation for tolerating non-conformity (or eccentricity) in those who wished to develop lives unencumbered by family obligations and engage in creative work; and it was these people, albeit only those of the middle and upper classes, who frequented the Stettheimer salons and Stettheimer’s studio.

During the period between the wars, bohemianism was celebrated in Baudelairean terms as “the cult of the multiplied sensation” in which artists working in varied media developed heightened powers of vision and perception—often through use of alcohol and drugs.³² A number of modernist writers, artists, and musicians attempted to “enter a state that is simultaneously totally full and totally empty, at once transparent and opaque, able to draw the world in to the self but at the price of divesting all things of their substantiality,” creating images of a “weightless, floating self.”³³ Years later, in a public talk titled “The Creative Act,” Duchamp characterized artists as being “like . . . mediumistic being[s],” not in possession of “consciousness on the aesthetic plane,” and further describing the artist as a person who speaks from “beyond time and space.”³⁴

In 1923 Stettheimer painted her most surrealist work, *Portrait of Myself* (figure 16.4), in which she appears as a weightless, “mediumistic” artist. Breaking with her earlier portrait conventions where she displayed herself with the working accoutrements of the artist, in this portrait she is instead transformed into a visionary—an androgynous, sun-attracted dragonfly. Her pose is an exact reflection of the small, winged insect that hovers in the composition’s upper right corner and seems drawn to the brightly shining sun. Stettheimer often stated that she considered the mayfly or dragonfly her *anima*. According to the artist Pavel Tchelitchew, Stettheimer saw herself as an “éphémère, [the] transparent insect . . . that is so translucent one can hardly see it,” and she linked this state with art that she felt was ephemeral and based on illusion.³⁵ Recalling the dragonfly’s delicate, transparent wings in her self-portrait, Stettheimer wears an ephemeral gown of white cellophane against a red cape. Wrapped in cellophane, her body is sexless and untouchable, the *décolleté* of the dress disclosing no apparent breasts, and her torso resembling that of a slim young man rather than that of a fifty-two-year-old woman. Duchamp reportedly stated that Stettheimer “had no female body under her clothes,” and Cecil Beaton added that clothes “hung on her.”³⁶

**16.4**

Florine Stettheimer, *Portrait of Myself*, 1923, oil on canvas, 40 × 26 in. Columbia University of the City of New York, gift of Ettie Stettheimer, 1967.

Women were often imaged as *femmes-enfants* in early surrealist journals, depicted with their eyes wide open and hypnotically glazed, indicating their openness to emotions and a stream of autonomic, unconscious stimuli.³⁷ In her self-portrait, Stettheimer incorporated many of these surrealist tenets, particularly those conferring on women the status of seer and bearer of psychic energy, by emphasizing her eyes through dilated pupils and thickly red-ringed lashes. Her hypnotic, dreamy expression in *Portrait of Myself* reflects the notion of Stettheimer as artist, seeing the world through the heightened vision of the innovator. On her head she wears a black beret—an item of clothing identified with artists and Parisian *apaches*, nonconformists who tended to populate the periphery of society. The syntax of the painting's title, *Portrait of Myself*, rather than "Self-Portrait," assuredly bespeaks the artist's intention. One of the fundamental characteristics of the modern novel, according to Stettheimer's favorite author, Marcel Proust, was the discovery of what he termed "a different self" whose aim was not to narrate a story but "to achieve a breakthrough" to a deeper, mythic, more human self.³⁸

During the same years that she painted *Portrait of Myself*, Stettheimer executed two portraits of Duchamp. One is a portrait of his head, painted entirely *en grisaille* except for his lips, which are tinted a faint rose/orange. As in her own self-portrait, she floats Duchamp's head in indeterminate space. His eyes are half-closed but with pupils dilated, while his head radiates with an intense energy symbolizing his intellectual powers. In the second portrait of Duchamp (figure 16.5), Stettheimer included representations of his two personae: the enigmatic, private Duchamp as inventor, artist, and businessman wearing conventional, muted clothes, is painted in somber tones of brown and gray, and looks nothing like a friend's observation that "Marcel in real life is pure fantasy."³⁹ At the right of the composition, Stettheimer depicted his feminine alter-ego, Rose Sélavy, painted entirely in rose tones, with features and body recognizable as those of Duchamp with a decidedly feminine cast.

**16.5**

Florine Stettheimer, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1923, oil on canvas, 152.4 × 106.7 cm. Collection of William Kelly Simpson.

Whitney Chadwick summarizes the observations of the French surrealist André Breton on woman's status as art-maker by noting that a female "completes the male vision by absorbing into herself those qualities that man recognizes as important but does not wish to possess himself."⁴⁰ Duchamp created Rose Sélavy as his female public persona in 1920, crediting her as author of a number of his works. In describing Sélavy's origins, Duchamp stated: "In effect, I wanted to change my identity, and the first idea that came to me was to take a Jewish name. . . . I didn't find a Jewish name that I especially liked, or that tempted me, and suddenly I had an idea: why not change sex? It was much simpler. So the name Rose Sélavy came from that."⁴¹

At the time of Sélavy's conception, Duchamp was an intimate member of the Stettheimer circle, so it is tempting to speculate on Rose's creation vis-à-vis Duchamp's using Stettheimer as his model, particularly when comparing representations of Duchamp's incarnation as Rose with images of Stettheimer. In addition to being Jewish, Stettheimer was slim, dark, and often draped her auburn bangs low on her forehead (thus drawing attention to her dark eyes)—all characteristics shared by extant images of Rose. In a rare portrait of Stettheimer drawn by Duchamp in 1925, he represented her in three-quarter view, her eyes and nose emphasized below her dark brow, and her mouth almost nonexistent. Like its sitter, the portrait is enigmatic and echoes the pose and manner of one of Man Ray's famous photographs of Duchamp as Rose with its three-quarter view and dark, mysterious glance (see figure 7.2). Although hatless in Duchamp's drawing, Stettheimer often wore a hat, whether an artist's beret, a wide-brimmed sunhat or a man's bowler similar to that worn by Rose Sélavy. A drawing of Stettheimer by Paul Thevénaz depicts her wearing a draped beret and ballooned harem pants; and in a watercolor by Carl Sprinchorn, Stettheimer stands in the foyer of her apartment wearing a dark bowler hat. Even more closely aligned to Rose's image is

the representation of Stettheimer by her friend Adolfo Best-Maugard. The Mexican artist/illustrator portrayed her holding her paintbrush and palette, wearing a culotted smock, and sporting a man's bowler that is identical to the hat Duchamp is wearing when photographed as Rose (without the elaborate band).

There is no written evidence that Duchamp used Stettheimer as a model for Rose; however, it is an intriguing proposal. Stettheimer, in fact, hinted at the possibility in her renderings of the figure of Rose in her *Portrait of Duchamp* and her own *Portrait of Myself*, both painted in 1923, in which the two sensuous, boneless, feminine bodies, wrapped in iridescent rose-red tones, hover in space. Stettheimer furthered this correlation in her painting of Duchamp by making Rose's hair an orange-red, in harmony with the rose tones of her/his clothing. Meanwhile, although her hair appears dark in the few photographs we have, Stettheimer inevitably gave herself red hair in all of her self-portraits, ranging in hue from carrot (like her image of Rose) to auburn.

Duchamp and Stettheimer's friendship ebbed and slowly faded after he left New York and returned to Paris where he ironically enacted his most non-Dada act. Throughout his time in New York, Duchamp was outspoken about sharing Stettheimer's views on marriage. He described his work, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* which he began in New York during the period when he was closest to Stettheimer, from 1915 to 1923 (see figure 6.2), as "above all a negation of women in the social sense of the word, that is to say, the woman-wife, the mother, the children, etc. I carefully avoided all that." He declared that "the family . . . forces you to abandon your real ideas, to swap them for things it believes in, society and all that paraphernalia!" However, despite his many public protestations against marriage, Duchamp wed Lydie Sarrazin-Levassor in Paris in 1927. Their marriage lasted less than a year, with Duchamp later recalling: "We were married the way one is usually married, but it didn't take, because I saw that marriage was as boring as anything. I was really

much more of a bachelor than I thought. So, after six months, my wife very kindly agreed to a divorce. . . . [I]t happened as simply as possible.”⁴²

Although the marriage apparently had little lasting effect on Duchamp’s life, the news caused a furor among Stettheimer and her friends. Stettheimer’s older sister Carrie was in Paris and met the couple two days after their wedding. She immediately wrote her sisters saying that Duchamp’s wife was “a very fat girl . . . very, very—fat.”⁴³ Stettheimer’s other sister Ettie and mutual friend Alfred Stieglitz ruminated on the implications of Duchamp’s marriage: “I oughtn’t to be surprised for last winter I remarked to him now that he had become ‘salesman of art’ what next? . . . [A]t any rate its [*sic*] a woman he married.”⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Stettheimer saw Duchamp in her dreams, “getting bald and his forehead and headtop [were] made of opaque milk glass which perspired—and which he constantly mopped—I asked him about his wife—what she was like—he said she looked about eight or nine years old.”⁴⁵ She wrote to the art critic Henry McBride, describing her peculiar fantasy of Duchamp’s wedding fashions: “He had a church wedding—six bridesmaids in white muslin, pink sashes, pink picture hats. Two little Kate Greenaway girls two little Eton-jacketed boys—the Bride in Silver-cloth. I think she should have worn a wedding gown of near-glass with a neat wire trimming-spiral design. However so few do the appropriate thing.”⁴⁶ Stettheimer repeated the image of a spiral in conjunction with Duchamp in her double portrait and again in a poem she wrote about the Frenchman, “Love Flight.” The poem once again reiterates Stettheimer’s caustic view of love and Duchamp, characterizing both as ephemeral and transient:

*A silver-tin thin spiral
Revolving from cool twilight
To as far as pink dawn
A steely negation of lightning
That strikes*

*A solid lambs-wool mountain
 Reared into the hot night
 And ended the spinning spiral's
 Love flight—⁴⁷*

Stettheimer displayed similar irony in her paintings of the later 1920s as New York's salon society slowly dissolved, and the artist increasingly turned her gaze away from intimate situations and toward popular culture. One of the topics she chose to depict during this period was, significantly, a fashionable society wedding. Stettheimer's painting, *The Cathedrals of Fifth Avenue* (1931) attests to her view of marriage as a suffocating, conventional, and commercial undertaking that benefits the man, not the woman. She incorporated images of all the ostentation and treacle involved in a New York society wedding, from jewels to house furnishings, which float in the sky surrounding the ceremony. Although occupying the center of the composition, the plump bride, surrounded by vaguely pink attendants, is a characterless mass of diffused white light, her features nearly invisible. By contrast, many of the guests attending the wedding are easily identifiable as friends of the Stettheimer sisters who themselves can be seen at the lower right of the painting, looking on from their elegant convertible. Stettheimer, at the far right, wears an artist's beret and peers at the procession from over her sisters' shoulders.

Both Stettheimer and Duchamp shared notions of the artist as bachelor, of necessity stripped bare of the encumbrances of spouse and progeny in order to be wedded to art and to have the freedom and time to create. In *The Cathedrals of Art*, her final, caustic representation of the New York art world, Stettheimer included herself in the foreground as a conflated bride/bachelor. In this painting (which remained unfinished when she died in her mid-seventies), Stettheimer portrayed herself not overtly as an artist, shown with the tools of her trade, but in a white flowing gown, holding a floral bouquet. As a bride of art, she stands under

a white and gold fringed canopy trimmed with huge calla lilies. Like her work, she exists outside the art business taking place in the background at the three prominent art museums—the Modern, the Whitney, and the Metropolitan. This position of outsider was one she cultivated in the context of her perception of the hypocrisy and greed she felt ruled the art world. In another of her poems she wrote:

*Art is spelled with a capital A
And capital also back it
Ignorance also makes it sway
The chief thing is to make it pay
In a quite dizzy way
Hurrah—hurrah—⁴⁸*

At the time Stettheimer was working on *The Cathedrals of Art*, Duchamp was no longer an intimate member of her circle. Therefore, for the position of groom opposite her in the composition, Stettheimer chose the decorator Robert Locher, whose homosexuality ensured that she would remain always a bachelor, never a bride, the virgin monogamously dedicated to her art, as evidenced by her chaste white gown.

In life, as in the painting, Stettheimer was wedded solely to her art; and so she curtained off her art life from her interactions with family and friends. She worked in isolation, exhibiting her paintings only when they were complete. As her sister Ettie recalled: “Florine was one of those fortunate beings who live in the present because they love the present. And she loved the present because she was always occupied with painting and she loved to paint.”⁴⁹ Until her mother’s death, when in her mid-sixties she was able to move away from the family apartment and live alone full-time in her studio, Stettheimer performed her duties as sister, daughter, society host—except during the time she was able to steal away to work on her art. The dual life she led was necessary, and her

commitment real. Stettheimer shared with Duchamp an interest in posterity, and at the time of her death was negotiating with art dealer and friend Kirk Askew to mount a one-person exhibition of her work. As Duchamp later observed: "The danger is always in pleasing the immediate public, the one which surrounds you, receives you, finally consecrates you and confers success and . . . the rest. Contrary to that, perhaps one might have to wait fifty or a hundred years to reach his real public, but it is that which interests me."⁵⁰

It has been fifty years since Stettheimer's death. After a long period of invisibility, she is finally becoming visible to a public that sees beyond the camouflage. While feigning shy eccentricity and fragility in her social, more public life, Stettheimer's private life was reserved for herself and her work. And it is as a working artist, a committed "bachelor," never the bride, that she chose to preserve and represent herself into the future.

*Occasionally
A human being
Saw my light
Rushed in
Got singed
Got scared
Rushed out
Called fire
Or it happened
That he tried
To subdue it
Or it happened
He tried to extinguish it
Never did a friend
Enjoy it
The way it was.*

*So I learned to
Turn it low
Turn it out
When I meet a stranger—
Out of courtesy
I turn on a soft
Pink light
Which is found modest
Even charming
It is a protection
Against wear
And tears
And when
I am rid of
The Always-to-be-Stranger
I turn on my light
And become myself.⁵¹*

NOTES

The author thanks Gretchen, Robert, and Daisy Ostenberg and the Trosters for space not among strangers; and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for everything else.

1. Florine Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers* (New York: privately printed, 1949), p. 59.
2. Parker Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer: A Life in Art* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, 1963), p. 10. See also "A Stranger Here Herself," *Newsweek* 28, no. 16 (14 October 1946): 116, 118. For an extended discussion of Stettheimer's work and the recoding of numerous individual works, see Barbara J. Bloemink, *The Life and Art of Florine Stettheimer* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1995).
3. Carolyn G. Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life* (New York and London: Norton, 1988), p. 109.
4. Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Art and Sexual Politics: Women's Liberation, Women Artists, and Art History*, ed. Thomas B. Hess and Elizabeth Baker (New York: Macmillan, 1971), p. 31. See also Linda Nochlin, "Florine Stettheimer as Rococo Subversive," *Art in America* 68, no. 7 (September 1980): 68–83; rpt. in *Florine Stettheimer: Manhattan fantastica* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1995), pp. 97–116.
5. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padgett (New York: Viking, 1971), p. 17; and Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in Cleve Gray, "Retrospective for Marcel Duchamp," *Art in America* 53, no. 1 (January 1965): 104. See also Katharine Kuh, "Marcel Duchamp," in *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), pp. 81–93.
6. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 60.
7. After Florine's and Carrie's deaths, Ettie culled their diaries and correspon-

dence (and her own), destroying any passages she felt were unsuitable, too personal, or not to her liking. Whether out of sibling jealousy or an impulse toward privacy, Ettie obliterated almost every passage in Florine's correspondence and diaries that referred to interactions of a romantic nature as well as every display of strong emotion or irritability. As a result, little is known of the artist's private thoughts and aspirations, and the only evidence remaining is found in Stettheimer's poems and works of art. For further information, see Bloemink, *The Life and Art*; and Barbara J. Bloemink, *Friends and Family: Portraiture in the World of Florine Stettheimer* (Katonah, NY: Katonah Museum of Art, 1993).

8. Ettie Stettheimer, "Introduction," in Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. iii. Stettheimer spent most of the first forty years of her life living in Europe. Her interest in the visual arts manifested itself early and was encouraged by her mother. Ettie recalled that Florine "had begun to show her love and gift in early school days, and after she left school she attended art classes continuously for many years, both here and abroad where she also traveled as extensively as possible to see European art. When finally she felt that she had got all she could from being trained and taught and 'shown,' she had her own studio here in New York where she spent practically all the hours of all her days working" (ibid.). Traveling with her two sisters, her mother, and various other relatives, Stettheimer repeatedly visited the great museums of France, Germany, Spain, and Italy and frequented as many contemporary art exhibitions as she was able.

9. This caused other artists who were not so fortunate, such as Georgia O'Keeffe, to complain: "I wish you would become ordinary like the rest of us and show your paintings this year!" (Georgia O'Keeffe, letter to Florine Stettheimer, 7 October 1929, Stettheimer Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University [hereafter cited as Beinecke]). At the same time Stettheimer's financial independence inhibited her reputation; she had no economic incentive to sell her work, and art must be marketed and critically reviewed in order to gain a widespread reputation. Additionally, in a manner reminiscent of Duchamp's *boîtes*, Stettheimer saw her entire artistic oeuvre as autobiographical and intelligible only when seen in its entirety. She therefore chose

not to sell her work during her lifetime, but hoped it would be donated, in its entirety, to a museum after her death. This, too, contributed to her reputation as an eccentric.

Recently, Steven Watson mistakenly proposed that Stettheimer refused to exhibit her works, stating that she “demanded that her paintings never leave the womblike atmosphere of her room.” See Watson, “Three Sisters,” *Art & Antiques* 9, no. 5 (May 1992): 66. In fact, throughout her life, Stettheimer regularly exhibited her paintings in numerous public forums and exhibitions throughout the United States and in Paris.

10. See Bloemink, *The Life and Art*, pp. 246–247, ns. 47–50.
11. Stettheimer and her sister Ettie supported and read widely about women’s issues and they attended a number of feminist rallies and public meetings.
12. A 1906 contest run by a local newspaper for the “‘best woman in Chicago,’” was “limited to single women” because the editors felt that “‘Unless the married woman ignores the wishes of her husband, it is difficult for her to achieve the same degree of goodness the unmarried woman does’” (qtd. in Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* [New York: Knopf, 1984], p. 275).
13. Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, p. 11; and Bloemink, *The Life and Art*, pp. 12–14. On the American bachelor-girl stereotype, see Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 190.
14. “The Maternal Instinct,” *Saturday Review* 8 (June 1895): 162.
15. Marius-Ary Leblond, qtd. in Debora Leah Silverman, “Nature, Nobility, and Neurology: The Ideological Origins of ‘Art Nouveau’ in France, 1889–1900” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1983), p. 129. See also Marius-Ary Leblond, “Les Peintres de la Femme Nouvelle,” *La Revue* 39, no. 4 (1 November 1901): 275–290.

16. Ettore Marroni, "How Women Can Grow Old," *Vanity Fair* 5, no. 1 (September 1915): 67.
17. "Florine," *New Yorker* 22, no. 34 (5 October 1946): 25.
18. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 4.
19. Bloemink, *The Life and Art*, p. 245, ns. 41–42. The fact that the Stettheimer sisters never married often causes speculation that their single status was the result of their being lesbians. Although Florine and her sisters befriended and associated socially with heterosexuals, bisexuals, and homosexuals of both sexes, there is no indication in any of her diaries or correspondence of a sexual preference for women. On the contrary, everything suggests that from early in her life Stettheimer was physically attracted to men, but because of her father's early desertion, her devotion to her work, and her hermetic lifestyle, she probably never acted on that attraction. For further discussion of this topic see Bloemink, *The Life and Art*, pp. 12–15.
20. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 33.
21. See Bloemink, *The Life and Art*, pp. 19–23.
22. Dorothy Sayers, qtd. in Heilbrun, *Writing a Woman's Life*, p. 55.
23. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 78.
24. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 60.
25. Carl Van Vechten, "Introduction," in Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, p. xiii. Only three photographs of Stettheimer exist, all taken by as yet unknown photographers. The first was taken in Bern, Switzerland, and was a posed shot of the three

sisters against a photographic background (the original was lost after being reproduced in Tyler's biography). The other two photographs appear to date from the teens and early twenties, and had been taken outdoors, probably at one of the summer estates the Stettheimers rented in Westchester County, New York. Late in life, Stettheimer's friend Marguerite Zorach made two sketches of her. The drawings depict the artist as an older woman complete with wrinkles and sagging skin. Stettheimer hated the drawings and Ettie tried to keep them from being reproduced in Tyler's book. Eventually Zorach gave the drawings to Columbia University where they remain with the other Stettheimer materials in the Butler Library.

26. Georgia O'Keeffe, Eulogy Notes, Georgia O'Keeffe Papers, Beinecke. I thank Sandra Markham for unearthing these unpublished notes and bringing them to my attention.

27. Ettie Stettheimer, "Introduction," in Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, pp. iii–vi.

28. O'Keeffe, Eulogy Notes, O'Keeffe Papers, Beinecke.

29. Marsden Hartley, "The Paintings of Florine Stettheimer," *Creative Art* 9, no. 1 (July 1931): 21 and 19, respectively.

30. O'Keeffe, Eulogy Notes, O'Keeffe Papers, Beinecke.

31. See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic, 1994).

32. Charles Baudelaire, qtd. in Jerrold Seigel, *The Private Worlds of Marcel Duchamp: Desire, Liberation, and the Self in Modern Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 217.

33. Seigel, *The Private Worlds of Marcel Duchamp*, pp. 245 and 243, respectively.

34. Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in Seigel, *The Private Worlds of Marcel Duchamp*, pp. 221, 222.
35. Pavel Tchelitchew, qtd. in Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, p. 41.
36. Marcel Duchamp and Cecil Beaton, qtd. in Tyler, *Florine Stettheimer*, p. 86.
37. See Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p. 33.
38. Norman F. Cantor, *Twentieth-Century Culture: Modernism to Deconstruction* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), p. 43. See also Silverman, "Nature, Nobility, and Neurology," pp. 150–160.
39. Henry McBride, "Florine Stettheimer: A Reminiscence," *View* 5, no. 3 (October 1945): 13–14; rpt. in *View: Parade of the Avant-Garde. An Anthology of View magazine (1940–1947)*, ed. Charles Henri Ford (New York: Thunder's Mouth, 1991), p. 156.
40. Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement*, p. 35.
41. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, p. 64.
42. Ibid.
43. Carrie Stettheimer, letter to Florine and Ettie Stettheimer, May 1927, Stettheimer Papers, Beinecke.
44. Alfred Stieglitz, letter to Ettie Stettheimer, 27 June 1927, Stettheimer Papers, Beinecke.
45. Florine Stettheimer, diary, Stettheimer Papers, Beinecke.

46. Florine Stettheimer, letter to Henry McBride, 13 July 1927, Stettheimer Papers, Beinecke.
47. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 55.
48. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 26.
49. Ettie Stettheimer, "Introduction," in Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. iii.
50. Marcel Duchamp, qtd. in Gray, "Retrospective for Marcel Duchamp": 105.
51. Stettheimer, *Crystal Flowers*, p. 42.

ZURICH DADA AND ITS ARTIST COUPLES

renée RIESE HUBERT



Hospitable to other avant-garde movements, Zurich Dada nonetheless maintained its autonomy, even in retrospect. Because it served as a haven, if not quite an ivory tower, for artists and writers who had fled the horrors of World War I, Zurich Dada hardly became an arena for political action: rather, it strongly emphasized performative meetings. In contrast, the politically oriented Berlin Dada, manifesting itself only after the war, demanded a different type of commitment, as it strove for real socio-economic change through concrete action. Drawing a large membership from the capital, it focused on the problematics of postwar Germany. Meanwhile, Berlin Dada and Zurich Dada were dissimilar in their attitudes toward women as well. Hannah Höch, probably the only full-fledged female member of the Berlin group, was simultaneously an outsider and an equal, a displaced female as well as a true partner.¹ Her photcollage *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser* (Cut with the Kitchen Knife), 1919–1920, addresses the question of sex roles, contrasting the audacity of women with the effeminization of political leaders, and can serve as a key document to Berlin Dada as a whole.²

For a great number of years, Höch had close relationships with a fellow dadaist, Raoul Hausmann. Likewise, the women participating in Zurich Dada, Emmy Hennings (1885–1948) and Sophie Taeuber (1889–1943), were linked to dadaist partners: Hugo Ball and Hans Arp. But whereas the

Höch-Hausmann relation was tension-ridden as long as it lasted, the Zurich partners, dedicated to collaboration, granted each other support and respect. Moreover, Hennings and Taeuber played crucial roles during the vibrant months of the Cabaret Voltaire and the Galerie Dada, participating in various forms of entertainment sponsored by the group.³

The image of artists working on their own and mediating in hushed solemnity in a studio in no way pertains to the Zurich dadaists, who generated most of their programs through group participation. In attempting to attract an audience by staging multiple simultaneous exhibits, displaying posters, and performing in a variety of ways, Zurich Dada functioned not only as a collaborative but a public venture. It thrived on get-togethers in cabarets, cafés, and galleries. Posters announced public performances that attracted a motley crowd of Zurich fans. Texts received their full valorization less in book form than in performances geared to jolt the spectators out of their complacency. Tzara would recite his texts, Arp give readings of his poems, and Hennings dramatize those by Hugo Ball among others. In the “simultaneous poems” in which Arp, Tzara, and Marcel Janco performed as a trio, each spoke and sang his own language. Reading aloud consisted of far more than an eloquent rendition of the texts, for it involved emotional gestures and the use of bizarre vocal effects while welcoming spontaneous interference. Nor did it strive for a thematic or narrative sequence among the performative acts. Various types of art were included, notably for the sake of transgression. Since performance functioned as a privileged means of communication, lyric poems and dramatic skits became almost interchangeable.

Emmy Hennings (figure 17.1) and Sophie Taeuber (figure 17.2) appeared as performers, both of them reciting and dancing, the former mainly at the Cabaret Voltaire and the latter at the Galerie Dada. They both made puppets and they both enjoyed positive professional collaboration with their spouse-partners. Neither made strong theoretical or ideological statements. They diverged artistically in that Hennings was



17.1

Emmy Hemmings with *Puppe* (Doll),
1916. Kunsthaus Zürich. © 1997 Artists
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Kunst, Bonn.

17.2

Sophie Taeuber in a costume made by
Hans Arp on the occasion of the open-
ing of the Galerie Dada in Zurich, 1916.
Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-
Arp, Rolandseck.



primarily a singer of popular music, Taeuber first and foremost a formally trained dancer.

Hennings had been a cabaret singer and a *diseuse* long before the first manifestations of Zurich Dada. Ball, the founder of the Cabaret Voltaire, had also participated in cabaret and café entertainment. Earning his living at times as a pianist in cafés, Ball had met Hennings when perchance they had appeared on the same stage. He took the initiative to make the Zurich dadaist organization viable from a practical as well as an artistic point of view. Ball's posters included the names of all participants, male and female, and later, when he published much of the verbal and visual material in a volume, his image and that of Hennings were given equal prominence on the title page.⁴

Though named the co-founder of the Cabaret, Hennings probably did not actively solicit contributions, leaving this practical task to Ball, then her husband. Apart from sporadic protests in opposition to the middle class and the war, neither Hennings nor Ball articulated a philosophically or politically grounded program to which other dadaists might adhere. It sufficed that their recitals, dances, and poems propagated the spirit of liberation: what counted was the event, the act rather than the manifesto or the theory. Hennings's dramatic, poetic, and musical talents were put to good use during the Dada evenings. Many of the poems owed their appeal if not their fame to her spirited interpretations. Her repertoire included folklore, traditional love songs, and verse, her own as well as that written by friends.⁵ Thus, Hennings displayed her voice, paraded her gestures, and showed her colorful wardrobe while making cabaret performance compatible with revolutionary sentiments. By purposefully collaborating with the author of a text, she increased the range of the work and the involvement of the audience.

In spite of her indispensable role, her vitality, and her spontaneity, we may wonder to what extent Hennings's heart really belonged to Dada.

Do the singing and reciting of texts, many of them having little to do with Dada, count so heavily that we can dismiss her lack of an ideological involvement? To what extent did her Dada performances really differ from her cabaret roles? Hennings had published poetry as early as 1913, so that even if Ball may have encouraged her to adopt a new style, he by no means awakened her talent as a writer. Most of her poetry, so critics claim, belongs to the expressionistic vein: emotional, subjective, somewhat linear in its narration.⁶ Before, during, and after the official Dada years, Hennings alluded to her relations with her partner, sometimes openly and sometimes discreetly, in poetry, letters, and biography. Ball fully returned the compliment. However, in the three poems by Hennings published in the *Cabaret Voltaire*—"Morfin" (Morphine), "Gesang zur Dämmerung" (Twilight Song), and "Die vielleicht letzte Flucht" (The Perhaps Last Flight)—such confessional and autobiographic statements do not predominate.⁷ We could assume that these texts were not specifically written for publication and may even have belonged to her song repertoires. They reveal the contact that Hennings had with the world of poverty, insecurity, sickness, and even drugs. But her verse is in no way reducible to lament and elegy. Far from indulging in polemics it barely hints at protest, an underlying note often found in expressionistic poetry.

The poem "Morfin" bespeaks a distance from the everyday and, while highlighting the inner world, it expresses suffering in terms of an alternation between awareness and confusion at the approach of death.⁸ By making a more fragmentary use of narrative while deliberately avoiding conventional rhyme schemes, "Die vielleicht letzte Flucht" can be considered more compatible with Dada goals. The title of the poem could refer to Hennings's repeated flights from city to city and her worries about the duration of the insecurity in her existence. Essentially recorded as a dialogue and as a voice, this text has analogies with Dada performances and even simultaneously recited poems insofar as it systematically undercuts any melodious or rhythmic presence. Alienation from life,

from any surrounding is conveyed by a varied terminology suggesting doubt and unrest: “fremden” (alien), “zweifelhaft” (doubtful), “fraglich” (questionable), and the “vielleicht” (perhaps) of the title with its unusual place and grammatical function. Verses fraught with suspense, perplexity, and in completion.

Die Frau (langsam und gedehnt): “Ich glaube man soll nichts genau ansehen.

Nur nicht genau ansehen. Ich glaube . . .”

Der Mann: “Du glaubst, sagst Du?!”

Die Frau (zögernd): “Ja, Mir erscheint alles zweifelhaft. Alles fraglich. Vielleicht—”

(The woman [slowly and phonetically stretched]: “I believe one should not look for anything closely / Not look at it closely. I believe . . .” / The man: “You believe you say?” / The woman [hesitatingly]: “Everything seems doubtful. Everything doubtful. / Perhaps—”)⁹

Spatial incompatibilities and alienation, which refuse any form of encounter while plunging man and woman, originally designated as “Wesen” (undefinable, neutral, shadowlike), into a ghostlike imprisonment. In the dialogue, accompanied by alluring and hesitant gestures, threatening allusions, identification and encounter are temporarily repulsed. Their inevitable intrusion signals that death can no longer be avoided.

It would be erroneous to see in this text primarily a social commentary or a nostalgic interpretation of human life and relations. This is a poem by someone who lived in poverty and distress, but it is also written by a woman who dwelled in the somewhat unreal world of the cabaret, of theater and of puppets, seen not exclusively as a form of entertainment for the bourgeois, but as a means of detachment from facile satisfactions. In addition to displaying new and deserving talents, the Cabaret Vol-

taire—and this may well have been its main function—devised methods for stirring up a more or less predictable public by stressing the unfamiliar and the uncanny through strange human and instrumental sound effects and by means of aggressive dancers wearing disturbing masks.

“Die vielleicht letzte Flucht” elegantly proposes incipient physical movement alternating with arrest and postponement, similar to gradual theatrical build-up of suspense. Theatricality is projected as much as possible through various filters of unreality: the extinguishing of lights except for the momentary glow of a cigarette, the impression of remaining underground and underwater. In addition to the telescoped language, the often truncated clichés, the attention focuses on mouth and eyes: “Um die Lippen boshaft, schmal, irrte ein graues Lächeln” (Around the lips, mean and narrow, errs a gray smile) or “Seine Augen kniffen sich cynisch zusammen” (His eyes cynically contracted). Facial contractions create a microcosm of the denouement to come.

In his substantial article on Hennings, Thomas Rugh rightfully establishes a connection between her puppets illustrated in the *Cabaret Voltaire* and some of her poems.¹⁰ Two of the puppets in the *Cabaret Voltaire* project skeletal shapes. Floating with functionless arms and legs, one of them could provide an illustration to “Die vielleicht letzte Flucht,” while another, on its knees, vainly attempts to reach out. But their lack of contact, the futility of their captive gestures, the close proximity of a second set of puppets sunken to the floor and capable only of displaying their emptiness, take the viewer to a realm beyond the text.

One of the most representative pieces of writing by Hennings is a section of her “Aus dem Tagebuch” (From the Diary) where she reports on her performance as Arachne.¹¹ Written in the present tense, the text combines several strands of narrative. Years after they had separated from Dada, both Hennings and Ball embraced Catholicism and advocated a more conventional style of writing, but without ever denying the importance of their Dada years and especially those of the *Cabaret Voltaire*.

The passage from “Aus dem Tagebuch” dwells on memories that have fostered worthwhile reflections. Here and elsewhere, Hennings speaks about her performances. She provides additional information about her versatile and spontaneous activities. Her account both documents and interprets her behavior as a woman, a lover, and a performer.

Although the text has philosophical depths, although it includes serious reflections, it is of even greater interest because of its underlying irony. Hennings displays a light-hearted narcissism, the narcissism of an actor who cannot share the same frontal view as the audience. Far from step in a matter of fact way into a role, she multiplies illusions regarding herself and the audience, finally dissolving her physical reality for the sake of a mythical image of Arachne, whose metamorphoses are a fitting punishment for jealousy. Hennings suggests a play within a play, an actor reflected by another actor. Arachne, a spinner who involves the audience in her narrative threads, also stands in for Hennings herself. But despite that Arachne is a reflection of Hennings’s desire to grasp a frontal image of herself, theatrical illusion fails to assure continuity, for the performer refers to Ball who is in the room and with whom she longs to exchange words or looks more directly. Consequently, the abdication of the self in favor of the role is only partial. If she needs the applause of the public in order to pursue a gainful career, she also needs to communicate with her lover. Ultimately, Ball becomes a witness of and a participant in her conflict, which transcends stage performance.

Throughout the text, duality intervenes: in the sharp limelight, the actor sees almost nothing but blackness, and her hair is at once “falsch” (false) and “echt” (real). She tells the eternal truth, but collects twenty penny pieces from the audience as payment for it. She has been pushed into disembodiment in so often repeating the eternal truth. As a result, her links with reality are temporarily severed, she faints, and thereby she enters the dreamworld only to exit with uncertainty.

It may be possible that the dialogue in which she engages with Ball at the end reiterates words he had previously written or spoken. If by reasons of chronology we may hesitate to call this a Dada text, nevertheless it frames a Dada event, which involves protest against the everyday in the form of an excursion into the world of the imaginary and the fantastic, seen as capable of taking stock of its own unreal nature. We understand the move from entertainment to love and mysticism as the dominant factor in Hennings's life.

Hennings's association with Dada brought her some recognition for her versatile talents. As a female artist, she enjoyed relative equality with male artists, and the problems she faced as a woman were mainly of a social rather than professional nature. In this respect, her partner and spouse hardly benefited from a more favorable situation. The relationship between Ball and Hennings lasted until his death and beyond it, as Hennings continued to edit her husband's works and sought to publish them.¹² The founder of the Cabaret Voltaire and later of the Galerie Dada, an energetic man with literary and ideological ambitions, who indefatigably took care of the practical as well as the programmatic side of the group, always included Hennings, whose multiple talents he never doubted. But even in his short Dada ventures, which included breaks and returns, Ball suffered from doubts, hesitations, and conflicts arising from his religious beliefs and philosophical allegiances, as well as from tensions provoked by other Dada participants. Hennings did not seem to share her husband's deep conflicts concerning the nihilism and irrationality raised by the absurdity of war.

In accepting a diversity of talents, from unknown to newly discovered and almost famous, from experimental to neglected, Ball never imposed generic or, for that matter, any other restrictions on the writers and artists he included. Nor did it matter whether they were famous, notorious, adventurous, or merely neglected. He also did not recognize all

the texts published in the *Cabaret Voltaire* as dadaist. At a somewhat later stage, he became fearful of the threat of excess and chaos, especially in regard to the machinations of radical dadaists such as Huelsenbeck and Tzara. An animator and promoter of Dada, Ball's allegiance to the movement proved to be temporary; and even his own contributions varied as to their avant-garde dosage.

By its very title, "Der Dorfdadaist" (The Village Dadaist), one of seven "schizophrenic sonnets," reveals that Ball focused on the playful aspect of Dada.¹³ Whereas dadaism requires the sophistication of the city and an attitude of protest against cultural traditions, the presence of a village dadaist seems paradoxical if not antithetical. The poet establishes a lively link between a village idiot and a Dada performer. Gestures and costumes permit the dancer/*diseur* to assume many roles and to produce a surprising concatenation of sounds. What counts is vitality and inventiveness, but not seduction; illusion and fantasy rather than reality; eccentricities without measures. The village dadaist is curiously prone to seasons, and always ready for change, and he produces dissonances rather than songs. Dada entertainment, so the poem conveys, stands out by its diversity, not by its coherence, and moves away from confinement toward openness. The fact that the schizophrenic poems adhere to standard verse and rhyme schemes without displaying any rhetorical innovations does not prevent the "Dorfdadaist" from throwing light on Dada activities and on the Dada spirit from an unusual perspective. These texts provide among other things one more translation into another medium. Yet this humorous and fantastic, yet somewhat conventional poetry does not quite fit with Hennings's repertoire of true liberating gestures that took place on the stage.

Undoubtedly, Ball's most revolutionary contribution to Dada was his six "Lautgedichte," which are dependent on sound effects and meant to be recited.¹⁴ In *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (Flight Out of Time), he writes:

I have invented a new genre of poems, "Verse ohne Worte" [poems without words] or Lautgedichte [sound poems] in which the balance of vowels is weighed and distributed solely according to the values of the beginning sequence. I gave a reading of the first one of these poems this evening. I made myself a special costume for it. My legs were in a cylinder of shiny blue cardboard, which came up to my hips, so that I looked like an obelisk.¹⁵

About another of the "Lautgedichte," he writes, "From a 'Gesang der Flugfische und Seepferdchen' [Song of the Flying Fish and the Sea Horses] there came a dance full of flashes and edges, full of dazzling light and penetrating intensity."¹⁶ Inviting movement and performance as well as collaboration, the "Lautgedichte" go beyond usual textual restrictions. Ball's sound poems have German titles, but the texts themselves consist of sounds and syllables with barely any recognizable words and without any clue to even a minimal meaning. They mark a return to a sort of Ur-language, an effort to undercut the written word and enhance the power of sound: "We must return to the inner-most alchemy of the word," Ball writes, "we must even give up the word too, to keep for poetry its last and holiest refuge."¹⁷

These poems are supported by Ball's theories about language, but can also be related to a persistent search for certain forms of primitivism, of the fascination with non-European cultures represented primarily by the masks that Hans Arp and Marcel Janco introduced into the Dada spectacle. It has been pointed out, further, that some of the sonorities of the "Lautgedichte" resemble songs of black Africa and are contemporaneous with Tzara's *Poèmes nègres*.¹⁸ In these poems, one of the high points of Zurich Dada, Ball sorts out sound from rhythm. The sounds each produce an immediate effect without upstaging one another. Each poem has a dominant sound, the "i" of "Gesang der Flugfische und Seepferdchen" suggests the light weight of the sea animals. Philip Mann rightly used the

term cathartic for the series of poems which neither persuade nor emotionally move the reader, but bewitch and disturb the listener.¹⁹

One of Ball's poems was performed for the opening of the Galerie Dada in March 1917. In his autobiography, Ball mentions "die Tänzerin" performing without naming her, but we may conclude that the dancer was none other than Sophie Taeuber.²⁰ Indeed, the program indicates that she was performing "abstrakte Tänze" (abstract dances).²¹ She, like other dadaists, rarely focused on a single art form and showed remarkable versatility in her productions. Taeuber starred as a dancer, a puppet-maker, a sculptor, and a painter and, at least occasionally, made tapestries, embroideries, costumes, drawings, and collages. An assessment of Taeuber's contribution to Dada can hardly be undertaken without including her spouse, collaborator, and partner, Hans Arp, who was an accomplished poet in both French and German, a sculptor, a painter, and a graphic artist.²²

Taeuber was almost the only actual Swiss in the Zurich Dada group. She was also an arts and crafts teacher in a Swiss school of design, an institution that was not altogether enchanted by her participation in Dada activities—even though it in no way affected her teaching. Dadaism for Taeuber, perhaps even more so than for Hennings, entailed only a partial commitment. She did not contribute to the *Cabaret Voltaire* volume, but appeared as a dancer at the Galerie Dada. The first (and only) number of the periodical *Der Zeltweg* reproduced one of her puppets and one of her sculptured heads.²³ Indeed, it seems that puppet-making and dancing represented primarily the women's share in the Dada world. However, Dada's attribution of certain artistic achievements to one sex rather than another becomes suspect if we take into account that embroidery and tapestry, generally considered a female-gendered domestic activity, were practiced as much by Arp as by Taeuber.²⁴ She is repeatedly represented clad in vast costumes that shield her body rather than reveal it, outfits usually produced by none other than Arp (see figure 17.2). As costume

designer, he thus partook in another kind of dadaist collaboration, leading, unlike the simultaneous poems that vie for center stage, to a harmony or fusion.

Taeuber is probably best known for her oils, gouaches, and watercolors, especially if we focus on the Dada years and those that immediately preceded. In these works, she aligned various rectangular forms and let them interact by elegant modifications or variations in their shapes, sizes, and colors. Rectangles or squares build upon each other and occupy the entire space without creating any intrusions. The colors or shades with their primarily subdued range pertain to the same musical tonality. In spite of the presence of straight lines and the avoidance of disturbing irregularities, the harmonious picture surfaces come alive. Triangular and circular shapes also intrude into some of her frames without producing friction or disruption within the two-dimensional, predominantly rectangular space. In the 1918 oil called *Triptych or Vertical and Horizontal Composition*, squares, rectangles, and triangles build up horizontal and vertical structures, crowned by upward and downward facing triangles. This triptych, which shows the characteristic features of her previous works, situates itself by reason of composition and basic motifs in relation to an established genre. Geometrical thrusts can lead to both openness and closure. Brownish tones alternate with blue and pink zones, whose coloration and luminosity turn the picture surfaces not only into frames, but also into a set of windows. Although composed entirely of rectangles, a 1919 gouache *Freie vertikal-horizontale Rhythmen* (Free Vertical and Horizontal Rhythms), strongly displays handpainted qualities and conveys a sense of motion and alteration. And in the same years, Taeuber together with Arp produced gouaches based on similar motifs and patterns. But in these works, the divisions seem larger, the rectangular patterns show signs of disturbance, and the color surfaces have relinquished some of their uniformity. As Alistair Grieve points out: "Here the rectangular grid and identical rectangular units point to Taeuber's sys-

tematic approach while the intuitive placing of the shades of grey . . . and the 'chance' division of the two rectangles, suggests Arp's judgment by eye."²⁵ So these gouaches are not truly exchangeable with those that Taeuber produced on her own. In spite of the emphasis on linearity, Arp's latter patterns of leaning and bending are incipient here.

Taeuber's concerns in these gouaches and watercolors, primarily painterly and aesthetic, were barely motivated by the social, philosophical, and strongly experimental trends overtly attributed to Dada. She painted these gouaches during the same period she performed her dances and created her puppets for *König Hirsch* (King Stag), activities far more akin to dadaist practices. The peaceful and harmonious aspects of the gouaches and their rhythmic equilibrium hardly would match the avant-garde features of the texts and visual works reproduced in the journal *Dada*. Arp's role in and contribution to the journal is far greater than Taeuber's, for his major Dada poem, "Die Wolkenpumpe" (The Cloud Pump) and a great number of woodcuts appear in *Dada I*. These woodcuts express a dadaist paradox: on the two-dimensional surface they bring to life, merely by exposing the wood fibers, fantastic figures whose features, at once human, animal, and floral, combine containment with expansion. Signaling spontaneity, forerunners of Arp's series of reliefs and drawings *According to the Laws of Chance*, they can accompany any text without fear of interpreting or illustrating it.

It would seem that Taeuber's role in Zurich Dada is to a certain extent parallel to Hennings's since much of it pertains to the area of performance. For her dances, Taeuber received applause worthy of a star. She was a student of the well-known Rudolf von Laban, mentor of famous dancers, notably Mary Wigman, one of Taeuber's friends. Not only did Laban add to the Dada repertoire by offering a program, but he participated as a prestigious presence.²⁶ But while a dialogue between Laban and Dada was possible, a final joining of forces was not. Taeuber's performance at the Galerie Dada, for example, may not have been inspired by

Laban's own teachings. The latter believed in the natural movement of the body in a dance that was not animated by musical composition. Willfully distancing himself from all traditions, he aimed to attain a purity he called "absolute" dance. Taeuber's performances at the Galerie Dada were usually solo improvisations accompanied more often than not by the beating of drums and choral readings of poems. Dances, songs, and recitations formed the ingredients, so to speak, of mixed media.

A study of Taeuber as a dancer, her most recognized contribution to Dada, is fraught with difficulties. Since Taeuber eventually gave up dancing to dedicate herself exclusively to the visual arts, the span of her performances was rather short-lived. In his writings, Laban does not mention her since she did not create her own choreography or open her own studio. We therefore have to rely on some photographs in addition to reports written by Wigman, Ball, Hennings, and Tzara.²⁷

Dada I includes a double exposure photograph of Mary Wigman in full body movement. Her almost weightless garment can hardly inhibit her gestures, and we are tempted to say that she floats. Gracefulness, transparency, and flexibility give the dancer an almost spiritual appearance. By contrast, a photograph of a Dada performance shows Taeuber in a heavily shielded disguise and mask concocted by Arp. From her adolescence on, Taeuber favored outlandish disguises and costumes. On one occasion, Wigman reports, "My friend Sophie Taeuber . . . and I sewed ourselves so tightly into our extravagant costumes one day that for the whole night we could not get out of them."²⁸ In photographs of Taeuber's 1918 Dada costume where she poses, and her 1916 "cubistic" outfit where she makes acrobatic gestures, her disguise becomes all encompassing, grotesque, outlandish, unidentifiable.²⁹ Her headgear serves to heighten her statuesque appearance; the mask transgresses the Western notion of beauty, and the arms as abstract tubes produce collages and metamorphosed forms. Taeuber integrated into her dance many experiments practiced or conceived by other artists: Janco's ideas about masks, a

disruptive use of language, the need for playfulness, the knowledge of textiles and design. Just like the costume Ball wore to recite his “Lautgedichte,” Taeuber’s outfit gave her a stiff statuesque appearance. This strange assemblage of sartorial elements, thrust into space, yet fully controlled, produced an explosive and magic impression on the audience.

Tzara inserted into *Dada* a note on the “Ecole de Danse Laban” in which he praised their manifold activities and evoked the characteristics of each dancer. Of Taeuber he wrote: “delirious strangeness in the spider of the hand vibrating quickly ascending towards the paroxysm of a mocking capriciously beautiful madness. Costume by Hans Arp.”³⁰ Tzara in a few words insists on the enormous display of physical energy, the tendency to transgress borders and norms, and the paradoxical situation of associating beauty with madness, strangeness, delirium, extravagance. We may wonder whether this is a faithful interpretation of Taeuber or whether Tzara created an idealized vision of what he dreamed a dancer to be.³¹

Like Tzara, Ball intended to provide general characteristics about abstract dances. Whereas Tzara’s text primarily conveys the effect produced by the dance, Ball first and foremost seeks to establish the “functioning” of the dancer: the origin and sequentiality of her movements. He repeatedly shifts his attention from the outer to the inner world. Bodily reflexes are brought about by sounds, gongs, and verbal units. The dance is called abstract insofar as it follows no preestablished musical scores or settings, no emotional narrative; the gong unleashes the body movements, it sets into motion not only muscles, but produces spurs on nerves. Ball does not so much insist on the body as an organic whole as on its many parts and their flexibility. Tzara insists on the fantastic unfamiliar aspects of the dancer, whereas Ball, in the passage from “Gesang der Flugfische und Seepferdchen,” gives more precise indications of what the dance itself stimulates.³² Like Tzara’s, Ball’s viewer is literally dazzled and even to a certain extent assaulted by the electrically rapid move-

ments. Lightening movement by diminishing or suppressing contact with the soil becomes comparable to the effects of the sun insofar as it creates or consolidates images. Ball establishes links between more than one of the art forms that Taeuber practiced.

Ball's evocation, which recounts a move first to the center and then to the periphery, has only a limited rapport with a text that Hennings wrote much later, after Taeuber's death. She recalled that "The mask served as a necessary thrust, to cover up the deeply convulsed face."³³ Hennings tried to remember a dearly loved friend and a highly admired artist. Even if her text is often sentimental and anecdotal, certain passages are of considerable interest. The two couples met in southern Italy a few months before Taeuber's accidental death. In spite of so many years of separation and distancing from Dada they could spend harmonious and unforgettable evenings together. Beyond the ephemeral Dada activities their joint creativity had brought about deep affinities. Hennings, herself a dancer and performer, displayed a deep understanding of Taeuber's dance, so different from her own. She stressed the assimilation of Taeuber's movement into the world of nature and landscape. She compared her to a lark moving toward the sky, to a flower that bends to worship the sun. Remembering almost a quarter of a century later every detail of Taeuber's dance, Hennings finds difficulty in translating it into words. Her remarks stress the transient and weightless motions and metamorphoses of her dance. She evokes Taeuber's life in stages, emphasizing the years of shared experiences. She sees in Taeuber, especially during the thirties, the Meudon years, a spiritual artist in search of beauty, striving for achievement through order: "A purely spiritual almost pious striving toward harmony and order, reflected in the arrangement and division of space and color, so that artistic perception, feeling for metaphysical forms and lines acquired in [Taeuber's] art works beautiful shapes."³⁴

Written during the Dada years, Tzara's and Ball's texts can be called poetical reportages destined to expand the territory of seduction. Hen-

nings, in contrast, writes an “in memoriam” where she pleads for an exceptional life and not for successful moments. Arp’s poems written after Taeuber’s death also paid homage to his deceased spouse.³⁵ By his poetic gifts, he transforms her into a spiritual presence and situates her on the threshold of immortality. He turns her into a muse, an image which in the Dada years would not have been bestowed upon any of the talented women.

After Taeuber abandoned dance as a professional pursuit, she continued to enjoy its practice with her spouse who devoted several poems to her dancing.

*She danced and dreamt
a triangle and a rectangle
a rectangle in a circle
a circle in a circle*³⁶

In these lines, Arp intimately relates Taeuber’s dance to her work with the brush, suggesting the poetic effect of geometrical figures and motions. As I have indicated elsewhere, the rapport between text (Arp) and image (Taeuber) in *Muscheln und Schirme* (Shells and Umbrellas), 1939, classifiable as neither thematic nor structural, refers to rhythmic patterns and choreographic substrata detectable in both poetic and visual lines.³⁷ A recent catalogue accompanying an exhibition of Taeuber’s works highlights the resemblance between the choreographic notations of Wigman and designs drawn by Taeuber, such as *Mouvement de Lignes* (Movement of Lines), 1940, or illustrations for *Poèmes sans prénoms* (Poems Without First Names), 1941, with similar unbroken, rounded, and spiral lines.³⁸

The various aspects of dancing—rhythmic movement in space, disguise, and grotesque appearance—were featured in the puppet show *King Stag*.³⁹ René Morax and Werner Wolf made a few changes as they adapted Carlo Gozzi’s tragicomic tale.⁴⁰ Their substitutions and changes might at

first sight seem mechanical. They include a change of date in the prologue from 1792 to 1913 and 1918, as well as substitutions for Cigolotti, “historian of the public square, a character from real life,” by Dr. Oedipus Complex, “contemporary savant,” and for Durandarte by Freud Analytikus, a magician. A somewhat faceless elegant black statue symbolizes the sacredness of psychoanalysis. The play juxtaposes Dada irony and parody with psychoanalysis. Reduction to regression and infantilism, particularly in the psychoanalysis of women, compound the humor of the modern play. According to Bruno Mikol, who has written a searching study of this work, conflicts between Jung and Freud animate the puppet play.⁴¹ I would argue that by interpreting the adapted text, Taeuber comes closer here than in any of her other work to articulating a critical position about the treatment and situation of women.

The opposition of Gozzi’s “real life” character to the other orientally dressed figures has shifted the puppet play from a tragicomic love and power game to an absurd version caricaturing psychoanalytical probings, political struggles, and censorships. Such a dadaist text can easily be enacted by the jerky manipulated gestures of the puppets. Puppet plays tend to rely on repetitions and echoes for comic effects, which the stylized movements of the actors foreground. In *King Stag* such themes and variations stem from the king and his prime minister’s overt amorous and political rivalries, from the antagonism between the master Freud Analytikus and the disciple Oedipus Complex, from the repercussions of tensions on the level of class (valets and birdwatchers), and from disguises, metamorphoses, and articulations of strange sounds having overt affinities with Dada performances at the Cabaret Voltaire.

What matters most of all is the originality of the puppets themselves and their relation to the stage set. The extraordinary decor echoes some of Taeuber’s paintings featuring assemblages of plain and patterned rectangles. Headless but horned stags as well as birds stand or are perched amid painted surfaces abstractly suggesting plants. Each puppet

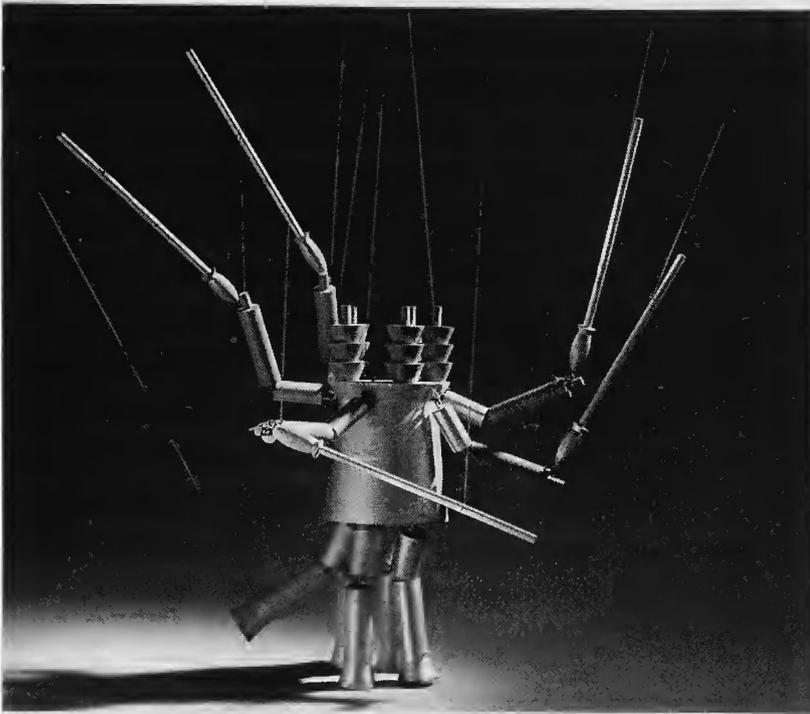
has individual features, composed of assembled, geometrically shaped parts: cylinders, spheres, ovals, disks. Hardly conforming to a linear human figure, the puppets possess an excessive number of mobile limbs. Their always visible and diversified articulations are geared toward agility. Elongated Freud Analytikus outranks all others, while Dr. Complex has a roundness all his own. Angela, wanted in marriage by both King Deramo and Prime Minister Tartaglia, elicits scopophilic appeal with her floating lace-covered garment, which fails to hide her wooden limbs and metal articulations. Tartaglia's feathers and flowers embellish his head and trunk. Made of painted wood unadorned by any garments or ornaments except headgears, most puppets can stand, crouch, hop, and float. Painted masklike faces produce an eerie, uncanny quality.

The greatest invention is the "Wache" (guard), a multiple image: from one circular torso emerges several heads, arms, and sabres (figure 17.3). The seeming mobility and upright gestures of the arms contrast with the rigidity and straightness of the multilayer heads and the stiff inseparable legs. Capable of rotating, the guard peers pointedly in several directions at the same time. This mechanical contraption proposes a preposterous transformation of a conventional tragic procedure.

About the same time as *King Stag*, Taeuber created her famous *Dada-Köpfe* (Dada Heads), sculpted wood "portraits" in the tradition of an invented or at least modified genre. The smooth oval shapes without holes and protrusions bear some of the geometrical features of the puppets. They point to a liberation from reality which, in addition to their humorous stylistic qualities, can be considered a pertinent Dada feature. The 1918 head with its brightly colored frontal view belongs to the abstract and the concrete at the same time—the eye and the circle, the sign and the representation (figure 17.4). The area that corresponds to the forehead suggests a dark curtain, the designs with bright rounded patterns producing a pure spectacle. Another *Dada-Kopf*, titled *Portrait of Hans Arp*,⁴² displays more recognizable facial features than the previously

mentioned head of 1918. Elevated on lengthy and narrow poles emerging from a round base, this hilarious representation of her husband is further enhanced by the elongated barely protruding nose, stretching from forehead to mouth. The face and the mask have become one. Of course, Taeuber did not want to show what the “real” Hans Arp looked like, but display him as a Dada creator, thus joining other dadaists in their denial of traditional portraiture as a mimetic and psychological representation. Since the other head, similar to the Arp portrait, is decorated with a spiral ribbon on the ears, we may wonder whether sex distinction played any part in these *Dada-Köpfe*, which could also serve as hat stands.

Finally, a photograph in which Taeuber herself poses with one of her heads provides an appropriately Dada document. As the forehead is labeled “1920—Dada,” we are privileged to witness the greatest moment of identification between Taeuber and Dada. Two heads appear in the photograph, both of them Dada. One functions as the producer and the other as the produced. Taeuber’s face appears more prominently precisely because the sculpture obliterates or, rather, replaces one eye. The distance between the real and the invented is clearly displayed. The inscription—“1920—Dada”—is by no means a transposed signature but an attempt at depersonalization, insofar as the double portrait of and by Taeuber parodies the role of an official stamp. A second version of this photograph plays on the same spatial closeness of the artist and her sculptured head, but much less of the head is visible: the sculpture eclipses a larger surface, and Taeuber wears a hat and veil (figure 17.5). Perhaps the problems raised by this photograph are even subtler than those of the first photograph because it is no longer the artist who appears but a bourgeois woman covered in a respectable manner by a black hat and veil. Yet even the middle-class woman asserts her artistic talents in the form of the patterns arising from the sculpture that are reflected on her face.



17.3

Sophie Taeuber, *Wache* (Guard) puppet for *König Hirsch* (King Stag), 1918. Museum Bellerive, Zürich. Photo: Marien Perez. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

17.4

Sophie Taeuber, *Dada-Kopf* (Dada Head), 1918, painted wood. Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne, Paris. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

The traditions of the artist and the model were obviously subverted in 1920. However, we cannot overlook that these two photographs serve also to reveal Taeuber's modesty, her unwillingness to push herself in the art world.⁴³ Her gendered awareness in a social sense was probably not very strong. Her successes during her lifetime, especially during the Dada years, came from her ability to collaborate in a group as well as from her brilliant performance and her deep and multiple dialogues with Arp. Zurich undoubtedly provided the most favorable Dada center for creative and versatile women committed to the arts but who asserted few if any claims regarding gender and politics.



17.5

Sophie Taeuber, *Dada-Kopf* (Dada Head), 1920. Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Rolandseck. © 1997 Artists Rights Society, New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

NOTES

I wish to acknowledge the great help that was given to me by Walburga Krupp and the Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp.

At the time of submitting this manuscript, the volume on Zurich Dada as well as the introductory volume in the series *Crisis and the Arts: The History of Dada*, edited by Stephen Foster, to be published by G. K. Hall, were not yet available.

1. Höch's status within Berlin Dada was discussed at the Hannah Höch International Symposium held at the Berlin Akademie der Künste, 16–19 November 1989.
2. See Jula Dech, *Hannah Höch "Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands"* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1989); and Maud Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993).
3. Activities at the Cabaret Voltaire began in February 1916 and ended in July of that year; at the Galerie Dada activities lasted from March to May 1917.
4. Hugo Ball, "Als ich das Cabaret Voltaire gründete . . . 15 May 1916," *Cabaret Voltaire* (June 1916): 5; rpt. in *Dada—Zürich, Paris, 1916–22* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 1981), p. 53.
5. Hennings successfully made her talent blend in not only with these interpretations, but with the varied programs that Ball orchestrated and animated. Undoubtedly, she would not have fared as well with some of the other Dada groups, more interested in looking for deviant lifestyles or in proclaiming European cultural bankruptcy. Open to many experiments, Zurich Dada refrained from consecrating a single method.

Hennings shares a few affinities with one of the woman who played a key role in New York Dada. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, who aggressively pursued

employment as a nude model, wrote Dada poetry, and signed her name to readymades, combined many talents that exemplified Dada's most uncodified tactics. This German aristocrat-by-marriage, who during the Dada years had to live in a cold water flat in New York, did not fully participate in group meetings because of her anarchical temperament as well as her estrangement from the somewhat reflective and theoretical nature of New York Dada. Her activities manifested far more than Hennings's a display of individuality that disturbed and shocked others. In addition to the essays on Freytag-Loringhoven published in this volume, see Robert Reiss, "'My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), pp. 81–101. See also her autobiography in *Baroness Elsa*, ed. Paul I. Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue (Ottawa, Ontario: Oberon, 1992).

6. See, for example, Kurt Pinthus, "Leipzig und der frühe Expressionismus," and Richard Seewald, "München," in *Expressionismus, Aufzeichnungen und Erinnerungen der Zeitgenossen*, ed. Paul Raabe (Olten und Freiburg im Breisgau, Switzerland: Walter, 1965), pp. 82 and 87, respectively; and Thomas F. Rugh, "Emmy Hennings and Zurich Dada," *Dada/Surrealism*, nos. 10–11 (1982): 5–28.

7. Emmy Hennings, "Morfin," "Gesang zur Dämmerung," and "Die vielleicht letzte Flucht," *Cabaret Voltaire* (June 1916): 12, 28; rpt. in *Dada—Zurich, Paris*, pp. 28, 44.

8. Emmy Hennings, "Morfin"/"Morphine" in *The Dada Market: An Anthology of Poetry*, trans. Willard Bohn (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), pp. 100–101; and Rugh, "Emmy Hennings and Zurich Dada": 19–21. Rugh's translation (pp. 19–20) differs slightly from Bohn's.

9. My translation.

10. Rugh, "Emmy Hennings and Zurich Dada." See also Raimund Meyer, "'Dada ist gross Dada ist schöne': Zur Geschichte von 'Dada Zürich,'" in Hans Bolliger,

Guido Magnaguagno, and Raimund Meyer, *Dada in Zürich* (Zurich: Arche, 1985), p. 34; and *Cabaret Voltaire* (June 1916); rpt. in *Dada—Zürich, Paris*, p. 36.

11. Emmy Ball-Hennings, "Aus dem Tagebuch," in *Betrunken täumeln alle Litfasssäulen: Frühe Texte und autobiographische Schriften 1913–1922*, ed. Bernhard Merkelbach (Hanover: Postskriptum, 1990), pp. 87–97.

12. Hennings edited the 1930 publication of Hugo Ball's *Sein Leben in Briefen und Gedichten* (foreword by Hermann Hesse), and a year later published *Hugo Balls Weg zu Gott*.

13. Hugo Ball, "Der Dorfdadaist," in *Gesammelte Gedichte*, ed. A. Schütt-Hennings (Zurich: Arche, 1963), p. 36.

14. Hugo Ball, "Lautgedichte," in *Gesammelte Gedichte*, pp. 24–33.

15. Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimés (New York: Viking, 1974), p. 70. *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* was first published in 1946 in Luzern by Joseph Stocker.

16. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 102.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

18. Annotating Tzara's *Poèmes nègres* Henri Béhar states: "We gather in this dossier all texts which have African, malgache, oceanic traits and which were of interest to Tzara. We know that the negro poems and songs constituted . . . an essential part of Zürich Dada evenings in 1916–17" (Tristan Tzara, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1, ed. Henri Béhar [Paris: Flammarion, 1975], p. 714) (translation J. D. Hubert). Michael North in his discussions of the poems, songs, and masks that were included in Dada programs observes that "Dada poetry of the period depended heavily on 'pseudo-African' languages made up of nonsense." See North,

The Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 30.

19. Philip Mann, *Hugo Ball, An Intellectual Biography* (London: University of London, Institute of Germanic Studies, 1987), p. 87.

20. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 102.

21. Ibid.

22. I have elsewhere discussed the works that Taeuber and Arp artists produced in collaboration, such as the laminated sculpture titled *Eheplastik* (Marital Sculpture), 1937, as well as their collages and drawings. See Renée Riese Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism and Partnership* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), chapter 2.

23. *Der Zeltweg* (November 1919); rpt. in *Dada—Zürich, Paris*; pp. 65, 83.

24. According to Renata Möhrmann, since the inception of the *Commedia dell'arte* women have been historically more easily accepted in the performing than in other arts. See Möhrmann, "Occupation: Woman Artist. On the Changing Relation Between Being a Woman and Artistic Production," in *Feminist Esthetics* (Boston: Beacon, 1986), pp. 150–161. This hypothesis may throw a different light on my discussion of Hennings and Taeuber.

25. Alistair Grieve, "Arp in Zurich," in *Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt*, ed. Stephen C. Foster and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (Madison, WI: Coda, 1979), p. 188.

26. Meyer, "Dada ist gross Dada ist schöne," pp. 40–42. See also Raimund Meyer, "Zurich," in Raimund Meyer, Judith Hossli, Guido Magnaguagno, Juri Steiner, and Hans Bolliger, *Dada Global* (Zurich: Limmat, 1994), p. 127.

27. See, for example, Emmy Ball-Hennings, "Zur Erinnerung an Sophie Taeuber-

Arp,” and Hugo Ball, “Die Tänzerin Sophie Taeuber,” in Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp, *Zweiklang*, ed. Ernst Schneidegger (Zurich: Arche, 1960), pp. 10–23, and 24, respectively.

28. Walter Sorrell, *The Mary Wigman Book* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 141.

29. Illustrated in Meyer, “‘Dada ist gross Dada ist schöne,’” pp. 42–43.

30. Tzara, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 558.

31. Tzara (*ibid.*, p. 610) also commented on Taeuber’s puppets.

32. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 102.

33. Ball-Hennings, “Zur Erinnerung an Sophie Taeuber-Arp,” p. 10.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

35. These writings are very ably discussed by Harriett Watts, “Traum- und Bildbauten: Sophie Taeuber in den Schriften von Hans Arp,” in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Hans Arp: Besonderheiten eines Zweiklanges* (Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, 1991), pp. 21–43.

36. Hans Arp, untitled poem, French text in Erica Kessler, “Sophie danse,” in *Sophie Taeuber* (Paris: Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1989), p. 45 (translation J. D. Hubert). Originally published in *Spirale* (1953), this verse was not included in the edition of Arp’s collected poems, *Jours Effeuillés* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).

37. *Sophie Taeuber*, pp. 51, 54.

38. Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors*, pp. 35–46.

39. Arp was instrumental in including a photograph of one of Taeuber's puppets, the modern magician Freud Analyticus, in *Der Zeltweg* (November 1919); rpt. in *Dada—Zürich, Paris*, p. 83.

40. Bruno Mikol lists two authors for the adaptation of the Italian play: Werner Wolff and René Morax ("Le Roi Cerf," in *Sophie Taeuber*, p. 61). A French edition, of which I have seen only a transcript, credits only Morax.

According to information provided by Mikol and also the Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp Foundation at Bahnhof Rolandseck, the play is still performed from time to time, most recently at the Züricher Puppentheater. The original puppets are housed in the Musée Bellerive, Zurich.

In addition to Mikol's searching study published in the catalogue cited above, see his, "Sur le Théâtre des Marionnettes de Sophie Taeuber" (Ph.D. diss., Université de Paris I, 1987).

41. Mikol, "Sur le Théâtre," pp. 59–69.

42. Watts, "Traum- und Bildbauten," p. 51.

43. Yves-Alain Bois in his analysis of Taeuber's achievement as a painter insists both on her modesty and on her independence. See Bois, "Sophie Taeuber-Arp against Greatness," in *Inside the Visible. An elliptical traverse of 20th century art: in, of, and from the feminine*, ed. M. Catherine de Zegher (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 413–417.

RECOLLECTING DADA: JULIETTE ROCHE

carolyn BURKE



Juliette Roche (figure 18.1), an accomplished painter, poet, and chronicler of the early twentieth-century avant-garde, took the measure of Dada as a sign of the times. While frequently mentioned in accounts of the movement and in studies of her husband, Albert Gleizes, Roche (1884–1980) has received little attention in her own right. Having watched artistic vanguards come and go in prewar Paris, she judged the New York hijinks of Marcel Duchamp and Francis Picabia with an independence of mind not always available to the Frenchmen’s American acolytes. Yet her response was not unambiguous. At once attracted to their anti-bourgeois stance and sceptical about their motivation, she scrutinized their circle and her participation in it in a book of innovative visual poetry, *Demi Cercle* (1920), and a *novella à clef*, *La Minéralisation de Dudley Craving MacAdam* (1924)—both inspired by the Arensberg group, in whose company Roche “watched Dada being born.”¹

Ironically, Picabia’s inclusion of Roche in his gallery of “mechano-sexual” portraits—a record of the Dada years from an increasingly sardonic perspective—provided the metaphor she would adopt to express her own role in the movement. Picabia’s 1917 (now lost) *Juliette Gleizes au manomètre* (Juliette Gleizes as a Manometer) represented the artist’s idea of her as an independent woman.² To understand the title, one needs to know that a manometer is a device used to gauge the pressure of gases, fluids, or vapors (e.g., a barometer or a sphygmomanometer, which mea-



18.1

Juliette Roche, c. 1917 (from Pierre Alibert, *Albert Gleizes, Naissance et avenir du cubisme* [Paris: Aubin-Visconti/Dumas, 1982]).

sure, respectively, atmospheric and blood pressure). Picabia's manometer was, most likely, a parodic allusion to the idea that such devices revealed a woman's sexual temperature. But in Roche's interpretation, a female manometer could also register the emotional weather and shifts in pressure on the mercurial group gathered nightly at the apartment of Louise and Walter Arensberg, the hub of New York Dada. A reading of Roche's poems and novella reveals her use of the figure in ways that its originator may not have intended.³

Roche's independence derived, in part, from her social position. Born in 1884 into a wealthy Parisian family, she was named after her father, Jules Roche, who occupied a number of influential positions during the Third Republic as publisher of the *La République française*, member of the chamber of deputies and the Conseil Supérieur des Beaux-Arts, and minister in successive governments. As an only child Juliette grew up in an atmosphere of informed political debate and enlightened art patronage. Her governess taught her to speak English fluently; her godmother, the Comtesse de Greffulhe (one of Marcel Proust's models for his fictional Duchesse de Guermantes), exemplified the social graces; her father encouraged her intellectual, literary, and artistic pursuits, allowing her to travel and live on her own—although she was as yet unmarried.

In the years before the Great War, the young woman knew the key figures of the Paris art world. With her father she frequented Beaux-Arts functions, the official salons, and the more progressive Salon d'Automne. In 1911 she enrolled at the Académie Ranson, considered the best art school in Paris, where she studied with Maurice Denis, Paul Sérusier, and Félix Vallotton. Ranson students witnessed contemporary debates about the new spirit in art, and classes tested their ability to think contradictory thoughts on the subject. In the morning, Denis explained that one needed a general theory of painting ("without a theory, one was lost") while in the afternoon, Vallotton preached the opposite ("above all, no theories"). One day Roche asked Denis whether form existed in reality or as a con-

cept: he replied that form was “what one thinks of with a line drawn around it.” Through her teachers Roche also met Bonnard, Vuillard, Maillo, and Odilon Redon, whom she called her “master.” This progressive-minded group of symbolists known as the Nabis were, in her view, producing “the best work in Paris.”⁴

At the same time, Roche was imbibing the ways of the *beau monde*. Through the Comtesse de Greffulhe she met the aristocrats and artists who mingled at the home of this celebrated *salonnière*. A witty, poised, and attractive woman (described by a contemporary as “a composite of an aristocracy that seems French, English and Japanese”⁵), Roche was soon invited to the other leading salons, each with its own aesthetico-political character and day of the week. She moved freely among these rival “villages,” as she called them, even though their residents rarely communicated. From 1910 to 1914 Roche’s social calendar was organized around these gatherings.

On Sundays, with her friend Misia Sert, she went to “the rue d’Athènes”—the home of Sert’s brother, Cipa Godebski, where one saw the composer Maurice Ravel, the writers Léon-Paul Fargue, Valéry Larbaud, André Gide, and Paul Valéry, as well as the Académie Ranson painters and the Nabis. But the star of the rue d’Athènes was Juliette’s childhood friend (and her father’s godson) Jean Cocteau. The young poet was “adorable,” she observed, “except when you wanted to strangle him.”⁶ Together they attended the most provocative art exhibitions, theater, and dance, including the Ballets Russes. While Cocteau, too, frequented salons with opposing artistic and political commitments, the “Prince frivole”⁷ seemed more at home with the *fin-de-siècle* luminaries of the rue d’Athènes—the poet Anna de Noailles, the portraitist Jacques-Emile Blanche, and Proust’s friend the composer Reynaldo Hahn—than with the “moderns” whose acquaintance he made in Roche’s company.

Members of these groups delighted in gossiping about each other and analyzing the minutiae of Parisian cultural politics. Monday evenings

saw Roche at the home of the Italian cultural activist, Ricciotto Canudo, whose aggressively vanguard magazine *Montjoie!* she helped support. Canudo prided himself on his modernism: by 1913 he had befriended the cubists—who were anathema at the rue d'Athènes. His *cérébriste* movement, a somewhat incoherent contemporary of Futurism and a precursor to Dada, called for an art “purified of sentimentality, uniquely cerebral and sensual.” Moreover, Canudo took his motto, “Soyons durs” (Let’s be tough), from Nietzsche.⁸ From 1913 on Roche also joined the Tuesday gatherings of poets at the Closerie des Lilas, which included Guillaume Apollinaire; his “simultanist” poems, some of which appeared in *Montjoie!*, may have encouraged her to write visual poetry of her own.

While Roche was writing “poésie fondée en peinture” (poetry rooted in painting) in the same year that Apollinaire published his first “idéogrammes lyriques,”⁹ the highly visual free verse and prose poems of *Demi Cercle* employ modernist typography and spacing to somewhat different ends. Moreover, their deliberate dating and ordering suggest a desire to reflect precise historic moments. In “Toulon-Cannes” (1913), for example, the interior monologue of an unnamed “elle” unfolds to the rhythm of the train on which she travels: “she” reflects on the nature of “Wanderlust” while taking in advertising slogans aimed at travelers like herself—members of the European upper classes:

Moutarde Grey-Poupon — Champagne Montebello

Perhaps in more brutal cities. . . .Melbourne. . . .San Francisco. . . .

*red letters on a black background Bénédicte—
grey backgrounds, red letters, black boar, green water, curls of smoke*

*Nord-Deutsche Lloyd
Hamburg-America Line*

The “brutality” of new world sites like Melbourne and San Francisco is imagined as energizing. But while the early poems of *Demi Cercle* engage the theme of travel as escape from a decadent civilization, they also express ambivalence about departure: “You wouldn’t exchange your hesitant, disparate, disoriented life for any other.”¹⁰

While Roche prided herself on seeing both art and politics from varied perspectives, she also felt disoriented by her attraction to apparently incompatible theories—those of the symbolists on the one hand and the “moderns” on the other. This quandary deepened after the opening of the 1913 Salon d’Automne, which she attended with the Undersecretary of State for Fine Arts. When their party stopped before three canvases by Gleizes (whose 1912 *Du Cubisme* made him the spokesman for the moderns), the Undersecretary exclaimed, “Ah, voilà un des doctrinaires du cubisme . . . c’est la liberté!” (Ah, here’s one of those dogmatic cubists . . . what freedom!).¹¹ Keen to meet the controversial cubists, however doctrinaire, Roche asked Canudo for introductions to Gleizes and his fellow artists Jacques Villon, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and Marcel Duchamp. Soon after making their acquaintance she was “excommunicated” by the Nabis for her embrace of Cubism. Their hostility to the new avant-garde inoculated her against such experiences while also sapping her belief in the community of the progressive-minded.

By the winter of 1913, the “ever-increasing ferment in artistic circles” became even more volatile, Roche recalled:

*one could feel in the atmosphere of Paris, so responsive to every slightest change, a sort of instability, a malaise, something like the restlessness displayed by animals before an earthquake. It crystallized now and again in a few words, a few sentences, then dissolved. But the unusual symptoms kept manifesting themselves in various ways.*¹²

The sensation of the Ballets Russes earlier that year was one such crystallization. Paris had been stunned by Igor Stravinsky's music and Serge Diaghilev's choreography because, as Cocteau put it, "[U]nconsciously we felt the need to rediscover what we had lost—the call of great elemental forces, savage rites, bloody sacrifices." He had been "keeping a fever chart"¹³ to document this malaise at the same time that Roche was transcribing her own into poems like "Jardin Public" (Public Garden) of 1914:

The city was already filled with talk of war. One heard cries coming from the courtyards of schools during recess, the brush of muffled steps in the old streets near the cathedral, and shabby pianos played behind string awnings. At noon the sick warmed all along the terrace. Funeral processions passed through the floating circle of prayers.

Roche's emotional disarray at the outbreak of war played a major role in her decision to marry Albert Gleizes. Whatever their aesthetic convictions, many artists and intellectuals had assumed that a progressive, internationalist spirit would work as a unifying force across national differences. With the outbreak of hostilities, everything changed. Roche was horrified to see friends like Canudo and Apollinaire caught up in war fever. Only Gleizes, conscripted soon after Sarajevo, was opposed to the idea of slaughtering Germans for the glory of France: Roche was deeply impressed with his pacifism and *sang-froid*.

Convinced that "in a time of collective folly, . . . one must save the savable," Roche worked behind the scenes to obtain Gleizes's discharge in August 1915. She and Gleizes did not know each other well when they married the next month (with Cocteau as their witness) and then sailed for New York, having made these plans by correspondence. Roche was thirty, Gleizes three years older. She was a wealthy woman accustomed to her freedom, and he a somewhat naïve populist and pacifist inspired by prewar ideas of social and artistic progress—the same notions of a

humanity without borders that was crumbling in the debacle of the war. Gleizes looked to the United States as the land of Walt Whitman, the bard of democracy and practitioner of an open form suited to his vision. By 1919 Roche would write “I shall soon be done with Walt Whitman.”¹⁴ During the early phase of their New York years, however, Whitman (filtered through the symbolists’ reading of him as a modern) provided an ideal against which to measure American reality. If art, especially Cubism, was to survive, it would do so in the United States: “the artistic center of tomorrow will perhaps be New York,” Gleizes’s collaborator Jean Metzinger wrote in a 1914 letter on the folly of the war in Europe and the coming shift of artistic energy to the New World.¹⁵

Their first impressions confirmed Metzinger’s optimism. The couple was met by Marcel Duchamp, who in his capacity as tour guide communicated his enthusiasm for New York’s bridges, skyscrapers, ferries, and soda fountains. A dinner was held in their honor by members of the Arensberg circle, including Duchamp, the Stettheimers, Man Ray, Alfred Stieglitz, Louise Norton, and Joseph Stella. Reporters rushed to meet Gleizes, considered a celebrity since his participation in the 1913 Armory Show, but often found that they were actually interviewing Roche, his translator. Increasingly, she would play the much-needed role of linguistic and cultural mediator for her husband, whose poor grasp of English would have made it hard for him to initiate a productive dialogue with the New World. In an article titled “New York Is More Alive and Stimulating Than France Ever Was, Say Two French Painters,” Roche expressed their mutual delight in the city’s beauty—“the lights, electric signs, most nourishing to artists”—and inspiring sights like Broadway.¹⁶

The interview turned to the subject of the war. For Roche it was “a fateful, inevitable force, . . . like gravity.” Prewar life in Europe, she remarked, had been “a refined, delightful circus,” but the war had toppled its foundations. The conflict was, nonetheless, “uninteresting”—merely a matter of “a few men grabbing at each other’s pockets.” She would even

go so far as to recommend the temporary suspension of newspapers. Their editorials had done “so much to incite and excite,” Roche went on, alluding to the pervasive war-mongering in Paris, that “perhaps even the war could have been averted if the newspapers had been more helpful.”¹⁷

When the journalist turned to another controversy, women’s suffrage, she may have been surprised to learn that “Votes-for-Women has no place in the hearts of the Gleizes, for they are not even interested in Votes-for-Men.” They never voted, Roche explained, because they did not “believe in politics.” (If they harbored anarchist sympathies, this was not mentioned.) But even more unlikely was Roche’s declaration that she and her husband were feminists, “for we believe in equal artistic, industrial and economic opportunity for men and women.” The interview closed with the observation that while they had the same views on war and suffrage, in artistic matters “Madame Gleizes show[ed] a startling intellectual independence.” Cubism was an art that “tries to see all the aspects of an object,” Roche explained; “we in our living are trying to get all viewpoints and all visions,” she continued, “and perhaps our lives are unintelligible as a Cubist picture is to some people.” Her own style was both figurative and “Japanesey”—a whimsical blend of *japonisme* and Post-Impressionism. She would never become a cubist—“no, even my husband cannot influence me there.”¹⁸

Picabia’s image of Roche as “manometer” may have dated about the time of this 1915 interview. (Perhaps he was also struck by the journalist’s taking her as seriously as, or more seriously than, her husband.) Like Cocteau’s 1914 “fever chart,” Roche’s 1915–1916 memoir registers fluctuations in the volatile ambiance that would be known retrospectively as New York Dada. That winter the couple grew close to Duchamp, who respected both Roche and Gleizes despite their temperamental and artistic differences. While the older artist would come to see New York’s concrete as inhospitable, his young friend embraced its anonymity. To Gleizes, Duchamp’s studio was “a desert of stone and steel”¹⁹; to Roche, the passage-

way to this “hell” was Dantesque. Moreover, Duchamp’s readymades were the pranks of a neurasthenic seeking to amuse himself: “[W]ith infinite care and attention to method, he sabotaged everything that had not yet been sabotaged.” One morning when Gleizes warned an already inebriated Duchamp that whiskey would kill him, he replied, “[I]f I didn’t drink so much I would have killed myself long ago.”²⁰ Decades later, Roche explained Duchamp’s “sabotage” as an extreme version of their circle’s despair.²¹

Roche’s poems from this period evaluate New York’s visual and social significance with the detached alertness observed by the journalist. Initially, overwhelmed by a jazz band heard on their first night there, Gleizes wrote, they seemed to be “rocked . . . in a cradle of feeling”—the release of “individual consciousness lost . . . in this hot, effervescent atmosphere.”²² While Gleizes began painting almost immediately, Roche put her impressions into painterly free verse—in which black dancers “sketch ellipses” blending “exoticism and geometry” (“Chanteurs Nègres” [Black Singers]), and the whirling skyscrapers seen from the elevated railway offer “an upside-down vertigo” (“Down-Town”). By the summer of 1916, however, when the Gleizes’ wonder at New York’s scale and tempo had ceded to disillusionment with its commercialism, the city had become a place where “the same pianolas play Tipperary” and the same “catastrophes” are shown at the cinema (“Déjà Vu”).

The couple retained some optimism about anti-war activists’ efforts in the United States. Both took an interest in Henry Ford’s unexpected decision to form an independent peace movement, which Roche attempted to join. Having been successfully lobbied by representatives of American peace groups, including Jane Addams, head of the Women’s Peace Party, the industrialist announced in November 1915 that he would devote his millions to the cause: he planned a conference of neutral countries to serve as a mediation board for the belligerents the following summer, and in the meantime, the departure to Europe of the Ford Peace

Ship. Roche, whose application to join the party of pacifists, feminists, and journalists sailing from Hoboken in New Jersey on 4 December 1915, was unsuccessful, shared in the disillusionment that followed the media's ridicule of all those on board. The government's refusal to back Ford, followed by his abandonment of the whole project, confirmed the Gleizes' growing fear that Whitman's land was not what they had thought.

By the spring of 1916 they were keen to leave New York. Friends wrote to recommend Barcelona: a number of artists in exile there were enjoying the city's rich cultural life. This cosmopolitan group of refugees, which included Canudo, the poet-boxer Arthur Cravan, his brother the painter Otho Lloyd and Otho's wife, the artist Olga Sacharoff, as well as the poet-novelist-dancer Valentine de St. Point and her two male companions, the artist Marie Laurencin and her German husband Otto Von Wätjen, and Gleizes' friends Francis Picabia and Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia. While it seemed to Roche as if "the entire debacle of Europe was represented," Picabia was the most demoralizing, not to say malicious of the group. Picabia made a point of denigrating everyone and everything—including the 1916 exhibition organized by Roche and Gleizes at the Galerie Dalmau. To Gleizes, Picabia was a symptom of their era's decadence, yet he had a limited usefulness as "a barometer that explodes."²³

By January 1917 Picabia's verbal grenades began exploding in *391*, the proto-Dada review he started in Barcelona and published irregularly until 1924. A caustic homage to Stieglitz's *291*, *391* continued its predecessor's tradition of running Picabia's "symbolic" portraits—many representing his associates as machines. The March 1917 issue included an allusive portrait of Marie Laurencin as a "ventilateur" or fan—one of Picabia's favorite objects.²⁴ *Juliette Gleizes au manomètre* was completed about the same time as Laurencin's portrait, Roche recalled. Picabia told her that both women's portraits were "good likenesses" and examples of a new philosophy—on which he refused to comment since "God does not explain himself."²⁵ While Roche admired his iconoclasm, she was dis-

turbed by the misogyny that she saw in these and related works—where woman as “la machine” was at best a manipulable object, at worst the butt of a private joke.²⁶

Her ambivalence about Picabia deepened during her and her husband’s second stay in New York (1917–1919). In subsequent issues of *391* Picabia (calling himself Pharamousse) mocked Gleizes and Metzinger as “candidates” for official posts in the French government and claimed that Roche was doctoring herself with whiskey in response to the U.S. declaration of war.²⁷ His corrosive effect could be observed at close range once Picabia and his wife, Gabrielle, arrived to occupy rooms at the Brevoort Hotel in Greenwich Village, and then the apartment below their own on West 88th Street. By summer, Roche recalled, “the worst cases washed up in New York . . . [had] attached themselves to him [Picabia] like mussels to a rock”; he provided these “wrecks”—including Cravan—with vast quantities of alcohol. Duchamp was content to ruin himself but Picabia liked ruining others.

Picabia’s nihilism had no doubt been exacerbated by recent events: the rise of militarism following the United States’ declaration of war, the Arensberg circle’s response to these developments in the Independents exhibition, *The Blind Man*, and the Blindman’s Ball—where Duchamp dropped his party favor, a miniature American flag, into his wine glass. While members of their group protested in their fashion, Roche attended meetings of the People’s Council for Peace and Democracy—a last-ditch effort to underscore the need for civil liberties and democratic peace terms. This umbrella group, soon to be labeled pro-Soviet, included feminists, socialists, labor leaders, Jewish organizers, and radical artists and intellectuals such as Max Eastman, John Reed, and Randolph Bourne. While Picabia ridiculed the efforts of this high-minded organization to change the course of events, Roche insisted that it might yet do so. It is noteworthy that Picabia painted *Vertu* (Virtue), his second portrait of her, at this time. Its spare mechanomorphism hints at Roche’s ethical stance

while also daubing her with guilt by association: increasingly, Picabia saw in her husband the group's self-styled censor. What is more, *Vertu's* almost cubist severity implies a seriousness of the sort that Picabia loved to undermine.²⁸

Whatever Picabia's intentions, the female manometer as pressure gauge, recording device, and historical witness circulates through Roche's poems dated 1917 to 1919. Read together, this section of *Demi Cercle* constitutes a type of social portraiture. Critics have mentioned "Brevoort" and "N'Existe Pas" (Doesn't Exist), the most striking of her visual poems, in connection with the textual play of Apollinaire and Marius de Zayas.²⁹ While they belong to the same "school" of poetry, Roche's lively compositions are neither pure "calligrammes" nor "psychotypes." In form they resemble a cross between Apollinaire's "poème-conversation" and his "idéogramme lyrique"³⁰; however, their socio-political content differentiates them from both Apollinaire's shaped poems and de Zayas's symbolic portraiture. Roche's poems include apparently random fragments of conversation overheard at the Brevoort or the Arensbergs' in order to reflect the aesthetic and political concerns of New York Dada. Like bookends, "Brevoort" and "N'Existe Pas" begin and conclude *Demi Cercle's* central section—in which the topical concerns of both the speaker and "The Group" (the title of one poem) are recorded.

"Brevoort" (figure 18.2) assumes an observer placed inside the hotel café, where conversations about war and art are going on simultaneously. Roche's poem is confined to the time and space of its venue: the reader must aid in the reconstruction of the scene. Yet its iconic forms and verbal fragments have been set on the page by a controlling consciousness—most likely that of the female instrument evoked by an unnamed guest, a painter who declares, "I see, she is a manometer!" This recording device is also likely to be the speaker whose low tolerance for the vaporous sentiments like "Tout va bien!" (Everything is fine!) and "Vive l'anarchie!" (Long live anarchy!), as well as allusions to such topics

as “Preparedness single tax Rasputin birth-control / abstract-art christian-science psycho-analysis [*sic*]”—propel her first in search of “a ventilator,” then toward the door. Spatially and thematically, a “zone of boredom opens up”—from which there is no escape.

The two poems on the page opposite “Brevoort” nonetheless propose alternatives to this “zone of boredom.” (From this point on, the dialogic double-page layout becomes a distinctive feature of *Demi Cercle*.³¹) The first, “I.A.W.O.O.T.A.S.,” at once explores and mocks the idea that the avant-garde’s activities echo events in the outer world: a note glosses the title’s abbreviation as “industrial abstraction workers out of time and space,” an allusion to the International Workers of the World (I.W.W.). The abstraction workers’ preoccupations, their “squares,” “ovals,” and “triangles,” are comparable to “barbed wire”; yet the term “parallels” (the idea of comparing art and the social realm?) is left hanging at the edge of the central blank space. “Words were too clear,” a speaker notes; a vocabulary of the “lieu-common” (a pun on Cubism’s “common places”?) had to be invented. The companion poem, “Muséums,” depicts yet another space and habit of mind, where one finds “stratifications” and “circuses” but also “neurasthenia.”

“West 88,” a prose poem whose title alludes to the building where Roche, Gleizes, and the Picabias lived in the summer of 1917, offers a different reading of atmospheric pressures. A storm will soon sweep the airless streets of the poem’s neighborhood, where shop window displays invoke “patriotism” and “Christian faith,” along with the spirit of commerce. In her role as weathervane the speaker muses, “another storm, invisible and inaudible, which will probably never break out, blows around our minds.” This street scene gives way to an elegant interior where one sees “painters who have renounced matter and poets who have transcended the use of words”—artists (Duchamp and Picabia?) who prefer “the silence of electric switches and the automatic titillations

of barbed-wire.”³² Picabia’s mechanomorphic “philosophy” is adapted to portray members of the circle: “the compass-boxer, oriented simultaneously to the north, south, east and west” is Cravan; “the metronome-poet” may be Mina Loy; “the candle-dancer,” Isadora Duncan. The speaker wonders whether they are “the end result of a race soon to disappear or forerunners already linked to the future.”

The surprising blend of apocalyptic rhetoric, temporal allusion, and urban imagery in “West 88” anticipates the next group of poems. In “Boule de Cristal” a visionary peering into a crystal ball tells a client, “Increasingly you will love glass / Mirrors / Metals / all materials / that are lucid and smooth / that can’t be corrupted or exhausted.” By contrast, the poem on the facing page, “Intérieur” (Interior), pokes fun at those who see themselves as machines—such as the unnamed member of their circle (Picabia?) who vaunts his capacity as a “storage battery” but who may be full of hot air. From this point on, rather than avoid those aspects of the cityscape that had repelled her, Roche’s poems entertain the mineral, metallic, and mechanical tendencies of modern art. Yet their speakers prefer the calming effect of objects that are “lucid and smooth” to close contact with men who insist too much on their own metal, or mettle.

Lines from Whitman’s Civil War poems alternate with cries for help in the double-page spread composed by two topical poems titled “S.O.S.”³³ In the first Whitman’s vision of democracy in crisis is contrasted with images of futurist machines exacting their revenge—a new race of men with “piston-muscles” and “turbine-lungs.” Similarly, his call, “Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching / Give me the sound of trumpets and drums!” is followed by an image of World War I troops marching beneath the windows of the Modern Gallery.³⁴ This ironic juxtaposition hints that the intellectuals who once invoked Whitman—the “sorcerer’s apprentices”—can no longer ward off the destructive side of modernity

envisioned in his writing. Roche's "S.O.S." poems mourn a culture devastated by Europe's "machine war": looking into the future the speaker sees a vista of "sheet metal and reinforced concrete."

The elegaic tone shifts to resignation in the next group of poems. "D'Une Ile" (From an Island) all but comes to terms with "the implausibility of death and its metamorphoses"; its companion, "D'Un Roof-garden" (From a Roof-Garden) calls the city "an almost likable chaos." In the first poem of a set of four titled "La Tour Parle" (The Tower Speaks), 1919, the speaker watches the city, "now tamed / purring below my window" and tells herself, "I shall soon be done with Walt Whitman." These poems weigh the competing values of past and present. In a glance at Duchamp the speaker of the third poem declares: "I have definitively renounced / the confusion often made / between the sumptuousness of a voluntary stripping-down / and a simple lack of vocation," and the idea of an art that takes the social temperature is again raised in the image of the (female) artist as measuring device—"the indifferent liquid or recording mercury." Yet in the fourth poem, the speaker declares her willingness to settle for "the few bits and pieces, garbled fragments which suffice to amuse me"—a modernist, if not a dadaist, solution to social, artistic, and emotional chaos.

Because Roche's second visual poem does not bear an official title in the manner of "Brevoort," it is possible to call it "N'Existe Pas" after the bold diagonal line of large print at the center top of the page; "Pôle Tempéré" (Temperate Pole) after another fragment singled out in this way; or a combination of these two phrases, which would suggest that no temperate pole exists in this landscape (figure 18.3). Whichever title one chooses, the poem illustrates Roche's notion that amusing bits and pieces themselves offer a principle of social and artistic composition. The attempt to grasp the era's contradictions has been abandoned; rather than sketch the social portraiture of "Brevoort," this poem takes a snapshot of a specific milieu—that of the Arensbergs' salon. On one side Du-

pyjama-toujours bleu
comme certaine difficulté à suivre la conversation
buste de Tolstol football
l'inconfort des meubles esthétiques
annonce la reminiscence
confesseur athlète
Jardins Guardi

jusqu'à la ressemblance

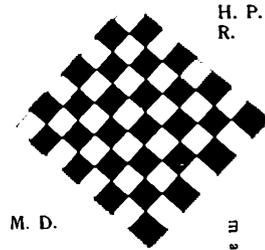
N'EXISTE PAS

idéoplasticité

PÔLE TEMPÉRÉ

sous un parasol
Je ne joue qu'en do
à Saint-Cécilia J. C. je ne joue qu'en fa
au l'obscuro Je ne joue qu'en sol

fa bémol faux



Le fil slave surcraint la tasse à thé
débayer les conceptions courage
arrangé

matricule 10872-B.

KODAK

Fr. 2.50

la chaleur d'une pipe allumée
et le froid du verre sur la peau

étaient tout un climat

18.3

Juliette Roche, "N'Existe Pas Pôle Tempéré" (Temperate Pole Doesn't Exist) (from *Demi Cercle* [Paris: Editions d'Art "La Cible", 1920], n.p.).

champ (“M.D.”) and Henri-Pierre Roché (“H.P.R.”) play chess, on the other a jangled music surrounds Jean Crotti (“J.C.”); below the exclusively masculine space thus defined the speaker records “the entire climate” in the contrast between “the warmth of a pipe” and “the coldness of glass on the skin.” And the theme of the observer as recording device is enhanced by the typeface and positioning of “KODAK”—the camera eye.

Roche also inscribed her stance as witness in most of her paintings from this period. In *American Picnic* (figure 18.4) two women in the latest Paris designs and chapeaux observe a group of unclothed, androgynous figures of all races at play out of doors—in what appears to be a parody and reversal of the gender and class politics of Manet’s *Déjeuner sur l’herbe*.³⁵ Similarly, in *Brooklyn, St. George Hotel Piscine*, swimmers of various hues disport themselves in the pool’s emblematic, multi-perspectival space while at the bottom right a fashionably clothed and hatted woman draws these lively representatives of democracy.³⁶ Finally, in *Self-Portrait* (figure 18.5), the artist, seated in some public space (a hotel lobby?), and dressed as in the previous paintings with the addition of gloves, is shown observing a scene just beyond the picture space. Judging by these paintings from her New York years, Roche used the canvas—as she used the page—to meditate on her positionality as privileged eye-witness.

La Minéralisation de Dudley Craving MacAdam (The Mineralization of Dudley Craving MacAdam) is Roche’s most detached consideration of the New York Dada circle and her engagement with it. Written in 1918 following Roche and Gleizes’s move to Pelham, it reflects the couple’s disillusionment with the city where they had sought inspiration. To her husband the new world had revealed “a heart futile and hard, sentimental and dry”; the great names from the past, Poe, Emerson, and Whitman, now struck him as “indifferent if not odious.”³⁷ Roche shared his disillusionment but remained ambivalent where the Dada group was concerned. Unlike Gleizes, she thought their wordplay and object games (e.g., *The Blind Man* and Duchamp’s readymades) harmless enough, especially



18.4

Juliette Roche, *American Picnic* (lost),
c. 1915–1919. Photograph courtesy
Union College, New York.

**18.5**

Juliette Roche, *Self-Portrait* (lost),
c. 1918–1920. Photograph courtesy
Union College, New York.

given what was going on in Europe. Yet increasingly, she found the men of the group cerebral and self-absorbed. And while she did not share her husband's new vision, "an agricultural mysticism" related to his rediscovered belief in a Christian God, her attraction to New York and to the Dada antics being enacted there was tempered by her sense that one paid a high price in embracing this notion of the modern.

A *novella à clef* on the spiritual disintegration of a wealthy Dante scholar, poet, and artist, *La Minéralisation* is—appropriately—a parodic *Inferno* set in Manhattan.³⁸ The first of its three sections begins with the titular figure wending his way through the "mishapen chessboards" of Wall Street in ninety-nine degree heat. In this apocalyptic landscape earth, air, and water have been replaced by "stone and sweat," the street surface melts, and the "gasometer"—whose job it is to measure the "catastrophe"—collapses. MacAdam seeks refuge in a Greenwich Village basement locale resembling the Brevoort, where intellectuals and artists of the Old World and the New pronounce fashionable banalities. The reader knows little about MacAdam except that he is an *habitué* who thinks indecisively about sailing to France. Another *habituée*, the expatriate Juliette Granit, calls for the New World's raw weather to wash away her obsession with a "done-for" continent. This pointedly named Frenchwoman is Roche's send-up of herself as Manhattanite: the generic rock ("roche") has naturalized as granite, an obdurate substance composed of fragments often assembled under metamorphic pressure.³⁹ In this play on words, an exact metaphor for the common processes of psychic upheaval, disintegration, and reintegration under stress voices Roche's sense of personal metamorphosis.

Two similarly named (or unnamed) denizens of the dark, smoky basement are stand-ins for Cravan and Picabia—both avant-gardists and refugees from the "done-for" continent. Lloyd Willow ("Lloyd" was Cravan's legal name; "Willow" alludes to his "interminable height") explains that he could have been a success in any number of careers but prefers

“the unlimited existence of the failure.” But his pronouncements (such as, “My real talent has always been detachment”) also suggest Duchamp, and Juliette Granit exhibits some sympathy for Willow’s displacements. The second man, an unnamed “fat philosopher” is surely Picabia, but a Picabia whose mechanomorphic faith is wavering. The philosopher muses, “[A]m I truly the medium for the world or am I just a kind of reporter?”—a question Roche may have asked herself. MacAdam leaves this dispiriting group and makes his way to his club, presumably a stronghold of traditional values.

The second section relates MacAdam’s progress up Fifth Avenue to the sounds of the “Star Spangled Banner,” random political slogans, and other reminders that this psychic quest is being played out in wartime. Disgusted by patriotic “hysterics,” MacAdam focuses on shop window displays—alternative forms of escape through consumerism, illustrated on the one page of *La Minéralisation* that resembles Roche’s visual poems in its juxtaposition of shapes and slogans. Yet once past their siren calls MacAdam concludes that “nothing justifies his persistence in existing.” At 42nd Street, mesmerized by the patterns of a giant screen, he follows a cinematic phantom called *The Film of Sleeping Sickness* to a drugstore, which fills him with a temporary sense of well-being even though it is located in Grand Central Station—the reminder of “rendez-vous nowhere.” There he composes a poem titled “Soda-Fountain,” in which allusions to the Ancient Mariner, collapsing icebergs, and a vessel sunk when “the compass turned on itself and the barometer disclosed nothing” prefigure MacAdam’s fate. Terrified by the signs of disintegration he sees in the drugstore mirror, he heads for home.

In section three, MacAdam’s apartment on Central Park West appears to be a cross between the Arensbergs’ duplex and Duchamp’s studio in the same building (33 West 67th Street). Roche parodies Walter Arensberg’s Dante scholarship by reducing it to MacAdam’s formulaic “Béatrix-Matrix”⁴⁰ and also recalls Duchamp’s “metallic” atmosphere in

MacAdam's floor of "ciment armé" ("armed" or "reinforced" concrete) as well as in the bolts, screws, balls of barbed wire, and other mechanical devices found there. (MacAdam's latest poem, a metal key he titles "Victory on the Marne," satirizes both visual poetry and the found object or readymade.) When his wish for mental stimulation fails to respond to his usual intake of cocktails, he resorts to sucking on a gleaming copper beam—an invention he calls Archduchess Otilie, whose "pure, cold, smooth, dull, silky, oxidised" surface attracts him. Alternations between this metallic medicine and his cocktails produces the alchemy that frees him from the laws of gravity, personality, and other constraints of the human condition. MacAdam's "mineralization"—at once a disembodiment and a spiritual suicide—is an all-night process in which he reviews his favorite intellectual systems and finds them wanting. Discovered the next day with the "incorruptible" Archduchess's metal teat in his mouth, MacAdam is a victim of his own penchant for the cold allure of the intellect.

Roche's satire has been read as Dada nonsense that nonetheless anticipates the *nouveau roman*; as a string of puns and language divorced from reality; as Roche's judgement on the sterility of American life; and as "proto-Surrealist" narrative.⁴¹ Scholars agree that MacAdam is a composite of several figures. Daniel Robbins has interpreted his first name, Dudley, as that of a customs official who failed to recognize Gleizes's paintings as art, and his middle name, Craving, as both an allusion to Cravan and to the diffuse yearning seen as typical of Americans.⁴² No doubt because of the work's obscurity, both its Dantesque allusions and its mobilization of the author's role as Dada manometer have, however, gone unnoticed. Although a minor character, Juliette Granit comes to accept her composite nature and pokes fun at herself in the process. The same cannot be said of MacAdam. In French his name means a paving surface made of layers of crushed stone covered by tar (in English, tarmac): when (t)his surface buckles under pressures both political and spir-

itual, Roche's eponymous hero reverts to the condition of Manhattan's substratum. Perhaps, the novella implies, it is wiser to stay on the sidelines than to occupy center stage when this leads to nihilism: of Duchamp as an extreme type of artist/intellectual Roche wrote that "he inhabited that particular region of hell which Dante said was reserved for those who did not know how to appreciate natural beauty."

In addition to the judgments on the avant-gardism contained, however covertly, in her poems and novella, Roche's memoirs offer a sly perspective on the dadaist "sabotages" she witnessed in New York—to her mind, "as decisive as those being prepared at the same time by [Hans] Arp and Tristan Tzara in a Zurich café." What she did not foresee was how the mechanosexual imagery that she turned to her own use would reappear in new guises: for example, in Man Ray's 1920 photo of Mina Loy wearing a thermometer earring which registers her depressed temperature following the disappearance of Cravan (see figure 19.1), and in *Catherine Barometer* (see figure 6.1), his sardonic 1920 portrait of the volatile Katherine Dreier. If, as Amelia Jones has argued, the dadaists' New Woman as machine "figured the threat of American industrial capitalism to European masculinity," and for this reason had to be "contained within the anxiety-reducing mechanomorphic forms,"⁴³ it is pleasant to see in the example of Juliette Roche a New Woman and artist who, rejecting this psychic containment, turned the figure of the female measuring device back on itself.

NOTES

My conversations with Juliette Roche took place in April and August of 1977. I was in Paris doing research on the life of Mina Loy. An affinity linked the two women, who met at the Arensbergs': they had moved in different social and artistic circles in prewar Paris but their paintings were both touched by what the French call "le féérique"—a somewhat literary, symbolist-inspired interpretation of Post-Impressionism. In 1915, Roche called her own style "Japanesey," a term that could have equally well described the art of Loy—who, like Roche at that time, was also writing free verse visual poems.

What interested Roche, however, was not Loy's itinerary from Post-Impressionist painting to modernist poetry but her marital choices. "Why," she asked, "did a woman as refined as Mina Loy marry a brute like Cravan?" (15 April 1977). Sixty years later, Roche still found it hard to believe that in 1917 Loy had abandoned a cosmopolitan New York life to follow Cravan to Mexico. "One had to be in good shape to marry Cravan," she remarked, as if the thought had crossed her mind (26 April 1977).

Roche did not discuss her own marriage, except to comment on Gleizes's turn to an agricultural mysticism as an antidote to the cynicism prevalent among the dadaists. The war had called everything into question, she explained. None of them knew what, if anything, was worth saving from the "over-crowded, disunified department store" of prewar European culture (1 August 1977). Happy to learn that Loy's poems from the 1910s and '20s would soon appear in a new edition, Roche presented me with a copy of *Demi Cercle*, her own poetry from that era. It gave the feel of the time, she remarked, of "the cosmic upheaval and breakdown which was for us the war." This article is my *hommage (femme?)* to Juliette Roche, who not only explained aspects of modernist culture and politics that I could not have grasped without her help but also provided research space, lodging, and an amazing cucumber omelette at Les Méjades, her farm in the south of France.

1. Juliette Roche, *Memoirs*, unpub. ms., n.p. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are from notes taken during my August 1977 reading of Roche's mem-

oirs. Quotations from another version of her memoirs as cited in Daniel Robbins's doctoral dissertation, "The Formation and Maturity of Albert Gleizes: A Biographical and Critical Study, 1881 through 1920" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, Institute of Fine Arts, 1975), are noted as such. I have been unable to consult versions of Roche's memoir held at the Fondation Albert Gleizes, Paris, where the manuscript I read in 1977 is presumably housed. See also Lea Vergine, *L'Altra metà dell'avanguardia 1910–1940: Pittrici e scultori nei movimenti delle avanguardie storiche* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1980), pp. 164–165. This is a good source of information and the first publication of Roche's visual poems.

2. Juliette Roche, interview with Carolyn Burke, 15 April 1977.
3. Terry Castle wittily details the cultural history of the "moralized" female thermometer or barometer in *The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 21–43. I am grateful to Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for suggesting Castle's relevance to discussions of women in Dada.
4. Roche, interview with Burke, 15 April 1977.
5. Sarah Addington, "New York Is More Alive and Stimulating Than France Ever Was, Say Two French Painters," *New York Tribune*, 9 October 1915, p. 9.
6. Roche, qtd. in Francis Steegmuller, *Cocteau: A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), p. 115n.
7. Cocteau was given this nickname, the title of his second book.
8. Roche, interview with Burke, 15 April 1977.
9. Roger Shattuck (*The Banquet Years: The Origins of the Avant Garde in France, 1885 to World War I* [New York: Vintage, rev. ed., 1968], p. 319) uses the phrase "poète fondé en peinture" to describe Apollinaire's work at this time; "idéo-

grammes lyriques" is Apollinaire's phrase in mid-1914 for what would soon be called "calligrammes." See Guillaume Apollinaire, *Calligrammes: Poems of Peace and War (1913–1916)*, trans. Anne Hyde Greet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 355.

10. Juliette Roche, "Routes," 1913. Roche's poems are cited here as published in *Demi Cercle* (Paris: Editions d'Art "La Cible", 1920), n.p.; all translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Her travel poems in particular bear comparison with Apollinaire's "Voyage" and "A Travers l'Europe," both published in 1914.

11. Guillaume Apollinaire, *L'Intransigent*, 15 November 1913, as cited in Robbins, "The Formation and Maturity of Albert Gleizes," p. 183.

12. Roche, qtd. in Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, p. 116.

13. Jean Cocteau's words as quoted by Roche in *ibid.*, p. 117.

14. Roche, "La Tour Parle," in *Demi Cercle*, n.p.

15. Jean Metzinger, qtd. in Daniel Robbins, "Expectations and Disillusion: The Gleizes in New York, 1915–1919," unpub. ms., p. 4. I am most grateful to Francis Naumann for alerting me to Robbins's paper and to the late Professor Robbins for his permission to quote from it.

16. Addington, "New York Is More Alive."

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.* Little is known about Roche's artistic career. According to the sketchy entry for her in E. Bénézit, *Dictionnaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs et Graveurs* (Paris: Gründ, 1976), p. 23, Roche's work was shown at a solo exhibition in Paris and at the Salon des Indépendants in 1914, in various group shows in New York from 1915 to 1919, in Geneva at the International Exhibition in 1921, in Paris

at the Petit Palais and the Musée Galleria in 1938–1939, and in Montpellier, Nîmes, and Avignon in a 1965 traveling solo exhibition. She remained a figurative painter whose favorite themes included Parisian and New York City scenes, still lifes, and flowers. Many of her paintings are held by the Fondation Albert Gleizes.

19. Robbins, “The Formation and Maturity of Albert Gleizes,” p. 218.
20. Roche, interview with Burke, 15 April 1977.
21. Ibid.
22. Robbins, “Expectations and Disillusion,” p. 6.
23. Albert Gleizes, qtd. in Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et “391”*, vol. 2 (Paris: Eric Losfeld, 1966), p. 43. The Dalmau exhibition, which included a cubist gouache by Cocteau, was not a success.
24. The four-bladed ventilator image of Marie, Laurencin’s portrait in *391*, may allude to the “freshness” that Picabia saw in the artist as well as to the four men in her life in 1917, one of whom was Picabia. See William A. Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 99–100. Camfield (ibid., p. 99) calls the ventilator image of a related work, *Portrait of Marie Laurencin, Four in Hand*, “haphazard in composition and so casual in technique that one is sorely tempted to regard it as a dadaist (or proto-dadaist) insult to art and technology.”
25. Roche, interview with Burke, 26 April 1977. A slightly different version of these remarks is cited in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 100.
26. About this time Laurencin told Roche not to listen to painters; Laurencin had stopped painting because, as she told Roche, she had heard too much theorizing.

27. Pharamousse [Francis Picabia], *391* 1, no. 4 (25 March 1917) and no. 5 (June 1917). See Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et "391"*, 1:40, 48.
28. See Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), pp. 69–70, for a discussion and reproduction of *Vertu*.
29. Sanouillet (*Francis Picabia et "391"*, 2:73) calls her visual poems “calligrammes” in the style of de Zayas; Vergine (*L’Altra metà*, p. 165) claims that they anticipate Dada uses of the form; Naumann (*New York Dada*, p. 99) discusses “Brevoort” as a “psychotype”; Dickran Tashjian situates it in relation to the visual poetry of Agnes E. Meyer and Katharine N. Rhoades but contrasts the “ironic self-deprecations of their female narrators” with Roche’s “self-assur[ance].” In my reading “Brevoort” is ambiguous, nor does it clearly “celebrate anarchy,” as Tashjian suggests. See Tashjian, “Authentic Spirit of Change: The Poetry of New York Dada,” in Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), pp. 266–271.
30. For an example of the “poème-conversation,” see Apollinaire’s “Lundi Rue Christine”; his “idéogrammes lyriques” are included in the *Ondes* section of *Calligrammes*.
31. On the double-page layout see Jay Bochner, “dAdAmAgs,” in *Making Mischief*, pp. 214–220.
32. The Picabias were house-sitting for Louise Norton at this time: Roche’s memoirs dwell on the contrast between the elegant comforts of Norton’s “silver-grey sitting room” and the behavior of the guests—especially Francis Picabia, then having an affair with Isadora Duncan.
33. Roche quotes two of Whitman’s poems in *Drum-Taps*, “Give me the Splendid Silent Sun” and “As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado.”

34. The poem deliberately alludes to de Zayas's Modern Gallery, where Picabia's "mechanomorphic" portraits were shown the previous year (5–25 January 1916).

35. *American Picnic*, now lost, was first illustrated in Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 99; of the two female figures, Naumann remarks that one of them is likely to represent "the artist herself."

36. *Brooklyn, St. George Hotel Piscine* was first illustrated in *Making Mischief*, p. 112. Robert Rosenblum ("A Dada Bouquet for New York," in *Making Mischief*, p. 265) notes the painting's "kaleidoscopic freedom" and "rapidly shifting aerial view" but does not mention its murky tonality or Roche's inclusion of herself. His interpretation of Roche's art and poetry is more upbeat than mine, which emphasizes their ambivalence.

37. Albert Gleizes, *Souvenirs*, qtd. in Robbins, "Expectations and Disillusion," p. 10.

38. *La Minéralisation* was first published in *La Vie de Lettres et des Arts* 8, n.s. (1922): 22–271; then separately in a limited edition of five hundred copies with a cover by Gleizes (Paris: Croutzet et Depost, 1924).

39. Roche shared the widely held notion that Manhattan's skyscrapers were built on granite. According to the WPA guide *Manhattan Panorama* ([New York: Random House, 1938], p. 24), they actually repose on "a tough bed of rock, Manhattan schist: a thick, unyielding, coarsely crystalline rock glinting with mica."

40. MacAdam's formula is elaborated in Walter Arensberg, *The Cryptography of Dante* (New York: Knopf, 1921). On Arensberg's interest in the ciphers he believed to be hidden in the work of Dante and Shakespeare, see Francis M. Naumann, "Cryptography and the Arensberg Circle," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 9 (May 1977): 127–133; and Naumann, *New York Dada*, pp. 31–32.

41. See Vergine, *L'Altra metà*, p. 165; Robbins, "The Formation and Maturity of Albert Gleizes," p. 220; Robbins, "Expectations and Disillusion," p. 9; and Naumann, *New York Dada*, p. 99.
42. Robbins, "Expectations and Disillusion," pp. 7–8.
43. Amelia Jones, "Eros, That's Life, or the Baroness' Penis," in *Making Mischief*, pp. 241, 245; see also an expanded version of Jones's essay in this volume.

DADA THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, OR: MINA LOY'S OBJECTIVE

marisa JANUZZI

[S]o intimate is the [liaison] of [Gertrude Stein's] observation with the sheer existence of her objective, that she invites you into the concentric vortex of consciousness involved in the most trifling transactions of incident. . . . There is a scholarly manipulation of the inversion of ideas, parallel to Alice In The Looking Glass

...

—Mina Loy¹

A PROPOS: LOY AND [HISTORICAL] DADA

In an unsigned report on “Notes and Activities in the World of Art,” a columnist for the *New York Sun* notes that “the official bulletin of the Dada Movement, which so aroused some of the Parisian journalists who recently attended the meeting at the *Salon des Indépendants*, has arrived, and proves to be sufficiently curious, but not particularly inflaming. It is a case of *honi soit qui mal y pense*.” The notice names the “New Yorkers that the *Bulletin* has already nominated to the presidency”: “Mabel Dodge, Alfred Stieglitz, Marcel Duchamp, Abram [*sic*] Walkowitz, Mina Lloyd [*sic*], John Marin, Katherine [*sic*] N. Rhoades, Walter Pach, W. C. Arensberg and

Edgar [sic] Varese.”² The publication of this note virtually coincided with the institutionalization of modern art in America,³ but the reporter may be pardoned his or her air of ennui about the latest Dada developments. After the Armory Show of 1913, the Independents’ exhibition of 1917, and the birth and death (between 1913 and 1920) of such publications as *291*, *Others*, *Rogue*, *The Blind Man*, *New York Dada*, *TNT*, and *Rongwrong*, the successful transplant of avant-garde tendencies to American shores—and Dada in particular, with its performative aspect on the New York social front—may have seemed like news that was no longer news.

Dada may have been old hat in New York by 1920, but it was vibrantly outliving its immediate usefulness in the writings of Mina Loy through 1925, at least. In this context, it is news, because oddly enough, the careers of Loy and Dada have not hitherto been treated as mutually illuminating. Except for Carolyn Burke’s biography of Loy, and a brief essay in a Dutch anthology titled *Dames in Dada*, none of the scholarship on Loy or Dada attempts to situate her work directly in relation to the movement.⁴ When the connection between Loy and Dada has been made, it is most often made by way of her fleeting 1918 marriage to the protean *avant*-Dada, Arthur Cravan (b. Fabian Lloyd), or by way of their social ties to the Arensbergs, who between 1914 and 1919 assembled one of the “earliest and most important collections of modern art,” artists, and writers in their West 67th Street apartment.⁵ Loy’s presence in the Arensberg salon, which has been reconstructed (in print, archival photographs, and most recently in a full-scale reproduction at the Whitney Museum of American Art) as chief headquarters for New York Dada, has been historically documented, if not fully considered from a critical standpoint.⁶ Here the expatriates Loy and Cravan first came together in the orbit of Duchamp and Picabia, whose more prominent names now function as metonyms for the wartime translation of “dada” into American English. In nearly every account, Loy is positioned as one of Dada’s brides if she is taken up in relation to the movement at all; the *Bulletin Dada*’s nomination

of “Mina L[Loy]d” to “presidency” is symptomatic of a historiographic trend that is now more than seventy-five years old.⁷

Loy’s poems, sent to little magazines from Florence via Carl Van Vechten, were appearing in the American literary equivalents of *salons des refusés* (*Rogue* and *Others*) prior to her 1916 arrival in New York. Advance notoriety helped to plunge her immediately into avant-garde performances inside and outside of the theaters, culminating in her poetry reading and exhibition with the Independents in April 1917, her appearance at the Blindman’s Ball (and subsequently in Beatrice Wood’s commemorative painting *Lit de Marcel*) a month later, or perhaps her 1921 participation, on a return trip to New York, in “An Evening with Gertrude Stein,” the Société Anonyme’s follow-up to its first Dada soirée and the event that may have supplied the impetus for her two-part “Gertrude Stein” letter to the *transatlantic review* in 1924. The Society of Independent Artists exhibition of course was also the venue for—or against, as it happened—Duchamp’s infamous *Fountain* (see figure 2.3), and has been amply documented as a crystallizing moment for New York Dada.

In a newspaper account of the exhibition, Loy is quoted as an authority on the perplexingly uncordial new relations between “the artist and the public” in remarks that echo “In . . . Formation,” which had appeared just days earlier in the Independents’ little magazine, *The Blind Man*.⁸ In this piece she accuses the public of “prejudice” and bad faith in looking at art, “acquired unnaturally” in the course of obtaining an “Education.” Whereas “the educator” cries, “Let us forget . . . the democratically simple beginnings of an art,” she argues, “The Public knows better than this, knowing such values as the under-inner curve of women’s footgear, one factor of the art of our epoch.” “Art,” she argues, is “*The Divine Joke*, and any *Public*, and any *Artist* can see a nice, easy, simple joke, such as the sun.” The piece articulates some critically astute readings of the function of avant-garde art, in relation to academicism, mass culture, the construction and deconstruction of the female body in

fashion, mass media, and those arts (especially her own later surrealist prose) that respond integrally to the media-ated new ways of “seeing.” Nevertheless, she closes on a fatalistic note, whose tone is difficult to determine: “You might, at least, keep quiet while I am talking.”

This question of mediated versus “unmediated” ways of seeing recurs, though rather subtly, in her profile “Pas de Commentaires! Louis M. Eilshemius,” printed one month later in the second issue of *The Blind Man* devoted to the defense of Duchamp’s *Fountain*. Eilshemius, an impoverished artist whose early success had been eclipsed by later bouts of paranoia and an obsessional interest in “impotent eroticism,”⁹ showed two canvases in the Independents exhibition; by 1917 he was known not for his art but for his vituperative letters to critics, especially Henry McBride at the *New York Sun*. “[T]ruthful to Roché’s promise that *The Blind Man* ‘will print what the artists and the public have to say,’” Thierry de Duve notes, “the editors granted him an interview.”¹⁰ However, Loy’s piece is more interesting for what *she* has to say about Eilshemius: “The complicated mechanism that obtains in other artists a prolonged psychological engineering of a work of art, is waived; his pictures, if one may say so, are instantaneous photographs of his mind at any given moment of inspiration.” This piece, like “In . . . Formation,” also concludes on a completely unforeseen note: “Duchamp, meditating the levelling of all values, witnesses the elimination of Sophistication.”¹¹

In his impressively detailed essay, “Given the Richard Mutt Case,” de Duve identifies Loy as the author of this profile and reviews her relation to the magazine, noting that “She had been the only contributor to the first issue of *The Blind Man* besides [the editors: Duchamp, Wood, and Roché] themselves.” He claims that although her previously-articulated predilection for “pure uneducated seeing” (as a meeting point between artist and public) is reflected in this piece, “the very construction of her text belies this seemingly genuine enthusiasm.” Considering a passage in which “Eilshemius’s mad ambition is simply sandwiched between two

admiring lines by Mina Loy as if nothing peculiar had happened,” de Duve concludes that “it is hard not to read Mina Loy’s article as if her pen had been at times held by another hand, almost sarcastic in a deadpan fashion.”¹²

Intriguing as the implication of Duchampian manipulative choreography at work here is, it is hard to read de Duve’s argument without wondering if he knows his female subject at all beyond this particular context. For one thing, Loy’s celebration of “pure uneducated seeing” is hardly uncomplicated, considering her reference to the (Platonic) sun as a “joke” and her recourse to mass-cultivated sensibilities about women’s footwear as an index of (supposedly) unmediated sight. Her reading of Eilshemius is another instance of a similar paradox: “The complicated mechanism that obtains in other artists a prolonged psychological engineering of a work of art, is waived; his pictures, if one may say so, are instantaneous photographs of his mind at any given moment of inspiration.” Taken at face value, the sentence is perplexing; what is a photograph of anything, if not a product of complex “engineering of a work of art,” whether psychological, aesthetic, scientific, or critical engineering is at stake here? If we credit Loy with sensitivity to the ways the media constructs artistic reputations (and who better to trust than this artist sensationally profiled as “The Modern Woman” just months earlier?¹³) the reference to Duchamp at the end of the piece illuminates the paradox. On the one hand, Loy can be read, as she generally is, as furthering the cause of his *Fountain* in her celebrations of “unmediated” vision; in fact, her friend Louise Norton offers an almost formalist appreciation of the object in this second issue of *The Blind Man*. On the other hand, to take up one of de Duve’s own best points, Loy can hardly be insensitive to the fact that, as an *unexhibited* object, Duchamp’s *Fountain* had already become a work of art *entirely manufactured as such* by the elaborate apparatus of public relations, and the efforts of the media in particular. Norton’s piece explicitly approaches the object through the mediation of Stieglitz’s famous photo-

graph of it, which tends to enhance its appearance as a Madonna or, in her words, the “Buddha of the Bathroom.”¹⁴

Loy’s Dada ties are inscribed in one other piece published in *The Blind Man*: “O Marcel—otherwise I Also Have Been to Louise’s.” While the three prose pieces explicitly foreground the question of Loy’s relation to Dada and to Duchamp, one senses that these were a sort of conceptual dead end for her. “O Marcel” is a sort of experiment she never tried (for publication) again, a bit of verbal easel-painting that seems quite directly to (re)present a slice of conversation among members of the Arensberg circle at the Blindman’s Ball,¹⁵ but which is also perhaps the first bit of feminist criticism on Duchamp, who seems to “give . . . paper” to women the same way he gives out his studio key and “tongue sandwiches”: “I want some tongue I will give you some—but don’t do too much what? Suck it. . . . anyway it keeps me awake.”¹⁶ Of course, in the sexual climate of the Arensberg salon as described by Burke, Loy’s growing detachment about her involvement with Futurism and her satirical skepticism about the sexism of the most ostensibly progressive circles were bound to begin to color her friendship with Duchamp, whose *Fountain* could, after all, be read as suggesting an equivalence between a Madonna-like side turned urinal rechristened “Fountain” and the female body. In a note written decades later for the *View* reprint of “O Marcel,” Loy remembered the magazine as “The Blind Boy,” and that is pretty much how she somewhat elliptically recollects Marcel’s antics at the Ball.¹⁷ Although Duchamp’s work shared many affinities with Loy’s lifetime project (affinities that will be explored later), and even though in the late 1950s he would be the artist to title Loy’s Bowery constructions (*Hauts-Reliefs et Bas-Fonds* [High Reliefs and Low Bottoms]—works read by at least one critic as bringing about an “alliance,” albeit a “sinister” and somewhat belated one, between “Dada and social comment”¹⁸), Loy’s relation to him can be figured as a kind of case study of her complex relation to Dada itself. Although she wrote several other pieces that may be read profitably in relation to

Dada (“Human Cylinders,” “Auto-Facial Construction,” the 1917 *Songs to Joannes*, the “Colossus” and “Ova” sections of “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” come to mind), we may have to seek out alternate constructions of Dada in order to see what might have been Loy’s contributions to the movement (“You might, at least, keep quiet while I am talking”). My aim is to probe the nature of that short-lived embrace between Loy and Dada and to explore—really to question—its usefulness for her later career as writer and artist.

LOY, THE BOYS, AND DADA

Everything has already taken place . . . our personality or destiny, like a roll of negative film . . . is unrevealable until it has found a camera to project it and a surface to throw it upon.

— Mina Loy¹⁹

Mina Loy’s husband Arthur Cravan is an as yet unmentioned tie joining her to the historical Dada movement. “Light—passed through the poet Cravan—became brilliance,” Loy wrote, and his refractory presence is discernible through all her writings produced subsequent to their romance.²⁰ Roger Conover has called Cravan the “forefather” with “no foreknowledge” of Dada, and has begun to reconfigure the biographical genre in order to tell the story of a man whose life animates a question posed in his poetry: “Quelle âme se disputera mon corps?” (What soul disputes my body?) to which the same poem seems to reply, “Ma funeste pluralité!” (My fatal plurality!)²¹ It is easy to imagine that Mina Loy, who had already essayed lives as a dutiful daughter in Pre-Raphaelite London; a young art student in Berlin at the height of Jugendstil; a painter, model, dressmaker, wife, and mother in Paris during the Post-Impressionist splash; an emergent feminist, futurist critic, and writer in the expatriate salons of Flor-

ence; and now an unforgettably creative conduit of overseas aesthetic intelligence in the fertile context of New York bohemia, should find in the “fatal plurality” of Cravan’s life and work something of a personal revelation. The first full-length biography of Loy was assembled in an almost collage-like format, which underscores Burke’s observation that her subject, like the lover she met in 1917, was “at home in exile.”²²

But is either Cravan or Loy “at home” in the rubric of Dada? The answer is more obvious in relation to Cravan than to Loy. Tristan Tzara’s manifesto- and performance-driven “anti-philosophy of *spontaneous acrobatics*” implicates the iconoclastic and self-inventing “french boxer” right and left:

*Every act is a cerebral revolver shot—the insignificant gesture the decisive movement are attacks—(I open the fan of knock-outs to distill the air that separates us)—and with words set down on paper I enter, solemnly, into myself. I plant my sixty fingers in the hair of notions and brutally shake the drapery, the teeth, the bolts of the joints. I close, I open, I spit.*²³

Tzara’s *Seven Dada Manifestoes* of 1916–1920 culminate on a distinctly poetic and pugilistic note: “*The thought is made in the mouth.*”²⁴ Two ancestral echoes are audible in this claim: Wilde’s observation that language is the parent and not the child of thought, and Cravan’s 1914 proclamation that “le génie n’est qu’une manifestation extravagante du corps” (genius is nothing but an extraordinary manifestation of the body).²⁵

Loy undoubtedly would have found these theoretical dicta compatible with her own interest in the incarnation of thought or vision or art. “Light—passed through the poet Cravan—became brilliance,” she wrote. In the texts she drafted in order to screen the “cerebral newsreel depicting his life . . . the newsreel of [her] memory”²⁶ of his character, Loy routinely refers to Cravan in relation to the perspectival shifts and optical

phenomena that his stature of character seemed to engender, and that would be increasingly important to her work starting in 1920, guiding her way from abstraction to a quasi-surrealist and metavisionary engagement with photographic portraiture. In the “Colossus” section of “Anglo-Mongrels,” Cravan’s dadaist trick of wordlessly recognizing and therefore reducing pap to the stature of pap is commemorated as a congenital trait:

*And the first time
that ever he sits up
devouring his pap
It is as if a pillar of iron
erects him
in place of a spine*

*And the first time
he opens his eyes
wittingly—
“Tis like an eagle
soaring on the sun”
and the first time
he communes within himself
he decides
“All words are lies”²⁷*

This scene finds an echo (or an origin) in an anecdote from “Colossus” that records a description of a photograph of Colossus as well as its impression on the narrator, who seems to be Loy herself:

[Colossus] had a faded photo of himself in an embroidered dress. It gave a surprising impression of the seated baby’s backbone being a rod of iron.

*He had said, when he showed it to me, "As soon as I could speak, I knew that everything people told me was a lie. All they say—all they do," he mused disgustedly, "is an attempt to drag me down to their own level."*²⁸

The infant Dada has such iconoclastic presence that he becomes precious to the experimenting portrait artist on two counts; first, as trope: a diagnostic or metasemiotic comment, infinitely reproducible, on "all words," especially civilized ones, as "lies" (a comment by extension on the inflated value of certain cultured institutions Loy had been attacking since 1914); second, as original subject of desire, never properly reproducible in print or images. "It is impossible, or at least dangerous, to remember Colossus after he left New York," Loy wrote, "for by this time I had magnified his being to such proportions that all comparisons vanished, which is the trick of falling in love."²⁹

As identification and desire enable her to magnify her subject, desire and envy also inscribe Cravan's/Colossus's childhood in an aesthetic frame distinct from the one through which Loy views her own. In "Anglo-Mongrels," the section on Colossus is a bundle of TNT set down silently but knowingly near the windows on the childhood of Ova (whom we may take to be the poetic narrator herself, *in ovum*, so to speak). Not yet hard-boiled, the young Ova is far more fragile and impressionable a character, and in a metatextual twist, risks being depicted mainly as a function of her acculturation to dreaded stereotypes:

*(The drama of)
a human consciousness
(played to the inattentive audience
of the Infinite)
gyrates
on the ego-axis
intoxicates*

*with the cosmic
proposition of being IT — —*

*Till the inconsiderate
competitional brunt
of its similars
informs it
of several millions
“pulling the same stunt”*

*this consciousness within her
uncurled itself upon the rollers of objective experience
printing impressions
vaguely and variedly
upon Ova
In place of the more formulate education
coming naturally
to the units of a national instigation*

- -

*New Life
when it inserts itself into continuity
is disciplined
by the family
reflection
of national construction
to a proportionate posture
in the civilized scheme*

*deriving
definite contours
from tradition*

*personality
being mostly
a microcosmic
replica
of institutions³⁰*

As a young “mongrel” and a creative girl, Ova is likelier prey than Colossus to the viral institutions (race, gender, nationality, class, education, family, religion, mass culture, and even art) that would discipline and assimilate her particularity into a more proper type.

While the narrator’s gaze can reflect and enlarge the child Colossus within it, the mirrors that the poem’s environs hold up to Ova are more menacing. The “Contraction” section of the poem illustrates the potential for negative birth or growth within the actively threatening purview of unseeing (“contracting”) eyes:

*She is contracting
to the enveloping
plasm of uneasiness
in which she is involved with the big bodies*

*The garden
the child’s
first place of purity
is become defiled*

*an egg is smashed
a horrible
aborted contour
a yellow murder
in a viscous pool³¹*

Ova, we know, has already been troubled with taunts that “the Jews killed Jesus / and are bound for Hades.”³² For a character whose name means egg, the egg pointedly hurled into her garden and lying broken there proposes what Priscilla Wald has called a “self-portrait in a shattered mirror”³³; by mirroring her in exactly the opposite fashion from the accepting and loving gazes that magnify Colossus, the broken egg takes on its most threatening aspect. Forced to confront a disfigured and disfiguring stock of available (self-)images, Ova is swindled of the apparent birthright of fortitude which endows her restless “twin,” Colossus.

Shoring fragments of the narrative and the heroine until such time as she can expatriate,³⁴ the poem takes recourse in recounting the various rigged seductions that embroiled the daughter in this plight. Does the Dada Colossus, portrayed in its infancy, portend yet another such rigged seduction for Ova? The poem is thematically but not structurally mute on this point. In desirous identification and difference, homage and sabotage, Loy discovers and frames Dada, even as Dada threatens to break the narrative frame.

DADA: SPIRIT, LETTER, AND LOY

The answer to the question (Is either Cravan or Loy “at home” in the rubric of Dada?) is, as I have asserted, less obvious in the case of Mina Loy. If the “Dada spirit” is separable from the historical Dada movement,³⁵ or if Dada is broadly construed as a name for the conspicuous refusal of conventions in art and in life, then surely Loy was lending Dada her own names and expressions from the moment she began to theorize and to enact bold connections between modern fashion and self-fashioning, between the (female) body and its dis- and re-articulation in the arts of dress design, photography, poetry, and painting. Pragmatically and politically, the earliest cutting of the corset strings, a gesture accomplished by the most daring women of Loy's generation, prepared new contours for

the feminine, not to say the modern human character. In an unpublished memoir by Loy's first husband, Stephen Haws, this instance of the "Dada spirit" *avant la lettre* is situated in a broader cultural revolt against the influence of the middle-class Victorian Mama. "Corsets were beginning to irk the youth of 1900," Haws remembers, "and were discarded. [Poiret's] first creations were to me recognisable [*sic*] as Gudrun's or Mina's last year's frocks."³⁶ Freedom from expensive and constraining foundation garments suggested other freedoms which women fought for, and also became a kind of paradigm by which defiance of traditional forms in the cultural realm could be understood.³⁷

In her "Feminist Manifesto" of 1914, Loy arrives at her own contemporary version of Cravan's claim that "genius is nothing but an extraordinary manifestation of the body." Arguing that "virtue" (like the corset) is a false index of female character and "the principal instrument of [women's] subjection," she calls for the "unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty—."³⁸ In Tzara's words, "A manifesto is a communication addressed to the whole world, in which there is no other pretension than the discovery of a means of curing instantly political, astronomical, artistic, parliamentary agronomic and literary syphilis."³⁹ The "Feminist Manifesto" functioned simultaneously as social criticism and aesthetic theory for Loy. Her earliest successful poems also date from 1914; they thematically deconstruct the conventional artifice of gender while positing (in)formal alternatives in uncorsetted free verse stanzas.

In the spirit if not the letter of the term Dada, the first radical re-tailoring of the quotidian feminine makes new sense of Mary Ann Caws's playful connection between the arts of *couture* and *Dada coupure*.⁴⁰ As Rudolf Kuenzli claims, Tzara's "haute coupure" (instructions for and actual readymade texts produced by cutting) involves a "metasemiotic" aesthetic all the more ambitious for taking the daily news rather than classic poetry as its subject. Tzara's *Dada ars poetica* was at once a radical re-

articulation of the deluded or illusory subject of mass media, a text for performance, and a “recipe for the production of anarchy in the cultural sign system.”⁴¹

To make a dadaist poem

Take a newspaper.

Take a pair of scissors.

Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.

Cut out the article.

*Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them
in a bag.*

Shake it gently.

*Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which
they left the bag.*

Copy conscientiously.

The poem will be like you.

*And here you are a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a
sensitivity that is charming though beyond the understanding
of the vulgar.*⁴²

Taking note of the typographic anarchy exploited in Dada’s poetic ready-mades, Kuenzli situates German Dada historically as a deconstructive reading of the wartime explosion of propaganda in the mass media.

Without once alluding to female Dada “practitioners” (or becoming self-conscious about its investment in a gendered rhetoric of “conquering and disseminating,” which derives from Tzara himself), Kuenzli’s essay nevertheless enables me to imagine a possible feminist stake in this deconstructive approach to the “cultural sign system” of the media. It does not require gigantic conceptual strides to get from Loy’s attack on conventional fashion designs (as outmoded “couture”), or from her surgical strike in the “Feminist Manifesto” against the composed contours of the

virtuous female body (“coupure”), to the collage aesthetic of her free verse, evolved from 1914, which often seems thematically and technically to unite them both. In her *Songs to Joannes*, a long kaleidoscopic farewell to Marinetti written just prior to her entrance into the New York Dada milieu, Loy laments: “We might have given birth to a butterfly / With the daily news / Printed in blood on its wings.” She need not have mourned the loss; the “daily news” is “printed in blood” as the body of her work (rather than “on its wings”).⁴³ However, one suspects that we might be inflicting too much “coupure” on the Dada concept, just to enable it to bring this fine print into focus.

LOY, THE BARONESS ELSA, AND DADA: A BRIEF CAUTIONARY TALE FOR CRITICS

What might be lost, from a Loy-al point of view, by suggesting that Loy’s experiments in *couture* and *coupure* are pioneering gestures of Dada, or that she, Tzara, and Cravan are siblings in Dada? We risk losing the specificity, particularly the feminist specificity, of Loy’s motives. The case of that congenital dadaist the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (friend of Loy and Djuna Barnes, and *habituée* of the Arensbergs’), is instructive. Construed as a dadaist primarily for her sartorial eccentricity, and much to the detriment of serious consideration of her writing and sculptural creations, what could the word Dada have sounded like to Baroness Elsa by 1924? Her poetry appears in *New York Dada* and *The Little Review*, but she is mentioned only once in the entire Motherwell anthology of Dada writers and painters, in a history of “The Dada Spirit in Painting” by Georges Hugnet. Hugnet notes, without mentioning her writing, that the single 1921 issue of *New York Dada* (the same one in which Mina Loy is featured presiding over a “coming-out party” for a pair of “Pug Debs”: the painters Hartley and Stella) carries the Baroness’s photograph (see figure 15.2):

... the portrait of a Dadaist whimsy, a woman whose whole life was Dada, the delirious spectre of Dada mingling with the crowd in one of its monstrous transformations. Baroness Elsa von Loringhoven [sic], who made objects in the manner of Schwitters, became famous in New York for her transposition of Dada into her daily life. Dressed in rags picked up here and there, decked out with impossible objects suspended from chains, swishing long trains, like an empress from another planet, her head ornamented with sardine tins, indifferent to the legitimate curiosity of passers-by, the baroness promenaded down the avenues like a wild apparition, liberated from all constraint.⁴⁴

Without entering long-brewed theoretical debates about avant-garde praxis, I would like to call attention to the historiographic trap sprung here on the Baroness, whose “monstrous” “transposition of Dada into her daily life” is recollected not as an extension of the Dada front but as “whimsy,” a sort of a joke at her own expense. And yet her cultural work, all of a piece and Dada to the core, was produced at great personal expense.

Her autobiography begins with the same topics found in manifestoes by Marinetti and Tzara: assassination, revolt against bourgeois hypocrisy, an attack against the old order as afflicted with venereal disease, and a conspicuous rejection of literary conventions. Yet these pieces come together to animate the more “monstrous” subject, a daughter whose autobiographical motive and aesthetic is firmly grounded in the desire to frame the “Dad[d]a” who had spawned her. The Baroness opens by attributing her mother’s death to her father’s venery:

After my mother’s dreadful death by cancer of the womb, occasioned by my father’s thoughtless mental as well as physical conduct of a sovereign entirely uncultured malebrute—whose honest youth devotion was spurious coin after all, for want of quality, alternating now from utter tyranny

*to tearful sentimentality, pitifully nauseating to behold . . . after her death I knew I had no home by my father, as she had foretold me . . . and I knew it without fear and regret—nay, with satisfaction, hidden delight—prepared for life’s wondrous kaleidoscope.*⁴⁵

In the phrase “life’s wondrous kaleidoscope” she seems to implicate her own self-refracting and colorful techniques of signaling defiance, from smoking to taking lovers to her notorious exploits abroad to the creation of her own fashions and a mature artistic style.

When the very young Elsa is hypocritically scolded by her father and stepmother for smoking, she retaliates by “telling [her] father [that her real] mamma lay dead in the graveyard by his fault.” Thus, within the first four paragraphs of the autobiography our heroine nearly successfully incites her father to strangle her; like Iphigenia she is all but dead before she has even crossed the dramatic stage. Only Elsa’s hated stepmother saves the father from “becoming [his daughter’s] murderer.”⁴⁶ The prose in which this is so swiftly and yet obscurely told is a remarkable vehicle for this particular story; the sentences unwind in endless anarchic ramifications, defying logic while framing those who (ab)use it as possessors of “base coin.” As in her poetry, the author nearly abandons conventions of syntax and punctuation altogether in a metasemiotic spectacle of unmistakably patricidal design.

Elsa’s memoirs were written between 1923 and 1925, exactly coincident with the serialization of Loy’s experimental autobiographical epic “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” in *The Little Review* and elsewhere. Both works announce the birth of their subjects in the paradigmatic moment when the creative daughter escapes the rigged seductions of paternal designs. Both Loy and Elsa treat this “real” birth as an act of self-production, and as a function of the new and distinctive aesthetics that constitute their autobiographies. What did the word Dada portend for either woman by 1924? Both authors had previously been construed as

Dada practitioners but, by this point, neither seemed particularly interested in acquitting the debt explicitly, to say the least. Both seemed to use autobiography as a means of contextualizing their most iconoclastic gestures, and perhaps ultimately of escaping the Dada classification altogether.

LOY, DUCHAMP, AND [HISTORICAL] DADA: ENCORE

The case of Marcel Duchamp offers us a precious line of demarcation between the two spirits that will tend to oppose one another more and more in the very heart of the "modern spirit," depending on whether or not this spirit lays claim to the possession of the truth that is rightly represented as an ideal nude woman, who emerges from the well only to turn around and drown herself in her mirror.

—André Breton, 1924⁴⁷

Finally, we need not rely on the distinction between the Dada movement and the Dada spirit (however tantalizing the possibility of dismantling the former and reassembling it to include the latter might seem) to place Loy on its historical map. Nor need we stop at identifying her as dadaist-by-marriage to Arthur Cravan. Although Duchamp has been profitably reconsidered from feminist perspectives,⁴⁸ Dada as a movement has largely escaped such reconsiderations, perhaps because of its limited, trap-laden usefulness for feminist practitioners. The few texts that Loy produced by way of Dada reveal that Marcel Duchamp rather than Cravan was in fact the proximate irritant for some of her most creative and ultimately profound considerations of the verbal and visual terrain: the emergent medi-

ascape in which Dada staked its claims. I would like to reiterate, explore, and, I hope, begin to expand upon this claim, though it will require a lengthier study of Duchamp than I can offer here to complete the task as outlined.

Duchamp's interest in constructions and destructions of female virginity dates from 1912, when (for both Duchamp and Loy) Cubism still seemed a promising means of exploring and representing the fourth dimension via an exploration of the properties of matter itself. Around 1912 he began sketching Virgin and Bride prototypes for the *Large Glass* (see figure 6.2), a project that became more public and consuming upon his arrival in New York from Paris in 1915.⁴⁹ Although it is highly unlikely that Loy knew these sketches when she penned the privately circulated "Feminist Manifesto" in Florence, she would clearly have been intrigued, upon her arrival in New York, to find that her most generative topic was also a worksite for her new friend in Dada Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp's interest in "open[ing] the vulva of the nude," like Loy's call for the "unconditional surgical destruction of virginity," posed "a major critique of traditions of representation," and a challenge to the cartesian optics that undergird perspective in Western painting since the Renaissance.⁵⁰

In her essay "Sub Rosa: Marcel Duchamp and the Female Spectator," Rachel Blau DuPlessis figuratively peeks beneath the skirts of Duchamp's invented feminine alter-ego, "Rose Sélavy" (see figure 7.2), (Rose's name is pronounced in French as a homophone of the phrase "*Eros, c'est la vie*"), enlisting the phrase "sub Rosa" to query the spectacle of Duchamp's ambiguous, ongoing confrontations with gender.⁵¹ Not coincidentally, Mina Loy employs the term "sub rosa" in her 1923 poem "Joyce's Ulysses" to describe the subversive—Irish, gendered—murmurs audible in the music of that text. Loy's poem shares Tzara's and Joyce's critical fascination with the mass media and the market as conditions in which language takes shape:

[. . . .] *Phoenix*
of Irish fires
lighten the Occident

with Ireland's wings
flap pandemoniums
of Olympian prose

and satirise
the imperial Rose
of Gaelic perfumes
—England
the sadistic mother
embraces Erin—

Master
of meteoric idiom
present

The word made flesh
and feeding upon itself
with erudite fangs
The sanguine
introspection of the womb

Don Juan
of Judea
upon a pilgrimage
to the Libido

*The Press — — —
purring
its lullabyes to sanity*

*Christ capitalised
scourging
incontrite usurers of destiny
—in hole and corner temples*

*And hang
the soul's advertisements
outside the ecclesiast's Zoo*

*A gravid day
spawns
guttural gargoyles
upon the Tower of Babel*

*Empyrean emporium
where the
rejector—recreator
Joyce
flashes the giant reflector
on the sub rosa ———⁵²*

Infinitely preferable to the sort of official, guilty poetic language represented by the English Rose (a figure of conventional literary speech anthropomorphosed as Loy's hated mother in "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose"), the "sub rosa" renames the transgressive metasemiotic function

of Dada at its best, and firmly harnesses its anarchic energy for feminist political purposes.

Rose is a Rose is a Rose? Of all Duchamp's productions, none assimilates his theoretical and aesthetic interests closer to Loy's own than the documented antics and multiple appearances of Rose. Like *Fountain*, Rose is a product—a cause and effect—of media coverage, bringing home Baudrillard's observation that “reproduction” is in fact a media about fifty years before he made it, and perhaps—perhaps giving it a gendered twist that Mina Loy would have appreciated. Like Rose, Loy was also famously photographed by Man Ray in the 1920s, sporting a darkroom thermometer as an earring that registers her body temperature as zero (figure 19.1). At this point, Loy was selling her designs and lampshades, and beginning to fade in her function as the media spectacle of the art and poetry world. Both Loy and Rose, then, owed their “livelihoods” to the creation and circulation of their own arts of manufacture and their images as commodities. The difference? Rose never tried to live for seven decades as an experimental writer in a commodity culture. And in all her life as a media queen, Rose's temperature was never higher than that of the printed page.

Rose serves to return us to the first and only contribution Stein ever made to a publication with Dada ties. Like Duchamp's Rose, Stein's “Aux Galeries Lafayette,” which appeared in *Rogue* magazine in March 1915, seems to take as its topic the paradox of singularity (particularly, as Loy's reading of this piece seems to infer, the paradox of feminine singularity) as reiterated in the marketplace: “Each one is one, each one is accustomed to it then. Each one is one. Each one is one, there are many of them.”⁵³

Despite her affinities to Duchamp, Loy likely regarded her Dada experiments as aesthetically terminal. Her sympathies with Dada followed in the wake of her emergence in America as a sort of satellite to the futurists, but neither her absorption nor her critique of these movements en-



19.1

Man Ray, *Mina Loy*, 1920, photograph.

Courtesy Roger L. Conover. © 1998

Man Ray Trust/Artists Rights Society,
New York/ADAGP, Paris.

tirely sustained her writing past the phase of its most energetic iconoclasm (which coincided roughly with the war). Loy's theoretical (re)turn to the aesthetics of Gertrude Stein, signaled by the 1924 two-part letter to the *transatlantic review*, suggests why; it elucidates the project of this friend from pre-Futurist days, while calling attention to a new lucidity about Loy's own poetic motives, projected in *Ova*.

LOY AND MAMA: STEIN

Reading Loy's work through the more proximal lens of her own aesthetic theory, it becomes clear that, as Virginia Kouidis has argued, "Dada's nihilistic current" eventually ran "counter to her . . . constructive quest."⁵⁴ Sustaining this claim necessitates a fuller reading of the "Ova-rian" aesthetic Loy invents in "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," which resulted from her resistance to the canonization of Dada and the dawning of Surrealism with a theoretical return to Stein. Loy had known and appreciated her writings since her own earliest futurist days in Florence, when Stein arguably showed her a few tricks around their aesthetic. Loy began to theorize Stein's work in earnest around 1924, just after her most critical engagements with the movement.

The "nihilistic current" to which Kouidis refers is everywhere visible in Dada writings, but summed up neatly in Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes's "History of Dada": "The real question was the destruction of values."⁵⁵ In a 1950 appreciation of Joseph Cornell's *Aviary*, Loy crafts an abbreviated map of a quarter-century's experiments in the visual arts, which should also be attended as her own retrospective *ars poetica*:

It is a long aesthetic itinerary from Brancusi's Golden Bird to Cornell's Aviary. The first is the purest abstraction I have ever seen; the latter the purest enticement of the abstract into the objective, even as cubism marks an itinerary of return to composite form, something which cubists pre-

*dicted would never again preoccupy the artist. Gertrude Stein explained the aim of cubism to me as “deconstruction preparatory to complete reconstruction of the objective.” I do not know if anyone considers this reconstruction process yet accomplished. How many sighs of ennui would have been spared if only Picasso could have copyrighted the Picassian.*⁵⁶

Again, an inevitable distortion of topic(s) (Loy, Dada) enters as I focus on her remarks in this context; however, Gertrude Stein’s mystical appreciation of what Loy called “the biological insignia” in prose would offer a useful new twist to Cravan’s wisdom: “Genius is nothing but an extraordinary manifestation of the body.” Loy’s 1924 *transatlantic review* “communications” on Stein suggest that Stein was the all-important transatlantic bridge, that she indicated a way by which Loy could bring her avant-garde aesthetics to bear in an idiom Loy tropes (here indirectly, but elsewhere directly) as feminist and democratic. “The pragmatic value of modernism,” Loy argues, “lies in [its] tremendous recognition of the compensation due to the spirit of democracy. . . . Modernism has democratized the subject matter and belle matière of art.”⁵⁷ Her tutor in this revaluation of aesthetic values is Stein, who (likened to “Curie / of the laboratory / of vocabulary”) “obtains the belle matière of her unsheathing of the fundamental with a most dexterous discretion in the placement and replacement of her phrases.”⁵⁸ Could anyone miss the bidden amplitude of the phrase *belle matière*, which manages to implicate *matière*, *metier*, *belle-mère* (stepmother, mother-in-law) and *belle chose* all at once? As Burke’s work on Loy, Stein, and logopoeia suggests, Loy was the first to read the “biological insignia” in Stein’s writing (its prosy sub rosa) *in* and *as* its deconstructive motive.⁵⁹ It is by way of such a gendered topic—the hymen, which Loy argues should be destroyed as a false index of female value—that Loy had already begun to theorize and to radicalize her own poetics in 1914. She didn’t really need Dada to keep on with it.

NOTES

I would like to thank Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for her guidance; she enabled me to see that Stein could be construed as a bridge over Dada, for Loy and for others as well. By revising the question of Loy's relation to Dada (to ask: what was the usefulness of Dada for Loy?), Priscilla Wald suggested the formulation that enabled me to write this piece. For illuminating the theoretical intersection between Loy and Cravan, I owe a continuing debt to Roger Conover.

1. Mina Loy, "Gertrude Stein," *transatlantic review* 2, no. 4 (October 1924): 428–429.
2. "Notes and Activities in the World of Art," *New York Sun*, 4 April 1920, p. 3. Francis Naumann's useful trove, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), is the source of the citation (pp. 198, and 240, n. 25).
3. Steven Watson dates the incorporation of the Société Anonyme (founded by Katherine Dreier, Duchamp, and Man Ray) to 29 April 1920. See Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville, 1991), p. 416.
4. Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), especially chapter 10; and *Dames in Dada: Het Aandeel van vrouwen in de Dada-beweging*, ed. Carolien van der Schoot and Gioia Smid (Amsterdam: Amazone, 1989), pp. 70–73.
5. See Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, pp. 237–281, for a historical account of the sociable circumstances in which New York Dada was incubated. See also his "Midnight at the Arensbergs': A Readymade Conversation," in Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), interspersed throughout pp. 177–205, for a gorgeously researched reconstruction of a *soirée chez Arensberg*.
6. In addition to Naumann's *New York Dada*, Watson's *Strange Bedfellows* and

“Midnight at the Arensbergs’,” see Burke, *Becoming Modern*; Roger Conover’s introductory material and notes to *The Last Lunar Baedeker* (Highlands, NC: Jargon Society, 1982); *New York Dada*, ed. Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986); and Thierry de Duve, “Given the Richard Mutt Case,” in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1991), pp. 187–230. For a dazzlingly documented essay on Duchamp, Arensberg, and their written experiments during this period, see Molly Nesbit and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, “Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg,” in *The Duchamp Effect*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 131–176; the essay mentions Loy in this connection briefly in a footnote.

7. The exception here is Susan Dunn, “‘Opposed Aesthetics’: Mina Loy, Modernism, and the Avant-Garde” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1995). Conover’s “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus’: Arthur Cravan Undressed,” in *New York Dada*, pp. 102–119, is useful (particularly insofar as it introduces Loy’s memoirs of Cravan, previously unpublished in English), but his focus is her interest in Cravan. “Colossus” is the name Loy gave Cravan.

8. Theodora Bean, “Your Country’s Art Calls You,” (New York) *Morning Telegraph*, 15 April 1917, sec. 2, p. 1 (Burke, *Becoming Modern*, pp. 229 and 445, is the source for this item). Mina Loy, “In . . . Formation,” *Blind Man*, no. 1 (10 April 1917): 7 (published as “The Artist and the Public” in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, p. 285).

9. De Duve, “Given the Richard Mutt Case,” in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, p. 197.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

11. Mina Loy, “Pas De Commentaires! Louis M. Eilshemius,” *Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917): 11–12. This piece was reprinted as part of the “Louis M. Eilshemius Portfolio” in *Sun & Moon 2* (Spring 1976): 46–48, along with a selection of poetry and visual work by Eilshemius.

12. De Duve, "Given the Richard Mutt Case," in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, p. 201.

13. "Do You Strive to Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions? If Not You Are Quite Old Fashioned," *New York Evening Sun*, 13 February 1917, p. 10. As the title hints, this unsigned article, which famously claims that "some people think the women are the cause of modernism, whatever that is," actually does present some of Loy's views on that very subject: women might indeed be "the cause of modernism" (and a worthy one at that), at least in terms of its explorations of mediated vision and the possibilities of more forms of sight.

14. Louise Norton, "Buddha of the Bathroom," *Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917): 5–6.

15. Nesbit and Sawelson-Gorse, for instance, link the essay to such a conversation. See "Concept of Nothing," p. 153, n. 56.

16. Mina Loy, "O Marcel—otherwise I Also Have Been to Louise's," *Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917): 14–15.

17. Charles Henri Ford, the editor of *View*, reprinted Loy's verse in the magazine's number devoted to Duchamp (5, no. 1 [March 1945]: 35, 51). Appended at the end of the verse (p. 51) are Loy's recollections (of Duchamp's antics at the Ball and "The Blind Boy" publication) that she insisted be included in the reprinting, according to her correspondence with Ford in the Charles Henri Ford Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University (hereafter cited as Beinecke).

18. Stuart Preston, "Public and Private Worlds of Artists," *New York Times*, 19 April 1959, sec. 2, p. 17.

19. From *Islands in the Air*, qtd. in Burke, *Becoming Modern*, p. 11.

20. Mina Loy, "Arthur Cravan is Alive!" in *The Last Lunder Baedeker*, p. 320. A

thorough study of the aesthetic intersection of their careers has not yet been written, in part because the published record (on her side of the story at least) is too fragmentary to suggest this as a viable topic. Although we do have the relevant sections of “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” to consider, Conover’s forthcoming publication of the complete text of Loy’s memoir of Cravan, “Colossus,” should greatly facilitate this inquiry.

21. Arthur Cravan, “Hie!” *Maintenant* 2, no. 2 (July 1913): 18–19; rpt. in Arthur Cravan, *Oeuvres: Poèmes, Articles, Lettres*, ed. Jean-Pierre Begot (Paris: Gérard Lebovici, 1987), pp. 44–45. Conover translates the phrases in *4 Dada Suicides: Selected Texts of Arthur Cravan, Jacques Rigaut, Julien Torma and Jacques Vaché* (London: Atlas, 1995), pp. 45–46.

22. Burke, *Becoming Modern*, p. 9.

23. Tristan Tzara, “Proclamation without Pretension” and “Manifesto of mr. aa the anti-philosopher,” trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Motherwell (Cambridge, MA, and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2d ed., 1989), pp. 82–83, 85. These manifestoes were two of seven written by Tzara (1916–1920) that were first published in book form in Paris (Jean Budry, 1924).

24. Tristan Tzara, “manifesto on feeble love and bitter love,” in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 87.

25. See Arthur Cravan, “L’Exposition des Indépendants,” *Maintenant* 3, no. 4 (March–April 1914), p. 7; rpt. in *Oeuvres*, p. 71; trans. Ralph Manheim in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 7.

26. Mina Loy, “Colossus,” in Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus,’” in *New York Dada*, pp. 112–113. The unpublished manuscript notes in the Mina Loy Papers at the Beinecke are unfortunately undated, but I would date this memoir to the early twenties. The disappearance of Cravan triggered a need to narrate his story, the

telling of which becomes entwined in the telling of her own, in the mounting prose profusion of Loy's unpublished autobiographies. The most vivid (and oft-rewritten) anecdotes are distilled poetically in portions of "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose."

27. Mina Loy, "Enter Colossus," in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, p. 150. I am using Loy's works as they appear in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, Conover's 1982 edition of her poems and verses; however, there are discrepancies in capitalization, spacing, and other diacritical marks, between Conover's edition and the first publications of Loy's works as well as her manuscripts. These differences are adjudicated in Conover's new edition of some of Loy's poems, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, and his forthcoming anthology of her works. For the corrected texts of Loy's works, see my unpublished dissertation, "Reconstru[ing] Scar[s]: Mina Loy and the Matter of Modernist Poetics" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1997).

28. Loy, "Colossus," in Conover, "Mina Loy's 'Colossus,'" in *New York Dada*, p. 113.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

30. Mina Loy, "Ova, Among the Neighbors," in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, pp. 152–153 (where the alignment and capitalization were adjusted; the verse, printed here in my essay, reinstates Loy's original).

31. Mina Loy, "Contraction," in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, p. 164 (where "plasm" was inadvertently replaced as "spasm").

32. Mina Loy, "Jews and Ragamuffins of Kilburn," in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, p. 159.

33. I thank Priscilla Wald for this illuminating concept.

34. In an unidentified autobiographical fragment, Loy crafts a horizon by which the Ovarian subject might more appropriately be oriented: "In my girlhood when I first left England, I saw something I had so far missed—the sunrise. That was in Holland. 'For one thing,' I said to myself, 'Abroad, the sun is enormous.' Long before breakfast this foreign sun had ridden up to its acceptable proportion of a yolk of an egg." See Mina Loy Papers, Beinecke, box 6, folder 183.
35. See the letter from M. Levesque to Robert Motherwell, 30 March 1950, trans. Dollie Pierre Chateau, qtd. in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. xxxix.
36. Stephen Haweis Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, box 3, "Arranged Mss.," bound memoir, p. 99. See also Ann Douglas's remarks on the "moderns' matricidal declarations" in her introduction to *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), especially pp. 6–9.
37. Burke has shown that metaphoric connections were drawn between "free-footed women" and free verse in the popular press of the 1910s. See Carolyn Burke, "The New Poetry and the New Woman: Mina Loy," in *Coming To Light: American Women Poets in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Diane Wood Middlebrook and Marilyn Yalom (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985), pp. 37–57.
38. Mina Loy, "Feminist Manifesto," in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), pp. 154–155. See also Januzzi, "Reconstru[ing] Scar[s]: Mina Loy and the Matter of Modernist Poetics," p. 175. Loy's holograph of the "Feminist Manifesto," dated 15 November 1914, is in the Mabel Dodge Luhan Papers, Beinecke.
39. Tzara, "manifesto on feeble love and bitter love," in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 86.
40. Mary Ann Caws, "Dada's Temper: Our Text," in *Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics*

of *Revolt*, ed. Stephen Foster and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (Madison, WI: Coda, 1979), p. 209.

41. Rudolf E. Kuenzli, "The Semiotics of Dada Poetry," in *Dada Spectrum*, p. 58.
42. Tzara, "manifesto on feeble love and bitter love," in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 92.
43. Mina Loy, *Songs to Joannes*, in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, p. 54.
44. Georges Hugnet, "The Dada Spirit in Painting," trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, pp. 185–186.
45. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Autobiography," in *Baroness Elsa*, ed. Paul I. Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue (Ottawa, Ontario: Oberon, 1992), pp. 41–42. In their introduction, the editors note that Djuna Barnes had hoped to edit her friend's poems for publication, along with the autobiography, which Barnes solicited for the occasion, but she may have thought the entire task seemed hopeless; the volume never materialized. However, Barnes's character of Robin Vote (in *Nightwood*) "owes much to the Baroness' personality" (*Baroness Elsa*, p. 13).
46. Freytag-Loringhoven, "Autobiography," in *Baroness Elsa*, p. 43.
47. André Breton, "Marcel Duchamp," trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 209.
48. Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, U.K., and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), is the most obvious example of this trend.
49. See, for example, Richard Hamilton, "The Large Glass," in *Marcel Duchamp*,

ed. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1973), pp. 57–67.

50. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar: Writing as Feminist Practice* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 80. How this critique of optics, representation, and portraiture works out in Loy's poem "Partuition" is discussed in my dissertation, "Reconstru[ing] Scar[s]." My approach to Duchamp owes much to the third chapter of Rosalind Krauss's pathbreaking study *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1993), specifically to her elaboration of Lyotard's epigrammatic reading of *Etant Donnés*: "'Con celui qui voit'"; "He who sees is a cunt" (p. 113).

51. DuPlessis, *The Pink Guitar*, pp. 68–82.

52. Mina Loy, "Joyce's Ulysses," in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, pp. 88–90. I have used Loy's original alignment, and spelling of "satirise" in my essay here.

53. Gertrude Stein, "Aux Galeries Lafayette," *Rogue* 1, no. 1 (15 March 1915): 13.

54. Virginia M. Kouidis, *Mina Loy: American Modernist Poet* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), p. 118.

55. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, "History of Dada," trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 102.

56. Mina Loy, "Phenomenon in American Art," Loy Papers, Beinecke, box 6, folder 172. The essay went unpublished during Loy's lifetime, but is reprinted in *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, pp. 300–302.

57. Loy, "Gertrude Stein": 429–430.

58. Mina Loy, "Gertrude Stein," *transatlantic review* 2, no. 3 (September 1924): 305–306.

59. The term "logopoeia" is from Ezra Pound's "Others" review (*Little Review* [March 1918]: 56–58). Reading from his comments on Marianne Moore, Loy, and logopoeia, Burke wonders to "what extent Pound's praise for Loy's portrait of a marriage [in 'The Effectual Marriage'] reflects an understanding that its author used the wit of logopoeia to treat the thematics of sexual (dis)union from a feminine, not to say, feminist, perspective." See Carolyn Burke, "Getting Spliced: Modernism and Sexual Difference," *American Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (March 1987): 111. "The Effectual Marriage" is published in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, pp. 36–39.

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International Dada Archive, The University of Iowa

The following bibliography of women in Dada is, of necessity, highly selective. This is true especially of the initial section on general works. For more comprehensive coverage of general works on the Dada movement, see the bibliographies listed in the second section. In the portion of the bibliography that covers individual women associated with Dada, the degree of selectivity varies according to a number of considerations. These include whether comprehensive bibliographies or oeuvre catalogues on the individual have already been published, how much secondary literature has been published about the individual, and whether the individual was closely or only peripherally associated with Dada. Where we had to be particularly selective, we emphasized works from the Dada period (c. 1915–1923) and secondary literature pertaining to that period. This bibliography contains published materials dating primarily to 1996.

The International Dada Archive maintains a comprehensive catalogue of literature on Dada and on the individual dadaists. Much material that is not available through normal interlibrary loan channels may be obtained through the Archive. For further information, see the Website of the International Dada Archive (<http://www.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/>).

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margaret ANDERSON

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Note: For a complete listing of Anderson's contributions to *The Little Review*, see Kenneth A. Lohf and Eugene P. Sheehy. *An Index to "The Little Review" 1914–1929* (New York: New York Public Library, 1961), 15–16.

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