What if Heidegger used Fountain instead of van Gogh’s Shoes to launch the Origin of a Work of Art?’

Heidegger’s reimagining of the artwork was instrumental in forcing a re-evaluation of modern aesthetic assumptions in the first half of the twentieth century. Heidegger’s theory of the origin of the work of art derives from a hermeneutic analysis of a single van Gogh masterpiece. On Heidegger’s view, the artwork provides a substantive and practical way of accessing the nature of art even if questions remain about all manifestations of the nature of art in general. This paper turns his analysis to an alternative influential artwork, Duchamp’s *Fountain*. I argue that *Fountain* presents difficulties for Heidegger’s method, some of which can be accommodated. However, the requirement to confine phenomenal engagement to the art object alone leads to problems when the object is appropriated from outside the artworld, not exhibited, and only one photograph bears witness to its existence. The prospect of broadening the focus of our attention from the art object alone to the “drama” of *Fountain* provides for a much richer phenomenal engagement. However, this move runs counter to a second stipulation of Heidegger’s approach – that the artist’s intentions and her performative acts in creating the object should be excluded from our engagement with the work. Duchamp’s radical move with readymades and *Fountain*, in particular, disarms more than Heidegger’s early post-modern conception of an artwork. It also places pressure on aesthetic theories that lack the capacity to reset ontological boundaries when deeper transformative experiences lie beyond the remit of the object alone, or when art-relevant concepts are appropriated into and

out of the realm of art. Duchamp points to a richer means of engaging with artworks than the one construed by Heidegger, one that includes consideration of the relevant artmaking acts.

The making of *Fountain*

On the eve of the United States entering the Great War, an eccentric band of anarchists purchased a urinal for display as an artwork. Rejected by the curators, the urinal never is exhibited.[1] The object itself, *Fountain*, *by R. Mutt* (fig. 1) is lost or destroyed shortly after the exhibition ended and there remains nothing for any museum to "preserve." No artist is needed to authenticate a non-existent art object. There is no "thing" to be "conferred the status of candidate for appreciation" in Dickie's terms.[2] "Nothing to see here" is normally a vain attempt to have the public gaze averted, but what if this whole art appropriation exercise becomes one of the most significant art performances of the twentieth century?[3]

The Origin of a Work of Art

Nearly twenty years later, Martin Heidegger circles a pair of old shoes depicted in an oil painting by Vincent van Gogh (fig. 2). Heidegger[4] leads us through a phenomenal engagement with this artwork and in so doing enunciates a theory of the origin of a work of art. Heidegger outlines how both artist and work are the co-dependent result of the art that is their source.[5] He applies a metaphor linking the material reality of "earthly things" with the "world" they reveal. His method of interpretation is both multilayered and cyclic with each earth-to-world relation revealing the next.Heidegger develops his earth-to-world notion through the medium of the artwork. He starts from a position that sees the "nature of things"

generally as “formed matter”.[6] On this account, the formed matter of an artwork, its “thingly” nature, so to speak, comprises material things such as paint and canvas.[7] Artworks do a certain kind of work in revealing the truth of how things act in the world – the van Gogh artwork itself displays its workly character in revealing a pair of peasant shoes “and nothing more.” The shoes themselves display their own workly character as equipment of the earth protected in performing their role in the world of a peasant.[8] This revelation about how the shoes are “working” in the world of a farm worker brings us back to the workly character of the artwork itself. The artwork’s “work” reveals the “truth of being” for the shoes in the painting. Finally, Heidegger captures this revelation from a particular artwork and proposes, albeit tentatively, how it might be, more generally, for the workly nature of all great works of art. He concludes that art just is truth, but truth construed in a radically different way. It is the “truth of beings setting itself to work.”[9] Here “beings” is read as a verb, comprising multiple dynamic actions of things over time. In the case of the van Gogh artwork, the truth of a particular “being” (i.e. the truth of the shoes doing their work), is made to “stand in the light of its being.”[10] This process of engagement leads us to see what and how this “thing” (i.e. the shoes) is in the context of its world.

In this way, a work by a great artist “discloses a world” for us, revealing an endless array of possibilities that can flow from a multitude of similar phenomenal engagements with the artwork. Heidegger’s phenomenological hermeneutic analysis of a painting turned modern aesthetic theory on its head and came to be an influential forerunner of postmodern art interpretation.[11]

For Heidegger, modern aesthetic theory,[12] popular among

philosophers in the early twentieth century, views the art experience as “subjects” accessing art “objects,” through the senses (fig. 4). Artworks are the result of creative exercises that reflect the experiences of the artist.

The artist embeds these experiences in the body of the artwork and, in-turn, the artwork elicits similar experiences in the art consumer.[13] Heidegger views modern aesthetics problematically in that it creates a subject/object dualism. In short, he sees modern aesthetics as making art available to be “consumed” and, along with technology, science, and culture, is part of a world trend to objectify and control the whole of reality.[14] According to Heidegger, this subject-to-object view of aesthetics mischaracterises the way we actually encounter the world on a day-to-day basis. Heidegger does not deny that the subject-object view of the world forms part of the artwork experience, it is just that a richer engagement with art derives from a more fundamental phenomenal connection with things in the world.

What applies is a more complex interweaving of subjective self and objective things in the world. In our use and experience of objects, we are colonised by them directly into a unified engagement with the artwork and its contents. We become immersed in a largely unconscious process of our lived experience of those things.
To understand how Heidegger sees this unified system working, it helps to reflect on the lived experience of a bike-rider.

A champion cyclist effects manoeuvres rapidly and unreflectively and only occasionally stops to think if an error has been made or a change of movement is needed. Heidegger believes an everyday notion of direct phenomenological access better reflects our encounters with artworks than the more traditional account of a subject consuming the rewards of an art object (see fig. 5). In clarifying his account of phenomenal engagement, Heidegger

warns against seeing it exclusively as a phenomenal experience in which the participant is engaged with the artwork. Were this exclusively the case, the person would be unable to distinguish her being from the thing.

On the other hand, it is incorrect to see the artwork entirely in a distinct subject-to-object relation. He sees it as a kind of experience lying somewhere between or moving between a distinct subject and object stance and a total unification of the self with the artwork.[15]

Heidegger demonstrates his theory of phenomenal aesthetics by guiding us through a series of encounters with the van Gogh painting and its contents – "a pair of peasant shoes and nothing more." [16]

But then, we are made to see the way the shoes are shaped and presented, and what the shoes are as essential equipment for a wearer, a person who toils on the earth. The shoes are understood, both in themselves and in their relationship to all the other things in the world they suggest. You can see the "truth" of the shoes encountered in the artwork because you have experienced it directly through the art of the painting. Heidegger's phenomenological method provides a novel combination of lived experience and hermeneutic analysis which describes and interprets the lived experience. Moving back and forth between these two modes of thought, he takes us in ever widening circles encountering individual things as resources of the earth, and how they work and relate to the people who work with them. These parts reveal the whole and the world is seen in the work of art and, in turn, the whole discloses the truth in the parts (e.g. the shoes). Three kinds of "work" are relayed here; the woman using the shoes as equipment as she toils in the field, the work of the artist through the artwork bringing to life the world of the shoes and the woman, and the works done by great artists who, through their art, disclose a seemingly unlimited number of new ways of seeing the true

nature of everyday things.

If *Fountain* was Heidegger's chosen artwork

Heidegger's theory of a work of art had one artwork as its guiding source. But what if Heidegger chose Duchamp's *Fountain* rather than van Gogh's *Shoes* as his starting point? A theory of the origin of an artwork should be robust enough to cover a work that perhaps more than any other provided the grounds for changing what we understand art to be. Could *Fountain* launch Heidegger's theory?

This paper will review Heidegger's theory employing Duchamp's *Fountain* as the subject artwork. It will proceed by first clarifying why focusing on Heidegger's theory and Duchamp's *Fountain* is important. It will then attempt to answer four questions that this encounter raises. It will show that the theory is found wanting in some key respects. Finally, it will conclude that the identified limitations of Heidegger's theory apply to other approaches which share Heidegger's commitment to a fixed ontology for artworks and the exclusion of performative acts in the making of an artwork.

Why Heidegger's theory?

Heidegger's theory was a seminal influence in early post-modern art criticism. It helps explain artwork contributions that extend beyond the Kantian notion of "disinterested pleasure,"[17] thereby opening up the possibility that great art will reveal new knowledge, and novel ways of seeing. This, in turn, shows how the creation of artworks can contribute in a profound way to how individuals and communities see themselves and provide a major impetus for the evolution of culture. Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art" became an important base for other philosophers including existentialists Jean

Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty and later post-modern theorists such as Hans Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, and Emmanuel Levinas, all of whom repurposed Heidegger's approach into their own interpretations of aesthetics.[18]

Many current theorists share with Heidegger an understanding that the revelatory or affective art experience derives from an engagement with the artwork and the artwork alone. Extrinsic features including artistic intention, social relations to the artwork, and art interpretation, may be excluded as not constitutive of the artwork itself. Some highly influential theories also share with Heidegger a respect for standard ontological boundaries regarding the chosen communication medium – whether it be painting, novel writing, drama, or poetry, these media are viewed as determinately distinct forms. Perhaps, most tellingly, the prospect that an object, concept, or material may be transferred in to or out of the artworld entirely by the design or intention of its maker, collaborator, or appropriator necessitates a fluidity in ontological boundaries that is beyond the countenance of Heidegger and like theorists. These two features, intrinsic features confined to the artwork and media boundaries around artmaking, prove crucial to this analysis. Proceeding to test *Fountain* against Heidegger's theory arguably has implications for a broader group of contemporary art theories.[19]

Why *Fountain*?

Repurposing "found" or manufactured objects as artworks was an early twentieth century innovation that created a paradigm shift in philosophy of aesthetics. *Fountain* and similar "readymades" are credited with influencing the development of many later innovations including pop art, op art, conceptual art, minimalism, performance art, and art-reflexive or self-referencing artworks.[20] *Fountain* is unique among repurposed

objects because *Fountain* has doubtful provenance and was lost or destroyed soon after being rejected for exhibition. A background such as this provides a uniquely poor platform for an art object by itself to provide rich aesthetic or revelatory value. There are numerous critical assessments of why *Fountain* played a significant role in twentieth century art.Most of these accounts fall broadly into two camps. Firstly, there is a focus on the object as anti-art, a disruptor mocking the hallowed institutions of art including the veneration of great artworks, the artist as genius, and the status of art professionals as supreme arbiters of taste.[21]*Fountain* is simply "chosen" for admiration in the artworld when it is otherwise indistinguishable from hundreds of identical objects, mass-produced for their instrumental bathroom value. The very idea that a work with such a tenuous claim to artworld status should be presented as such establishes "mockery" as part of the artist toolkit. On this view, *Fountain* is a seminal source for many later art disruptors.

Second, *Fountain* references the concepts, planning and collaborative actions that brought into view *Fountain's* transformative nature. The simple act of choosing an object, together with the subsequent associated collective actions that made it art, expanded our concepts of what art can be. Art becomes fundamentally conceptual and not merely "retinal" like so much art that went before it. Van Weeden claims that in choosing *Fountain* as a work of art, Duchamp recasts the space that art occupied – everything could be art.[22] Artworks and artmaking are no longer distinct. They occupy a continuum of relations wherein artmaking acts are seen as the principal output and artworks themselves can be a window revealing these acts. Artwork and art acts are juxtaposed on a level playing field. Moreover, *Fountain* affirms that artmaking can be as straight-forwardly simple as selecting an object or concept as art. This makes the artworld the province of whoever deems

what they do as “art”; no hierarchies involved; we all get to interpret and judge what is good and bad art.

Artists have available to them an unlimited range of ideas, materials, and audiences to choose from in the making of their art.[23] In Roberts view the cognitive, cultural and political tenor of twentieth and twenty first century art is reshaped by *Fountain* so that we are now all “post-Duchampians.”[24]

A promising prospect

The idea of applying Heidegger to *Fountain* has some promise of bearing fruit. Duchamp and Heidegger had much in common in their construal of art. First, they both reject the notion that an artwork harbours aesthetic features gifted to the viewer through the senses. Heidegger rejects modern aesthetic theory on these grounds and Duchamp rejects “retinal” or visually-appealing art,opting instead for art that engages the mind. Second, both see engaging with an artwork as opening a multiplicity of revelations and interpretations. For Heidegger engaging is an in-the-moment experience for the individual with the work, a “presencing” that does not exhaust the world of meanings.[25] This enables each individual engagement (for different people and different times) to produce a multiplicity of phenomenally grounded revelations.[26] And for Duchamp, “aesthetic relativity” situates artworks as nodes in a relational web comprising multiple meanings.[27]

So with this promising beginning the paper will review key features of Heidegger’s model through the prism of *Fountain*.

Applying Heidegger’s theory of art

to Duchamp's *Fountain*

While Heidegger described a phenomenal engagement with one particular artwork, he intends his theory to apply to how we might engage with other great works of art. Engaging in this way with a work of art involves at least four relevant criteria implied or explicitly entailed by Heidegger's model. These can be expressed as a list of questions needing answers:

1. What kind of thing is the "artwork" or object under study?

First, we need to settle on the work's ontology or decide on exactly what kind of thing the artwork is. This first step seems a trivial one for conventional art; the artwork just is the painting, or sculpture, etc., before you. However, Fountain is anything but conventional. Is it art, plumbing, or something else?

2. Is there a singular creative agent behind the making of the work?

This second key feature follows from Heidegger's assumption that each great work of art requires a singular great creator to realize and illuminate profound and unique truths about things in the world through their art.

3. What counts as "earth" in the creation of Fountain?

This third question involves fundamental resources ("the earth") being "worked" to create and inform how things are in the world?

4. Does Fountain stand as an artwork, in its own right, without relying on the artist's intentions or performative acts in its appreciation?

Finally, to be consistent with Heidegger's model, whatever experiences or revelations arise will stem from a direct engagement with the artwork unsullied by anything external to

the work.

Does Heidegger's model for the creation of an artwork work for Fountain? If so, our phenomenal encounter will need to answer these questions.

What is the nature of *Fountain*?

Urinal as art object

If art is the origin of the artwork and of the artist, but no art object remains for our gaze, then we will need to rely on a photograph of the original by Alfred Stieglitz.[28] Resting on a plinth, the object is transformed just enough so that its abstract form can be appreciated. It soon becomes clear that the thing depicted is a male urinal.

It is called *Fountain* and it is signed "R Mutt." Before it was transformed for exhibition, the urinal was designed and produced to be restroom equipment and not a work of art. Whoever was the original designer is not the "artist" here. The urinal itself is transformed in the most meagre of ways – turned on its side with the inlet facing the viewer so it suggests a fountain. It is named, signed, submitted for exhibition, and rejected. There is not enough artistry here to call the "transformer" an artist either. No artwork and no artist should mean, at least in Heidegger's terms, that this is not art. But whatever happened in the New York Spring of 1917 changed twentieth century art. Finding the "art" in this puzzle necessitates a different path to the one taken by Heidegger with van Gogh's *Shoes*.

Fountain as drama

No object remains and the collaborators are long since dead so the story of the *Fountain* is sketchy and uncertain. However, what is known is that it has a beginning, a middle, an end,

and a very long epilogue. It also has “dramatis personae,” an “auteur” of sorts. There is no art object, but there is a mildly vulgar prop around which the drama unfolds. The story has atmosphere, a backstory, it is riddled with puns.

There is not the space for a full exegesis of *Fountain* as drama or as a succession of performative acts. Doing so would reveal a cast of larger-than-life characters, a famous photographer, a most interesting director and the no-rules-barring-entry exhibition curators who broke their only rule by excluding *Fountain* from being exhibited.[29]

The drama would explain the quixotic quest of Dada to get a mad world to abandon the brutal logic of war on the eve of young Americans signing up for service to the background lyrics of “Johnny get your gun”.[30]

It would show that Duchamp’s play most probably has not ended. The long epilogue may show that, as he promised,[31] *Fountain* really is for future generations.[32]

It would appear the urinal, taken as artwork in and of itself, leads to a lean reading; a dead-end. But znderstanding *Fountain* as a collaborative drama does have the potential to “disclose a world” in the way Heidegger would recognise. Duchamp himself adopted a deliberatively performative stance with regard to his artmaking and its reception by the public:

“You’re on stage,” he explains, “you show off your goods”; right then you become an actor; one accepts everything, while laughing just the same. You don’t have to give in too much. You accept to please other people, more than yourself. It’s a sort of politeness.[33]

Moreover, *Fountain* is invested with that polysemic potential that Heidegger sees as a necessary ingredient of great art.[34] Is it a pun for “taking a piss” or a crypto-feminist plot for

“taking the piss” out of men? Is it art, not art, neither or both; a real case of a true contradiction?[35] Even the *Fountain*-as-drama reading bifurcates into a man-story with artist Joseph Stella, Walter Arensberg art critic, and Duchamp planning the “*Fountain* play” prior to Duchamp’s execution[36] and a less told under-story with Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, Louise Norton, Katherine Dreier, and Beatrice Wood playing leading roles[37] with Duchamp as ally.. Rival narratives only add to the dramatic potential. If we do accept *Fountain* as drama for a Heideggerian analysis, this move is still problematic for his theory on a number of fronts. This leads us to the next important question.

Is there a single creative agent behind the making of the work?

While not ruling out collective acts, Heidegger’s project suggests he had in mind that a great artwork was the product of a single great creator uniquely realising her vision through the act of artwork creation. But with *Fountain*, there is no singular artist to take the mantle of greatness that Heidegger seems to assume is required for artworks to be imbued with the necessary transformative qualities. In *Fountain*, it would appear a collective of creative talents worked collaboratively, arguably, under the direction of Marcel Duchamp although there remain doubts concerning who exactly played what role in the *Fountain* drama.[38] Removing the stricture of artist as sole creative agent does not affect the overall project dramatically. It means we accept that collective creativity can sometimes be transformative as well. Heidegger at least acknowledged that the “createdness” of the work was to be seen as distinct from the greatness of the singular artist:

The emergence of createdness from the work does not mean that

the work is to give the impression of having been made by a great artist.[39] In moving forward then, we tentatively have *Fountain* being read as drama with a collective of creative players. But how might we construe Heidegger's earth-to-world relation which proves so crucial in his origin of an artwork?

What counts as "earth" in the creation of *Fountain*

Construing *Fountain* as drama and assuming a collective process of creation does not fully address the problem of applying Heidegger's model to this iconic creation. A third hurdle for *Fountain* as drama relates to the earth-to-world metaphor. Heidegger enlists a variety of "world-forming" material resources that normally count as "earth." While the urinal is certainly "material," we have shown that it is an inadequate source for what *Fountain* becomes. In the case of van Gogh's *Shoes*, the connections Heidegger makes between earth and world via the constitutive materials of the artwork and the relations of the shoes to the peasant's work[40] provide a rich account of how a great artwork can be culturally transformative. Contrasted with this rich account for 'Shoes', the physical object of the urinal by itself tells us little about how '*Fountain*' comes to be a major catalyst in changing twentieth century art. In the case of *Fountain* then, what counts as earth? What can be the constitutive source for the "thingness" of no-thing? The construal for earth needs to be extended to, somehow, accompany the '*Fountain*' performance. This includes the formative ideas that lead to the playing out of "*Fountain* as drama"; or, at least, the available records of what is said and done to enact those ideas as the basis of a plan to acquire a ready-made, display it, reject it, etc. Heidegger provides us with a clue in his discussion of poets using words inhe way artists use pigment:

> To be sure, the poet also uses the word – not, however, like

> ordinary speakers and writers who have to use them up, but rather in such a way that the word only now becomes and remains truly a word.[41]

In fact, Heidegger says that the defining feature of all great works of art is found in “poesis” or their poetic nature of bringing important things into being:

> All art, we learn from “The Origin of the Work of Art,” is essentially poetry, because it is the letting happen of the advent of the truth of what is. And poetry, as linguistic, has a privileged position in the domain of the arts, because language, understood rightly, is the original way in which beings are brought into the open clearing of truth, in which world and earth, mortals and gods are bidden to come to their appointed places of meeting.[42]

The constitutive origins of words are phonemes, and phonemes as physical acoustic artefacts may qualify as the “earth” of poetry. But what about the succession of performative acts at the heart of the “*Fountain* drama”? The earth could be seen here also as residing in the non-verbal signs and symbols of the actions of the players coupled with these same “acoustic artefacts” informing what is said. With this account of earth, the emerging “artwork” can be seen as the drama derived from performances of the players transforming acoustic artefacts with their utterances and the signs and symbols manifest in their actions revealing a world; a *Fountain* world.This brings us to the final question.[43]

Does *Fountain* stand as an artwork without relying on the artist’s intentions or performative acts in its appreciation?

So far, we have seen that with some significant adjustments

Heidegger's phenomenal aesthetics can be made to work for *Fountain*. But a final hurdle remains for his construal. Heidegger is strongly of the opinion that the artwork and the artwork alone should be the focus of our phenomenal engagement:

> Where does a work belong? The work belongs, as work, uniquely within the realm that is opened up by itself. For the work-being of the work is present in, and only in, such opening up.[44]

Moreover, Heidegger emphasises that this engagement should be considered as it is and not be narrowed by its creator:

> The thrust that the work as this work is, and the uninterruptedness of this plain thrust, constitute the steadfastness of the work's self-subsistence. Precisely where the artist and the process and the circumstances of the genesis of the work remain unknown, this thrust, this "that it is" of createdness, emerges into view most purely from the work.[45]

For Heidegger, direct phenomenal engagement with the artwork requires the undivided attention of the person. Taking into account the artist's opinions and constitutive actions count as distractions to this primary purpose.

How does *Fountain* challenge this position? As we have seen, if *Fountain* is to be read in a manner that exposes us to its full revelatory potential, then it must be interpreted beyond the physical object itself. Reframing *Fountain* as drama provides such a rich reading. A consequence of this move is that the contents of the artwork necessarily comprise narratives of what the actors do and say. In this regard, it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate the art; that is, the performative acts themselves from the opinions of the actors/artists.

As an example, Louise Norton writes an article in the *Blind*

Man magazine shortly after *Fountain*'s rejection.[46] Her article is both artist opinion and also a key step in a later chapter of the *Fountain* drama; making it a necessary part of the artwork-drama itself. Problematically for Heidegger's theory, the performative acts of the artists must be included because they are constitutive of the artwork as drama and contradictorily not included to meet Heidegger's stipulation of excluding the artist's opinion. Separating this kind of opinion destroys or obscures the very work itself.

The problem of excluding the artist's "opinion" and other key constitutive elements from the analysis extends to artworks generally. Access to *Shoes* suffers from being confined to a hermeneutical analysis of the painting itself. What if a work identical to the van Gogh masterpiece were produced by a forger simply copying the original stroke by stroke? Would we be in error if a phenomenal engagement with the copy means we imbued the shoes with the "earth and toil of the peasant"? Our only means of knowing the copy's status derives from evidence of the faker's performative acts in making the forgery – evidence, possibly, only available externally to the painting.

But surely the problem of conflating interpretative opinion with the composition can be addressed by finding a way of distinguishing acts that are part the creators' critique of their art from those that are part of the art act performance *simpliciter*? In other words, why not place a boundary around artmaking performative acts and separate these from interpretations that lie outside the artmaking acts? The problem is that "*Fountain*-play" is not a formally framed orthodox "play" like a Shakespeare play with clear boundaries between the play and the play's creation. Constitutive acts of the players are no less important than the object created. Duchamp would see other boundaries being blurred as well; the "spectator's role" after the objects' creation becomes equally informative of what the work is.[47] *Fountain* has no such clear boundaries. All the creative acts connected to the *Fountain*

drama are both acts of creation and performance with no clear limits of time, space or characters.

Opting for a "Neo-Heideggerian" solution

We have shown Heidegger's theory provides an inadequate response to *Fountain* unless four important questions integral to his approach, can be addressed. So why not just "bite the bullet" and accept some adjustments to Heidegger's theory to enable *Fountain* to be accommodated? This move has the advantage of preserving the core innovative feature of the theory – hermeneutical phenomenology. Heidegger's artwork methodology helps explain the revelatory potential of engaging with an artwork while avoiding the subject/object dualism that Heidegger roundly criticises. While adopting a substantially modified "Neo-Heideggerian" theory of the origin of an artwork is plausible, the move creates something like the problem of the old kitchen broom – the one that has three replacement handles and four new heads. It really isn't the same broom. In addition, the revised theory is lacking an adequate explanatory account for any of the relaxed criteria – for example, how should we understand performative acts of multiple players undertaken over different times and places as the "work" of art when Heidegger's account is confined to engaging with a single art object ostensibly at one sitting. Even in its expanded "Neo-Heideggerian" form, Heidegger's original analysis lacks the epistemic resources to accommodate this move and it is therefore lacking in the required explanatory narrative to enable a robust account of *Fountain*.

Conclusion

Heidegger's phenomenal hermeneutics was instrumental in forcing a re-evaluation of modern aesthetic assumptions in the early twentieth century. Heidegger's theory of the origin of

the artwork is born from a hermeneutic analysis of a single van Gogh masterpiece. This essay turned his analysis to another great artwork – perhaps the most influential work of the twentieth century – *Fountain*. While Heidegger's method can accommodate some hurdles thrown up by *Fountain*, the requirement to confine phenomenal engagement to the art object alone leads to problems when the object has such limited potential as an influential work of art. The prospect of broadening the focus of our attention to the drama of *Fountain* provides for a much richer phenomenal engagement.
However, this move runs counter to a second stipulation that the artist's intentions/opinion and performative acts in making the art should be excluded from our engagement with the work. Adjusting Heidegger's theory to better accommodate works like *Fountain* also fails.

This paper focused on the capacity of a single early post-modern theory of art to explain a singular work. However, the two key limitations that defeat Heidegger's theory also limit similar theories, particularly those approaches that privilege the intrinsic features of the artwork but exclude the actions of artmakers, collaborators and appropriators. It also places pressure on aesthetic theories that lack the fluidity to reset ontological boundaries when the richer revelatory experience is found beyond the exclusive remit of the object alone.

This theory limitation would be of minor consequence if it applied to a singular exception – *Fountain*. But as we have seen, *Fountain* is only the first in a long succession of art making practices characterised by repurposing or appropriating objects, concepts, and styles into the world of art from elsewhere. Heidegger's "Origin of the Work of Art" and like theories are restricted in their capacity to reveal the rich potential of *Fountain*'s innovative progeny, the very progeny that have helped to define current art practice.

Figures

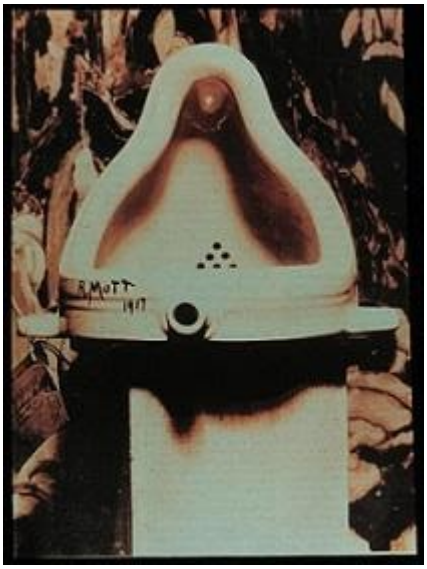

Figure 1: Fountain – Marcel Duchamp

1917 Photo – Alfred Stieglitz Retrieved from http://academics.smcvt.edu/gblasdel/slides%20ar333/webpages/m.%20duchamp,%20fountain.htm



Figure 2: Shoes Vincent van Gogh, 1886

Oil on canvas, 38.1 cm x 45.3 cm van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)

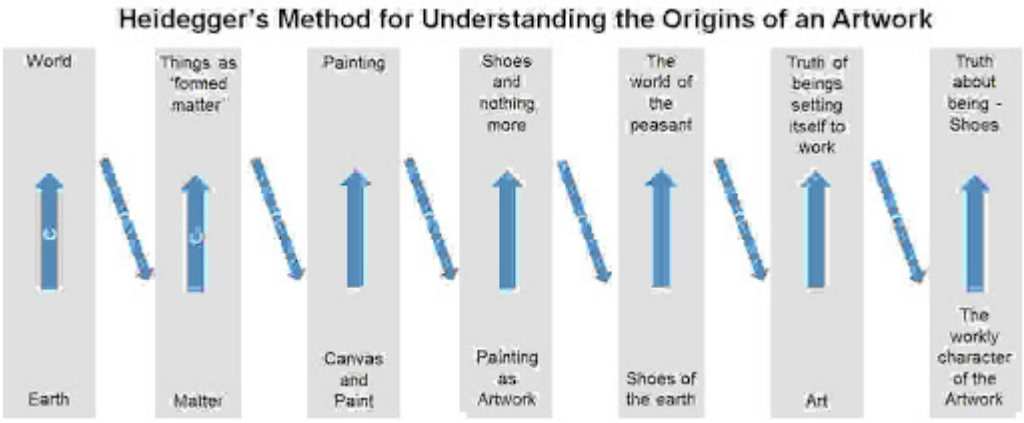

Figure 3: Heidegger's Hermeneutic cycle applied to van Gogh's painting. Heidegger employs a series of connected earth-to-world relations to understand the origin of an artwork. 'Things' like shoes and artworks are 'formed matter'. Van Gogh's painting reveals shoes and, in turn, their 'being' brings into being the working life of the woman. This very process illuminates the workly character of a particular artwork and, tentatively, for Heidegger, the true nature of all great works of art.

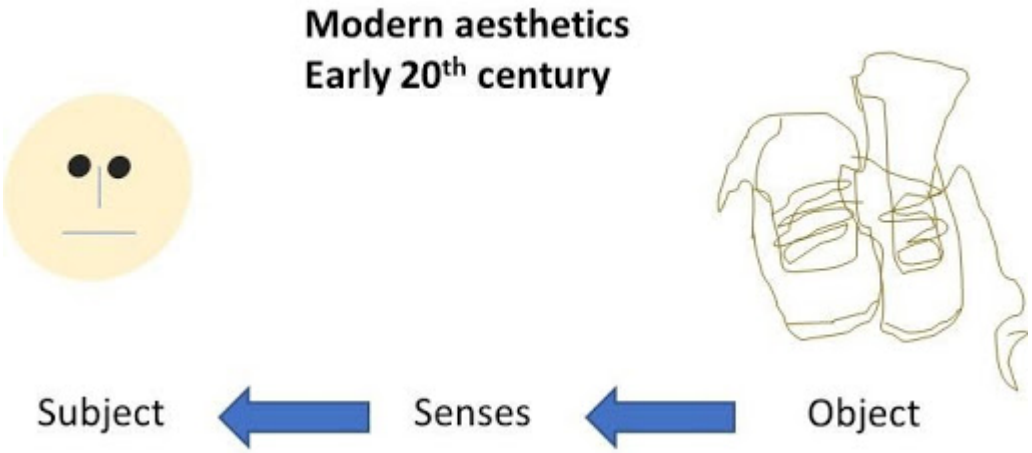

Figure 4: The modern aesthetic model of art requires a subject/object dichotomy between the subject and artwork.

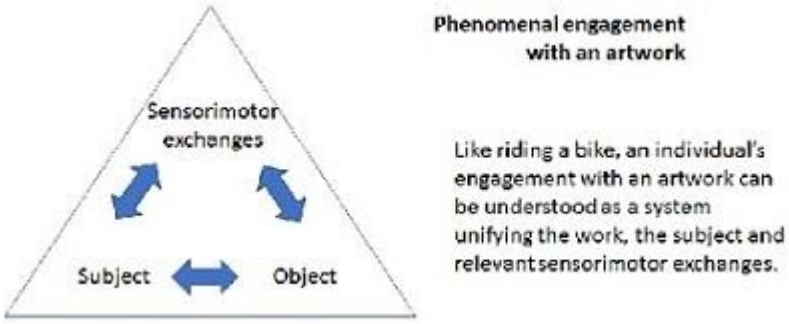

Figure 5: Heidegger's alternative model for engaging with an artwork

Notes:

[1] Robert Kilroy, *Marcel Duchamp's Fountain: One Hundred Years Later,* 2017 ed. (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Palgrave Pivot, 2017), 51.

[2] George Dickie, "Defining Art," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (1969): 254.

[3] Kilroy, 1.

[4] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought, Translations and Introduction by Albert Hofstadter,* Perennial Library (New York ; Sydney : Harper & Row, 1975, c1971., 1975), 15-86.

[5] Ibid., 17.

[6] Ibid., 26.

[7] Ibid., 19.

[8] Ibid., 33.

[9] Ibid., 35.

[10] Ibid., 35.

[11] Iain Thomson,*Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 65-77.

[12] The modern aesthetic tradition that Heidegger criticises had its origins in the eighteenth century through the writing of a number thinkers, the Earl of Shaftesbury and Immanuel Kant,

prominent among them. Modern aesthetic theory held that beauty existed in things independent of humans. In the ‘Critique of Judgement’, Kant emphasised that judging the ‘taste’ of an object requires the subject to adopt a state of disinterest to enable the experience of delight derived from the object to be fully appreciated.
Jerome Stolnitz, “On the Significance of Lord Shaftesbury in Modern Aesthetic Theory,”*The Philosophical Quarterly (1950-)*, no. 43 (1961). https://doi.org/10.2307/2960120; Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 37.

[13] Thomson, 47-51.

[14] Martin Heidegger and William Vernon Lovitt, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Harper Torchbooks: Tb 1969 (New York [etc.] : Harper and Row, 1977., 1977), 116; Thomson, 45.

[15] Heidegger, 25.

[16] Ibid., 33.

[17] Kant, 41.

[18] Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting* (University of Chicago Press, 1987); Hans Georg Gadamer and Robert Bernasconi,*The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1986); Leonard Lawlor and Ted Toadvine, *The Merleau-Ponty Reader* (Northwestern University Press, 2007), 69-84, 241-82, 351-78; Emmanuel Lévinas and Seán Hand,
The Levinas Reader (B. Blackwell, 1989), 129-65; Paul Ricoeur, “Aesthetic Experience,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 24, no. 2-3 (04/01/ 1998); Jean-Paul Sartre,
Essays in Aesthetics, Essay Index Reprint Series (Books for Libraries Press, 1970).

[19] Arguably, Ricoeur, Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer are theorists who fall short in these respects. Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the singular character of the ‘work’ as crucial in engaging with art. He alludes to the significance of the frame of a painting

in
separating the work from its background. In so doing, it provides us with a window on the world of the painting. He finds contemporary
notions of appropriation, for example ‘a chair being placed on a platform’, troubling for art. Ibid.Ricoeur, 30. Merleau-Ponty argues
the authenticity of a painting can only be judged by examining the painting and ‘if the counterfeiter succeeded in recapturing not only the
processes but the very style of the great Vermeers he would no longer be a counterfeiter’. See Lawlor and Toadvine, 261-62. Gadamer comes
closer to realizing the fluidity in art boundaries with his idea of the ‘play’ in artworks and how spectators are not excluded from joining in
the ‘play’ suggested in the work. See Gadamer and Bernasconi, 24. On the other hand, Gadamer understands works of art as being ‘set free’ and
‘released from the process of production because it is, by definition, destined for use’ Ibid., 12. Duchamp’s ‘Bottle-rack’ is viewed through
the object’s determinate character in suggesting the effect it once produced Ibid., 25. The performative acts of the appropriator are not
needed here to fulfil Gadamer’s account of the ‘Bottle-rack’.

[20] William A. Camfield and Marcel Duchamp, *Marcel Duchamp, Fountain* (Houston Fine Art Press, 1989), 88; Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp : A Biography*
, 1st ed. ed. (H. Holt, 1996), 455-56.

[21] Allan Antliff, “The Making and Mauling of Marcel Duchamp’s Ready-Made,” *Canadian Art* 23, no. 1 (Spring2006 2006): 57; Camfield and Duchamp, 42; Kilroy, 48.

[22] Dirk van Weelden, “Black Coffee. Marcel Duchamp’s Pataphysical Sensism,” *Relief: Revue Électronique de Littérature Francaise, Vol 10, Iss 1, Pp 70-76 (2016),*

no. 1 (2016): 71. https://doi.org/10.18352/relief.925.

[23] If '*Fountain*' does lead us to a greatly expanded construal of art, it also increases uncertainty concerning the boundaries of art. Where should I draw the line between what is and is not art? Of course, contesting the boundaries of art did not begin with Duchamp. Resolving the art status of borderline works may be a less rewarding exercise than finding the pathway that reveals the revelatory potential of any given work despite its status as art or something else.

[24] John Roberts, "Temporality, Critique, and the Vessel Tradition: Bernard Leach and Marcel Duchamp," *Temporality, Critique, and the Vessel Tradition: Bernard Leach and Marcel Duchamp,"* 6, no. 3 (2013): 256. https://doi.org/10.2752/174967813X13806265666618.

[25] Iain Thomson, "Heidegger's Aesthetics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2010).

[26] Heidegger, 81.

[27] van Weelden, 71.

[28] Mystery surrounds even this one photograph with some claiming it is not all it seems. See Rhonda R. Shearer, "Why the Hatrack Is and/or Is Not Readymade : With Interactive Software, Animations, and Videos for Readers to Explore," *Tout-fait* 1, no. 3 (2000).

[29] Paul Franklin, B., "Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History," *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000).

[30] Lyrics from the popular song 'Over There' by George M Cohen.

[31] Camfield and Duchamp, 142.

[32] Duchamp in a talk titled 'The Creative Act' acknowledges the role of the spectator as collaborator in art-making: *"All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone;*

the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and ‘ interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.”

[33]Kilroy, 84.

[34] Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity,* 69.

[35] Damon Young and Graham Priest, “It Is and It Isn’t,” *Aeon* 2018 (2017).

[36] The story of ‘*Fountain*’ is a collection of narratives arising from actions by members and associates of the Society of Independent Artists.
Alfred Steiglitz is credited with the one known photograph of ’*Fountain*’ taken shortly after its rejection from the exhibition, and Walter Arensberg,
art critic and collector, who together with Joseph Stella and Marcel Duchamp arguably planned the exhibition of ‘*Fountain*’. Marcel Duchamp himself may
have ‘directed’ much of the execution of the ‘*Fountain* play’ Camfield and Duchamp, 20-43.

[37] There is a significant body of evidence that the women collaborators played a far greater role in *Fountain*’s creation than has been historically
acknowledged. Beatrice Wood, the ‘Mama of Dada’ along with Henri-Pierre Roche and Duchamp edited the Blind Man which provided narrative for the ’
Fountain’ story. Louise Norton’s article in the Blindman “Buddha of the Bathroom,” *The Blind Man*1917. played a seminal role in making what ’*Fountain*’
eventually became particularly given the object’s early disappearance and continuing uncertainty surrounding its origins. Katherine Dreier was the
first to offer the ‘originality objection’ against ‘*Fountain*’ but subsequently became an advocate for the Society of Independent Artists to rescind
their rejection of the work, Camfield and Duchamp, 28-32.

Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven is credited, by some, as being the real creator of *Fountain*. See, for example, Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa : Gender, Dada and Everyday Modernity : A Cultural Biography* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London : MIT, c2002., 2002); Julian Spalding and Glyn Thompson, “Did Marcel Duchamp Steal Elsa’s Urinal?,” *Art Newspaper* 24, no. 262 (2014). Gammel. Spalding and Thompson. However others have disputed this claim. See Thierry de Duve, “The Story of *Fountain*: Hard Facts and Soft Speculation,” *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics* 28, no. 57/58 (01// 2019): 42.

[38] Anne Sejten, “Art Fighting Its Way Back to Aesthetics: Revisiting Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain*,” *Journal of Art Historiography* 15, no. 2 (2016): 3-4.

[39] Heidegger, 63.

[40] Ibid., 30-36.

[41] Ibid., 46.

[42] Ibid., 73.

[43] Including the words and actions of all those with a part to play in the making of ‘Fountain’ as drama does not exclude the role of the object i.e. the urinal itself. It remains a central defining point of reference – one that the ‘Fountain’ players continually reference as the drama unfolds. In a certain sense, the urinal becomes a ‘prop’ essential to the drama.

[44] Heidegger, 40.

[45]Ibid., 63.

[46]Norton, 5-6.

[47]Camfield and Duchamp, 142.

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Photographic Masquerades: The Readymade Femininity of Greta Garbo and Marcel Duchamp

Always the vamp I am, always the woman of no heart.

– Greta Garbo [1]

Nowadays, this may be all very well – names change with the times – but Rrose was an awful name in 1920.

– Marcel Duchamp [2]

Click to enlarge

	
Illustration 1: Greta Garbo as Mata Hari, 1931	Illustration 2: Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy, 1921
Let us compare two photographs…	

The first is of Greta Garbo as *Mata Hari*, one of several from a series of publicity stills of the movie star taken in 1931 by Clarence Sinclair Bull. In this particular image Garbo's hands are posed on the white fur of her collar, which, pressed suggestively against her cheeks, frames the mysterious beauty of her face; half hidden in shadow and with a notably seductive arch of her eyebrows, her eyes stare boldly out of the picture. A large ring on her left hand calls attention to her ambiguous marital status, allowing for the possibility that any viewer could *possess* her. It is important to remember that Garbo, in the words of Roland Barthes, "belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy." [3] The ecstatic beauty of Garbo's face in this image is at once captured and produced by the medium of the photograph, which represents a space of simulation in which the reality of the movie star can be said to truly exist.

The second photograph, taken by the Surrealist photographer Man Ray, pictures the artist Marcel Duchamp posturing as his female alter ego Rrose Sélavy. This image, referred to as

Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy, is visually quite similar in composition and pose to that of the Garbo photograph, except Duchamp uses the standard feminine props to photographically invert his gender. Interestingly enough, Duchamp tells us that his first idea "was to take a Jewish name," but he considered the possibility of changing sex as "much simpler." [4] Richly dressed in dark furs and a geometrically patterned hat, Rrose's fingers arch in a feminine gesture as she holds the fur collar close to her exposed face. On her right hand is a simple wedding band that, in European fashion, mates her to her male counterpart Duchamp. Rrose is in this way created as a readymade woman that is constructed out of readymade elements, Duchamp's body and Germaine Everling's hands. Through the strategic implementation of readymade femininity, Rrose is brought to life in New York in 1920. Her reality is quite literally sustained within the frame of the photograph, which demonstrates, as we argue, the readymade nature of gender positions.

Duchamp's use of femininity in this photographic sex-change is a direct extension of his famous artistic readymades, in which (often mass-produced) objects are chosen rather than created by an artist to be art. *Fountain* (1917), for example, is a urinal purchased from a lavatory supply store, one of a series of virtually identical objects within a commercial line of products, which could be easily replaced by another with little to no difference in the object itself. The only feature that distinguishes this artwork from the other urinals in the series is the signature of *R. Mutt*, Duchamp's pseudonym for this piece. As Duchamp makes clear in his discussion with Pierre Cabanne, the readymade is based within object-relations: "It's difficult to choose an object, because, at the end of fifteen days, you begin to like it or to hate it. You have to approach something with an indifference, as if you had no aesthetic emotion. The choice of readymades is always based on visual indifference and at the same time, on the

total absence of good or bad taste." [5] Prominently included in a list of Duchamp's readymades, Rrose exists as a photographic – a readymade medium par excellence – manifestation of the already existing language or signifiers of femininity. According to Judith Butler, "femininity is an ideal which everyone always and only 'imitates.' Thus, drag imitates the imitative structure of gender, revealing gender itself to be an imitation." [6] Duchamp's imitation of femininity in his pose as Rrose is in this way an imitation of the imitation of femininity as a cultural discourse of gender, a discourse that Garbo also participates in with her own imitation of the feminine.

In addition to the remarkable similarity in the respective poses of Garbo and Duchamp (or Rrose), the photographs also share a visual psychology that, as Moira Roth points out, is astonishing similar in terms of their "beauty and remoteness: staring out of their photographs, with their hands idly protecting them, they both project an image of utter aloofness. In both portraits there is an impenetrable impassivity." [7] It is the photograph as a major site of the production of femininity that we argue is the basic subject of both Garbo's and Duchamp's portraits and, more significantly, it is their apparent playing with the productive capacity of the photographic medium that allows them to perform a *masquerade*.

1.

In "Womanliness as a Masquerade," the psychoanalyst Joan Riviere makes the point that womanliness can "be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it." [8] Yet it is this possession of masculinity or masculine traits that made Garbo such an attractive public figure, not the least of which is due to her deep voice and the questions surrounding her sexual orientation. There is a dramatic

contrast between Garbo's photographic eroticism, a quintessential visual representation of the female film star, and her active challenge to the strict understanding and even performance of gender identity. Throughout her career Garbo highlighted the ease with which cultural conceptions of gender and sexuality can be manipulated. Through her masquerade of masculinity and her homosexual tendencies, Garbo lays claim to the masculine characteristics that at the time were outside the realm of most women's experience – and in this way she appropriates a certain amount of power with her pose.

This power is evident in Garbo's direct gaze in the *Mata Hari* photographs, since it is still rare today to see an eroticized feminine figure challenging the viewer with such a bold look. A comparison can be made between the gaze of the courtesan in Édouard Manet's *Olympia* , confronting the viewer with the power of a woman as a sexual subject that looks back, and the gaze of Garbo. Manet's painting is still discussed as controversial for the simple fact that cultural presentations of eroticism do not make room for the female gaze and, more specifically, women's active acceptance and employment of their own sexuality. In her essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," Laura Mulvey points out,

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*.[9]

While Garbo is set up as an erotic feminine figure to be looked at in the *Mata Hari* publicity still, she undermines the traditional presentation of women as passive by powerfully looking back at the viewer.

Whereas Bull's photograph of Garbo is specifically intended to produce a feminine consumer object (through photography and film) that is *womanly* , it is clear that Duchamp's Rrose is not attempting to *be* a woman but instead is trying to bring into dialogue the cultural signifiers of man and woman through Rrose. Although constructed and staged using similar readymade feminine props and poses as those employed in the image of Garbo, Rrose remains obviously not a woman – or at least can be seen as an intentionally fake woman. Yet Rrose is no longer strictly a man either, the photographic medium allowing Duchamp to perform both genders simultaneously. Poised in a feminine masquerade Duchamp can be seen taking on the cultural qualities that are considered "feminine" or "womanly." As Amelia Jones states: "It is because Duchamp and Man Ray constructed Rrose Sélavy through photographic conventions that draw directly from cultural codes constructing femininity in relation to commodification that the images can be said to subvert these inexorable effects of the advertisement's production of femininity." [10] Duchamp's masquerade as Rrose, similar to Garbo's photograph as *Mata Hari*, draws upon the methodology and processes of popular culture advertisements, specifically the manner in which femininity as a social category is constructed or assembled through the production of imagery.

This complex relationship between Duchamp the "man" and Rrose the "woman" performed by the "man" is made evident in the works title: *Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy*. Duchamp sets up his name in a typographical pairing with Rrose, in a typical surrealist game where words are seen as *making love* with words, in this case "Marcel Duchamp" poetically making love to "Rrose Sélavy" and vice versa. Hence, for Duchamp, it is possible to unhinge his gender through a reinvention of his name and play with other matings of meaning. This multiplicity of meanings is most evident in the wordplay of Duchamp's chosen name *Rrose Sélavy* , which is an elaborate double pun in French: "eros c'est la vie," *eros that's life*, and/or "arroser

la vie," *drink it up, celebrate life*.

Duchamp uses the photograph as what he terms an *inframince* or infrathin medium. [11] Through this quality of the photograph, he both is and is not *Rrose Sélavy*, is and is not a woman. This inter-distinction is reflected in the use of the term "and/or" to negotiate the relation between Duchamp and Rrose, connecting them through the "and" while at the same time separating them through the "or." Jones even suggests that this *and/or* is a mating device in which Duchamp and Rrose "are related by way of an *inframince* asymmetry (incongruence) carried through all of Duchamp's productions: Duchamp and/or Rrose Sélavy, bride and/or bachelors, man and/or woman, viewer and/or viewed." [12] The photograph functions as a means of visually positing such *inframince* visual relationships through the materialization of the image as a simulation or representation. "In the photographic process it's not a question of considering the world as an object, of acting as if it was already there as an object, but of making it become an object, in other words, of making it become other," Jean Baudrillard states. [13] In this way, Duchamp's relationship with Rrose Sélavy is an infra-thin coupling of sexual identity that is accomplished strictly within the representational space demarcated by the photograph.

Duchamp's use of the advertising industry's strategies of producing femininity can be seen as a parody of gender differentiation. But, as Jones asks:
What are the specific codes of femininity the Rrose Sélavy images parody? Here it is worth turning to studies in the history of photography that have linked nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century representations of women to the massive expanse of consumer culture and concomitant developments in photographic technology and the mass media. Since its origins around 1840, photography has developed a special relationship to both the commodity and femininity. [14]

We can readily see this relationship in the *Mata Hari* photograph in which Garbo is presented as a commodity object of the film industry, embodying the fantasy of femininity that Hollywood sells. In images of Garbo, the relationship between commodity and femininity is made explicit: she is the object of desire who seduces spectators who seek to consume her image. Garbo the fetishized movie star exists only as a product of this system of signification. Similarly, Rrose is "also highly seductive, having been photographed with portrait conventions used in advertisements and celebrity photos of the time, conventions used for eroticizing the female image to sell commodities or the female herself as a commodity." [15] As an extreme example of this same system of cultural signification, Rrose exists as a representation defined through the readymade modes of femininity she exhibits, yet without the relation to any "real" womanly presence. In other words, Rrose represents all of the signifiers used in the photographic commodification of femininity without a bodily or "real" referent.

In *Belle Haleine* (1921) Duchamp uses the star power of his alter-ego to sell perfume under the readymade label *Belle Haleine* (Lovely Breath), *Eau de Voilette*, which bears the authorizing signature of RS: *Rrose Sélavy*. But like the signifiers that constitute the feminine, this perfume bottle is only the surface appearance of what is actually an empty shell. This work consists of a readymade Rigaud perfume bottle originally labeled *Eau de Violette* (Violet water), which Duchamp slightly alters to say *Eau de Voilette* (Veil Water) and uses the reversed R of the Rigaud label to create the initials of Rrose Sélavy. Rrose, like many other celebrity figures, is pictured – a photograph of her, again taken by Man Ray, graces the custom cut label affixed onto the crystal surface – as the embodiment of feminine beauty on a perfume bottle, a commodity object advertised as a key element in the cultural production of the feminine. Duchamp's *Belle Haleine* can in this way be seen as a parody of the conception of

purchasing a readymade product the sole purpose of which is the production of womanliness.

As a cultural readymade, Butler reminds us, “femininity is an ideal which everyone always and only ‘imitates,’” and Duchamp’s imitation of the feminine or womanly through Rrose, his act of transvestitism, reveals the imitative structure of gender itself as a product. [16] Photography is also based upon imitation and therefore reinforces the imitative qualities of Duchamp’s act. “Surrealism lies at the heart of the photographic enterprise,” Susan Sontag notes, “in the very creation of a duplicate world, of a reality in the second degree, narrower but more dramatic than the one perceived by natural vision.” [17] What is the duplicate gendered role that Duchamp is creating? The answer appears to lie in the masquerade of representation: the interchangeable signs of gender, the poses and its props, that constitute the erotic play of femininity that Duchamp and Garbo engage in.

2.

Let us consider in more detail the significant similarities between the photograph as an imitative form and the notion of the readymade. This overlap is particularly apparent when considering the representation or masquerade of femininity as a cultural readymade, which significantly uses eroticism to hide sexuality both in terms of the physical body and the power dynamics that accompany gender constructions. Eroticism, according to Duchamp, becomes a tool to reveal “things that are constantly hidden – and aren’t necessarily erotic.” [18] In this way, Rrose’s erotic traits are largely the result of the photographic medium that quite literally hides the reality of what is pictured, turning all that it captures into a readymade image. This, stated simply, is the power of the photograph that reveals the masquerade hidden within life, showing us not what we see but rather what we want to see.

As Garbo and Duchamp demonstrate in different ways, *femininity*

is a culturally transmitted and easily purchased readymade language, one that can be used by anyone who wants to participate in the production and/or reproduction of its qualities. This aping of the masquerade of femininity by Duchamp illustrates the construction of the feminine self that Susan Bordo describes as a manifestation of social control of women: "With the advent of movies and television, the rules for femininity have come to be culturally transmitted more and more through *standardized visual images*. As a result, femininity itself has come to be largely a matter of constructing[…] the appropriate surface presentation of the self." [19] Bordo's observations can readily be seen in the ready-made or *standardized visual images* that constitutes Duchamp's work and also the whole of the industrial world; the ready-made is tangible in all aspects of modern life, including the objects of femininity that are used to create a surface illusion of what it is to be a woman. Rrose bears the photographic *surface presentation* of a woman because she, paradoxically, visually reproduces all the signifiers of femininity without having to physically embody them as a reality. In the hyperreality of the photographic image – which generates real models without origin or reality [20] – there is a level of perfection that cannot be achieved outside its simulated frame. It is therefore no coincidence that photography is the primary means through which femininity as a readymade cultural object is produced and communicated.

The use of readymade femininity is most evident in the popular culture use of film or publicity stills, which function as fetishistic objects that stand in for the hyperreal movie star. In photographic film stills produced by the film industry, John Ellis states:
The star is tantalizingly close and similar, yet at the same time remote and dissimilar. Further, the star is a legitimate object for the desires of the viewer in so far as the star is like the viewer, and an impossible object for the desire of

the viewer in so far as the star is extraordinary, unlike the viewer. There is a complicated game of desires that plays around the figure of the star: every feature in it is counteracted by another feature. The male and female star can be desired by either sex, yet that desire has access to its object only on condition that its object is presented as *absent*. Desire is both permitted and encouraged, yet knows it cannot achieve any tangible form of satisfaction, except the satisfaction of looking.[14]

The desire exhibited by Garbo and Duchamp is permitted and encouraged through the mode of still image presentation, the tangible photographic object achieving a hyperreal eroticism that is not possible outside the illusionism of this frame. There is a complicated game of desire being played out within the photograph of Greta Garbo as *Mata Hari*, a tantalizing closeness resulting from her tightly cropped face that makes her a legitimate object for the desires of spectators. The Hollywood publicity still is not simply a means of promoting and selling films, it is also an active site within modern culture for the production of feminine desire based upon the spectator's ability to experience this erotic encounter as an act of (visual) consumption, with women being the primary object of this envisioning desire.

Using the conventions of the publicity photograph readily seen in the Garbo image, Duchamp disappears as a subject in order to recreate himself as an object: the photographic Rrose. The photographs of Garbo and Rrose use the seductive gaze of womanliness to create masks that are adorned with readymade signifiers of femininity such as the furs and rings that accentuate their overtly feminine postures. Such *classic props*, as Barthes refers to those objects that "constantly make the unveiled body more remote," function as a powerful means of making "the living body return to the category of luxurious objects which surround men with a magical décor."[22] This effect in fact is a key purpose of the publicity still,

which is a fetishistic object that distinctly separates the erotic representation from any physically reality. Garbo, considered from this perspective, is a model produced through the processes of photographic image creation that is created without an original "Garbo" – Greta Gustafson being simply the feminine prototype from which Garbo the international icon was formulated. Stated differently, Garbo the movie star is a hyperreal construction that exists through the reproducibility of photographic technology, which makes her become or disappear into the object of the photograph.[23] But, whereas Garbo is transformed into an object through the photograph, Duchamp uses the photograph to make the object of Rrose around which there is literally no reality: Rrose is purely hyperreal (infrathin).

The paradox of the movie star is that, in the case of Garbo, the spectator's experience of eroticism is based on a pretense of the possibility of a *real* encounter with the object of the image, namely Greta Gustafson. Duchamp forgoes this possibility, instead basing Rrose's eroticism in the readymade cultural signifiers that are used to produce femininity as a hyperreal state. Rrose is in this way not a photographic representation of feminine eroticism but rather exists as an object of the erotic female stripped bare of any pretense or mask of *real* or authentic subjectivity.

Georges Bataille points out that it is through objects that we first flirt with sexuality, the photographic object being a key example. He observes:
We thus achieve awareness only by condemning and by refusing to recognize our sexual life. Eroticism is not the only thing to be brushed aside: we have no direct awareness of anything within us that cannot be reduced to the simplicity of things, of solid objects. In the first instance we are clearly conscious only of things, and anything less sharply defined than a physical object is not clearly perceived at first. It is only later that analogy provides us with concepts not

possessing the simplicity of a solid object.[24]

Duchamp is masking the illusion of his gender identity with another mask, one constructed through the significations of femininity with which he as Rrose adorns himself. This dual identity, being both the male Duchamp and the female Rrose, is made possible by the hyperreal space of the photograph, which allows him to escape the physical genital reality of maleness or femaleness and to propose an infra-thin gender position based on the realities of the masquerade.

3.

In *Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy* , the figure of Rrose is a play of feminine parts that collectively contribute to the creation of a gender and identity while at the same time making us aware of this constructed nature. For example, the fragmented signifiers of the "real" woman's hands, the fur collar, the hat, the wig, the made-up face of Duchamp all function as parts in an elaborate cultural masquerade. These fragmented effects, however, are visually resolved in the medium of photography, through which the real and/or masquerade is brought into dialogue. Duchamp's pictorial cross-dressing as Rrose, however, embodies the fragmented process of gender signification as a means of parodying the production of sexual and gender identity. This embracing of the fragmentation of femininity as a cultural product or commodity allows for multiple meanings and, as evidenced in his photograph, opens up possible perspectives that cannot exist in gender roles as they are culturally constituted.

Unlike Garbo's penetrating gaze, which visually seduces us into her image, Duchamp's look is drowsily seductive and suspiciously evasive. Rather than an overt sexuality that invites the possibility of an erotic encounter, Duchamp presents a mysterious sexuality that, although playing with the signifiers of femininity, calls our attention to the fact that he is a man masquerading as a woman. In fact, this

masquerade is made even more clear by the signature in the lower right corner of the photograph that reads *lovingly Rrose Sélavy, alias Marcel Duchamp*. Here Duchamp presents the full complexity of this pictorial representation: Duchamp is named as the alias of Rrose and/or Rrose is the alias of Duchamp. More generally, masculinity is presented as a masquerade of femininity and/or femininity is a masquerade of masculinity. Femaleness, according to Bordo, is an artificial constitution the rules of which are learned "directly through bodily discourse: through images that tell us what clothes, body shape, facial expression, movements, and behavior are required."[25] Garbo, although born a woman, was not born *feminine* and, just like Rrose, has to pose in order to achieve this feminine state. What Duchamp makes obvious with the readymade feminine character of Rrose is that *bodily discourse* is regulated through a complex network of already existing cultural conceptions of gender and sexual identity, with femininity in particular being powerfully enacted through consumerist enterprises – the film industry representing a key example – that sell the image of the feminine.

Gender and sexuality are projected onto subjects and objects alike, functioning as symbols and signs that subvert and conceal the complex and convoluted reality of identity as a lived state. Identity becomes a floating category, a game to be played by social subjects. As Riviere states in response to her use of "womanliness" as a category: "The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial: they are the same thing."[26] Duchamp draws upon this indifference between genuine womanliness and the "masquerade," that Riviere highlights, in the (photographic) creation of Rrose, who, at her most basic level, exists as an active questioning of the strictly binary view of gender in modern culture. Both Garbo and Rrose exist

through a play with the culturally constructed and disseminated nature of gender, which in both cases supersedes any physical or bodily reality.

On this point, therefore, we can recognize a key distinction between the two photographs. In Garbo as *Mata Hari* – as well as in most if not all publicity stills – the expression of gender functions through an assumed reality that is projected onto the image, with viewers assuming the persona of "Garbo" to be the same as the person named Greta Gustafson; it is the possibility of this fantasy becoming a reality that is at the heart of these erotic images. The same is not true for Rrose, who exhibits readymade gender signifiers not as a prelude to the real but instead to accentuate the unreality of performed gender roles. In *Marcel Duchamp as Rrose Sélavy*, Duchamp pictures a coming together of the polar categories of male and female in order to produce an ambiguous and dialogic eroticism only possible in the object of the photograph.

[1] Greta Garbo, quoted in Alexander Walker, *Garbo: A Portrait* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), 11.

[2] Marcel Duchamp to Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* , trans. Ron Padgett (Cambridge: Da Capo Press. 1987), 64.

[3] Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* , trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 56.

[4] Duchamp to Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 64.

[5] Duchamp to Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 21.

[6] Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 145.

[7]Moira Roth, "Marcel Duchamp in America: A Self-readymade," in *Difference / Indifference: Musings on Postmodernism, Marcel Duchamp and John Cage* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998), 20.

[8] Joan Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," in *Formations of*

Fantasy, ed. Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (New York: Methuen, 1986), 39.

[3] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 837.

[10] Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994: 168.

[11] Duchamp never directly defines the term "infrathin." Instead, he presents examples of how it functions. As he writes in one of his notes: "infrathin separation – better/ than screen, because it indicates/ interval (taken in one sense) and/ screen (taken in another sense) – separation has the 2 senses male and female." Marcel Duchamp,*Marcel Duchamp, Notes* , ed. and trans. Paul Matisse (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1980), np.

[12] Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp,* 95.

[13] Jean Baudrillard, "The Art of Disappearance," in *Jean Baudrillard: Art and Artefact,* ed. Nicholas Zurbrugg (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 30.

[14] Jones,*Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp,* 164.

[15] Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp,* 147.

[16] Butler, The *Psychic Life of Power,* 145.

[17] Susan Sontag,*On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 52.

[18] Duchamp to Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp,* 88.

[19] Susan Bordo, "From Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism,* ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York: Norton, 2001), 2366.

[20] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, trans. Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), 2. There

is a comparison to be made between Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal and Duchamp's idea of the infrathin, both of which define a form of simulation as model.

[21] John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), 98. [22] Barthes, *Mythologies*, 85.

[23] Baudrillard, "The Art of Disappearance," 30.

[24] Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality,* trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights, 1986), 161-162.

[25] Bordo, "From Unbearable Weight," 2366.

[26] Riviere, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," 39.

Duchamp with Lacan through Žižek

Duchamp's Legacy

As we approach both the fiftieth anniversary of *Marcel Duchamp*'s death and the centenary of his most famous "readymade" it would appear that not a lot more can be said about the man and his work. And yet, most scholars would agree that, since Duchamp's passing and the subsequent emergence of the enigmatic *Étant Donnés,* the reception of his *oeuvre* has become highly problematized. As Benjamin Buchloh notes in one of the most recent publications directly addressing this issue, the "near total silence" which has surrounded *Étant Donnés* attests to the fact that Duchamp's *oeuvre* has "fallen short of its actual historical potential." (1)

In an effort to break this silence and move beyond the impasse in question, many scholars have taken *Étant Donnés* as a point

of departure for the reassessment of the Duchampian project. Through the peephole, this re-reading has involved an assessment of the erotic dimension of Duchamp's work, primarily on the basis of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Some of the most important research in this area has been undertaken by two of the most prominent scholars in the field, Thierry de Duve and Rosalind Krauss. Krauss, for her part, was one of the first to explore the precise connections between Lacan and Duchamp when, in a chapter entitled "Notes on the Index" from her seminal 1986 work *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,* she uses Lacanian theory to unlock the mysteries of the *Large Glass*. First, she develops Lacan's notion of the "mirror stage": how the "child's self-identification through his double" allows for the movement from "a global undifferentiated sense of himself towards a distinct, integrated notion of selfhood." [(2)] She then uses this concept to read the *Large Glass* as a ''split self-portrait" which – through the emphasis placed on certain syllables in the title *La MARiée mise à nu par ses CELibataires, même* – displays a "self-projected as double."[(3)]

This analysis is extended further in her 1994 work, *The Optical Unconscious*, where she again differs to Lacan – through reference, this time, to his "L schema" apparatus – in order to put forward an "alternative" reading of modernism.[(4)] Indeed, it is not difficult to recognize the Lacanian co-ordinates which frame Krauss's thesis regarding *Etant Donnés*: that, at the peephole, "vision is demonstrably hooked up to the mechanism of desire" so that the viewer as voyeur becomes a "carnal being trapped in the searchlight of the Other's gaze […] a self that exists on the level of all other objects of the world."[(5)] It is ultimately by recourse to Lacanian theory that she can argue that, in the Duchampian field, "nothing […] breaks the circuit of the gaze's connection to its object or interrupts the satisfaction of its desire."[(6)]

In his 1991 work *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*, Thierry de Duve calls for a parallel approach to the relationship between psychoanalysis and art history – what he terms a "heuristic parallelism" [(7)] – which uses Lacanian theory to read the work of art in terms of dream analysis. First, he examines how the development of Lacan's conceptual apparatus takes place through a close reading of Freud's approach to dream analysis. From this theoretical standpoint, de Duve then interrogates Duchamp's *oeuvre* using the Freudian method, arguing that Duchamp discovered "a truth that has long been familiar to psychoanalysis," namely, that "the practice of painting has something to do with sublimation." [(8)] Like Krauss, de Duve does not attempt to hide the fact that his analysis of Duchamp is supported by Lacan's conceptual apparatus, declaring that Duchamp's "definition of the Real was strictly that of Lacan." [(9)]

One can conclude, then, that Krauss and de Duve's respective readings of Duchamp's work are governed by a common grounding in Lacan's conceptual apparatus. However, it should be remembered that, as with the history of *psychoanalytic* studies of art, there is also a long and well-established tradition of *psychoanalytic* interventions into the Duchampian field, of which Krauss and de Duve's Lacanian stances are simply the most recent examples. As Paola Magi has recently noted, the range of perspectives which make use of psychoanalysis in assessing Duchamp's work is wide and varied: from Lebel's brief intimations on the possible connection between the clinical setting and the *Large Glass*, to Schwartz's thorough examination of the l*Ibid*inal forces at work in Duchamp's *oeuvre* , to the different interpretations put forward by Ulf Linde, Maurizio Calvesi, and Octavio Paz.[(10)]

A surprising omission from this list is the name of Jean Francois Lyotard, whose 1977 work *Les Transformateurs Duchamp*,

written at a pivotal moment during the rediscovery of Duchamp's work in France, paved the way for all subsequent appraisals of Duchampian eroticism.[11] Of course, one should also make reference to the many rigorous interpretations of Duchamp's work offered by Lacanians themselves: for example, Jean Copjec's suggestion that Duchamp may have in some way understood the aesthetic object as a form of sublimation;[12] or Badiou's recent claim that the *psychoanalytic* aspect of Duchamp's work is "another story" which "is probably the contradictory destiny of the most important part of modern art." [13]

What, in my view, separates Krauss and de Duve from other scholars in the field is the extent to which they have applied Lacanian theory to Duchamp's work; they have, I would argue, gone the furthest in integrating Lacan's conceptual model into the field of Duchamp Studies, as an established methodological tool. The necessary predominance of this specific Lacanian line of enquiry was given an increased level of credibility in 1987 when, to mark the one hundredth anniversary of Duchamp's birth, the Philadelphia Museum of Art reissued the Bulletin that had been devoted to *Étant Donnés* in 1969. It was this publication which, by foregrounding the connection between Duchamp's final work and a series of preparatory etchings produced in 1968 entitled *The Lovers*, caused the Lacanian connotations in *Étant Donnés* to reverberate. It was firstly deemed to be highly significant that one of the sketches was taken directly from Gustave Courbet's 1861 painting *Woman with White Stocking*. Even more important, however, was the fact that another seemed to directly indicate the influence of Courbet's *L'Origine du Monde* – a painting which, at the time Duchamp was working on the etchings, was in the possession of none other than Lacan himself. The significance of this curious set of circumstances was again underlined as recently as 2009 when, in the catalogue released to mark the fortieth anniversary of the *Étant Donnés* installation in the

Philadelphia Museum of Art, the precise nature of the link between Duchamp, Courbet, and Lacan was further clarified. According to Michael Taylor, Duchamp most likely saw *L'Origine du Monde* in late September 1958, "when he and his wife were invited to dine with the Lacans at their apartment at 3 rue de Lille in Paris." [(14)] Thierry Savatier goes as far as to suggest that Lacan deeply admired Duchamp and that it was therefore "inconceivable that he would not have brought the painting to Paris for this important rendez-vous".[(15)]

While this new evidence adds weight to de Duve and Krauss's Lacanian interventions, I would argue that it also brings to light a number of important questions which remain unanswered by Duchamp scholars. The first point worth noting is how the relationship between *The Lovers* and *Étant Donnés*, while strengthening the validity of a *psychoanalytic* reading, also brings into focus the specific dilemma which art historians faced when the preparatory sketches were first discovered; namely, the fact that the direct, unambiguous reference to Courbet fundamentally undermines all the criteria according to which Duchamp's work had for so long been judged and evaluated. How, as Calvin Tomkins asks, can we account for the fact that Duchamp was explicitly claiming as an influence over his last major work an artist who he had previously criticized "for setting art on its exclusively 'retinal' course'," the very attitude against which he was seen as reacting?[(16)]Krauss's answer to this question appears insufficient since, by insisting on the distinction between the eroticism of Duchamp's later works and the earlier "cerebral Duchamp" who rejected "the world of material sensations" in favour of "the world of ideas," she simply holds in place the very categories which the Courbet/Lacan question forces us to re-examine. [(17)]

If we choose to interrogate this interpretative aporia a little further, we begin to see that its roots lie in the paradoxical nature of the relationship between the *Large Glass*

and *Étant Donnés*, the two diametrically opposed centre-pieces of Duchamp's visual output. For almost fifty years, scholars have struggled to adequately explain what is at stake in the overlapping dimensions of openness and closure which penetrate each work: one is a blatantly figurative installation which remains fixed at a limited viewpoint; the other is a frustratingly inaccessible form whose opacity is counteracted by its transparency, the simple fact that the viewer is free to walk around it. This obvious feature was identified by Anne d'Harnoncourt as early as 1969, a year after Duchamp's death, in what was the first critical appraisal of the work; and yet, to this day, several issues raised by d'Harnoncourt's initial response remain unresolved. For example, her description of *Étant Donnés* as "the alter ego of The *Large Glass*" raises a very important question for Duchamp scholars: if we are to understand Étants Donnés as a "mise-en-scène" of the *Large Glass*'s implicit "erotic content," then how do we account for the role of the viewer-come-voyeur positioned in the space mapped by the "*Glass*"? If the allegorical content of the "*Glass*" is rendered visible in Étants Donnés – so that the "Bride" can be seen lying on a mass of twigs and the "brick base" of the "Bachelor" machine is "echoed in the inner brick wall and the outer brick doorway" – then what is the precise "allegorical" role of the viewer located at the peephole? [(18)]

What this apparent dichotomy leads us to is the fundamental impenetrability of the *Large Glass* itself. As Tomkins has noted, there is no getting away from the fact that, for almost one hundred years, nobody has come to fully understand the work. The reality is that, despite the transparency of its support, the forms in the *Large Glass* remain opaque: although each element has a name, it is impossible *to move* beyond the work's purely formal qualities – its status as a *Large Glass* – and identify specific motifs. The "conceptual" interpretation which appears to overcome this obstacle is here undermined by Duchamp's insistence that the *Large Glass* has "no theoretical substratum," that "fundamentally, there are very few ideas."

[19]If, as has been generally accepted, the *Glass*'s "anti-retinal" status marks it as a work of "conceptual art" then why does Duchamp continuously emphasize the importance of its formal dimension: the various "technical problems" concerning the support, the colour, the "rehabilitation of perspective" based on "dimensions," etc.? [20]On the whole, such efforts to account for the dilemma the work presents have been undone by their own acute cynicism: despite openly dismissing as naive those readings which attempt to unlock the mysteries of the *Glass*, scholars continue their own efforts to excavate the secrets the work contains. The fact remains that, in the face of assertions that meaning is impossible to decipher, the *Large Glass*'s impossible status continues to exert a fascinating hold.

The basic premise of this paper – and the central argument in my doctoral thesis, *Marcel Duchamp: Resolving the Word/Image Problematic, Afterthought* – is that this set of obstacles persists because the dominant Lacanian interventions into the Duchampian field remain limited in their theoretical scope. The reason for this, I claim, is that such readings rely heavily on what Slavoj Žižek has called "the distorted picture of Lacan as belonging to the field of 'post-structuralism'."[21]Thus, my hypothesis is that, in order to answer the above questions and build on Krauss and de Duve's work, one must continue their Lacanian analysis of Duchamp's *oeuvre* from a *Žižekian perspective*. That is to say, in order to account for the fundamental lacuna in Duchamp scholarship and properly address the problematic nature of his reception, one must revisit the 1958 encounter between Lacan and Duchamp on rue de Lille with *Žižek as a companion*.

It is worth noting here the significance of recent remarks made by Hal Foster on the subject of Duchamp's legacy. In an essay entitled "What's Neo About the Neo Avant Garde" Foster appears to be one of the first scholars to advocate the need

for a specific Žižekian reading of Duchamp as part of a broader *psychoanalytic* understanding of the avant-garde tradition. Through a critique of Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, he examines the paradoxical nature of the avant-garde's reception and offers a precise description of Žižek's revised interpretation of Lacan when he affirms the importance of "rigourous" re-readings which take the form of a "radical" return. The problem with this approach, I claim, is that it does not perform the particular reading it calls for: by narrowing his focus to an analysis of the neo avant-garde Foster overlooks what precisely is at stake in Žižek's "return" to Lacan. In doing so, he obscures the precise "symptomatic" nature of the avant-garde tradition in general and Duchamp's "readymade" in particular.[22]

In order to address this limitation I will engage in a Žižekian reading of Duchamp that accounts for the revolutionary nature of Žižek's re-reading of Lacan. The aim, in short, is to bring together Duchamp with Lacan via Žižek: to re-habilitate the *psychoanalytic* core of Duchamp's work by re-examining it through the prism of Žižek's revised interpretation of Lacanian theory: namely, his attempt to articulate how Lacanian theory, rather than belonging to the tradition of post-structuralist thought, represents a "radical break" with this tradition and as such should be viewed as one of the most "radical contemporary versions of the Enlightenment." [23]

At the same time, this revised Lacanian reading of Duchamp sets the scene for an important encounter, over the Lacanian threshold, between Duchamp and Žižek. Not only does Žižek allow Duchamp's work to become readable in a new and interesting way, his conceptual apparatus also re-coordinates the parameters of the Duchampian field, redefining them for the concerns of visual culture in the twenty-first century. In short, Duchamp's work begins to operate as a crucial iconological tool in a re-defined critique of ideology; a

matrix enabling us to locate contemporary ideological phenomena operating on the visual (aesthetic-iconological) plane. This may have important implications for avant-garde scholarship in particular and the discipline of art history as a whole: a reading of Duchamp (via Žižek) on the basis of Lacanian theory opens up a radical revision of the historical avant-garde in which an alternative understanding of modern art becomes possible. One is thus directly responding to Alain Badiou's assertion on the urgency of telling "another story" about the work of Duchamp in order to re-engage with "the most important part of modern art."[24]What this "other story" both entails and engenders is a re-habilitation of art history to its *psychoanalytic* foundations and, ultimately, the emergence of a new mode of disciplinary exchange which moves beyond the "parallel" approach offered by Thierry de Duve. [25]

With regard to the broader implications of these claims, the current paper should be viewed as the first step in contributing to a paradigmatic shift in the field of Duchampian scholarship, an effort to bring about what Žižek has defined as a Copernican revolution: instead of seeking to overcome the persistent obstacles which Duchamp's work continues to present by "adding complications and changing minor premises".[26]within the terms of the established interpretative framework, I am calling for a fundamental change in the foundations of this basic framework itself, a new paradigm of Duchamp studies which fully recognizes the revolutionary kernel of his work. [27] Through Žižek, Duchamp's *oeuvre* will be opened up to a Lacanian-Hegelian heritage where – against the standard "post-structuralist," "postmodern" ("conceptual") reading of his work – he is located in a lineage of rationalism alongside figures such as Kant, Hegel, Freud, and Marx. It is only in this way that the deafening silence surrounding the man and his work can be shattered so that, to the sound of broken *Glass*, the emancipatory potential of his project can become fully realized.

Two sides of a Coke ad: The Duchampian title and the Lacanian signifier.

When searching for a place to begin such a radical re-*think*ing of Duchamp's project it helps to consider Duchamp's own point of departure, the genesis of his major work *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*. "It's not the bride itself," he famously declared, "it's a concept of a bride that I had to put on the canvas one way or another, *but it was more important that I should have thought of it in words, in terms of words, before I actually drew it.*"[28] With this statement, Duchamp reminds us that the *Large Glass*'s impenetrability is rooted firmly in a distinct and original use of language: the indecipherable nature of the allegory the *Glass* is said to represent, namely, the story of "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors." Although acknowledged as the tale of an erotic encounter, the extremely cryptic nature of the hand-written notes through which the story itself is told ensures that a clear reading is always blocked. Thus, given that a full understanding of the visual dimension of Duchamp's work is not complete without unlocking the meaning of these notes – or, more specifically, by identifying their precise signifying logic, what Charles Cramer has loosely defined as a particular Duchampian "syntax" – it is here that the focal point of this paper resides. [29]

Our analysis of the visual dimension of Duchamp's *oeuvre* will therefore begin by focusing on the system of language that supports it. Adding an increased theoretical rigour to Cramer's analysis, my basic thesis is that the notes are the most complex and extreme form of what Žižek terms the "poetic act of naming," an elaborate system of *metaqua signifier*associations rooted in a fundamental *psychoanalytic* understanding of language. In what remains of this paper, I will argue that, in his use of words, Duchamp literally follows the basic rule of psychoanalysis to the letter *(à la lettre)*In Žižekian terms, he grounds "the irreducible gap

between the enunciated content and the act of enunciation that is proper to human speech." [30]
Or, to Duchamp's own words, he gives palpable presence to the "art-coefficient," the "gap […] between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed." [31]

Of the many statements Duchamp makes on the subject of language, one of the more curious was offered in the recently published "afternoon interviews" with Calvin Tomkins. Discussing how a painting comes to acquire a mystical aura, he explains that "an object is an object, a three-dimensional form, but words are taken and repeated."[32] Duchamp then elaborates on his point by drawing on an example from the world of advertising: "Like publicity. All along it's the same thing, "Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola." After a while magic appears around Coca-cola […] maybe in fifty years, if nobody speaks of Coca-Cola again, it will disappear." [33] It is with this strange analogy that one begins to notice an interesting overlap between Duchamp and Žižek. The first point worth noting is how, with these comments, Duchamp returns to a point made in an earlier interview undertaken fifty years after the rejection and subsequent celebration of his *Nude Descending a Staircase*. In conversation with Francis Steegmuller, he declared that, if the painting's "infamy" has lasted fifty years, then "there's more to it than just the scandal." When pressed to elaborate ("what else is there?") he responds as follows: "There's It" – *"It?"* – "It. Whatever has no name." [34] Further contextualization of this point can be found in his assertion that the "Nude" scandal was ultimately rooted in a basic misunderstanding on the part of his colleagues (and brothers) in the Puteaux group of *the painting's title*. In another statement focusing on the central issue in question, Duchamp explains that "they thought it was too much of a literary title, in a bad sense—in a caricatural way." [35] It is the same misunderstanding, he maintains, which contributed to

the subsequent scandal the work provoked at the New York *Armory Show* in 1913: "what contributed to the interest provoked by that canvas was its title."[36] In short, one can conclude that, by referring to a Coke ad in order to demonstrate the general function of language in sustaining the aura surrounding the work of art, Duchamp is effectively highlighting the specific role of the title in his own work.

The crucial point is that, in one of those unique intellectual analogies which have become the hallmark of his *Writings*, Žižek also uses an advertisement for Coca-cola to elucidate his own particular theoretical understanding of language. In doing so, his analysis displays a striking overlap with Duchamp's comments: from his Lacanian perspective, the "magic" described by Duchamp is articulated as an effect of the act of naming whereby the "'spirit of America' (the cluster of features supposed to express it)" is "condensed in Coke as its signifier, its signifying representative." Furthermore, Duchamp's specific reference to the "it" which persists in the "Nude" – the "whatever has no name" – is formulated by Žižek as the "impersonal it" or surplus-X of the commodity-form, that "unattainable something" which is "in Coke more than Coke." [37]

The Coke ad can therefore be viewed as the point at which an encounter between Žižek and Duchamp might be said to take place: for Duchamp, the ad demonstrates the particular status of titles in his work and the more general function of language in relation to the work of art; for Žižek, it is used to exemplify the Lacanian logic of the signifier and show how it diverges radically from post-structuralist theory. It is through the coke ad, then, that it becomes possible to undertake a new reading of Duchamp's titles on the basis of Žižek's re-reading of Lacan's conceptualization of language. Conversely, by further exploring the implications of this overlap one engages in a *psychoanalytic* reading of Duchamp's *oeuvre* which functions, at the same time, as a Duchampian

reading of psychoanalysis. In other words, it might be argued from a uniquely *psychoanalytic* viewpoint that Duchamp's work provokes a new understanding of the signifier, a shift from a post-structuralist to a Lacanian notion which, by opening up the radical break Žižek speaks of, ultimately contributes to a re-evaluation of Lacanian theory.

The Lacanian signifier and the Žižekian name

How, then, might we draw out the Lacanian connotations suggested by this curious parallel between Duchamp and Žižek? In this section, my aim is to sketch the theoretical background to Žižek's "Coca-Cola remarks" in order to specify where his reading of Lacan diverges from post-structuralist theorists such as Krauss and de Duve. In turn, I will use this distinctly *Žižekian perspective* to offer a new way of understanding Duchamp's use of titles. The elucidation of Žižek's theoretical apparatus will thus be followed by a close, formal analysis of Duchamp's work. [(38)]

The central argument being put forward is that Žižek's Coca-Cola reference, by demonstrating the *psychoanalytic* logic of language, allows us to re-read Duchamp's work in terms of what Žižek terms "the dogmatic stupidity" of the signifier. Žižek's basic point is that, as a signifying structure, the advertising image is not constituted as a field of representation – it does not come to represent the "spirit of America" – until it is supplemented by the label "Coke." It must be remembered that, as a name, the label "Coke" has no meaning; it is fundamental empty, its function is purely structural: as such, it acts as what Žižek calls a "reflexive marker" [(39)] or unifying feature: a registered trademark which, by supplementing the advertising image, constitutes it as a totality. It is this operation – referred to by Lacan as a "quilting" process – which allows the interplay between visual-verbal elements to generate the ad's central message.

This occurs when the empty label “Coke” acquires the status of a sign: that is, it comes to explicate the meaning generated by the advertisement. The shift from empty name to sign takes place through a simple inversion whereby “coke” comes to designate the field it supplements; that is to say, the question “What does ‘Coke’ mean?” is given an answer: “Coke is [‘the Spirit of America’].” The process is complete when the sign “Coke” becomes a signifier, a stand-alone label with its own significance: when “Coke” takes the place of the advertising image by functioning as a *metaqua signifier*replacement for its central message. In other words, the sentence “Coke is [‘the spirit of America’]” simply shifts to “this object—a *Glass* bottle or red tin can—is ‘the spirit of America’ [because it is a bottle/can of Coke].”

The crucial point worth emphasizing is that, as a signifier, the label “Coke” does not represent or bring to mind the concept created by the ad: despite its apparent wealth of significance – its status as a signifier – it remains an empty name or trademark which, through a *metaqua signifier*operation, simply stands in for the concept it is seen to “represent”; in this sense, the ad should simply be understood as the “missing representation”[(40)].whose place is held by the label inscribed on the tin can or *Glass* bottle. It is this shift in perspective which allows us to grasp Žižek’s basic argument: the signifier does not designate an object from a distance (or, the label “Coke” does not point to the contents of the *Glass* bottle or tin can); rather, it is inscribed into the object, onto its surface, as the empty name holding the place of the *missing representation* (the advertisement).

This is what Žižek means by the “dogmatic stupidity” of the signifier: the fact that a name is no more than a tautological, performative element which, rather than calling to mind a particular signified-idea, represents its lack. What conceals the signifier’s “stupidity” is a fundamental formal inversion, a reversal in causality, through which the object-

referent is misrecognized as containing the signified content designated by its name: the red can or *Glass* bottle is believed to contain a set of particular properties *because it is a can or bottle of Coke*; in short, the object is viewed as the physical embodiment of the "spirit of America". This is what Lacan termed the retroactive production of meaning: the way the *missing representation* – the advertising image and all the significance it carries – magically "stays behind" in the object as its "immanent essence,"[41] as the impersonal "it," that magical aura which cannot be named because it is merely an effect of naming. [42]

It is the "dogmatic stupidity of the signifier," Žižek maintains, that is overlooked in the post-structuralist conception of language. In Žižek's reading, the post-structuralist perspective makes two basic theoretical claims. The first assertion is that "the relation of the subject to the world of objects is mediated through language" and, consequently, the objective world is no more than the "imaginary effect-illusion of the signifier's play" which must therefore be abandoned to the "infinite self-interpretive play of language."[43] This "self-referential" conceptualization of language, Žizek argues, is based on a clearly defined theory of the signifier: that language is "the place of auto-reflexive movement" in which metonymy is given "logical predominance" over metaphor.[44] Thus, in the post-structuralist reading, the signifying chain functions, at its most fundamental level, as a "decentered network of plural processes" in which meaning is constantly sliding along the signifying chain. [45]

According to Žižek, it is on the basis of this particular understanding of language that Derrida criticizes Lacan for giving primacy to metaphor over metonymy. For Derrida, Lacan localizes the central lack in the signifying chain in a single (Master) element thereby stemming the differential flow which

corrupts the closed nature of the signifying field. For Žižek, this critique betrays a misunderstanding of the notion of Lacan's notion of the signifier: how, for Lacan, the signifier does not represent a lack but incarnates – takes the place of – a lack. Žižek's point is that such an understanding of the signifying process, by giving primacy to the metonymical relations between signifier, misreads the distinctly *metaqua signifier*status of the signifier as defined by Lacan. It is for this reason that Žižek insists on the distinction between the post-structuralist understanding of the signifier and the *psychoanalytic* version put forward by Lacan. While the Derrida's conceptualization of language remains rooted in the Saussurean tradition, Lacan's represents a radical break with this tradition: it inverts the fundamental principles of Saussure's semiotics by submitting them to a Freudian reading.

It is this precise theoretical error which, I claim, Krauss and de Duve fall victim to in their "Lacanian" interrogations of Duchamp. While both *think*ers claim to use the Lacanian notion of the signifier to examine Duchamp's *Writings*, it is clear that their analysis is based on a post-structuralist mis-reading of Lacan. Krauss, by equating the Lacanian signifier with Jakobson's concept of the "shifter," over-simplifies Lacan's radical Freudian interpretation of linguistic theory. The result is a distinctly Derridean reading of Lacan in which Duchamp's notes are seen to display a "strategy of infecting language itself with a confusion in the way that words denote their referents"; in line with the self-referential conception of language, she argues that the notes "upset the balance of meaning" through an "outrageous formalism" which, by causing confusion, grounds the logic of the shifter such that "form begins to erode the certainty of content." (46)

De Duve, as I have noted, examines Lacan's theory of the signifier through a close reading of Freud's dream analysis in order to argue that, in his titles, Duchamp's "definition of

the Real was strictly that of Lacan." [47]The problem is that this thesis is rooted in what Žižek calls "a fundamental theoretical error" regarding the analysis of dreams. In mapping the structure of a dream onto a work of art de Duve overlooks Freud's basic point: that the "essential constitution of the dream"[48] is not its "latent content" but the mechanism of displacement and condensation which transforms this content into "the form of the dream." As a consequence, his analysis obscures the *psychoanalytic* dimension of Lacan's theory of the signifier, as it is articulated by Žižek, thereby overlooking what is at stake in Duchamp's titles.

On the whole, it would appear that de Duve's particular understanding of the Lacanian signifier is governed by the very formal inversion which, according to Lacan, conceals its true workings. For example, from the assertion that the word assumes its fundamental form "when the signifier has no other signification than its own being as a signifier" [49] we can see that the basic (Saussurean) notion of the signifier is retained; in other words, de Duve's reflexive recognition of the signifier's status *qua signifier* (that the signifier *signifies itself*) is supported by the assumption that the signifier is a material representative of a signified-idea (that it signifies). Beneath his claim that language is reduced to a basic "zero-degree" level of "nothingness," to "the realm of non-language," when "words ought to 'forget' that they have referents,"[50] it is not hard to detect the central tenant of post-structuralist theory: the notion that language is a self-reflexive system, that "there is no pure-object language." [51]

One might even go as far as to argue that, beyond Krauss and de Duve, it is the Derridean rather than Lacanian understanding of language that has served as the dominant interpretative framework through which Duchamp's *Writings* have

been received. Indeed, is it not the post-structuralist conceptualization of language which, to date, has framed our understanding of the notes in Duchamp's "Green Box"? In accordance with the theoretical principles described above, it has been widely acknowledged that the notes have a "cryptic, absurd" dimension which is rooted in the fact that they are "unanalyzable by logic." It is assumed that the notes are "simply impossible to fathom," that they have "no meaning whatsoever" and are simply examples of Duchamp's humorous word-play, his ironic poeticism.[52] What all of this ultimately bears witness to is the fundamental contradiction which penetrates the current state of Duchamp scholarship. To paraphrase Žižek's words, this (post-structuralist) insistence on a type of ironic poeticism is ultimately *affected*: that is, the whole effort to reinforce the idea that Duchamp's *Writings* are "caught in a decentered network of plural processes," the constant attempts "to evade the theoretical form," mask a fundamental fact: that at the root of what is being said "there is a clearly defined theoretical position which can be articulated without difficulty."[53]

The Duchampian title and the Žižekian name

How might Duchamp's homology between the Coke and the "Nude" acquire new meaning against this theoretical background? To put the question another way, how does the overlap between Žižek and Duchamp allow us to read the Duchampian title on the basis of the Lacanian signifier? In order to closely examine the status of the title in the "Nude" – a task I have undertaken in more detail elsewhere[54] – it is perhaps best to focus on the 1911 painting which served as its preparatory work: *Sad Young Man on a Train (Jeune homme triste dans un train)*. The most striking aspect of this painting – a detail, it must be said, which is all too often overlooked by art historians – is the fact that "the sad young man" mentioned in the title is nowhere to be seen in the image in question.

Duchamp's reduction of the visual motif to a precise configuration of points, lines and planes ensures that the viewer inevitably struggles desperately to identify any recognizable content. He himself underlined this point when he said that "the object is completely stretched out, as if elastic" [(55)] so that, in the painting, "there isn't much of the young man, there isn't much of the sadness, there isn't much of anything in that painting except […] a repetition of schematic lines." [(56)]

What Duchamp achieves in this painting, I claim, is the dissolution of the illusion which conceals the true workings of the title, its true status as a (Lacanian) signifier: namely, the perspectival error according to which the title's representational content is (mis-)perceived as being inherent to the object (the painting). The effect of such an operation manifests itself, I would argue, in the very acute feeling of discomfort which accompanies the viewing of the work: the way the viewer, standing perplexed before an explicitly opaque surface, is forced to ask in vein: "Where is the man indicated in the title?"[(57)] Indeed, is it not this very simple yet direct question which lies at the root of the art historical debate surrounding "Sad Young Man," the continued attempts to decipher the work's title and subject matter? What the question "where is the man on the train?" reveals is a basic misconception regarding the title's actual function and status. In other words, the assertion made in the catalogue entry for the work, that the title expands upon "the simple description of the figure for (or of) a nude, by also designating it – as if with a subtitle – 'Jeune homme triste dans un train'," [(58)] is made on the assumption that the title has the status of a sign; that it somehow points to (or designates) the content of the painting from an objective distance.

Could it be possible to argue, then, that many Duchamp

scholars have, to date, made the same error as Duchamp's colleagues in the Puteaux group? Just as the hanging committee misunderstood the title's "literary" status, so too have scholars missed the basic fact that the "subtitle" *Sad Young Man on a Train* is not a sign at a distance from the painting but a sentence ["sad-young-man-on-a-train" or "JEUNE-HOMME-TRISTE-DANS-UN-TRAIN"] inscribed onto the surface of the picture? This alternative reading is given weight when we consider Duchamp's decision to directly paint the name of the work in block capitals, a procedure he goes on to repeat with the "Nude" ("NU-DESCENDANT-UN-ESCALIER") and all his subsequent works thereafter. The most explicit example of this is, of course, the sentence which Duchamp literally inscribed in black paint on the back of the lower panel of the *Large Glass*: *LA MARIÉE MISE À NU PAR/SES CÉLEBITAIRES, MÊME/Marcel Duchamp/1915-1923/inachevé*. Through this explicit act of inscription Duchamp is doing much more than simply emphasizing the title's role in the painting; he is foregrounding the fact that the title functions not as a sign (in the Saussurean sense) but as a type of signifying structure, a verbal inscription which is part of the picture, on the same level as the visual inscriptions. This might well have been what was meant by his insistence that "I always gave an important role to the title, which I added and treated like an invisible colour." [(59)] This is also why it is Žižek who appears to offer the most precise description of the Duchampian title when he writes:

In this case the relation between the picture and its title is not the usual one whereby the title corresponds simply to what is depicted […] Here the title is, so to speak, on the same surface. It is part of the same continuity as the picture itself. Its distance from the picture is strictly internal, marking an incision into the picture. [(60)]

The basic point is that, in Duchamp's titles, we encounter the Žižekian re-conceptualization of Lacan's master signifier in

its purest form.[61] Given that the title [“sad-young-man-on-a-train,” “JEUNE-HOMME-TRISTE-DANS-UN-TRAIN”] cannot be said to designate or represent the motif in question, one can logically conclude that the man on the train is the central absence around which the picture is constructed: the motif is, in Žižekian terms, the *missing representation* for which the title is a *metaqua signifier*substitute. The title is only part of the painting in so far as it fills the central hole in the painting. It should therefore be understood not as a sign but as a signifying structure – an inscription – which holds the place of that which is lacking; namely, the scene whose exclusion is the condition which constitutes the painting as a field of representation. Duchamp even suggests as much when, in response to the question “is the man you?”, he admits that “of course the sad young man on the train is myself.” However, he immediately qualifies this statement by referring not to the painting but to “the occasion of a train trip I took from Paris to see my family in Rouen […] in October 1911” when the idea of the painting came to him.[62] He is here referring to the actual scene – the *missing representation* – which is nowhere to be seen in the work; the scene is significant because it marks the important point in Duchamp’s development: when he came upon “the idea of using the movement as one of the elements” of a painting. [63] It is in this way that the title of the work functions as a master signifier *par excellence*: it does not call to mind or represent the idea of the sad young man; rather, it is inscribed into the field as the element which holds the place of that which is lacking. It is the reflexive marker which constitutes the painting as a totality (as a field of representation) by holding the place of a central void.

The “Lacanian” logic of Duchamp’s titles becomes even more evident when we consider the rapid development of his work before and during his stay in Munich. During this period, his titles clearly take on an even more explicit *metaqua*

*signifier*status: “Two Nudes, One Strong and One Swift,” “The King and the Queen Traversed by Nudes at High Speed,” “The King and the Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes,” “The King and the Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes,” “Virgin No. 1,” “Virgin No. 2,” “The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride.” In this series of works, the effect produced in “Sad Young Man” is driven to its extreme limit: the fact that the motifs are nowhere to be seen merely emphasizes the workings of the title, its status as what might be (retroactively) termed a Lacanian signifier. The procedure finds its most acute formulation in Duchamp’s final work *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*: it is only when we recognize that the name “Bride” clearly does not point to any identifiable object in the picture (“Where is the ‘Bride’ designated by the title?”) our attachment to the “painting’s” content is disrupted and our attention is drawn to the title itself, to the act of inscription as a signifying operation. It becomes immediately clear that the word “Bride,” rather than pointing to the opaque forms in the picture, functions instead as the element holding the place of a missing representation, the central emptiness around which the picture is constructed.

The problem, however, is that this Žižekian (Lacanian) dimension of Duchamp’s work remains obscured by the fact that the current misunderstanding of the precise role and status of Duchamp’s titles is supported by a fundamental error in perspective. The viewer continues to see the title *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* as a sign designating the *Large Glass*, despite the fact that Duchamp constantly drew a division between the two.[(64)] Due to an excessive investment in the work’s representational content, a belief that the signified-content produced by the workings of the title somehow persists as the intrinsic or immutable essence of the object, the true logic of the title is obscured. It is this excessive movement beyond the purely phenomenal qualities of the *Large Glass*, which accounts for the work’s magical aura, the power of fascination which, to this day, it continues to

exert. By aesthetically fetishizing the object, we miss Duchamp's basic point that "afterward there is no mystery – it's a pure logical conclusion." [65]

Once again, de Duve appears to fall into this trap when, in reflexively acknowledging the role of the title, he reveals the underlying assumption supporting his argument that, rather than taking the place of what is clearly absent from the painting, the title represents a certain signified-idea. What comes to the fore in his insistence that "the woman is so obvious in Duchamp's works, openly announced in their titles: Virgin, Bride, Stripped Bare, and so on" is, I maintain, a fundamentally post-structuralist conceptualization of language which is completely opposed to the Lacanian position he purports to adopt. Despite claiming to read Duchamp's work on the basis of Lacan's notion of the signifier, it is clear that de Duve, to use Žižek's terminology, still finds reason to retain the mask of the Saussurean sign: he sees content as that which is "announced" by the title; the title designates a "real referent"; it "expresses" and "proclaims" its signified.[66]

It could be argued that Duchamp, in his efforts to foreground the status and role of his titles, was actively taking this perspectival error into account in advance. Indeed, if we focus on the evolution of the visual plane of his work, we can see how he may have been attempting to break the viewer's excessive attachment to the object-referent (the painting): his progressive reduction of the image to no more than compositional arrangement of lines on a flat, opaque surface, is aimed at reinforcing an obstacle blocking the viewer's engagement with representational content. However, it is also important to note how the increased distortion of the motif in Duchamp's work runs directly parallel to an increased emphasis on the literary (metaphorical) nature of his titles. By reducing the motif to a set of opaque forms forming part of a specific point-to-point configuration, Duchamp breaks the

viewer's misplaced investment in the painting's content; the crucial point is that he does so in order to underline the fact that the painting is a fundamentally symbolic mechanism. By staging a distortion in the field of visual representation – an obstacle between the viewer-subject and the painting-object – he draws attention to the signifying structure which supports the field itself: how, in effect, it is the workings of the title which provoke the viewer's frantic search for an identifiable motif. It is only when we read the sentence "sad-young-man-on-a-train" that we attempt *to move* beyond the opacity of the work's appearance towards what Erwin Panofksy called the world of "artistic motifs." [67]

The development of Duchamp's style could thus be viewed as a repeated effort to reinforce this effect by reducing the operation to its fundamental structure: "reduce, reduce, reduce was my thought – but at the same time my aim was turning inward, rather than toward externals."[68] The point of culmination is, of course, the *Large Glass* where the effect is driven to its most extreme point: "And later, following this view, I came to feel that an artist might use anything – a dot, a line, the most conventional or unconventional symbol– to say what he wanted to say. The "Nude," in this way, was a direct step to the *Large Glass*." [69] In front of the *Glass* we are left with no option but to subtract all excessive investment in the object's representational content, all fascination with the work's magical "it." In doing so, we make the crucial step toward "regions more verbal": we shift our perspective away from the object and towards the symbolic ("conceptual") inscription that supports the visual ("retinal") field.

Such a perspectival shift allows for a radical definition of Duchamp's notion of "movement." Consider, for instance, his strange insistence that, in "Sad Young Man," there are "two parallel movements corresponding to each other": "first, there

is idea of the movement of the train, and then that of the sad young man." [70] The question which must be asked is this: why, if Duchamp is referring to the painting's representational content, does he say that the movement of the train comes before that of the man when, normally, the identification of the motif ("man") would logically come before that of the idea ("train")? It is only by subtracting our fascination with the painting's content – by giving up all attempts to identify the "man" and the "train" – that the answer becomes evident: the only conditions under which the movement of the "train" can come before that of the "man" is if Duchamp, rather than referring to the object-motif, is actually speaking about the effects of signification created by the title, the fact that, in the chain of signifiers ["sad-young-man-on-a-train"], "train" is the last element.

From our Lacanian-Žižekian viewpoint, it is the "movement" triggered by the title – the viewer's movement beyond the surface of the painting, his efforts to overcome the obstacle posed by the image of a figure broken into a series of converging lines – which concerns Duchamp. In other words, he is not referring to the movement of the man or the train *but that of the viewer*: he or she who falls into the trap (illusion) of reaching beyond the work's physical appearance in an attempt to grasp some identifiable motif. It can thus be argued that the title generates the viewer's movement beyond the realm of the painting's purely formal co-ordinates, *a frantic search for "movement" in the painting*. [71]

Based on this revised understanding of Duchamp's notion of "movement," one might argue that his work gives physical form to the what Lacan termed the retroactive production of meaning: the way the signified (the meaning created by the title) "stays behind" in the object (the painting) because it is produced retroactively, created "après-coup"; that is, when the chain of (signifying) elements in the title has been supplemented, supported, and "quilted" by the intervention of

an empty name. This operation becomes explicit if we focus closely on the precise working of the title in “Sad Young Man”. Note how it is only with the last word in the title (train) that the relations *between the words* which precede it become fixed, and meaning is retroactively produced. “Train,” in other words, plays the role of the pure signifier: the reflexive marker which supplements and unifies the series [“sad-young-man-on-a”] chain thereby constituting it as a field within which metonymical relations between words begin to operate. In other words, it is only with the last word that the relations *between the words* in the chain are fixed and meaning is created; it is only with the last word that the “movement” of the viewer on the visual plane is generated.

Duchamp himself suggests as much with the curious remark that “the young man is sad because there is a train that comes *afterward.*” [(72)] The choice of the term “afterward” draws our attention to the fact that the word “train” comes after the series “sad-young-man.” This, in turn, underlines the position of the word “train” within the chain of signifiers and emphasizes the fact that meaning is produced after the sentence is unified by the last element. Similarly, in the *Large Glass* it is clear that meaning is produced retroactively; that is, when one reaches the end of the sentence. This is why it is Lacan who offers a perfect description of the work’s title through what he called “the diachronic function of this button tie” at the level of the sentence: “insofar as a sentence closes the signification with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction by the other terms and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect.” [(73)] In short, it is the last term – the addition of the adverb “même” – which seals the sentence and totalizes the chain which precedes it by grounding the metonymical relations *between the words* in the chain. As with the word “train,” “même” functions as a Lacanian signifier *par excellence*, the purest form of the “the dogmatic stupidity

proper to the signifier as such."[74] As Duchamp explains:

Words interested me; and the bringing together of words to which I added a comma and "even," an adverb which makes no sense, since it relates to nothing in the picture or title. Thus it was an adverb in the most beautiful demonstration of adverbness. It has no meaning. This "antisense" interested me a lot on the poetic level, from the point of view of the sentence….In English, too, "even" is an absolute adverb; it has no sense. All the more possibility of stripping bare. It's a "non-sense." [75]

It is important here to note Duchamp's insistence that *Sad Young Man on a Train* "already showed my intention of introducing humour into painting, or, in any case, the humour of word play: triste, train…'Tr' is very important."[76]

In Žižekian terms, the "tr" is the crucial feature which grounds the empty, self-reflexive nature of the title, the status of the title as a pure signifier. This operation reaches its most extreme point when the "tr" of train is replaced by the word "même" and the performative, tautological dimension of the signifier, is exposed. This effort to openly stage the performative (metaphorical) and, ultimately, tautological dimension of language also gives new meaning to what Duchamp refers to as the "literary" use of the title, or the poetic use of words: "titles in general interest me a lot […] at the time, I was becoming literary. Words interested me […]."[77] However, he maintains that, while his work might be called "literary," his use of words is "not entirely literary": it was "much deeper than literary" because "it's using words, but then everything that uses words is not necessarily literary, as you know." [78] Duchamp was referring here to "the poetic aspect" of the words, the way in which the common assumption that a word simply pointed to an object was fundamentally challenged: "I wanted to give 'delay' a poetic

sense that I couldn't even explain. It was to avoid saying 'a *Glass* painting,' 'a *Glass* drawing,' 'a thing drawn on *Glass*,' you understand?"[79] For Duchamp, "poetic words" are the opposite of words which have an "essential concept"; they are, he explains, "words distorted by their sense" [80] which create "an explosion in the meaning of certain words" so that "they have a greater value than their meaning in the dictionary."[81] What this explosion ultimately calls attention to is "the intellectual side of things," to the symbolic-conceptual dimension of the object, to "regions more verbal." [82]

It is at this point that the full weight of the parallel between Lacan and Duchamp is felt. What is significant is the way Duchamp's statements on poetry have very close resonances with Lacan's and Žižek's claim that the poetic act of naming ultimately displays what can, retroactively, be termed a *psychoanalytic* understanding of language: an attempt to name the "unnameable X" in the object through "tautological pseudo-explanations"[83] which themselves ground the tautological nature of the naming process itself. Indeed, is it not a "certain systematic and deliberate use of the signifier as such"[84] that becomes apparent in Duchamp's series of puns? By reducing language to the zero-level of a tautology, does a pun not openly stage the "poetic" dimension of language, the dogmatic stupidity of the signifier?

While the answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this paper it is worth repeating that, for Lacan, the act of staging the logic of the signifier finds its purest form in the poetic act of naming. This is his point in Seminar VII when he discusses the importance of the technique adopted in the phenomenon of courtly love within the context of the *psychoanalytic* process. It is thus significant that Duchamp consistently relates his approach to the use of titles to the poetic tradition: "it was the poetic aspect of the words that

I like […] it was really poetic, in the most Mallarméan sense of the word, so to speak." [85] The Duchampian notion of "humour" – as with the term "movement" – can thus be fundamentally redefined along Lacanian lines. Directly echoing Lacan's description of the "amusing side" of courtly love – which "has perhaps no other cause than the semantic confusion produced' by the use of metaphor" [86] – Duchamp continuously refers to his use of titles in terms of humour: it was, he notes, "amusing to try."[87]

The crucial concluding point is that, while the encounter between Duchamp and Lacan in front of Courbet's L'Origine du monde remains the only corroborating evidence to support the direct influence of Lacan over Duchamp and vice versa, the fact remains that Lacan developed his theory of the signifier through an analysis of the very source from which Duchamp's radical use of titles emerged – that is, a particular poetic understanding of language that can, after the fact, be understood through a *psychoanalytic* lens. From this departure point Duchamp's *oeuvre* and Lacan's theoretical apparatus open themselves up to the possibility of radical transformation whereby, to cite the mediator of the message, both *think*ers "may simultaneously redeem themselves, shedding their old skins and emerging in a new unexpected shape."[88]

Notes

Footnote Return 1. Benjamin Buchloh, introduction to *The Duchamp Effect: Essays, Interviews, Round Table*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 4

Footnote Return 2. Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index," in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths,*

(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), 197.

Footnote Return 3. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde*, 202.

Footnote Return 4. Krauss leaves the reader with little doubt as to the extent of her debt to Lacan when, in the opening chapter of *The Optical Unconscious*, she outlines the specifics of her theoretical position. Her argument begins with the thesis that modernism is a fundamentally visual field in which the "the fundamentals of perception," the opposition between figure/ground and not-figure/not-ground, are constantly maintained *(Ibid.*, 14). To demonstrate this point she maps the topology of modernism onto the structuralist graph developed by the Klein Group and asks: how does one trace an "alternative history, one that had developed against the grain of modernist opticality" *(Ibid., 20),* one that rose out of modernism to "defy its logic"? *(Ibid.*, 21). The task Krauss sets herself, in other words, is to trace an opposing trend in modernism, one which instead of being "contained by the terms of visual perception" *(Ibid.*, 14) functions as a "statement of this containment" *(Ibid.*, 15). What Krauss attempts to identify is a shift in which the opposition figure/ground is both preserved and cancelled, an inversion in the fundamentals of perception which unveils "the structure of the visual field as such" *(Ibid.*, 15), what she calls "vision as a form of cognition" *(Ibid.*, 16). In order to map the logic of this counterhistory, Krauss locates what she sees as its practical and theoretical poles: it is Duchamp's decision to give up work on the *Large Glass*, she ventures, which indicates a possible starting point; and it is Lacanian psychoanalysis which marks a conceptual foundation. She writes: "The theorists of this refusal were Bataille and Breton, Caillois and Leiris, *with in the background, Freud*. And in the foreground, Dali linked through one arm and Caillois through the other, there was Lacan. *Lacan, it struck me, provided the*

key to this refusal, a way of giving it a name" (*Ibid*., 22; my emphasis).

Footnote Return 5. *Ibid*., 112.

Footnote Return 6. *Ibid*., 112. Krauss's arrives at this statement by way of supplementing the semiotic graph used by the "structuralists" with Lacan's L schema: a model which shows the subject "as an effect of the unconscious" (*Ibid*., 23). This move allows Krauss to map the figure/ground axis in the visual logic of modernism onto Lacan's conceptual categories (the ego, the object, the subject and the Other) thus providing theoretical justification for the counterhistory which frames her analysis of Duchamp's late work. It is Lacan's shema, she writes, which "displays the diagnol, mirroring relationships" lacking from the structuralist graph, the co-ordinates which "map the way the ego identifies with its object." There is, she definitively declares, "no mistaking it" (*Ibid*., 23).

Footnote Return 7. Thierry De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 4.

Footnote Return 8. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 31. In the book's opening chapter, which is entitled 'Art and Psychoanalysis, Again?' and is framed by a quotation from Lacan, de Duve presents an overview of the long tradition in *psychoanalytic* readings of art and asks: "of what use can *psychoanalytic* interpretation be in the constitution of a historical 'narrative' récit of art?" His response, much like that of Krauss, is clear and definite: "the time at which the question is being asked must be explicit: that time is today"

(Ibid., 1). He is equally unambiguous when he explains that his attempt to bring the two "incommensurable historicites" *(Ibid*., 5) of art and psychoanalysis into a parallel relation – a method which, he claims, is unlike "applied psychoanalysis" and "*psychoanalytic* aesthetics" in that it neither presupposes a strict adherence to Freudian doctrine nor burdens itself "with any equally a priori critical suspicion" *(Ibid*., 7) – is made on the basis of a simple hypothesis: that the "truth-function that Duchamp's work […] brings to light" *resonates* with the fundamental premises of Lacanian theory. He writes: "*And behind these artistic and theoretical resonances one hears the voice of Lacan*, who, more than anyone, authorized this sort of reading and established it, epistemologically. *This is what interests me here. One will soon see the important place I reserve for Lacan in the exercise of parallelism that follows" (Ibid*., 8-9; my emphasis).

Footnote Return 9. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 78-9. He arrives at this analysis through his heuristic parallelism: an "explicit point-by-point comparison" *(Ibid*., 67) between Duchamp's Munich painting *The Passage from Virgin to Bride* and Freud's famous "injection dream". The crucial point worth emphasizing here is that this comparison relies on Lacan's specific reading of the dream in question, such that de Duve's interpretation of Duchamp's work is ultimately vectored through the lens of Lacan's conceptual categories, the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary *(Ibid*., 69).

Footnote Return 10. Paola Magi, *Treasure Hunt with Marcel Duchamp* (Milan: Edizioni Archivio Dedalus, 2011), 11.

Footnote Return 11. Indeed, it is to Lyotard's topological analysis of the specular "dispositif" at work in *Étant Donnés* that Krauss refers in her own Lacanian reading of the work.

Similarly, de Duve cites Lyotard's 1969 essay on the "Principal Trends in the *psychoanalytic* Study of Artistic and Literary Expression" as the most recent moment of "breaching" in the history of post-Freudian aesthetics, to which de Duve responds by asking "what use can we make today of the relation of psychoanalysis to art?" Situating his own contribution within this tradition and in relation to Lyotard's work he writes: "the method that I propose here has bully broken with an attitude of reciprocal deconstruction that characterizes the second-to-last moment of the double breaching of art and psychoanalysis, as narrated in Lyotard's 1969 essay. If my method produces any results, they should remain valued even if a later breaching of the Freudian corpus carries the relation of art to psychoanalysis to yet unsuspected shores." De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 2-3, 7.

Footnote Return 12. Joan Copjec, editorial for "Aesthetics & Sublimation", *Unbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious* 1 (1999): 4.

Footnote Return 13. Alain Badiou, "Some Remarks Concerning *Marcel Duchamp*," *The Symptom* 9, (2008)

Footnote Return 14. *Marcel Duchamp*: *Étant Donnés*, ed. Michael R. Taylor (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2009), 112.

Footnote Return 15. Thierry Savatier, *L'Origine du monde: Histoire d'un tableau de Gustave Courbet* (Paris: Bartillat, 2006), in Taylor (ed.), *Marcel Duchamp*, 127.

Footnote Return 16. Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1996), 460

Footnote Return 17. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, 108.

Footnote Return 18. Anne d'Harnoncourt and Walter Hopps, "*Etant Donnés*: 1. La chute d'eau; 2. Le gaze d'éclairage: Reflections on a New Work by *Marcel Duchamp*," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 64, nos. 299-300 (April-September 1969): 6-41.

Footnote Return 19. *Marcel Duchamp*, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padgett (London: Da Capo Press, 1979), 25.

Footnote Return 20. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 38.

Footnote Return 21. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), xxx.

Footnote Return 22. Hal Foster, "What's New About the Neo Avant Garde," *The Duchamp Effect: Essays, Interviews, Round Table,*, ed. Martha Buskirk and Mignon (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 5-32. For a full elaboration of this thesis see Robert Kilroy, *Marcel Duchamp: Resolving the Word/Image Problematic, Afterthought,* unpublished doctoral thesis, Department of French, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultural Studies, Trinity College Dublin, 2014.

Footnote Return 23. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, xxx.

Footnote Return 24. Badiou, "Some Remarks Concerning *Marcel Duchamp*," 2008.

Footnote Return 25. For a full elaboration of this point see Robert Kilroy, "Re-Framing the Real: Duchamp's Readymade as a Lacanian Object," in Preservation, Radicalism and the Avant-

Garde Canon, ed. Rebecca Ferreboeuf, Fiona Noble, and Tara Plunkett (London: Palgrave Macmillon, 2016), 133-152. See also Robert Kilroy, "Facebook: The Central Place of the Lacanian Clinic," *Lacunae: APPI International Journal for Lacanian Psychoanalysis* Vol. 3, no. 11 (2015): 1–22.

Footnote Return 26. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, vii.

Footnote Return 27. This assertion is based on the following statement made by Žižek in the updated preface to his seminal 1989 work *The Sublime Object of Ideology*: "When a discipline is in crisis, attempts are made to change or supplement its theses within the terms of its basic framework – a procedure one might call 'Ptolemization' […] But the true 'Copernican' revolution takes place when, instead of just adding complications and changing minor premises, the basic framework itself undergoes a transformation […] the question to ask is always: is this truly a Copernican revolution, or merely a Ptolemization of the old paradigm?" Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, vii.

Footnote Return 28. *Marcel Duchamp* in interview with Richard Hamilton and George Heard Hamilton, "*Marcel Duchamp* Speaks," BBC – Third Program (series: Art, Anti-Art, ca. October 1959); issued as an audio tape by William Furlong (ed.), *Audio Arts Magazine*, Vol. 2, no. 4 (1976). For full audio see http://www.tate.org.uk/audio-arts/volume-2/number-4.

Footnote Return 29. Charles Cramer, "Duchamp from Syntax to Bride: Sa Langue dans sa Joue," *Word & Image* 13, no. 3 (July-September 1997): 279-303.

Footnote Return 30. Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (London: Granta, 2006), 18.

Footnote Return 31. *Marcel Duchamp*, "The Creative Act," *Writings* of *Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michael Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), 139.

Footnote Return 32. Calvin Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: The Afternoon Interviews* (New York: Badlands Unlimited, 2013), 62.

Footnote Return 33. *Ibid*., 62.

Footnote Return 34. *Marcel Duchamp* in Francis Steegmuller, "Duchamp: Fifty Years Later," Show 3, no. 1 (February 1963): 2,. in Thierry De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*: On *Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade*, trans. Dana Polan, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 191.

Footnote Return 35. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 83.

Footnote Return 36. *Ibid*., 44.

Footnote Return 37. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 106.

Footnote Return 38. I have elsewhere discussed how this particular aspect of Žižekian theory relates to Duchamp's work in "*The Sublime Object* of Iconology: Duchampian Appellation as Žižekian Interpellation," *Seachange: Art, Communication, Technology, International Online Journal* (Montreal: McGill University, 2016). I argue that a Žižekian reading of Duchamp's titles allows us to rethink Duchamp's *oeuvre* as a radical form of ideology critique. For the purposes of this paper, however, my intention is to elaborate a Lacanian/Žižekian reading of Duchamp's titles in more detail,

by examining them outside their broader relation to the ideological parameters of the aesthetic field. In the bibliography I have included some works by Žižek which, although not directly cited, are included because they are germane to my brother arguments concerning Duchamp's project. It is in *The Fragile Absolute* or *Why is the Christian Legacy worth fighting for?* (London: Verso, 2008), for example, that Žižek makes direct reference to Duchamp in the context of a distinctly Lacanian reading of the avant-garde tradition. It is the curious nature of his assessment of Duchamp – the fact that he overlooks what, according to his own theoretical framework, he should have been able to see – which I take as a departure point for my re-reading of Duchamp. It is in this way that my Žižekian reading of Duchamp functions primarily as a Duchampian reading of Žižek, an interrogation – via the Duchampian lens – of the aesthetic-iconological foundations of Lacanian thought, the very co-ordinates lacking from Zizek's apparatus. A substantial elaboration of this argument is the subject of my forthcoming book entitled *Duchamp with Zizek: Towards a Word/Image Parallax.*

Footnote Return 39. Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, ed. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens (London: Continuum, 2006), 186.

Footnote Return 40. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 178.

Footnote Return 41. *Ibid*., 113.

Footnote Return 42. *Ibid*., 113. For a full elaboration of how, through Duchamp, the act of naming functions as a critique of the ideological structure of the aesthetic field see Kilroy, "*The Sublime Object* of Iconology" (2016).

Footnote Return 43. *Ibid*., 177.

Footnote Return 44. *Ibid*., 177, 172.

Footnote Return 45. *Ibid*., 174, 172.

Footnote Return 46. Krauss, *Modernist Myths,* 200.

Footnote Return 47. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 78-9.

Footnote Return 48. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 5.

Footnote Return 49. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 125. While beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting here how this inherent limitation in de Duve's reading of Lacan comes to manifest itself as an obvious contradiction in his 'parallel' approach: the fact that his efforts to escape the ideological pitfalls of the *psychoanalytic* position – its status as "an indecisive and even highly troubling epistemology" *(Ibid*., 3) – are undermined by the indecisive and highly troubling nature of the parallel method itself. De Duve maintains his approach affords him a critical distance towards the ideological tendencies inherent in a *psychoanalytic* study of art: "To put the problem this way is to ask what role ideology plays in art and in psychoanalysis and to imagine that ideology varies in an inverse relation to the truth function of art and analysis" (De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 3). In other words, the "heuristic parallelism" provides a model which ensures that one remains "attentive to the truth-function that is at work in the two fields" *(Ibid*., 4). However, the very admission that "of course, as 'parallel' as my reading will be, I cannot help applying to Duchamp Freudian concepts (or others, Lacanian in particular)" *(Ibid*., 7) testifies to an obvious discrepancy between theory and practice, between what he claims to be doing and what he is

actually doing. In the face of all rigorous attempts to avoid *psychoanalytic* essentialism, there is no getting away from the fact that he falls into the very position he seeks to escape. What this contradiction ultimately underlines is the significance of Žižek's thesis regarding ideology, arrived at on the basis of his re-reading of Lacanian theory: that ideology functions not at the level of concepts (what people *think* they are doing) but in the form – or "socio-synthetic dimension" – of their activity (what they are *actually doing*). One might argue it is this paradox – what Žižek terms the "enlightened false consciousness" of postmodern scepticism – which governs the current paradigm in Duchamp Studies: that is to say, despite all efforts on the part of scholars to take into account "the distance between the ideological mask and the reality," at the level of what one is doing one "still finds reason to retain the mask." Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 173-4, 15, 26, 28.

Footnote Return 50. *Ibid*., 127.

Footnote Return 51. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 177.

Footnote Return 52. See Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp*, 6, 4, 3.

Footnote Return 53. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 173-174.

Footnote Return 54. Here I will provide a more nuanced version of the analysis of the "Nude" which appears in "*The Sublime Object* of Iconology" by focusing on the work that precedes it, *Sad Young Man on a Train* (1911).

Footnote Return 55. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 29.

Footnote Return 56. Duchamp in Tomkins, Duchamp, 76.

Footnote Return 57. I can claim to have had personal experience of this phenomenon when, as an intern at the museum where Duchamp's painting is held, I was repeatedly asked the same question by perplexed visitors: "where is the man on the train?" This question serves as the departure point in the aforementioned paper, "*The Sublime Object* of Iconology," when it is discussed in relation to a curious joke made by Žižek in which he demonstrates the Lacanian logic of the signifier through reference to a viewer's experience of a painting in a gallery.

Footnote Return 58. Angelica Zander Rudenstine, *Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1985).

Footnote Return 59. Tomkins, Duchamp, 51.

Footnote Return 60. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 179.

Footnote Return 61. This thesis is expanded in Kilroy, "*The Sublime Object* of Iconology" where it serves as the basis for a re-reading of Duchamp's readymade in terms of Žižek's revised notion of ideology.

Footnote Return 62. Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp*, 76.

Footnote Return 63. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 130.

Footnote Return 64. Is this not his aim when splitting the work into visual and verbal poles? He writes: "I wanted the album

to go with the '*Glass*,' and to be consulted when seeing the '*Glass*', as I see it, it must not be 'looked at' in the aesthetic sense of the word. One must consult the book, and see the two together. The conjunction of the two things entirely removes the retinal aspect that I don't like. It is very logical." Duchamp, *Dialogues*., 42-3. By continuously grounding the text-image disjunction Duchamp calls attention to the fact that the visual ("retinal") is governed by a symbolic ("conceptual") structure, a point which is further underlined by the distinctive way he chooses to name each work: The *Large Glass* and *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*.

Footnote Return 65. Duchamp in Tomkins Duchamp, 211.

Footnote Return 66. De Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 31-32.

Footnote Return 67. Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York and London: Harper and Row, 1972), 5.

Footnote Return 68. Duchamp, *Writings*, 124-5.

Footnote Return 69. Duchamp, *Writings*, 124-5.

Footnote Return 70. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 29.

Footnote Return 71. This the central claim in "*The Sublime Object* of Iconology": that the "Nude" can be understood as the point where this movement becomes eroticized, when the frantic search for content becomes sexualized through the transformation of the motif from man to female object. Thus, when de Duve asserts that, with Duchamp's Munich works,

"erotic themes enter his work and never leave," he misses the basic point that the themes in question are not "in the work" but are an effect of the title; thus, one could say that the eroticism in question is present at the very level of *de Duve's own activity*: his own (mis-)recognition of erotic themes; his own movement beyond the opaque surface of the painting to the realm of representational content. See de Duve, *Pictorial Nominalism*, 31.

Footnote Return 72. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 29.

Footnote Return 73. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York and London: Norton & Company, 2006), 682.

Footnote Return 74. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, 103.

Footnote Return 75. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 40.

Footnote Return 76. *Ibid*., 29.

Footnote Return 77. *Ibid*., 40.

Footnote Return 78. Duchamp with Hamilton, *Audio Arts Magazine*. Op. cit. note 28 above.

Footnote Return 79. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 40.

Footnote Return 80. *Ibid*., 88-9.

Footnote Return 81. *Ibid*., 16.

Footnote Return 82. Duchamp, *Writings*, 141.

Footnote Return 83. Slavoj Žižek, *Less Then Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso. 2012), 943.

Footnote Return 84. Jacques Lacan, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter (New York and London: Norton & Company), 148.

Footnote Return 85. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 40.

Footnote Return 86. Lacan, Seminar VII, 150.

Footnote Return 87. Duchamp, *Dialogues*, 29.

Footnote Return 88. Žižek, *The Sublime Object*, viii.

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On “The Creative Act”

On “The Creative Act”

Julian Jason Haladyn

With art … the finitude of the sensible material becomes a support for the production of affects and precepts which tend to become more and more eccentred with respect to preformed structures and coordinates. Marcel Duchamp declared: “art is a road which leads towards regions which are not governed by time and space.” – Felix Guattari (1)

In his polemic text “The Creative Act,” Marcel Duchamp describes the act of creating art as consisting of a dialogue between the two poles (as he terms them) of the artist – the creator of the work – and the spectator, or more generally the posterity – the person or people who experience the work. For Duchamp, both of these subject positions are necessary in order to create a work of art, which must be seen to involve not just the making of the work but also its reception. This relationship is described most clearly in the concluding paragraph of the text, where he states: “the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the

work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualifications and thus adds his contribution to the creative act" (2). This understanding of art undermines the privileged position typically accorded the artist within modernity, who is most often perceived as the singular creator or "genius" behind great works of art. By suggesting that artists actively depend on the contributions of viewers in order for their work to be *completed*, Duchamp directly challenges the authority of artists over their art – and, by extension, the modern conception of art based upon this vision of the "genius" artist.

At the heart of Duchamp's short text is, I propose, a fundamental questioning of the accepted parameters of the artist-viewer relationship that emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with the modern conception of art and the museum. Whereas prevailing modernist theories assume the artist to be a position of privilege, marking a distinct perspective on the world that is the basic expression of their uniqueness or "genius" – a perspective that defines everything the artist produces precisely because it is produced by the artist – Duchamp's vision of art is fundamentally based upon the relational interactions or dialogues of viewer and artwork, with the artist's participation being *mediumistic*. "If we give the attributes of a medium to the artist," he tells us, "we must then deny him the state of consciousness on the esthetic plane about what he is doing or why he is doing it" (3). Duchamp clarifies this position in an interview with Pierre Cabanne, where he states:

I believe very strongly in the "medium" aspect of the artist. The artist makes something, then one day, he is recognized by the intervention of the public, of the spectator; so later he goes on to posterity. You can't stop that, because, in brief, it's a product of two poles – there's the pole of the one who makes the work, and the pole of the one who looks at it. I give the latter as much importance as the one who makes it.

(4)

Rather than creating an artwork that is experienced by a spectator after it is completed, in Duchamp's description the artist is positioned as a *medium* that produces works of art only *with* the participation of the spectator and, more important, the posterity (multiple spectators in multiple contexts) that historically recognizes the work as art. What Duchamp proposes is a dialogic artist-viewer relationship that is predicated on a psychological and affective *transference*, an important term he uses to describe the interaction between artist and spectator – and, in the more historical interpretation, between the past and present – through the material presence of the art object.

The purpose of my present text is two-fold. First, to argue for the significance of "The Creative Act" within modern artistic and cultural discourse, specifically examining Duchamp's act of defining the relational subject positions of the artist and spectator that form the basis for his theory of art – which, I propose, can be applied to a more general consideration of the psychology of modern subjectivity. Second, to analyze Duchamp's use of the word "transference" when he defines the workings of the creative act and to situate this Duchampian transference, a psychological notion based on subjective dialogue, in relation to the psychoanalytic understanding of the term. In this way my analysis approaches "The Creative Act" psychologically, considering the text primarily as a statement on art, not as an esoteric practice or discipline but rather as the basis of and material for a continuing artistic dialogue that takes place through the artist-artwork-viewer relationship.

Creating the Creative Act

It may be helpful to begin by outlining the circumstances in which Duchamp wrote and presented "The Creative Act," an aspect of the text that is often overlooked. As one of only a

few documents in which Duchamp clearly describes his understanding of the process of creating art – one might even say his philosophy of art – it is important that we consider the (practical) development of this text especially as it relates to and even reflects his practice as an artist.

In 1957, Duchamp was invited to give a talk at the American Federation of the Arts Convention in Houston, Texas. His acceptance of this invitation was likely motivated at least in part by the fact that the exhibition *Jacques Villon, Raymond Duchamp-Villon, Marcel Duchamp* was on view at The Museum of Fine Arts of Houston during this convention. Organized by James Johnson Sweeney, director of the Guggenheim, where the show was first presented, this exhibition brought together works by Duchamp and his two brothers – hence, it is often referred to as the "Three Brothers" exhibition. As Calvin Tomkins suggests, Duchamp was no doubt encouraged by Sweeney and "may have felt under some obligation to help promote" the exhibition (5). The show was of considerable importance to Duchamp, who actively participated in its planning as well as the design of the catalogue. His talk would in this way greatly aid in promoting the "Three Brothers," the opening of which (on the evening of April 3) was included on the schedule of activities for the convention (6). Duchamp presented his paper on the morning of April 5 as part of a panel discussion that included Professor William Seitz (Art History, Princeton University), Professor Rudolf Arnheim (Psychology, Sarah Lawrence College), and Gregory Bateson (anthropologist). The topic for this panel was the creative act, with the title being directly adapted by Duchamp as the title of his paper – which was published in *Art News* the same year.

The approach that Duchamp takes in "The Creative Act" builds upon and extends his earlier theories of the role of the artist in society that he discussed at the Western Round Table on Modern Art, which took place at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1949 (7). Duchamp proposes two key ideas during the

four sessions of the roundtable.

The first is the concept of what he terms the *esthetic echo*, which he compares to the notion of aesthetic taste:

Taste gives a sensuous feeling, not an esthetic emotion. Taste presupposes a domineering onlooker who dictates what he likes and dislikes, and translates it into beautiful and ugly when he is sensuously pleased or displeased. Quite differently, the "victim" of an esthetic echo is in a position comparable to that of a man in love or of a believer, who dismisses automatically his demanding ego and helplessly submits to a pleasurable and mysterious constraint. While exercising his taste, he adopts a commanding attitude, when touched by the esthetic revelation, the same man, almost in an ecstatic mood, becomes receptive and humble.… the man of taste trusts his pre-established likes and dislikes. The man who gets the esthetic shock – it's a shock – is not master of himself. He submits and becomes humble (8).

The distinction Duchamp is suggesting between taste and the *esthetic echo* hinges on a question of the spectator's subjective will, specifically whether or not an artwork is viewed passively or actively. Most people, according to Duchamp, respond to an artwork in a manner that generally conforms to preconceived interpretations, which often consist of culturally accepted opinions or shared perspectives (uncritically) reproduced by the viewer; this is what is meant by *taste* – which for Kant allows people a common means of judging and making communicable their subjective responses within a larger community. With taste, therefore, will is not a necessary component since one's initial response of *like* or *dislike* is trusted. To experience the *esthetic echo*, however, the spectator must give up any *commanding attitude* over the artwork and actively be willing to engage in a dialogue with it, creating receptiveness beyond the mere apprehension of the work. Here Duchamp envisions the act of viewing as the possibility of using one's will to create meanings that are

not given.

The second major idea that Duchamp introduces at the 1949 roundtable is his belief that the artist and artwork must be treated as separate, a notion that – even after the Poststructuralist critique of the author – remains challenging to this day. Responding to a discussion about the artist's recognition of when a work is complete, Duchamp adds: "We don't emphasize enough that the work of art is independent of the artist. The work of art lives by itself and the artist who happened to make it is like an irresponsible medium. No artist can say at any time 'I am a genius. I am going to paint a masterpiece.' That is not done" (9). In this articulation of the artist as an *irresponsible medium* we can see the starting point for the main themes of "The Creative Act," in which Duchamp presents a more focused argument for the *mediumistic* (as he terms it) quality of the artist and, by extension, his conception of the artwork as a creative experience that is distinct from the person who created it – a distinction that he leaves for the spectator to reconcile. For Duchamp, the artist cannot be responsible for what becomes of the artwork – how it may be interpreted or understood, whether it is appreciated or not – once it is sent out into the world, not unlike the idea that a medium such as paint or marble is not responsible for a painting or sculpture produced out of its materials.

It is important to note that Duchamp's proposed view of the artist as an *irresponsible medium* is not simply an abstract theory but instead emerged directly out of his own experience as an artist. As Tomkins points out, there existed for Duchamp a "notable gap between his own intentions and the end results" of his various artistic projects, the eventual significance of which, from an art historical perspective, has little to nothing to do with Duchamp's *intentions* – what W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley characterize as "the intentional fallacy" (10). This gap can be seen in the events surrounding

his painting *Nude Descending a Staircase*, No. 2 (1912), which, after its scandalous success in the 1913 "International Exhibition of Modern Art" or (as it is better known) the "Armory Show" in New York City, represented a key turning point in his career. When this same painting was submitted a year before to the 1912 Salon des Indépendants it was regarded so poorly that his brothers, on behalf of the organizers, asked him to change the painting, which he instead withdrew from the exhibit – the entire demoralizing event precipitated his trip to Munich from June to October. Even after the work's subsequent inclusion that same year in an exhibition of Cubist work at Galerie Dalmau in Barcelona and the "Section d'Or" exhibition in Paris, the painting was still not considered to be of much artistic importance in comparison to the innovativeness of his contemporaries. The American response to *Nude Descending a Staircase*, No. 2 was a surprise to Duchamp, who would not realize his own success as an artist until his visit to New York in 1915 – a status he did not experience in France until much later and arguably never to the extent as in the United States (11). What was the difference between the painting that was "refused by the Indépendants" and "didn't cause a stir" at Galerie Dalmau or in *Section d'*Or and the painting that became the *succès de scandale* of the *Armory Show* (12)? Through this discrepancy, Duchamp experienced first-hand how *irresponsible* his intentions as the work's creator were in its reception.

On its most basic level, "The Creative Act" is Duchamp's recognition and articulation of this gap between the artist's *intentions* and the end result of the work as experienced by the spectator (and posterity). He defines the experiential discrepancy between these positions as the personal *art coefficient*, which can be seen "in the chain of reactions accompanying the creative act" in which we can witness "the relation between the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed." He continues: "To avoid a misunderstanding, we must remember that this 'art coefficient'

is a personal expression of art ‘à l’état brut,’ that is, still in a raw state, which must be ‘refined’ as pure sugar from molasses, by the spectator” (13). The emphasis on the spectator’s role as *refiner* of the raw artistic product of the artist serves to clarify the distinction Duchamp is highlighting, particularly in terms of understanding different receptions of a work of art by different groups of people – and, as was the case with *Nude Descending a Staircase*, No. 2, to radically different ends. (No one interpretation is correct or incorrect, according to Duchamp, although he makes it clear that posterity provides what he calls the *final verdict*.) From his own experience as an artist Duchamp recognized that judging works of art is ultimately and almost exclusively the responsibility of the spectator, with the artist becoming a type of *medium* out of or through which the work is created (14). The different and even contradictory responses elicited by an artwork represent the overdetermined nature of the creative act, which, as Duchamp came to see it, necessarily involved a dialogic relationship between the artist (as *medium*) and spectator through the work of art.

The significance of Duchamp’s conception of the artist as *mediumistic* cannot in my opinion be overemphasized, especially when considered not just a theory of art but also a theoretical critique of modern notions of authorship – and the modern subject more generally. In fact, with “The Creative Act” Duchamp anticipates the Poststructuralist interrogation of the author performed most powerfully in Roland Barthes’ “The Death of the Author” and Michel Foucault’s “What Is an Author?” (published in 1967 and 1969 respectively). Let us therefore examine “The Creative Act” in relation to two key areas of overlap: first, Barthes’ and Duchamp’s critical shifts in focus from the authority of the author to that of the reader-spectator; second, the manner in which Foucault and Duchamp divide or split the role of the “author” and “artist” (respectively) to challenge the perceived unity given to the author-artist position in modernity. In addition to explicitly

connecting Duchamp's analysis of the artist with the examinations of the author performed by Bathes and Foucault, an important goal of this comparison is to locate Duchamp's ideas within the larger critical investigation of the *author question* that pervades twentieth century discourse, a category of inquiry in which (surprisingly) "The Creative Act" is not typically examined.

The Birth of the Reader-Spectator

In "The Death of the Author," Barthes questions the significance of the author's role in understanding or approaching a text. His critique focuses on the manner in which the author is used as a *given* in the reading of a text, treated as the natural origin or source that the reader is supposed to uncover in order to experience the "true" meaning of the work. "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing," Barthes tells us (15). Earlier in the essay he notes that this overt focus on the author as a key interpretive position is a distinctly modern way of examining texts, pointing to (but not explicating) the history of interpretation that pre-dates the nineteenth century. M. H. Abrams describes this development in his influential *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition:*

The pragmatic orientation, ordering the aim of the artist and the character of the work to the nature, the needs, and the springs of pleasure in the audience, characterized by far the greatest part of criticism from the time of Horace through the eighteenth century…. Gradually, however, the stress was shifted more and more to the poet's [author's] natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity, at the expense of the opposing attributes of judgment, learning, and artful restraints. As a result the audience gradually receded into the background, giving place to the poet himself, and his mental powers and emotional need, as the predominant cause and

even the end and test of art. (16)

It is this shift of orientation from audience to author that Barthes objects to, proposing a form of reversal in which it is the author who is required to recede into the background of a text, giving place to the audience or reader *as the predominant cause and even the end and test of art*. Or, as Barthes dramatically proclaims in the final statement of his essay, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (17).

In spite of the forcefulness of his title, the main target of Barthes' critique is not strictly speaking the role of the "author" (as writer or creator of a text) – a role that he necessarily participates in and even celebrates and enjoys throughout his writing – but rather with the excessive privileging of the author's authority over the text. At no point is this "death" equated with the elimination or disappearance of the author position, in theory or practice; what disappears is the privileged autonomy associated with the role of the author in modernity. Barthes replaces the designation "author" with what he terms the *scriptor*, which, although it excludes the "passions, humours, feelings, impressions" – that is, the personal or subjective qualities of the writer – typically associated with the Romantic vision of the author (as genius or *author-god*), still maintains a similar position in relation to the text (18). Even a cursory examination of his substitution of "scriptor" for "author" demonstrates this overlap since, quite literally, scriptor is the Latin word for a writer, scribe, or author; beginning in his 1953 *Writing Degree Zero*, Barthes uses this alternative categorization to describe the act of writing in which the writer can no longer claim presence within what is written. He is therefore not removing or killing the author, as commentators often claim (19), but instead is proposing an understanding of authorship that is again more akin to a pre-nineteenth century orientation that privileges the reader's

relation to the text. In the most extreme interpretation, Barthes' scriptor is an author reduced to the function of a scribe or copyist that merely re-produces texts by drawing upon an *immense dictionary* of existing or ready-made cultural material, as a result of which there is no claim to personal expression or originality.

Here we can see a direct parallel between Barthes' conception of the author as *scriptor* and Duchamp's description of the artist as *medium*. In both cases there is an active de-privileging of the modernist authorial relation between the author-artist and their work, which is replaced by a renewed focus on the reader-spectator's authority in *disentangling*, making sense of and even completing the text. This is made clear by Duchamp's assertion that the spectator contributes to the creation of a work of art by *interpreting its inner qualifications*; and by Barthes, who in S/Z states: "What is at stake in literary work (in literature as work) is making the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of a text" (20). For Duchamp and Barthes the role of the reader-spectator is vital to addressing the *author question*, the critical evaluation of which depends upon understanding a text not just as the product of an author-artist but also, and more important, as a social space or language (textual or visual) that invites engagement (present and future).

The specific position granted the reader-spectator in relation to the text, however, is quite different in each of their two accounts. On the one hand, Duchamp argues that the spectator (or posterity) is responsible for the final evaluation and interpretation of what an artist creates, locating spectators within the creative process by making them the determining factors – particularly through the shared experience of multiple spectators – in the social and historical constitution of a work of art. As he states: "The creative act takes another aspect when the spectator experiences the phenomenon of transmutation; through the change from inert

matter into a work of art, an actual transubstantiation has taken place, and the role of the spectator is to determine the weight of the work on the asthetic scale" (21). The power of the Duchampian spectator is in this way directly based upon an aesthetics of subjective judgment, with individual spectators being called upon to interpret and share what they experience. On the other hand, Barthes clearly disavows the manifestly subjective aspects of the reader (as person) and instead proposes the birth of a position that quite literally *structures* the received text, which is experienced most fully by readers who deny their own (as well as the author's) pathological interest in order to engage with the text in-itself. According to Barthes:

The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. (22)

Barthes' reader occupies the fundamental position in which the *multi-dimensional* aspects of a text are given *unity*, the result not of an individual reader's subjective experience but rather the act of being the text's destination. The distinction between "The Death of the Author" and "The Creative Act" can in this way be summed up as follows. While Barthes depersonalizes the role of the reader-spectator, which he declares is without *history, biography* and most significantly *psychology*, Duchamp celebrates the subjective abilities of reader-spectators to engage in a personal dialogue with a text, deciphering it through acts of individual judgment.

On an historical level, it is important to acknowledge the fact that "The Death of the Author" was first published in the 1967 double issue of the American journal Aspen, no. 5/6,

designed and edited by Brian O'Doherty. In place of a traditional bound publication, O'Doherty produced a white box containing a series of loose texts (in the most general sense of the term), a format that, as he – or, more accurately, his pseudonym Sigmund Bode – writes, "constitutes a test for the reader" (23). Translated into English by Richard Howard, Barthes' text was printed as an eight-inch square pamphlet that also included essays by George Kubler and Susan Sontag. While planning *Aspen*, no. 5/6, O'Doherty contacted Barthes about contributing to the project:

Barthes was in Philadelphia at that time and he came to New York to talk about the project. He got it immediately. My notion that art, writing etc., was produced by a kind of anti-self that had nothing to do with whoever "me" was, an excellent preparation for our conversation. He said "I think I may have something for you." When "The Death of the Author" arrived, I knew it was revolutionary. (24)

Written (at least in part) for *Aspen*, no. 5/6 – with the more often cited French version appearing the following year in the journal *Mantéia* – Barthes' text reflects the critical issues of authorship that are enacted through the dialogic interplay of materials in this box. The significance of Barthes writing "The Death of the Author" for this project is heightened when we consider that it appears alongside an audio recording of Duchamp reading "The Creative Act" (presented on one of several records found in the box). Given O'Doherty's overall interest in Duchamp and his work, as well as the obvious parallels between *Aspen*, no. 5/6 and Duchamp's *Box-in-a-Valise* (1935-41), it is more than likely that Barthes was (or became) aware of "The Creative Act" when he wrote "The Death of the Author."

Questioning the Author-Artist

Following in the wake of Barthes' text is the presentation of Foucault's influential lecture "What Is an Author?" at the

Collège de France in 1969, which he published as an essay the same year in *Bulletin de la Société Français de Philosophie*. Similar to "The Death of the Author," Foucault's essay confronts the overt privileging of the author's authority over the text within modernity. But where Barthes focuses on articulating a *death* or disappearance of the author in order to refocus discussion on the significance of the reader – formulating a type of either/or – Foucault actively draws attention back to the (admittedly) problematized authorial position or function, examining what he terms the *author-function*:

It is obviously insufficient to repeat empty slogans: the author has disappeared; God and man died a common death. Rather, we should re-examine the empty space left by the author's disappearance; we should attentively observe, along its gaps and fault lines, its new demarcations, and the reapportionment of this void; we should await the fluid functions released by this disappearance. (25)

Here we see a subtle acknowledgement of Barthes' text, which Foucault critiques by inferring that the "death of the author" is an *empty slogan*. While accepting the basic premise that the author (in the modernist sense) is no longer at the center of a given text or group of texts, this disappearance for Foucault is not the end of the *author question* but instead represents his point of departure for examining a simple yet vital problem: what is it that occupies the position once reserved for the author? No longer the end and test of art (to borrow Abrams' description), the term "author" has become an *open question* in relation to the text that is understood at one and the same time as the author's and not the author's – a contradiction that Foucault makes clear from the outset he recognizes in his own writing, grounding his analysis in a subjective framework.

This problematic can be described quite simply as a splitting of the author into two distinct roles: the individual who is

responsible for the actual creation of a specific text and the authorial identity that, typically associated with a name, is used to designate the role of the text's creator. In the first case we are talking about an individual who makes (physically and/or conceptually) a text, the author as person – for example, the "Michel Foucault" who wrote "What Is an Author?" among other texts, who was born in 1926 and died in 1984. In the second case we are referring to the functioning persona associated with the text, the "figure who is outside and precedes" the text and yet the "text apparently points to" – the "Michel Foucault" whose name, no longer tied to the life of the individual, historically authenticates "What Is an Author?" (26). Foucault's concept of the *author-function* critically references this historical persona, what in Lacanian terms can be called the real author that gives authority and unity to a text on the level of history, a position that must be regarded as separate from the *reality* of the author who happens to have written the text. It is the often assumed correlation between these two roles, if not the outright and unquestioned belief in their similitude, that Foucault challenges through his examination of "the 'author' as a function of discourse," a rational entity constructed around the (judicial) need for authority within modernity (27).

The division of the authorial position into personal and functional roles serves to highlight the inherent contradiction in the modern conception of the author-artist. If a person – and here we need to remember the consistent modernist claims (including Duchamp's) that everyone can be or is an artist – were to actually embody and enact all of the qualities associated with the designation "author" or "artist," this combination of (psychological) demands would foster what can only be described as a schizophrenic subjectivity. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari articulate a vision of this (irrational) entity in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia:* "The schizophrenic is the universal

producer. There is no need to distinguish here between producing and its product" (28). Interestingly enough, the framework of the book reflects this approach, which Foucault in his preface notes is informed "by seemingly abstract notions of multiplicities, flows, arrangements, and connections" that are best read and understood as an "art" (29). Such a play with language, in which contradictions are embraced rather than avoided or resolved, raises serious questions about the authority of the author-artist and by extension the authenticity or autonomy of the text as a source of (intrinsic) meaning.

In different but complimentary ways, Foucault and Duchamp each enact this playfulness by approaching language – which we will consider for now in the restricted sense of written language – not as a transparent medium of expression but rather as an open discursive space that is, as Foucault poetically writes, "an attempt to exhaust language" (30). We see this particularly in the authors Foucault chooses to focus on, which prominently include Friedrich Hölderlin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Raymond Roussel – Duchamp notably sharing an interest in Roussel – as well as in the development of his archaeological method of analysis that, stated simply, treats language as a stratified space into which we can *dig*. Duchamp's use of language similarly serves not to clarify or describe but rather to carry the mind "towards other regions more verbal"; while specifically addressing the short texts he often inscribed on his readymades, this statement also speaks to his propensity for giving works complex or (to use Guillaume Apollinaire's term) *intellectual* titles as well as his general interest in notes and puns (31). In both Foucault's writing and Duchamp's artistic practice, language – and here I propose we can extend its parameters to include not just written or spoken but also visual language – is an opportunity to make visible the contradictory functioning of the author-artist, a conflicted position that remains defined by its pathological need to exceed or even transcend itself

(as seen throughout avant-garde practices).

For Duchamp, the schizophrenic quality of the modern author-artist is, as stated earlier, not just a theory but rather represents a philosophy of art developed directly out of his first-hand experience as a practicing artist. While the catalyst for Duchamp's critique of the (privileged) role of the artist is likely the radically different responses to *Nude Descending a Staircase*, No. 2, it is the invention of the readymade that most powerfully manifests his critical perspective. To begin with, the term "readymade" should not be treated as a rigid artistic categorization that is seen as unifying all artworks under its banner but instead must, I propose, be understood as describing a (particularly modern) theoretical or philosophical artistic discourse (32). This is precisely why, as Thierry de Duve tells us, Duchamp's "readymades are easily annexed by the deconstructionists as a proof of irrelevance or obsolescence with regards to the notion of authorship" – and why the art historical treatment of the readymade as an artistic (rather than philosophical) gesture ironically serves to strengthen the authorial role of the artist, of Duchamp's in particular (33). The challenge posed by *Fountain* (1917), for example, is not simply the fact that it questions the categorical space of "art" but rather that, by taking the authority of the author-artist – and the institutionalization of this authority – *too* seriously, it makes visible inherent contradictions in the modernist discourse of art. Through the artist's act of choosing an already-made and undifferentiated object, the readymade functions as "art" because it is, in Foucaultian terms, strategically situated in the *breach* separating the two roles of the author-artist, within the space opened by art historical discourse – the object, in this case a urinal, being experienced at one and the same time as a *priori* and a *posteriori*. (Or, following Deleuze and Guattari, as a lack of distinction between *producing and its product* .) We can even go so far as to call the readymade a schizophrenic form of art

that is consistently involved with its own conflicted and contradictory character, a condition inaugurated through an exaggerated split between the psychology of the artist as (absent) person and the artist as a functioning discursive presence (as *medium*).

Here the overlap between Foucault's conception of the *author-function* and Duchamp's arguments for the *mediumistic* qualities of the artist can be seen most notably in their shared critique of the assumed singular or immediate unity attributed to the position of the modernist author-artist. "The author," according to Foucault,

constitutes a principle of unity in writing where any unevenness of production is ascribed to changes caused by evolution, maturation, or outside influence. In addition, the author serves to neutralize the contradictions that are found in a series of texts. Governing this function is the belief that there must be – at a particular level of an author's thought, of his conscious or unconscious desire – a point where contradictions are resolved, where the incompatible elements can be shown to relate to one another or to cohere around a fundamental and originating contradiction. (34)

This forced unity, which results from a failure to distinguish between the author as person or individual and the author as *author-function*, is a means of establishing the vision of a complete and autonomous discourse that is at one and the same time supported by and serves to demonstrate a stable site of subjectivity within modern culture. By arguing that the author is a function of discourse – rather than the other way around – Foucault undermines the perceived unity and authority of the "author" (or "artist"), which, rather than referring to a *real* individual, becomes a space that "simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy" (35). Without its unifying principle, however, the author-artist becomes little more then a *mediumistic being* that, as Duchamp notes, is not

conscious of what is being created or why – a task that is instead entrusted to the reader-spectator, whose role is to *accept* or judge the "social value" of an artist-author's work (36). This is a key consequence of giving the attributes of a *medium* to the author-artist: recognizing that the person who creates a text cannot occupy the *author-function* and therefore should be treated as separate from their work.

Duchampian Transference

The question becomes: if the artist is not wholly responsible for the creation of art, but is dependent upon the spectator's engagement with the work, what is the means by which these two positions are able to fulfill the creative process? Duchamp similarly asks, if the artist "plays no role at all in the judgment of his own work, how can one describe the phenomenon which prompts the spectator to react critically to the work of art? In other words, how does this reaction come about?" His answer is quite significant: "This phenomenon is comparable to a transference from the artist to the spectator in the form of an esthetic osmosis taking place through the inert matter, such as pigment, piano or marble" (37). Of particular interest is his use of the term "transference" to describe the process of exchange between artist and spectator through the object of the artwork. This word choice can be read in two different but not mutually exclusive ways: first, the common usage in which one is referring to the act of *transferring* something and, second, the psychoanalytic understanding that describes the psychological process by which feelings, emotions, and even memories are unconsciously *transferred* or projected from one person onto another, typically an analyst in the clinical setting. (And, given his propensity for puns and other playful forms of using language, it is likely that both meanings are being employed simultaneously.) The aim of this final section is to consider the implications of Duchamp's notion of transference within the process of the creative act, specifically as it relates to and extends the psychological

and affective territories of psychoanalytic thought. Before considering this Duchampian transference – as I describe his particular approach – it is important that we first establish a basic understanding of transference as a concept.

"What are transferences?" Sigmund Freud writes in Dora: *An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, "They are new editions or facsimiles of the tendencies and phantasies which are aroused and made conscious during the process of the analysis; but they have this peculiarity, which is characteristic of their species, that they replace some earlier person by the person of the physician" (38). Published in 1905, this early formulation proposes transference as a form of resistance to the analytic process on the part of the person being analyzed (the analysand), with the working through of the transference – by making oneself conscious of feelings or emotions rather than projecting them – representing a (potential) breakthrough in the analysis. An often-cited example is when patients transfer feelings of love onto their analyst, thereby stopping the analytic process until such time that this love can be recognized as belonging to a different object; this moment of conscious realization is for Freud a (if not *the*) cornerstone of psychoanalytic practice. Since its introduction, the concept of transference has continued to explore and extend as a tool of analysis and, more significantly for our purposes, as a more general operation that Melanie Klein suggests is evident "throughout life and influences all human relations" (39). It is through this expanded understanding of transference as a relational phenomenon applicable to everyday *human relations* that the concept, no longer restricted to the clinical setting, is able to be used as a vital concept for addressing the intersubjective exchanges that take place throughout modern life – with the relation of the author-artist and reader-spectator being a particular subset of this form of cultural analysis.

In the fourth chapter of *Postmodernism and the En-gendering of*

Marcel Duchamp, Amelia Jones discusses Duchamp's work through a psychoanalytic consideration of his (uncertain and *chaotically* eroticized) *author-function*, emphasizing the way his work plays out the relational qualities of transference through the creative exchange between artist and spectator via the artwork – which she treats as analogous to the clinical relationship of the analyst and analysand. Her (admittedly Lacanian) description of "transference" provides a valuable perspective on how we can approach Duchamp's use of the term: "transference – this site where the struggle for meaning takes place via the spoken or written text that 'represents' the subject under analysis – is also the psychic site where both the analyst and analysand are constituted, in relation to each other, as meaningful subjects" (40). This definition characterizes transference as an *enunciative* space, both representational and psychic, in which the subjective *struggle* for *meaning* is articulated through two interconnected relationships. The first is the relation of the reader-spectator to the text being examined, with the reader-spectator performing a role similar to that of an analyst and the text being the subject under analysis. The second is the relation of the reader-spectator to the author-artist, with the author-artist in this case playing the role of analyst to the reader-spectator that is now in the position of the analysand.

Jones clarifies the workings of these two relationships by discussing, in a notably psychoanalytic tone, how she (as a spectator) personally functions within these relational positions when viewing the work of Duchamp. As the interpreter of his artworks, Jones notes that she is "the analyst and Duchamp is the narrative I produce from his enunciative 'symptoms' as meaningful." Yet, as she continues:

I am also his analysand, subject to his texts, and he is my ego ideal. I transfer my desires and unconscious wishes onto him as authority – identifying with him so as to produce

myself as full. The fantasy “Duchamp” promises to take the place of the lack for me, even as I “master” him through analysis. I interpret his works, yet they are always already interpreted by his own selections, the “secondary revisions” of enunciative production…. I make the attempt to master him so I can submit myself to his mastery: We are, so to speak, in a reciprocal dialectic of analytic transference. (41)

In this manner Jones reads her encounter with his work as a dual act of relational subjection in which she at one and the same time is constituted by and constitutes Duchamp’s work, a process that she directly compares to *analytic transference*. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that Jones re-frames the parameters of the transference relationship using Duchamp’s notion of the *creative act*. As she reveals through her analysis, the creative transference enacted in the artist-artwork-spectator relation is based within a series of interdependencies that are analogous to those found in the analyst-analysand relation of psychoanalytic transference; this correlation, far from drawing a mere parallel between discourses, actively demonstrates a fundamental discursive overlap on the inter-subjective or relational level.

This overlap may also account for Duchamp’s subtle but significant presence in the writings of Guattari, where the readymade serves (schizophrenically) as both exemplar and foil to his aesthetic theories. We see this particularly in his *aesthetic paradigm*, a re-envisioned form of analysis in which the psychology of modern subjectivity is examined through an aesthetic (rather than scientific) lens, a methodology that for Guattari, as Stephen Zepke observes, begins with the readymade – making “Duchamp the harbinger of a re-vitalized creative act” (42). Treated as both aesthetic and political, the readymade is seen as a language of creative enunciation that functions through an authorial and psychological *refrain*, privileging not the “origin” of a particular act, event or object but rather the complex subjective affects and emotions

– what Guattari describes as a *constellation of universes* – that result from the relational interactions that the readymade facilitates. Here again we see evidence of the shared territory between clinical and cultural transferences, with art representing a key modern form of subjective creativity that Guattari actively incorporates into the realm of psychology on both theoretical – through his critical re-thinking of psychoanalysis – and practical – through his work as an analyst – means. For this reason his conception of transference is quite telling: no longer conceived as a dual relation between two subjects, Guattari views transference as (at minimum) a triangular relation that also includes a mediating object that functions as an ambiguous *medium* (43). Is not the readymade the ultimate (creative) expression of a *mediating* object?

Jones also employs the readymade as a major instance of transference within Duchamp's work, although for her it is the artist's signature (in whatever form it takes) that is the *ultimate* site of the transferential relation. The urinal that Duchamp used in *Fountain*, for example, was part of a series of mass-produced objects that, at the time, could be found in commercial lavatory supply stores, meaning that it could be (and was) easily replaced by another of its kind with little to no difference in the overall experience of the work. The presence of a signature is therefore at odds with the inherent repeatability of a machine-made urinal, with the contradictory result of producing an individualized object that is multiple or manifold. By signing a urinal (one of many) with the pseudonym *R. Mutt* Duchamp makes the spectator's relationship with the work a blatantly self-conscious and problematic one by destabilizing, on the one hand, the assumed unity of the work of "art" and, on the other hand, the perceived singularity of the artist's act of creation – with the artist, in Foucault's terms, functioning as simultaneously the internal function of the work's creation that precedes the urinal and the external figure to which *Fountain* points. It is

the ability of the readymade, as a literal *new edition* or *facsimile* of an already-existing object, to call attention to the arbitrariness of the author-artist's discursive authority over the artwork that is its most challenging and dangerous quality. The instability of Duchamp's authorial "I," which the indexical signature of the "artist" stands in for, is in this way transferred via the art object to the spectator so that, as Jones states, his "shifting 'I' enforces an unstable intersubjective exchange, an ongoing process of transference" (44). Rather than a singular event, the creative act is here seen as the product of a recurrent and *ongoing* repetition – another key aspect of psychoanalytic transference (45) – with the readymade making obvious the continual transferential process, active but not recognized in all works of art, by which an object is constituted and reconstituted as "art" by each consecutive spectator who (with the help of the artist's *author-function*) recognizes it as such.

For Duchamp the artist's role in the creation of an artwork is a means rather than an end, the last analysis being reserved for the evaluative and interpretive acts of the spectator and, more generally, the posterity (of art history). To understand Duchamp's conception of transference therefore requires us to appreciate his vision of art as a psychological process of dialogue, one that does not stop when the artist has completed the artwork or even when it is placed within an institution of display, but continues on to include the reception and interpretation of the work on the social level. "Don't say that the artist is a great thinker because he produces it," Duchamp tells Calvin Tomkins. "The artist produces nothing until the onlooker has said, 'You have produced something marvellous.' The onlooker has the last word on it" (46). What we see in Duchamp's proposed creative act is therefore not just a relation of artist and spectator or spectator and artwork, but rather involves a networking of the three. To return to Jones' description of "transference," it is the dialogue among the permutations of the two relationships she

outlines – the manner in which the reader-spectator's analysis of the text (and by extension the *author-function*) is also the site where the reader-spectator and author-artist connection is constituted or made (historically) *real* – that most closely articulate the dynamics of Duchampian transference as described in "The Creative Act."

Within the text we find an invaluable clue to help us contextualize, both personally and historically, Duchamp's approach to the artist-artwork-spectator relation. Following his introduction of the two poles and his proposed attribution of the ontological status of "medium" onto the position of the artist, he calls upon T. S. Eliot's words from "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (written in 1919) to describe what he sees as the split roles of the artist: "The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material" (47). Eric Cameron points to the fact that this is Duchamp's only direct quotation of a critic, making it imperative that we take this reference seriously – particularly since, in spite of the perceived polarity between his vision of art and Eliot's, Duchamp was obviously able to see in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" something of the conflicted character of the modern position of the "artist" that spoke to him, positively or negatively, about the (most often) unacknowledged realities of creating works of art (48). In addition to the above quoted characterization of the artist, we also find in Eliot's essay two key ideas that parallel aspects of the *creative* act as Duchamp describes the process.

The first concerns the *depersonalization* of the artist, a process of "continual self-sacrifice" or "extinction of personality" that Eliot suggests is a necessary progression by which the mind of a mature artist becomes "a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings

are at liberty to enter into new combinations" (49). His use of the word "medium" is especially significant given the importance of the term in Duchamp's text. For Eliot, the expression of a (great) artist is based not on personality but rather the ability to escape one's self, to function as a *medium* – with much of the term's religious connotations – through which (great) works of art are created. We can see in this depersonalized vision many of the qualities that characterize Duchamp's notion of the artist as a *mediumistic being*, with one overriding distinction. Whereas Eliot clearly believes in the artist's privileged position, which the role of *medium* as a genius-like state beyond the individual serves to maintain, Duchamp's proposal of giving the artist the attributes of a *medium* directly undermines the artist's authority over the work precisely because of the disconnect between the person (who *suffers*) and the mind (that creates). In other words, while Eliot uses the term "medium" to describe a condition of higher (objective) authority that the author-artist achieves through the sacrifice of the personal – which, as he suggests, turns art towards a *condition of science* – for Duchamp the role of "medium" defines – through a (playfully) pseudo-scientific description – the unawareness or, as he worded it in the 1949 roundtable, *irresponsibility* of the author-artist in terms what is created and why. "The artist doesn't count. He does not count. Society takes what it wants," Duchamp tells Tomkins in no uncertain terms (50).

The second idea in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that is of interest to us is Eliot's *suggestive* scientific analogy in which he describes the functioning of the author-artist as catalyst, specifically comparing the process of creating art to a chemical reaction. We are invited to consider the action that takes place when oxygen and sulphur dioxide "are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nonetheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected;

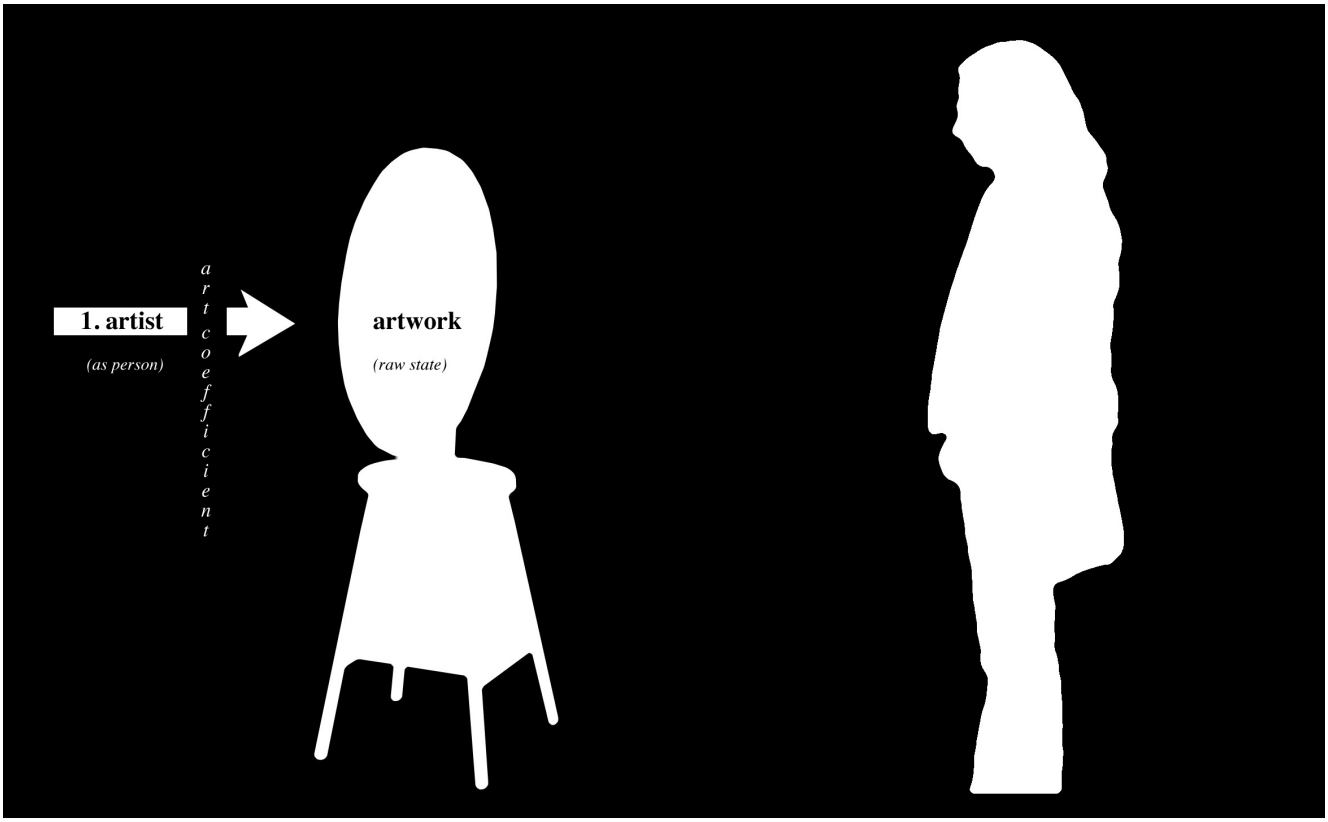
has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged" (51). The filament of platinum, necessarily active without either being depleted or leaving a trace of itself in the final product, represents for Eliot the ideal mind of the author-artist in the creative act. As he makes clear in the lines following this analogy – those quoted by Duchamp – the ideal or *perfect* author-artist results from the separation of the affects of personality from the (de-personalized) expression of the mind that, like the platinum, creates without leaving a trace of its *self*. We can easily apply the basic parameters of Eliot's use of this analogy to Duchamp's arguments for a creative act that is no longer defined by the authorizing presence of the artist (as the *end and test of art*), although, unlike Eliot, Duchamp would never claim that the work possesses no *trace* of the artist. For Duchamp, the artist's personal intentions and desires (the "series of efforts, pains, satisfactions, refusals, decisions") are irrelevant to the artwork's final realization, which, like the created sulphurous acid, must be understood and judged as distinct from the artist (as person) that created it. The reason for this is because "the artist goes from intention to realization through a chain of totally subjective reactions" that, especially in terms of aesthetic choices, cannot be considered fully self-conscious and therefore must not be treated as the singular source of and for the work's meaning (52). In this manner, while the artist (as *author-function*) is the catalyst for the artwork, the actual realization of a work of art can be accomplished only through the transferential process of the creative act.

This last point brings up an important distinction that should be made between Eliot's use of this analogy and our present consideration of it in relation to Duchamp's text. By focusing exclusively on the filament of platinum and what its function has to say about the mind of the author-artist Eliot overlooks the remaining elements involved in this chemical reaction, thereby leaving out most of the relational interactions beyond the central figure of the author-artist. In this respect,

Duchamp can be seen as taking this analogy more seriously than Eliot by considering not just the catalyst, which is only the first pole in Duchamp's equation, but also the two gasses – the oxygen and sulphur dioxide roughly coinciding with the spectator and the artwork in its *raw state* – that combine to form a new acid – sulphurous acid again roughly standing in for the final realization, accomplished by the second pole of the spectator, of a work as "art." The complex relational process that we see in the formation of this new acid can in this way be used to help describe or illustrate, in quasi-scientific terms, the transmutation that takes place when inert matter becomes a work of art – a process that is for Duchamp determined through an (aesthetic) act of transference.

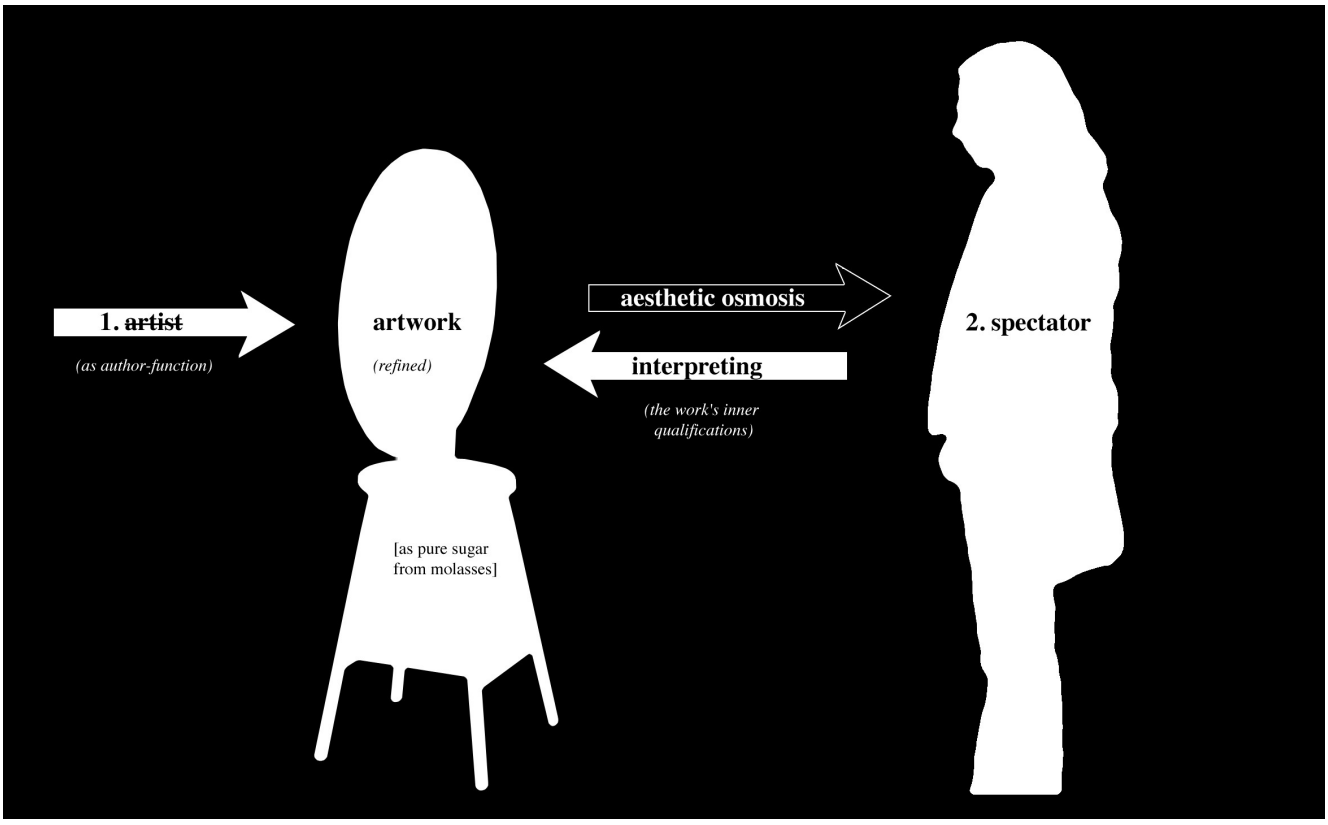
Let us now examine the functioning of Duchampian transference through an (imagined) encounter with the readymade, in this case *Bicycle Wheel* (1913). To begin with, we know from Duchamp's numerous accounts that this object began not out of an active intention to make an "artwork" but rather for the personal curiosity and pleasure of attaching the wheel from a bicycle to the top of a wooden stool, in order to have something to play with in his studio. The truthfulness of his claims – in a manner that strangely reflects Freudian psychoanalysis – are irrelevant, since what is important is not his *real* actions or intentions but rather his framing and interpreting of himself through what he chooses (consciously or unconsciously) to say or not say. In fact, his conception of the personal *art coefficient* is based within this type of discrepancy, noting the psychological and affective differences between what an artist intends to create (the unexpressed but intended) and what is actually created (the unintentionally expressed). Thierry de Duve's describes the art coefficient as "Duchamp's Freudian (even Lacanian) witty and ironic redefinition of the romantic self," which presents as a "measurable ratio between repressed or failed intentions, idiosyncrasies and preferences on the one hand, and the return of the repressed, Freudian slips and failed acts on the other

– in other words, the ratio between (disgusted) ‘taste’ and (ridiculous) ‘genius’” (53). Therefore, it is not Duchamp’s intentions when creating *Bicycle Wheel* that are of interest to us but rather his conceptual and material act(s) of creating this (aesthetic) object that, regardless of whether it is “good” or “bad,” exists as *art in a raw state*. The following illustration – which I have loosely based on the visual language of *Coffee Mill* (1911) – describes the basic subjective mechanism of Duchamp’s relation to the readymade.



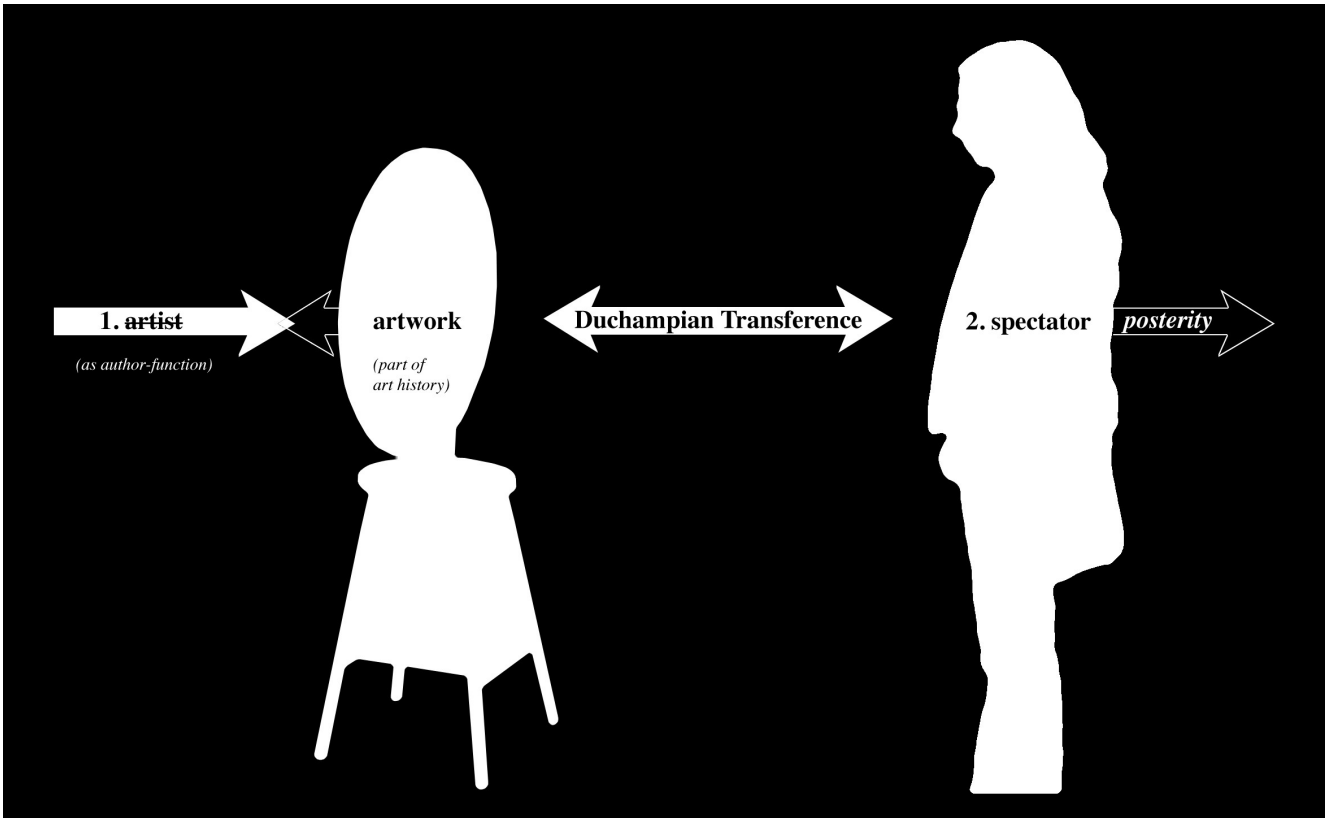
What exists at the completion of this first pole, which is the end of the artist’s *personal* contribution to the creative act, is the work of art in a *raw state* that Duchamp proposes is the “inert matter” through which the (creative) transference occurs. The second pole of the creative process begins when the spectator encounters this raw artwork – in our current example, when we stand in front of the artistic construct that is *Bicycle Wheel*. It is the role of the spectator to (aesthetically) refine the work by, on the one hand, reacting critically to what the artist presents – experienced as what Duchamp calls an *aesthetic osmosis* from artist to spectator

through the artwork – and, on the other hand, (actively) judging the work as perceived and interpreted from the position of the spectator that is notably disconnected from the work's creator. Here we can recognize the shift in the role of the artist's relation to their work. While Duchamp initially created Bicycle Wheel, once this work entered the outside world its connection to the person "Marcel Duchamp" is replaced by an association with the "Marcel Duchamp" that exists strictly as a function of art historical discourse – a contradictory existence as that is at once a presence and absence, which I have illustrated by (following Derrida) putting the term "artist" under erasure.



It is the *author-function* of Duchamp (and not the *real* person) that we in fact engage with when viewing *Bicycle Wheel*, a reality of the artist's position – as a *mediumistic being* that is denied a *state of consciousness on the aesthetic plane* – that consequently leads to the realization that the artist-artwork-spectator relation is not unidirectional (emanating from artist). Rather, the functioning of the transference as Duchamp describes it necessarily involves two interdependent

and dialogic creative actions. In the first we see a linear transfer from the artist through the artwork to the spectator and on to posterity, whereas in the second the critical (and answerable) response of the spectator is transferred onto the work of art, which in turn impacts the cultural understanding of the artist's *author-function* and therefore the posterity of both the artist and the work (54).



This dynamic vision of the act of artistic creation therefore hinges on an artwork's capacity to affect the spectator, who emerges – or, in Barthes term, is *born* – through an active participation in the transference process. Since it is the spectator who is tasked with completing the work that the artist begins, with actually *making* the historical work of art, we must acknowledge the (subjective) authority of the spectator's look as a catalyst for these relational interactions. As Duchamp tells Tomkins: "The onlooker is part of the making of the painting but also exerts a diabolical influence by looking alone," which he stresses is a "transcendental" action through which spectator's "change the physical image without knowing it" (55). Here we can recognize

the full extent of Duchamp's theory, which aims not only to fundamentally question the assumed authority of the author-artist but also to establish a vision of art that has no definitive beginning or end. The creative act exists in and through the dialogic relations of Duchampian transference, as the spectator gets caught up in the repeated and repeatable relations that the artwork engenders.

References

1. Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis, An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 100-101.

1. Marcel Duchamp, "The Creative Act," *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 140.

1. Duchamp, "The Creative Act," 138.

1. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Ron Padgett (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1987), 70.

1. Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Owl Books, 1996), 396.
2. In her Masters thesis on "The Creative Act," Lauri Nelson reproduces several key documents related to Duchamp's text including the schedule for the A.F.A. convention (appendix 6), the January 1957 draft of "The Creative Act" (appendix 5), and the

"Biographical Sheet" that Duchamp filled out for the convention, in which he refers to himself as a "freelance artist" (appendix 3). See Lauri G. Nelson, "*This Kind of Circus, all in Cordiality": Marcel Duchamp's Speech "The Creative Act*," M.A. Thesis (Houston: Rice University, 1994), 1104-120. This document is available online at: http://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/13872/1360084.PDF?sequence=1

1. This roundtable was organized as a means of confronting the question of the state of art in the mid-twentieth century, bringing together a number of prominent individuals in fields related to art. In addition to Duchamp, the participants were George Boas, Gregory Bateson (who would also be on the panel with Duchamp at the American Federation of the Arts Convention in 1957), Kenneth Burke, Alfred Frankenstein, Robert Goldwater, Darius Milhaud, Andrew C. Richie, Arnold Schoenburg (who could not attend but instead provided a statement), and Frank Lloyd Wright. The roundtable consisted of three official sessions, with an unofficial session added at the end.

1. Marcel Duchamp, et al., *The Western Round Table on Modern Art* [Transcript of Proceedings], ed. Douglas MacAgy (San Francisco: San Francisco Art Association, 1949), 44c. This transcript is available online on UbuWeb at: http://www.ubu.com/historical/wrtma/transcript.htm. It should be noted that Duchamp starts off the roundtable discussion with a statement markedly

similar this the one I have quoted, although his wording is a bit less concise. In this first version he connects the esthetic echo to the lack of an adequate definition of art, stating: “We also imply that art cannot be understood through the intellect, but is felt through an emotion presenting some analogy with a religious faith or a sexual attraction – an esthetic echo.” Duchamp, et al., *The Western Round Table on Modern Art*>, 5a.

1. Duchamp, et al., *The Western Round Table on Modern Art*, 30a.

1. Tomkins, *Duchamp*, 397. For a discussion of “the intentional fallacy,” see W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1954).

1. This discrepancy between the reception of his work in America and France is, Miriam Jordan and I argue, a key motivating factor in Duchamp’s decision to establish the major collection of his artwork at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. See Miriam Jordan and Julian Jason Haladyn, “The Posthumous Exile of Marcel Duchamp” [Errata Series pamphlet] (London: Blue Medium Press, 2013).

1. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 31; 45.

1. Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” 139.

1. In a particularly compelling exchange at the 1949 roundtable, Gregory Bateson and Frank Lloyd Wright respond to Duchamp’s statement that the artwork is *independent of the artist: Bateson*: Now, Mr. Duchamp, what you are saying is that the artist is the picture’s way of getting itself painted. That is a very serious and reasonable thing to say, but that implies that in some sense, the work of art exists before it is there on canvas. *Duchamp:* Yes; it has to be pulled out. *Bateson:* Which is on its way out. *Wright:* All right, gentlemen you can put it at that end too, if you want to, but no work of art is ever going to rise higher than the artist. *Duchamp:* Who is great, the work or the man? Duchamp, et al., *The Western Round Table on Modern Art*, 31a.

1. Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” *Image – Music – Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 147.

1. M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 20-21.

1. Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148.

1. Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 147.

1. See, most notably, Harvey Hix, “Morte D’Author: An Autopsy,” Iowa Review 17.1 (Winter, 1987): 131-150 and Sean Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992). There are two key exceptions to this reading: William Gass, “The Death of the Author,” *Salmagundi* 65 (Fall 1984): 3-26 and Molly Nesbit, “What Was an Author?” *Yale French Studies* 73 (Everyday Life, 1987): 229-257.

1. Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), 4.
2. Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” 139-140.

1. Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148.

1. This quotation is taken from the contents page of Aspen, no. 5/6, where O’Doherty presents a lengthy quote from his pseudonym Sigmund Bode’s 1928 (fictitious) book *Placement as Language*. Andrew Stafford has adapted *Aspen*, no. 5/6 for the web, presenting the box as a series of twenty-eight numbered items that include, in addition to the box itself, printed material, records, a reel of super-8 film and several (small) artworks. See: http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/index.html

1. Phong Bui and Brian O’Doherty, “In Conversation: Brian O’Doherty with Phong Bui,” *Brooklyn Rail*

(June, 2007): http://www.brooklynrail.org/2007/06/art/doughtery (accessed April 26, 2013). It is interested to note that, in a letter to Brian O'Doherty dated October 29, 1967, Barthes apologizes for the brevity of the text and expresses "his hopes that it would be acceptable and 'in sufficient harmony with the issue.'" Quoted in Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 57.

1. Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980), 121.

1. Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 115.

1. Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 124. Foucault briefly describes the emergence of this form of authorship "when a system of ownership and strict copyright rules were established (towards the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century) that the transgressive properties always intrinsic to the act of writing became the forceful imperative of literature." Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 124-125. For an extensive discussion of the legal aspects of the *author question* see Nesbit, "What Was an Author?" For a more general analysis of "What Is an Author?" see Adrian Wilson, "Foucault on the 'Question of the Author': A Critical Exegesis," *Modern Language Review* 99.2 (2004): 339-363

1. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 7.

1. Michel Foucault, “Preface,” in Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, xii.

1. Michel Foucault, “The Father’s ‘No’,” *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, 86.

1. Marcel Duchamp, “Apropos of ‘Readymades,’” *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 141. This text is of a talk he gave in 1961 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

1. Such an approach, while not explicitly argued for, is at least intimated by Octavio Paz in his essay “The Castle of Purity.” When discussing the readymade, he notes that the “wealth of commentaries on their significance … shows that their interest is not plastic but critical or philosophical,” with Paz later in the text referring to Duchamp’s gesture as “a philosophical … game more than an artistic operation.” Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp: Appearance Stripped Bare*, trans. Rachel Phillips and Donald Gardner (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1990), 22; 28.

1. Thierry de Duve, “Authorship Stripped Bare, Even,” RES: *Anthropology and Aesthetics*, no. 19/20 (1990/1991): 235.

1. Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 128. Foucault explores this issue in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*; see, most notably, chapter 1, “The Unity of Discourse,” 23-33. Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Routledge, 2003).

1. Foucault, “What Is an Author?” 131.

1. Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” 138.

1. Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” 139.

1. Sigmund Freud, Dora: *An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 107.

1. Melanie Klein, “The Origins of Transference,” *Melanie Klein: Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (London: Vintage, 1997), 48. In a more recent iteration, Jean Laplanche proposes that “maybe transference is already, ‘in itself’, outside the clinic” and that “perhaps the principle site of transference, ‘ordinary’ transference, before, beyond or after analysis,

would be the multiple relation to the cultural, to creation or, more precisely, to the cultural message." Jean Laplanche, "Transference: Its Provocation by the Analyst," *Essays on Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 222.

1. Amelia Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 113.

1. Jones, Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp, 114.

1. Stephen Zepke, "The Readymade: Art as the Refrain of Life," *in Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New* ed. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (New York: Continuum, 2008), 33. While Zepke's treatment of the readymade is admirable, his dialectic distinction between a Duchampian "conceptual" version and a Guattarian "affectual" version, particularly in relation to his claim that the readymade is re-made by Guattari (and Deleuze) "*against* Duchamp," does not hold up – and, I would add, is not supported by Guattari's treatment of Duchamp – since the readymade as Duchamp conceived it is already a ground for a modern form of art based within an (affective) act of becoming for the spectator. Zepke, "The Readymade," 35.

1. Félix Guattari, "The Transference," The *Guattari Reader*, ed. Gary Genosko (Oxford: Blackwell

Publishers, 1996), 63.

1. Jones, *Postmodernism and the En-gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, 133.
2. Jacques Lacan's discussion of transference is particularly helpful here, since it can also be applied to a reading of the readymade. As he states: "If transference is only repetition, it will always be repetition of the same missed experience." Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998), 143. Considered in relation to Lacan's statement, the readymade can be seen as repeated and repeatable moments of transference that, as Duchamp makes clear, are constituted within and through the relational gap between artist and spectator. "What art is in reality is this missing link, not the links which exist," Duchamp tells Arturo Schwarz, noting that art is no what we see: "art is the gap." Quoted in Dalia Judovitz, *Unpacking Duchamp: Art in Transit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 135.

1. Calvin Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: Afternoon Interviews* (New York: Badlands Unlimited, 2013), 31.

1. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 48. Lawrence Steefel informs us that in a 1961 personal discussion Duchamp said he "feels that

Eliot's essay presents his own feelings as well or better than he himself has ever done in writing." Lawrence D. Steefel Jr., "Dimension and Development in *The Passage from the Virgin to the Bride*," in *Marcel Duchamp in Perspective*, ed. Joseph Masheck (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002), 97 n15.

1. Eric Cameron, "Given," in *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Thierry de Duve (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 1. In the discussion that follows this text (see pages 31-39) Rosalind Krauss takes particular issue with the connection being made between Duchamp and Eliot, which not only betrays her understanding of Duchamp but also cannot be supported by anything in his practice. Marjorie Perloff explores this topic in her essay "Duchamp's Eliot: The Detours of Tradition and the Persistence of Individual Talent" – originally published in T. S. *Eliot and the Concept of Tradition*, ed. Giovanni Cianci and Jason Harding (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

1. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 47; 48.

1. Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: Afternoon Interviews*, 30.

1. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 48.

1. Duchamp, “The Creative Act,” 139.

1. Thierry de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 319-320.

1. In psychoanalytic terms, this back-and-forth relation of artist and spectator involves not just transference but also a countertransference, which in the clinical setting describes the analyst’s act of projecting (unconscious) feelings or emotions onto – and most often in response to – the analysand. I have intentionally avoided bring up this second term because, following the logic of Guattari’s view of transference, I believe the act of counter-transference is already contained within the transference dynamic. Particularly for our present discussion, although I do believe this holds true generally, distinguishing between these two forms of transferential relations denies the necessarily dialogic nature of the psychological interactions being described.

1. Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: Afternoon Interviews*, 60-61. Duchamp uses *Nude Descending a Staircase* as an example of what he means, noting that it went from a scandalous painting to a *boring* one “by being looked at too much.”

Five Small Things about *L.H.O.O.Q.*

1

click to enlarge



Figure 1
Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q.*

Attempting to recall exactly when in 1919 the *L.H.O.O.Q.* had been made, Marcel Duchamp himself offered two different dates: in conversations with Sidney, Harriet and Carroll Janis in early 1953, he mentioned December;[(1)] in conversations with Pierre Cabanne in June 1966, October.[(2)]
Either date—October 1919 or December 1919—may be the right one.
From early August to December 27, 1919, Duchamp resided at avenue Charles-Floquet (Paris 7e), in the home of Francis Picabia and Gabrielle Buffet (the latter pregnant with Picabia's fourth child, who was born on September 15). Picabia had been living for some time (days or weeks) in rue Émile-Augier (Paris 16e) with Germaine Everling, his mistress, who was also pregnant by him (their child was born January 5,

1920).[3] This particular situation (two places of residence, two pregnant women, etc.) would indicate that during this nearly five-month stay there were few, and perhaps no contacts between Duchamp and Picabia (except, in all likelihood, towards the end of the stay), and may explain why *L.H.O.O.Q.* was not published in issues 9 (November 1919), 10 (December 1919), or 11 (February 1920) of *391*, Picabia's journal, but rather as a Picabia version entitled *Tableau dada par Marcel Duchamp* in issue 12 (March 1920).[4] Michel Sanouillet argues that "Picabia wrote to ask him [Duchamp] for authorization to 'redo' a *Mona Lisa* for *391*, and the authorization was naturally granted. But Picabia, who had only a vague memory of Duchamp's work, contented himself with drawing the moustache."[5] In fact, Picabia simply redid "L.H.O.O.Q.," the inscription that would become the title of the readymade.[6] He also wrote these initials vertically and without periods on one of his own canvases, *Le double monde*, dated [December] 1919, which was exhibited on stage by André Breton during the First Friday of (the journal) *Littérature*, January 23, 1920, the first Dada manifestation in Paris.[7]

2

Owing to its title (*Tableau dada par Marcel Duchamp*), for many years the Picabia version passed for the original. Along with an enlarged replica (done in late January or early February 1930),[8] the original was not displayed until March 1930 in Paris in an exhibition titled *La peinture au défi* and with an important preface by Louis Aragon.

For a poet, novelist and critic like Aragon, a readymade was not, from that time on, merely an industrial object removed from its context and divorced from its utilitarian function.

3

It must be pointed out that the colour reproduction which is the basis of the work was not a postcard, despite what so many people have stated verbally or in writing.[9] A glance at the back of the reproduction, published by Arturo Schwarz in 1969 in the 1st edition of his catalogue, shows that it is not arranged in the usual way, with one space for the address and stamp (at right), and another for the "message" and the caption of the illustration (at left). The reproduction has been inscribed by Duchamp with a technical indication (in pencil) on how to photograph the picture on the front and, later, above this indication, with an official declaration in the presence of a notary (in ink) stating that it is indeed the original.[10] The only trait shared by the small palimpsest—*writing on writing* —on the back and the picture on the front is the lead [in French: *mine*] pencil markings (additions of the moustache and goatee)[11] *on* the Mona Lisa's face [in French: *mine*].

But where did Duchamp obtain this colour reproduction? The most likely explanation, as he mentioned to the Janises in 1953, is that he purchased it in a boutique near the Louvre, in the rue de Rivoli, which sold inexpensive copies of reproductions of the museum's masterpieces, a popular practice in all large cities with major museums. It should also be recalled that in April 1911 Leonardo's highly celebrated work, painted in the early sixteenth century, had been stolen from the Louvre (and not recovered until December 1913). Since it was believed to have disappeared or been destroyed, massive quantities of colour reproductions were distributed during these years or immediately afterwards, including photographs both intact or touched up, some in postcard format.[12] As well, there was undoubtedly an awareness that 1919 was the 400th anniversary of the painter's death. These two events (the perhaps irremediable loss and the anniversary) come into play

in Duchamp's choice.
When Duchamp sent a letter (New York, May 9, 1949) to his friend Henri-Pierre Roché asking him to purchase a vial of serum—become the vial of *Air de Paris*—to replace the one, currently broken, he had brought back from Paris in late December 1919 for his friends Louise and Walter Arensberg, he wrote:

Could you go into the pharmacy on the corner of rue Blomet and the rue de Vaugirard (if it's still there, *that's where I bought the first ampoule*) and buy an ampoule like this one: 125 c.c. and of the same measurements as the drawing […]

—If not rue Blomet, somewhere else—but, as far as possible, the same shape and size, thanks.[13]

A glance at a map of Paris shows that there is no corner of Blomet-Vaugirard, since these streets (15e) run parallel to each other! I use this example to demonstrate that a specific indication, even on the part of the author, may quite simply be inaccurate, even erroneous. And so it was for *L.H.O.O.Q.*, postcard.
And when Duchamp, in "Apropos of Myself" (1962-1964), describes this colour reproduction as "a cheap chromo," it must be pointed out that in French as in English, *chromo* is the abbreviation of *chromolithographie*, "*image lithographique en couleur*" (*Petit Robert I*), and *chromolithograph* "a color print produced by chromolithography" (*The American Heritage of the English Language*). In French, however, *chromo*, now a masculine (and no longer feminine) form, has a pejorative sense: "*toute image en couleur de mauvais goût*" [any colour print in bad taste]. This added meaning, which highlights the notion of taste, introduces an aesthetic, even artistic, note; such is not the case in English, where *cheap*, in this example, signifies "of poor quality," but particularly "inexpensive."[14]

4

When, during his 1966 conversations with Cabanne, Duchamp spoke of Picabia and *L.H.O.O.Q.*, he used the opportunity, if I may say so, to add:

Another time, Picabia did a cover for *391* with the portrait of Georges Carpentier, the boxer; he and I were as much alike as two drops of water, which is why it was amusing. It was a composite portrait of Georges Carpentier and me.[15]

During the summer of 1923, Georges Carpentier went to Picabia's home in Tremblay-sur-Mauldre, the little village where the artist had been living since 1922. Picabia did a profile of the boxer, who even signed the portrait. When Picabia, over a year later, decided to put this portrait on the first page of the last issue of *391* (issue 19, October 1924), he crossed out Carpentier's signature incompletely (it can still be seen under the cross-out markings) and added "Rrose Sélavy / by Picabia".[16]
Accordingly, if, by contiguity, this "composite portrait" likewise designates *L.H.O.O.Q.*, Duchamp's 1961 statement makes sense:

The curious thing about that moustache and goatee is that when you look at it the *Mona Lisa* becomes a man. It is not a woman disguised as a man; it is a real man, and that was my discovery, without realizing it at the time.

In 1919, a woman (Mona Lisa in *L.H.O.O.Q.*) is also a man, just as in 1920-1921, a man (Marcel Duchamp as Rose, then Rrose, Sélavy) is also a woman.

5

Without actually entering into an interpretation of the famous readymade, one notes, nonetheless, that the 400th anniversary of Leonardo's death may have been not only a trigger (as an anniversary), but also a constraint (as a set of numbers), with the 4 indicating that only four letters could be used, and the 00 suggesting that one of them—which must be an O—be reduplicated.[18] As can be seen afterwards as well, these four letters (as Duchamp states in "Apropos of Myself") are in alphabetical order—H, L, O, Q—in the name of the street (cHarLes-flOQuet) where he lived at the time. But they are also in the name of the process at the basis of this reproduction, which is *cHromoLithOgraphiQue*.

And I note that in New York the name of the notary chosen by Duchamp, whose signature on December 22, 1944 certified that the work was the original ("This is to certify that this is the original 'ready made' L H O O Q Paris 1919"),[19] was Elsie Jenriche.[20] How can we fail to see that she was there because of her name as well (which, by this fact, is a metatextual reference to one of the issues in the work), a mix of *I* in English or *Ich* in German and of *else*, and that the issue of "gender" (*jenre*, another way of spelling *genre*) comes into play, since *el*se rhymes with the feminine (*elle*: La Joconde, La Gioconda), which in turn rhymes with the masculine (*L*: Leonardo, Louvre), she having become a he!

Finally, if we trace a vertical line at a right angle to the top of the work and passes it through the centre of the moustache, it becomes clear that, owing to the angle of the face, the line runs alongside the nose, at left, of the female—and now also male—figure and arrives "down below" (as Duchamp would say in 1961), exactly between "L.H." and "O.O.Q." This reduplication of the O is indicated once again.

Notes

Footnote Return 1. Still unedited, the conversations with the Janis family (Sidney, the father, Harriet, the mother, and Carroll, the son) occurred on the occasion of Duchamp's preparation of the catalogue and hanging of the exhibition *Dada 1916-1923* at the Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, April 15 – May 9, 1953. In the integrated chronology of the catalogue *Joseph Cornell / Marcel Duchamp… in resonance*, catalogue of the exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, October 8, 1998 – January 3, 1999, and at the Menil Collection, Houston, January 22 – May 16, 1999 (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz Verlag, 1998), 277, Susan Davidson, without mentioning her information source, gives the month of December 1919.

Footnote Return 2. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, translated by Ron Padgett, introduction by Robert Motherwell, preface by Salvador Dali, appreciation by Jasper Johns (New York: Da Capo, 1971), 62.

Footnote Return 3. It was a day after the meeting of André Breton, who had been invited there, and twelve days before Tristan Tzara arrived there to live on January 17, his stay coinciding with the start of what Michel Sanouillet called "Dada à Paris"; see his general survey, *Dada à Paris* (Paris: Pauvert, 1965). The seat of the "MoUvEmEnT DADA, Berlin, Genève, Madrid, New York, Zurich," according to the letter paper with this heading, was now in Paris. Furthermore, I notice the following coincidence (which was perhaps not a coincidence in 1919, considering the state of knowledge on Leonardo's work): when Duchamp was in Paris that year, Picabia's two women (his

wife and mistress) were pregnant with sons; when, in the spring of 1503, Francesco del Giocondo commissioned Leonardo to paint a portrait of his wife, she had already given him two sons (in May 1496 and December 1502). See Daniel Arasse, *Léonard de Vinci. Le rythme du monde* (1997; Paris: Hazan, 2003), 388-89. The rhyme, here, is in between Mona Lisa [*Joconde*] and fertile [*féconde*].

Footnote Return 4. To Cabanne, Duchamp says *Tableau dada de* [*sic*] *Marcel Duchamp*.

Footnote Return 5. Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et «391»* (Paris: Losfeld, 1966), II: 113. Volume I is a facsimile edition of *391* [1917-1924] expanded with various unedited documents (Paris: Losfeld, 1960). Since Duchamp had been in New York since January 6 and no 12 of *391* did not appear (Sanouillet specifies) until the end of March, one might assume that Duchamp, interviewed by Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Abrams, 2nd edition, 1970), 476, only dimly recalled the circumstance: "My original did not arrive in time, and to delay the printing of *391* no further, Picabia himself drew the moustache on the *Mona Lisa* but forgot the goatee."

Footnote Return 6. I say "the inscription that would become the title of the readymade" since, in the poster-catalogue of the exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, Duchamp wrote:"*La Joconde,* postcard with pencil." In *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Trianon Press, and New York: Grove Press, 1959), Robert Lebel first uses the inscription as the title. In *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Abrams, 1st edition, 1969), Arturo Schwarz first indicates the exact dimensions of the readymade: 19.7 x 12.4 cm. (7 ¾ x 4 7/8 in.).

Footnote Return 7. The two O's in "L H O O Q," themselves in the centre of two other O's shaped like strings forming 8's, or propeller blades, but without an axis, soft and bent by the wind, are equally—and doubly—the O's of "dOuble" and "wOrld" [*mOnde*]. The small gap at the top left in one of these other O's is matched only by the small gap in the À of "*À DOMICILE*" [at home], another inscription, and by the small addition—the tail—of the Q in "L H O O Q." One way of creating an ironic coincidence between mathematical speculations (topOLOGY) and commercial speculations (delivery "*à domicile*", that is, at home [*AU LOGIS*]).

Footnote Return 8. "I made, just before leaving Paris, a Mona Lisa, for Aragon […] / Man Ray has the 1st Mona Lisa", letter from Duchamp to Jean Crotti, Villefranche-sur-mer, February 6, 1930, in *Affectionately, Marcel : The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, edition by Francis Naumann and Hector Obalk, translation by Jill Taylor (Ghent and Amsterdam : Ludion Press, 2000), 171.

Footnote Return 9. Three examples: Duchamp himself in 1953 (see note 6); Ecke Bonk, *Marcel Duchamp: The Box in a Valise. Inventory of an Edition* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 241; Calvin Tomkins, *Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 221.

Footnote Return 10. I note that Duchamp never used a postcard in subsequent replicas.

Footnote Return 11. In the original French version of this article I use the plural, as did Duchamp in April 1942, when he indicated in ink at the bottom of the model of one of Picabia's two versions (that reproduced in *391*): *Moustaches par Picabia / barbiche par Marcel Duchamp*." In French, the

singular and plural are used indifferently for certain words, for example: *ciseau* and *ciseaux* (two blades), *pantalon* and *pantalons*(two legs), *moustache* and *moustaches* (two cheeks or, simply, two sides of the face). Furthermore, I note that the indication, inscribed by Picabia on two lines pencilled vertically to the right of the reproduction, begins with two liaisons—the one starting the 1 of "1 cliché" on the first line, and the other starting the s of "sans" on the second line—which are matched only by the tips of the moustache! For a reproduction with commentary, see Francis Naumann, *The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, catalogue of the exhibition at Achim Moeller Fine Art, New York, October 2, 1999 – January 15, 2000. If, in fact, Arp came into possession of these two versions during his trip to Paris in April 1942, his meeting with Duchamp (they had known each other since 1926) could only have taken place in the non-occupied zone of southern France (in Grasse where Arp lived or in Sanary where Duchamp was living before his departure for the United States on May 14th).

Footnote Return 12. See the two postcards dated 1914, reproduced in Roy McMullen, *Mona Lisa: The Picture & the Myth* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1975).

Footnote Return 13. *Affectionately, Marcel*, 272.

Footnote Return 14. This is, moreover, Michel Sanouillet's translation of this passage: "*un chromo* […] *bon marché*", in "À propos de moi-même," *Duchamp du signe* (Paris : Flammarion, 1975), 227. Naumann follows exactly the same train of thought: "an inexpensive chromo-lithographic color reproduction", *The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 10.

Footnote Return 15. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*,

63.

Footnote Return 16. See Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et "391,"* 166. One can see (*391*, 127) Carpentier's signature and Picabia's addition under some of the typewritten lines printed at the bottom of the page.

Footnote Return 17. Herbert Crehan, "Dada," *Evidence* (Toronto), no. 3 (autumn 1961).

Footnote Return 18. These two O's also evoke, by means of the rhyme "O." / water [*eau*], the mountain lake and the plains lake in the *Mona Lisa*, respectively at the top right and a little farther down left of the landscape dominated by the loggia where Lisa, the model, is. And what about the winding road that leaves the plains lake, and which is echoed in the tail of the "Q" (calligraphied by Duchamp)?

Footnote Return 19. A presentative sentence in another, the referent of "This" (This, as in "This is my Body" or in "This is a work of art") being cataphoric (that is, it follows the pronoun): in the first case, it is "the original 'ready made';" in the second, it is the entire proposition that shapes the first case.

Footnote Return 20. In a short article titled "Desperately Seeking Elsie: Authenticating the Authenticity of *L.H.O.O.Q.*'s Back" (*Tout-Fait,* New York, vol. I, no. 1, December 1999), Thomas Girst informs us that this lady was a public stenographer at the Hotel St. Regis, New York, from 1943 to 1945.

Why Teeny’s Hair?

I don’t remember quite when I stumbled upon the chord sequence that constitutes the structure of this song, but it was long before I found an appropriate theme to write the lyrics around.

There is an O. Henry “Gift of the Magi” quality to Teeny Duchamp’s donation of her beautiful tresses to the construction of her husband’s creation.

An exit Marcel Duchamp and Jules Laforgue

An exit Marcel Duchamp and Jules Laforgue
Pieter de Nijs



I

ntroduction

In 1887, the then famous actor Coquelin Cadet published an illustrated book called *Le Rire*. The illustrations were made by Eugène Bataille. One of these, showing Leonardo's *Mona Lisa* smoking a pipe, can be regarded as a direct predecessor of Marcel Duchamp's *L.H.O.O.Q* (1919).

Bataille, better known as Sapeck, was an important member of the Incohérents, a group of artists who from 1882 on organized several exhibitions as alternatives for the official Salon. Parodies of famous pieces of art, political and social satire, and graphical puns were at the root of these exhibitions. Like their literary counterparts, who adorned themselves with such fantastic names as Hydropathes, Hirsutes, Zutistes, and Jemenfoutistes, the activities of the Incohérents were mainly aimed at ridiculing the official art world.The painters, writers, journalists, and cartoonists who participated in the activities of these artistic groups generally convened in the *cabarets artistiques* that sprang up in Paris in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, first on the *rive gauche*, in the Quartier Latin, later in Montmartre. Most of them published their work in the illustrated newspapers and magazines that appeared after the abolition of press censorship in 1881 and the emergence of new and faster (photomechanical) printing. These newspapers offered many writers and artists new opportunities to provide for their livelihood and to bring their work to the attention of a wider audience.

The activities of groups like the Hydropathes and the Incohérents have long been seen solely as a means to "shock the bourgeois" (*épater le bourgeois*), as joking-for-joking's-sake. The attitude pervading much of their work was being described as *fumisme*: a mocking of official values and societal norms through biting satire, puerile humor, and practical joking. In recent years though, this view has made way for a more serious approach, in which their work is being linked to that of the avant-garde movements of the 1920s and

1930s. (1)

Apart from that, it is easy to overlook the links that existed between the groups of artists and writers that gathered in the so-called *cabarets artistiques* of Montmartre, and the artists and writers who are nowadays considered as the founders of modern art and literature. Cabarets such as the Chat Noir attracted Hydropathes-poets and -novelists such as Charles Cros, Alphonse Allais, and Jules Lévy, along-side with singers like Jules Jouy and Maurice Mac-Nab and actors like Coquelin Cadet. But more established poets such as Jean Moréas, Léon Bloy, and Paul Verlaine were also regular visitors, and the same goes for Gustave Kahn and Jules Laforgue. Moréas is considered to be the "founder" of symbolism. Novelist Léon Bloy, an ardent catholic (though he detested the catholic church and its institutions), was one of the sharpest polemicists of his time, mixing his high-pitched sentences with sneers and curses. Verlaine, of course, was the exemplary *poète maudit* . Kahn allegedly was the inventor of "free verse," in which the tight rules, rhythm, and end rhyme of romantic poetry was abandoned to give way to assonance and internal rhyme. And Jules Laforgue made his first literary friends amongst the Hydropathes around 1880. He too has a claim to the invention of "free verse."

The poems, songs, and *monologues* that were performed or recited in the cabarets combined social criticism with irony and self-mockery; the language used was a mix of popular or vulgar words and sentences, full of *argot* and newly formed words, paired-off with unconventional rhyme and poetical structures.
In the poems of – nowadays generally acknowledged – writers such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Paul Valéry, Gustave Kahn, and Jules Laforgue (to name a few) – experimental innovations can be found that are similar to the *nouvéautés* in the poems and songs that were performed in the cabarets. (2) The ideas of these poetic innovators mixed more or less perfectly with

those of the poets and singer-performers of the Montmartre cabarets.

In this article, I want to point to a link that can be established between the work of the artists who lived and worked in Montmartre at the end of the nineteenth century and that of Marcel Duchamp. The work of Jules Laforgue can be seen as a part of that link. I will try, on the one hand, to show what Jules Laforgue owed to the Hydropathes and other "proto-Dada" groups in his attempts to renew poetry and, on the other hand, to discuss the way he influenced Duchamp, who around 1911-1912 was looking for a way out of the artistic deadlock he felt he was trapped in. I will also try to show that Duchamp translated parts of what Laforgue did on a poetic level to the visual arts.

Duchamp has stressed the importance of several writers for the development of his ideas. He never concealed his admiration for Raymond Roussel and Jean-Pierre Brisset. He loved the humorous stories of Alphonse Allais and looked upon Alfred Jarry as a sympathetic soul. And he also positively referred to Jules Laforgue: "I liked Laforgue a lot, and I like him even more now," he told Pierre Cabanne in 1967. (3)
Duchamp never really explained what it was that made him like the work of Laforgue. In my opinion though, Laforgue's work was of more importance for the development of Duchamp's ideas than he himself acknowledged.

Jules Laforgue

Laforgue is generally seen as a representative of the decadent movement within Symbolism, which by 1880 had adherents among many young authors. The Decadents combined pessimism with black humor, self-mockery with irony. Their poems and novels clearly demonstrate a tendency towards literary innovation.
Jules Laforgue (Montevideo 1860 – Paris 1887) was the second of eleven children. In 1877 his mother died of a miscarriage.

When his father decided to return to his hometown of Tarbes, Jules remained behind in Paris. He tried to write in order to earn a living. In 1881, he got a job as the personal reader of Empress Augusta of Prussia, and he moved to Berlin. There he worked on a series of poems called *Les Complaintes*. In the first months of 1885 Laforgue completed the stories that would later appear under the title *Moralités légendaires* . In 1886, he meets a young English woman, Leah Lee, and in December of that same year they marry. The couple settled in Paris. There Laforgue is forced to stay in bed because of his neglected health. While still looking for a publisher for a new book of poems and for his *Moralités Légendaires* on 20 August 1887 he dies of tuberculosis. (4)

Melancholy and celibacy

In his poems Laforgue again and again turns to the same motifs, melancholy and celibacy being the leading themes. Autumn is the blackest season, the moon is to be preferred to the sun and the sound of a distant piano brings about melancholic reflections on the sad future of young girls who will end up in the *bourgeois* trap of marriage. Marriage itself is often the theme of a poem ("Complainte des formalités nuptials," "Complainte des bons ménages"), as is the life of the bachelor ("Célibat, célibat, tout n'est que célibate," "Complaintes des crépuscules célibataires"). And looking at the score of poems in which Sundays are being described as days of boredom, Laforgue seems to have seen Sunday as the day *par excellence* for thoughts of spleen and melancholy (5).
Though he constantly emphasizes the loneliness and melancholy of the bachelor – the "pauvre jeune homme" – Laforgue's poems and prose clearly speak of a preference for celibacy and for the bachelor state. He also proclaims rather peculiar ideas about women, love, or a relationship. His ideal seems to have been "love at a distance," an unfulfilled or sterile love. In *Saison*, one of his unfinished novels, the protagonist is dreaming about his ideal woman: "The type of the adorable, the

only beloved, for me is the English woman (…) she is the only kind of woman that I cannot undress (…) My imagination remains sterile, frozen, has never existed, and has never brought me down. She has no sexual organs for me, I cannot think of it, could never have thought of it (…). All the others are bitches (…).” (6) In his wife Leah Lee, Laforgue apparently found the representative of his ideal woman, or the ideal of what he named “the third sex”: Lee was very skinny and very English, with her red hair, dark eyes, her baby figure, her timid nature and sophisticated, delicate mannerisms.

Moralités Légendaires

Besides poems Laforgue also produced some “prose poems.” These *Moralités légendaires* are rather humoristic. Their humoristic effects rest for the greater part on the ironic way Laforgue deals with his literary examples and with the symbolist stereotypes they contain. A good example is the “moral tale” Laforgue devotes to Salome. In symbolist literature this supposed daughter of the Jewish king Herod is often depicted as the epitome of the staggeringly beautiful, mysterious, sensual, and perfidious Goddess-Demon, who seduces men, only to plunge them into misery. As such she was portrayed by painters like Moreau, Redon, Regnault, and Beardsley, and described by Flaubert (in *Herodias*, 1877), Oscar Wilde (*Salome*, 1891-1893), and Mallarmé (*Hérodiade*, 1898).
Laforgue’s *Salomé* leans firmly on Flaubert’s *Herodiade*. But although he remains close to Flaubert’s text, which he sometimes paraphrases literally, Laforgue scoffs at Flaubert, for example with his preoccupation with historical accuracy (Flaubert relied on earlier historical sources, such as those of Flavius Josephus). The same goes for Flaubert’s style – so often praised. Laforgue sprinkles his story with ironic and anachronistic details. Herod Antipas is called Emeraude-Archetypas (Hérode = E(me)raude). (7) Iaokanaan (John the Baptist) – a strong personality in Flaubert’s story – is nothing more than a unsuccessful writer (a “malheureux

publiciste” or “écrivassier” , i.e., a potboiler or hack writer).
Laforgue’s story is not set in Biblical Palestine, but on one of the White Esoteric Iles (“Iles Blanches Esoteriques”), where even the noise of an express train is heard. In the palace Herod’s guests, “sur la scène de l´Alcazar” (i.e., a music hall), are being entertained by circus and vaudeville performers, including musical clowns with a street organ, an ice skater, and trapeze artists.
Laforgue’s Salome, with her exaggerated manner of dress and childish acts, is almost a caricature, a mockery of the symbolist *femme fatale*. At the same time she seems to embody Laforgue’s female ideal: she hardly has any hips and breasts (“deux soupçons de seins”) and is more shy than tempting, indeed almost innocent (a “petite Immaculée-Conception”) – and much less a sex object than the Herodias (i.e. Salomé) of Flaubert.
One of the other *Moralités légendaires*, *Hamlet ou les suites de la piété filiale*, deals rather effectively with another “hero” of Western literature. Hamlet obviously is one of Laforgue’s favorite plays and Hamlet one of his most beloved characters. (8) In literature, Hamlet is often portrayed as the prototype of the moon-sick melancholic, always hesitating and not able to act when he is called upon. Laforgue’s Hamlet though has nothing to do with Shakespeare’s melancholic dreamer. Although the sentences and statements of Laforgue’s Hamlet are reminiscent of Shakespeare (“Stabilité! Ton nom est femme”; “Mais ne plus être, ne plus y être, et ne plus être”), they remain an echo. Laforgue’s Hamlet hardly suffers from the fact that his father was murdered; instead he dreams of becoming a celebrated playwright. He is nothing more than a downright fool, who is proud of his clumsy choruses, as is demonstrated by the verse he recites: “Il était un corsage/et ron ron et petit pa ta pon/il était un corsage/qu’avait tous ses boutons.” (9)

Parody

Laforgue was one of the first poets who, at the end of the nineteenth century, felt that the existing modes of expression for the poet were obsolete and that there was a need for new ways of poetic expression. Parody for him was an important means to break away from existing literary conventions and poetical registers, and to introduce a new poetic language and innovative literary structures. Parody was an important instrument of *fumisme* and formed a significant part of the language of the *cabarets artistiques*. As Mary Shaw underlines in her essay on the literature of Montmartre, parody served a dual purpose: "Parodical markers generally signify breaks (…) with literary traditions at the same time that they forge links for initiated readers with a network or other contemporary, subversive, avant-garde texts." (10) Using parody Laforgue rewrote and overwrote the "legendary stories" that served him as models. The distorted quotations from, and allusions to, classic writers (Shakespeare, Flaubert) contribute heavily to the parodical character of Laforgue's stories.

Popular language

Laforgue's poems and prose show the same characteristics as the songs, poems, and monologues that were presented in the *cabarets artistiques*. They are an often absurd blend of classical poetic language, nonsense rhymes and colloquial patches, peppered with exclamations, shouts and quotations from street and cabaret songs. (11) "Complainte du pauvre jeune homme" for instance sets off with the caption "Sur l'air populaire: Quand le bonhomm' revint du bois" (a song also known as "Le Bucheron de Bresse"). In the poem Laforgue reverts to practices used by singers and poets in the *cabarets artistiques*: a repetition of words or lines (the line "Quand ce jeune *homm'* rentra chez lui" is used twice), elision (*homm'*

instead of *homme*) and the use of nonsense or nursery rhyme ("Digue dondaine, digue dondon"). (12)

The rhyme in Laforgue's poetry and prose often rests on comparable sound effects. Typical is his frequent use of assonance and alliteration – which especially in free verse are important forms of rhyme. A few examples from *Moralités légendaires*. In the first *b* and *s* are repeated: "Dan*s* un coin o*bs*cur d'une tri*b*une, Hamlet dont nul jamai*s* ne *s'* inquiète, a*ss*i*s* sur un cou*ss*in, o*b*serve la *s*alle et la *s*cène par les *b*aies de la *b*alu*s*trade" (*Hamlet*). The second example centres on the repetition of the *f/v*-sound, the *c* and the *l*, with the "o" as a resounding vowel: and: "Et sur *c*ette f*olle* petite *vil*le et son *cercl*e de *col*lines, *l*e *c*iel in*f*ini dont on *f*ait son deui*l*, *c*es é*ph*émères *f*éminines ne sortant jamais, en e*ff*et, sans mettre une *fri*vole ombre*ll*e entre e*ll*es et Dieu" (*Miracles des roses*). Sound for Laforgue is seemingly more important than significance: "Que je vous baisotte les mains, ô Kate, pour cette etiquette' (*Hamlet*); "unique titre de Tétraque"; "une salle jonchée de joncs jaune jonquille" (*Salomé*). (13)As was the habit in the cabarets, Laforgue frequently reverts to popular expressions and exclamations, to *argot* and vulgar words (*s'en ficher*, *s'engueuler*). He invents new words or verbs (*angeluser* or *ventriloquer*, *voluptuer*, *massacrileger*) and uses mots-valises or port-manteau words to intensify the sense of the emotions he wants to convey (*crucifiger* as a speaking combination of *crucifier* and *figer*; *éternullite* as an – again very expressive – combination of *éternité* and *nullité*; *violuptés* as a combination of *volupté* and *viol*; *ennuiverselles* from *ennui* and *universelles*). In addition to "modern" words or (often incongruous) combinations (*thermomètre*, *rails*, *capitaliste*, *laminé*, *transatlantiques bercails*, *spleens* or *ennuis kilométriques*) he sprinkles his poems with non-poetical, technical, biological or medical expressions (*polype*, *apoplectique*, *spectroscope*, *télescope*, *plasma* or chlorose, to denote the pallor of unhealthy adolescent girls). (14)

Duchamp and Laforgue

For Duchamp getting acquainted with the work of Laforgue was of special importance for the development of his ideas. To Cabanne he stated that he especially liked Laforgue's short stories, not just because of their humor, but also because they were something completely new: "I'm not acquainted with Laforgue's life. […] That didn't interest me enormously. But the prose poems in *Moralités légendaires*, which were as poetic as his poems, had really interested me very much. It was like an exit from Symbolism." (15)
Without any doubt it was especially the parodical character of the *Moralités légendaires* that appealed to Duchamp. Besides that he must also have picked up some of the innovative aspects of Laforgue's poetry that were linked to the artistic climate in Montmartre.

Duchamp in Montmartre

Duchamp came to live in Montmartre in 1904, with his brother Raymond in the rue Caulaincourt. Their elder brother Jacques Villon lived in the same street. Even though the Duchamp brothers associated themselves with other painters, e.g. in the Société Normande de Peinture Moderne, and showed their work on "alternative" exhibitions like the Salon des Indépendants and the Salon d'Automne, in Montmartre they spent most of their time in quite different circles, in the company of illustrators and cartoonists. Like them, the brothers of Duchamp earned their money primarily by producing cartoons for Parisian humoristic journals. According to Duchamp there was little or no contact between them and the artistic avant-garde: "Remember that I wasn't living among painters, but rather among cartoonists. In Montmartre, where I was living, rue Caulaincourt, next door to Villon, we associated with Willette, Léandre, Abel Faivre, Georges Huard etc., this was completely different; I wasn't in contact with the painters at

that time.” (16)

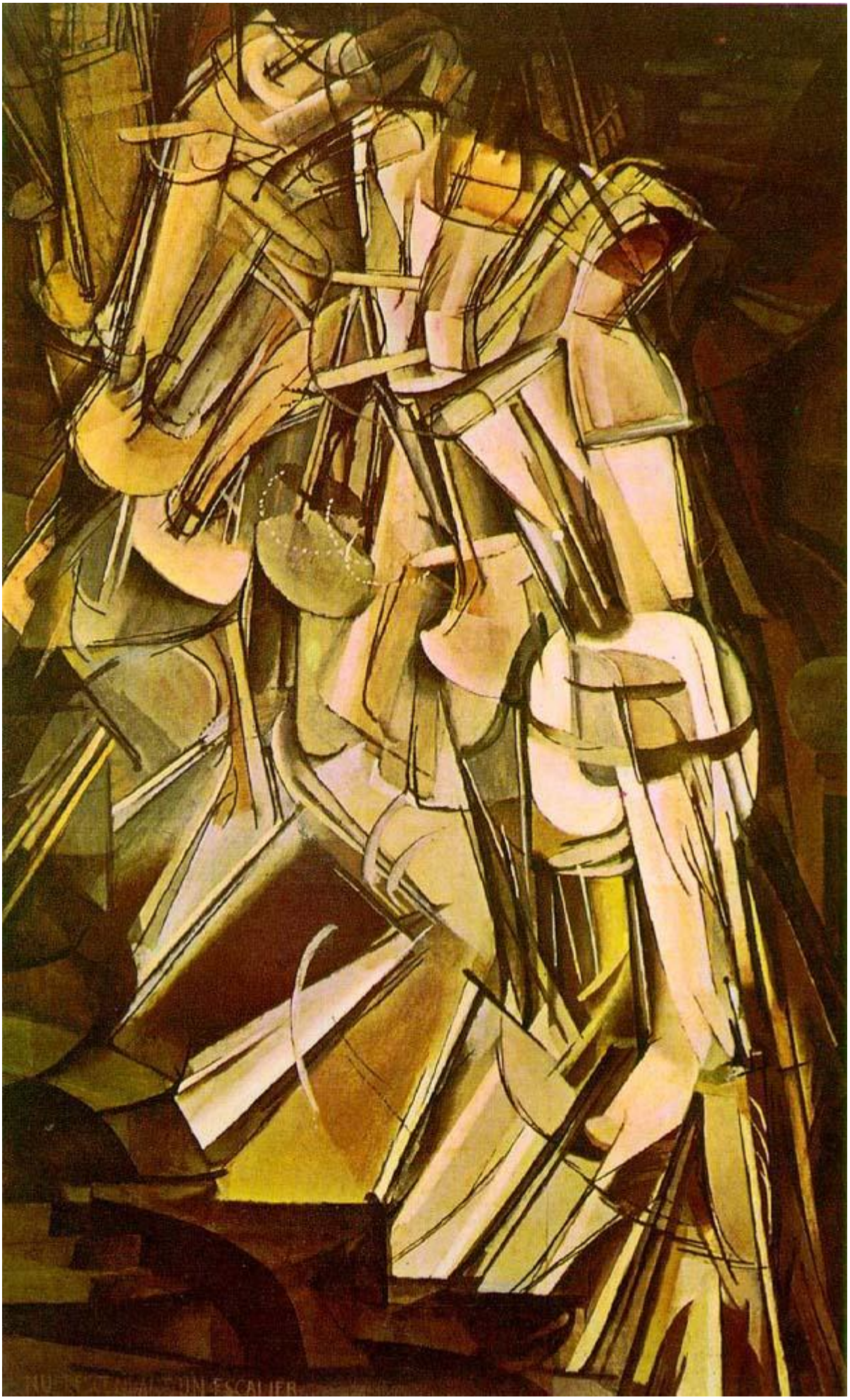
Although they were working as commercial artists, Duchamp’s brothers had not given up hope to be recognized as serious artists. Duchamp on the other hand had no clear goal. He tried his luck at the exam for admittance to the École des Beaux Arts and failed, attended some of the classes at the Académie Julian, but confessed later he preferred to play billiards at a local café, and evaded a three year conscription in the army, posing as an *ouvrier d’art* and learning the art of print-making in an atelier in Rouen.



Duchamp had been drawing domestic scenes, portraits of family members or friends and everyday scenes of passers-by or street strollers from early on. After his return to Montmartre and following the example of his brothers, he produced another series of drawings and cartoons, often with the relations between men and women as a theme. A good example is *Sundays* (*Dimanches*, 1909): a fairly common scene of a young man, pushing a baby carriage, with next to him his wife, again heavy with child. The plural in the title not only refers to the endless repetition of dreary Sundays with their common family scenes, but also to the cycle

of the seemingly joyless repetition this marriage is subject to. *Dimanches* could very well echo Laforgue's melancholic poems about dreary Sundays.
Some of the cartoons Duchamp produced were published in humoristic magazines such as *Le Rire* and the *Courrier français* and were shown at the Salons des Humoristes that were organized from 1907 on. The captions of these cartoons are full of sexual innuendo and show that Duchamp had a keen eye for puns and *double entendres*. (17)

An "intellectual" artist



Thoug

h he picked up painting again around 1907, Duchamp's ideas, in no way, fitted in with the usual pattern of a "serious" artist. He went rapidly through successive stages of the new movements in painting – Fauvism, "Cézannism" – as if he couldn't decide what style suited him. In 1911, he painted the first works that show the influence of Cubism. He also participated in discussions about Cubism with his brothers and other painters of a cubist group that had formed around the painters Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. But he did not stick to Cubism, either. He was searching for an art that differed fundamentally from what had been produced up to the 1910s. As he stated later, painters until then had exclusively focused on "retinal" effects. In the course of the nineteenth century the "physical" side of painting had increasingly been emphasized, which had resulted in a one-sided production of "pleasant" or "attractive" images of art, solely appealing to the senses. According to Duchamp, art had thus lost its "intellectual" (religious, historical, or literary) content. Even new movements such as (Neo)Impressionism, Futurism, or Cubism were mainly producing "physical" paintings. Duchamp deliberately searched for other ways: "I wanted to get away from the physical aspect of painting. […] I was interested in ideas – not merely in visual products. I wanted to put painting once again at the service of the mind."(18)
The decisive breaking point is well-known. In March 1912, Duchamp planned to show his freshly painted *Nu descendant un escalier* at the Salon des Indépendants, together with other members of the cubist group. Gleizes and Metzinger disapproved of the direction Duchamp had taken with his *Nu* and asked Duchamp's brothers if they could persuade Duchamp to remove his "*moving*" nude. (19) This incident proved to Duchamp that the painters *milieu*, even that of the avant-garde, had little to offer to him. He therefore sought his inspiration elsewhere. Duchamp had a clear mind for innovation, both in the field of the visual arts and in the fields of science, language, and literature. The cartoons he produced were proof of his interest in language, in the possibilities of wordplay

and puns, corresponding with the products of cartoonists and writers who moved around in the artistic circles of Montmartre. (20). And although he did not read a lot, his literary favorites were the more experimental symbolist authors such as Mallarmé . Duchamp's attitude was quickly assessed as "intellectual" and "literary," but that did not bother him. "I felt that as a painter it was much better to be influenced by a writer than by another painter," he stated. (21)

Although his literary favorites were to be found among the more "difficult" symbolist writers, Duchamp (as he stated to Pierre Cabanne) preferred authors who offered an exit from symbolism. Like Raymond Roussel and Jean Paul Brisset (two authors Duchamp admired because of their "insane imagination"). Laforgue evaded the prevailing taste: he offered Duchamp the exit he was searching for. Duchamp must have been receptive to Laforgue's ironic tone and the way this "decadent-symbolist" author exploited and ridiculed symbolist stereotypes. And more than Laforgue's obvious themes (melancholy about human existence in the light of eternity, celibacy, unattainable love, and – almost consequently – sterility), Duchamp recognized the irony in the way Laforgue turned melancholy and self-pity into (black) humor. Besides that he must have felt attracted to the way Laforgue transformed common language into poetry, to his frequent use of dissonant words or expressions in a poetic context and to his extravagant titles: "But perhaps I was less attracted by Laforgue's poetry than by his titles. 'Comice agricole,' when written by Laforgue, becomes poetry." (22)

The full title of the poem Duchamp refers to reads "Complainte du soir des comices agricoles" ("Complaint of the Evening of the Agricultural show"). (23) Laforgue's poem describes the depressing behavior of farmers and their ladies, who have great difficulty giving themselves over to dancing and fun. The poet therefore dresses up in melancholic thoughts about

the human race and the planet it is living on: “Oh Terre, ô terre, ô race humaine, / vous me faites bien de la peine.” (O Earth, o human race, it is quite a pain you give me.”) Apart from the poetic effects of assonance and alliteration (*co-co-co*) the title of the poem is rather unusual. Nobody normally associates a farmers fair (“comice agricole”) with melancholy or other poetic feelings. Laforgue reverts quite happily to the use of such dissonances. Apparently, this use of dissonance attracted Duchamp too.

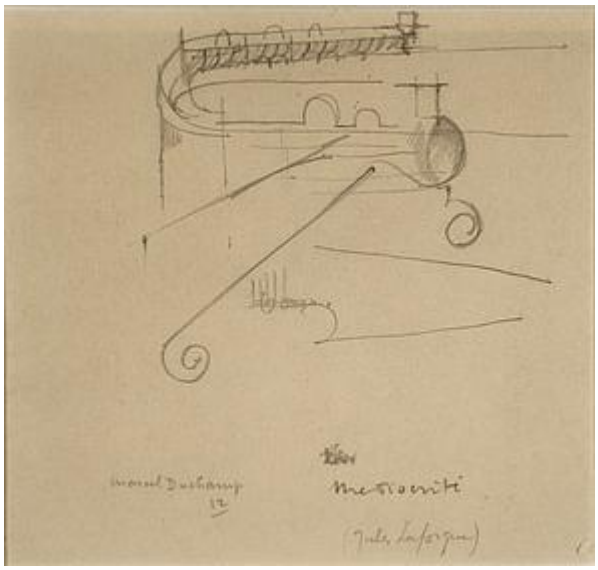
Motion instead of emotion

In 1911 Duchamp decided to illustrate some of Laforgue’s poems. The drawings bear the same titles as the poems, all from Laforgue’s first bundle *Le Sanglot de la Terre* (published posthumously in 1901): *Médiocrité*, *Sieste éternelle*, and *Encore à cet astre* (though the drawings bear the indication “12” and “13” they all date from 1911).(24)
Remarkably enough, the content of Laforgue’s poems seem to



have little or no direct connection with the subject Duchamp chose to depict in his drawings. *Sieste éternelle* shows a section of a piano keyboard, possibly referring to the verse: “Et comme un piano voisin rève en mesure/je tournoie au concert rythmé des encensoirs.” (“And like a piano close by that dreams in scales / so I move around

on the rhythmic concert of the incense burners"). In Laforgue's *Complaintes* the piano is often used as a signal of wistful longing. In "Complainte des pianos qu'on entend dans les quartiers aisés," for example, the poet is strolling through a rich residential area. Through the windows of the houses he hears the sound of endless rows of scales that are being practiced by young girls. The gray and boring life of these girls, who are all eagerly looking forward to a future lover, leaps to his mind, and he imagines how the monotonous life of these young girls eventually and inevitably will pass into the meager routine of married life. Duchamp's drawing, however, doesn't convey anything of these melancholic thoughts. It leaves the viewer in the dark as far as its



meaning is concerned. *Médiocrité* shows something that looks like a steam locomotive with wagons trailing behind. In Laforgue's sonnet such a machine is nowhere to be found. Laforgue deplores the mediocrity of most people, who toil and slave endlessly and without joy, and suspect nothing of the nullity (the *éternullité*) of the planet Earth in light of eternity. The only possible connection between poem and drawing is the last line of the poem ("Combien même s'en vont/Sans avoir seulement visité leur planète"; "How many take their leave/without even having visited their planet").This line could have brought Duchamp the idea of a train – and possibly the idea of motion, instead of emotion. *Encore à cet astre* ("Once more to this star"; to be understood as an address to the sun) gave Duchamp

the idea for *Nu descendant un escalier* (*Nude Descending a Staircase*, 1911):

The idea of the *Nude* came from a drawing which I had made in 1911 to illustrate Jules Laforgue's poem *Encore à cet astre*. I had planned a series of illustrations of Laforgue's poems, but I only completed three of them. […] In the drawing *Encore à cet astre* the figure is, of course, mounting the stairs. But while working on it, the idea of the *Nude*, or the title – I do not recall which – first came to my mind. (25)

Duchamp's drawing again doesn't contain much of which Laforgue is speaking. The poem reads as an imaginary dialogue between the sun and the people on earth. The sun (for Laforgue often a symbol of a dying force) expresses its contempt with those damned animated puppets ("pantins morphines") down there on Earth. The earthlings, however, challenge the sun and point to its damned fate: it is at the end of its strength, its beams will inevitably grow cold, and it will be the laughing stock of the other stars. They, however, even if they are young, "die of health."



In Duchamp's drawing we see a

floating head, as a sort of reference to Odilon Redon, between two figures. On the left a (apparently) female figure, naked from the waist down, surmounted by a cylindrical shape; on the right another (male? female?) figure, climbing a flight of stairs. (26) The pronounced teeth of the floating head could be taken as a reference to one of the lines in the poem ("Toi seul claques des dents"; "Only you clack your teeth"). Graphically, there is a connection with two earlier (realistic) nudes Duchamp drew, rather unusually sitting or resting on a ladder. (27) Maybe Duchamp got the idea of setting a (rudimentary or puppet-like) nude in motion, walking on a flight of stairs, from Laforgue's description of the sun high up in the sky, talking to human puppets down below. Be that as it may, Duchamp probably drew more inspiration from the idea of movement (up-down) in Laforgue's poem, than from its actual (emotional, i.e. melancholic) content.

Duchamp´s drawings after the poetry of Laforgue signify an important turning point in his work and thinking. As indicated, around 1911 Duchamp was searching to break free from the art of tradition, but also from the work of Cézanne and the Fauves, which until then had served him as an example. He experimented with techniques he had taken from Cubism, but was also inspired by the art of Symbolism – a symbolism embodied in paintings such as *Buisson* (*The Bush*, 1910-1911). When asked about the title of this painting, Duchamp stated he added the title (*Buisson*) "as an invisible color." (28) He felt he needed " *a raison d'être* in a painting that was different from the visual experience," as a means of "giving a work that contained no anecdote an anecdotal element." (29) "A poetic title for a painting was an anathema in the Fauves period, and was dismissed as literature," he stated later. (30) In symbolist art such a "suggestive" title was not unusual. (31)
By giving paintings such as *Buisson* symbolic titles, Duchamp tried to lend these rather traditional nudes (they are more or less Fauvist nudes) a meta-realistic touch, purely because he

felt the need to step away from their being too realistic.
The next step would even lead him away from the idea of giving his paintings “symbolist” titles. He started experimenting with setting his subjects in motion. *Encore à cet astre* must have played a central part in this development. About the genesis of this drawing Duchamp explained to Cabanne: “(the origin is) in the nude itself. To do a different nude from the classic reclining or standing nude, and to put it in motion.” (32) Motion (or the suggestion of motion) as a subject thus was becoming more and more important, and certainly more important than emotion.

Melancholy?

In December 1911, Duchamp painted *Jeune homme triste dans un train* (*Sad Young Man in a Train*) and, in the same month, the first study for *Nu descendant un escalier* . Michel Sanouillet has suggested that *Jeune homme triste dans un train* was based on a lost sketch, belonging to the series of illustrations to poems of Laforgue that Duchamp had planned to do. According to Sanouillet the original title of *Jeune homme triste dans un train* would have read *Pauvre jeune homme* M: “precisely the name of one of Laforgue’s *Complaintes*.” The Laforgue poem Sanouillet refers to tells the sad but hilarious story of a young man who finds out his wife has left him for another, laments his fate, and in despair finally cuts his throat. (33). If Sanouillet is right about Duchamp’s first idea for a title, the M would have given his painting a personal touch (M being an indication for ‘Marcel’). Unfortunately, there is no M in the title of the Laforgue poem. (34)



Several interpreters (Arturo Schwarz, Lawrence D. Steefel, Jerrold B. Seigel, John Golding) have tried to link *Jeune homme triste dans un train* to Duchamp's melancholic mood at the end of 1911 and have suggested that this painting could point to an influence from Laforgue's poems. (35) John Golding for instance sees something of the "bleak, quizzical despair" in Duchamp's painting which characterizes the Laforgue poem. Duchamp's painting is what he calls a "mood painting": "The Nude Descending is in no way a tragic painting (…). Yet the debt to Laforgue exists in the sensation or pervasive melancholy which the canvas transmits." (36). According to Golding the relationship between *Jeune homme triste dans un train* and *Nu descendant un escalier* is reinforced by the fact that Duchamp painted black borders in both paintings. Duchamp himself, however, always rejected a "melancholic" interpretation of *Jeune homme triste dans un train*. He acknowledged that the painting was a self-portrait (a pipe, hardly visible, should be an indication), but when Robert Lebel asked him if the

black borders are to be seen as an atmospheric sketch of his mood at that moment, Duchamp with his usual aplomb stated that "the black frames in *Jeune homme* triste only served to bring the painting back to the right dimensions." (37)
It is rather unlikely that Duchamp intended *Jeune homme triste dans un train* to be "a mood painting." If he had wanted the title to be read as a reference to an autobiographical fact and as an indication of a melancholy mood he could indeed have added the "M" Sanouillet is referring to. Duchamp himself particularly stressed the role of the *train-triste* alliteration in the title: "The *Sad Young Man on a Train* already showed my intention of introducing humor into painting or, in this case, the humor of word play: *triste, train.* […] The young man is sad because there is a train that comes afterward. 'Tr' is very important." (38)
In other words, Duchamp chose the word "triste" (sad) because it worked beautifully with "train," or better because the word "train" trails after, *entraînes* the word "triste."

Dissonances

As his early drawings and cartoons show, and as is evident in his work after 1911, Duchamp was very aware of the possible use of "literary" (or poetic) effects in his search for an art that differed from traditional art. Duchamp had always been interested in word games and was trained in the use of *calembours* and words with double meanings. It could not have escaped him that Laforgue regularly made use of the humorous and ironic effects of dissonant words and expressions in his poems. The irony and humor in Laforgue's poems mainly resides in the collision of two traditionally opposing verbal registers: on the one hand, the (traditional) poetical register, and on the other, the register of spoken language and language used in new areas of communication. His poetry takes its ironic character primarily from the dissonances between these two different linguistic sources. And Duchamp must have noticed that he could do something similar in the

visual arts.
In the titles of his work after 1911, Duchamp sometimes falls back on the same effects as Laforgue. When asked about the word “vite” in the title of *Le roi et la reine traversés par des nus vites (The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes,* 1912), Duchamp stated that this word amused him, because at that time it was new and modern, and was only used in sports, e.g. as an indication for a cyclist, a racing driver or an athlete: “if a man was ‘swift,’ he ran well.” (39) Titles like *Jeune homme triste dans un train* , *Deux personnages et une auto* (*Two Characters and a Car,* 1912), *Le roi et la reine entourés des nus vites (The King and Queen Surrounded by Swift Nudes, 1912), Le roi et la reine traversés par des nus en vitesse (The King and Queen Traversed by Nudes at High Speed, 1912), or Le roi et la reine traversés par des nus vites (The King and Queen Traversed by Swift Nudes,* 1912) with their unusual dissonances (a combination of a word deriving from the world of mechanics or sports and from more traditional registers), definitely have Laforgian traces. And the title of Duchamp’s 1914 drawing *Avoir l’apprenti dans le soleil (To Have the Apprentice in the Sun)*, in which we see a bicyclist frantically working his way up a slope, would not have seemed out of place amongst the titles of Laforgue’s poems.

Assonance and alliteration

In addition, Duchamp must have noted that in his (free) verse and his prose Laforgue frequently made use of alliteration and assonance as a *remplaçant* for more conventional rhyme. As is obvious from his statement about the word play “*triste/train*” Duchamp was sensitive to such literary effects. He was without any doubt amused by the tonal qualities of the work of Laforgue, for instance, by the (alliterative and assonant) effects of choruses such as “digue dondaine, digue dondon” or the use of assonance and elision (bonhomm’) in poems like “Complainte du pauvre jeune homme” – lines and words that referred to the popular song the poem is based upon, echoing

the practices used in the *cabarets artistiques*. Talking about the poetry of Mallarmé, Duchamp stated that it wasn't so much the content or the construction of the verses that attracted him, but the "sonorité" – the sound. For Duchamp Mallarmé's poetry was primarily a "poésie audible" (poetry to be listened at): "Since I don't completely understand him [Mallarmé], I find him very pleasurable to read for sound, as poetry that you hear," he said to Cabanne. (40)

In his works after 1911, Duchamp frequently fell back on the poetical effects of alliteration and assonance. A title such as *Le roi et la reine traversés par des nus vites* derives its poetic effect from the repeating of the "r" and the "a"; in *La Mariee mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* , the "m" is repeated, as it is in *Neuf Moules Mâlic* (*mâlic* being a neologism). (41)

In naming the different parts of *The Large Glass* , Duchamp made use of similar effects. *Témoins oculistes* is another example of a neologism, and assonance is present in titles such as *Glissière contenant un moulin à eau en métaux voisins* ("eau" rhyming on "métaux" and "o"), and alliteration in *Dynamo désir* or in *L'Enfant-phare*. Moreover, Duchamp, especially in later ready-mades, frequently fell back on the humoristic power of mots-valises or port-manteau words (*Fresh Widow, La Bagarre d'Austerlitz*).

The influence of Laforgue

In Nu descendant un escalier Duchamp united a principle he borrowed from Laforgue: to bring together two elements (nude – staircase) that in traditional terms do not mutually "rhyme." He added a novelty of his own, namely the liberation of the nude from her traditional frameworks: he painted a moving nude instead of a stationary nude, a nude that "descends," instead of reclining or standing. It is this idea of motion or movement – not in an emotional sense, but in an intellectual sense – that he developed in several works after 1911, culminating in *La Mariee mise à nu par ses célibataires, meme*

(The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even, 1915-23) and in his ready-mades. In these works, he concentrated not on a pictorial (static) scene, but on a mental idea, using the artwork as a means to convey the idea of a world in motion, a constant flux or a coming-and-going of appearances.

Duchamp picked up another idea from Laforgue. In his poems, Laforgue often attributes life to lifeless objects or abstractions, thereby augmenting the ironic quality of his poems (See, for example,"Complainte du foetus de poète," "Complainte du vent qui s'ennuie la nuit," and "Complainte des débats mélancoliques et littéraires").

Similar (Laforgian) irony speaks from phrases and titles for parts of *La Mariee mise à nu par ses célibataires, meme, such as Handler of gravity* (*Manieur de gravité,* also named Tender of Gravity – *Soigneur de gravité* – or *Juggler of gravity* – *Jongleur de gravité*). Here Duchamp plays on the double meaning of the word *gravity*: *weight* or *gravitation* on the one hand, and *seriousness* on the other. The irony is of course present in the idea that you can "juggle" with gravity – an idea Duchamp illustrated in his concept of objects "made of a substance of *oscillating density*," such as the Hook or the Chariot in the Big Glass (42) – or that you can tend to ("take care of," or "look out for") gravity. The same goes for the attribution of human emotions to some of the mechanical devises in *The Large Glass* (a chariot with a "slow" or "celibate life," a motor with "a desire center").When it comes to the intrinsic themes that Duchamp might have found in the work of Laforgue, it is not so much the theme of melancholy but another theme that jumps out. Laforgue frequently refers to his dislike of *bourgeois* marriage, especially where sex is concerned as a mere means to acquire offspring. Instead of "love in the service of reproduction" as the above quotation about his perfect English girl illustrates, Laforgue finds the ultimate ideal in selfless, sterile love.

Duchamp in his turn repeatedly and emphatically manifested his aversion to marriage as a social institution and his preference for the status of the bachelor. Duchamp's early

drawings are not only interesting because of the combination of text and image and the use of *calembours* or sexual innuendo in the captions, but also because of their themes. Many of these early drawings provide an ironic view on the concerns of courtship, the period of engagement, and the routine of married life. (43) They can thus be seen as an early ruling against (civil) marriage and as a celebration of the state of bachelor (or – for that matter – of unmarried cohabitation). His drawing *Dimanches* can be seen as an early manifestation of this conviction. The theme of his *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* seems to be partly based on the same idea of (sterile) love; on the idea of the fundamental impossibility of the union of bachelor and bride, even though they mutually undergo the effects of desire for the other. Where Duchamp speaks of *the Large Glass* as a "negation of the woman," it was the negation of the woman as a wife/mother he focused upon, as the person who assists in the continuation of social life and the (mechanical) producing of social individuals over and over again. (44)
That is not to say that Duchamp's work can be interpreted as an expression of the "eternal" opposition between the masculine and the feminine, which is the theme of many symbolist works of art. Duchamp does not tackle the (eternal) male-female opposition, but his work does challenge the opposition husband vs. wife/mother.

It could well have been the introduction of popular material in a poetic context, the use of newly formed words and the playing on their incongruity (this diversion from traditional poetical standards) that put Duchamp on the trail of comparable methods to undermine existing codes and registers in the visual arts. Laforgue was one of the first modern poets who used words that stem from such non-poetical arsenals as trade, (natural) science, traffic, slang and popular songs. With his introduction of neologisms and non-poetical words and phrases he gave an example of increased lexical and linguistic choices for the poet.

Laforgue's idea of using dissonances in order to pervert the traditional poetic language has a clear counterpart in the work of Duchamp, both in his early work and in his ready-mades. As is the case with Laforgue, Duchamp reverted to a process of dissociation: he isolated words (or sounds) and objects from their habitual (grammatical, logical) context and presented them in another context. By painting simple and everyday objects, such as *Coffee Mill* or *Chocolate Grinder*, he introduced mechanical devices as legitimate subjects for art works. This practice eventually gave way to simply "choosing" ordinary objects and, by giving them a poetic (often ambiguous) title, elevating them to genuine art works (*In Advance of the Broken Arm, Trébuchet/Tra*p). With his genuine ready-mades – *Fountain* being the most famous – he went one step further. By isolating an ordinary object – a urinal – from its normal context (the public restroom) and by introducing it in a surrounding where it is definitely out of place (the gallery or museum) he expanded the artistic methods and materials and took them to until then uncharted realms.

Conclusion

Laforgue was one of the first modern poets who demonstrated an ambivalent-melancholic attitude towards language and poetry. Thus, in "Complainte des Blackboulés" it is said that "she" (a "coeur rose") has spat on the Arts and the poet. In the poem a poet complains about the fact that art is mocked and attacked – while Laforgue himself is doing nothing different, by mocking all that has been seen as sacred in poetry. It is a melancholic attitude, because the poet realizes that there is little else to do, that writing has become a ridiculous, pointless activity – "Ah! Qu'est-ce que je fais, ici, dans cette chambre!/Des vers. Et puis, après?"("Ah, what am I doing sticking around indoors! Verse. And then, what after that?", *Complainte d'une autre dimanche*) – but that he can do nothing else. Laforgue hides behind the ironic nonchalance with which he ridicules poetry, rhetoric, literary themes or motifs – but

he still writes poetry! In that sense he distinguishes himself from the pranksters, who were also to be found amongst the Hydropathes and other Fumistes. Where some of these poet-singers were aiming to ridicule Literature – as an example of what was called "the established order" – Laforgue was looking for an answer to the question which way poetry could go, while rejecting the path of traditional rhetoric or of legendary themes. The work of Laforgue may in many respects be similar to that of the Fumistes, the difference is in what Laforgue aimed at. He was not aiming at the joke "for the joke's sake." Or, in the words of Grojnowski: "Se voutant à la quête d'une manière 'clownesque', il inaugure une esthétique de la disparate où, selon ses propres termes, les dictionnaires 'se brouillent'." (45). Duchamp recognized and appreciated the irony of Laforgue, which is akin to his "ironie d'affirmation," with a slight but important difference; unlike Laforgue there is, in the case of Duchamp, no question of black vision or melancholy. He approaches his subjects in a "dry" and "neutral" way.

Instead of a well-established, traditional style, Laforgue sought a new style of his own, an idiolect, a language offering space to the everyday, spoken word – a style that is not only related to the style of the authors who frequented the Parisian *cabarets artistiques* and that of innovative authors such as Mallarmé, but can be regarded as a harbinger of the style of modern writers such as Céline and Queneau.

It is this ambivalent attitude – rejecting the (old) poetry but simultaneously seeking a way to save poetry by looking for new ways – that Duchamp has in common with Laforgue. Duchamp is not so much the Dadaist, who only rejects. He is much more like Laforgue, someone who is "looking for a way out" – looking for new ways for the arts to go in a changing society. That is what is behind Duchamp's judgment about the work of Laforgue: "It was like an exit from symbolism." Laforgue helped Duchamp to find his way out in his "ironisme d'affirmation," in his Large Glass, and in his readymades.

Notes:

1. Daniel Grojnowski, talking about the Incohérents, has pointed out that their activities can be interpreted as being a sort of proto-Dada. ‘Une trentaine d’années avant que n’éclatent les scandales provoqués par la jeunesse de l’après-guerre, qui, vers 1920, a transformé de manière sans doute irréversible notre perception de l’œuvre, les *Incohérents* ont, pour une bonne part, inventé ‘dada’ avant la lettre, sans avoir trouvé […] la reconnaissance qui aurait consacré leurs recherches. En somme, ils ont formé une avant-garde sans avancée, une provocation artistique sans prise qui, faute de s’être imposée, demeure un simple objet de curiosité.’ Daniel Grojnowski, *Aux commencements du rire moderne. L’esprit fumiste* (Paris: Corti, 1997), 255-256.

1. It is impossible to discuss the “literature of Montmarte” here in full. For a more extensive view see: Mary Shaw, “All of nothing? The Literature of Montmartre,” in Philip Dennis Cate and Mary Shaw, eds., *The Spirit of Montmartre. Cabarets, Humor, and the Avant-Garde, 1875-1905* (Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1996. See also: Charles Rearick, *Pleasures of the Belle Epoque. Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985); Harrold B. Segel, *Turn-of-the-century cabaret. Paris, Barcelona, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Cracow, Moscow, St.Petersburg, Zurich* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). In French: Daniel Grojnowski, *Aux commencements du rire moderne.*

L'esprit fumiste (Paris: Corti, 1997) ; and André Velter, *Les Poètes du Chat Noir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).

1. Pierre Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1979), 29-30.

1. For a brief biography of Laforgue in English see: *Jules Laforgue, Poems* , Trans. Peter Dale (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2001 [1986]).

1. *Des fleurs de bonne volonté,* for instance, contains thirteen poems with "Dimanche" in their title, for a total of 56 poems.

1. "Le type de l'adorable, de l'aimée unique, pour moi est par exemple l'anglaise […]. Elle est la seule race de femme que je ne parvienne pas à déshabiller. […] Mon imagination reste stérile, gelée, n'a jamais existé, ne m'a pas dégradé […] Elle n'a pas pour moi d'organes sexuels, je n'y songe pas, il me serait impossible d'y songer. […] Toutes les autres sont des chiennes." *Feuilles volantes* , in: Jules Laforgue, *Oeuvres Complètes* , Vol. 3 (Lausanne: L'Age des Hommes, 2000), 960-961.

1. A typical Laforgian play-on-words. The first part of the name refers to the preference Flaubert puts on sparkling gems, the second part is an ironic

reference to the – supposedly – “archetypal” character of Herod.

1. Laforgue often reverts to quotes from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* , using them as a motto for his poems. In *Des Fleurs de bonne volonté* , eleven out of 56 poems have a motto taken from *Hamlet* . He uses these quotes regularly in connection with other recurring themes that for him represent melancholy: Sundays, moonlight, sterility, autumn.

1. This refrain, echoing the practices of the *cabaret artistique*, is taken from a French nursery song: “Il était un’ bergère’/Et ron et ron, petit patapon/Il était un’ bergère/Qui gardait ses moutons/Ron, ron/Qui gardait ses moutons.

1. Cate and Shaw, 128. Laforgue´s “L’Hiver qui vient” is a good example of this dual objective. “What is often overlooked, however, is that this poem, far from emerging as a work of solitary genius, exemplifies a general context of innovation,” says Shaw (Cate and Shaw 1996, 129). The title of the poem echoes the beginning of a poem by Raoul Ponchon from the *Album zutique* (1871): “V’la l’hiver et ses guenilles/Un’saison qu’est emmerdant!”, (with the characteristic elision “V’la” instead of “Voila”) and the opening lines of Jehan Rictus’ “L’Hiver” (from Les *Soliloques du Pauvre*, first performed in cabaret Les Quat’z’Arts in 1895): “Merd’! V ’là l’Hiver et ses dur’tés/V’là l’moment de n’plus s’mettre à poils.” And the first word of Rictus’ poem again raises an

echo: of the first word of Jarry's *Ubu Roi namely*, the play that knew its premiere a year after Rictus first performed his poem.

1. Two other examples. "Complainte de cette bonne lune" sets off with a variant on the popular song "Sur le pont d'Avignon" and "Complainte de Lord Pierrot" with an adaptation of the more well-known "Au clair de la lune": "Au clair de la lune/Mon ami Pierrot/Filons en costume/Présider là-haut!/Ma cervelle est morte/Que le Christ l'emporte/Béons à la Lune/La bouche en zéro (…)."Typical in this last poem is the combination of the moon (lune) with Pierrot. Pierrot is, next to Hamlet, the character who for Laforgue embodies the theme of melancholy. In late nineteenth century literature, Pierrot served as the epitome of the melancholic: he is the enemy of the sun, and – consequently – a lunatic.In 1882 Laforgue borrowed the title of one of Adolphe Willette's famous Pierrot cartoons, Pierrot fumiste, for a play of his own. The Pierrot of Laforgue mocks marriage and wedding nights and proclaims a love that must remain sterile. Notwithstanding he marries. On his wedding night he smothers his bride with kisses, but otherwise doesn't touch her, and goes to sleep. The next day she is still a virgin. The same thing happens every night. As the months pass, what the family mistook for delicacy becomes cause for concern. The doctor who is finally brought in warns Pierrot that others could rob him of what he despises in his wife. Pierrot then brutally assails her and sets off immediately afterwards – not as someone who has failed, but as someone who punishes his wife: she has spurned

true love and exchanged it for the profane sexual act.For *Pierrot fumiste* see: http://www.laforgue.org/Pierrot.htm

2. The lines “digue dondaine, digue dondon” refer to a popular song from the operetta *Les Cloches De Corneville* by Robert Planquette, that is supposed to suggest the ringing of church bells: “Digue, digue, digue, digue, digue dong/Sonne, sonne, sonne, sonne, sonne dong/Digue, digue, digue, digue, digue donc/Sonne, sonne, sonne donc, joyeux carillon.” The singer Jules Jouy referred to the same song in his “Le Reveillon des Gueux.” See: Segel, 37-38 and http://kropot.free.fr/JJouy.htm#GUEUX
   To give an example of a Chat Noir poem with similar characteristics, some lines from “Faculté des sciences du Chat Noir” by Alphonse Allais: “(Air connu): L’azote est un gaz bien malain/Dans l’quel on n’peut pas vivre/Il se trouv’ dans l’air le plus sain/C’est pas lui qui enivre,/Il n’a pas le moindre action,/La faridondaine, la faridondon,/Il empêche la vie/Biribi/A la façon de Barbari, mon ami. ” See: André Velter, *Les Poètes du Chat Noir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 124-125.

1. More examples in: Daniel Grojnowski, *Jules Laforgue et l’originalité* (Neuchatel: Edition de la Baconnière, 1988), 230-234. Duchamp uses similar phonetic principles in his puns: “Abominables fourrures abdominales”; “Nous livrons à domicile: moustiques domestiques (demi-stock)”; “Daily lady cherche démêlés avec Daily Mail”; “Paroi parée de paresse de paroisse.” See: *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1973), 105-119.

1. For an extensive review of the lexical and linguistic aspects of Laforgue's prose and poetry see: Jacques-Philippe Saint-Gérand, "Jules Laforgue: Les Complaintes, 'où Saint-Malo rime avec Sanglots et Bocks avec Coq.' Éléments de mise en perspective grammaticale et stylistique."

1. Cabanne, 30.

1. Cabanne, 22.

1. E.g., *Femme Cocher* (Woman Hack Driver, 1907), *At the Palais the Glace* (1909), *Future Mother-in-law* (1909), *Nuit Blanche (Sleepless Night,* 1909), *Vice sans fin (Endless Vice,* 1909) and *Chamber Music* (1910). See: Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Delano Greenidge Editions, 1997), volume 2: no's 102, 144, 146, 150, 155 and 173). The pun in *Femme cocher rests* on the (homophonic) ambiguity of the title: *femme cocher/femme couché* (woman coach driver/woman who is making love); the running meter of the coach in front of an hotel and the indication 6969 on the lantern on the coach are allusions to the activities the coach driver and her client are involved in.
2. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp,* 125.

1. The question remains what Gleizes and Metzinger may have incited to reject Duchamp's *Nude*. For the Cubists the painted object functioned as an 'anchor' for the sum of (sensory) experiences.

Duchamp had reduced the object – in this case the nude – to a transient flux. But perhaps there was still another reason for their refusal. Gleizes and Metzinger seem to have thought that Duchamp's *Nude* wore a too literary title for a cubist painting. The title would have reduced the painting to a caricature. Funny enough Duchamp's brothers suggested him to at least change the title of his painting, but that was utterly impossible: Duchamp had painted the title directly on the canvas. The title was, in other words, an integral part of the work.

1. Michel Sanouillet has rightly pointed out the importance of what he calls the 'popular tradition' for a good understanding of Duchamp's ideas: "What sets Duchamp apart [from contemporary avant-garde artists] (…) is the fact that he was led to move in a particular milieu, among the journalists, cartoonists, and artisans of Paris, more than among the fashionable painters and men of letters. Thus he kept close to a French oral tradition that manifests itself in a thousand different ways in the life of the average Parisian: argot, vulgar words, "in" jokes, puns, the language of pamphlets, ads, almanacs etc." Michel Sanouillet, "Marcel Duchamp and the French Intellectual Tradition": Anne d'Harnoncourt and Kynaston McShine, eds., *Marcel Duchamp* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989 [1973], 53.

1. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 126.

1. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 124.

1. In his notes Duchamp refers to the Large Glas as a “machine agricole” or “instrument aratoire” (an “agricultural machine”). See: *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp,* 44.

1. Apparently, Duchamp wasn’t very precise when it came down to signing and dating the drawings. In the case of *Encore à cet astre*, for instance, he only the added the indication ‘13’ with the caption ‘très cordialement´ when he offered the drawing to F.C. Torrey.

1. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 124. In his conversations with Cabanne Duchamp states that he made about ten drawings, but he suggests to ignore where even the three that are known have gone to. See *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp,* 30.

1. As has been suggested, the relation between drawing and poem could be found in the similarity between the French word *astre* (star) and the English *stare/stair* . See for instance: B. Bailey, “Once More to this Staircase: Another Look at *Encore à cet Astre,” Tout Fait, The Marcel Duchamp Studies Online Journal,* 2, No. 4. For me, it seams unlikely that Duchamp intended such a relation, considering that he mastered the English language only after 1915, during his stay in the United States.

1. See Schwarz, vol. 2: no’s 109 and 110.

1. “The presence of a non-descriptive title is shown here for the first time. In fact, from then on, I always gave an important role to the title which I added and treated like an invisible color.” Duchamp, in: d’Harnoncourt and McShine, 249.
2. In a letter of 1951 to Mary Ann Adler, quoted in d’Harnoncourt and McShine, 249.

1. In a letter to Bill Camfield, quoted in Jennifer Gough-Cooper and Jacques Caumont, *Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy* , 1887-1968 , Palazzo Grassi, Venice (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), entry for 25-4-1961.
2. Compare for instance Odilon Redon’s works with titles such as *Les origins, Esprit de la fôret or La folie,* Gustave Moreau’s *Les Voix* or Félicien Rops’ *Parodie humaine* .

1. Cabanne, 30.

1. The first stanza of the poem reads: “Quand ce jeune homm’ rentra chez lui (2x)/Il prit à deux mains son vieux crâne/Que de science était un puits!/Crâne/Riche crane/Entends tu la Folie qui plane/Et qui demande le cordon/Digue dondaine, digue dondon.” (this last line 2x).

1. Michel Sanouillet, “Marcel Duchamp and the French intellectual tradition,” d’Harnoncourt and McShine, 50. It is interesting to note that this misreading of Laforgue’s title pops up almost everywhere in the Duchamp-literature. Even Calvin Tomkins, who sacrifices two pages of his Duchamp 1996 biography to Duchamp’s interest in Laforgue (he rightly stresses the point that Duchamp “had a particular liking for the prose narratives that Laforgue calles *Moralités legendaires*” , amongst which Hamlet was Duchamp’s favorite), fails to see that the title of Laforgue’s poem reads simply ‘Complainte du pauvre jeune homme’. See: *Calvin Tomkins, Duchamp* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), 89-90.

1. See Schwarz, 109-111; Lawrence D. Steefel, Jr. ” *Marcel Duchamp’s Encore à cet Astre* : A New Look,” Art Journal 36, no. 1 (1976): 23-30; Jerrold Seigel, *The Private Worlds of Marcel Duchamp: Desire, Liberation, and the Self in Modern Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 59-60. Schwarz suggested that Duchamp’s melancholy was afflicted by the marriage of his favorite sister Suzanne. His suggestion that Duchamp was in love with his sister is more funny than probable.

1. John Golding, *The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even* (New York: Viking Press, 1973) [London, Penguin Books, 1972], 25.

1. “en réalité, la bordure noire du Jeune homme

triste, m'a surtout servi à cadrer le tableau pour la mettre à son échelle (…)." Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Belfont, 1985 [1959], 122-123. Duchamp moreover added black borders to his first version of The *Chess Players* too.

1. Cabanne, 29.

1. Cabanne, 36.

1. Cabanne, 105. In French this statement is more heavily emphasized: "[…] j'ai beaucoup de plaisir à le lire au point de vue de la sonorité, de la poésie audible." See : Pierre Cabanne, *Marcel Duchamp, ingénieur du temps perdu* (Paris: Belfond, 1977 [1967]), 183-184.

1. The addition of the adverb *même* in the title *La Mariee mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* has given rise to a lot of explanations: did Duchamp aim at the – homophonic – "m'aime", did he want to refer to himself (through a double M [M M or (e)m(e)-(e)m(e)]? Or did he just like the alliterating effect of the "m" in the title, as an echo of Laforgue's "bonhomm' "? In answering Otto Hahn about the meaning of "même" Duchamp explained: "*Même* doesn't refer to anything. It has a sense of poetic affirmation. As Breton says, humour of affirmation. Neither denigration nor a joke, but humour which amplifies. Somewhat the 'Ha, ha' of Jarry." Marcel Duchamp, interview with Otto Hahn, *L'Express* , 23 juli 1964. Cited in:

Jennifer Gough-Cooper en Jacques Caumont, *Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy* , 1887-1968 (Exhibition catalogue Palazzo Grassi, Venice: april-july 1993) (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993), entry for 23 juli 1964.

1. “the Hook (…) is made of a substance of *oscillating* density. This hook therefore has an indeterminate, variable and uncontrollable weight” and: “The chariot is emancipated horizontally. It is free, of all gravity in the horizontal plane.” *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp* , 61 and 57.

1. One is reminded of the “jeu de massacre”, the fairground game Duchamp referred to in an interview with Richard Hamilton and George Heard Hamilton: “The idea came probably from the fairs, the country fairs in France at least, were you have a wedding scene. And you have big balls that you throw at the heads of the bride and the bridegroom and the guests (…).” Quoted from: *Marcel Duchamp: An Interview by Richard Hamilton in London and George Heard Hamilton in New York* (London: Audio Arts, 1975);

1. When questioned by Cabanne about his marriage (his first, in 1927) and the qualification of his “Large Glass” as a “negation of woman”, Duchamp stated: ‘It’s above all a negation of woman in the social sense of the word, that is to say, the woman-wife, the mother, the children, etc. I carefully avoided that, until I was sixty-seven.. Then I married a woman who, because of her age,

couldn’t have children. (…) One can have all the women one wants, one isn’t obliged to marry them.” See: Cabanne, 76

2. Grojnowski, *Aux commencements du rire modern*, 94

Opposition and Sister Squares: Marcel Duchamp and Samuel Beckett.

This article explores the personal and artistic relationship between Marcel Duchamp and Samuel Beckett. It examines the biographical evidence for a connection between the two men and in particular focuses on chess. It explores some apparent evocations of Duchamp, both as a man and as an artist, in writings such as Murphy and Eleuthéria. It suggests that some key aspects of the dramatic structure, staging, and dialogue in Endgame derives from Beckett’s awareness of the peculiar endgame position described in L’opposition et les cases conjuguées sont réconciliées (Opposition and Sister Squares are Reconciled) by Duchamp and Halberstadt. To reach a detailed understanding of this argument, it sets out an expository account of a typical chess position and its accompanying terminologies from the book, then applies those to the play itself.

Wayne Andersen, Marcel Duchamp: The Failed Messiah

Wayne Andersen, Marcel Duchamp: The Failed Messiah (Geneva: Éditions Fabriart, 2010)

This book is an insult to the intelligence of anyone who believes that Marcel Duchamp was an important and influential figure in the history of modern art in the early years of the 20th century. It's subtitle-The Failed Messiah-tells you pretty much everything. While not technically an oxymoron, within this context, the words "failed" and "messiah" contradict one another, for by definition, a messiah is one who succeeds in his quest, and even Duchamp's most ardent detractors would find it difficult to argue that he didn't. Even the author of this book, Wayne Anderson-an 82-year-old retired professor of history and architecture at MIT (and also a doubtlessly disgruntled academic)-tells us that what Duchamp did to the history of art is comparable to the impact of the meteor that killed the dinosaurs. His use of the word "failed," therefore, must apply specifically to his own personal point of view, for Andersen believes that the adulation accorded Duchamp by the art establishment is unjustified, blown far out of proportion to what he perceives are the artist's actual accomplishments. Since Anderson's myopic view is shared by preciously few, in writing this book he must have envisioned his own role as that of a messiah, someone who has valiantly stood up against all opposition to provide us with the correct path to aesthetic salvation, one that would have gone smoothly had Duchamp and his readymades not intervened.

Andersen's greatest objection-and the reason he claims that motivated the writing of this book-is that Duchamp is increasingly identified as among the most important artists of the 20th century, and his urinal (titled Fountain) is

repeatedly named the single most influential work of art made by any artist of the modern era (as confirmed by a survey of art professionals in England in 2004). He is most aggrieved by those who admire the urinal with the reverence accorded other great works of art. In a prologue to the book, Andersen declares Fountain and all copies of it a sham, in words that tellingly reflect his messianic theme: “Pilgrims by the daily hundreds come to one or the other of these shrines of modern art to contemplate with puzzlement and some in reverence this recumbent piece of plumbing as if it had closed down the Old and given rise to the New Testament of Art History.” The allusions to religion are not coincidental, for although I have no idea what faith Andersen practices (if any), his real objections to Duchamp are derived from a sense of moral superiority, especially when it comes to the subjects of eroticism and sex (themes that run, admittedly, through Duchamp’s work from start to end). In the introduction to his book, Andersen openly confesses his prudish beliefs. “With sexual freedom comes degradation, since morals of any kind are generated by the immoralities of sex, like valor by cowardness [sic] or honesty by cheating. Yet, the whole biological purpose of each species’ existence is to breed for the next generation. The moral brain cannot always hold up pants and panties when desires press downward to where bodies generate dirt and from there upward to pictures drawn and enacted by dirty minds.” That he was thinking of Duchamp comes a few pages later. “Duchamp was a vulgar man with a dirty mind,” he writes, “sexual, not sensuous.”

The issue of bodies generating dirt and excrement is something that comes up repeatedly in Andersen’s critique of the urinal, and it is abhorrent to him that some might equate these thoughts within the realm of aesthetics. He is especially revolted by the fact that when a urinal is used, it requires the exposure of a man’s penis, something he repeats on no fewer than on four separate occasions in his text. Here is one: “The beauty constant and concomitant sexual urges are

universal. Is it merely coincidental that every man, on stepping up to a urinal, opens his fly and takes out his member?" In an effort to place the urinal in an art-historical context, he places it at the end of a lineage marked by fifty-year intervals that begins with Manet's Olympia (1863), continues with Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907), and concludes with the urinal. (Although Duchamp's Fountain was conceived of in 1917, it was not recognized for its importance within the art establishment until the 1960s, allowing him to place it some fifty years after Picasso's Demoiselles.) This observation causes him to pose the following question:

> How is it that modern art, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century starts and finishes its first fifty-year phase with representations of women not for adoring and seducing or even raping but for just plain fucking? And ends its second fifty-year phase with a urinal pretending to be a fountain while asking to be pissed in. It is of course biological for a man to approach a urinal as if it were a woman. Each time he steps up to one, he open his fly and takes out his member.

There he goes again with the penis reference. But in making his point, it is worthwhile to ask why Andersen used the word "fucking," when he could just as easily have used any other more socially acceptable euphemism for sexual intercourse? He finds Duchamp's sexual puns vulgar and distasteful, so on the title page of the book (yes, on the title page), he issues the following warning to his readers: "This book was written for mature readers at an adult age. It contains words and expressions that are suppressed as obscene wherever English or French is spoken. And it includes quotations of texts by others that are pornography in both the original language and English translation." Presumably, Andersen's own words were not translated from anywhere, so what could be his excuse for resorting to such foul language?

In the end, what Andersen finds most objectionable is that the

art establishment has accepted Duchamp as having made a legitimate contribution to its history, when he feels that the artist is an outright charlatan. At one point, he even stoops so low as to try making his own sexual pun by calling Duchamp a con artiste [cunt artist], having found the Etant donnés to be "one of the greatest domination assaults on a woman that art history has recorded." Throughout the text, Andersen foolishly and quite naively states that the readymades are not art, and he takes us through what he must believe is a logical line of reasoning to dismiss them as such, constantly reminding readers that when a readymade is returned to the setting for which it was originally designed, it reverts back to the object that it was. No kidding! Of course it does, but that is precisely the point of these objects. Context is everything. Indeed, in the case of the readymades, when placed into a museum, it is their very raison d'être. What Andersen seems incapable of understanding is that the readymades are both things simultaneously: objects designed for a specific purpose and, when placed on display in a museum or art gallery, works of art. In a sense, they are conceptually akin an optical illusion, like the schematic drawing of a staircase, for example, that is comprised of steps that go up and down simultaneously. The problem is that our minds are limited in their capacity to see them going in both directions at the same time, but we are intelligent enough as human beings to know that they do. Apparently this simple concept is way over Andersen's head. Either that or, if he understands it at all, he ignores the logic within it, for it does not facilitate his insistence that the readymades be dismissed as works of art.

In the introduction to his book, Andersen takes a swipe at university presses, many of which, we can be fairly safe in assuming, have rejected his manuscripts for publication. "Like mega-corporations in economics, academic presses control the trade," he tells us, "five to ten university art editors with the power to determine what gets published." The opinions of

these highly qualified and informed individuals did little to deter Andersen, for he responded to their rejections by forming his own private printing press, a firm that goes by the name Editions Fabriart, which, on the copyright page of the Duchamp book is identified as an imprint of the consulting firm of Vesti Design. Only from the website for the publishing house do we learn that Vesti Design is founded and owned by Wayne Andersen, and that Editions Fabriart publishes only the writings of one author: Wayne Andersen. Ostensibly, nothing is wrong with publishing your own writings (indeed, I plan to do so one day myself), but if not handled properly, the result can be an academic disaster, which is unquestionably the case with Andersen's book on Duchamp. To begin with, academic presses employ a peer-review process, something that would have caught the countless regrettable errors contained in this book and, anyone familiar with the literature on Duchamp and Dada, would have cut out at least half of the 388 pages of insufferable text by pointing out the simple fact that most of it has been published elsewhere and, in most cases, in writings based on primary source material.1 Andersen is certainly driven in his quest to defame Duchamp, but, apparently, he is not sufficiently motivated to seek out and read the appropriate literature on the artist, and least not enough to make a significant contribution of his own. Even when he does consult the appropriate sources, they are usually only skimmed, causing him to miss important details that could-in some instances-even have bolstered his argument. Anderson tells us, for example, that it will be his purpose in this book to strip Duchamp bare, to "peel away at his mythical overlays until he becomes shiveringly naked… under his wrappings of adulation." With this in mind, he delves into the Duchamp biography, using Calvin Tomkins's excellent book on the artist as his primary guide. In his summary, Andersen tells us that Duchamp "produced no children" (p. 157), but Tomkins is among the first to publish the fact that, in 1911, Jeanne Serre, a model who appeared in several paintings by the artist from this period (one of which, The Bush, Andersen

reproduces), gave birth to his only biological daughter, Yvonne. She was never formally recognized as his offspring, but in the late 1960s, he met and established a close relationship with her during the last years of his life. In my review of the Duchamp retrospective that took place at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice in 1993, I connect the birth of this illegitimate child to the theme of the unobtainable, which I postulate figures into the making of not only the Large Glass, but also the Etant donnés. This review was not published in an obscure periodical, but rather appeared seventeen years ago as a full-length article in the pages of Art in America. Somehow, Andersen managed to miss it.[2]

I realize that within the context of a book review, it is considered bad form to chastise an author for having failed to consult the reviewer's publications, but I have devoted a good part of my scholarly career to writing not only about Duchamp, but also *New York Dada.* Whereas Andersen has read some of my writings on these subjects and even refers to them admiringly, they are mostly from anthologies, and he has missed the more important books, most notably my monograph on *New York Dada* (published in 1994) and the catalogue *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name that I organized for the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1996).3 Had he known these publications, he might have spared us his excruciatingly painful indictment of Duchamp's friends and associates-Beatrice Wood, Mina Loy, Arthur Cravan, Man Ray, the Baroness Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven-all of whom are given separate chapters in my book. Even here, Andersen displays a remarkable ignorance of the most current literature on his subject: he gives a biographical sketch of Mina Loy, without knowing that the definitive book on this remarkable woman was written by Carolyn Burke and published in 1996, nor when he discusses the Stettheimer sisters does he seem to know anything about the biography of Florine Stettheimer written by Barbara Bloemink

and published in 1995.[4] He devotes an entire chapter to presenting what he believes is an original interpretation of Duchamp's Large Glass by comparing it to a Rube Goldberg cartoon, which, he claims, is information repressed by Duchamp scholars. "I find no discussion or even mention of this cartoon in any academic essay devoted to a descriptive analysis of the *New York Dada* [magazine] texts or images," he writes. In my own writings, I have discussed the Goldberg cartoon that appeared in *New York Dada* on at least two occasions: once when comparing it to the complex machinations of the Large Glass, and again when pointing out that the twisted pipes it contains mimes the circuitous route of *New York Dada* through various European capitals.[5] Andersen has clearly not done his homework; these are the sort of literary lacunae for which any conscientious professor of art history would fail his students.

It is known that Andersen published this book without requesting permission from the Duchamp Estate (or the agency that represents them: The Artists Rights Society, or ARS) to reproduce the works by Duchamp that it contains. Rather, it appears that he scanned the images from various published sources, without bothering to request permission from the authors or the publishers whose labors he so freely appropriates. If Andersen can adopt such a moral high ground in criticizing Duchamp, how is it that he can so blatantly violate issues of copyright? Maybe this is just one of many duplicitous positions taken by a man who, in his twilight years, wishes to seek revenge from the same sort of institutions that rejected him (if true, I would recommend he heed the advice of Confucius: "Before you embark on a journey of revenge," he warned, "dig two graves"). It was the art establishment, after all, that also understood and embraced the contradictions that lie at the core of Duchamp's work, a philosophical conundrum that is implicit to its meaning. I find myself in an equally complex dilemma in writing this

review, for allowing its publication can only serve to draw more attention to a book that presents no legitimate justification for its existence. To ignore it, however, would seem the greater injustice. Andersen's objections with Duchamp are shared by comparatively few, yet a number are more influential critics, writers who, like himself, believe that Duchamp has no rightful place in the history of 20th century art. These writings can only serve to inhibit a greater understanding of Duchamp and his work, preventing honest and otherwise diligent students from engaging the serious issues that are necessary to fully comprehend its importance and meaning. Refuting such a biased and highly restrictive point of view is-despite the consequences-a worthwhile endeavor.

Notes

Footnote Return 1. The book is also filled with a plethora of typos and clerical errors. At one point, Andersen says that only he has read the text, which is regrettable, for even a casual reader would have caught mistakes in the sequence of footnotes that occur in several places (most notably in chapter 5, where the footnotes start to renumber themselves, a detail ignored where the footnotes themselves appear at the back of the book). This creates a real headache for serious scholars, but as I hope to demonstrate, it is indicative of the way in which the author so casually treats the literature he consults.

Footnote Return 2. See Francis M. Naumann, "The Bachelor's Quest," Art in America 81/9 (September 1993), pp. 72-81, 67, 69

Footnote Return 3.*New York Dada* 1915-23 (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994) and Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York (Whitney Museum of American Art, November 21, 1996 – February 23, 1997; catalogue distributed by Harry N. Abrams).

Footnote Return 4. Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), and Barbara J. Bloemink, The Life and Art of Florine Stettheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

Footnote Return 5. New York Dada, p. 203, and Making Mischief, p. 20.

The Museum of Good Ideas



Duchamp's "underground" career – decades ostensibly away from

the art world in pursuit of chess – is a touchstone for youthful artist Mark Bloch, who has taken the gameboard out of the underground and bck into the museum gallery in his recent series, Storage Museums. There’s an element of travel chess here too, not to mention the Museum in a Suitcase.