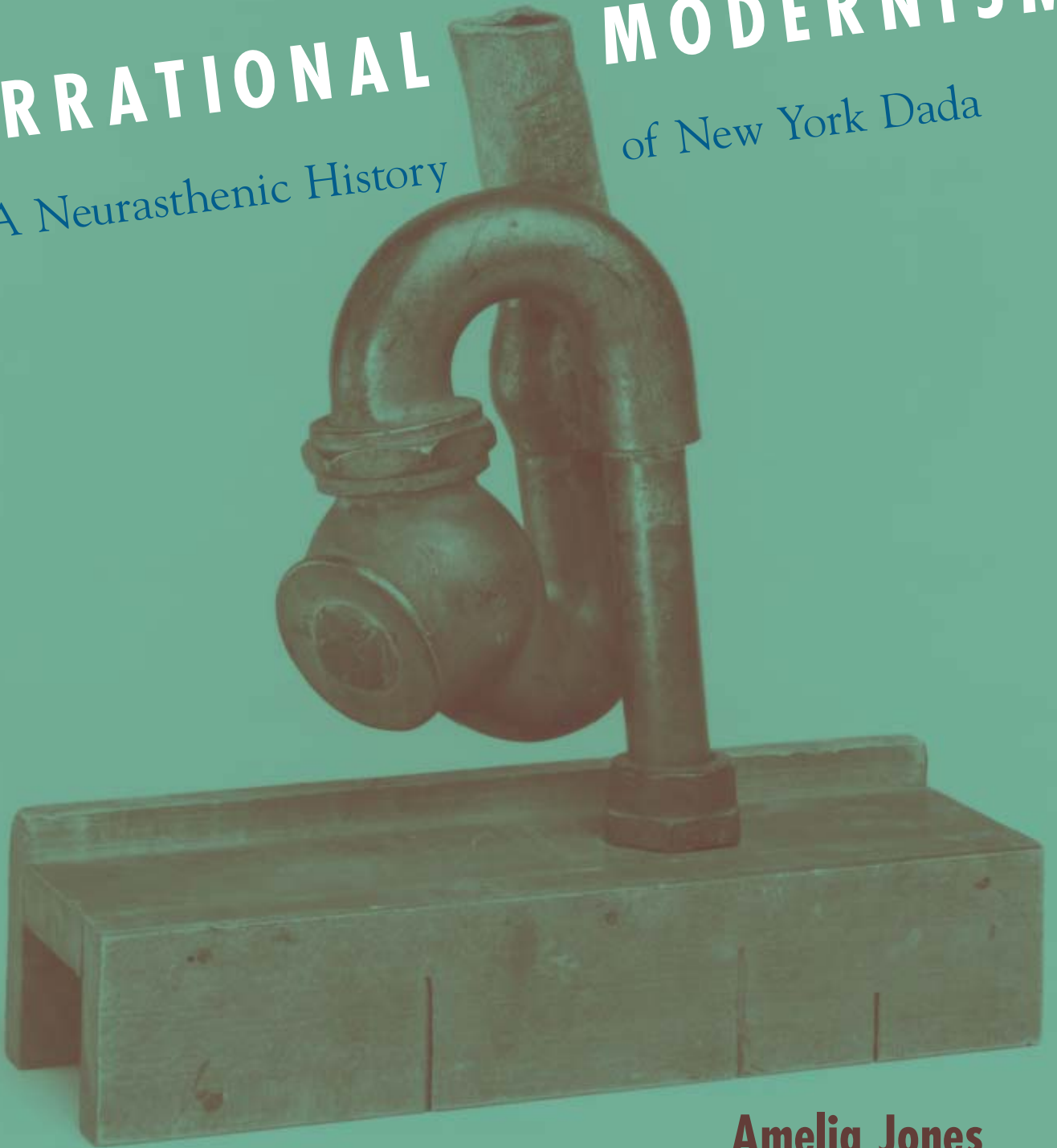


IRRATIONAL

MODERNISM

A Neurasthenic History

of New York Dada



Amelia Jones

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Amelia Jones

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⋮ This book is dedicated to my mother, Virginia Sweetnam Jones, whose calm has balanced
⋮ my tendency toward neurasthenia.

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IRRATIONAL MODERNISM

1 The Baroness and Neurasthenic Art History

Genius is nothing but an extravagant manifestation of the body.

— Arthur Cravan, 1914

Some people think the women are the cause of [artistic] modernism, whatever that is.

— *New York Evening Sun*, 1917

I hear “New York” has gone mad about “Dada,” and that the most exotic and worthless review is being concocted by Man Ray and Duchamp. . . . What next! This is worse than The Baroness. By the way I like the way the discovery has suddenly been made that she has all along been, unconsciously, a Dadaist. I cannot figure out just what Dadaism is beyond an insane jumble of the four winds, the six senses, and plum pudding. But if the Baroness is to be a keystone for it,—then I think I can possibly know when it is coming and avoid it.

— Hart Crane, c. 1920

Paris has had *Dada* for five years, and we have had Else von Freytag-Loringhoven for quite two years. But great minds think alike and great natural truths force themselves into cognition at vastly separated spots. In Else von Freytag-Loringhoven Paris is mystically united [with] New York.

— John Rodker, 1920

My mind is one rebellion. Permit me, oh permit me to rebel!

— Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, c. 1925¹

In a 1921 letter from Man Ray, New York artist, to Tristan Tzara, the Romanian poet who had spearheaded the spread of Dada to Paris, the “shit” of Dada being sent across the sea (“merdelamerdelamerdela . . .”) is illustrated by the naked body of German expatriate the Baroness Elsa von **Freytag-Loringhoven** (see fig. 1.1). Pubis shaved and arms cocked to flaunt her lean physique, the Baroness’s body itself forms the “A” of Man Ray’s “America!,” becoming—for Man Ray, for Tzara, and thus for European Dada—a sign of American Dada’s “merde” effect, a sign of the fact that “dada cannot live in New York,” because “All New York is dada, and will not tolerate a rival.” Man Ray thus sums up the paradox that is and was New York Dada—a retroactive label describing the work of a group of American and European artists practicing in New York in the years around World War I who often congregated in particular at the salon of Walter and Louise Arensberg, including, most famously, Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp, and Francis Picabia.²

Man Ray’s letter also indicates that, in spite of the tendency to telescope the history of New York Dada into this male triumvirate and their works (especially Duchamp’s readymades), there is a body, “traced by language and dissolved by ideas” as Michel Foucault would have it,³ that both epitomized and, in its performative lived forms, radically disrupted the movement from inside and out. This body (and the subject that enlivens it)—the Baroness, a poet, autobiographer, artist, artist’s model, and self-performative cultural provocateur whom Berenice Abbott once evocatively

MER DELA MERDELAMERDELAMERDELAMERDELAMER

de l'a



merique!

Cher Tzara - dada cannot live in New York.
All New York is dada, and will not tolerate a
rival, - will not notice dada. It is true
that no efforts to make it public have been
made, beyond the placing of your and our
dadas in the bookshops, but there is no
one here to work for it, and no money
to be taken ~~in~~ for it, or donated to it. So
dada in New York must remain a secret.

No additional sales have been made of
the consignment you sent to "Société Anonyme".
The "anonyme" itself does not sell anything.

described as being “like Jesus Christ and Shakespeare all rolled into one”—motivates and disrupts as well this particular history of New York Dada.⁴

Man Ray was not the only contemporary who radicalized his representation of New York Dada (or the absence thereof) through the body of the Baroness. As Jane Heap (who, with partner Margaret Anderson, published the Baroness’s writings in their journal *The Little Review*) put it in 1922, the Baroness was “the first American dada,” adding, “she is the only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada.”⁵ Georges Hugnet described her equally evocatively in his early 1930s account of the Baroness: “like an empress from another planet, her head ornamented with sardine tins, indifferent to the legitimate curiosity of passers-by, the baroness promenaded down the avenues like a wild apparition, liberated from all constraint.”⁶ There was something unnerving, otherworldly, *irrational* about the Baroness, even in the context of the supposedly radical bohemian and avant-garde circles of the day. The Baroness lived, performed a kind of unhinged subjectivity that most of the other artists of her day only examined or illustrated in their work and that many, in spite of their aspirations to thwart bourgeois norms and define themselves as avant-garde, assiduously avoided.

We know the Baroness as a performative subject through several extant photographs of her (mostly by Man Ray), her own experimental autobiographical text and poems, and numerous anecdotal textual descriptions of her flamboyant self-display that exist in accounts of World War I-era *Greenwich Village*. An exemplary instance of the latter is the reminiscence of Margaret Anderson, who wrote about the Baroness’s first visit to the offices of the *Little Review*:

She wore a red Scotch plaid suit with a kilt hanging just below the knees, a bolero jacket with sleeves to the elbows and arms covered with a quantity of ten-cent-store bracelets—silver, gilt, bronze, green and yellow. She wore high white spats with a band of decorative furniture braid around the top. Hanging from her bust were two tea-balls. . . . On her head was a black velvet tam o’ shanter with a feather and several spoons—long ice-cream-soda spoons. She had enormous earrings of tarnished silver and on her hands were many rings, on the little finger high peasant buttons filled with shot. Her hair was the colour of a bay horse.⁷

Clearly, for the Baroness, “the style [was] the woman.”⁸ The Baroness used detritus she found on the street as well as items stolen from department stores to craft elaborate

costumes which she would then wear, complete with black lipstick, shaved head or brightly dyed hair, and other body adornments, to the legendary Greenwich Village balls or (notoriously, and surely far more noticeably) through the streets of New York. Even the daily newspapers carried stories of the Baroness's self-display, as in a 1915 *New York Times* story entitled "Refugee Baroness Poses as a Model," which described her as follows: "She is lithe in figure and as graceful as a leopard. Her hair is red and her eyes a turquoise blue. Her costumes are all her own, for she designs them and makes them. Perhaps some might call her bizarre in attire," and cites her melodramatic pronouncements: "I seek as best I may to give artistic expression, to show forth something of the thoughts within me. . . . Always was that soul hunger—always that raging protest within me against the conventional."⁹ This incipient commercialization of the Baroness as an anecdotally rendered symbol of Greenwich Village bohemianism aside, the Baroness was never fully or easily incorporated into the institutions of the period.¹⁰

A quintessential New Woman in her independence, though far more extreme in her demeanor and openly sexualized behavior, the Baroness (born Else Plötz) had run away from her middle-class German/Polish family when she was 18, fleeing what she called her stepmother's "bourgeois harness of respectability" to make her way as an actress, chorus girl, and artist in Berlin and then Munich; she looked for a rich lover to keep her "in style."¹¹ Numerous marriages and lovers later, a continent away from Europe, in New York City, the Baroness en-titled herself by marrying the German Baron von Freytag-Loringhoven (who shortly thereafter left to enlist in the German army and never returned).¹² She had settled in New York City in 1913 and lived there for 10 years, mingling with Greenwich Village bohemia and those artists now grouped under the rubric New York Dada.

In spite of their on-again, off-again difficulties with this dynamic personality, Margaret Anderson and her feminist literary colleagues Jane Heap and Djuna Barnes, as well as the young photographer Berenice Abbott, were extremely helpful and friendly to the Baroness, giving her emotional support, publishing her work (Anderson and Heap in the *Little Review*; Barnes was responsible for urging the Baroness to write her autobiographical narrative), and, at various points, giving financial assistance.¹³ Meanwhile, the Baroness's erstwhile friend and ongoing object of desire, the poet William Carlos Williams, published a violently misogynistic account of his encounter with this epochal figure in the journal *Contact* in 1921. Williams's response exemplifies, in an extreme way, the tendency among the male avant-gardists to view the voraciously heterosexual Baroness with trepidation. Thus Williams describes her

as “a Bohemian” but also as a pathetic, desperate lover spewing “bloodygreen sensations” in a continuous “flux” of letters; he claims that she has an ancient body (re-marking on “her broken teeth, her syphilis” and calling her an “old lady,” though she was only in her mid forties) and a deep stench (“a reek stood out purple from her body”) that differentiate her from the “clean muslin souls of Yankeedom.” He describes her apartment in similar terms as “the most unspeakably filthy tenement in the city. Romantically, mystically dirty, of grimy walls, dark, gaslit halls and narrow stairs, it smelt of black waterclosets, one to a floor, with low gasflame always burning and torn newspapers trodden in the wet. Waves of stench thickened on each landing as one moved up . . . I saw them [her dogs] at it on her dirty bed.”¹⁴

Williams’s scatological characterization of the Baroness as a stinking flow seems intimately connected to Man Ray’s labeling of his missive with the punning “merdelamerdelamerde . . .”. Clearly, while the Baroness was a potent and active agent in New York’s cultural avant-garde (even personally terrifying and threatening to many associated with it, while her experimental poems and prose pieces provoked heated discussions),¹⁵ she also functioned as a site of violent projections. She was thus a figure who pointed to the limits of avant-gardism as such.

Not only did the Baroness’s lived Dada perform this function; in her own published poems and prose pieces criticizing the life and work of Williams and Duchamp she made it clear what she thought their limitations were, for example characterizing Williams in her acerbic review of his *Kora in Hell* as “yoked by neurasthenia / poisoned by ‘loved ones’ [i.e., his bourgeois family in suburban New Jersey] / pestered by sex,” and noting, “W. C. attacks art—*when has time*.” From the Baroness’s point of view, Duchamp and Williams exemplified the tendency among male avant-gardists to make radical art in their free time, while living more or less bourgeois lives, driven by neurasthenic fears of the modern challenges to their coherence as male subjects.¹⁶

Elsewhere, in another text on the Baroness (with whom he seemed to be obsessed, in spite of himself), the married poet histrionically noted that she “tried to destroy me. That made no difference to me because she couldn’t, but the form it took was familiar. ‘Come with me and I will make a man of you.’ Yea, yea. . . . She was like Cortez coming to Montezuma and she wanted to do the same stupid thing he did. Destroy.”¹⁷ Ultimately, then, Williams’s ruminations on the Baroness seem aimed at reestablishing his virile masculinity. In the *Contact* essay, he performs this through the transparently autobiographical figure of the essay’s potent, even godlike protagonist, “Evan Dionysius Evans,” who has definitively rejected the Baroness’s threatening charms and who makes her a symbol of a struggle between European encroach-

ments—via Dada—and American culture. Toward the end of his diatribe, Williams plaintively poses the question, “what in God’s name *does* Europe want of America . . . [?]”¹⁸ What, indeed, does the highly sexed Baroness—a sign of ethnic, national, class, and sexual otherness (an androgynous German woman with an overtly voracious sexual appetite, dressed in urban detritus like a mentally ill “bag lady”)—want of the hounded avant-garde poet?

The Baroness, then, can be viewed (as she clearly was by many of the male members of the avant-garde) as embodying the cacophonous clash of races, sexes, sexualities, and classes of people that constituted the population of New York City in the World War I era and that accompanied the massive cultural shifts to which Dada responded and which it helped to promote. The Baroness, as constructed and reconstructed through accounts such as Man Ray’s, Williams’s, and Anderson’s, becomes not only a sign of New York Dada but a figure of the threat posed by these shifts to the normative—Euro-American, white, heterosexual, male—subjects of the modernist avant-garde, in spite of the vast variations among these subjects in their adherence to the codes of normative masculinity. Perhaps because of these variations, Williams’s misogynistic reaction contrasts sharply with the far more cool rejection of the Baroness by Duchamp, whose masculinity (at least in the context of World War I-era New York) was already ambiguous.

As David Joselit put it to me, Duchamp’s relationship to masculinity in his New York Dada period parallels the “Warren Beatty effect in *Shampoo*”—the less macho man adopting feminine attributes in order to seduce women.¹⁹ Joselit’s formulation encourages me to emphasize here that, while stressing the “feminine” as that which compromises normative masculinity, I do not mean to imply that masculinity is fixed. Masculinity manifests itself in multiple, and mutable, ways, some of which (like Beatty’s character) are not at all typically “macho.” In this book, I stress feminization as a trope of a certain kind of compromised masculinity in order to stress the way in which gender categories were being shored up during this period—not incidentally, the period of their first acute erosion; and the way in which the polymorphous “gender fucking” of the Baroness (and of parallel characters such as Arthur Cravan) completely subverts such reiterations of traditional notions of gender.²⁰

The Baroness, then, became a sign of the ruptures in the social (and gender) fabric during this highly charged period—of the uncontainable, violent, feminizing, debased and debasing effects of modernity, and in particular of industrial urbanism and its most violent extrusions, the trenches and advanced weaponry of the World War I battlefields, between roughly 1913 and 1923. These are precisely the years of

the Baroness's life in New York, but also the general period associated with the avant-gardism of New York Dada.

In this way, the Baroness—in Williams's charming words, a “dirty old bitch” with a deep stench and “bloodygreen sensations” flowing threateningly forth across the boundaries of respectable avant-garde behavior—figures what I am calling in this book *irrational modernism*. In her inimitably fluid and destabilizing way—queer in her disruption of both the gender and homo/heterosexual axes of sexual identity—she will thread her way through this book, just as she insinuated herself into the circles of artists and writers now associated with New York's World War I-era artistic avant-gardes (including New York Dada as well as the writers from Barnes to Ezra Pound and James Joyce connected to the *Little Review* and other experimental little magazines from the period). In so doing, she will serve to disrupt this art historical study of New York Dada, reenacting the very irrational effects that she so dramatically stood for at the time, performing the seedy and seamy underside of modernism that discourses of high art and architecture have labored to contain through their dominant models of rational practice.

Such an insertion of the Baroness will also allow me to insist upon the acknowledgment of the aspects of sexism and misogyny within this period's avant-gardes (and, in particular, New York Dada)—their lingering sexual conservatism (as is made clear by Williams's responses to her)—and upon a recognition in art history of the crucial importance of the contributions of avant-garde women in stimulating, promoting, and producing the ideas and aesthetic innovations associated with Dada. As Naomi Sawelson-Gorse puts it in her crucial revisionist anthology *Women in Dada*: “The paradoxical irony of Dada is slippage. This movement of absolute rebellion was also one of repression [and in it] . . . misogyny prevailed in a consistent way.”²¹ While feminist scholars in literary studies have been laboring for many years to recuperate and revalue the work of individual women writers in the avant-garde literary movements (including, relevant to this study, writers from this period such as Mina Loy, Djuna Barnes, and, through the work of Irene Gammel, the Baroness herself as a writer), art history has been very slow to accommodate such a feminist impulse. In general, as the cultural historian Marisa Januzzi has noted, while studies of individual women writers and artists linked to Dada have emerged in recent years, “Dada as a movement has largely escaped such [feminist] reconsiderations, perhaps because of its limited, trap-laden usefulness for feminist practitioners.”²²

Navigating around these traps, with a little help from the Baroness (well-versed in stepping between the cracks on the sidewalks of New York, as well as in negotiat-

ing the black holes of avant-gardism for its women practitioners), and following the lead of Sawelson-Gorse's *Women in Dada* as well as Gammel's groundbreaking feminist biography of the Baroness, I hope to sketch here a picture of New York Dada that suggests not only its limitations in response to social and gender shifts, but also its debt to radical feminist figures such as the Baroness. In so doing, I believe I will provide a new, different view of New York Dada that is more, not less, important and interesting for its acknowledgment of the group's contradictions—contradictions that, indeed, make it more relevant to the conflicted situation of late modernity (or postmodernity) in the early twenty-first century.

DEFINITIONS

This book is by no means meant to be a comprehensive study of New York Dada, nor an apology for the use of this term, which I use merely as a shorthand to talk about an artistic phenomenon that was only retroactively, from the early 1920s, labeled as such by the popular press and, self-servingly, by the European Dada movement (Tzara's exchange with Man Ray is typical of the attempt to reinterpret the group in relation to European Dada movements, in which Tzara was a key player).²³ As noted, the book focuses primarily on the visual art practice associated with the group of artists working in the context of the Arensberg salon and, to some extent, Alfred Stieglitz's 291 Gallery and the related, eponymous publication (spearheaded by Paul Haviland, Agnes de Meyer, and Marius de Zayas),²⁴ as well as other related journals and institutions (such as the journals *The Blind Man* and *New York Dada*, and the organizations Society of Independent Artists, founded in 1916, and Société Anonyme, cofounded by Duchamp, Man Ray, and Katherine Dreier in 1920). The book often focuses even more narrowly on the work of the best-known representatives of the visual arts component of the New York Dada movement, the triumvirate Man Ray, Duchamp, and Picabia, counterposing their practice to the less codifiable self-display, literary self-constructions, and urban promenades of the Baroness.

While the interconnections among the various institutional and discursive sites of the European and New York avant-gardes should not be forgotten, many important and useful sources have already exhaustively traced them, and this book will not repeat such efforts.²⁵ It will, however, attempt to broaden and deepen the historical texture in which the New York Dada group's works are suspended and in relation to which they can be understood. To that end, the book will make reference to other

cultural figures linked at various times to the core New York Dada group (Jean Crotti, Katherine Dreier, Arthur Cravan, and others) and to related cultural expressions, including the visual artwork associated with purism and other contemporaneous movements (by artists such as Joseph Stella, Morton Schamberg, and others), films addressing modernity (such as Charlie Chaplin's brilliant 1936 spoof of industrial rationalism, *Modern Times*), and the literary avant-gardes that intermingled with the New York Dada artists (including Williams, the writers and editors associated with the *Little Review* and other little magazines, etc.), as well as to memoirs, novels, and poems from the period addressing the topics of war and urban modernity in general and World War I-era New York in particular.

I have attempted to steep myself in the culture of the period in order to get at least a slightly less fragmented sense of the texture of life during this period in New York, and to imagine more fully the spatial meanderings of the Baroness's body among the avant-garde salons and the streets of New York. The figure of the Baroness, who interferes in this narrative as an aggressive, peripatetic interloper whose fantastic sartorial displays and sexualized comportment ruffled the composure of the male avant-gardists at the time, also emerges now and again as the author of fantastic experimental poems and innovative objects made from found urban detritus—and thus not only as a performative irritant to the male avant-gardes, but as an important contributor to avant-garde culture in her own right. Through this focus, I hope to continue the rescue of the Baroness begun in earnest by Robert Reiss, Paul Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue, Francis M. Naumann, and, in the recent biography, Irene Gammel—a rescue from the limiting framework of the partial anecdotes in Greenwich Village memoirs and contemporaneous newspaper accounts defining the Baroness as an object of voyeuristic fascination or derision during her life and after her untimely death in 1927.²⁶ But it will also be noted that the Baroness was not unique in her flamboyant self-performance (there were, for example, the numerous costume balls, drag balls, the political movement to free women's bodies through dramatic innovations in dress during the period, and the shared interest in constructing elaborate bodily adornments by avant-garde, “New Woman” colleagues such as Mina Loy).

In sum, I am interested here not simply in inserting the Baroness into the artistic canon of New York Dada—this, at any rate, has already been effectively done by scholars such as Naumann and Sawelson-Gorse.²⁷ I am interested, rather, in challenging the very rationalism of art history itself (its tendency to reduce complexity to simple genealogies of radicalism founded by male artists) by using the Baroness's disruptive, irrational example as a way of looking at the canonical works from a different, res-

olutely feminist point of view. In so doing I hope to begin to question the very notion of avant-gardism that has come out of the histories and theories surrounding this canon and, by extension, the very ways in which art histories of this movement and the avant-gardes in general have been written. By insisting on attending to the *lived* avant-gardism of the Baroness, I want to revise our current understanding of New York Dada as a group of visual objects and images whose meaning and political significance has remained more or less static over time and, thus, to interrogate our understanding of avant-gardism and even of art history and modernism themselves.

RATIONAL MODERNISM, RATIONAL POSTMODERNISM, AND THE READYMADES

There are two basic modes of art history that have been brought to bear on New York Dada: the numerous texts historicizing the doings, publications, and artworks of the artists associated with the movement (such as the work of Dickran Tashjian and Naumann);²⁸ and the texts, often oriented toward the study of postmodernism, that use the movement as a grounding for their theories of avant-gardism or radical critique (the work of cultural theorist Peter Bürger, art critics and historians Benjamin Buchloh and Hal Foster, and many others) and which position New York Dada, and particularly Duchamp's readymades, as key origins for the institutional critique associated with the historical avant-gardes and later with progressive postmodernism.²⁹ It is this second understanding of New York Dada in which I want to intervene by over-identifying, as it were, with the Baroness, who (along with all the other women involved in the historical avant-gardes) is routinely left out of such larger pictures.

William Carlos Williams's anxiety-driven account of the Baroness makes clear that *flux*—in its tendency to overflow the bounds of rationalism—was highly threatening to modern masculinity, even, apparently, in its avant-garde guises. This threat had to be managed, psychically and discursively (as Williams's text indicates) as well as in material terms, through rationalizing social institutions that, as Michel Foucault's work persuasively and extensively argues, function to channel and regulate psychic anxieties. For example, as the brilliant feminist German cultural theorist Klaus Theweleit has argued, World War I (with its attendant schools, discourses, machines, and social institutions) functioned to reestablish the myth of virile masculinity in the face of the threat of unleashed feminine flows posed by industrialism and shifting gender roles.³⁰

Strong links, if not a complete congruence, exist between industrial rationalization and the particular impulse toward rationalization among some of the most

influential modernist (or, in Bürger's terms, "historical") avant-gardes in their heroic period from just before World War I to around 1930.³¹ Thus, even as the dominant industrial models of this period of the second industrial age—Taylorism and Fordism—focused obsessively on *controlling* the dangerous flows of labor and capital loosed by the new machine-age economies, avant-garde theorists such as Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier argued for a highly rationalized method of artistic or architectural production that would *contain* the irrational (ugly, dangerous, debased, kitsch, ornamental) flux of an explosively burgeoning mass culture.³² Ironically, this tendency toward rationalism within the avant-garde itself has been reiterated by some of the major theorists of the historical avant-garde who, following Bürger's example, have reduced the complexity of these movements to the singular radical impulse of Duchamp's ready-mades.

As Terry Smith has noted in his useful analysis of Taylorism and Fordism, in these industrial systems (which, indeed, function on both psychic and material levels) labor is minutely divided and instrumentalized according to assembly line production of machine parts; the "precision of timing, or coordinated human/machine action" dominates factory production, and "all other relationships become subordinate to maintaining the Flow." Although the flow is maintained and even encouraged (as the necessary surplus that motors capitalism), the threat of its overflow—of the loss of control—is acute and must at all costs be avoided. The Taylorist/Fordist system is thus aimed primarily at manipulating and surveying labor and, particularly in Fordism (which involved the construction of gargantuan factories to implement the assembly line mode of production), at *shaping space* such that no excess flow can escape the system of production and consumption that benefits the factory owners.³³ All energy is focused toward the channeling of human labor into the most efficient, machinic production of parts and, ultimately, of machines that can be sold for a reasonable price but at a great profit. Taylorism and Fordism also function to rationalize *bodies*, which are virtually made into machines through repetitive labor. So much is made brilliantly clear in John Heartfield's critique of rationalization, his 1927 collage *Rationalization Marches / A Spectre Goes around Europe*, which constructs a figure out of fragments from machines and factories, striding (as a symbol of the march of socialized industry) across an urban, **industrial landscape** (see fig. 1.3).³⁴

Linked intimately to this logic—not surprisingly, since Le Corbusier was an open supporter of Fordism—this modernist architect, painter, and theorist explored what he calls the "new world of space" of modernity precisely through an insistence that architecture, sculpture, and painting are "bound to the necessity of controlling



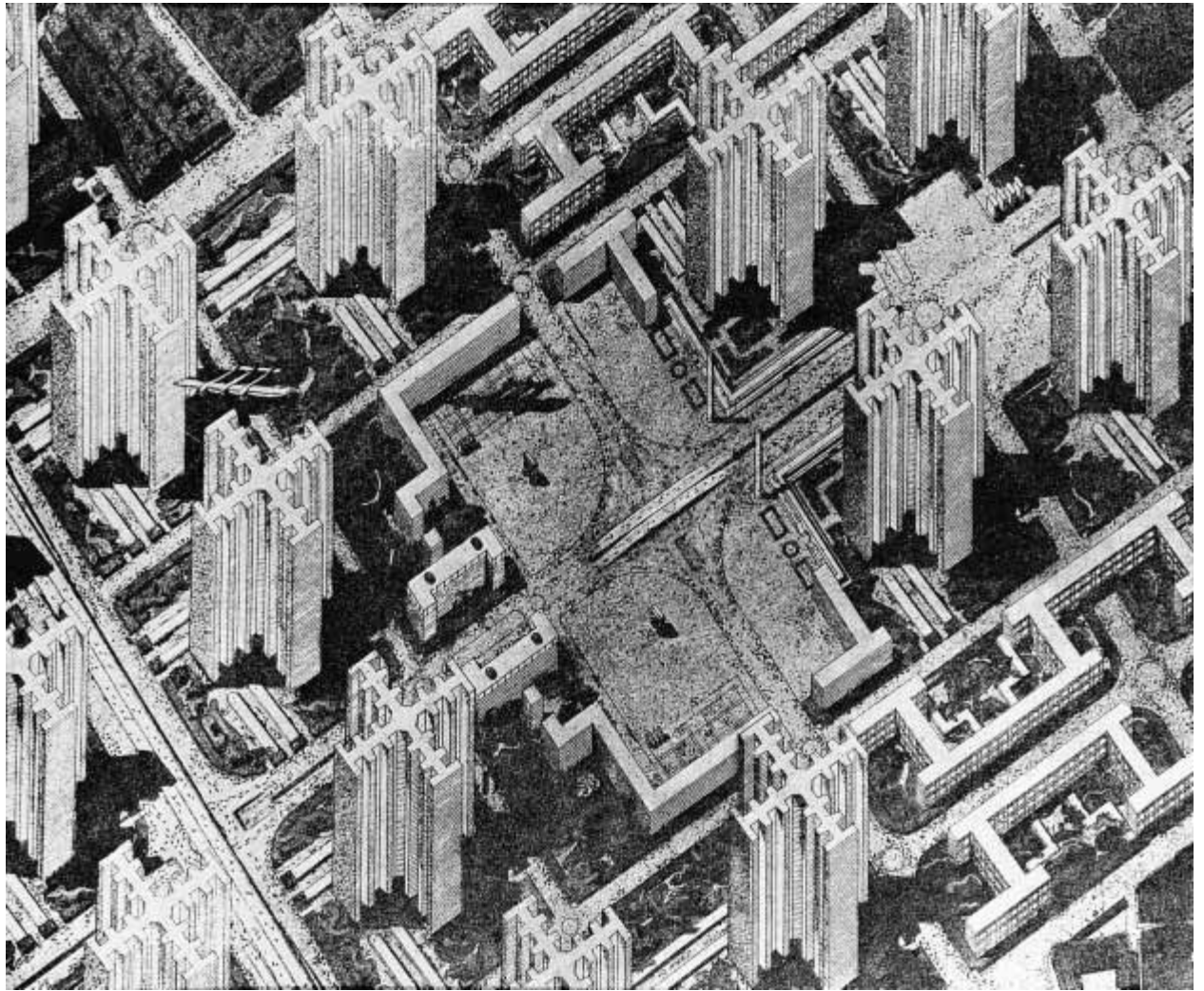
1.3 John Heartfield, *Rationalization Marches / A Spectre Goes around Europe*, c. 1927, collage; a manipulated version of this was published in *Der Knippel*, no. 2 (February 1927). Akademie der Künste, Berlin; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

space.” A fully successful work, he argues, opens up the “boundless depth” of this new space, accomplishing “*the miracle of ineffable space*.”³⁵ Ironically, Le Corbusier’s claims for this transcendent quality of the new modern arts are articulated as a defense against the convulsing “birth pains of the machine age,” but not against machines (nor, clearly, against rationalization) per se. His core argument is that, in art and architecture, the work must “show an incessant desire to take possession of space”; and, finally, that all elements in the best work (exemplified, of course, by his own) “can be brought into proportion: dimensions, light, distances, colors, outlines, the mass of plastic constructions.”³⁶ Everything, then, in this “new world of space” can be brought under the *control* of the social engineer—apparently (given the aims of Fordism) this might be factory owner, architect, or artist. Le Corbusier’s compulsion to rationalize bore fruit in buildings and sketches such as his rigorously, even oppressively, geometric drawing of the ideal modern city from his 1925 *essay* “*The Street*” (see fig. 1.4).³⁷

It is worth stressing that, while modernity can be usefully characterized by its dominant strains of rationalism—from the controlling discourses of theorists such as Le Corbusier and Loos (who infamously declared ornament to be a “crime”)³⁸ to its everyday corollaries in the Taylorized and Fordized bodies of industry and beyond—it was also continually disrupted by the very irrationality it labored to contain. As Charlie Chaplin’s magnificent spoof of Taylorist/Fordist industrialism in his 1936 film *Modern Times* makes clear (in particular the scene with the feeding machine, which goes out of whack and begins to beat Chaplin with its mechanical arm; see fig. 1.5), such rationalism, when taken to an extreme, inevitably extrudes its own grotesque *irrationalities*.³⁹

In a sense, the conception of the avant-garde that continues to dominate (at least) Anglophone conceptions of radical practice—one that, loosely, assumes (as I will do here) “avant-gardism” to define those practices that in some way function to critique or effectively point to the contradictions within the structures of urban, capitalist, industrial modernity or postmodernity—specifically negotiates this rational/irrational divide.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, as we will see, such conceptions often close down the irrational side of modernity in order to make modernist sense of it, even as, at the end of Chaplin’s film, the narrative reaches closure by siphoning the hilarious, uncontrollable body language and behavior of Chaplin’s character into the straitjacket of a heterosexual marriage portrayed in the most banal fashion in its bourgeois aspirations (as Chaplin and his beloved Gamin make a “home” for themselves in a shack on the outskirts of the city).

As the case of Le Corbusier makes explicit, the aesthetic manages such “irrational impulses” just as efficiently as Ford’s factory system, or, ultimately, Chaplin’s



1.4 Le Corbusier, drawing of the ideal city, from "The Street," 1925. From Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *Oeuvre complète de 1910–1929* (Zurich: Les Éditions d'architecture Erlenbach, 1948).



1.5 Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*, 1936; still of broken feeding machine molesting Chaplin.

film. Both systems—industrial, artistic—aim at containing flux (though, admittedly, often from opposite ends, with the artist “making sense” of it creatively, while the factory owner wants to rationalize it out of existence). The entire concept of art as a mode of channeling desires and impulses that are inappropriate to “civilization”—the basis of Sigmund Freud’s theory of sublimation—makes this much clear.⁴¹ Fredric Jameson, following Freud’s model (which will be examined at greater length in chapters 3 and 4), confirms this rationalizing tendency in his claim that the aesthetic itself is “conceived as a kind of safety valve for irrational impulses.”⁴²

While these managing systems inevitably produce their own excess and inefficiency, such excess is continually controlled and/or disavowed—not only by dominant modes of modernist practice (such as Le Corbusier’s rationalized model) but also by discourses of art history, which labor to make sense of the past by erasing or containing its confusing irrationalities. One could argue, as some already have,⁴³ that the discipline of art history and its corollary art criticism have functioned largely to manage away the irrational confusion of the past through rigid models of historical and aesthetic analysis that ultimately come down to individual genius (simplistic origins) and isolated aesthetic values and meanings (the artwork divorced from any of the messy vicissitudes attached to its production, dissemination, and interpretation).

While we can easily laugh with Chaplin at the limitations and contradictions of industrial rationalism (and certainly in the new era of global postindustrialism, as we grapple with more insidious and profound rationalizing forces, the shortcomings of Taylorism and Fordism seem more than obvious), it is apparently more difficult to confront the rationalizing impulses of the ways we think—in this case, of the logic of historical avant-gardism, its theories, and art history in general. In art history and beyond, we are far too attached to a simplistic notion of the avant-garde as a group of heroic (almost always white male) individuals fighting unequivocally against the evils of capitalism and the dumbed-down values of its mass bourgeois culture.

To acknowledge the complexities and contradictions of the attitudes and social interactions of the members of the historical avant-garde would be to undermine the belief in their simple heroics and to call into question the very framework through which their works have been canonized. It would be to challenge on the deepest levels our conception of what it meant not only to make and interpret culture during the World War I period but what it means to make and interpret culture (from works of art to historical texts) today. It would be to throw out the time-honored masculinist conception of art history as a patrilineal succession of male geniuses heroically battling the forces of industrial capitalism.⁴⁴ It would be to open the door to a fuller,

though inevitably less cohesive, understanding of the history of modernity and artistic modernism.

A particular example of the tendency to heroize male avant-gardists, as I have already begun to suggest, is the case of Duchamp and his readymades, which, largely because of the huge influence of Bürger's argument in his 1974 *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, have come to define for many the most radical impulse of the historical avant-gardes. Ironically, given Bürger's own insistence that all aesthetic theories must be understood to be highly contingent on the "period of their origin," and that the tools of historical avant-gardism wielded to critique institutions of art can no longer simply be applied to the same effect,⁴⁵ Bürger's definition of the historical avant-garde, extended by art historians and art critics from the 1970s to the present, has become absolutely central to dominant Anglophone understandings of avant-gardism.

In particular, Bürger's privileging of Duchamp's readymades as critiques of "art as an institution," via their undermining of the fundamental modernist idea of art as produced in a historical and political vacuum by the hand of a genius, has come to inform dominant conceptions of radical practice. The success of Bürger's argument carries with it an inherent contradiction. Bürger's model dominates discourses of contemporary art and particularly the notion of radical practice to such an extent that artists are heroized for, precisely, their supposed critique of art institutions (including the institutional category of the artist). The art museum thus celebrates (and markets) the artist as a genius *because* he critiques the institution: a situation epitomized by the mass marketing of Andy Warhol via the 2001–2002 retrospective of the artist as a countercultural genius, in a hagiographic exhibition that was (for its Los Angeles appearance) sponsored by Merrill-Lynch and taxpayer dollars from the city of Los Angeles.⁴⁶ As I have already explored at length in my book *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*—although this phenomenon continues full force—Bürger's claim that "when Duchamp signs mass-produced objects . . . and sends them to art exhibits, he negates the category of individual production" is thus itself completely negated by the art- (turned mass-) marketing of artists such as Duchamp and, more recently, Warhol as geniuses of radical practice.⁴⁷

Particularly in U.S.-based discussions of postmodernism, New York Dada, and specifically the readymades of Marcel Duchamp, have been situated as epitomizing the cultural critique of the radical historical avant-garde, and thus as origins for a radical postmodern practice in the visual arts. This model provided a historical explanation and grounding for the effusion of practices critical of high modernism in the 1960s and, more specifically, for the emergence of the postmodern appropriation art

that burst out of the confines of conceptualism in the late 1970s. Duchamp's readymades, then, have typically become an offhand reference in discussions of art practices as diverse as minimalism and feminist appropriation art—a point of origin for any work perceived as being motivated by an impulse to intervene in the capitalist structures of the art market through a recontextualization of mass-media or industrially produced images and objects. The rationalizing logic of the market, these arguments suggest, was thus to be overturned by the simple gesture of recontextualizing mass production as art. While acknowledging how useful they have been for theorizing postmodernism, I am insisting that these arguments themselves have had a rationalizing force in that they have telescoped the chaos of a dynamic cultural movement into a simple, understandable, unilaterally critical aesthetic gesture: and one originated by a single (white male) author.

In my earlier study on Duchamp I pointed to Hal Foster's influential model of the avant-garde, which synthesizes such arguments and epitomizes many of the features of this type of theory of avant-gardism and postmodernism. Foster has elaborated his argument in numerous places, including his 1986 essay "The Crux of Minimalism," where he produces a heroic lineage of artistic radicality from the readymades straight to 1960s minimalism.⁴⁸ For Foster, who draws explicitly on the idea of avant-gardism developed by Bürger, the model of artistic radicality for the minimalist artists originates with Duchamp's readymade and its ontological critique of the conditions of art making, display, marketing, and interpretation. For Foster the critique of the institutions of art initiated by the readymades originates a trajectory of "repressed modernism" diametrically opposed to the Manet-to-Picasso-to-Pollock lineage established by Clement Greenberg in his 1950s writings. Foster sees Duchamp's readymades (and implicitly Duchamp as their originator) as ultimately generating a radical *postmodern* practice that "was able to break up the order of late modernism."⁴⁹ (By "late modernism" he is gesturing to the fixities of Greenberg's formalist model.)

This dominant model of avant-gardism is predicated on the erasure of the subjectivity of the artist—the messy and potentially compromising aspects of her or his sexuality and other biographical vicissitudes—from the artistic encounter. (I want to stress that this erasure is a fantasy, one that inevitably fails as biographical and bodily details about the artist inevitably haunt every discussion of the work.) As Foster puts it, minimalism in particular functioned as a "critique of subjectivity . . . as the grounds . . . for the production . . . of art."⁵⁰ As Foster's formulation reveals, the "repressed modernism" he posits is, in one sense, highly conservative: it is explicitly

Cartesian in its emphasis on a desubjectified, conceptual (versus interested, embodied), *rational*, readymade-inspired, and inevitably masculine set of practices.

In another sense, however, the suppression of subjectivity was aligned with radical theoretical ideas, in particular post-1960 poststructuralist notions of “the death of the author” (per Roland Barthes’s famous 1970 essay).⁵¹ The idea of the death of the author (the demise of the humanist notion of the centered, fully knowing subject who is the origin of his productions) was posed, and often functioned, as a radical corrective to mythified modernist notions of artistic genius as determining the meaning of the text or work of art. However, not only does this “corrective” have the potential to contradict itself (as I have noted, Foster epitomizes the tendency to reauthorize “geniuses” such as Duchamp), but it has also, as Anna Chave has pointed out, served within art discourse to facilitate an ultimately conservative, exclusionary model of what art is admitted into the canon and what is excluded.⁵²

The feminist art movement, gaining momentum just as minimalism and other conceptually oriented movements were beginning to dominate the U.S. art scene, thus strategically refused such desubjectifying and potentially rationalizing approaches, insisting on reinjecting the “personal” into models for making and viewing art (motivated by the slogan “the personal is political”). As Chave points out, none of the work of women artists exploring minimal forms in the 1960s, such as Judy Chicago, Mary Corse, Lynda Benglis, Eva Hesse, Hannah Wilke, Simone Forti, Yvonne Rainer, and beyond, are included in the canonic “Duchampian” strand of avant-gardism, even though they were intimately involved in the lives of and innovations attributed to the male minimalists.⁵³ Thus, the ostensible erasure of subjectivity within art criticism and art history has been largely disingenuous. Foster is stuck with an oxymoronic codification of what he calls a “Duchampian ‘tradition’”:⁵⁴ Duchamp—via the readymades—becomes the heroic origin for a postmodernism that critiques origins (and that leaves out women, queers, irrational aspects of subjectivity and practice, etc.).

The Bürgerian model of the historical avant-garde has come to dominate Anglophone discussions about twentieth-century art to such a degree that ideas such as the Duchamp to minimalism or pop axis have become completely naturalized. There are times when it seems as if Duchamp, Warhol, and other privileged white male artists such as Robert Morris and Richard Serra worked in an intense historical vacuum untouched by femininity, women artists, and even (in the case of Warhol) his own blatantly self-performed queer subjectivity. Fundamentally, any aspect of the work connecting back to the *irrational* flows of modernity and its subjects—to

the messy, uncontainable aspects of the artist's subjectivity and, inevitably, of the viewer's/interpreter's (the artist's embarrassing nonmasculine gender, nonwhite racial identity, sexual excesses and/or irregularities, or any digression from the critique of capitalism proclaimed to be inherent to avant-gardism)—must be suppressed within this model. In this regard at least, such arguments do not differ in their ultimate ideological assumptions and effects from the rigorous controls of modernity and modernism in their most rationalizing moments.

IRRATIONAL MODERNISM: AN ALTERNATIVE AVANT-GARDE?

To return to the provocative case of William Carlos Williams: the “Bohemian” Baroness not only threatened his sense of masculinity directly through her brazen attempts at seduction, but she destroyed the “ineffable” personal space (as Le Corbusier might say) that enabled Williams to retain his sense of self-containment and equanimity (as a family man but also as an avant-garde poet). In its full citation, Williams described the Baroness's olfactory effect as follows: “close up, a reek stood out purple from her body, separating her forever from the clean muslin souls of Yankeedom. It was that peculiar, pungent smell of dirt and sweat, strong of the armpit.”⁵⁵ Here Williams explicitly counterposes the clean, unstained and freshly laundered shirts (and sheets?) of rational, healthy, wholesome, mainstream American culture (as he fantasizes it) to the Baroness's old-world stench: she is disruptive and terrifying in terms of gender (a proactively heterosexual female artist with voracious sexual appetites, yet one who was queer in her excessiveness and bonding with lesbian friends), ethnicity (as a German, endowed with the very name of one of the best-known German generals during the World War I period, her father-in-law), as well as class (smelly, wandering the streets, and often overtly performing her abject poverty, notoriously refusing the personal refinements of the mostly bourgeois or upper-class members of the avant-garde). Her smell, more even than the sight of her strong, androgynous body, threatens the integrity of Williams's carefully maintained, new-world masculinity.⁵⁶

With the help of this marvelous, pungent figure—“La Baronne,” as Williams calls her—this book will, I hope, offer a convincing counternarrative of how we might understand (both historically and theoretically) the practice of the avant-garde during this particular moment and at this particular place of cultural practice (New York from around 1913 to 1923). Drawing on and, as it were, reperforming the disorderly figure of the Baroness throughout this text, I hope to provide a model for

understanding (or, more to the point, performing, enacting, and/or allowing for the resurfacing of) *irrational modernism*—a model that provides a new way of thinking about the so-called historical avant-garde, but also (by implication) revises our current conception of radical artistic practice.

This irrational modernism should not be confused with the fetishizing appropriative attitude toward so-called primitive cultures (usually from sub-Saharan Africa) on the part of the European cubist and Dada movements.⁵⁷ Rather, as the above discussion makes clear, I am interested in the irrationality that *escapes* the appropriative logic that itself attempts to rationalize whatever confusing, invigorating, “exotic,” or complex otherness is perceived to be attached to such cultures. The artist who fetishizes a “primitive” culture does so in order simultaneously to borrow from its supposedly freeing cultural difference and to suppress the terrifying effects of such difference;⁵⁸ the Baroness, conversely, provides an opening into ethnic, sexual, and class otherness (albeit of a still European variety), pointing to the limits of the rationalizing strategies of a male-dominated avant-garde whose whiteness yearns to be ethnicity-free in its global dominance. It must be admitted up front, however, and even stressed, that the Baroness’s own anti-Semitism, evident in her autobiography and letters, compromises any easy conception of her as a figure who destabilizes all aspects of oppressive othering.⁵⁹

It is also important to emphasize this author’s particular investment in the Baroness’s irrationality. The Baroness will be interpretively performed here through the eyes/mind/heart of a fellow neurasthenic: someone who acknowledges her own stench and confusion of boundaries in the researching and writing of this art history—but also someone clinically diagnosed with what I understand and experience as the twenty-first-century version of neurasthenia: panic disorder. Through such an interpretive performance, the Baroness as she appears here will reassert the confusing and unfixable vicissitudes of a particular performative artistic practice while pointing to the confusing and unfixable vicissitudes of the interpretive desire that reenacts her in a new historical narrative. In this way, I hope not only to come up with new ways of looking at New York Dada and historical avant-gardism (ones that result not from changing or challenging the “facts,” but rather from viewing them—and representing them—from a different angle), but also to argue for a revision of the very models through which we (historians or otherwise) continue to understand the past. Most importantly, the revised model I offer here embraces rather than shuns or suppresses the irrationality that oozes across the boundaries of any neatly formulated account of

these artists—of any account that would reduce their lived practice to the making (or, in the case of the readymades, appropriation) of objects and pictures.

Of course, I must admit that, in writing a book that will “take place,” as it were, between two (containing) covers, one cannot be entirely irrational. This book, then, will sustain the tension between rationality and irrationality, interrupting the seemingly “objective” passages of art historical argument with intermittent bursts of neurasthenic irrationality (admissions of my own overidentification, etc.). By the end, my identification with the Baroness will be so dramatic that the lines between “fact” and “fiction,” between art history and storytelling, between biography and autobiography, will be definitively blurred. The story will be embarrassingly personal—just like the Baroness herself—resubjectifying the dry, putatively “objective” narratives that comprise “proper” histories of art and culture. This is not posed simply as a “subjective” art history, then, but as one that attempts to expose the interestedness of all history writing—to expose the way in which all historical narrative takes shape through an intertwining among subjects.

A distinction needs to be made, then, between different degrees of rationality and irrationality. As a long-time, somewhat obsessive fan of the life work of Marcel Duchamp, I have no interest, for example, in dismissing the importance of the readymades or in labeling them as “rationalizing” in some simplistic way (although they have been put to rationalizing—desubjectifying—ends by Bürger’s followers).⁶⁰ While the Baroness will be reenacted here as a figure of dramatically useful irrationality, I will, in fact, suggest that the readymades and Duchamp’s machinic sexual diagrams (such as the epochal 1915–1923 *Large Glass*)⁶¹ labor in their own way to negotiate the “mad rationality” of industrial capitalism such that, in effect, they verge on exposing, though they never fully embrace, irrationality.⁶² When viewed in this way, these works become nicely freed from the onerous duty of acting as inspirational and even instrumental “origins” for postmodern appropriation art. They become elusive, and we are reminded that we can never, indeed, fully understand what or how they mean.

What I want to stress is that the readymades, when understood solely as critiques of the institutions of art, offer only one way of looking at both the potentialities of radical practice and the larger significance of the activities of the New York Dada movement (as well as of postmodernism, but that’s a topic for another book). And that this one way has become somewhat of a dead end, functioning (as it does) to exclude the messy, subjective, and disorderly practices identified in some way with irrationality,

often (as Williams's comments so usefully make clear) by proximity to the creative bodies of women, queers, colored, and/or otherwise "grotesque" subjects.⁶³

As Mikhail Bakhtin argued in his important study of Rabelais, the grotesque subject destroys "dogma" and "authoritarianism"; Rabelaisian, carnivalesque images "are opposed to all that is finished and polished, to all pomposity, to every ready-made solution in the sphere of thought and world outlook."⁶⁴ "Grotesque," countercultural figures such as the Baroness thus extrude from (and deny the containing power of) the very kind of rationalism promoted by Le Corbusier (his system being, if nothing else, a "pompous" and "ready-made solution" proposed to control spatial relations). As Peter Stallybrass and Allon White put it in their wonderful study *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, in which they expand on Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque as disruption, the grotesque subject is the necessary "other" to bourgeois concepts of high culture (which I am linking to bourgeois rationalism): "The high/low opposition in each of our four symbolic domains—psychic forms, the human body, geographical space and the social order—is a fundamental basis to mechanisms of ordering and sense-making in European cultures. . . . Cultures 'think themselves' in the most immediate and affective ways through the combined symbolisms of these four hierarchies."⁶⁵ This book, in these terms, will strategically focus on the "low" part of these hierarchies (via the Baroness—the abjected, "grotesque" subject excluded from accounts of the avant-garde) in order to trace a revised history of a particular moment in art history.

Irrational, grotesque subjects are those whose expressions and desires are uncontainable not only in the logic of mainstream European cultures but also within the restrained and restraining logic of avant-gardism epitomized by the reactions of Williams but also as embedded in the exclusionary patrilineage established over the last forty years in relation to Duchamp. If the readymade became the model for minimalism, conceptualism, and postmodern appropriation art, with their apparent evacuation of artistic subjectivity, the Baroness's disorderly urban flânerie (as well as her radically experimental poetry, self-costuming, and kleptomaniacal approach to commodity capitalism) might be the very lens through which to understand another important strand of late capitalist culture relating to feminism, body art, and other less rational—and rationalizing—modes of contemporary art practice.⁶⁶ In fact, I would insist that the Baroness's current renewed visibility in New York cultural discourse (see for example the recent fashion spread in the *New York Times Magazine's* "Fashions of the Times" supplement, with a model posing in outlandish costumes and la-

beled as “channeling Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven”)⁶⁷ testifies, precisely, to this confluence of attitudes.

To my mind, then, the irrationality the Baroness unleashes is far closer to the complexities of contemporary culture than the reified view of the readymade that has developed out of Bürger’s theory (so close, in fact, that it can, unfortunately, be marketed and thus completely defused of its destabilizing effects by the *New York Times Magazine*). Nonetheless, with some attempt to restore the truly *gross* and excessive aspects of her life and work, as here, the Baroness might help us understand how the messy, personal, and subjective have—in waves, beginning at least with the rise of identity politics in art world discourse in the late 1960s—begun to reemerge with increasing force to challenge the repressive boundaries of this restrictive patrilineal model of art practice and art history.

The alternative view of New York Dada, and of historical avant-gardism in general, which the Baroness allows me to trace here makes much more sense in relation to the profoundly multiethnic, sexually and racially diverse art world (and panglobal visual culture) of the twenty-first century, a world that demands some acknowledgment of the contingent relations among diversely identified subjects. I propose an *immersive* historical understanding (which thus exposes the contingency of its own production, the embeddedness of its narratives in the historian’s own historical fabric) that parallels what I will argue to be this irrational, immersive trajectory of avant-gardism or radical practice embodied by and through the promenades of the Baroness in the streets of World War I-era New York. For it is through a neurasthenic, *flâneurial immersion* in the spaces of urban industrialism that the Baroness ultimately most profoundly challenges the rationalisms still embedded in most variants and narratives of historical avant-gardism.

NEURASTHENIC ART HISTORY

There are at least two histories (which themselves splinter *ad infinitum*) at issue in this book, which moves from a more obvious level of history—more or less conventionally art historical—to an increasingly disintegrated narrative that overtly intertwines past and present. By the end of the book, it will be clear that the “obvious” history—like the less obvious one—has as much to do with the person telling it as with the “facts,” however those might be construed. On this level, then, this book is about *doing* art history as well as about this particular art history of a movement and

its works. I offer this account as an overtly neurasthenic art history—disorderly, irrational, and ultimately highly self-invested.⁶⁸

Let me emphasize my conviction that any history we reconstruct of this period, and indeed our whole conception of radicality or avant-gardism, are deeply informed by our own experience: in my case (I was born in 1961) by the reenergized social activisms of the 1960s and 1970s and the reinvigoration of critical theory with the rise of poststructuralism during and after that period. We can never view the World War I period as those who lived it did; those gestures of radicalism I privilege here must be understood in the light of my own experience of this later period of activism and cultural theory and my own thus-inflected ideas of culture and what constitutes political intervention.

In particular, as I have noted, my affinity with the time, place, and activities of the New York Dada group is personal as well as intellectual. As a sufferer of panic disorder, my *descriptions* of their neurasthenic responses are thus also openly admitted to be *projections*, empathetic attempts to inhabit, and also to identify with, their anxious, sometimes downright disorderly and antisocial behavior and creative expressions.⁶⁹ Anxiety is my mode of being. Sometimes, reading about Francis Picabia or the Baroness, two nervous (and nerve-wracking) characters who will figure heavily here, I feel attached to them by a hot, electrified wire of neurosis across the decades. Writing in early twenty-first-century Los Angeles (an environment said by theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson to be the quintessential site for the stresses and shocks of postmodernity or, indeed, of posturbanism),⁷⁰ I hold within myself, I behold outside of myself (the two collapse in people with neurasthenic/panic dispositions), the various effects of postmodernity, of late/global capitalism. It is with this metaphor of wired (electrical) connectivity that I wish to enliven this study of a group of artists whose work negotiated—rather than definitively overturned, subverted, or resolved—the conflicts of industrial urban modernity.

I am interested, then, in neurasthenia not as a medical discourse of managing (rationalizing) excessive or socially unacceptable behaviors and thoughts, but in neurasthenia as a complex network of bodily/psychic symptoms that rupture the subject's smooth functioning, propelling her into a heightened state of irrationality. To be a neurasthenic, suffering generalized anxiety and fear which can become incapacitating as they escalate into hysteria or panic, is to experience every stimulus of one's surroundings acutely as an attack on one's emotional and corporeal integrity; under such an attack, the neurasthenic is suspended in a state of terror and dissociation as the fight-or-flight system begins randomly to misfire.⁷¹ In theories of neurasthenia

from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the corporealized neurotic symptoms of the neurasthenic were seen as responses to the noise and crowds of urban modernity (as late nineteenth-century psychologist George Beard's work laboriously argued), to the horrors of trench warfare in World War I (per the writings of Sigmund Freud, Sándor Ferenczi, W. H. R. Rivers, E. E. Southard, and others), and even, as we will see in the case of Francis Picabia, to a self-imposed state of nervous exhaustion caused by excess socializing and drug and alcohol abuse (excesses that can themselves be viewed as attempts to process the shocks of industrial urban modernity).⁷²

Neurasthenia has also been intimately connected to Dada by its practitioners. As Brigid Doherty points out in her rich study of German Dada, George Grosz's 1917 poem "Kaffeehaus," written shortly after his release from a military mental hospital where he had been committed to cure his shattered nerves after a brief stint in the army, includes the lines: "I am a machine whose pressure gauge has gone to pieces! / And all the cylinders run in a circle — / See: *we are all neurasthenics!*"⁷³ And Duchamp wrote in his notes, "See Nietzsche's eternal Return, neurasthenic / form of a / repetition in succession to infinity," linking neurasthenia to the repetitions of machine-age labor and logic.⁷⁴ Picabia was clinically diagnosed as a neurasthenic. But, Picabia and the Baroness aside, the New York Dada crowd was in general far less likely to expose any such weaknesses than the violently expressive Germans. To admit to experiencing neurasthenia (rather than disavowing it, attempting to sublimate it, or slinking away to Switzerland to heal it—all understandable, but perhaps less productive, responses to its horrors) is to embrace one's lack of cohesion, and the impossibility of knowing others (whether historically or in the present).

If anything, the primary point of this introduction, and this book as a whole, is that none of its major subjects—art, bodies, subjectivities—are superstructural to social or economic causes. All are, rather, modes of being and experiencing the world around us; they cause as much as they are caused by the roar of police helicopters outside my window that functions for me as an aural sign of urban (post)modernity (my husband hardly registers the noises that, to me, are shattering). The Baroness knew that much. She wore modernity and its violent effects in and as her body. This history, then, is my history in more ways than one. I write about this specific group of artists both because this earlier moment in my view speaks so directly about some of the origins of our present difficulties, and specifically because their writings, visual artworks, and other remaining ephemera—especially the urban wanderings of the Baroness—activate just the kind of irrational modernism that I feel speaks most urgently and relevantly to the present moment.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

All historians of New York Dada face the problem of dealing with a seemingly insurmountable mountain of archival and secondary materials, all of which convey a smothering mass (and sometimes mess) of fascinating anecdotes. Particularly in the case of the Baroness, what we know about her is cobbled together from fragmented and usually hyperbolic descriptions of her various corporeal performances, as well as (more recently) from her poems and rediscovered autobiography, which itself is a fragment (its narrative stops before she arrives in New York).⁷⁵ How do we construct a legitimate or convincing history when we only have a pile of disconnected anecdotes (anecdote being, as Djuna Barnes put it, “the skeleton of life”)?⁷⁶ How do we construct the history of a movement from what essentially amounts to gossip, including chatty and often facetious stories from the art as well as popular press venues of the period not only about the Baroness but about her (in)famous colleagues Man Ray, Duchamp, and Picabia; self-constructed narratives later published about the doings of the group (autobiographies and memoirs); little magazines relating to their gatherings and productions; their visual artworks; other archival letters and sources?

As Irit Rogoff has suggested, gossip—in its immediacy and connection to “subjectivity, voyeuristic pleasure and the communicative circularity of story-telling” (precisely all the qualities erased by the rationalizing kinds of art history I am hoping to counter here)—offers a juicy and “gender-specific variant” on Foucault’s notion of the disruptive potential of historical genealogy, which he articulated in his 1971 essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” as follows:

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy . . . is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body. . . .

If interpretation were the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a new game, and to subject it to secondary rules, then the development of

humanity is a series of interpretations. The role of genealogy is to record its history.⁷⁷

Anecdote, like gossip, is a particular kind of language that inscribes the bodies studied here. The task of this genealogy (as Foucault puts it) is to “expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history’s destruction of the body.” Once again, the Baroness—who is gossiped about and produces her own gossip-filled account of herself, but who also enacted “history’s destruction of the body” (as Williams’s comments made so clear)—provides an exemplary model for recapturing a particular genealogy of New York Dada.

So much, I hope, is already clear. Briefly, this genealogical tracing will pursue the following particular logic: the chapter after this one, entitled simply “War/Equivocal Masculinities,” will retrace the particular links between World War I and the New York Dada group. While the group’s more or less retroactive incorporation into the Dada cannon automatically links their anarchic practice to the highly politicized practice of the European Dadaists (such as Grosz) working in the shadow of the Great War, the group, perhaps in part because of their strategically chosen distance from the battlefields, has not been discussed at any length in relation to that profoundly shattering context.⁷⁸ This chapter will begin to redress that gap, but also to complicate the relationship between the male artists of the group and conventional conceptions of masculine subjectivity at the time—conceptions that were, naturally, linked to the heroic figure of the soldier-male. First and foremost, the chapter will argue that their escape from the war at the very least must be seen as complicating their relationship to the notion of “avant-gardism” (since “avant-garde” is a term of heroic proportions drawn, in the nineteenth century, from military parlance, serving to position the artist as a cultural soldier marching at the forefront of his society).

The following chapter, “Dysfunctional Machines / Dysfunctional Subjects,” takes a topic well known in New York Dada studies and begins to dissect it through a series of case studies, specific works drawn from the New York Dada canon and here rethought in relation to the irrational side of modernism noted above. The feminized and broken machines constructed by the Dadaists (almost exclusively, it must be noted, by the men) seem to be prototypes of Chaplin’s broken feeding machine in *Modern Times*: they leak, misfire, and otherwise waste crucial “virile” energies through their dysfunctional forms. While not as overtly or as passionately and disruptively as the Baroness, these machine images and objects thus (perhaps inadvertently) allow some seepage; the machinic forms which should function to regulate and channel the

flows of capital instead leak. This chapter itself begins to focus more extensively on the Baroness, in particular pointing to her writings on machine-age rationalism and to her objects fabricated from urban detritus. The Baroness's found plumbing sculpture (the twisted plumbing pipe mounted on a miter and labeled *God* in 1917), with its trembling, broken, mouthlike orifice, provides one example of an ironic dispersal of the regulatory boundaries claimed both by modernity (industrial capitalism) and by its artistic axis, modernism.

In the fourth chapter, "The City / Wandering, Neurasthenic Subjects," I increasingly overtly identify with—and project onto—the Baroness as a radical urban wanderer performing a fragmented narrative that itself is flâneurial (art history is thus revealed not only as neurasthenic but as a mode of historical wandering). By the end of this chapter, there will be no distance at all between my panicked relationship to postmodernity and the Baroness's neurasthenic desublimation of the terrifying, destabilizing social forces of the World War I period. Casting light on the particular fabric of New York City—its byways, physical and psychic structures (as recaptured through my own contemporary wanderings, historical photographs and textual accounts, as well as films documenting the streets of New York from this period)—the chapter will nonetheless also cast such a retroactive "knowledge" of the spaces of urban modernity into question. How much can we ever know about what it was like to wander the streets of World War I-era New York? I inhabit the Baroness, as much as this can be possible, in order to find out.

The book ends with a melancholic conclusion. In Walter Benjamin's study of nineteenth-century Paris and its arcades, wherein he accumulates and examines fragment upon fragment of the detritus (objects, city structures, anecdotes) that comprised life at that time, it becomes increasingly clear how impossible it will be ever fully to recapture the simultaneously glittering and dislocating effects of the era in a fully embodied way. And yet Benjamin valiantly kept trying to recuperate something believable of this past—such that he ends up giving us an equally glittering, fascinating genealogical tale of dreamworlds and subjects reeling from the shocks of modernity, a flâneurial, broken narrative exploring the fragmentary texture of, but not fully defining, the fabric of past lives and the spaces of their materialized wanderings. Honoring Benjamin's strategic failure fully to recapture the past, I end by relinquishing any claims to having provided another "true" history of New York Dada.

At the same time, I will hope to have revitalized some questions about New York Dada and its various complex contexts, so that this book will be a valuable contribution to the study of this moment in the history of artistic modernism. I offer a new

story, and one that I hope will be perceived as being as glittering as those that came before—but perhaps also, as Benjamin imagines possible for his own study, may be seen as dispelling some of the mystifying lure of the capitalist (and late capitalist) dreamworld. In this case, I am most interested in pointing to the lingering rationalism of theories and histories of the historical avant-garde and in general within art history, a discipline whose practitioners often continue to grasp at certainties (and origins) and thus fail to resist the lure of oversimplifying the historical understanding of the avant-garde. If the goal of Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* is to awaken the dreaming collective with a "box on the ears," then the goal of this book is to dispel the easy answers that are too often called upon to explain this particular moment of our collective past.⁷⁹

Returning once again to Foucault, I would say that the Baroness, with her body understood as an "inscribed surface of events," becomes a natural object of my interpretive desire but also the subject I hope to inhabit through art historical, interpretive identification; she is the lingering trace of the historical disruptions that made the World War I period so traumatic. I follow her, as she wanders, in order to understand more fully the conflicted history inscribed there. In following her lead, I willfully impose this new direction on the history of New York Dada in order to recover some of its irrationality. As Foucault tells us, genealogy, after all, "is history in the form of a concerted carnival."⁸⁰

2 War / Equivocal Masculinities

The individual who is not himself a combatant—and so a wheel in the gigantic machinery of war—feels conscious of disorientation, and of an inhibition in his powers and activities.

— Sigmund Freud, 1915

There is a difference between sitting quietly in Switzerland and bedding down on a volcano, as we did in Berlin.

— Richard Huelsenbeck, c. 1920s

Els[α] von Freytag-Loringhoven [claws] aside the veils and rush[es] forth howling, vomiting, and leaping nakedly. . . . It is a blessing to come upon an unconscious volcano now and again.

— Maxwell Bodenheim, 1920¹

During World War I, the American artist Louis Bouché reports having seen a vision on the New York subway: a rangy German Baroness riding along with a French *poilu*'s trench helmet—perhaps the ultimate mixed metaphor of the Great War.² A German woman in a violently anti-German cultural context wearing a French soldier's helmet, the Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, in her elaborate self-performances through the streets and salons of New York City, thus embodied some of the most poignant cultural tensions of the World War I period. (She was even, at one point during the war, arrested as a spy and jailed for almost a month in New Haven, Connecticut.)³ As Irene Gammel, her biographer, has put it, “Old Europe, associated with old age, decadence, and destruction . . . was inscribed on her flesh and . . . terrorize[d] a young generation of artists.”⁴

Not only was the Baroness aesthetically and intellectually threatening as a poet, artist, and performative disruption to bourgeois as well as avant-garde assumptions, but she was threatening in terms of class, sexuality, and her perceived ethnic and national identity. In a sense, as Bodenheim's characterization implies, she embodied the “volcano” that European artists working in New York during this period had hoped to leave behind: the war and its discourses of heroic masculinity, nationalism, and patriotism. Impoverished for much of her stay in New York, she made no bones about scavenging the streets and wearing cast-off items as well as asking for money from her colleagues. Strong-boned and emphatic in her gestures and general

self-presentation, she spoke in a thick, guttural German accent. She paraded her vocal and bodily difference openly in the streets and artistic salons of World War I-era New York.

In addition, she adopted wholeheartedly the name and title of Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, even though she had been with the Baron a very short time before their marriage in the end of 1913; he departed for the front late in 1914 and committed suicide in a prisoner-of-war camp in Switzerland in 1919. By taking on this highly remarkable name, the Baroness explicitly aligned herself with a famous German general, the Baron's father, who was well known in the United States and frequently mentioned in the American press's accounts of the war.⁵ Not only generically "German," then, the Baroness would have been specifically associated through her adopted name with an enemy general. A volcano indeed!

The Baroness is a figure whose boundary-breaking performances rearticulated gendered and national identity to an extent far beyond that to which most of the male avant-gardists, their anti-bourgeois proclamations aside, were ever willing to go. A figure deemed by her cohorts to be "the first American dada . . . [and the] only one living anywhere who dresses dada, loves dada, lives dada,"⁶ the Baroness, poet, model, artist, and frequenter of the avant-garde salons, enacted the violent dislocations in personal and national identity put in play in the period. As Daniel Sherman has argued, at this time "gender served as a primary figure . . . for the social disruptions of war," a war for which "human loss had become the paramount sign."⁷ The Baroness performed an ostensible femininity itself dangerously tempered by masculine artistic agency and by the terrifyingly effusive expression of her sexual desire for some of her male colleagues. In so doing, she pointed to and exacerbated the radical destabilization of Euro-American masculinity during the war years.

In 1921, W. B. Yeats expressed a view of the world that corresponds well to the anxieties a figure such as the Baroness would have provoked among the New York avant-garde: "Things fall apart; the *centre cannot hold*; / Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, / The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere / The ceremony of innocence is drowned."⁸ This chapter explores this falling apart, this loss of a center, in relation to the work of the Baroness and her colleagues hovering around the Arensberg and other salons of the day.

In his classic history of the art from this period, *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression*, Milton W. Brown explicitly downplays the importance of the war in understanding this work: "The direction of American art was not changed by the World War. The events of the war found their way into only a fraction



2.1 Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven working as a model, December 7, 1915. Photograph © 2002 Bettman/Corbis photo agency.



2.2 *Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, c. 1920. Papers of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven / Papers of Djuna Barnes, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries.

of our art and if those years of crisis had any influence it was through the subsequent effects upon our social and cultural atmosphere. The war years, as far as art was concerned, were merely a hiatus.”⁹ Taking the idea of the war’s “influence” literally, Brown makes the obvious observation that artists working in the United States were not making work explicitly about the war. What he leaves out is a more subtle understanding of how an overbearing political and social situation informs, and is informed by, cultural practice. Even the excellent studies that have examined New York Dada in relation to sexuality and gender—in particular, the work of Caroline Jones and Nancy Ring and the essays collected in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse’s anthology *Women in Dada*—have noted but not fully explored the obvious link between the war and the ways in which masculinity and femininity were experienced and represented by these artists (in particular, by the three main figures of the group, Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Man Ray) during this period.¹⁰ New York Dada, it is crucial to note, would not have existed if it weren’t for the fact that Picabia and Duchamp, like Jean Crotti and others working in contact with the New York avant-garde, had come to the city to escape the war raging in Europe and its rhetoric of heightened belligerence and inflated narratives of male heroism and nationalism.

The lack of deep analysis of this work in relation to the impact of the war is paralleled by the absence of attention to the American context in studies of Western art during the period. Thus, the two major recent books on art during the Great War, Kenneth Silver’s *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War, 1914–1925* and Richard Cork’s *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War*, do not address New York Dada as a particular cultural phenomenon related to the war, nor do they examine the issue of masculine artistic subjectivity in relation to those who did not go to the front.¹¹ And, aside from these sources, as Philippe Dagen has noted, in studies and practices of modernism and the avant-garde there is a profound “silence” on the subject of the war in general, a willful silence that verges on “deliberate blindness.”¹² The association of war, and perhaps particularly World War I, with patriotic reactionism has made it anathema for scholars of avant-gardism to acknowledge the obvious links between the particular critical language of the avant-gardes of this period and the pressures and tensions stemming from the war. New York Dada is no exception: viewed as a cutting-edge avant-garde movement, its works are seen as political in an abstract sense (critiques of traditional aesthetics) but as otherwise autonomous of the social realm—unrelated to the cultural and social effects of World War I. In the case of New York Dada, it’s as if the artists were working in a vacuum, as well they might have wished when they fled Europe for New York.

What I offer in this chapter, then, is a new way of looking at the works of the New York Dada group specifically in relation to the pressures on artistic subjectivity (and particularly on masculine subjectivity, for the two were nearly coincident in this period of high modernism) stemming from the war. I will examine their works as visualizing the effects of an *equivocal masculinity*, one compromised by its distance from European ideals of proper, patriotic, heroic male behavior, hugely inflated by propaganda during the war.¹³

Duchamp and Picabia, who had worked among the Puteaux cubists near Paris, in fact both came to New York to avoid the war; Man Ray, an American, probably never imagined enlisting. Of course, the issue of enlisting was less of an issue for American men until the United States entered the war in the spring of 1917, at which point (in May) conscription was enacted.¹⁴ There are no records of whether Man Ray was drafted and, if he was, how he avoided going over. Either way, in Europe, and in the United States after May 1917, to be a young man who did not fight was a highly fraught proposition. I take this as a starting point, interpreting the destructive language of these artists' aggressively avant-garde works from the World War I period as deeply informed by this situation, which severely compromised their masculinity.

At the same time, following Dagen's insistence that the Great War permeated every aspect of cultural experience and expression in France, this essay also seeks to redress a tendency in revisionist and feminist histories of the war to theorize its impact but to focus exclusively on the experience of the men who enlisted or on the roles of the women who remained at the home front.¹⁵ The editors of the important anthology *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* note that "war must be understood as a *gendering* activity, one that ritually marks the gender of all members of a society, whether or not they are combatants."¹⁶ However, essays in *Behind the Lines* still focus on the men who fought or the women who stayed home. Following the editorial insight rather than the example of *Behind the Lines*, I focus on the work of New York Dada in relation to World War I in order to provide a new lens through which to understand the ways in which gender relations both informed and were transformed by the war—but in relation to *those men who refused to go to the front*. These noncombatants are the men whom Freud so pointedly describes in the opening quotation of this chapter as disoriented and inhibited.

In this study, then, I negotiate and, I hope, at least partially correct a double void: the absence of any deep understanding of World War I as a crucial context for New York Dada; and the absence of a theorization of noncombatant masculinity in relation to the war. Conveniently, this double void points as well to the way in which absence will haunt this chapter as a trope of noncombatant masculinity during the war.

EMPTY CENTERS

The war is our brothel.

— Hugo Ball, cofounder of Zurich Dada, c. 1916

Let us then be brave, as our sons were brave; let us be thankful that it has been our privilege to give our sons to our country and to the cause for which they so nobly sacrificed their precious lives.

— Robert Leighton to Thomas Brittain, June 24, 1918, on the loss of their sons in the war¹⁷

As World War I historian Paul Fussell has convincingly argued, and as the conflicting ideals expressed in the two quotations above suggest, *irony* came to condition the experience of modern industrialism as exaggeratedly epitomized by the “advances” in military technology mobilized in the Great War. Characterized by a gap between expectations and actual experience, irony in the case of World War I produced a profound shift away from prewar cultural beliefs and ideals; the war, Fussell argues, “was a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress.”¹⁸ (As Duchamp put it several decades later, “progress is merely an enormous pretension on our part.”)¹⁹

Fussell, like many of the important historians of this war, does not mention gender at all, posing the war as having affected all of the authors of English literary culture in the same way (transforming their experience of themselves as subjects of modernity) and to the same degree, although, of course, virtually all of his examples of writers are male soldiers and veterans. However, one can productively extend his analysis to feminist ends and argue that irony did its most crucial work in exposing lack: the loss of a central, coherent, and specifically *masculine* ideal holding societies together, moving them forward in a unified trajectory toward an agreed-upon goal.

Lack, as the feminist psychoanalytic argument would have it, is structurally bound into any myth of plenitude (as Parveen Adams notes, the “urge to ‘wholeness,’ far from demonstrating the lack of a lack, demonstrates the defense against a lack”).²⁰ Lack could be seen, within this framework, as motivating the very production of discourses such as those of “masculinity,” “nation,” “artist,” and “God” as a means of covering over its destabilizing effects. Through such discourses, the destabilizing effects of lack had long been quite effectively veiled in pre-World War I mythic narratives of European progress. It is worth reiterating that by “masculinity” I mean to refer to dominant—though admittedly continually shifting—notions of male subjectivity, which function to eradicate any suggestion of femininity, effeminacy,

or homosexuality. In some ways the flexibility of normative masculinity often facilitates its easy defusing of the disruptive potential of these nonnormative sexualities.

The most important point to be drawn from Fussell's argument, viewed from this angle, is that, while war functions in general to reinforce masculine and national power, World War I paradoxically set in motion experiences that served to unmask the absence at the heart of these narratives of progress, undermining their truth value and leading to a culture of cynicism and irony (a culture perfectly exemplified, in its most extreme form, by the work of the Dadaists). The so-called Great War, then, undermined not only nationalism and the corresponding unquestioned belief in progress that was promoted as part of untrammelled capitalist development but also masculine subjectivity, pointing to the fact that these three ideological and psychic structures (nationality, capitalism, masculinity) are intertwined and interdependent.

Bringing together these regimes of lack through an ironic visualization of absence, in 1917 Marcel Duchamp infamously submitted a urinal to the Society of Independent Artists in New York City. Entitled *Fountain*, rotated from its usual axis, and signed with the mysterious initials "R. Mutt," the piece effectively tested the boundaries of the Society's claim that any and all entries would, for a nominal fee, be accepted into its exhibition, which had no jurors (fig. 2.3). The piece was summarily rejected before the show opened (by whom, since there were supposedly no jurors, it remains unclear) but was then taken to Alfred Stieglitz's 291 gallery and photographed by Stieglitz. While this "original" *Fountain* subsequently disappeared, in its radical absence it has nonetheless—via Stieglitz's photograph, descriptions of the event, and later copies of the work—become one of the key works in the history of avant-garde modernism.

One might say, too, that Duchamp's initial refusal publicly to admit authorship of *Fountain* opens another hole, here at the "origin" of the piece—and so of mythic histories of Dada themselves.²¹ It has even been suggested by Irene Gammel, refreshingly against the grain of tendencies to construct Duchamp as the heroic instigator, via *Fountain* and other readymades, of a certain brand of Dada, that the Baroness, rather than Duchamp, was the "author," as it were, of *Fountain*. Gammel makes a convincing argument, based on the Baroness's scatological aesthetic, on Duchamp's own equivocation in an April 11, 1917, letter to his sister Suzanne (where he notes that "one of my women friends, using a masculine pseudonym, Richard Mutt, submitted a porcelain urinal [to the Society of Independents show] as a sculpture"),²² and on the tendency among newspapers at the time to attribute the piece to a Philadelphian (the Baroness was then living in Philadelphia), that *Fountain* should be viewed as a



2.3 Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917; photograph by Alfred Stieglitz. © 2002 Succession Marcel Duchamp; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

companion piece to the Baroness's *God*, an exactly contemporaneous work in which plumbing tubing is mounted ceremoniously atop a wooden miter box (fig. 2.4).²³ Whatever their authorship, both *God* and *Fountain* make *scatological reference*, via industrially produced plumbing supplies, to an anatomical gendering gone awry—pointing, through a different means from that of the Baroness's own cross-cultural, cross-gendered self-performances, to the massive dislocations in masculine (and artistic) subjectivity during the World War I period.

The Great War, I am suggesting, is the epochal event that hollowed out discourses of nationalism and masculinity, metaphorically informing the drain sucking away at the center of *Fountain*.²⁴ The loss of the center noted by Yeats thus translates into the collapse of nationalistic concepts of (masculine) honor and myths of European superiority and the progress of European culture. What *Fountain* pinpoints is the devastating and ironic separation of rhetoric from lived experience, a separation that served to open a hole at the center of heterosexual masculinity (and Frenchness, Englishness, etc.). With its hole the absent urinal, itself a male-identified industrially produced apparatus paradoxically formed of a womblike opening, waits for some kind of christening or defilement.²⁵

Beginning with the psychiatric studies initiated in response to the epidemic of shell shock among soldiers during the war, the shattering of nineteenth-century masculinity through the trauma of trench warfare has long been viewed as the war's primary and most lasting psychic effect (although, of course, until recent feminist studies, the issue of war trauma was not dealt with in gender-critical terms).²⁶ World War I, it is generally agreed in these studies, acted as a massive rupture between a nineteenth-century world of values, in which heroism and idealism were the touchstones of combat, and a brutal new world in which technology extended men's bodies in horrifying ways²⁷—ways that, paradoxically and with cruel irony, feminized the very bodies that were meant to be thus further empowered and phallicized. As Sandra Gilbert notes in this regard, "through a paradox that is at first almost incomprehensible, the war that has traditionally been defined as an apocalypse of masculinism seems here to have led to an apotheosis of the feminine."²⁸ The Great War transformed not only nations but also gender roles and thus the individuals who enacted the effects of both nationalism and gendered subjectivity. The specific nature of this war defines it as an epistemological as well as historical and political turning point in the history of the West.

The absences paradoxically at the "heart" of New York Dada (including the absence of an appropriately weighted acknowledgment of the crucial importance of the



2.4 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven with possible collaboration of Morton Schamberg, *God*, 1917; wood miter box and cast iron plumbing trap, $10\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{7}{8} \times 4$ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection.

war in its history) are deeply informed by this self-wounding through which Europe—and European masculinity in general—destroyed all remaining vestiges of the pre-modern world and confirmed the hegemony of industrial capitalism. One could argue that this hegemony itself was invented to confirm once and for all the supreme inexorability of the union of man and machine, man and capital. The great paradox of this ideological system, however, is that, precisely because of these unions, certainly aimed in some psychic sense at culminating in a final irrevocable suture of penis and phallus, the experience of the war dissolved the boundaries that had long functioned to sustain the illusion of heterosexual European “masculinity” as such.

The dissolution of these boundaries is precisely, I want to argue, what the dead space leading to the piss hole of *Fountain* is, in some perhaps distant but nonetheless compelling way, about (among many other things to which it may have referred or to which it may continue to refer in the imaginary of its audiences). The void of the urinal is the loss of a center noted by Yeats: the absence at the heart of masculinity, after all—tank and machine gun prostheses aside.

COMBATANT MASCULINITY

My thoughts were powerless against unhappiness so huge. I couldn't alter European history, or order the artillery to stop firing. I could stare at the War as I stared at the sultry sky, longing for life and freedom and vaguely altruistic about my fellow-victims. But a second-lieutenant could attempt nothing—except to satisfy his superior officers; and altogether, I concluded, Armageddon was too immense for my solitary understanding.

— Siegfried Sassoon, 1930

We had left lecture-room, class-room, and bench behind us. We had been welded by a few weeks' training into one corporate mass inspired by the enthusiasm of one thought . . . to carry forward the German ideals of '70. . . . The only dam against this loss [of nerve in the face of battle] is a sense of honour so resolute that few attain to it.

— Ernst Jünger, 1922²⁹

Siegfried Sassoon and Ernst Jünger represent the two poles of masculine self-performance characteristic of combatant masculinity during the war, perhaps too easily corresponding to the stereotypes of the “English” and the “German” characters. While the upper-class English poet explores his powerlessness in pithy prose, exposing it as the basis for his profound melancholy, the German soldier, a member of the

fascist Freikorps military movement in immediate postwar Germany, gladly adopts the armored phallicism proffered by German nationalism (“one corporate mass”) to shore up his masculinity (see fig. 2.5). The **flexibility of masculinity**, its brilliant adaptability to varying pressures, is exemplified by these two seemingly diametrically opposed methods of reinscribing masculinity in the face of the devastations posed by the war.

Sassoon reinvents his masculinity through a complex process of protest and reintegration, first refusing to fight after witnessing the carnage of his men and issuing a public statement protesting the war (“I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it”) and then submitting himself to a program of psychiatric care to “cure” his shell shock.³⁰ Sassoon is the effete literary man, the caring officer whose loyalty to his men provides the impetus for him to return, against his ethical will, to an unjust war. If shell shock was a kind of “refusal to continue the bluff of male behavior, . . . the body language of masculine complaint, a disguised male protest, not only against the war, but against the concept of manliness itself,” as Elaine Showalter has argued, then Sassoon’s return to the fold betokens its own kind of masochistic affirmation of “proper” masculinity.³¹ In this sense, the famous story of Sassoon’s protest and reintegration, which has even been fictionalized (by British novelist Pat Barker),³² proposes a narrative of reinscribed masculinity that is less obvious, but perhaps more insidious, than that of Jünger, who clearly takes a very different approach to the war’s violent challenges to sustaining the illusion of masculine inviolability at the base of male social power.

Paradoxically, as Klaus Theweleit, the German scholar of fascist masculinity, argues, even as masculinity falters at its very first contact with the homosocial milieu of the army and, more so, in the face of the crushing anxieties provoked by live combat, both homosociality and the homicide of combat are ultimately marshaled, within fascism, to reinforce the very masculinity they at first seemed to compromise. The fascist male, as Jünger’s statement makes clear, stiffens his “welded,” armored, phallic body as a “dam against” the loss of nerve in battle. Or, as Theweleit puts it, the soldier male of the fascist type “defends himself [from femininity or the threatening Red flood of revolution] with a kind of sustained erection of his whole body, of whole cities, of whole troop units.”³³ Although from opposite directions, both Sassoon and Jünger reinscribe masculinity. Through the very drama enacted by the processes of their reinscription, however, we can locate the equivocation of masculinity.

For those who fought at the front, falling into their prescribed place as combatant males, the war had clearly opened a radical incommensurability between the masculine ideal of prewar European society—the image of rational, civilized, restrained



2.5 A squadron of Thunderbolt Freikorps, known as the Deathbolt Freikorps, Bottrop, 1919.

Man—and the shattered masculinities littering no man’s land (where, as Rebecca West wrote in her World War I novel *The Return of the Soldier*, bullets fell “like rain on the rotting faces of the dead”).³⁴

As Eric Leed has argued in his crucial study *No Man’s Land: Combat and Identity in World War I*, the equivocating of masculinity in the war was due primarily to the enforced passivity of trench warfare; the narrator of Henri Barbusse’s classic war novel, *Under Fire*, connects this passivity to the repetitiveness of industrial culture, noting, “we [soldiers] have no choice but to go as the weeks and months go—alike. . . . We are waiting. . . . In a state of war, one is always waiting. We have become **waiting machines**” (see fig. 2.6).³⁵ The endless waiting, combined with the inevitable obedient rush to be slaughtered by the opponents’ machine guns or by shells, severely compromised the long-established link between masculinity and free will in post-Enlightenment European culture, not to mention the particularly French conception of masculine *élan* in battle.³⁶ The particular French attitude toward the war and masculinity, overdetermined by this antiquated belief in an inappropriate kind of individual heroism (a heroism that was, to say the least, not effective in the face of the industrialized militarism of World War I), was thus highly fraught, with the general tendency being to judge the psychic disorders born of trench warfare as signs of a feminizing lack of will.³⁷

John Dos Passos’s novel *Three Soldiers* makes this agonized state of enforced passivity, and its effects on masculinity, excruciatingly clear. Dos Passos himself, along with e.e. cummings, had signed up with the ambulance corps and so had firsthand experience of the front. His hero, John Andrews, who is of the educated officer class but has chosen to enlist as a foot soldier, rails at the “groveling promiscuity of the army”—the humiliating submission of men to the authoritative structure of the army: “all the tingling bodies constrained into the rigid attitudes of automatons in uniforms like this one; of all the hideous farce of making men into machines.” When Andrews sees a young boy in the countryside in France, he can only think of the horrors of the army’s deindividualizing pressure on men:

[the boy’s] lithe body would be thrown into a mould to be made the same as other bodies, the quick movements would be standardized into the manual at arms, the inquisitive, petulant mind would be battered into servility. The stockade was built; not one of the sheep would escape. And those that were not sheep? they were deserters; every rifle muzzle held death for them; they would not live long.³⁸



2.6 Endless waiting in the trenches: the 11th Hussars dug in near Ypres. Imperial War Museum, London (#Q51194).

As Dos Passos notes, the choices were grim: one could only be a “sheep” and sign up to fight or desert and face almost certain capture and execution (and indeed Andrews, who deserts in despair, is captured in the end).³⁹

Simply put, the loss of mastery under the specific circumstances of World War I was incommensurable with the previously dominant image of the phallic (self-possessed and possessing, rational and civilized) male of Western patriarchy. Carl Zigrosser was an anarchist art critic spurred by Friedrich Nietzsche’s masculinist call for self-affirming individualism to combat the standardization and group mentality fostered in the industrial era. For Zigrosser, World War I was “the downfall of individuality and the apotheosis of the herd instinct.”⁴⁰ The compromised masculinity of the trenches, in this way, explicitly paralleled the threat to normative masculinity posed by industrial culture in general, where increased mass production led to Taylorized bodies being submitted to machines and corporations, choreographed like mariottes held by the hands of capitalists.

Artists and other intellectuals negotiated these pressures in various complex ways. The German Dadaists, who so explicitly explored in their work the link between the voraciousness of capitalism and the bottomless pit of the military maw (I am thinking here of George Grosz’s World War I-era paintings of fat-cat war profiteers and corrupt military leaders), are frequently discussed in relation to their sophisticated critiques of industrial capitalism and their savvy exposure of the political and economic causes of the war. Art historical studies of the American avant-garde from this period, however, rarely examine at any length the role played by its members’ political affinities. In fact, as art historian Allan Antliff has recently argued, the rise in the popularity of anarchism in the World War I period, especially among artists, writers, and political activists, testifies to a broad-based politicization of the American avant-garde, a politicization that was in many cases (including, for a short while, that of Man Ray, as we will see below) made quite explicit.⁴¹ Writer Hutchins Hapgood noted in 1909 that, while anarchism in Europe “is mainly political,” in American it is “mainly sexual.”⁴² This evaluation, as we will see, rings true in the case of Man Ray, whose politics were not radical in a political sense and whose works were largely aimed at tweaking bourgeois conceptions of sexuality (though he himself, in his relationships and in his work, reiterated relatively conservative, heterosexist notions of sexual relations and identifications).

The loss of power experienced by men fighting in the war led, on the one hand, to a feminizing of masculinity through the epidemic of war neurosis, also called

neurasthenia or shell shock, and, on the other hand, as we see with Jünger's pronouncements about soldiering ("we are soldiers and the weapon is the tool with which we proceed to shape ourselves"),⁴³ to reinvigorated performances of phallic masculinity. There is an extensive literature, fictional, historical, and psychological, dating from the beginnings of the war to recent feminist studies, on the role of neurasthenia or shell shock in shattering conventional masculinity during World War I. Shell shock was linked early on to neurasthenia, a mental disease associated initially with the shocks of industrialism and urban life and linked, as a kind of masculine or bigendered variant, to nineteenth-century female hysteria.

Neurasthenia became a particularly charged diagnosis during the Great War as a synonym for a certain kind of shell shock when it became a label to characterize, as Leed puts it, "a generalized anxiety syndrome . . . a flight from an intolerable, destructive reality through illness" that was associated particularly with industrialized war.⁴⁴ As Anson Rabinbach has noted, the war exacerbated stresses on the psyche that had previously been associated with urban, industrial modernity, stresses, he notes, that were viewed in machinic terms as weakening the "human motor" by sapping its vital forces (the neurasthenic soldier-male, then, was simply an exaggerated form of the neurasthenic city-dweller, rendered effeminate by this compromise to his potency).⁴⁵ Interestingly, discourses at the time linked shell shock or war-induced neurasthenia to a failure of the subject's capacity to sublimate, to repress the terror of death and rechannel it into acceptable social behavior.

World War I-era psychologist W. H. R. Rivers, who saw a number of shell shock patients, differentiated in his work between war neuroses he classifies as "hysterical" (finding "expression in some definite physical form, such as paralysis, mutism, contracture, blindness, deafness, or other anaesthesia")—far more common among privates—and those anxiety neuroses (depression, tremors, tics, and suicidal thoughts) found primarily among the officer class; it is these latter that he groups under the term "neurasthenia." Rivers attributes the differences in manifestation to "differences in the character and effects of military training and military duties" but argues that the primary cause of both is "a conflict between the instinct of self-preservation and certain social standards of thought and conduct, according to which fear and its expression are regarded as reprehensible," especially among the officer classes.⁴⁶ Interestingly, then, for Rivers, each class of men suffered from what would have disempowered (or "unmanned") him the most: the upper classes from a loss of mental or rational control, the lower from the loss of physical power.

The soldier, then, was caught in a state of impossible contradiction: he had to submit himself to military authority—possibly killing or being killed on command—while maintaining his claim to social conventions of heroic masculinity. The soldier had to be both individualistic (self-willed) and completely subordinate to the state (the military). The foot soldier might have been more used to subordinating his individualism and personal power to higher authority; the officer class was clearly devastated by this aspect of the war alone: as psychoanalyst Ernst Simmel explained at the time, “his self-respect is sorely tried by unjust and cruel superiors . . . he has no individual value, but is merely one unimportant unit of the whole.”⁴⁷

For my purposes here, I want to collapse the class-biased distinction Rivers and other theorists of neurasthenia have made between the “cerebral” officer and the “brute” foot soldier to understand neurasthenia as coextensively expressed across the body-mind complex. While men of the upper classes may have unconsciously articulated their reaction to this stress through psychic rather than gross bodily symptoms, their bodies were equally affected; while foot soldiers may have been used to responding in a more physical way to trauma, their self-concept and view of the world were clearly compromised as well. Neurasthenia, I want to stress, is a manifestation of the coextensivity of body and mind, of the way in which bodily trauma is always simultaneously psychic trauma (and *vice versa*).

Leed comments of neurasthenia that “what had been predominantly a disease of women before the war became a disease of men in combat.”⁴⁸ War neurosis, then, involved a *feminization* or unmanning, which called for the state’s intervention (through these medical discourses) in order to remasculinize the soldier-male. Thus, in 1917 wartime psychologist Thomas Salmon wrote an extended pamphlet on war neuroses, urging the United States Army to take action: “the patient must be re-educated in will, thought, feeling and function. . . . Progressive daily achievement is the only way whereby manhood and self-respect can be gained.”⁴⁹ In approaching the problem of war neuroses, medical discourses thus often aligned themselves with the rationalizing attitudes we associate with the totalitarian state.

Combined with the horrors of mutilation, constant fear of death, rotting corpses, and violent mayhem, the effect of these forces on European masculinity was catastrophic (and included in these threats was, according to Abraham, that of the “homosexuality and narcissism” encouraged by the “almost exclusive association with men” in the military situation).⁵⁰ Grown men reverted to childlike behaviors perceived to be feminine, feminizing, or homosexualizing: in Sándor Ferenczi’s terms,



2.7 The corporeal and psychological effects of shell shock (war neurosis), as illustrated by Otto Dix, *Wounded Man*, Autumn 1917, *Bapaume, France*, 1924; etching with aquatint on copper engraving paper. Galerie Albstadt, Städtische Kunstsammlungen, Albstadt; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

shell-shocked soldiers “wish to be supported and provided for like a child . . . the primary motive for the illness is the pleasure itself of remaining in the secure retreat of the childish situation.”⁵¹ The helplessness of the feminized man, such as the soldier wounded in the penis who suffers the “cessation of genital manliness,”⁵² would mark him as simply pathetic.

In essence, the victims of shell shock enacted the massive failure of the processes of sublimation—a failure that was seen at the time in terms of feminization. The sublimatory act of channeling inappropriate socialized erotic energies into “civilized” behaviors, which underlies “proper” masculinity according to the Freudian model, is made impossible in the war situation.⁵³ The male subject, then, must either reject normative masculinity altogether, rearticulate it (per Sassoon) in terms of a sacrifice to state interests that is noble rather than pathetic, or exaggerate some of its tropes to the point of fascism (where, as Theweleit points out, the honing of the male body into an armored weapon of rationalism is carried to a horrific extreme in the state-sponsored genocide of those perceived as “other” to the ideal [masculine] subject). The reconstruction or reinforcement of masculinity often took the form, as Fussell has noted, of “gross dichotomizing,”⁵⁴ as if by a reinscription of Cartesianism the male body could be restored to its previous (fantasized) mode of inviolacy/invisibility, with the male mind transcendent, pure, and still centered in its link to divinity.

Both the neurasthenic retrained by medical discourse and the Jüngerian phallic soldier may apparently challenge bourgeois capitalism in some ways, but they inevitably return masculinity to its throes. The war neurotic (Sassoon) is returned to the front after going through therapy to remasculinize him; the already hypermasculinized fascist soldier-male fights the anonymities and sentimentalities of bourgeois capitalism only to become its most loyal enactor. Both bodies, of course, are disciplined more or less closely in conformity with normative codes of *heterosexual* masculinity, in spite of (or perhaps because of) the heightened homoeroticism linked to soldier bonding and to the male-to-male patient/analyst relationship in the clinical setting.⁵⁵

In contrast to Sassoon’s reinscribed masculinity (which starts off neurasthenic but is rechanneled into normative masculinity by his therapist, W. H. R. Rivers), in the case of New York Dada I want to understand neurasthenia as a nexus of hysterical or neurotic symptoms, as a manifestation of the subject’s refusal (whether conscious or not) to negotiate the impossibly contradictory positions of masculinity afforded

during the period of World War I. It is such symptoms—and the general eruption of excess and irrationality defined by the term neurasthenia—that interest me here more than the medical discourse of neurasthenia, which is more a logic of management and thus of rationalization.⁵⁶

The great paradox is that the war promoted a reiterative staging of masculinity that drew on ideologies of individualism, thus paralleling discourses of the artistic avant-garde and of anarchism and other politically activist movements,⁵⁷ and yet simultaneously reinforced exactly the kind of conformity to state control that masculine “individualism”—and particularly the masculinity of the avant-garde artist—is meant to counter. How can the male subject—much less the male artist—be a soldier and retain his masculinity? And, more to the point vis-à-vis New York Dada, how can the male artist *not* be a soldier and still position himself as avant-garde?⁵⁸

Dada could be seen as an ambivalent, and certainly not entirely self-conscious, negotiation of this conflicted terrain of masculinity. By no means do all Dadaist (or New York Dadaist) works produce some kind of radical critique of normative masculinity, nor even of state or corporate power. Dada is as fascinating and as important as it is because it intervenes in these discourses *but does not resolve them*. Seen in this light, Dada is as much a part of the construction—or deconstruction—of masculinity as is the military, though they are clearly working from opposite ends. Crucially, with New York Dada in particular, its energies were generated precisely by men who had escaped conscription, who wanted to avoid the war and its attendant (contradictory) discourses of masculine heroism and conformism. In the case of New York Dada, then, it is *noncombatant* masculinity that is at issue.

Given this situation during the World War I period, marked by the increasing assertion but also the increasing equivocation of Western masculinity, how do we understand the unarmed, noncombatant male body, staying back at the home front with the women, children, and old men? What to do with those who specifically labored to avoid any contact with the front and its corresponding virile and/or devastated masculinities? What to do with Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray, partying hedonistically in New York City from 1915 onward?

DUCHAMP'S "DEFERRAL"

From a psychological standpoint I find the spectacle of war very impressive. The instinct which sends men marching out to cut down other men is an instinct worthy of careful scrutiny. What an absurd thing such a conception of patriotism is! . . . Personally I must say I admire the attitude of combating invasion with folded arms.

— Marcel Duchamp, 1915

No one can put anything over on me! [On ne me fait pas marcher, moi!] I do not march for their modern art. I do not march for the Great War!

— Arthur Cravan, c. 1917–1918

No sooner had [Francis Picabia and I] . . . arrived [in New York] than we became part of a motley international band which turned night into day, conscientious objectors of all nationalities and walks of life living in an inconceivable orgy of sexuality, jazz and alcohol.

Seen from Broadway, the massacres in France seemed like a colossal advertising stunt for the benefit of some giant corporation.

— Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, 1949⁵⁹

It is not surprising that some artists were motivated by a desire to escape from the “volcano” of the war taking place in Europe and from the compromising discourses of heroism and nationalism that dominated public culture in Europe, to the “sexuality, jazz and alcohol”-filled orgies of New York City. As pressing as the war was as a motivator for such excesses (and for the move to New York in the first place), it has been most often viewed, per Milton Brown’s comment cited earlier, as at most a minor issue in relation to art made in New York during this period. In particular, the stories circulating around Duchamp and Picabia in relation to their work in New York Dada seem to aim at dismissing their noncombatant status as only marginally important to studies of their work or even to the history of New York Dada.

This gesture of dismissal is crucial in sustaining the identification of these artists as members of a cutting-edge, politicized avant-garde. The avant-garde artist, after all, is a kind of “soldier” on the cultural front: so much is made clear through the very term “avant-garde,” a military term that was first used in relation to artists by the radical social philosopher Henri de Saint-Simon, who wrote in 1825, “it is we artists who will serve [society] . . . as avant-garde. . . . We inscribe [ideas] . . . on marble or canvas; . . . and in that way above all we exert an electric and victorious influence.”⁶⁰ Artists are

the soldiers at the *front* of culture. So how can an artist identified as a soldier fighting on behalf of radical aesthetic intervention be reconciled with the figure of the evader or noncombatant escaping the war and staying, in the most cowardly fashion, at the home front? Primarily through elision—the downplaying of the war as a social and personal context for his work.⁶¹

On the face of it, the evidence we have of their lives in New York suggests that they did everything possible to forget the carnage taking place thousands of miles away, even when it involved their own family members (as in the case of Duchamp, whose frenetic late-night socializing came close to rivaling Picabia’s legendary womanizing, drinking, drug abuse, and fascination with fast cars). A photograph of Duchamp from this period, seemingly exhausted and inebriated and slumped in the corner of a bathroom, gives *Fountain*—as an appropriated plumbing apparatus—a new twist (fig. 2.8). As Francis Naumann notes, the picture shows Duchamp “exhausted after an evening that likely involved some form of excessive consumption”; he recalls Duchamp’s artist-friend (and, before he went to the front, fellow expatriate) Albert Gleizes’s criticism of Duchamp for such habits, and Duchamp’s response: “if I didn’t drink so much alcohol, I would have committed suicide long ago!”⁶² Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia reminisced that, when she and Francis arrived in New York in 1915, they “found Marcel Duchamp perfectly adapted to the violent rhythm of New York. He was the hero of the artists and intellectuals, and of the young ladies who frequented these circles. Leaving his almost monastic isolation, he flung himself into orgies of drunkenness and every other excess.”⁶³

So, while the war conscript lived in fear of death by the violence of shells and bullets, or the demasculinization of subordinating himself to military authority, Duchamp lived, worked, and socialized in New York seemingly untouched by the conflicts ensuing from his refusal to protect *l’union sacrée* (the sacred union of France, threatened by the belligerence of Germany) alongside his brothers, sister, and sisters-in-law: Jacques Villon fought in the trenches; Raymond Duchamp-Villon joined a noncombat medical unit (and lost his life for having done so); his sister Suzanne and two sisters-in-law joined a nursing corps. Duchamp-Villon marked out some of the tensions of the war era in a letter of April 8, 1916, to his friend, the American collector John Quinn (giving his return address as “with the armies”):

You know how little we are ourselves for the present, and you cannot imagine the effort necessary to evade by the mind, even for a moment, the world of the war. In fact, it is a world, really, which is complete in itself,



2.8 Duchamp slumped next to toilet, c. 1916–1917. Timothy Baum Collection.

in its ways and in its ends. / For what counts the thought of one man in this whirlwind, and, above all, what is that thought able to do? We are as far away from Paris, where some friends are working now, as from New York. Any connection with intellectual life and us is broken, and for an undetermined time.⁶⁴

As Duchamp-Villon notes, the trenches were, psychologically, as far from Paris and New York as they could be. The disconnect between Duchamp's circumstances and those of his brother could not have been more complete. The basic foundations of intellectual life, of avant-garde practice, and of the male artistic subject that went along with these had been shattered. Viewed in this light, Duchamp's obsessive plays with sexual difference, and his particular fixation on masculine (bachelor) impotence in his various diagrammatic glass pieces and notes, testify at the very least to his profound attention to the marks and codes by which masculinity performed and shielded itself, as well as through which it inadvertently proclaimed its ineffectuality and incoherence.

The story about Duchamp is that he was released from war duty by a minor heart murmur; he remarked to his friend Walter Pach in a letter of January 19, 1915, "I went through the medical board: and I am condemned to remain a civilian for the rest of the war. They found me too *sick* to be a soldier. I am not too unhappy about this decision: you'll well imagine." While he obviously could have enlisted in a noncombat unit, as did Duchamp-Villon and a number of other artists judged unfit for combat,⁶⁵ Duchamp chose to leave Europe altogether. Departing for New York in June of 1915, he was clearly eager to escape what he described to Pach as the "aussi bête" atmosphere of wartime Paris, where public spaces had to be darkened to avoid German Zeppelin attacks.⁶⁶ Duchamp noted to a reporter at the time that "Paris is like a deserted mansion. Her lights are out."⁶⁷ The 9 p.m. curfew in the city effectively ended the effusive activities of the prewar avant-garde, and the incessant talk of war put a damper, as Duchamp-Villon noted in his letter to Quinn, on any intellectual discussion or exploration.⁶⁸

As Jean-Jacques Becker has pointed out, to live in France during the war was to be submitted to the extreme pressures of national consensus, in which *l'union sacrée* was sacrosanct. Even the tensions between the conservative pro-Church factions and the socialist and anarchist anti-Church groups (often also Dreyfusards) which had fractured French culture before the war were, to a certain extent, dissolved by this national consensus.⁶⁹ The common ideological value of patriotism pulled together

previously antagonistic forces. Those who refused its call were not viewed with generosity or treated well: they were, by and large, considered traitors to the sacred union of the French state, a state in which the monarchic and imperial past and republican present were merged in the cause of fighting the enemy.

Prewar aesthetic debates that had seemed so weighty and crucial were made to seem irrelevant by trench warfare, although few artists chose to depict the war directly. As art critic Henri Lavedan noted, “the war, though invisible [in most artworks at the time], remained altogether present.”⁷⁰ The fact of Duchamp’s and Picabia’s avoidance of the war, in particular, would have been highly remarkable had they stayed in Paris and continued to avoid conscription. In Paris, able-bodied young men who were not in uniform were, according to myth at least, routinely harassed by young women handing them white feathers.⁷¹

Aside from Picasso, who rested on his status as a foreigner to avoid combat, most of the major male figures of the Parisian avant-garde were in one way or another involved at the front—except for those associated with New York Dada (including Duchamp, Picabia, Arthur Cravan, and the more marginally Dada figure Henri-Pierre Roché, a friend of Duchamp’s); these men escaped conscription in one way or another. Roché, a journalist for *Le Temps*, managed to avoid fighting by performing translation work relating to the war (he was brought to the United States to translate a report by the American Industrial Commission on French wartime industry);⁷² Cravan avoided conscription by continually fleeing to neutral ground, first to Barcelona, to New York in January of 1917, and then, shortly after the United States entered the war, to Canada and then Mexico. As Mina Loy described her ephemeral husband’s trajectory, “this dragonfly . . . would appear at different points on the globe defying the snares of encroaching carnage.”⁷³

The artists who stayed in Europe, conversely, were generally forced to engage in some fashion in the war and often became overtly patriotic; as Juliette Roche (Albert Gleizes’s wife and an artist in her own right) noted, she was dismayed by how easily Apollinaire and others were carried away by war fever, buying into rather than resisting patriotism and nationalism.⁷⁴ Apollinaire, the poet and supporter of Duchamp, his colleagues in the Puteaux group, and the cubists in Paris, had even applied for French citizenship so he could enlist; Modigliani attempted to enlist even though he had tuberculosis; and the 45-year-old Matisse tried to join up in 1914.⁷⁵ As noted, almost Duchamp’s entire family enlisted in one capacity or another. One friend of the Duchamp family, a student of Duchamp-Villon, described the atmosphere at Puteaux as oriented toward the war: “there were many discussions and arguments with friends

and other artists who drifted into the atelier . . . the year before the war. Already, it seemed possible, almost probable to break out . . . , and was much talked about. The Duchamps were very patriotic but definitely pacifists.”⁷⁶

The scene in Paris, even the gatherings of artists, was saturated by talk of war.⁷⁷ And other artists all over Europe—from Franz Marc, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Max Beckmann, Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Max Ernst in Germany, to Fernand Léger, Albert Gleizes, Georges Braque, André Masson, and André Derain in France, and of course most of the prowar Italian futurists—negotiated the minefield of the war as soldiers on active duty. Some, such as Léger, reveled in the world of the front, with its promotion of manly virtues, offering of homosocial bonds, and creation of a man’s world virtually without women (other than the prostitutes, nurses, peasants, and villagers hovering just behind the front line).⁷⁸

While still in France, then, Duchamp was an anomaly, and this would have been made painfully evident to him. He once remarked, with understandable resentment, that Yvonne Duchamp-Villon, Raymond’s wife, reproached him for being “behind the lines,” and he found himself the target of strangers who would spit at him on the street, in a visceral extension of the white feather treatment.⁷⁹ It would make sense that, as an object of such violent disgust, Duchamp would have wanted to take himself far away from such a context, one in which unquestioned ideals of masculine heroism and national glory (as Becker notes) had a death grip on the public’s consciousness.

So much is clearly suggested on one of the rare occasions when Duchamp wrote of the war, his note of 1914 expanding on the mechanical-erotic flow of the *Large Glass*:

Against compulsory military service: a “deferment” of each limb, of the heart and the other anatomical parts; each soldier being already unable to put his uniform on again, his heart feeding telephonically, a deferred arm, etc. / Then, no more feeding; each “deferee” isolating himself. Finally a Regulation of regrets from one “deferee” to another.⁸⁰

Duchamp’s specific, if oblique, statement “against compulsory military service” (as was in full force in France during the war and, after 1917, in New York) plays out in relation to the “deferred” body, broken in pieces and thus severely compromised, brilliantly and poignantly connecting military service to the deepest level of masculine embodiment. In fact, his comments seem specifically pointed toward describing the noncombatant (a “soldier” but one who cannot “put his uniform on”): the man with

“deferred” limbs and “other anatomical parts,” the incapacity that “isolates” the “deferee” and links him to others who have refused or been otherwise unable to go to the front. In the figure of the isolated and regretful “deferee” we have an echo of Duchamp’s own truncated masculine subjectivity, cut off—tragically and painfully—from his brothers, sisters, and friends active at the front but also (a point viewed with some irony on his part) severely compromised in relation to dominant ideals of masculinity being circulated in relation to the war. Castration (the deferred “other anatomical parts”) is not too strong a word to label what Duchamp is obliquely suggesting about the “deferee’s” experience and, one assumes, self-perception.

Duchamp’s veiled written references to wartime masculinity are unusual and thus revealing. In his notes accompanying the *Large Glass*, beyond his comments on the “deferee,” he makes reference to the “malic moulds” of the bachelor section of the glass as “hallucinat[ing] rather onanistically” in a “cemetery of 8 uniforms or liveries”—recalling nothing so much as a burial of dead French soldiers, their uniforms or servants’ outfits perhaps signifying their ultimately deadly service to the state. Close by, the bachelors’ impotence, described by Duchamp in a vivid castration metaphor (they are “cut by an imaginary horizontal plane at a pnt. called the pnt. of sex”), is linked explicitly—if somewhat obliquely—to the dead bodies of soldiers, impotent in their subordination to the state.⁸¹

Ironically, given his desire to escape the war, in order to support himself in New York Duchamp found himself in 1917 taking a 9-to-5 job as personal secretary to a captain at the French war mission in downtown New York; he noted to his friend Ettie Stettheimer that he was finally “going to be useful to my country” along with everyone else, describing himself as a “miserable bureaucrat who abandons everything he had loved and loves in New York for two years.”⁸² A “miserable bureaucrat” is as close to summing up the herd instinct threatening masculinity as one could get in this period of nascent corporatization and national consensus.

After the United States entered the war and enacted conscription laws, Duchamp’s aversion to wartime culture propelled him away from New York, which apparently wasn’t removed enough from the charged propaganda of militaristic masculinity and “100 percent Americanism” for Duchamp’s tastes. In August of 1918 he traveled to Buenos Aires, where he stayed until mid 1919, returning to Paris and then New York.⁸³ Duchamp’s deferral, his desire to escape not only fighting in the war but being anywhere near the propagandistic militarism and patriotism that accompanied it, was the most important motivating factor shaping where and how he lived from 1915 to 1919.

PICABIA'S NEURASTHENIC RETREAT

In America work of an artistic nature is possible where it is utterly impossible in Europe to-day. The war has killed the art of the Continent utterly. . . . The horror of war is everywhere. It penetrates to the furthest outposts. In America work is possible.

— Francis Picabia, 1915⁸⁴

With a Cuban grandfather, a Spanish father, and a French mother, and having been born in France, Picabia was called up for duty by the French army (he had neglected to foresee the usefulness of taking Spanish or Cuban citizenship). Hardly suited for trench warfare, Picabia made use of the contacts of his wife at the time, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, to garner a job as chauffeur to a general stationed at the provisional French capital in Bordeaux. According to his biographer William Camfield, Picabia's "incurable civilian customs tormented the general," who was thus happy to give Picabia over for a mission to obtain sugar from Cuba (where he had family connections). A contrasting story is told by French biographer Michel Sanouillet, who notes that Picabia lost his chauffeuring job because of cutbacks on extrinsics such as drivers due to the need for more fighting men, and was thus forced to lobby frantically—and successfully—through another family friend for a mission that would take him away from the trenches of Ypres.⁸⁵

Having obtained his mission in one way or another, Picabia embarked for Cuba via New York, where he met up with his old Puteaux friend Duchamp; a 1915 sketch by Stieglitz circle cartoonist, writer, and editor Marius de Zayas shows Picabia in military uniform looking genially out of place in such garb (fig. 2.9).⁸⁶ In New York, as Sanouillet puts it, "seduced by **this atmosphere** of insouciance and friendship, so close to that . . . of the good old days in Paris . . . [now lost] in a France entirely oriented toward the war, Picabia forgot all: his mission, the battlefields, equally his military situation and the punishment that he would incur." Deliberately "turning his back on the grand adventure into which France found itself plunged," Picabia stayed in New York and initiated his riotous activities within the New York Dada milieu.⁸⁷ Or, more simply, as Man Ray later noted, Picabia was in New York "for a lark, to have fun. Isadora Duncan was his mistress for a time; and he ran around. . . . Poor Gabrielle, always unhappy . . . but Picabia was like that."⁸⁸

At this point, according to Buffet-Picabia, his "total incomprehension of the exigencies of war might have turned out very badly for him if, thanks to his dissipated life in New York, he had not fallen gravely ill. He profited by a temporary discharge which, from medical board to medical board, carried him to the end of the war."



2.9 Marius De Zayas, sketch of Picabia in military garb, c. 1915. Photograph courtesy of William A. Camfield.

Picabia's nervous exhaustion (which Buffet-Picabia acknowledges was self-induced from their immersion in New York in "an inconceivable orgy of sexuality, jazz and alcohol") thus saved him from a probable court-martial and public humiliation.⁸⁹ Buffet-Picabia does not make note of Picabia's drug abuse, but archival documents (in addition to oblique published references here and there) sketch out a figure whose desperate consumption of cocaine, opium, and alcohol more than explains his extended bouts of neurasthenia.⁹⁰

More than anything, it seems Picabia needed to calm his self-induced state of nervous exhaustion by drying himself out (or, as one friend put it, going through a "deintoxication").⁹¹ One theorist of stress has provocatively argued that drug addiction "is characteristic of modernity. It is the correlate and counterpart of shock."⁹² We might conjecture that, for an avant-garde artist used to following his every whim and thumbing his nose at authority, the shock of submitting to the unilateral authority of the general whom he was slated to chauffeur, and to wartime ideologies of (masculine) self and nation, precipitated a downward spiral of self-abusive behavior. An addict of drugs and alcohol, Picabia chose to submit his body to a different kind of bodily stress, the "correlate and counterpart" of the shocks induced by modernity and war.

Camfield's story has Picabia, driven by his more or less self-imposed neurasthenia, allowing Buffet-Picabia to talk him into completing his military mission late in 1915, then, for a brief period late in 1916, relocating to Barcelona, where they were surrounded by other expatriate artists, including Albert Gleizes (who had been at the front earlier and was demobilized by 1915),⁹³ Marie Laurencin, and Arthur Cravan. Picabia began publishing his own Dada journal, *391*, in Barcelona in early 1917, returning to New York from about March to October of 1917 and then traveling again to Barcelona. In 1918, driven by his recurring "nervous disorders," Picabia went to Switzerland in search of a cure.⁹⁴ Here he ended up establishing a bond with the Dadaists active in Switzerland during the war, including Romanian poet Tristan Tzara, who was to become the ringleader of French Dada after the war.

The male artists promulgating Dada practices in Zurich, from Tzara to Hans (also known as Jean) Arp and Hugo Ball, were in a similar situation to those French artist-expatriates in New York: Zurich was neutral territory (psychologically removed from the "volcano" of the war, as Huelsenbeck noted in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter), and the artists were there to escape the war.⁹⁵ As Arp noted:

At Zurich in 1915, disinterested as we were in the slaughter-houses of the world war, we gave ourselves to the fine arts. While the cannon rumbled in the distance, we pasted, recited, versified, we sang with all our soul. We

sought an elementary art which, we thought, would save men from the curious madness of these times. We aspired to a new order which might restore the balance between heaven and hell.⁹⁶

Rejecting Arp's rather romantic stated aim to "save men from the curious madness" of war, Picabia produced outrageous poems and images that could be viewed as attempted purgatives. Picabia's work is acerbic rather than healing, subversive rather than aspiring, vicious (and very funny) rather than ameliorative. As with Duchamp, all of his work during this period is deeply informed by obsessive markings of gender difference. In a rare poem mentioning the war, entitled "Soldats" and published in 391 in 1917, Picabia thus associates soldiering with feminization:

Soldiers
 Credulous repeat
 the good occasion
 welcoming
 republican
 Three times
 one time more
 An idea
 nothing but an idea
 of candid animal cry
 Trompe-l'oeil
 baptized
 discredits
 moving muscles
 The day steals
 health
 life
 Hatred of infants
 in the war
 Siren's music
 cold kingdom
 of overloads
 Productive cultures
 horrible lamb
 of the crazed

avid constraint
 Of desperate attitudes
 the sick
 wall
 of the Feminine
 sex.⁹⁷

In Picabia's poem the soldier, who is first and foremost described as "credulous," is forced to repeat the "good occasion" demanded by the republic's repeated siren call; productive cultures and the artist/soldiers who represent them are submitted as sacrificial lambs to the "crazed, avid constraints" of the war, the true horror of their "desperate attitudes" and compromised masculinity explicitly symbolized by the image of them smashed against "the sick wall of the Feminine sex." As New York Dada scholar Nancy Ring has noted, the syntax of the poem "becomes more incoherent" as it progresses, its incoherence climaxing in the irrationality of feminine sexuality.⁹⁸ Ring concludes that the poem represents the war as "a traumatic destabilization of gender identity," which is certainly in line with my analysis. However, I would also suggest that Picabia is not only projecting his anxieties outward onto a mythical combatant, but is in some sense himself the *failed* soldier dashed against the wall of femininity; at the same time, as I will argue more strenuously below, he himself *identifies with* female sexuality. The smashing—and the feminization—are both of and by Picabia.

MAN RAY'S EQUIVOCATION

In August [1914] war broke out in Europe. We figured that our plans to go abroad would have to be postponed. . . . Wall street was booming; speculators were reaping fortunes in a day. . . . It was like a great holiday [in the city], all the profits of war with none of its miseries. Walking home in the evening . . . I felt depressed. . . . There must be a way, I thought of avoiding the calamities that human beings brought upon themselves.

— Man Ray, 1963⁹⁹

As far as we know, Man Ray never publicly or directly discussed the possibility of fighting in the war, though clearly (and understandably) avoidance was his primary strategy of dealing with its looming presence on the international scene and in New York in particular. For Man Ray, as for many Americans, up until the enactment of con-

scription laws in May of 1917 the war was primarily a nuisance rather than a direct threat: the above laconic passage from his autobiography is one of the only references he makes specifically to the turmoil in Europe (apparently more of an inconvenience than anything else). He mentions the war here primarily as a context for his “prophetic” painting of hieratically arranged men and horses, which he retroactively entitled *War (A.D.MCMXIV)* in response to the war.¹⁰⁰

As Francis Naumann, Nancy Ring, and Allan Antliff have pointed out, however, Man Ray’s relationship to the war was marked by deeper psychic investments than he cared to dwell on in his later reconstructions of this period. In particular, as Naumann and Antliff have each noted, Man Ray initially asserted his own individuality—or, as I would put it, performed his own avant-garde masculinity—by associating himself with anarchism. He attended life drawing classes at the Ferrer Center, also known as the Modern School, in New York City, a gathering place for political radicals such as Emma Goldman and Upton Sinclair. Here, Robert Henri and George Bellows taught a highly radicalized version of artistic modernism, and Man Ray came into contact with an avant-garde that promoted an individualist materialism linked to the anarchist ideas of Max Stirner and other major political theorists in Europe.¹⁰¹

Antliff, in particular, makes a highly compelling case for the role of anarchism, via Man Ray, in a certain strand of Dada practice.¹⁰² Certainly anarchist and avant-garde ideologies were felicitously meshed through the activities of the New York Dadaists. Resisting conscription, in what way we do not know,¹⁰³ Man Ray was prepared by his association with anarchism—as well as with his Belgian-born anarchist wife Adon Lacroix (whose parents were incommunicado in Belgium, trapped because of the war)—to be conceptually aligned with his French colleagues who were escaping the draft. Lacroix had recently gotten a divorce from Adolf Wolff, who was a friend of Man Ray’s, a frequenter of the Ferrer Center, a participant in a number of anarchist demonstrations (for which he was arrested and imprisoned), and a contributor to the socialist review *The International*.¹⁰⁴ In 1913 Man Ray moved to Ridgefield, New Jersey, with several other members of the anarchist group associated with the Ferrer Center, and soon married Lacroix. In 1915, Lacroix’s passionate antiwar poem entitled simply “War” was included in a *Morning Telegraph* article by a fellow Ridgefield intellectual, the poet and journalist Alfred Kreymborg. Lacroix’s poem is an explicit indictment of the trappings of nationalism associated with war.¹⁰⁵

Still, in spite of his anarchism, Man Ray’s relationship to politics was limited by his allegiance to a particularly American kind of individualism and contrasts strongly with, say, the deeply politicized aesthetic attitude of the members of the Berlin Dada

group. As he later stated to an interviewer, all that had counted in this period in the United States was “how much publicity you got and how much money you made. . . . There was no aesthetic movement really; everyone was out for himself. There were no ideas. When I came to Paris and suddenly ran into the Dada movement, these were youngsters who really had an ideal of some sort, that they were working for. A violence, an enthusiasm, a conviction, which I’d never come across in America except among anarchists, who were maniacs in their own way. I was interested in meeting maniacs.”¹⁰⁶ If Dada in Zurich was in an oasis of calm compared to the “volcano” of carnage and propaganda in Berlin, as Richard Huelsenbeck commented (see the quotation opening this chapter), the United States was even further removed.

Given his anarchist contacts and relationship with a woman so directly affected by the war, it is not surprising that Man Ray produced an image depicting the war as a result of the excesses of capitalism and nationalism. The September 1914 issue of Emma Goldman’s radical magazine *Mother Earth* sports an explicitly antiwar cover image by Man Ray in which the striped bodies of (political?) prisoners are merged into the stripes of the American flag; the stars of the flag are shell explosions, hovering over the heads of soldiers viciously bayoneting each other (see fig. 2.10). Oddly enough, given the fact that **Man Ray was Jewish**, he chose to place a figure of Christ on the cross at the top of the flag—perhaps an indictment of the hypocrisy of Christian ideologies of brotherhood, rather than a romanticizing reference to the redemptive power of Christian values.¹⁰⁷

In association with anarchism, Man Ray could have remained comfortably apart from war hysteria, justifying his decision not to enlist (or to evade conscription) on the basis of his ostensible political beliefs. But it is worth noting that even other anarchists such as George Bellows did attempt to enlist in spite of their open resistance to the idea of war.¹⁰⁸ As with Duchamp in Paris, Man Ray’s masculinity would have been equivocated in the eyes of the general public and the popular media, which supported and reproduced discourses of male heroism during this period. Man Ray’s inability to help Lacroix, who suffered greatly from worry about her parents, was one key aspect of his experience of the war, defining his position in the face of world events as one of enforced passivity. By 1915 Man Ray had met Duchamp, and increasingly his identification with the cool demeanor of this representative of glamorous European avant-gardism overshadowed the American artist’s commitment to radical anarchism.

As these personal histories of the cases of Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray suggest, the relationship to the war of the men in the core New York Dada group is far

MOTHER EARTH

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more ambiguous but also far more pressing than it is generally held to be. While their work can hardly be held to be as directly responsive to the war as the work of artists who fought at the front or who were working in Europe in this period, such as the German Dadaists (several of whom had combat experience), even Man Ray's work is deeply informed by the tensions of wartime masculinity. New York Dada is thus conditioned precisely by this equivocal masculinity; the works of New York Dada both reiterate and themselves produce complex equivocations of gendered identity, negotiating masculinity as a discourse through which mainstream ideologies of the male subject (linked so closely to ideas of patriotism and nation) were, paradoxically, both confirmed and destabilized.

NEW YORK AND THE UNITED STATES AT WAR

New York in war . . . is doing more than her share in the big job undertaken by the nation. . . .

Thousands upon thousands of women are now sitting at desks formerly occupied by members of the opposite sex, and so the complacent dictum that the place of the feminine person is at home has received another blow in the solar plexus. . . .

It seems natural [to] . . . pick out a dozen different foreign military uniforms in a walk between 42nd Street and the Plaza. . . . The first war tank from the trenches to go up the Avenue made a sensation. . . . Nobody is surprised to see a general or a colonel riding on a street car.

— Arthur Hepburn in *Vanity Fair*, December 1917¹⁰⁹

As Hepburn's essay suggests, New York was thoroughly saturated by war and its effects by late 1917 (the United States had officially entered the war in the spring of 1917). The conceptual and literal presence of signs and symbols of the war, interestingly, is marked by gender dislocations: Hepburn spends a good quarter of the article discussing the new empowerments of the women put to work in war industries and as replacements for men at the front. A subsequent *Vanity Fair* essay by L. L. Jones, entitled "When Women Run Things: A Glimpse into a Feminine Future," notes that "Woman" will soon come into her own and that "I do not mean in the matter of political rights merely. . . . I mean in the whole domain of social and personal relations."¹¹⁰ The war era not only provoked newly internationalized discourses of American patriotism after the U.S. entry into the war, but encouraged a burgeoning of public discussions about gender roles and relations.

The absence of the war, or its apparent distance and unreality, had been, one could argue, the determining factor drawing European artists to New York at the

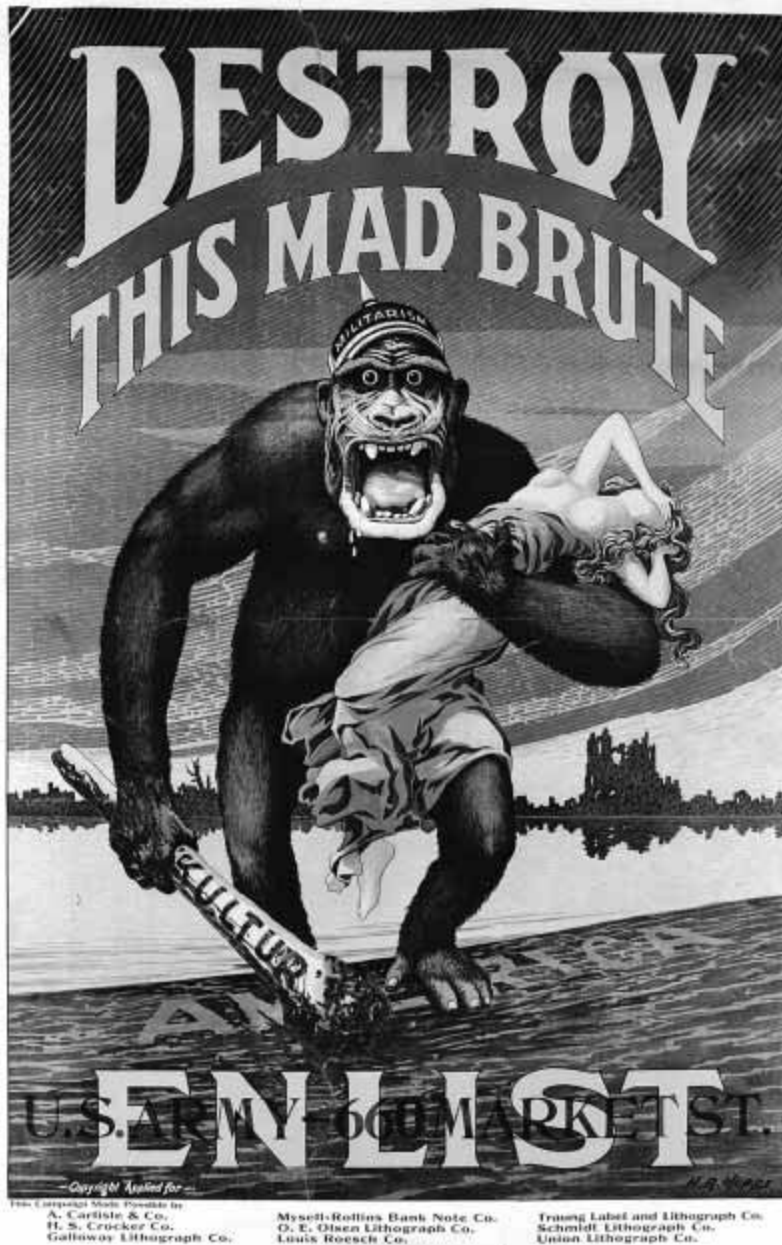
beginning of the war. New York became a haven for displaced avant-garde artists, marking the beginning of the shift away from a European to an American hegemony in the visual arts.¹¹¹ The burgeoning New York art world, however, was hardly completely free of the chilling touch of the war, especially after the 1915 sinking of the British liner *Lusitania*, carrying 128 American passengers, and everything changed with the U.S. entry into the war, followed by the enactment of the Espionage Act (which outlawed opposition to the war) in June of 1917. In the streets of New York (filled with soldiers, almost daily parades [see fig. 2.11],¹¹² and an occasional ostentatious tank), at recruiting stands, and on numerous colorful propaganda posters, in the salons and little magazines, as well as in newspapers and popular magazines such as *Vanity Fair*, the war now became ubiquitous. The posters were particularly hyperbolic: one includes the text “Beat Back the Hun with Liberty Bonds” and depicts a gruesome dark beast looming forward with blood on his hands and a bayonet; another, even less subtle, a recruiting poster for the U.S. Army, shows a slaver gorilla with German military helmet, blood-covered hands, and club (inscribed with the word “Kultur”) carrying a prostrate, half-naked white woman, with the text “**Destroy This Mad Brute** / Enlist, U.S. Army” (fig. 2.12).¹¹³ And a gigantic full-scale **replica of a warship**, the “U.S.S. Recruit,” was lodged in the middle of Union Square to advertise a **recruiting station** (fig. 2.13).

Not only was the atmosphere increasingly saturated with talk of war, but non-citizens (in particular Germans like the Baroness) were viewed with growing suspicion as American patriotism obliterated common sense and tolerance (those identifying themselves as “100 percent Americanizers,” historian John Higham has noted, “opened a frontal assault on foreign influence in American life”).¹¹⁴ (Needless to say, in the wake of the destruction of the World Trade Towers on September 11, 2001, such excesses seem all too familiar as the U.S. retreats once again into xenophobia and the limiting of civil liberties.)

In the World War I period, lower-class immigrants were singled out, as always, for particularly overt oppressions, and all Germans, in the words of historian David M. Kennedy, “found themselves the victims of a brainless fury that knew few restraints.”¹¹⁵ It is not surprising that the Baroness was arrested during this period and briefly jailed. With the entry of the United States into the war, American culture was suddenly fully galvanized. While *The Masses* still promoted antiwar messages (such as the succinct cartoon showing a soldier with no head and the caption “Army Medical Examiner: ‘At last a perfect soldier!’”) by 1917 many socialists and other former radicals had allied themselves with Wilson’s administration, supporting the war effort.¹¹⁶



2.11 *War Scenes, World War I—Fighting 69 (with Sweethearts on Their Way to France)*, 1919. Museum of the City of New York; Print Archives.



2.12 H. R. Hopps, *Destroy this Mad Brute*, c. 1917. United States recruiting poster. Imperial War Museum in London (#Q82583).



2.13 *Union Square, World War I Bond Drive* ("U.S.S. Recruit" installed in Union Square), c. 1917.
Museum of the City of New York, The Leonard Hassam Bogart Collection.

Vanity Fair, whose president, Frank Crowninshield, was known to appear at the Arensberg and other avant-garde salons on occasion, provides an interesting case study of the attitudes of the New York popular press, though it must be noted that *Vanity Fair* is not broadly typical of the popular press in the sense that the magazine was targeted to a relatively elite audience.¹¹⁷ In September of 1914 (the war had started in August) *Vanity Fair* was filled with the portraits of the leaders of the “embattled” nations, and frivolous articles on “Fall Fashions in the Balkan War Zone.” Every issue from that point on included numerous articles, fashion spreads, and celebrity reports relating to the war (as well as essays on feminism and “women’s evolution towards an always greater maturity of heart and spirit,” in the words of essayist Bergeret).¹¹⁸ From 1915 on, Frederick James Gregg wrote extensively on the war and on issues relating to feminism; in 1916 Marcel Prévost published an article on artists joining the war effort.¹¹⁹

With increasing enthusiasm after the U.S. entered the war in April of 1917, the magazine documented and purveyed the confluence of the fine arts and the war, with intermittent essays on feminism—confirming the meshing of terms I have outlined here. Advertisements in the magazine, especially in 1917 and 1918, continually drew on the figure of the soldier hero to sell products, from *McClure’s Magazine* to Fisk Tire Service and Gorham silverware, and the magazine’s cover was frequently illustrated with pictures relating to the war.¹²⁰ By March 1918, the propagandistic role of the magazine had been consolidated: the contents/masthead page is topped by a U.S. Navy recruiting poster announcing “All Together!,” with an array of soldiers beckoning, and the banner: “VANITY FAIR / Every Issue is a Boost for the **Morale of the Nation**” (see fig. 2.14). This shift in the tone of *Vanity Fair*’s coverage of war issues, from mocking detachment to overheated patriotism, is evidence of the country’s rapid and comprehensive transformation from isolationism to chauvinistic belligerence.

Vanity Fair’s concerns, and its often trivializing approach to the war, were to a certain extent paralleled by the little magazines published by the avant-garde, though these tended to take a more acerbic (or, in the case of the Dada magazines, oblique and outrageous) approach to the war. The short-lived avant-garde literary journal *Rogue* included ongoing columns and cartoons about the war, remarking in a facetious tone that would have had no place in a contemporaneous European publication, “next to ROGUE, the matter of most importance is the war.”¹²¹

The salons themselves were populated by characters who had varying relationships to the war. In addition to the expatriate artists trying to avoid conscription, a renowned expert on war neurosis and Director of the U.S. Army Neuropsychiatric

ALL TOGETHER!



From a Photo by LIEUT. HENRY BERTHOUD, U.S.A.F., Taken by the United States Navy

VANITY FAIR

Every Issue Is a Boost for the Morale of the Nation

MARCH 1918

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Training School, Dr. Elmer Ernest Southard, participated in the Arensbergs' salon, frequented regularly by our triumvirate. It is impossible to say whether he engaged with the visiting artists and writers in discussions about the shattering psychological effects of the war on soldiers; given the tendency among these artists to avoid situations in which the war was at issue, it is possible that he kept mum and only analyzed their dreams.¹²² Interestingly, in relation to Southard, Duchamp cryptically notes in a letter to Louise Arensberg of January 7, 1918, "my greetings to Dr. Southard and apologies to him for not having worn out his uniform."¹²³ While Duchamp is apparently making a humorous comment about his failure to be an ideal object of psychiatric analysis for Dr. Southard, who would perhaps have worn the uniform of a military doctor, the reference to *uniform* loops us back to *Duchamp's* failure to wear one (and, continuing this train of thought, it is this failure that makes him an inappropriate patient for this specialist in war neuroses).

Gammel, whose recent biography of the Baroness provides one of the best and most lively accounts of the New York salon scene to date, notes that the group of artists assembled at the Arensbergs' and frequenting 291 and the other avant-garde spaces active at the time were, to a certain extent, escaping the war by "drugging themselves with sex, alcohol, and peyote," as exemplified in the excesses of Duchamp's inebriation, Picabia's fast living and driving, and Mabel Dodge's infamous peyote party at the outbreak of war.¹²⁴ Such excesses, I am suggesting, are linked to the male artists' attempts to escape the pressures of the war, pressures born of discourses of proper masculinity that were intimately related to ideologies of nationalism.

It is important for me to stress that I am by no means intending to cast aspersions on these men for trying to avoid the war—far from it (at any rate, that would simply be to buy into the very patriotic ideologies of the period that I am trying to understand). Men had every reason to avoid at all costs the traumatic psychic pressures exerted by discourses of nationalism and proper masculinity—not to mention the likelihood of being butchered at the front. My point is that, in laboring to escape these, they did not avoid compromising their masculinity. To the contrary, the remainder of this chapter will point to the ways in which their masculinity failed to read coherently at all. As Dos Passos's Andrews notes in the quotation above, "those that were not sheep [and refused to fight] . . . were deserters; every rifle muzzle held death for them; they would not live long." While Andrews's prediction is too melodramatic to fit the case of these artists, the fierceness of his conviction points to the profundity of the effects of the psychic and social pressures experienced by European and American men during the war.

PICTURING MASCULINITY

The time I spent in the stranglehold of militarism was a period of constant resistance—and I know there was not one thing I did which did not utterly disgust me.

— George Grosz to Robert Bell, after being discharged from active service, September 1915

More oppressive than anything else is the strain of war and the prevailing shallowness. It is like a murderous carnival. . . . We ourselves are now like the tarts I'm painting.

— Ernst Kirchner in 1916 after being at the front and being discharged for neurasthenia¹²⁵

On the contrast between combatant and noncombatant masculinity, pictures might say more than words. Two 1915 images bespeak the varied responses to the shocks to masculinity during World War I: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Self-Portrait as a Soldier* speaks of the shock of the enlisted soldier (fig. 2.15); Francis Picabia's *Fille née sans mère* (Girl born without a mother), more obliquely, of masculinity compromised by a refusal to fight (fig. 2.16).¹²⁶ These images mark, **even exaggerate**, a certain dramatic difference between the man who went and the man who didn't—each of whom nonetheless experienced a neurasthenic disruption of his masculinity.

Kirchner's soldier is presumably a self-portrait, although Kirchner himself was not physically wounded during the war. After propelling himself into a state of nervous exhaustion and periodic anxiety attacks from heavy drinking and "irregular" living (just like Picabia), Kirchner had volunteered for service as a driver in the artillery in July of 1915 and had a breakdown in October 1915; finally, after three trips to a sanatorium, Kirchner obtained a discharge from the army and moved to Switzerland in 1917.¹²⁷ It was surely the oppression of the army as much as the fear of death itself that generated Kirchner's breakdown (particularly since Kirchner was not on active combat duty but an ambulance driver). Brigid Doherty convincingly argues this point in relation to Kirchner's compatriots, the German Dadaists George Grosz and John Heartfield, noting that they broke down not in battle but "in the face of authority" before even going to the trenches; she quotes Heartfield's brother Wieland Herzfelde: "almost worse than the idea of death or being crippled was the dread of [the] Prussian barracks drill."¹²⁸ As Dos Passos's novel made clear, the demasculinizing effects of submitting to military authority (particularly, it seems, of the rigid, Prussian variety) were devastating to these German artists.

Kirchner stands in the forefront of the painting in uniform, holding up his right arm, severed at the wrist and dripping from the still-fresh wound; his clawlike left hand is lifted. Cigarette drooping from dispirited mouth and blood dripping from



2.15 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, 1915; oil on canvas, 69.2 × 61 cm. Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Ohio. Charles F. Olney Fund, 1950; © Ingeborg and Dr. Wolfgang Henze-Ketterer, Wichtrach/Bern, Switzerland.

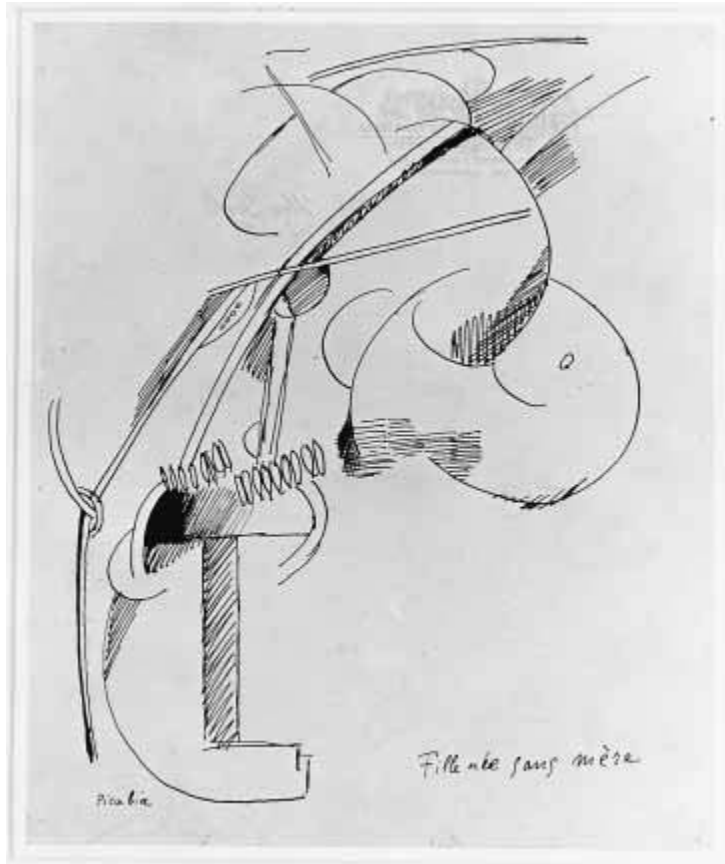
truncated right arm, Kirchner's castration is held up, painfully, as a sign of both sexual and artistic impotence; these are exaggerated by the appearance in the background of a blood-red painting and an androgynous naked woman, her skin as jaundiced and harshly rendered as that stretched across the soldier's own bony, blank-eyed face.¹²⁹

As Kirchner said in a letter of December 1915 of his fear of being called back to the front (presumably before he obtained his discharge), "new draft calls of the reserves stay close at my heels and who knows when they will stick me in again, and then one can't work any more, one is more afraid of that than any prostitute."¹³⁰ Nothing—not even a sexually active woman selling her body on the open market—could be as terrifying as trench warfare (or, one guesses, as potentially shattering to European masculinity); and we remember that for Kirchner, per his 1916 quote at the opening of this section, trench warfare turns men into "tarts."¹³¹ Having been forced to imagine his own death, Kirchner seems to watch himself with great fear as his masculinity dribbles away through neurasthenic effusions of castration anxiety, confirming Freud's pronouncement, in his own 1915 response to the war, that, "our own death is indeed unimaginable, and whenever we make the attempt to imagine it we can perceive that we really survive as spectators."¹³²

The mood and gender alignments couldn't be more different in Picabia's *Fille née sans mère*. Picabia, as noted, left France on a military mission in April of 1915; when he arrived in New York, he met up with his friend Duchamp and other members of the burgeoning avant-garde and stayed. New York was appealing not only for its neutrality (nominally, until mid 1917) but because it seemed so distant from the traumatic physical and psychic effects of the war. As Picabia himself noted in a poem describing the salon scene in the city during this period and entitled "Bad Girls and Great Men at the Arensbergs'," the absence of soldiers gave the New York avant-garde a kind of "purity" derived from the cleansing of stress and "enigma":

Charming spectacle
Of big nonchalant girls
Charming spectacle
Of chess players
Charming spectacle
Of dancers

In the studio of my friends
There is no enigma



2.16 Francis Picabia, *Fille née sans mère* (Girl born without a mother), 1915; pen and ink on paper. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Alfred Stieglitz Collection; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP Paris.

In the studio of my friends
There is no soldier
 In the studio of my friends
 All eyes are pure.¹³³

Picabia's *Fille née sans mère*, then, extrudes from a vastly different environment from that of war-torn Europe; she issues forth "sans mère," from the hand of a man who has refused to engage in the war, produced in the hothouse of a bohemian social scene (the Arensberg salon) where there is *explicitly* "no soldier." Vaguely mechanical, a line drawing with hatchings and broken springs that poke forth as genital projections, she is nonetheless gesturally rendered rather than engineering-precise—a machine that cannot work. With a dysfunctional set of springs/penis, she is a castrated male, and also a motherless one.¹³⁴ The *Fille*, in fact, relates directly to Picabia's shattered masculinity. The image was published in Picabia's collection of poems by the same name, printed and distributed in 1918 and dedicated to the American, French, and Swiss doctors who cured (or at least ameliorated the effects of) his neurasthenia.¹³⁵

Picabia and Kirchner both suffered from neurasthenia, at least partly self-imposed but exacerbated by the war situation. Whether there was some internal conflict leading each of them to self-medicate and/or womanize themselves into a state of nervous exhaustion can never be fully known—chances are they hardly knew of such causes themselves. But, through the lens I am providing here, it is tempting to hypothesize that both Picabia and Kirchner were negotiating a kind of masculinity severely compromised by their decision to avoid combat; drinking and drugs might help mask the kind of self-doubt and anguish provoked by the total disjunction between one's behavior (and self-identifications?) and the norms of masculinity in the culture at large. Disgust at the overwhelming consensus supporting such norms would, of course, provide another motivation for such neurasthenia-inducing behavior. As Kirchner's comments make clear, the equivocated male, whether combatant or not, found himself collapsed into (identified and identifying with) the prostitute.

The dangers to masculinity were not only those perceived as residing in women's bodies. Trench warfare's threat of bodily harm, of penetrating the phallic body and causing it to flow and leak, was one thing—at least partially accommodated to normative structures of masculinity through reiterated tropes of "male bonding"—the feminizing of the noncombatant man was another. Not fighting in combat with or against other men, paradoxically the draft dodger, neurasthenic noncombatant, or (in Picabia's case) AWOL conscript would have put himself in a compromised

position with other “available” men. Picabia’s womanizing might have been (who knows?) unconsciously oriented toward obliterating himself in otherness (identifying *with*— rather than, as for Kirchner, trying, if failing, to pose himself against—the feminine position of remaining on the home front).¹³⁶ That the masculinities negotiated, avoided, and/or reiterated by Kirchner and Picabia are resolutely heterosexual points not to the absence of homosocial bonds and tensions among men during this period but to the lingering heteronormativity of their gendered imagery (and thus of their self-perception and self-construction).

The anxieties provoked by wartime gender dislocations are not only expressed in relation to sexually voracious women, then; they are also played out in relation to the tantalizing possibilities laid open in relation to the enforced proximity to other men, whether in the army (as suggested earlier in my discussion of psychoanalytic discourses of neurasthenia) or in a still war-neutral nation’s roiling salons and parties filled with other questionably masculinized noncombatant male expatriates and the many women who stayed behind.¹³⁷ Another Kirchner image, his 1915 painting *Artillerymen in the Shower*, makes such anxieties (and the queer desires that underlie them) quite explicit (fig. 2.17). Viewed after World War II, the painting is **haunting in ways** that Kirchner could not have foreseen (the death-dealing gas chamber show-ers of the Nazis still a few decades off). A group of emaciated naked young men (they look like adolescent boys with oddly overdeveloped but limp penises) wet themselves under a group shower while a ramrod straight officer, fully clothed in military regalia, stands on guard at the side. The faces are anonymous, the naked young men made tender and available, the attenuated tubes of their bodies formally mimicked by the turgid chimney of a blazing stove in the foreground of the picture.¹³⁸

Kirchner’s identification with his soldier males (both phallic and feminized/homoeroticized) here and in the apparent self-portrait in an odd way parallels Picabia’s identification with the *Fille*. The castrated girl, precisely in her incongruity and impossible anatomical suggestion, seems in some way to illustrate the compromised bodily situation of a noncombatant with self-imposed neurasthenia: both are dysfunctional, overtly shattered sexual beings. Just as, in Picabia’s poem discussed earlier, he both throws himself against the wall of the feminine sex and *is* that feminine sex, so too the *Fille* might be viewed as a kind of self-portrait. In the operative terms of war-era masculinity, after all, it was *Picabia* who was a castrated (noncombatant) male. In this sense Kirchner and Picabia are parallel cases in that both acted out their sense of impotence and suppressed rage in neurasthenic behaviors, producing violently castrated, highly sexualized imagery that can be viewed, in some sense, as



2.17 Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Artillerymen in the Shower*, 1915; oil on canvas, 140 × 153 cm. (55¹/₈ × 59¹/₈ in.).
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

negotiating their own states of compromised masculinity. Both picture themselves as castrated males and/or as prostitutes/girls without mothers.

The timing of Picabia's breakdown is significant here: he fell ill in February of 1918, traveling to Switzerland to consult a neurologist and then to rest at Gstaad. In April of that year he published his collection of poems entitled *La fille née sans mère*. In August he completed treatment at Béguing and received his first letter from the Romanian poet who was to spearhead French Dada, Tristan Tzara.¹³⁹ In November the war ended. Picabia's masculinity, compromised by his own lapsing into an out-of-control neurasthenia primarily of his own making, was redirected, slowly but surely, into the channels of a reversed avant-gardism. Ironically, with his meeting of one of the spearheads of "official" European Dada, he began to paint dream pictures, romantic and sentimental. His acerbic machine women disappeared along with his neurasthenia; his neurasthenia disappeared along with his Dadaism.¹⁴⁰ Both had been tamed by the end of World War I.

WOUND CULTURE

The death of Jégoud was atrocious. He was on the first steps of the dugout when a shell . . . burst. His face was burned; one splinter entered his skull behind the ear; another slit open his stomach, broke his spine, and in the bloody mess one saw his spinal cord gliding about. His right leg was completely crushed above the knee. The most hideous part of it all was that he continued to live for four or five minutes.

— Charles Delvert, 1916

The Great War touched the masculinity of several German male generations in its most sensitive area . . . [it was] a narcissistic wound of the first order.

— Klaus Theweleit, 1978

The most important point to be made about the male body in the Great War is that it was *intended to be mutilated*.

— Joanna Bourke, 1996¹⁴¹

In rather generalized historical terms, Mark Seltzer has written perceptively about "wound culture," associated with radical mutation and the violent relocations that shift the boundaries between the public and private spheres, making private hurts into public spectacles ("the public fascination with torn and opened bodies and torn and opened persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound . . . the

wound is where private and public cross").¹⁴² While Seltzer applies his model primarily to futuristic thrillers such as J. G. Ballard's 1973 novel *Crash* and to the confessional television talk shows of the turn of the twenty-first century, he also projects the concept backward to encompass theories of modernity as shock from the early twentieth century and back to even earlier traumatic events such as the American Civil War. Although he unfortunately does not explore the gender-specific aspects of how trauma is registered on the body and in relation to the social realm, certainly his discussion of trauma as posing "a radical breakdown as to the determination of the subject, from within or without: the self-determined or the event-determined subject; the subject as cause or as caused; the subject as the producer of representations or their product" is provocative in terms of the World War I-era imagery and structures of masculinity I am [discussing here](#).

Fundamentally, Seltzer argues, what is destroyed in wound culture is the former imagined certainty regarding the "subject's and the body's distance . . . with respect to representation."¹⁴³ With the violent physical and/or psychic wounding of male bodies in World War I (even those who were not actively fighting on the front, as we have seen), the male body itself becomes its representations (see fig. 2.18). Given New York Dada's obsessive rendering of female machine bodies, this collapse has intriguing implications. If, for example, as I have suggested, Picabia's castrated girl in *Fille née sans mère* is in some sense Picabia himself, this would explain the particular mode of her crippling, which is that of a castrated male.

Extending a line of argument introduced by Nancy Ring in her important 1991 dissertation, Caroline Jones has persuasively argued that Picabia's female machine images from this period (and they are virtually all female) are signs of projected masculine anxiety vis-à-vis the development of industrial capitalism, the power of the machine, and the rise of New Women with the liberated sex roles they represented. As Jones argues, Picabia's machine images are projections of "male hysteria circulating around the '*femme nouvelle*,' and, in the case of Picabia, the gender negotiations epitomized by neurasthenia."¹⁴⁴

This analysis is compelling and certainly informs my readings here, supporting my situating of the *Fille* in relation to Picabia's woundedness. But I am both restoring something largely downplayed in Jones's account (the nerve-shattering context of World War I) and insisting, via Seltzer, that the image is not (or not only) a projection of anxieties but a *visual enactment of Picabia's own equivocal masculinity*, which—as that of an AWOL conscript of uncertain nationality partying himself into a state of nervous exhaustion in New York—*itself becomes a kind of femininity*. Viewed through this lens, we could say that it is Picabia himself who is the "girl born without a mother"



2.18 War “mutilés,” as interpreted in Jean Galtier-Boissière’s *Procession of the Mutilated, July 14, 1919*, 1919; gouache on paper, 43 × 75 cm. Bibliothèque de Documentation Internationale Contemporaine (BDIC), Nanterre, and Musée d’Histoire Contemporaine, Paris.

(without a country? without a clearly determined object of “proper” oedipal desire, and so an improperly masculine subject?).

As the theory of fetishism, expanded within feminism, would have it, generally representation functions to project the male artist’s anxieties on/into the female form, thereby relieving him of his own anxieties regarding his unconscious awareness of his lack. The irony of this particular situation is that the broken springs of the *Fille née sans mère*, and the slightly hacked-at curves and lines that don’t quite meet at proper angles, are *Picabia’s already*. There is no distance between Picabia and the women (or other feminized, noncombatant men?) who surround him. They are one, at the home front. Picabia, then, cannot “other” his own lack through fetishistic projection: he is established in and through it, and, I want to argue, his works are as powerful and important as they are because they instantiate this fact. As such, they exemplify Seltzer’s wound culture.

The analysis of wound culture offers another way of understanding why/how Picabia became a neurasthenic even though he did not fight at the front. Paralleling the collapse of the distance between thing or body and representation I am arguing to be informing the *Fille*, neurasthenia is another—corporeal—way of embodying and enacting a perceived lack of authority or sense of control. In this regard, it is worth recalling Leed’s and Fussell’s arguments. The loss of power experienced by men fighting in the war pinpointed by Leed led, as Fussell argues, to a reaction formation of “gross dichotomizing,” wherein the soldier attempts (à la Jünger) to reaffirm his masculinity by performing it in excess.¹⁴⁵ This operation, as Theweleit notes, requires the violent exclusion and oppression of those perceived as threatening or other to the masculine. Picabia’s particular case, however, involves a body made neurasthenic because of its refusal to dichotomize, a body made passive through its own actions (it is in this sense that Picabia is the “sick wall of the feminine sex” against which he wants to hurl himself).

Choosing (if it can be termed a willed choice) to reject the clarion call of proper masculinity, Picabia, like Duchamp, joined the women and other, in Freud’s words, “disoriented” and “inhibited” male noncombatants at the home front. His neurasthenia is a mark of this self-feminization, marking his body as “wounded”; there is no distance (or projection) keeping Picabia safe from feminization. The symptoms of neurasthenia noted earlier—bodily tremors, violent emotional outbursts, acute anxiety, and other “childish” reactions and needs—are evoked in the scraped lines and haywire springs of the *Fille*. Oddly enough, however, he becomes a neurasthenic just like those who *did* go to the front. His neurasthenic feminization parallels Kirchner’s,

making clear that there was no escape during the World War I period from the pressure to conform to normative masculinity.

The wound thus has its place in New York Dada. Furthermore, as suggested at the beginning of this essay with my analysis of *Fountain*, the void, an empty hole that functions as a kind of wound, is appropriately enough a reiterated motif in the works of the three main figures associated with New York Dada. Viewed in this light, we could argue that the placement of *Fountain* in 1917 in front of Marsden Hartley's 1913 painting *The Warriors* (a heroic portrayal of German soldiers) in Alfred Stieglitz's famous photograph of the original readymade is not a coincidence. *Fountain*, I am suggesting, instantiates the psychic wound or void that eviscerated or compromised male subjectivity—especially that of the noncombatant or sufferer of war neurosis during this period.¹⁴⁶

In spite of the fact that many of the New York Dada works are explicitly referenced as female machine forms, I would like to read them here less as projective fetishizations of women's bodies than as identificatory visualizations of the lack and loss of *masculinity* defining the wound culture surrounding the war (and this is so whether Duchamp or the Baroness produced *Fountain*, which, after all, began as a urinal). In this way, the works (with their voids and absences) become palimpsests or portraits of the men who render them. I propose, then, another way of looking at the lack haunting not only the female machine images but also other Dada works that in some way evoke the wound: those involving shadows or rendering absence in some more or less direct way; those "portraits" that void the image of the human subject through abstraction; and those works that deal with violence and/or death.

SHADOWS

Cast Shadows [. . .]. — *the execution of the picture by means of luminous sources. And by drawing the shadows on these planes. simply following the real outlines projected . . . / all this to be completed [. . .] to relate with the subject? [. . .] cast shadows formed by the splashes coming from below / like some jets of water which weave forms in their transparency.*

— Marcel Duchamp, c. 1915–1920¹⁴⁷

Duchamp obsessed over the shadow in his World War I-period notes on his epochal *Large Glass*. The shadow for Duchamp is like "jets of water which weave forms in their transparency": it is there in space (makes "real" outlines) but it is evanescent, almost invisible at the same time. The shadow, one might say, is that ineffable and inexorable

darkness that stalks the human condition. When we walk in light, it follows. It is an index or sign that cleaves to us, refusing the distance that would constitute it as “representation.”

Man Ray and Duchamp completed a number of works from 1916 to 1920 referencing or representing shadows: for example, Duchamp’s 1918 painting *Tu m’*, with its haunting, attenuated shadows of readymades and “real” shadow cast by an actual protruding bottle brush; and Man Ray’s 1919 *Aerograph*, which he created by spraying over and then removing a sculptural object to leave a suggestive, shadowlike imprint of its former placement on the picture’s surface. The shadow, of course, is the indexical mark of a person or thing—but a mark that is itself characterized by absence. There is nothing “there” and, in fact, the shadow takes its form in relation to the *absence* of illumination: its contours are formed by an obstacle that blocks out light.

In this series of works, then, we might say that Man Ray and Duchamp referenced some kind of melancholic trace linked to their equivocal position (as “shadows” of properly masculine soldiers) relative to an increasingly war-obsessed culture. The shadow is their absence from the spotlight glare of belligerent masculinity at the forefront of the Western imaginary during that period. There is no “appropriate” distance between the wound of the depicted shadow (the dark hole plunging the two-dimensional surface into a third dimension of deep space) and the wound (the metaphorical castration) symbolizing these two men’s failure to perform according to socially acclaimed and accepted modes of the masculine.

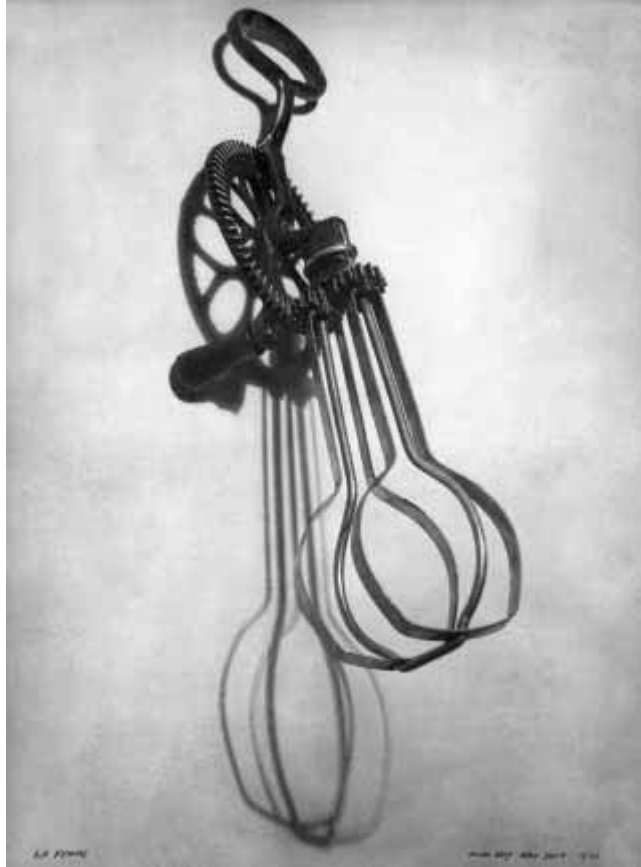
The shadow is a trace, but one of paradox. While it “is” in a sense that which it shadows (hence its inevitable closeness to the object or figure from which it is cast and to which it clings), it is also linked to the trace, that which makes representation itself possible.¹⁴⁸ The trace, as Jacques Derrida has noted, is reiterated to introduce difference and thus to inaugurate the regime of representation itself. The shadow as trace is thus visible because it is apparently *different from* the object or figure that defines its contours, and this difference enables the gesture of inscription that defines representation. The representation is thus a “bending back,” a “return” that (like the shadow) confirms the putative presence of the thing represented but also marks its absence; as Derrida notes, this bending back is “irreducible in presence or in self-presence,” and the “trace or difference is always older than presence and procures for it its openness.” Ultimately, then, we might argue that the shadow confirms the fact that the living present “is always already a trace” and “the self of the living present is primordially a trace.”¹⁴⁹ The shadow exemplifies the fact that representation and iden-

tity are attached to reproduction. Something can be pictured (shadowed, as it were) only through the reiteration of the trace.

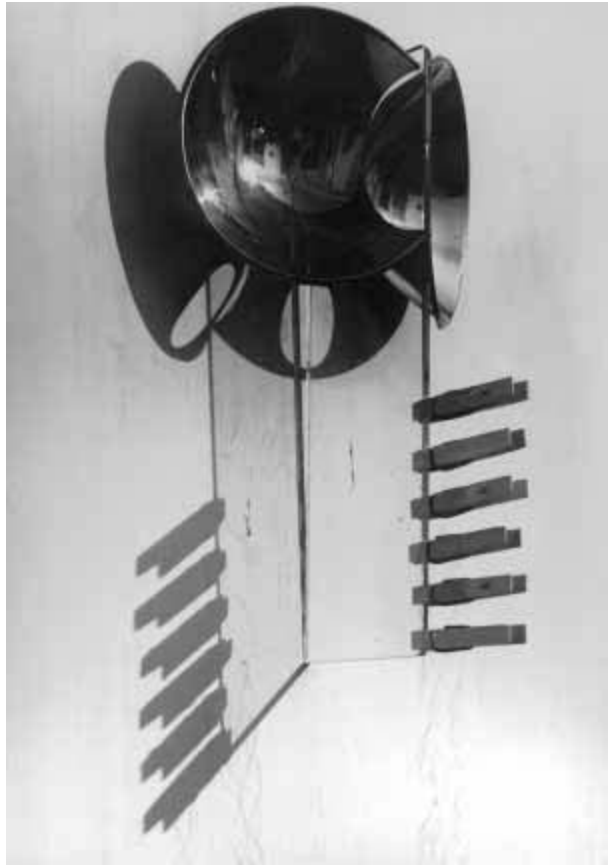
This is really another way of saying that Duchamp's and Man Ray's shadows confirm not only the absence that destabilizes masculine subjectivity, putting the lie to fantasies of its coherence (ideas about the heroism of the combatant male, for example), but also the inexorability of the ultimate emptiness that determines the limits of the human condition: death. And this reveals precisely what is so terrifying about both fighting on the front and not fighting on the front. The fact of the war points to the doubled lack that horrifically undermines the male subject—as masculine (defined in relation to the projected lack of femininity, and so inevitably tied to it) and as a human, and so mortal, subject—in the modern industrial era and, more specifically, in artistic modernism. The male subject is experienced as being immanent, corporeal, rather than transcendent, during the World War I period. Because of this impossibility of sustaining the myth of male transcendence, the Cartesian subject is deflated and shown to be lacking. This scissoring away of the male subject's cloak of transcendence profoundly alters masculinity, aligning it with a kind of mortal embodiment and immanence long associated with the feminine.¹⁵⁰ (It is this scissoring away that the discourse of militarism—per Jünger's hypermasculine protestations—seeks to veil or disavow.)

Shadows, then, visualize the tenuousness of masculinity, the fact not only of its contingency and reliance on femininity but of the ultimate disappearance of the male (like the female) body into the wound of the earth. As Man Ray once remarked, “the shadow is as important as the real thing.”¹⁵¹ Perhaps even better than the real thing, in that the cast shadow (the representation) would at least give the appearance of immortality. The picture (the representation, perhaps the shadow?) will not, strictly speaking, die.

In 1918, Man Ray and Duchamp created three photographic works that further dangle the loss that constitutes human embodiment into the screen of vision. Man Ray's dual “portraits” of a man and a woman, *Homme* (Man) and *Femme* (Woman), produce ambiguously gendered forms out of mechanical objects and their shadows. *Femme* (alternative title: *Shadows*) is the label assigned to the explicitly phallic form of two concave photographer's light reflectors attached to a plane of glass notched by clothespins (fig. 2.20). Each of the components of this masculine appendage has feminine connotations as well (concave reflectors mirror the womblike space of *Fountain*, while also, if I am seeing correctly, reflecting Man Ray's own studio; clothespins, used



2.19 Man Ray, *Homme (or Femme)*, 1918. Photograph courtesy Telimage, Paris; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



2.20 Man Ray, *Femme (or Shadows)*, 1918; photograph. Photograph courtesy Telimage, Paris; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

to hang developing photographs in the darkroom, also reference housewifery, etc.). In *Femme*, the blinking “eyes” of the reflectors seem to look balefully down at the suturing action of the clothes pins, which both rip and sew the paper/glass.

The equally androgynous *Homme* (in one variant print called *Femme*)¹⁵² is also explicitly phallic in appearance, with the shadow doubling the penislike appendage of the beater, which oxymoronically references feminine domestic tasks (fig. 2.19). The shadows scar: in *Femme* they tear into the gray-quiet space of the apparatus’s surround; in *Homme*, the shadow of the hand crank digs a black hole into the paper, a mark of penetration but also of absence.

In Duchamp’s notes for the epochal *Large Glass* (such as the one quoted at the opening of this section) and in interviews, he repeatedly mentions the role of shadows in his conceptualization of this mechanical-erotic map of the workings of the heterosexual sex act and the structuring role of sexual difference in representation (a map explicitly divided into incompatible and unbreachable masculine and feminine realms). As art historian Linda Henderson has exhaustively documented, Duchamp and other members of the New York avant-garde during the World War I period drew on the works of architect-philosopher Claude Bragdon, who theorized at length the geometric vicissitudes of the shadow. Bragdon notes in his *Primer of Higher Space* of 1913 that “lower-dimensional representations may be conceived as the shadows cast by higher-space forms on lower-space worlds.”¹⁵³

Expanding on such ideas, Duchamp argues in his notes that the shadow is a two-dimensional projection of a three-dimensional person or thing; in this way, we might conceive of the three-dimensional person or thing as a projection of some unknown in the fourth-dimension, “something we’re not familiar with.”¹⁵⁴ Within this logic, we are the shadow projections of something beyond ourselves. And this projection has a specifically gendered connotation for Duchamp, as always: “The Bride or the *Pendu femelle* [female pendant / hanged female body]¹⁵⁵ is a ‘projection’ comparable to the projection of a four dimensional ‘imaginary being’ in our three-dimensional world (and also in the case of the flat glass, to a re-projection of these three dimensions onto a **two-dimensional** surface).”¹⁵⁶

As a projection or shadow, the bride, the upper portion of Duchamp’s *Large Glass*, enacts the lack informing the human condition (see fig. 2.21). This might be another way of saying that the bride’s projectedness simply illustrates or symbolizes the fact that patriarchal society projects lack as feminine; but, far from confirming her status as uniquely secondary, as only a projection or *shadow* of the lack sloughed off from masculine plenitude, the bride’s projectedness in the *Large Glass*, because it is

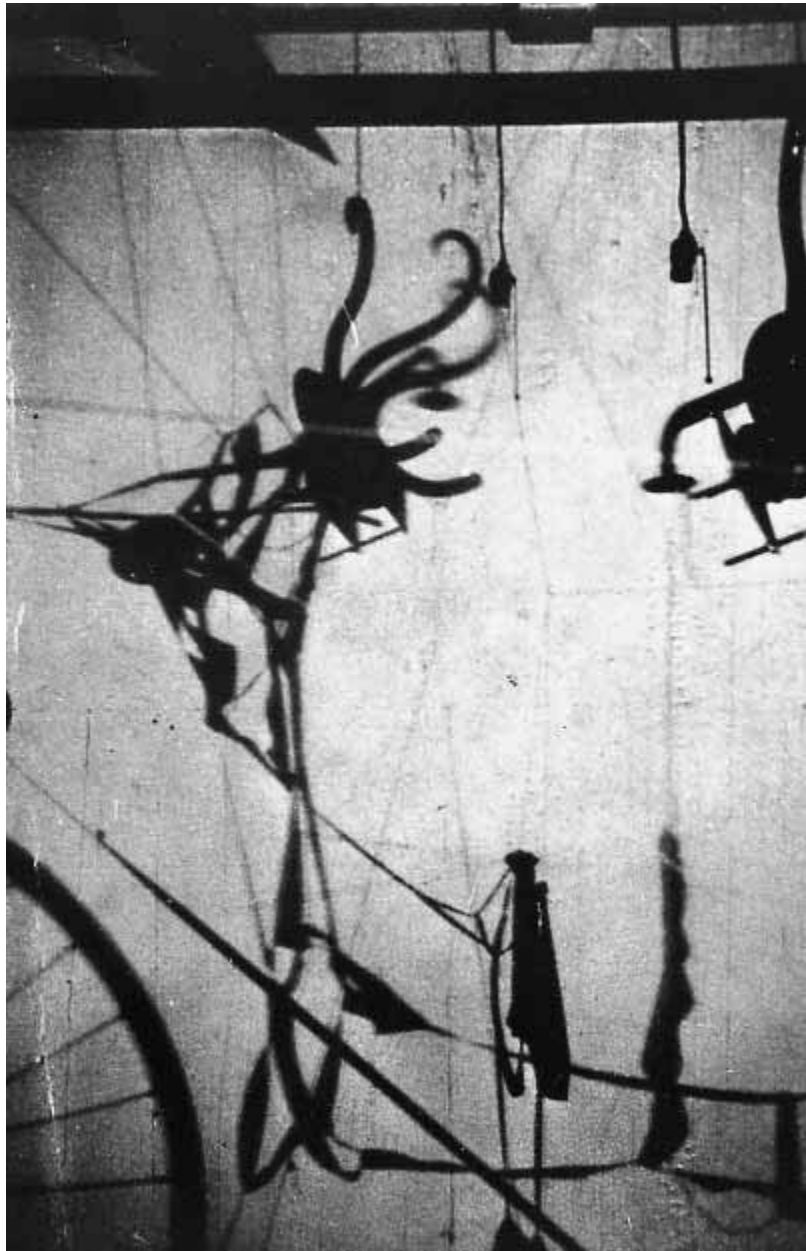


2.21 Marcel Duchamp, *The Large Glass* (*La mariée mise à nue par ses célibataires, même*, or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*), 1915–1923; oil, varnish, lead foil, lead wire, dust, glass, aluminum foil, wood, and steel; 109¹/₄ × 69¹/₄ in. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Bequest of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953; © 2002 Succession Marcel Duchamp; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

depicted in intimate interdependence with the bachelor zone, renders her as a metaphor for the general contingency of the human subject (just as, according to feminist psychoanalytic theory, feminine lack is a metaphoric repository for the lack in all human subjects). After all is said and done, as Bragdon's and Duchamp's theories of shadows suggest, we are all ephemeral smoke and mirrors, our bodies, even while tangible and living, perhaps only the shadows of "imaginary beings" we cannot know or comprehend. We exist—tenuously, whether feminine, masculine, or something in between—as fleeting shadows projected onto the skin of the world. The shadow marks a fascination with the fragility and transience of corporeality, then, a fascination with death.

In the *Large Glass* project, Duchamp explored as well the shadowlike mold, which is a kind of "negative (photographic) . . . apparition" of the object just as the shadow is its projection. The malic molds of the *Large Glass* are a masculine "group of . . . uniforms or hollow liveries destined to give to/receive the illuminating gas." They serve as armatures for "gas castings" that listen to the song of the "whole celibate machine" residing in the bottom of the *Large Glass*.¹⁵⁷ The malic molds are empty vessels, empty *uniforms*: they are perhaps the uniforms that Duchamp *does not wear* as a noncombatant. They are the emasculated "gas castings" whose flatulent, pointless actions parallel the dysfunctional machinery of the bride up above (and in fact, as we have seen, their emasculation is explicitly noted: "Each of the 8 malic forms is cut by an imaginary horizontal plane at a pnt. Called the pnt. of sex.").¹⁵⁸ The shadow/mold, then, is also a hollow vessel, vaguely phallic in shape but hollow and gassed, castrated at the "pnt. of sex."

The 1918 photograph *Shadows of Readymades*, a picture of shadows cast by the readymades onto the wall of Duchamp's studio in the Arensbergs' apartment building, serves as an ultimate statement on shadows (notably, these shadows provided the template for Duchamp to paint the readymades' shadows onto *Tu m' that same year*; fig. 2.22). The most striking shadow at the center of the photograph (probably taken by Man Ray) is that of the now lost *Sculpture for Traveling*, 1918. Duchamp constructed this collapsible rubber "sculpture": "I bought some [of those rubber bathing caps that come in all colors], cut them up into uneven little strips, stuck them together, not flat, in the middle of my studio (in the air) and attached them with string to the various walls and nails in my studio. It looks like a kind of multicolored spider's web."¹⁵⁹ Duchamp took it with him to Buenos Aires when, he went there in August of 1918 to escape the heat of a culture that was increasingly war-obsessed.



2.22 Marcel Duchamp and/or Man Ray?, *Shadows of Readymades*, 1918; photograph. © 2002 Succession Marcel Duchamp; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

The *Sculpture for Traveling*, which could take on myriad forms according to how its ends were tied around the room, is an antimonument, a potentially flaccid (or, when tied up, taut) sketch in negative space. It is a “spider’s web,” a net ready to trap its (male?) victims. Its cast shadow, in *Shadows of Readymades*, accentuates its simultaneous linearity and lack of volume—as well as its refusal to stand in for the human form, as traditional sculpture is wont to do. The shadow of a piece that is already a wraithlike apparition (but potentially menacing as it stretches across the viewer’s path) is doubly marked by absence, just as Duchamp’s absence from the front was in a sense doubled by his retreat to Buenos Aires.

ABSENCE

Is it the idea of death, always present in the thunderous rolling of cannons and falling shells, which transposes our state of relativity in enlarging its limits, is it the idea of life, conglomerated in powerful masses that grow larger by the disappearance of the individual into a gigantic corps. I don’t know.

— Raymond Duchamp-Villon to Walter Pach, December 17, 1915

The smell of peace is here and it’s splendid to breathe it in and, with the provincial tranquillity [of Buenos Aires], this allows and even forces me to work. . . . I have begun the right side of the [*Large Glass*].

— Marcel Duchamp to the Arensbergs from Buenos Aires, November 8, 1918¹⁶⁰

While writing of the “smell of peace” in Buenos Aires, Duchamp was presumably processing the fact (sent to him via cable in the end of October) that his brother Raymond Duchamp-Villon had died on October 7, from typhoid fever and blood poisoning contracted through his activities as a medic at the front. He was soon to find out, too, that his friend Apollinaire would die the following day, on November 9, from a war wound compounded by influenza. He was unaware that the war in Europe was three days away from its final ending. His blissful ignorance and emotional distance, bought, again, at the price of escaping the siren call of masculine heroism, allowed him to work on his opus, the *Large Glass*. Halfway through the same letter, he mentions in passing, “you have without doubt learned in New York already of the death of my brother Raymond. . . . It is a frightful thing for you know how he was close and dear to me,” only to go on immediately thereafter to discuss pulling some canvases together for a cubist exhibition.¹⁶¹

This is one of the few references Duchamp makes to his brother’s death in his extant letters, writings, and public statements.¹⁶² Duchamp’s resolute, Dadaist attitude

of “indifference” toward the world (his attitude of skepticism toward the war and promotion of the attitude of “combating invasion with folded arms,” as in his statement to the New York press in 1915 cited above) was a highly fraught, if not untenable, one to take during World War I, especially in the face of the direct involvement of his brothers and friends. It is a challenge to imagine how he could have continued to work, methodically, one might say coldly, on the *Large Glass* while Europe and those close to him who lived there struggled mightily to pull together again.¹⁶³ If, as one historian of the war argues, the “need for emotion was never so intense as when faced with mortality,”¹⁶⁴ then perhaps it makes sense that Duchamp, avoiding mortality at all costs, suppressed his emotions; or perhaps it was his natural indifference, his inability or refusal to contemplate death, that led him to avoid the war in the first place.

Duchamp’s emotional reserve was and remains legendary. Fernand Léger noted that “Marcel . . . was a dry type, with something inaccessible about him,” and Beatrice Wood, one of the Arensberg group, wrote of his face being “as blank as a death mask,” with a “curious emptiness . . . [that] gave the impression that he had been hurt in childhood.”¹⁶⁵ The Baroness also lamented his coldness. Her poem addressing Duchamp as a frustrated lover, “Love—Chemical Relationship,” remarks on his emotional reserve, describing him as a male Medusa who freezes her in hard glass:

Thou now livest motionless in a mirror!
 Everything is a mirage in thee—thine world is glass—glassy!
 Glassy are thine ears—thine hands—thine feet and thine face. . . .
 So long must I love it until I myself will become glass and everything
 around me glassy. . . .¹⁶⁶

Too, around 1917, she made a portrait of Duchamp, on whom she had an exaggeratedly desperate crush (at one point, she had infamously rhapsodized, “Marcel, Marcel, I love you like hell, Marcel!” then rubbed her body down with a clipping of Duchamp’s *Nude Descending a Staircase*).¹⁶⁷ Her friend (possibly lover) and admirer, the artist George Biddle, described his contact with this portrait image:

It was painted on a bit of celluloid and was at once a portrait of, and an apostrophe to, Marcel Duchamp. His face was indicated by an electric bulb shedding icicles, with large pendulous ears and other symbols.

“You see, he is so tremendously in love with me,” she said. I asked, “And the ears?” She shuddered:

“Genitals—the emblem of his frightful and creative potency.”

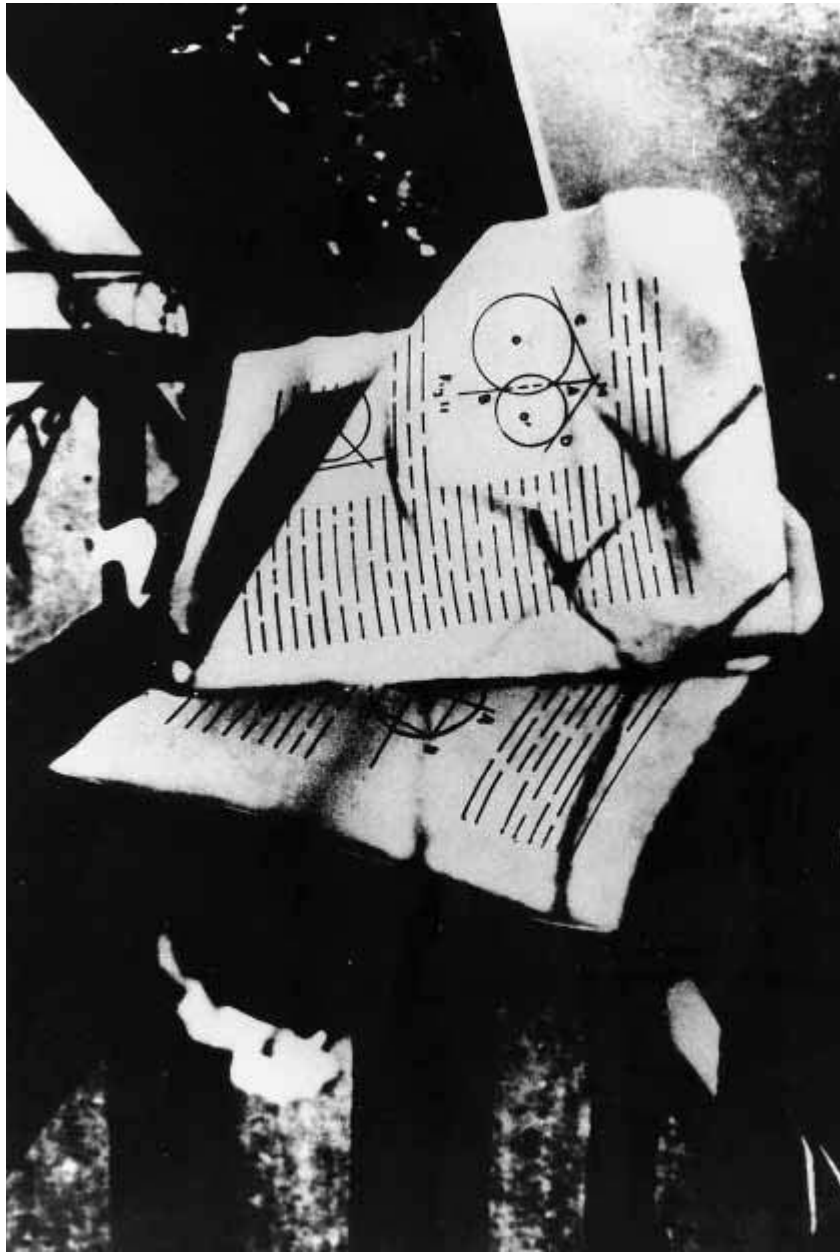
“And the incandescent electric bulb?” She curled her lip at me in scorn.

“*Because he is so frightfully cold.* You see all his heat flows into his art. For that reason, although he loves me, he would never even touch the hem of my red oilskin slicker. Something of his dynamic warmth—electrically—would be dissipated by the contact.”¹⁶⁸

Even Duchamp’s electric genitals are marked as frigid in this evocative anecdote: they transfer their heat into his artwork, leaving his female admirers in the cold (this was clearly part of his seductive lure).

This coldness, which one might view as a personality trait attached to Duchamp’s legendary self-proclaimed indifference in relation to aesthetic and broader cultural issues, is confirmed by his strangely removed attitude toward the war and the deaths of his brother and friends. While his friend and first biographer, Robert Lebel, insists that Duchamp immediately returned to Paris after hearing of Raymond’s death, in fact he did not return to the continent until July of 1919, even noting in a letter from late 1918, “I find it useless to leave for France now. . . . The readjustment to peace demands more time (six months to a year) than that to war.”¹⁶⁹ Even peacetime Paris, shortly after the armistice, would apparently have been distasteful to Duchamp, who awaited the at least partial erasure of the signs of battle (and of reactionary discourses of patriotism and heroic masculinity) from European soil.

While still in Buenos Aires, in 1919, Duchamp sent instructions to his sister Suzanne, who was in Paris, to construct an “Unhappy Readymade” (fig. 2.23). The **resulting piece**, a geometry book flapping in the wind which was to be a wedding gift in honor of her marriage to Jean Crotti, was perhaps Duchamp’s only response, if oblique, to his personal loss due to the war.¹⁷⁰ There are two aspects of the piece that are relevant to my argument here: the readymade was specifically given bigendered authorship, displacing the generating agency from Duchamp to his sister and then to the anonymous force of the wind (which “had to go through the book, choose its own problems, turn and tear out the pages,” as Duchamp later noted); and the readymade is defined by loss (per Duchamp, “the wind tore it up”)—all that is left of it is his description, a black and white photograph of the splayed book, its pages flapping in the wind, and a small painting Suzanne made of it.¹⁷¹ A shadow of loss that is itself to be lost, it is an “unhappy” reminder of mortality (and, being a geometry book, perhaps also of the dissolution, in the World War I period, of belief in a rational, mathemati-



2.23 Marcel Duchamp and Suzanne Duchamp Crotti, *Unhappy Readymade*, 1919; retouched photograph of lost ready-made. © 2002 Succession Marcel Duchamp; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

cal universe). Its ultimate absence is a marker of Duchamp's own self-removal from the scene of masculine trauma which stole away his brother, Apollinaire, and millions of other men of their generation.

Another kind of absence hovers around the myriad portraits of Duchamp created by his colleagues and admirers in New York during the World War I period. A number of these, like the Baroness's lost piece, noted above, are abstracted or without direct reference to Duchamp's particular physiognomy: Jean Crotti's *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (1915; now lost, known through a photograph and drawings), Katherine Dreier's *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (1918), the Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven's *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (c. 1920, also lost but known through a photograph by Charles Sheeler). Also, in Duchamp's own self-projection as other (most notably in the c. 1920 drag images of himself as Rose Sélavy), one could argue that he disappears behind the face of another.¹⁷²

Crotti's portrait is a spare wire outline abstracting Duchamp's face into a few suggestive lines in space, its only solid portion a sculpted forehead with **dangling eyeballs** (fig. 2.24). As the Swiss artist, who shared a studio with Duchamp in New York City in 1915–1916 and married Duchamp's sister Suzanne in 1919, put it: "It is an absolute expression of my idea of Marcel Duchamp. Not my idea of how he looks, so much as my appreciation of the amiable character that he IS."¹⁷³ While the likeness to Duchamp is suggested in the contours of this wire hovering in space, it does its primary referential work via absence. It *points to* rather than *depicts* in any detail Duchamp's identity as a cerebral, emotionally detached chess player.

Crucially, too, the preparatory drawings for the piece indicate that Crotti's conception of it developed this mysterious, hovering partial face out of a sketch of a skull (itself embedded as a trace within a partial drawing of **Duchamp's face**; fig. 2.25).¹⁷⁴ Crotti seems fully to imagine Duchamp's mortality, even as everyone in New York on some level was forced to acknowledge the dangers confronting those who went to the front during this period. He *projected onto* Duchamp's image the death that, in fact, Duchamp (understandably, to be sure) labored to avoid by leaving first Paris and then, after the United States entered the war, New York.

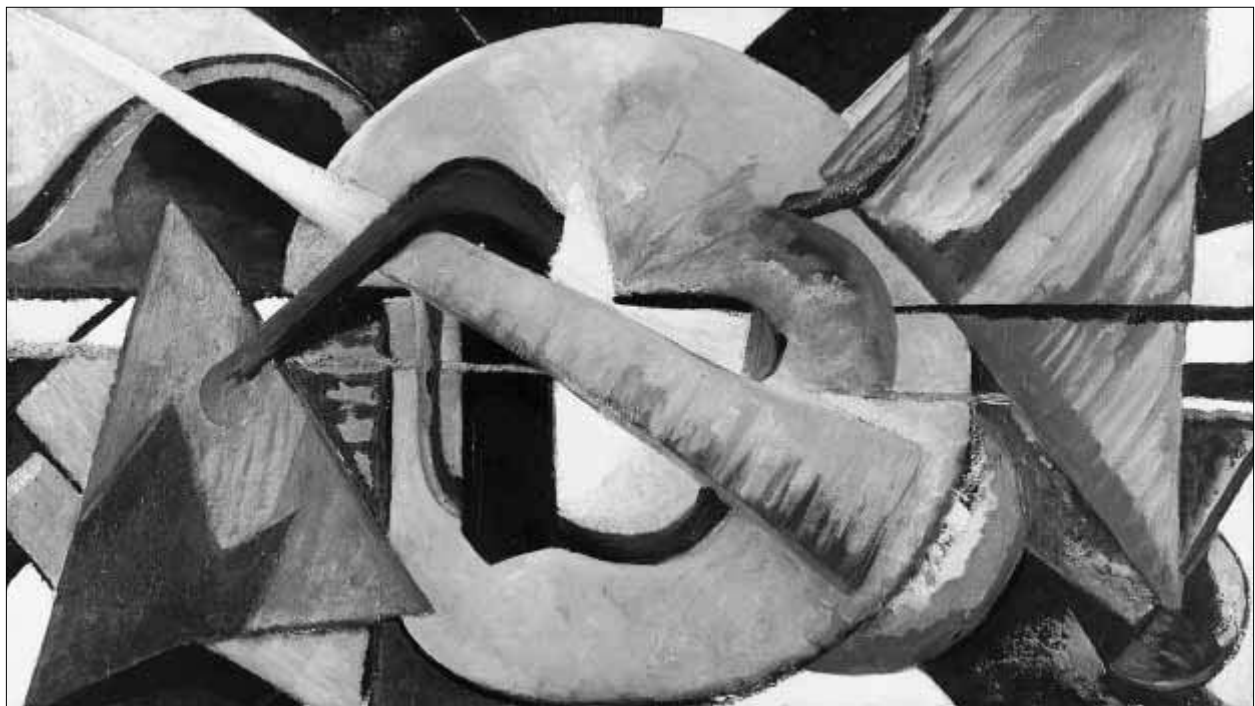
Dreier's *Abstract Portrait* is a lush horizontal field of painted **abstract forms** (fig. 2.26). Probably painted while Dreier was in Buenos Aires visiting Duchamp in late 1918, its most telling attribute is the central feature of two triangular rods. One, in silver and white, is rigid and authoritative; the other, blood-red turning to rust colored, curls limply over the top of the silver one. While some art historians have attributed these forms to Dreier's theosophical spiritualism,¹⁷⁵ I would be more tempted to



2.24 Jean Crotti, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1915; photograph of a work now lost. Photograph courtesy of Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., Jean Crotti Papers 1910–1973; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



2.25 Jean Crotti, *Herr Professor*, 1915; pencil sketch on paper, 43 × 27.8 cm. Private collection; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



2.26 Katherine Dreier, *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, 1918; oil on canvas, 18.3 × 45.7 cm. Museum of Modern Art, New York, Abby Adrich Rockefeller Fund.

imagine the picture as a symbolic rendering of Dreier's deeply repressed sexual fantasizing and frustration in relation to Duchamp. As suggested above, Duchamp was highly seductive to the women of the New York Dada circle and frustratingly unavailable to most of them, in particular Dreier. While she gave him money to support him (ostensibly in payment for completion of the *Large Glass*, which passed into her collection), this older German woman was clearly not Duchamp's type. Their personal correspondence shows a frustrated sexuality turned maternalism on Dreier's part, a polite and gentle distance maintained on Duchamp's.¹⁷⁶

Their personal relationship aside, one critic's facetious response to the work in a 1921 review is telling: "I am unable to see anything in the canvas beyond its yellow, jaundiced disk pierced by a grayish brown mottled cornucopia, which a long pointed end shot from a tense blue funnel. . . . Said funnel, *perhaps it is a howitzer*—is richly flanked with mottled brown patches, indicative . . . of liver complaint."¹⁷⁷ This anonymous critic's own projections allow me to extend mine further. If the funnel is a turgid phallus (its virility marked in contrast to the flaccid blood-colored rod flopped obsequiously over it), it may also be a "howitzer." One of the most salient ways, after all, to symbolize masculine potency in visual form is through references both to the male anatomy and to the weapons that prosthetically extend and confirm its strength. This is, of course, a perfect example, a conceptual and visual enactment, of the penis/phallus conflation—wherein the anatomical attribute of masculinity is wedded to the forms of its cultural empowerment. Absent in the "portrait" is Duchamp's recognizable face or form; present is some cloudy and perhaps uncharitable (as well as peevish, if certainly also unconscious) reference to his equivocal masculinity.

Man Ray took a series of photographs that are tantalizing in their suggestion of some kind of evaporation of **Duchamp's very body**. The pictures apparently document Duchamp standing next to his *Rotary Glass Plates* machine while it is in motion (fig. 2.27).¹⁷⁸ And yet, in one of the images, Duchamp is merely a whisper hovering like a spirit behind the whirling glass plates (in the other, too, he seems to melt into the darkened background). The capacity of these spinning projectiles to sever, with their menacing glass edges, is all too evident (Man Ray tells a story of Duchamp standing by the camera to see the piece in motion only to have the glass blades whirl off "like an airplane propeller," crashing in all directions and practically decapitating Man Ray).¹⁷⁹ To this end, the placement of Duchamp's disappearing body, with his crotch perfectly placed, it appears, to catch the slicing action of the blades and stop their whirring, is disturbing. Why is Duchamp disappearing? Is this a trick photograph? Or is this merely an oblique reflection of Duchamp in a mirror behind the whirling work?



2.27 Man Ray, view of Marcel Duchamp with the *Rotary Glass Plates*, 1917 or 1920; photograph.
Photograph courtesy Telimage, Paris; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

All of this is unclear. But the suggestion of threatened absence seems overwhelming. Too, with its ghostly apparition, the one photograph references nineteenth-century “spirit” photography (wherein charlatans would manipulate a portrait so that it would appear to include a “spirit” image of a lost loved one hovering above the portrait subject) and thus seems to go beyond the threat of castration to imply Duchamp’s ultimate disappearance through death.

DEATH

How exhausted one is by all this fury of strident lies and foul death.

— D. H. Lawrence, 1916

A man who returns to life from the dead, a man who becomes a machine, a man who is part animal—this man is an impossibility as long as the exclusivity of life and death, man and machine, and human and animal is upheld. When such an impossibility is encountered, the feeling of uncanniness is the result.

— Eric Leed, 1979¹⁸⁰

Driving and walking alone through the cold, gray northeastern countryside of France, November of 2001, I am blown away (so to speak) by the lingering effects of the Great War, a good 85 years after one of its most grueling fights, the Battle of Verdun (1916). The ground is an **endless sea of gouged**, pitted earth, and still torn pieces of trees, wire, and rock poke out; the forts lie in ruins; the entire villages that were destroyed remain only as piles of stone, with a foundation visible here and there (see fig. 2.28). Even more noticeable is the way this entire area of France is devoted to memorializing the carnage of that particular battle (in which approximately 300,000 French and German soldiers were killed); ongoing legends of ground saturated with corpses, war matériel, and so much blood that it would not bear fruit for decades testify to the psychological centrality of Verdun in the minds of the French, still, three or four generations later.¹⁸¹ How could Duchamp and his colleagues have been so flippant about the war?

And yet, the avant-gardes were specifically (in the minds of later theorists of the historical avant-garde) *supposed to* refuse to participate in the ideologies and institutions of bourgeois capitalism, which (as the German Dadaists were fond of pointing out) were the underlying causes of the war. By deliberately losing my art historical “objectivity,” buying—for a moment—into the state-sponsored ideologies of reconstruction and memorialization of the tragedy of the Great War, I want to recuperate



2.28 The ruins of Fleury, a village destroyed during the battle of Verdun; author's photograph, November 2001.

some of the complexities of the situation that Duchamp and the other artists lingering in New York would have faced. I want to reject the simplistic, and offhand, marginalization of the war as something they simply avoided, pointing to the enormous creative, emotional, and psychic costs such avoidance would have involved in the environment that existed during that time.

In fact, my compassion for these men who escaped conscription has grown immeasurably since the parallel situation, following the destruction of New York City's World Trade Towers in September of 2001, of ratcheted-up patriotic rhetoric and simplistic divisions of world politics into "us" versus "them," accompanied by a puffed-up, belligerent, and masculinist idea of Americanism. I have come to appreciate more the disgust that Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray, Cravan, and others associated with Dada by all accounts felt regarding the circumstances surrounding World War I. I have come to realize (if I can imagine being in their masculine shoes) that I would have done the same thing. I would have done anything to avoid not only the senseless violence of the front but the very *situation* of war and its seemingly inevitable, contaminated ideological environment of reactionism, masculinism, reductive thinking, racism, and belligerence.

Finally, then, we return to the underlying theme of this chapter: that of a sense of loss or lack more profound than those Freudian anxieties prompted by New Women or whirling or dysfunctional machines; by the undermining of masculinity's age-old claims of wholeness, plenitude, and transcendence; by the gaping void opened by the war in nationalist and capitalist ideals of Progress, "civilization," and the preeminence of Europe on the world scene. We return to the ultimate loss indicated by the threat of death itself. The acknowledgment of death on more than an abstract level (an acknowledgment forced by war) projects a sense of "uncanniness," a loss of center, as Leed suggests.

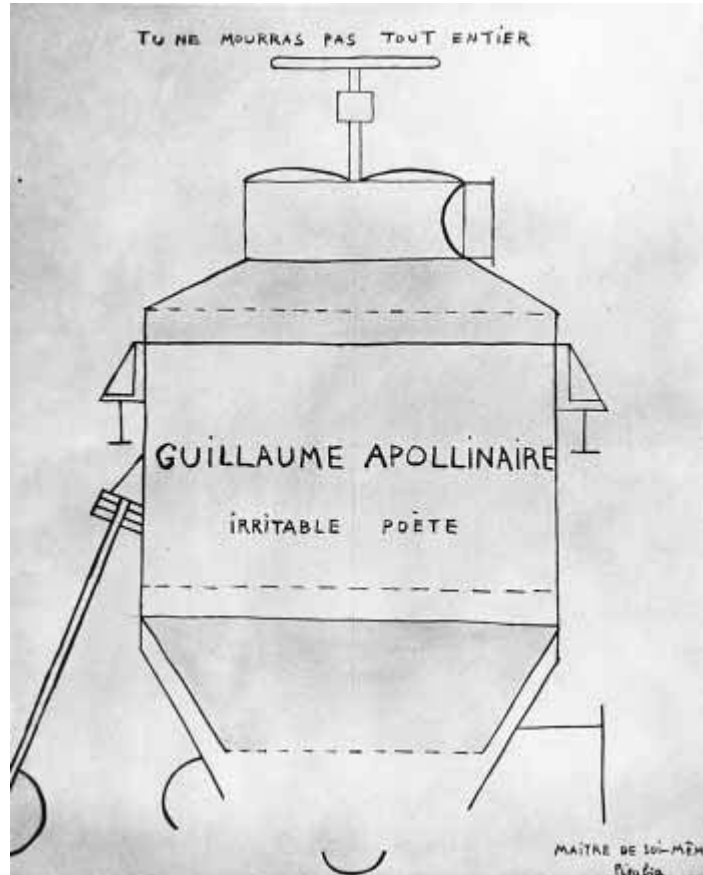
For Freud, who developed the notion in his 1919 essay "The Uncanny" (and the date, Leed's argument would suggest, is surely not coincidental here), the uncanny is an experience derived from its German root, *unheimlich*, or "unhomely." The (for Freud inevitably male) experience of the uncanny is the experience of having been ripped from the womb (*Heim* or home), never to return. Freud, in his singular way, extends this observation to the male fear of women's genitalia (this "*unheimlich* place . . . [that] is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings").¹⁸² The uncanny, then, precisely articulates the male anxiety about the "loss of center," via the threat so obviously, to Freud, posed by women's sexual organs; what more

potent symbol to point to the destabilization of masculinity? This elegant—if misogynistic—theory, summed up through a single overdetermined word (*unheimlich*), goes beyond castration to point its gaze in the most aggressive way at the female sex. It is this uncanny lost center to which, I have argued, many of the works of Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray, and other New York Dadaists refer in their obsessive rendering of voids and absences.

Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray had their own, patently inadequate, ways of negotiating the pressures exerted on the masculine subject during the period of World War I. But these negotiations were hardly more inadequate than those of any others. Certainly those who fought, from Duchamp-Villon to Apollinaire, the German Dadaists, and even the Italian futurists, were, if not themselves annihilated, almost to a man violently disillusioned by the war itself and by the crude nationalistic politics and capitalist greed that was perceived to have motivated it.

There is, of course, no “adequate” response to war (perhaps this is precisely what makes it happen again and again). Death and the horror of combat (not to mention the wholesale destruction, raping and pillaging, rotting of bodies and cultures, deprivations, grieving, and behind-the-scenes corruptions that take place a short distance away from the front itself) cannot be conceived in relation to the heroic ideals of masculine subjectivity that are still operative in twenty-first-century Western culture and beyond. Like Duchamp lingering near his rotary glass plate machine, the war-mutilated male body, not to mention the evasive one, will always be made to hover, ghostlike, at the margins of cultural memory. When represented, it will be as a freak (as in Otto Dix’s flesh-torn war veterans) or a tormented absent body (Duchamp as “howitzer”—limp bloody phallus).

One of New York Dada’s only explicit references to the absence through death brought about by trench warfare is Picabia’s c. 1918 machine sketch in homage to Apollinaire, who had just died as a result of **wounds from combat** (fig. 2.29). Marked “Tu ne mourras pas tout entier” (You will never completely die) at the top, and “Guillaume Apollinaire/ Irritable poète” at the center of a large empty barrellike shape (a gas drum? some kind of generator?), this machine is dysfunctional. Here, at least, one of the New York Dadaists makes the ultimate link: (compromised) male body = broken machine = the inexorability of death. If Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray had fought at the front, they might have died a lot sooner than otherwise, but their deaths (in 1968, 1953, and 1976 respectively), like the lack that inevitably constrained and undermined their masculinity, were, of course, inevitable.



2.29 Francis Picabia, *Portrait de Guillaume Apollinaire*, c. 1918; watercolor and ink on paper, 57.4 × 45.4 cm. Photograph courtesy of the Picabia Estate (Comité Picabia, Paris); © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

Picabia's humorous but nonetheless deeply cutting machine pictures hardly point to some redemptive view of technology or of renewed masculinity. They do not offer to fill the void at the center of World War I-era myths of masculinity and its supports—nationalism, capitalism, and the global conflicts these engender—as the more traditional images of the war (or even Picabia's own later pictures) arguably tended to do. Rather, as I have interpreted them here, they suggest the possibility of sustaining that void to embrace rather than disavow the new kinds of subjects arising from the post-Cartesian conceptual terrain offered by the devastations of the war.

3 Dysfunctional Machines / Dysfunctional Subjects

The power of the machine asserts itself and we can scarcely conceive living beings anymore without it.

— Raymond Duchamp-Villon, 1913

It is [the male subject] . . . , puzzled, astray, always playing with breakable toys, lonely and terrified in his universe of chaotic forces who is pitiful. The chaos that torments him is his own rootless self.

— Dorothy Richardson, 1923¹

As Dorothy Richardson's feminist heroine muses, the threats to normative masculinity led the male subject to attempt to recuperate his sense of coherence by "playing with breakable toys." The machines of industrial capitalism, and the rationalizing logic that sustained their smooth functioning, will be the focus of this chapter, which examines industrial rationalism and its links to aesthetic rationalism in relation to New York Dada's romance with the machine. We will see that industrial rationalism constituted a related but different (more bureaucratic and less visceral) kind of threat to male subjectivity than that proffered by the industrial slaughter of the war. We will also see that once again it was the male body that functioned as the site where industrial rationalism inscribed its insidious—and contradictory—demands that the male subject be both individual and corporate at once.

The body has been connected to the machine—and, in some cases, viewed as a machine—for centuries. Descartes famously described the body "as a clock, made up of wheels and counterweights," stubbornly material and thus transcended by the soul or spirit (*esprit*), while Julien Offray de la Mettrie countered the mind/body split of Cartesianism in his 1748 book *L'homme machine* ("Man a Machine"), precisely by claiming the soul itself to be "clearly an enlightened machine."² In his important 1990 book *The Human Motor*, Anson Rabinbach explores the extension of this idea into the nineteenth century, remarking that the notion of the "human motor" was a key

metaphor of the industrial era, involving a vision in which “the working body was but an exemplar of that universal process by which energy was converted into mechanical work, a variant of the great engines and dynamos spawned by the industrial age.”³

Not only is the body a machine or a part of a machine, then; machines are also understood as bodies. The two reciprocally map one another. The machine images and objects of New York Dada (including the readymades) can thus be understood as reciprocally determined and determining *mappings* of the male artists’ own equivocated experiences of masculine embodiment. Such experiences were conditioned by the massive shifts in human relations that occurred with the rise of urbanism, capitalism, and perhaps especially the development of modes of rationalizing production and rationalizing the human workforce itself in Taylorism and Fordism (terms that most Europeans in the early twentieth century viewed as synonymous with “Americanism”).⁴

Industrial discourse, like its military counterpart, described the importance of regulating and rationalizing the male subject, the primary source for the pool of industrial workers and soldiers in particular. And in the industrial realm, as in the military, this ideological and systemic (structural, institutional, bodily, and, per our earlier discussion of Le Corbusier and industrialism, spatial) rationalization strove to regulate the male worker so as to maximize his efficiency, turning him, in effect, into a machine or, even more threateningly, a cog in the larger machine of the assembly line and thus of the structure of capitalism itself.

As Frederick Taylor’s foundational text of industrial rationalism, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), makes all too clear, attempts at rationalizing workers assume the lower-class male factory laborers from the start to be profoundly feminized—malleable, debased, stupid, and virtually animals (“gorillas” or “oxen”). In short, the industrial worker is, Taylor asserts, “too stupid properly to train himself,” and so in essence demands the oppressive structuring of scientific management to make him useful. Taylor fully reveals the confluence of racism, primitivism, and classism in discourses of rationalization when he characterizes the workers as trained gorillas and when he insists (as if in a gesture of generosity) that the managers must not be “nigger drivers.”⁵ Of this burst of racist condescension, Antonio Gramsci notes in “Americanism and Fordism” that Taylor “is in fact expressing with brutal cynicism the purpose of American society,” a purpose that is not novel but represents “simply the most recent phase of a long process which began with industrialism itself.”⁶ Gramsci’s disturbing acquiescence with Taylor’s racism and classism aside, his argument makes clear that a rendering of the worker as primitive, stupid, and without (masculine) will

is inherent in the rationalization of the male subject required for the development of industrial capitalism.

Of course, one can find many examples within the historical avant-gardes of attitudes that are equally racist, sexist, classist, and primitivist; one can also easily find examples of works that appear to be direct comments on this rationalization of the male subject, perhaps especially within German and New York Dada. Thus, with a lack of subtlety that is typical of his work, Man Ray's 1920 *Priapus Paperweight*, with its perfect balls and shaft, aggressively reasserts the gleaming impenetrability of the phallus, unequivocally equating this symbolic form of power **with an erect penis (fig. 3.1)**. The gleaming phallus thus functions as a counter to the wounding effects of industrialism and the war. Man Ray ends up rationalizing (recontaining and resecuring) masculinity in this more or less explicit presentation of a small, dense—about 6 inches high—construction made of what appear to be machinic forms, glorious in their perfect symmetry, welded together and plated in gleaming metal.⁷

In this chapter, I will be less interested in such obvious attempts to resecure the coherence of masculine authority than in the works that ooze and leak, marking a (deliberately or not) failed attempt at reestablishing the compromised ego of the male subject. Man Ray's recuperative phallic sculpture contrasts strongly, for example, with the complex, organic view of masculinity promoted by or otherwise negotiated in the work and self-performances of the Baroness. Her c. 1920 assemblage *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (now lost, but known through an extant photograph by Charles Sheeler) is a case in point: a conglomeration of fragile, part animal/vegetal and part machinic, found objects—feathers, fabric, a bit of rubber or kelp, a shred of polkadot fabric, and a clock spring—rests precariously in a champagne glass, with a slender rod decorated by a curlicue of metal and a feather at the very top seemingly **growing from its midst (fig. 3.2)**. If Man Ray's pictures and sculptural assemblages render a masculinity that is torn by a conflict between rationalism (machine parts, the deindividuating pressures of factory labor) and traditional notions of coherent, heroic masculinity (symbolized through the phallus of Priapus, after all the Greek god of fertility), then the Baroness refuses the terms of rationalism altogether to portray Duchamp as a delicate mortal being cobbled together from various incompatible parts.

While readymade objects or pictorial or sculptural renditions of machines obviously comment in some way on industrial rationalism, I will argue here that they still function within the framework of aesthetics. Such works mark the confluence of industrial rationalism with aesthetic rationalism, both of which function to recontain the threats posed to modern subjects by urban industrialism. The sexual, machinic



3.1 Man Ray, *Priapus Paperweight*, 1920/1966. 8 signed and numbered examples. Photograph courtesy Telimage, Paris; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



3.2 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, c. 1920; assemblage, miscellaneous objects in a wine glass, now lost; photograph by Charles Sheeler, as reproduced in *Little Review* 9 (Winter 1922). Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, New York.

forms of Man Ray, Picabia, and Duchamp's New York Dada pictures and objects (including the readymades) have easily been recuperated into the capitalist logic of the museum and its extensions. The Baroness's irrational lived Dada, however, still resists any easy or formulaic positioning within the institutions of high art (see fig. 3.3). Even in this book it will be clear that I fail to render her lived Dada coherently; partly through my own impulse to retain the confusion her work puts into play, this rather neurasthenic rendering will surely fail, in turn, to secure her work a canonical status in histories of modern art.

The Baroness thus ruptures the very bond between industrial and aesthetic rationalism through a violently desublimated, *irrational* practice involving the body (with all of its unpredictable, smelly vicissitudes) as an extension of **the artistic impulse**. Sublimation has long been theorized by Freud and others as a central mechanism in the survival of the subject of civilized cultures. For Freud, the process by which instincts are sublimated—for example, by giving “phantasies body” through artistic expression—“is an especially conspicuous feature of cultural development. It is what makes it possible for higher psychical activities, scientific, artistic or ideological, to play such an important part in civilized life.” Just as the appearance of individual unity is produced by repression, so, Freud argues, the idea of civilization “is built up upon a renunciation of instinct” through sublimation.⁸

And sociologist Georg Simmel had argued a few decades earlier, at the turn of the century, that the artist in particular, buffeted by the shocks and traumas of modern urban industrialism, was well advised to *sublimate* such shocks; the city, Simmel argues, “becomes aesthetic only as a result of increasing distance, abstraction and sublimation.”⁹ What interests me in this chapter (and, really, in the book as a whole) is the way in which the Baroness, through a process of radical *desublimation*, pointed to the limits of historical avant-gardism itself. Historical avant-gardism still largely resides within the boundaries of conventional aesthetics in its adherence to the model of abstracting sublimation—a model which (as Man Ray's *Priapus Paperweight* makes clear) itself has rationalizing effects.



3.3 Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven working as a model, December 7, 1915. Photograph © 2002 Bettman/Corbis photo agency.

NEW YORK DADA'S IRRATIONAL MACHINES

Almost immediately upon coming to America it flashed on me that the genius of the modern world is machinery, and that through machinery art ought to find the most vivid expression. . . .

I have been profoundly impressed by the vast mechanical development in America. The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of human life. It is really a part of human life—perhaps the very soul. In seeking forms through which to interpret ideas or by which to expose human characteristics I have come at length upon the form which appears most brilliantly plastic and fraught with symbolism. I have enlisted the machinery of the modern world, and introduced it into my studio.

— Francis Picabia, 1915¹⁰

Picabia's celebration of America, and New York in particular, as the center of "mechanical development" is often cited to substantiate the idea of New York Dada as embracing the machine age. Crucially, within such arguments New York Dada works are viewed by extension as abstracted (sublimated) comments on the effects of the machine on the subjects of the modern cities of the industrial age. The machinic works are most often viewed in isolation as direct responses to machine-age modernity: either as reactions against its threat, or celebrations of its potentialities.

While some, such as John I. H. Baur in his 1951 essay "The Machine and the Subconscious," have seen the New York Dada works as part of the larger artistic "discovery of the beauty in the machine" in the early twentieth century, others focus more on the works as defensive in motivation (even Baur adds, somewhat contradictorily, that "one of Dada's most characteristic manifestations was the conception of man as a machine without will or meaning") or as recuperative and humanizing.¹¹ Dickran Tashjian argues, in his important 1975 study *Skyscraper Primitives*, that the New York Dada group's explorations of the machine relate to their interest in the "technological effects [of machines] upon culture" and to the link between these effects and American culture in particular.¹² The general idea of such arguments is humanist: that the artists making machine images are "primarily interested in the endless capabilities of mechanical forms to symbolize the human condition."¹³

For feminist scholars the analysis of these works understandably takes a different, more critical form. Works such as de Zayas's and Picabia's are often examined as signs of the group's overt misogyny. Thus in her important feminist interventions, Barbara Zabel has indicted the New York Dada machine images: "there is an obvious undercurrent of misogyny in these images, suggesting some dread of the New Woman of the postwar years."¹⁴ Other feminists are subtler in their critiques. In chapter 2

I have noted the importance of Nancy Ring's intervention into histories of Dada with her 1991 dissertation "New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity," and of Caroline Jones's extension of Ring's line of argument in her 1998 essay "The Sex of the Machine."¹⁵ Ring was the first (to my knowledge) to explore the relationship between shifting gender relations and the machine works of New York Dada, arguing these to be projections of masculine anxiety in relation to the rise of the New Woman with her threatening new freedoms.¹⁶

Jones, interestingly, takes up this basic idea and extends it specifically in relation to Picabia's neurasthenia, which she links to the contemporaneous writings of Joseph Collins, a specialist in neurasthenia at New York's City Hospital and Picabia's own doctor during his period of "nervous exhaustion" while escaping conscription in New York.¹⁷ Collins published an 1899 article in which he theorized the need in cases of neurasthenia "to inculcate habits of obedience and self-repression, eradication of egotism and selfishness, restraint of temper and capriciousness, and the development of moral courage and of physical and mental self-confidence."¹⁸ So close are these terms to those of Taylor (and, later, Gramsci) that it becomes clear how pervasive such language of regulation and rationalization—of the self, of the other, of machines and the flow of capital—was at the time.

Jones, who argues that Picabia's seemingly "female" machine images are actually "hermaphroditic," and thus at least in part marked not only as projections but as self-identificatory forays into the artist's own irrational, leaky masculinity, thus provides an opening to what I want to say here.¹⁹ As I understand the machine works, they are not so usefully thought of as rehumanizing (as Barbara Zabel argues), nor as focused simply on the capacity of the machine to "symbolize the human condition," as noted by Willard Bohn.²⁰ Nor is their thrust predominantly or only comic, as Francis Naumann would have it (although his emphasis on their humor and irony positions them usefully in contrast to the belligerent and self-important urban and mechanical images of the futurists and the rage-filled political statements against bourgeois materialism on the part of the German Dadaists).²¹

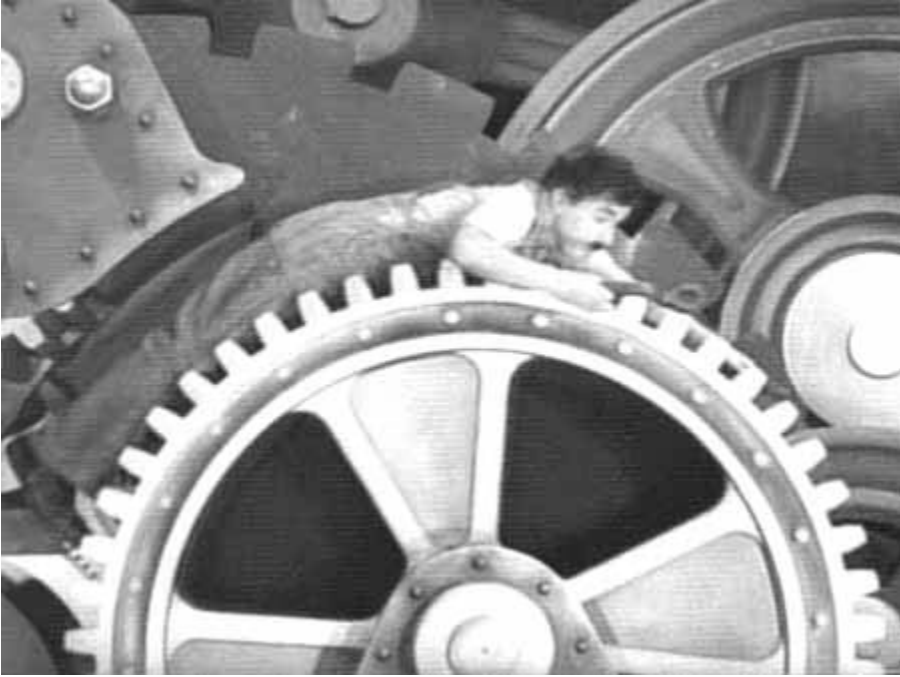
Following Jones's opening, I want to insist here that the New York Dada machine works are extremely complex and can most productively be viewed as incomplete negotiations of the violent challenges to the masculine subject in urban industrialism. The works, then, are as much *enactments* of the exploded, compromised masculinity experienced by the male artists as they are attempted (and failed) *projections* of anxiety onto the female "other." Viewing them in this way, we avoid dismissing them as simply misogynistic, or seeing them as somehow congealing into

conscious or fully formed statements against these violent changes. Like all of the cultural effusions of this period of New York's avant-gardes, they become complex—and to some extent not fully legible—maps of an ongoing process of negotiating, rather than making final sense of, the radically new social and cultural terrain of machine-age New York.

If we understand the machine works to be open-ended in this way, our view of the history of New York Dada itself becomes more open. Significantly, a gap appears that allows for the reemergence of some of the more irrational characters into the same historical field. The common tendency to discuss the performative forays of, say, the Baroness or Arthur Cravan as anomalies, or as anecdotal amusements surrounding the “legitimate” New York Dada works, usually defined as the machinic works of Man Ray, Duchamp, and Picabia and the readymades, might partially begin to break down. I am proposing a *continuum of irrationality* from the machine works (with their failed attempts at sublimation) to the immersive, flamboyantly desublimatory objects, poems, and promenades of the Baroness. The Baroness collapses the rationalizing conception of the body as a machine.

And yet, one would not want to assert the possibility that a body during the World War I period could *escape* the machinic or technological. As Marcel Mauss puts it in his important 1934 essay “Techniques of the Body,” the body is “man’s first and most natural instrument . . . man’s first and most natural technical object, and at the same time his first technical means.”²² The Baroness’s body, and her own various machine-related objects, are clearly technological (or *technologized*) in this sense: they are conditioned in and through modern, urban, industrial culture (this is part of their power and poignancy). But, emphasizing the organic as well as the mechanical, they are not organized rationally like the typical industrial-era images of a machine or machine/body. They are *irrational machines*, pointing to the irrationality of technological processes that never obtain the clean efficiency promised by Americanism.

The links between machines and the human body/self are multiple. Machines are feared or celebrated (depending on the point of view) as instruments of the rationalization of the human body and self under the regimes of Taylorism and Fordism.²³ This is perfectly illustrated in the ludicrous congruence of machine and human movements in Chaplin’s 1936 film *Modern Times*, which shows the Tramp’s regimented human movements on the assembly line exploding into neurasthenic jerks (the jolting of the machines somatized into a mental/corporeal disorder) and the human body becoming incorporated into giant machine gears, which “chew” and **regurgitate it (fig. 3.4).**²⁴ Chaplin plays the ultimate disorderly subject who, through



3.4 Charlie Chaplin, *Modern Times*, 1936; still showing machine chewing up Chaplin.

his irrational excessiveness and inability to be incorporated into the logic of the machine, threatens to throw a wrench into its smooth functioning (while, reciprocally, the machine continually threatens to mutilate and destroy him).²⁵

Chaplin's movie, which renders machines as symbols of the dysfunctionality of modernity itself (a modernity that is contrasted with the more authentic, bucolic, family-centered [if impoverished] lifestyle established by the Tramp and his beloved Gamin in a shack out in the country), also constructs machines, and the regimented bodies they require and entail, as the tropes of such rationalization. Chaplin's failed stint as a department store guard (which ends with him inviting the Gamin to sleep on the beds and skating blindfolded around the toy department as masked men hold up the store) points to the fact that the capitalist industrial system, most crucially, functions to regulate bodies not only by turning them into efficient machines of production but also by constructing them as perfect consumers.

The supposed "high wages" paid in the Fordist system were aimed at allotting the worker extra spending money, which he must (as Gramsci puts it) spend "rationally" in order to "maintain, renew, and if possible, increase his muscular-nervous efficiency and not to corrode or destroy it." American rationalization, Gramsci notes, has "determined the need to elaborate a new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process," and, he continues, "the truth is that the new type of man demanded by the rationalisation of production and work cannot be developed until the sexual instinct has been suitably regulated and until it too has been rationalized."²⁶ The Taylorized/Fordized "new man" would be a machine of perfectly efficient, speedy bodily movements, but one who was either physically restrained and surveyed by those who had an interest in his productivity or (even better) psychologically inculcated with self-regulatory moral constraints, such that all of his energy could be expended on labor and none would be wasted on the "animalistic" excesses of extra-marital sex or drinking—just the kind of excesses that, as we have seen, the New York Dadaists excelled in perpetrating.²⁷

Gramsci also emphasizes that the Taylorist/Fordist system is a profound threat to individualism; in fact, as a Marxist thinker attached to ideas of corporate or collective power, he supports the system's erasure of individualism and notes that "it is certain that [American industrialists like Ford] are not concerned with the 'humanity' or the 'spirituality' of the worker. . . . It is precisely against this 'humanism' that the new industrialism is fighting."²⁸ Gramsci's embrace of the deindividualizing effects of industrialism contrasts to the much earlier, and more pessimistic, recognition by Simmel that, with the "growing division of labor . . . [the individual] has become a

mere cog in an enormous organization of things and powers which tear from his hands all progress, spirituality and value.”²⁹ It is precisely this loss of individuality that Simmel proposes the artist must work to counter with his sublimatory representational strategies (which will rechannel the threats to the individual—clearly masculine—subject).

Industrial rationalism channels flow, just as aesthetic rationalism (sublimation) directs excessive, socially unacceptable energies into artistic creation. As Terry Smith has noted, machines enact but are also the symbols of a particular kind of “bureaucratic modernity,” wherein “the world [is] organized in all its relations according to a complete clarity of articulation, the always evident logic of rational planning, functional form and efficient design, a distribution of services through channels of such transparency that the equity of their flow is everywhere observable—thus securing an ideal of human behavior open to all, in the best interests of all.”³⁰ Machines symbolize and enact the regulation of the untrammelled flows of capital and bodies that threaten always to pollute or destabilize the ineffable spaces (as Le Corbusier put it) of industry as well as of a certain brand of artistic modernism itself. This system is predicated not only on machines but on the strict surveillance of workers both on and off the job, a surveillance that contributes to the paradoxically demasculinizing threat of rationalization in general (paradoxical in that rationalization is obviously intended to *shore up* masculinity, not to compromise it).³¹

This paradox marks the productive failure of rationalization. As Chaplin’s movie makes clear, the most important and highly charged aspect of the body/machine nexus is the inevitable *failure of the process of rationalization successfully or fully to contain or regulate human bodies/selves*—a failure that parallels the failure of masculinity to cohere as a fully stable subject position in modernity or, as we have seen, in artistic modernism. In Chaplin’s film (and his filmed body), as in the machine works of the New York Dadaists, it is precisely this *failure* that is sketched through the representation of *dysfunctional* machines. The dysfunctional machines of New York Dada sublimate the shocks of modernity (per Simmel’s call) but only in the most limited, “failed” way; they exhibit *not* a successful projection of male anxiety and lack onto female bodies, but the *failure and incoherence of industrial-era masculinity itself*.

SUBLIMATION AS AESTHETIC RATIONALISM

America's comfort:—sanitation—outside machinery—has made American forget own machinery—body!
— Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, 1920³²

The Baroness's own words sum up what is at issue in this moment of body/machine relations. What she offered to the New York Dada group was an overt recognition of the tendency in America to forget or to repress the organic, the irrational, the disorderly, in the rush to celebrate (or in some cases to bemoan) the effects and potentials of machine-age industrialism. Attempts to control excess, irrationality, and/or otherness, however, are never fully successful, especially when human beings (often underestimated in their pride and intelligence by managerial types such as Taylor) are involved. As Gramsci goes on to note, industrialists "have understood that 'trained gorilla' is just a phrase, that 'unfortunately' the worker remains a man. . . . Not only does the worker think, but the fact that he gets no immediate satisfaction from his work and realizes that they are trying to reduce him to a trained gorilla, can lead him into a train of thought that is far from conformist."³³

Members of the artistic avant-gardes thought of themselves as resisting, or at least refusing to accommodate themselves to, the mentality of rationalization attached not only to factory labor but, as movies such as King Vidor's 1928 *The Crowd* make clear, to white-collar labor as well. In *The Crowd*, a middle-class worker is shown taking his place among a vast array of identical desks with identical men in identical suits working out endless and seemingly meaningless figures on paper (fig. 3.5). The conformism expected of the bureaucratic worker is paralleled by the repetitiveness of the urban and architectural spaces containing and regulating such work (the camera pans up enormous spans of building facade showing never-ending rows of identical windows). Le Corbusier's ineffable spaces are exposed as inexorably linked to the rationalizing logic of industrial capitalism, with its mind-numbing effects of conformism and bodily as well as mental regulation.³⁴

Thus certain aspects of modernist avant-gardism, from Man Ray's phallic objects to Le Corbusier's repetitive architectural motifs and spaces, reiterate rather than challenge the logic of rationalism. But, as the cases of Picabia and the Baroness (not to mention Arthur Cravan and other uncontrollable figures associated with Dada) make clear, attempts at rationalization could have the paradoxical effect of producing *irrational*, disorderly, neurasthenic subjects who do not conform to—or who specifically thwart—the regulatory apparatus of industrialism, military or otherwise.



3.5 King Vidor, *The Crowd*, 1928; still showing rows of white-collar workers leaving for the day. Photograph courtesy of Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Los Angeles.

Picabia made evident his desire to escape such regulation throughout his early career, noting in 1917: “Happiness for me is to give orders to nobody and to receive orders from nobody.”³⁵

Along these lines, one could argue, as Gramsci does in “Americanism and Fordism,” that bohemia itself (with its embrace of alternative lifestyles and of avant-gardism in the arts) was an irrational extrusion of industrialism. Gramsci notes the “depraving” behavior, “libertinism,” and “crisis of morals” characteristic of bohemia as having taken form in opposition to the constraints of “wartime life and life in the trenches”; his descriptions elsewhere of the regulatory efforts of industry clearly align such constraints with industrialism as well. Finally, Gramsci opposes the supposedly clean-living, regimented worker (successfully rationalized by the factory system) to the depraved, upper-class (male) “Bohemian layabout” whose loose lifestyle precipitates “crises of *libertinism*” and “depraves [his] . . . women folk.”³⁶

The Baroness, already fully depraved and a bohemian layabout par excellence, in one of her poetic stream-of-consciousness rants (this one from a grant request to Peggy Guggenheim), explicitly commented on the Taylorist/Fordist mindset:

All know—[God] is tinkerer—limitless of resources.
 But why so much tinkering?
 He better fordize—learn from America—start expert machinshop—
 Ford can supply experience—funds—is rumored—for as yet he is clumsily subtle—densely—intelligent—inefficiently—immense— (Lord not Ford—of course).
 [God] better hotfoot it towards progress—modernize—use his own omnipotence intelligently—smart or we’ll all expire in tangle. Well Lord knows—(Does he?)³⁷

Showing a typical acerbic, glittering wit, the Baroness hones in on the way in which Fordism deflates individual authority by pointing to its potential role in teaching “God” to “start expert machinshop.” The inefficiency (irrationality) of God’s world as we know it points to its obsolescence—it must be “modernized,” and, since Ford presumably knows more than Lord (in spite of the latter’s “omnipotence”), Ford provides the model for such “hotfoot[ing] . . . towards progress.” The ultimate question, in response to the phrase “Lord knows,” becomes “Does he?”—a question that finally dismisses the very conception of an omnipotent (and inevitably masculine) deity.

Given her prescient spoof of Fordism and of phallocentrism, Christianity, and patriarchy in general, we might argue that the Baroness's *God* is a more telling sign of the complexity of New York Dada's engagement with machine culture than even Duchamp's *Fountain*, which is still (in my view) taken too seriously for all of its humor, or than the ironic but patriarchally affirmative *Priapus Paperweight* (see figs. 2.3, 2.4, 3.1). If *Fountain* is pissoir as womb, and *Priapus Paperweight* an aggressive sign of the conflation of phallus (symbolic power) with penis (the male sexual organ), *God* is disposal pipe as twisted phallus—a “modernized” objectification of male power in machine-age America. Here the plumbing implement was apparently in use, although dysfunctional (a clogged pipe in Morton Schamberg's studio in Philadelphia), when the Baroness ripped it out and attached it—or had it attached—to a miter box; when torn from its full extension, the metal rippled, leaving a curiously trembling upper lip at the top of the piece.³⁸ The regulating slits of the miter box (meant to guide a saw) are countered by the contorted tube of pipe, which precisely fails to channel flow properly. *God*, a contorted phallus, is the perfectly succinct indictment of masculinity and phallocentrism (not to mention Fordism), pointing to the ludicrousness of its aspirations to transcendence (to divinity) through the violent rechanneling of the vertical thrust of metal pipe.

Viewed through the model I have articulated here, the piece seems explicitly to signal the failure of the attempt to channel the flux of modernity through rationalization. The Baroness's rectified readymade (Duchamp's term for a found object modified in some way) functions, however, as a representational *comment about* masculinity, not as a reiterative heroic enactment of male power or a sublimation of the threats to the coherence of masculinity. Contorted and with its metal lip (like flesh) referencing the ripping of the pipe from the wall, *God* acts as a subversive, desublimated, and, one is tempted to argue, even feminist counterpart to the gleaming and assertive phallicism of *Priapus Paperweight* or the ambiguously gendered and sexed cavity of *Fountain*.

BROKEN MACHINES / DYSFUNCTIONAL BODIES

I would eat my shit. . . .

Let me state once and for all: I do not wish to be civilized.

— Arthur Cravan, c. 1915

MAN MADE THE MACHINE IN HIS OWN IMAGE. SHE HAS LIMBS WHICH ACT; LUNGS WHICH BREATHE; A HEART WHICH BEATS; A NERVOUS SYSTEM THROUGH WHICH RUNS ELECTRICITY. THE PHONOGRAPH IS THE IMAGE OF HIS VOICE; THE CAMERA THE IMAGE OF HIS EYE. THE MACHINE IS HIS 'DAUGHTER BORN WITHOUT A MOTHER.' THAT IS WHY HE LOVES HER. HE HAS MADE THE MACHINE SUPERIOR TO HIMSELF. THAT IS WHY HE ADMIRES HER. HAVING MADE HER SUPERIOR TO HIMSELF, HE ENDOWS THE SUPERIOR BEINGS WHICH HE CONCEIVES IN HIS POETRY AND IN HIS PLASTIQUE WITH THE QUALITIES OF MACHINES. AFTER MAKING THE MACHINE IN HIS OWN IMAGE HE HAS MADE HIS HUMAN IDEAL MECHANOMORPHIC. BUT THE MACHINE IS YET AT A DEPENDENT STAGE. MAN GAVE HER EVERY QUALIFICATION EXCEPT THOUGHT. SHE SUBMITS TO HIS WILL BUT HE MUST DIRECT HER ACTIVITIES. WITHOUT HIM SHE REMAINS A WONDERFUL BEING, BUT WITHOUT AIM OR ANATOMY. THROUGH THEIR MATING THEY COMPLETE ONE ANOTHER. SHE BRINGS FORTH ACCORDING TO HIS CONCEPTIONS.

— Paul B. Haviland, 1915³⁹

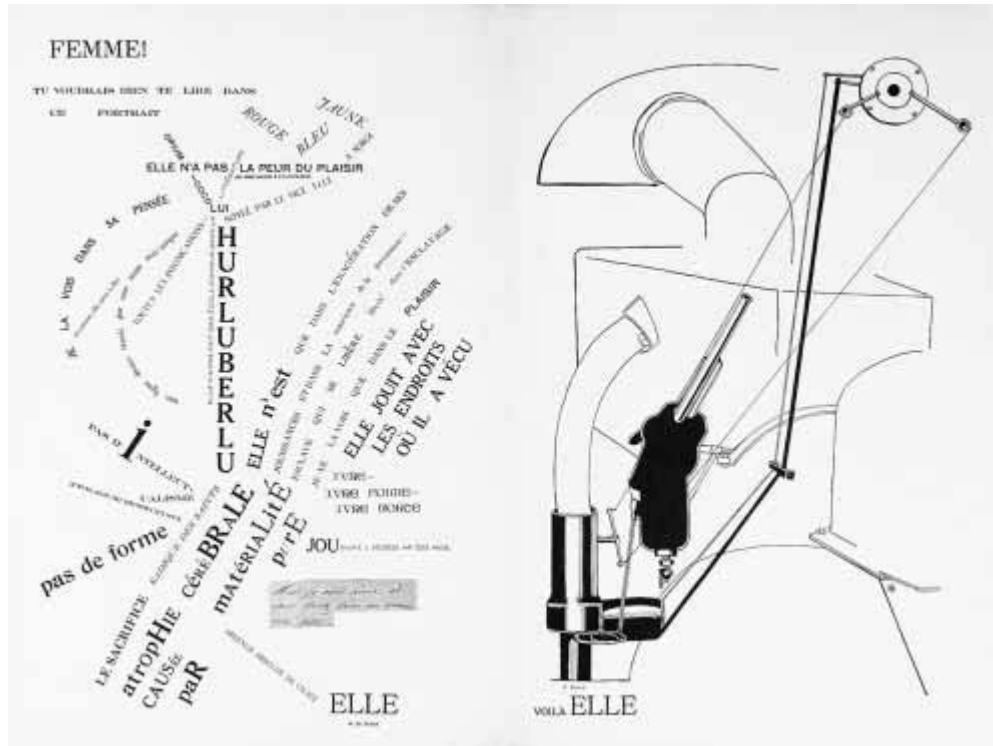
Arthur Cravan and Paul Haviland represent in an exaggerated way the two alternative responses to the trauma of machine-age industrialism I am sketching here: Cravan the desublimatory attitude, Haviland the masculinist, sublimatory approach. Although Haviland (cofounder of the journal *291*, a wealthy connoisseur, and U.S. representative of the Limoges porcelain company) was not connected through his politics or aesthetics to the renegade ideas of Dada, his commentary is often taken as an illustration or indication of the misogyny of the male artists in the group. Haviland's logic is truly sublimatory in Simmel's sense: his statement suggests that the artist makes his poems and visual works feminized machines in order to dominate them, to recontain the threat of both women and mechanization. Like the industrialist described by Taylor, the male artist "must direct [the] activities" of the subject in question (here, referencing Picabia's work by this title discussed in chapter 2, a female/machine, but one born "without a mother"), whose innate stupidity ("a wonderful being, but without aim or anatomy") would otherwise consign her, like Taylor's workers, to uselessness.

Haviland's attitude, indeed, seems to be directly reflected in a number of machine images from this period. Marius de Zayas and Francis Picabia published dual images of women/machines face to face in the November 1915 issue of *291*: de Zayas's *Femme!* (Woman!), and Picabia's *Voilà elle* (Here she is) (fig. 3.6). De Zayas's piece, a calligraphic picture poem, is consistent with the impulse of Haviland's proclamation; words construct a playful if overtly misogynistic sketch of a woman who is "hair-brained" ("hurluberlu"), defined by her "cerebral atrophy caused by pure materiality," and "is nothing outside of the exaggeration of her pleasures. . . . I do not see her but in pleasure."⁴⁰ Her body is formed of de Zayas's highly uncomplimentary poetic diatribe, which projects her into being but only as a love object for a man.

Picabia's *Voilà elle* presents a more equivocal and complex picture: a sketchy diagram of a mechanical structure, the only recognizable part of which seems to be a dysfunctional, abstracted shotgun whose gleaming, phallic barrel points at a tiny target above and to the right. Truncated piping on the left, next to the gun shape, leads nowhere, while the delicate lines of what seems to comprise part of an engineering drawing to the right stop in midair. Exemplified not by de Zayas's reactionary word poem but by Picabia's more ambiguous diagram, the classic New York Dada woman/machine image, then, is obviously misogynistic but, more interestingly, radically dysfunctional. If the gun/machine is phallic, it hardly seems purposive or threatening. Rather, with its empty black handle, it seems to mark the (literal) pointlessness of such attempts at virile self-display or violent projection. Picabia's *Voilà elle*, I am suggesting, seems to be motivated by a sublimatory impulse and yet, unlike de Zayas's more explicitly misogynistic and tightly composed work, ultimately illustrates the failure of sublimation to cleanse modernism of excess, femininity, and irrationality.

The remainder of this chapter will unfold as a series of serious plays with New York Dada machine works, interpreted as enactments of the disordering of the body/self nexus in urban industrial society. I am interested in the kind of disordering that marginal figures such as the Baroness and Cravan enacted through an engagement with industrialism—wherein they desublimated the "shit" of modernity (the excremental pollution of factories / of bodies) which Cravan claimed he would eat (the "merdelamerde" of the Baroness's New York Dada, as indicated in Man Ray's letter to Tzara, discussed in the beginning of chapter 1).

That said, there are three categories of works I want to explore as this chapter moves toward a provisional, but ultimately inconclusive, ending. First, the appropriated machine-made objects or parts of machines that comprise the field of the ready-mades—the foundational aspect of which is their dysfunctionality (their removal



3.6 November 1915 issue of 291, spread showing Marius de Zayas's *Femme!* (Woman!) and Francis Picabia's *Voilà elle* (Here she is). Photograph courtesy Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

from the world of efficiency and function to that of aesthetics).⁴¹ Second, the works that illustrate the channeling or stymieing of the electrical flows of urban industrialism. Third, and perhaps most importantly, those works that deploy plumbing images or materials, and that comment in this way on the link between the rationalism of industrialism (plumbing equipment being industrially produced and serving to channel bodily waste away from the ineffable spaces of modernity) and that of modernism, a link forged through the rationalization of the human body and its grotesque flows.

READYMADES

I really did not love the machine. It was better to do it to machines than to people.

— Marcel Duchamp, 1956⁴²

What is the “it” that Duchamp is doing to machines rather than to people? In 1916 he appropriated an Underwood typewriter cover, which he signed as a readymade entitled *Traveler’s Folding Item* (fig. 3.7). The typewriter, developed in the nineteenth century, has been cited as one of the most dramatic inventions of the machine age in terms of its effect on the human body; the typewriter is thus defined as a rationalizing machine that forever sunderes the link between the hand and writing.⁴³ In appropriating the typewriter cover, which doubles as a kind of “skirt,” Duchamp empties out this rationalizing function. The skirt is empty—but an open hole; the typewriter and its mechanical keys are understood as referents by those who know the brand name “Underwood,” but the machine is now absent. Only the useless art object—the empty skirt, the cover—is left in its place.

I noted in chapter 1 that the readymades have often been taken as *the* signs of the radicality of the historical avant-garde, based partly on Peter Bürger’s arguments in his 1974 book *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, but also on an earlier discourse about the readymades as (in Arturo Schwarz’s words) a “radical questioning of all conventions,” as the “purest materialization” of the Dadaist concept of merging art and life, and as showing that “art was to be found everywhere.”⁴⁴ Through this dominant view, Duchamp is raised to the status of the “benevolent technician” who transformed (single-handedly, it is implied) the very categories of “art” and “artist.”⁴⁵

Such characterizations align with a tendency among avant-garde artists during the New York Dada period to privilege the engineer over the artist (a tendency that paradoxically did not preclude the relegitimation of individual male producers such



3.7 Marcel Duchamp, *Traveler's Folding Item*, 1916 (later version without stand); Underwood typewriter cover, 9¹/₁₆ in. high; original readymade now lost. Copyright © 2002 Succession Marcel Duchamp; Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

as Duchamp as art [or anti-art] geniuses). In fact, Duchamp liked to proclaim that he considered himself an engineer rather than an artist.⁴⁶ The gesture of the readymades highlighted his confusion of the boundaries between engineering (the making of machines) and art, but this gesture is also tinged with what we might call a machine-age primitivism. The avant-garde's valuation of the engineer or everyday worker also functioned to privilege the untutored eye, which intuited a kind of machine-age beauty that overtrained artists could no longer see (the "freshness" attributed to the engineer's or laborer's eye is thus akin to the freshness of the so-called primitive, who is not overschooled in bourgeois habits and thus supposedly has a purer, less adulterated capacity to appreciate true beauty).

The final paradox of the readymades is that this pure untutored eye is inevitably connected back to an artistic name; the new kind of seeing is legitimated by its incorporation into artistic discourse. As with the more global acts of primitivism, where "primitive artists" are subsumed into the modernist gaze of avant-garde practice, the worker/engineer gains value, but not on his own, only inasmuch as he and his fresh eye can be incorporated into the figure of the avant-garde artist.

There are numerous anecdotes and statements associated with New York Dada that confirm this attitude within and in relation to the group. Most famously, Fernand Léger in the 1950s told the story of going, before World War I, to an airplane exhibition with Duchamp and Brancusi: "Marcel . . . walked around the motors and propellers without saying a word. Suddenly he turned to Brancusi: 'Painting has come to an end. Who can do anything better than this propeller? Can you?'"⁴⁷ And in a 1923 issue of the *Little Review*, Léger published a talk he had given at the Collège de France on "The Esthetics of the Machine," where he argues that "the beautiful machine is the modern fine subject" and its "very lack of [artistic] intention is one of its great claims to beauty."⁴⁸ Léger's claim that the machine had an inherent beauty because of its lack of aesthetic intentionality was a view common to a particular machine-age formalism characteristic of this period of high modernism.⁴⁹

If the "lack of artistic intention" makes the machine beautiful, then what is the readymade, a machine-made object that becomes art only through an exaggeratedly intentional act of artistic choice and signing? Of course Duchamp denied that he used aesthetic judgment in appropriating the readymades and denied that he intended them as art, insisting that they were adopted with a resolute indifference. (The first readymade "was just a distraction. I didn't have any special reason to do it, or any intention of showing it. . . . The choice of readymades is always based on visual indifference and, at the same time, on the total absence of good or bad taste.")⁵⁰ But the

fact remains that we view them as art because Duchamp—a person located within the context of the historical avant-garde—chose them.

Duchamp, while proclaiming visual indifference, made use of the fact that he was viewed as an artist to legitimate the machine-made objects he selected as art. In one sense, his readymade gesture thus explicitly reverses the dynamic at play in the Ford system: while the assembly line functions specifically to take the individual product away from the individual worker (in what Marx noted to be an alienation of the laborer from his products), Duchamp's gesture is to return individuality to the mass-produced object—to reestablish its link to an individual creator—*precisely through an act of selection that renders it “artistic” and, in effect, dysfunctional*. Duchamp's act turns the object into a play of forms (per Léger's remembrance and arguments). On the surface of it, this gesture could be seen as giving in to bourgeois values, in that it plays into the notion of the aesthetic as that which has no use value, which defuses the threats of urban modernity through an act of sublimation that transforms the industrial into the aesthetic.

It is by viewing Duchamp's gesture as ironic—as an *exposure* of the absurdity of such distinctions—that the works can be viewed as radical critiques rather than, along the lines of Léger's claims, as springing from a nostalgic, machine-age primitivism. It is not difficult to read them as ironic, of course, if one knows Duchamp's decades of clever public commentary about the readymades (not to mention his brilliant contextualization of them, such as the positioning of *Fountain* at the 1917 Society of Independents exhibition; and his later double ironization of them through their painstaking refabrication in the 1960s).⁵¹ Even so, returned to the context of discourses about the beauty of the machine, the readymades look more complicated than when viewed in isolation as “origins” of the postmodern critique of the institutions of art.

At the very least, the readymades emerge as negotiations of the discourses of Taylorism and Fordism, of the evacuation of individuality within these regimes, and of the way in which aesthetics often functioned to reassert this individuality by staging itself in opposition to machine production. If nothing else, this more complex contextualization should give pause to the Marxian critics who privilege the readymades as unequivocally radical critiques of capitalism and its markets. By reasserting individualism, Duchamp does not support collectivism, nor does he take a Marxian stand against the nefarious role of art institutions in commodifying artistic creation and establishing aesthetic value. More to the point, it seems to me, Duchamp negotiates the treacherous contradictions laid out by the very notion of avant-garde practice—in a vein that Warhol was to mine richly fifty years later—and points to the

fact that any artistic practice is necessarily embedded in the same value systems (economic and otherwise) that structure bourgeois capitalism. It is, I am arguing, the *ambivalence* of the readymades vis-à-vis industrialism and capitalism, not their supposedly unequivocal critical stance, that makes them important.

The readymades can be viewed at least in part, then, as playful engagements with the dynamic of the kind of aesthetic sublimation Simmel called for: they seem to comment on the (failed) potential of sublimation fully to reverse the rationalizing effects of industrialism on the human subject. At the same time, Duchamp's ready-made practice was relatively safe; it certainly did not in any way desubliminate his relationship to urban industrialism (the Underwood skirt continues to veil Duchamp). Nor did the particular readymades make direct or overt political reference to the specific rationalizing practices that the objects were originally manufactured to perform.

The person tapping the typewriter keys, then—the corporeal subject who labors and becomes thereby rationalized—is not directly referenced in the Underwood readymade, which thus functions as coy commentary rather than a fully desublimated challenge to rationalization. By circling around, rather than enacting, the compromised bodies of modernity, Duchamp kept his practice radical to a degree—but safe (and fully disembodied). In particular, the typewriter operator could have been a woman, as the skirtlike cover of the piece and Duchamp's later commentary seem to suggest: “I thought it would be a good idea to introduce softness in the Ready-made—in other words not altogether hardness—porcelain or iron or things like that—why not use something flexible in a new shape—changing shape, so that's why the typewriter cover came into existence.”⁵² (So much for aesthetic indifference!)

The “soft” and limp typewriter cover is held up only when there is a “hard,” rod-like stand underneath, a stand that replaces the missing form of the feminized typist.⁵³ Still, that hole underneath beckons the viewer to try to see what's there. And, once again, this viewer will see only a void as she peers beneath the skirt. In fact, speaking of voided subjects, the operator of the missing typewriter could have been Duchamp himself: as part of his schemes to support himself, Duchamp learned to type and acquired his first typewriter in 1915, just after he had come to New York.⁵⁴ Reading *Traveler's Folding Item* in this way, we can see that it is perhaps toward Duchamp's lack (not toward that of a “woman typist”) that the feminizing machinic reference of this piece points.

As always, however, Duchamp ultimately retained control and thus artistic mastery by choosing, contextulizing, and directing the display of each readymade. Taking on the role of curator of these found industrial objects, Duchamp exposed

the industrialism (not to mention the capitalist logic) motoring art institutions and discourses. But these strategies also indicate that the readymades have their own kind of rationality: they may be comments on the sublimatory practice Simmel identified as the “proper” course for aesthetics, but they still function closely in relation to that practice.

As was her wont, the Baroness homed in on the contradictions that make Duchamp’s readymades, contextualized by his self-construction, so fascinating, but that also compromise our belief in their unmitigated radicality. In a letter of circa 1922 to Jane Heap, the Baroness chastised Duchamp for his frivolousness: “he likes *frivolous* poeple [sic]—persons of low degree—no quality—vulgar flood . . . [he] is kept—fed—lulled—petted. . . . [He is] a relic of splendor—that U.S. *should* have *means of support without* being *turned into use* as a stable or modern drawing-room—or boudoir of *unprincipled callous prideless females*. . . . If I had *real money*—I would give him his needs.” The Baroness wants to “keep” Duchamp, and at the same time is disgusted by what she perceives as his self-prostitution: he has “God . . . in him,” but, “just like an American” (just like a bourgeois pseudo-bohemian?), he prostitutes himself.⁵⁵

In this private letter the Baroness exposes Duchamp’s coy flirtation with the prostituting effects of the art market as a compromise of the radicality of his avant-gardism. Far from overturning the structures of capitalist modernity, Duchamp, as the Baroness recognized, entertained them to such a degree that only a strategically myopic viewer could see him as the singular, uncomplicated origin or high point of the historical avant-garde’s critique of the institutions of art. The Baroness seems to have seen clearly that the power of the readymades is precisely due to their refusal to reject entirely the framework of aesthetics, their ongoing flirtation with the “prostitution” of art.⁵⁶

The Baroness continued her long letter by counterposing Duchamp’s weakness (a “weakness,” let me make clear, that I am not necessarily joining her in condemning) to her own “*sheer life power*.” For, she notes, “I can only join *real life* not *spectre performance*—I lived life with my passions—myself—since men were not men—but prostitutes. . . . I have my *full power*—I am *Amazon*e . . . my *swing will naturally go to desperation and ‘crime’* instead [of] to: *prostitution*.”⁵⁷ While the Baroness’s tendency toward racial and national stereotypes must be noted in all of its disturbing dimensions (here Duchamp’s weakness is counterposed to her “teutonic” strength; elsewhere she makes explicitly anti-Semitic comments),⁵⁸ I think she is onto something with her recognition that Duchamp’s avant-gardism is coy and in some ways safe compared to her “desperate” lived Dada.

The notion of mining industrial or everyday culture for material is also central to the Baroness's practice, but the case of the Baroness—because of her capacity (and seemingly even desire) to lose control—makes an interesting contrast to that of Duchamp. The Baroness would, for example, fashion found objects into art, as in her piece *Enduring Ornament* (1913), a rusted industrial metal ring that she found on the street on her way to her wedding with the Baron (hence its **optimistic title**; fig. 3.8). In strong distinction to Duchamp, who elaborately choreographed future appearances of his readymades and other works in art museums (and thus, resolutely, contextualized them as “art”), the Baroness's readymade and assembled objects either self-destructed or very slowly percolated out into the world (in the case of *Enduring Ornament*, in an eight-decade-long journey before their rediscovery by an art institution). Many of her legendary objects and works—such as the fabulous hanging object covered with buttons and urban detritus from c. 1918–1920, known only through its reproduction in Arturo Schwarz's *Almanacco Dada*—have been destroyed or lost.⁵⁹

Enduring Ornament was one of four objects that the Baroness gave to her friends Pavel Tchelitchew and Allen Tanner while they were living in Berlin in the 1920s. Almost lost forever to art history (they only recently resurfaced in a New York collection),⁶⁰ these objects hardly served to confirm the Baroness's artistic authority (as Duchamp's readymades did for him) nor to position her within canonical narratives of historical avant-gardism. The Baroness's *Enduring Ornament* functioned less as a commentary on the circuits of exchange within the art world, then, than as part of the continuum of ephemeral, performative urban engagements and textual interventions that constituted her lived Dadaism (a “lived” Dadaism that thus, like all living things, contained within itself a built-in threat of mortality).

I have already noted the Baroness's propensity to comb the streets and department stores of New York for detritus and commodities with which to construct elaborate costumes to adorn her magnificent form. The Baroness's *body itself*, then, became a kind of “readymade” in action. In addition, she wrote what she called “ready-mades in poetry,” of which the dazzling poems collectively called “Subjoyride” are exemplary. In one of these poems she wrote:

Subjoyride

Ready-to-wear-American Soul Poetry. (The right kind)

It's popular— [. . .] you like it!

Ah—madam—

That is a secret pep-o-mint—will you try it—



3.8 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Enduring Ornament*, metal ring, approximately 3 ¹/₂ in. in diameter.
Mark Kelman Collection, New York.

to the last drop?
 [. . .]
 Lux Kamel hands off the better bologna's beauty—get this straight—
 Wrigley's
 pinaud's heels for the wise—Nothing so pepsodent—soothing—
 pussywillow—kept clean
 with Philadelphia Cream
 Cheese.
 They satisfy the man of largest mustard underwear—no dosing—
 Just rub it on—⁶¹

Borrowing brand names and the obnoxious, chipper tone of advertising lingo common to the burgeoning consumer culture surrounding her (New York City streets were papered with billboards and notices already by the teens), the Baroness integrated this everyday language into her “Ready-to-wear-American Soul Poetry (The right kind).” Like Duchamp, she had a flare with English that was born out of her fresh, newly acquired access to the language and her ability to make puns across two languages. Perfectly in tune with the kind of supposedly random choice outlined by Duchamp as the basis for his readymade appropriations, she deploys words as much for their sound and pattern as for their social or personal significance. At the same time, meanings circulate around her imagery and on occasion congeal into revealing configurations: readymade (poetry) becomes “ready-to-wear,” with commodities (“better bologna's beauty”) promising to improve the potential consumer's life by bringing it “aesthetic” value (an aesthetic value which, we have seen, is in practice discursively opposed to any item with use value: here lie the paradoxical claims of advertising culture).

Too, the sexual overtones of all ad and commodity culture are laid bare by the suggestion of the man with “largest mustard underwear” rubbing himself with “soothing pussywillow—kept clean with Philadelphia Cream Cheese.” Machine-age urban culture functions not only by rationalizing the worker but, as suggested earlier, by producing rational(ized) consumers and by confirming traditional gender roles. As a woman circulating within this culture, the Baroness is perhaps especially well suited to noting the onanistic (“Just rub it on”) lure of advertising, which promises to deliver products that impossibly proffer both aesthetic and use value at once (while also shoring up traditional gender roles and concepts).

From *Enduring Ornament* to her “Subjoyride” series of “ready-mades in poetry,” the Baroness's practice brilliantly negotiated the urban industrial era's multifarious

modes of rationalizing the modern subject. All of her lived practices—the found object sculptures, readymade poems, elaborate costumes, and performative forays into the streets and salons of New York—intervened in different ways not only into the art institutions’ structures of ensuring aesthetic (and thus economic) value for works of art, as did the readymades, but into the larger systems of commodity exchange and symbolic meaning that characterized and assigned value to life in machine-age New York.

ELECTRICITY / MISFIRING

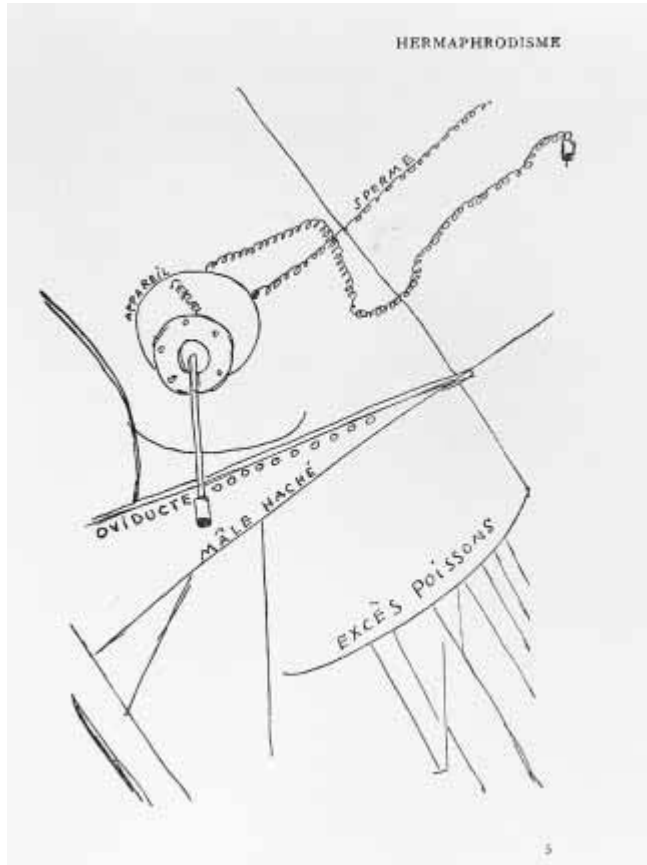
Cut Flower

**We inhabited the same era
in a deserted town
and the electrical curtain
would introduce its batteries twice
in a box of bizarre matches.**

— Francis Picabia, 1918⁶²

Picabia’s images of machines, machine parts, and electrical systems and parts from around 1915 to 1918, produced while he was AWOL from the French army and (according to legend) partied and womanized himself into a state of acute neurasthenia, reiterate over and over the theme of dysfunctionality. As in the 1915 drawing *Fille née sans mère* discussed in chapter 2 and *Voilà elle!* noted above, these images convey leaky, broken machines and misfiring electrical and mechanical systems with missing parts.

Picabia’s 1918 book *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère*, in which his *Fille* drawing was published, is filled with sketches of impotent sex machines, probably made during his various hospitalizations in the late teens for his neurasthenic breakdown. Composed of highly charged sexual parts in various states of limp dysfunctionality, they clank and grind with futility. The drawing called *Hermaphrodisme*, for example, shows curlicue “sperme” spiraling helplessly into detached machine parts labeled “appareil sexuel” (sexual apparatus or display), while an “oviducte” pumping out circles hovers over a “mâle haché” (a jerky [jerking off?] male, like Chaplin’s **neurasthenic worker**; fig. 3.9).⁶³ A “box of bizarre matches” (phallic in shape) might serve as a potential backup for an “electrical curtain” with uncertain battery power.



3.9 Francis Picabia, *Hermaphrodisme*, from *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère* (Lausanne: Imprimeries Réunies, 1918). Photograph courtesy Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

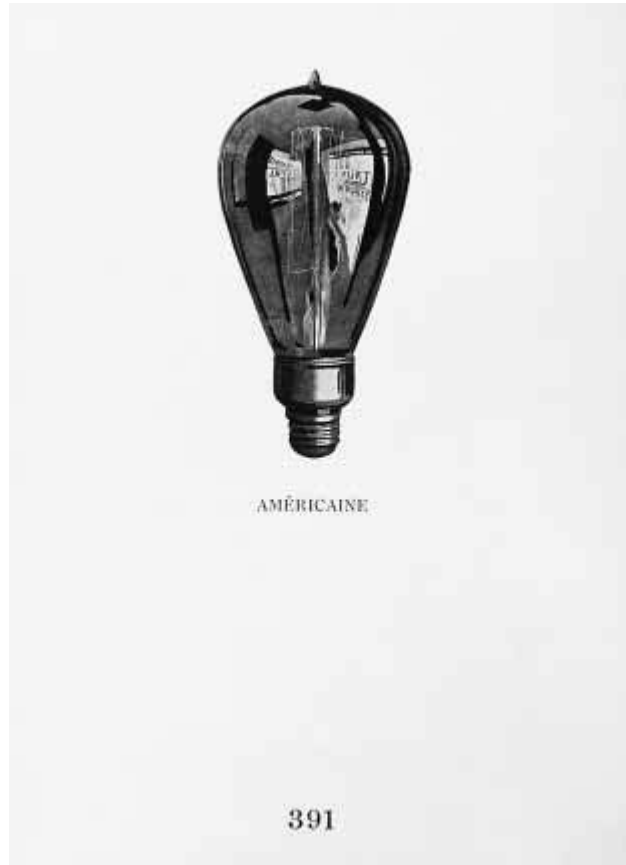
In particular, two pieces explicitly conflate a stymied electrical power with femininity and, ultimately, with Picabia's self-image (elsewhere in the volume Picabia notes: "I believe in my image").⁶⁴ the *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a young American girl in the state of nudity, a **mechanically drawn** sketch of a spark plug published along with a suite of his other machine images in the July-August 1915 issue of 291) and *Américaine* (the feminine for "American," published on the cover of 391 in July 1917) (figs. 3.10, 3.11).⁶⁵ If electricity is, for artists during this period, often utilized as a metaphor for the "hyped" or "wired" (potentially neurasthenic) subject of the modern city⁶⁶—of neurotic overstimulation—then images of a disconnected spark plug (such as the *Portrait d'une jeune fille*) or unscrewed light bulb (such as *Américaine*) phantasmatically thwart such electrical overkill. They portray electrical subjects who are flaccid, turned off, neurasthenic, or literally defused: stuttering "mâles hachés"?

Zabel interprets the *Portrait d'une jeune fille* as reflecting "the breakdown of categories—human/mechanical, male/female," and as signaling a "double threat, the threat of control by the machine and by the liberated female," positioning the work once again as a projection of male anxieties about the New Woman. William Innes Homer argues that the spark plug is a portrait of Agnes Meyer, cofounder of 291.⁶⁷ I want to argue once again, however, that such readings stop short. What if we look at the spark plug as on some level rendering Picabia's sense of himself as a (feminized) car part, rendering not only his potential anxiety in relation to women but, more importantly, of the feminizing effects of rationalization on his own body and mind? Perhaps, in fact, the explicit projection of the spark plug (via the inscribed title) as a "young American girl" can once again be viewed as a failed attempt at sublimation: a sign that he cannot lose himself in drugs or women, he cannot successfully project his sense of incoherence outward onto women's bodies (and affirm his own heterosexual virility), but feels this loss as his own. Picabia is the "young American girl." So much, certainly, the stuttering poems and flaccid male apparatuses of the poems and pictures of *La fille née sans mère* suggest.

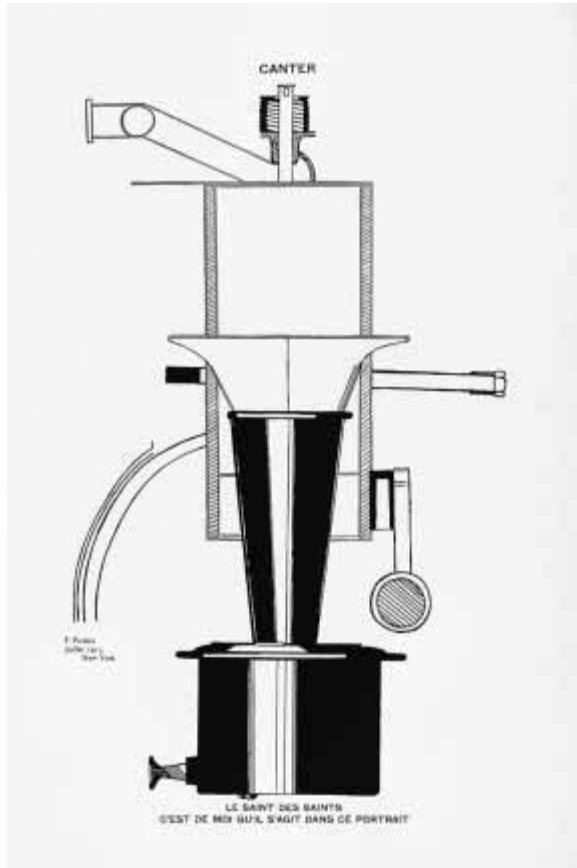
In addition to his habits of inebriation and womanizing, Picabia obsessed over cars (he documented his automobiles and had himself photographed in the driver's seat),⁶⁸ and in his own machinic self-portrait, *Le saint des saints c'est de moi qu'il s'agit dans ce portrait* ("The saint of saints / This portrait is about me"; also published within the 1915 suite of machine images in 291), he identified himself with what looks to be a **disconnected car horn** (pointing impotently toward some kind of open-ended crank shaft; fig. 3.12). I want to argue that there is more continuity between the "Améri-



3.10 Francis Picabia, *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (Portrait of a young American girl in the state of nudity), from July-August 1915 issue of 291. Photograph courtesy Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



3.11 Francis Picabia, *Américaine*, published on the cover of the June 1917 issue of *391*. Photograph courtesy Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.



3.12 Francis Picabia, *Le saint des saints c'est de moi qu'il s'agit dans ce portrait* (The saint of saints / This portrait is about me), July-August 1915 issue of 291. Photograph courtesy Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

caine” or “young American girl” and the “saint of saints” (Picabia) than there is a disjunction. Both the *Portrait d'une jeune fille* and Picabia's self-portrait, at any rate, show dysfunctional parts of a car that can be viewed in relation to Picabia's failed attempt to announce himself (“c'est moi”) coherently, to speak his own centered masculine ego, in relation to machine-age rationalization.⁶⁹

Man Ray's *Self Portrait* from 1916, the original of which is now lost, also explicitly pivots around a nonworking electrical circuit: he presents himself to us as a dark handprint (one conjectures blood-red from the existing black and white photograph) on a white field painted with violin sound holes and an actual, but nonworking, set of doorbells **with pushbutton (fig. 3.13)**.⁷⁰ On showing the piece, Man Ray noted, “everyone who pushed the button was disappointed that the bell did not ring. . . . I was called a humorist, but it was far from my intention to be funny. I simply wished the spectator to take an active part in the creation.”⁷¹ Again, the man (or perhaps we should say “Man”) does not function—the electrical current is cut; while the spectator can attempt to reenergize him, to reactivate his electrical current by pushing the button and connecting the circuit, she can only fail.

This apparatus-portrait, as Man Ray noted, points to one of the most radical potentials of New York Dada work: the possibility of opening up the circuits of intersubjectivity whereby the other is called upon to confirm and define the self. These failed electrical circuits point precisely to the attempts of the (male) artistic subject to cohere himself by dominating others—and ultimately, to his failure to cohere himself even *with* the recourse to women, drugs, and/or fast cars. The most threatening aspect of urban industrialism and the social shifts that accompanied it for formerly privileged white male subjects was surely precisely this forced acknowledgment of their contingency on the other.

Such contingency is complexly played out in Duchamp's various mechanical-electrical sex diagram pieces, of which the *Large Glass* is thought of as the culmination (see fig. 2.21). Duchamp's bride, at the top of the glass, is disrobing but never becomes a wife (she is never deflowered). She is, as Duchamp describes her in the copious notes he published relating to the project, an “apotheosis of virginity”: the bachelors below are impotent, providing only her “architectonic base.”⁷² Duchamp describes them as if they are Taylorist/Fordist drones, pumping away endlessly at the same onanistic task, but in vain.⁷³ Nothing is produced. They have nothing to show but waste and inefficiency for all their rhythmic actions.

Duchamp describes the connections between the bachelors and the bride explicitly as mechanical and electrical, thus sketching an elaborate erotic/machinic



3.13 Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, 1916; mixed-media assemblage with nonworking pushbutton and doorbells, now lost. Photograph courtesy J. Paul Getty Museum; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

exchange that mimics the “human motor” Rabinbach had identified as a central metaphor in industrial discourse. But for Duchamp, the overarching thematic is *failure* rather than successful, efficient, and fully channeled mechano-human consumption. The “tormented gearing” of the failed erotics of the bachelors “gives birth to the desire-part of the machine”:

This desire-part—then alters its mechanical state—from steam passes to the state of internal combustion engine. there is no discontinuity between the bach. machine and the Bride. But the connections. will be. *electrical*. and will thus express the stripping: an alternating process. Short circuit if necessary—

Take care of the fastening: it is necessary *to stress* the introduction of the new motor: the bride.⁷⁴

It is, then, *the bride* who provides the electrical current for this thwarted circuit of the exchange of love gas; the bachelors only provide the “masonry substructure” for her firing circuits. In spite of her characterization as possessing only a “timid power” (that of “a sort of automobiline”) and as expressing “ignorant desire. blank desire. (with a touch of malice),” the latter being qualities Duchamp ascribes to her through her virginity, the bride is the generator, the bachelors the pathetic failed recipients of her electrical power.⁷⁵ Indeed, noting the centrality of “elements of the sexual life imagined by her,” Duchamp tries to imagine the bride imagining—aligning himself, through identification, with her desiring electrical charge. Ultimately, the bride “has a life center—the bachelors have not.”⁷⁶ The latter are dressed in “uniforms” such as those of the “gendarme” or “cuirassier”; the bachelors are empty shells and are explicitly castrated: “each of the 8 [bachelors] . . . is cut by an imaginary horizontal plane at a pnt. called the pnt. of sex.”⁷⁷ They respond to the electrical current but can never successfully cross the dividing line of the glass (which is also, per Duchamp’s notes, the bride’s clothing).

We have also seen that Duchamp himself was described as cold. In particular, we remember the Baroness’s comments to George Biddle, in which she defends her rendition of Duchamp in the lost work on celluloid as an “electric bulb shedding icicles,” because “*he is so frightfully cold*. You see all his heat flows into his art.” As we have seen, the Baroness explicitly recognized the dysfunctionality of Duchamp’s own thwarted electrical flow, frozen under the frigid gloss of “icicles”; it was this coldness that she intuited was the cause of his fear of her—“For that reason, although he loves

me, he would never even touch the hem of my red oilskin slicker. Something of his [clearly already limited] dynamic warmth—electrically—would be dissipated by the contact.”⁷⁸

The Baroness, conversely, was, as Irene Gammel notes, a “live electric wire,” overflowing with uncontainable electrical passions.⁷⁹ The Baroness’s poem “Aphrodite to Mars” thus provides a passionate, fully enfolded set of imagery that contrasts strongly with Duchamp’s chilly mechanico-erotic *Large Glass*: the “flashing blade” is buried in the “Flexible tenderness web / Abdominal / Of Systems / Equal steel / Shaped / Female,” with the sharpness of her steel melted through the “Ecstatic elasticity / Feminine”; further on, all mechanical metaphors abandoned, the poetess moves into luscious organic language, remarking on the “Cool salty / Kelp’s” (the female sex?) and so on. This poem is about Duchamp—either a fantasy or a partial remembrance of sexual relations with him: the male love object is called “Victor” (Henri-Pierre Roché’s nickname for Duchamp) and the poem ends with “Flush / Poise / Mars,” “Mars” being the Baroness’s nickname for him.⁸⁰

Far from being Duchamp’s virgin bride, with her timid power, the Baroness was consistently bold, outspoken, and flaunted her scorn for the entire conception of virginity (not to mention for the state itself, which she openly refuted). As she states in her autobiography, “To adore virginity as essential property (instead of as preparatory state only—and then—why adore it? Everybody has it—even a kidgoat!) is the most flagrant illogic possible! It is sentimentality to that rotting tradition that reduces the men of Teutonic race—for *they* are most beset with this freak growth of no sense.”⁸¹ Once again, the Baroness cuts to the quick of the issue. Duchamp’s notes for the *Large Glass* complicate social notions of womanhood, and (ambivalently, it must be noted) examine the notion of virginity as a fixable guarantor of female sexual desirability, but the Baroness violently scorns the concept altogether both in theory and practice.⁸² While her male colleagues endlessly churn out images of their own impotence in the face of the rationalizing logic of modernity, the Baroness performs her irrationality openly and exposes the “flagrant illogic” of such attempts (through “freak” notions such as virginity) to control and channel the flux of human (and perhaps particularly female) desire.

The Baroness’s infamous working taillight, which she presumably found on the street and attached to her bustle, reads interestingly within this narrative of electrical transfer as a sexual metaphor relating to “perverse” sexual acts. Artist Louis Bouché noted that when he asked her about this blinking taillight, “she explained, with her fabulous accent, that after all, bicycles and automobiles had taillights and

she didn't want to collide with anybody."⁸³ Since colliding with someone at one's rear end is a very strange idea, one begins to imagine a sodomistic dimension to this particular electrical machine, attached to the Baroness's backside as it was. While Picabia and Man Ray made works that illustrated their own defused, failed electrical charge, and Duchamp transferred the little electrical heat he had into the thwarted circuits of his sex diagrams, the Baroness was like Duchamp's bride (a "new motor" who dramatically and open-endedly generates creative potency) but a more assertive, less "timid," and resolutely nonvirginal version.

PLUMBING: RATIONALIZING BODILY FUNCTIONS

Let no cultivated reader despise these details (lavatories, sinks, sewers, and manholes). There is no truer sign of civilization and culture than good sanitation. It goes with refined senses and orderly habits. A good drain implies as much as a beautiful statue.

— J. C. Stobart, 1911

If I can eat I can eliminate—it is logic—it is why I eat! My machinery is built that way. Yours also—though you do not like to think of—mention it—because you are not aristocrat.

. . . Why should I—proud engineer—be ashamed of my machinery . . . ?

— Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, 1920⁸⁴

Aesthetics and plumbing are intimately connected, as classical historian J. C. Stobart makes clear in his pronouncement regarding good sanitation, and as the Baroness suggests throughout her lived Dada. They are connected, in fact, through their joint rationalizing functions. Both channel the flux of impurity to cleanse and sublimate that which must not see the light of day in a civilized society.⁸⁵

The second and final issue of the avant-garde journal *The Blind Man*, published in 1917 by Duchamp, his French friend and colleague the writer Henri-Pierre Roché, and the young American artist Beatrice Wood, is devoted to expressions of support for *Fountain*, which had been summarily removed from the supposedly "open" (unjuried) Society of Independent Artists exhibition; as such it is not surprising that the issue contains several references to scatological functions. Louise Norton opens the issue with a salvo on the "Richard Mutt Case," calling the work "Buddha of the Bathroom" and noting infamously, in answer to the charge that *Fountain* was only "a plain piece of plumbing," that, as for plumbing, "that is absurd. The only works of art Amer-

ica has given are her plumbing and her bridges.” The piece, she notes, was removed from the exhibition because it was “irrevocably associated in [the organizers] . . . atavistic minds with a certain natural function of a secretive sort.”⁸⁶

Picabia extends the scatology of Dada in his contribution to *The Blind Man*, casting aspersions in his poem “Medusa” on “artists of speech / who have only one hole for mouth and anus” (while also describing his tongue as “a road of snow,” perhaps a reference to the cocaine use which is to catapult him forward in his artistic search (“I am looking for a Sun”).⁸⁷ Holes that spew idiocies and excrement, holes that can be penetrated, holes that ingest cocaine and booze, holes (as with *Fountain* and *God*) that no longer funnel the fluids they are meant to channel away in order to cleanse the human body and its spaces of their excremental dimensions (as in the quotation opening this section, “good sanitation . . . goes with refined senses and orderly habits”). Something smells fishy here.

If America only has plumbing and bridges to offer, aesthetically speaking, then *Fountain* and *God* are, indeed, the ultimate in American art. And, as suggested earlier, *God* marks the thwarted masculinism of the American Taylorist/Fordist system. *Fountain*? The male fixation with pissing his insecurities onto others. The Baroness, as was her wont, described it best: Duchamp “came to *this country*—protected—carried by fame—to use its plumbing fixtures—mechanical comforts.”⁸⁸ In this light, *Fountain* could be seen as a device to channel the flow of Duchamp’s old-world piss (mirroring, as if in reverse, the photograph of Duchamp in an unnamed bathroom from around 1916–17 [see fig. 2.8]: off guard, “pissed” with liquor, he sits fully dressed, slumped on the “porcelain goddess,” perhaps after “praying” to her in a purging of his system through the flux of vomit).⁸⁹

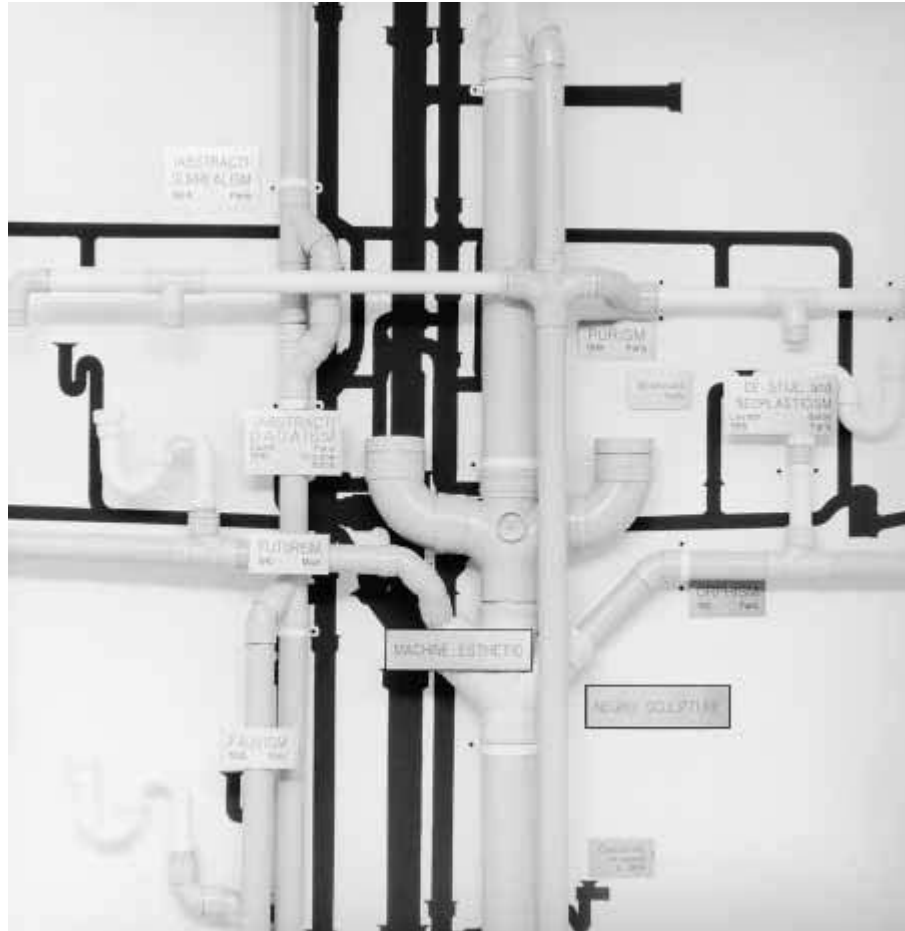
Too, while it could be viewed as an indicator of the homoerotic social interactions afforded by public urinals (I am told that men who piss next to each other in such spaces inevitably enjoy surreptitiously gazing at and/or comparing the size of their penises), *Fountain* has generally been read as art historian Paul Franklin has noted, in terms of heterosexual signifiers of gender difference.⁹⁰ Something, again, is fishy here. Too much is being telescoped into a single set of convenient meanings (New York Dada → male-constructed machine works // machine works → readymades // readymades → [in spite of homoerotic connotations] hetero-virile, masculine origins of radical avant-garde practice // and, ultimately, Duchamp → the origin of postmodernism). Where’s the irrationality, the stench, the flux in this picture? Where are all the women and queers—the Baroness, Charles Demuth, Arthur Cravan (heterosexual in his liaisons but decidedly queer in his lived Dada), etc.?

Artist and writer Margaret Morgan has most usefully summed up what is at stake in the New York Dadaists' obsession with plumbing (which itself connotes the architectonics of the passage of fluids in bodies as well as in buildings: "something wrong with my plumbing," at least for women, can be colloquial for having problems with one's reproductive or urinary pathways). It is all about flow and its containment, once again. Morgan's own practice takes off from two particular art historical points: that of *Fountain* (and, more recently, of *God*); and that of Alfred Barr's famous art historical diagram of modern "movements" (admittedly bad pun intended), published on the front cover of the catalogue for the [show he organized](#) at the Museum of Modern Art in 1936, "Cubism and Abstract Art" (fig. 3.14).

Barr's diagram is a flow chart that progresses downward, from 1890 ("Japanese prints," "Synthetism," "Cézanne," and "Neo-impressionism") at the top to 1935 ("Non-Geometrical Abstract Art" and "Geometrical Abstract Art") at the bottom. Inadvertently, as Morgan points out, Barr's chart channels the excremental flow that threatens to pollute the perfection of art historical "progress" by regulating "movements" through a system that resembles nothing so much as a plumbing diagram.⁹¹

More than anything, Barr's chart represents in an exaggerated fashion the art historical version of industrial rationalization: each movement (as it were) must move smoothly and effortlessly (via arrows) to the next; all of the flow of creative progress (with the inevitable racist connotations such as "Negro sculpture" and "Near-Eastern Art" contributing to the heroic European and United States-based movements such as "Expressionism") is neatly choreographed—rationalized—into one seamless logic of cultural (read: Western male) progress. Barr's phantasmagorical charting of non-European art types (with the cultures of entire continents, and across millennia, conflated) functions to channel the irrational and unknowable culture of the "other" into the logic of the "self-same."⁹²

Morgan intervenes in this logic through her room-sized installations *Too Much Leverage Is Dangerous: Modernism and Plumbing* (1994) and *Out of Order* (1997), where actual PVC plumbing tubes (PVC being the postmodern version, as it were, of the heavy-duty metal tubing of *God*) are arranged against the wall to comprise an "aesthetic" flow, labeled (in the case of *Out of Order*) with terms taken [from Barr's chart](#) (fig. 3.15). The configuration of the piping mimics both Barr's chart and actual plumbing diagrams from sources such as *The Plumber's Journal*, where intricate maps (looking like abstract drawings) outline the ideal placement of plumbing structures inside building walls.⁹³ The (homoerotic?) flow of aesthetic progress from (male) artist to (male) artist, from European/American movement to European/American move-



3.15 Margaret Morgan, *Out of Order*, 1997; detail of installation of white PVC with metal plaques, dimensions variable, plumbing system 14 × 14 ft. Collection of the artist.

ment, is exposed as just so much rationalized shit flowing through the highly overdetermined “plumbing” systems of modernist discourse and institutions.⁹⁴

Morgan applies her acute critical eye to *God* in her essay “A Box, a Pipe, and a Piece of Plumbing,” where she notes that the tubing is actually a plumbing trap—a curve (or in this case twist) in a pipe which traps liquid to form a seal so that neither gas nor fluid can escape from behind or below. The “trapping” function of plumbing (of aesthetic discourses and institutions) is linked to its channeling one: nothing unseemly must escape to pollute the perfume of rationalized modernism. The rationalizing logic of the flowchart or grid is directly linked by Terry Smith to Taylorism/Fordism with their attempt to impose “a two-dimensional flowchart onto the three-dimensional actuality of men.”⁹⁵ What Barr, Taylor, and Ford refused to see was that, as Gramsci pointed out, such efforts to rationalize always extrude elements of irrationality (in the case of plumbing, shit and piss; or, in the realm of aesthetics, elements such as Barr’s dangling label “Negro sculpture” or the visible penises in Demuth’s paintings of naked men in public baths).⁹⁶

As Morgan notes, the Baroness “challenged all notions of propriety, taste, juridical law, and *good sense*.”⁹⁷ The Baroness, in effect, openly performed the embarrassing sexual and/or scatological bodily functions that both artistic modernism and urban industrial modernity strove to suppress or contain. Most notoriously, she once carried a plaster penis through the streets of New York, blatantly exposing the continuing phallicism of the avant-garde and, by extension, the misogyny and sexism in the culture at large.⁹⁸ The Baroness openly paraded in public what works such as Constantin Brancusi’s 1916 sculpture *Princess X* (a veritable bronze penis parading as an abstract portrait of Princess Bonaparte) labored to veil through aesthetic, formalist abstraction.⁹⁹

The Baroness’s phallic display paralleled Demuth’s exposure of the explicit phallicism of Brancusi’s famous piece in his 1930 watercolor *Distinguished Air* (fig. 3.16).¹⁰⁰ Here, two men (one a sailor) embrace openly in a gallery, framed on their left by a bourgeois couple and, to their right, by a high society woman in a risqué red evening gown (with fan tellingly poised over her genitals); four of the five figures look up at a sculpture that looks exactly like a pink, fleshy version of Brancusi’s piece—exactly, in other words, like a white man’s penis (is the woman in red protecting her femininity from the unwanted thrust of this huge male organ—of the pretensions of modernist avant-gardism?). The fifth figure—the bourgeois man—stares down at the side (or perhaps at the ass) of the gay sailor.



3.16 Charles Demuth, *Distinguished Air*, 1930; watercolor, 16⁷/₁₆ × 12¹/₁₆ in. (41.12 × 30.8 cm.).
Whitney Museum of American Art; Purchase, with funds from Friends of the Whitney Museum and
Charles Simon.

While such images have recently begun to trickle into art historical studies of American art during this period—in particular, I am indebted here to the strong accounts of Jonathan Weinberg and Wanda Corn—the disruptive effects of their sexy irrationality have not been sufficiently taken into account in overall accounts of the period and in histories of New York Dada (Demuth frequented the Stieglitz circle and was a friend of Picabia and of Duchamp, often going club-hopping with the latter). As Corn points out in her important book *The Great American Thing*, Demuth’s position in art history was compromised from the start because of his sexual orientation. In particular, Alfred Stieglitz—still a major power broker in the New York art world into the 1920s—did not fully embrace or promote Demuth’s work, even though the artist was closely allied with those whose careers Stieglitz made possible; as Corn puts it, “some of Stieglitz’s coolness can be attributed to Demuth’s painting ‘vulgar’ subjects that ran entirely against the grain of [Stieglitz’s] program”—paintings, I would stress, that *desublimat*e the forms of modernist abstraction. Surely, too, Stieglitz would have been made nervous by Demuth’s openly swish self-presentation, which went against the grain of Stieglitz’s notions of proper male artistic behavior. The critic Paul Rosenfeld, Corn notes, went so far as to call Demuth’s forms “grotesque and monstrous”—terms that were destined by extension to denigrate the more or less openly gay Demuth as well.¹⁰¹

If we were to take seriously the phallic exposures in *God*, the Baroness’s dick-displaying promenade, and Demuth’s explicit celebrations of gay male sexual encounters, the singularity with which Duchamp and his readymades are celebrated as heroic origins of avant-garde practice would be at least mitigated. I imagine, in my own projective art historical mind, that Duchamp, obviously sympathetic to Demuth as his club-hopping friend, would have appreciated such “grotesque and monstrous” forms and practices and would have liked to see them returned to discussions of New York Dada. Among other things, such overtly erotic—and irrational—works enrich rather than lessen our appreciation of the complexity of the readymades as both politicized gestures and representational signs with a myriad of specific local meanings and effects tied to the urban industrial milieu of the time.

BODILY FLUX: SMELLING DADA

All smell is, if it be intense, immediate disease, and eventually we may say that, by depressing the system and making it susceptible to the action of other causes, all smell is disease.

— E. Chadwick, urban reformer, 1846¹⁰²

Demuth's personal demeanor, and in particular his decorum in social situations, at any rate somewhat defused the threat of his homosexuality (even after the harrowing trial of Oscar Wilde twenty years before, a swish persona could still be vaguely acceptable in someone who was seen as an artist, at least in bohemian circles). And we have already seen that the Baroness had a lock on the grotesque and monstrous—at least according to her male avant-garde colleagues. As a segue to the next chapter, in which I will finally succumb to an obsessive overidentification on my part with this marvelous, openly irrational neurasthenic, I want to end this chapter with a fantastic example of her capacity to explode the boundaries of the rationalizing logic of art history—whose nefarious (in my opinion) effects can be seen in the decades-long suppression of the dick-filled and overtly performative works of Demuth and the Baroness—through her exuberant (and radically anti-bourgeois) flaunting of her own bodily flux. Metaphorically, to return to Williams's descriptions of her stench (“a reek stood out purple from her body”) which he cites as an example of her repulsiveness and primitivism, the Baroness embodied what modernism sought to exclude as disgusting—the smell of otherness which conspired with the specific phallic plays of her work to expose the immanence of masculinity.¹⁰³

In her autobiography, the Baroness sketches her hot and heavy pursuit of a retreating lover (a young but retired German officer) during her travels in turn-of-the-century Italy; he tries to escape her advances, but, as she puts it, “this man I had to have—and I knew—I *would* have him . . . my feminine victory was paramount.” Her interest in him wanes, however, after a thwarted love scene in which a deadly fart sends him packing. Her description of this moment is well worth quoting at length:

We were standing together in my room looking out of the window into the glowing evening landscape . . . when I felt within myself a seemingly harmless elegant tiny fart like a smooth little ball found itself ready to escape—I felt sure of its good behavior and did let it slip. First all went

well—it seemed to be as wellborn as I had supposed it to be—soundless—but that was its sly treachery . . . on which I had not counted. Slowly but irrepressibly it began to spread its onion scented wings through my dress up to my nostrils! . . . I put it up to fate—I hoped it would escape notice—it wasn't penetrating nor in any way blatantly vulgar—but—it was definitely *present*. . . . With a touch of mischievousness I watched the expression of his fastidious features to see the knowledge born. . . . But it really grew more voluminous than I had anticipated.

. . . I wanted to escape—I was walled in by this atmosphere that had [made] . . . me prisoner of my own vitals—when—in speechless questioning gaze he turned to me—as to an adder. . . . I began to snicker and giggle—about the only wellbred manner possible to save the situation after it had gone *that far*.

[The climax was reached] . . . when, with a look of almost abject loathing—embarrassment, insulted virtue—he detached himself from me—stalking past me—his suffering nose in the air—towards his room—shutting and locking the door . . . all of a sudden I saw the whole little narrow pitiful piece of tightarshole that he was, felt the vulgar tactlessness of his own bourgeois behavior, the utter lack of flexibility of the prig meeting an unknown situation.

Elsa becomes increasingly contemptuous of her lover after this, linking his persnickety rejection of her farting body to the hypocritical pretensions of the art world; she connects the “vulgar odour of the mortal fart” with “the high refined odour of immortal artatmosphere.” Not daring “to fart nor shit,” this bourgeois prig keeps his door locked, to her “silent glee” for she recognizes this as “a feint—he kept it locked [out of fear of sex] . . . —not for fartscare—or contempt.”¹⁰⁴

From *God* to her detachable penis sculpture to the description of her lover fleeing with “abject loathing” from the stink of her farts (and her sex), the Baroness with tactical brilliance exposes again and again the limitations of bourgeois as well as avant-garde—modern industrial-age as well as modernist aesthetic—value systems. As Morgan's two installations suggest, both industrialism and aesthetics are circumscribed by the desire to eradicate or at least contain the stench of being human, as well as the specific smell of the other (whether it be an African sculpture or the female body). Through the Baroness we can begin to rediscover what is

channeled and flushed away in traditional accounts of New York Dada and modern art in general.

It is, finally, the dysfunctionality, misfiring sparks, and escaping odors emanating from the leaky borders of New York Dada's machines and electrical systems that point to what I am arguing to be the most radical aspect of its practice: the conflation of image and action in a *lived Dada* that, in its most extreme manifestations (such as the life/work of the Baroness), exults in rather than sublimating the terrifying, irrational flows that neither industry nor aesthetics can ever fully contain.

4 The City / Wandering, Neurasthenic Subjects

I have twenty countries in my memory and I drag the colours of a hundred cities in my soul.

— Arthur Cravan, c. 1915

City stir on eardrum—.

In night lonely

peers—:

moon-riding!

pale—with beauty aghast—

too exalted to share!

— Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven, c. 1917¹

In their neurotic creative excesses, both the Baroness and Arthur Cravan exemplified the way in which machine-age rationalism in World War I-era urban centers in some cases produced rather than suppressing or containing **neurasthenic subjects** (see **figs. 4.1, 4.2**). In the poetic **effusions quoted here**, both writers convey a sense of embodied immersion into the byways of urban modernity, with the “city stir on eardrum” and a myriad of urban milieus dragging horizontally across the soul, viscerally and radically challenging the urban wanderer’s (and, by extension, the poems’ readers’) sense of bodily integrity.

I am interested in this chapter not only in furthering my neurasthenic rewriting of the history of New York Dada but in exploring how the artist took place in relation to the city in the World War I period and how the spaces of the city were reciprocally produced by certain artistic acts.² I want to argue here that the artist-city relation is the conceptual and material site where the relationship between art and the social can best be explored. It has recently been remarked that the body and the city reciprocally map—become metaphors for—one another. As Steve Pile puts it in his book *The Body and the City*, “both the body and the city are intensifying grids for simultaneously social and psychic meanings, produced in the mobile, conflictual fusion of power, desire and disgust.”³ If the body and the city interrelate through a kind of discursive and psychic yet material interface, as scholars such as Pile and Elizabeth Grosz have argued,⁴ then one way of understanding an artist’s work, an artistic



4.1 Fabian Lloyd / Arthur Cravan as a student in Lausanne, c. 1908. Collection of Roger Conover.



4.2 Man Ray, *Else [sic] Baroness von Freytag-Loringhoven*, photograph published in the *Little Review* (September-December 1920). © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

movement, or the cultural meanings of a particular time in a city's history is by tracing the trajectory of artists' bodies through urban space.

Extending my interest in the irrational counterexpressions to the rationalizations of modernity and modernism explored in the first three chapters of this book, here I focus almost exclusively on the Baroness and other creative figures who paralleled her mode of peripatetic self-performance, tracing new routes in the material and psychic spaces of World War I-era New York. In exploring the embodied performances of figures such as the Baroness and Cravan, we will, I suggest, not only come to a new understanding of New York Dada but develop a new view of the city and its avant-gardes.

There are many New Yorks, but it is a rare study that allows the irrational, confusing, transgressive aspects of the city to emerge; that encourages thinking not only about the gridded streets and skyscrapers, city leadership and celebrity luminaries, and the ins and outs of urban planning, but also about the figures who lurked at the margins of these rationalized material and conceptual spaces. There are few cultural histories of the city that highlight not the *rational* New York (the New York that, in Le Corbusier's words, "lives by its clear checkerboard [such that] millions of beings act simply and easily within it . . . , *oriented* and [made] sure of [their] . . . course") but the *irrational* one (identified succinctly by Thomas Jefferson early on in its history through his description of the city as a "cloacina of all the depravities of human nature").⁵

By focusing on those figures at its margins (on the irrational, excremental extrusions that muddied the rationalism of the grid), I hope to open the door to a new picture of the city and its avant-gardes from this period. Inspired by the Baroness's own neurasthenic avant-gardism, this strategy is part of my plan, and key to my attempt to promote a kind of neurasthenic art history—one that acknowledges rather than suppresses the confusing projections and identifications through which we art historians give meaning to works of art, movements, and the artists who make and sustain them both.

In terms of urban neurasthenia, Cravan provides an interesting complementary case to that of the Baroness, and one worth contemplating at some length to clarify what I mean by the *irrational* city and its *irrational* subjects. Cravan enunciated across his various modes of expression a corrupted masculinity underlying his neurasthenic effusions. In many of his writings, he specifically enfleshes the city. Street and artistic subject intertwine in an imagery of pulsating urban chaos that ultimately threatens

the integrity of the body itself (in the city, as he wrote in his “Notes,” there is “no body, do you understand, no body”).⁶ A nomad whose identity refutes the labels accommodated by national boundaries, not to mention ideas about artistic subjectivity, Cravan dragged “the colours of a hundred cities” in his soul: he was active in the 1910s in Paris, Barcelona, and other cities of Europe and then in New York before he disappeared off the coast of Mexico as he prepared to sail to Buenos Aires to meet Mina Loy, his wife, in November 1918—coincidentally or not, the month in which World War I ended.

Cravan could be said to have lived his life and practiced his art (the two processes being identical in his case) in such a manner as to *reembody* the male subject of urban modernity during the early twentieth century (see fig. 4.3). It is legendary that Cravan not only wrote incendiary prose and poetry, such as the “Notes” cited above, which insisted on visceral bodily metaphors for the increasingly abstracted and rationalized human subject during this period, but also enacted himself violently and flamboyantly against the grain of either bourgeois, military, or even accepted artistic models of masculine subjectivity. Cravan’s various self-performances in and out of the literary and visual avant-gardes included: fighting the legendary Jack Johnson in a banner fight in Barcelona in 1916 (he styled himself as “poet and boxer” and, losing badly, he nonetheless earned his passage to the United States, where he landed in January of 1917); claiming, in his journal *Maintenant*, that Oscar Wilde was still alive (he was, notoriously, Wilde’s nephew), going so far as to provide an extensive description of a meeting with him; and taking on alternative artistic personae under various pseudonyms (the name Arthur Cravan itself was fabricated in 1911; his original name was Fabian Lloyd).⁷

Most notably, Cravan refused to fight in World War I. As his most sensitive biographer, Roger Conover, has noted, Cravan “sought confrontation” but “refused to bear arms. In defiance of war, he assumed the disguise of a soldier and hitchhiked to neutral ground.”⁸ Having thus escaped conscription (Cravan had English parents, was born in Switzerland, and used French as his primary language), he lived in New York briefly during the heyday of what we now call New York Dada and, like the Baroness, was taken by some to embody its premises.⁹

More to our point, Cravan was, as Conover puts it, “obsess[ed] with his own body”; Conover notes that Cravan himself attributed his agonized struggle with modernity (“what soul disputes my body?”) to what Cravan called his “fatal plurality.”¹⁰ Unlike the other male artists associated with New York Dada, who (we have



4.3 Francis Picabia, *Portrait* (said to be Arthur Cravan), c. 1924–1926; pencil and watercolor on paper. Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

seen) continually channeled their responses to modernity into relatively safe visual images and aesthetic (or anti-aesthetic) strategies such as the readymades, Cravan wore his creativity on his sleeve, or, more accurately, on his body. Like the Baroness, he *lived Dada*, if Dada is the subversion of bourgeois norms and expectations; because of his embodiment (his turning inside out) of the internal neuroses linked to urban modernity, his extreme behavior and artistic productions, like those of the Baroness, pointed to the limits of avant-gardism itself.

His best-known exploit in New York has become a mythical anecdote in histories of New York Dada. As recounted by Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, Duchamp and Picabia had invited Cravan to give a lecture at the Society of Independent Artists exhibition at Grand Central Gallery (the same exhibition to which *Fountain* had been submitted). Cravan arrived late, “obviously drunk. . . . He gesticulated wildly and began to take off his waistcoat . . . [and] began to undo his trousers.” After tossing his clothing into the crowd (whose “murmurs of indignation” were increasing), Cravan was indecorously “manhandled, dragged out” by several police officers who attacked him from behind. Walter Arensberg saved him from an otherwise certain stint in the local jail.¹¹

Cravan, like the Baroness, thus ran into trouble with the law through visceral, embodied, performative acts of misbehavior that positioned him against the grain of bourgeois—but also, in their extreme, avant-gardist—norms. While incorporated, via anecdote, into art historical studies of New York Dada, Cravan’s radicalism, like that of the Baroness, has never fully been acknowledged. If it were to be acknowledged by the broader studies situating New York Dada in relation to the historical avant-gardes, patrilineal constructions of historical avant-gardism as rooted solely or primarily in the gesture of the readymades would be, to say the least, compromised. The readymade, in some ways, can be seen as obscuring the more dangerous, embodied disruptions of figures such as Cravan and the Baroness (disruptions that ultimately defy their safe placement as minor anecdotal figures in histories of Dada). Both Elsa and Arthur lived Dada in such a way as *actively to perform* the nerve-wracking effects of urban modernity, effects that, as we have seen, both medical/psychological and mainstream discourses urged all modern subjects and particularly artists to suppress, sublimate, or otherwise avoid.

URBANISM AND SUBLIMATION

The causes of American nervousness [or neurasthenia] are complicated but are not beyond analysis: First of all modern civilization . . . [including] these five elements—steam power, the periodical press, the telegraph, the sciences, and the mental activity of women.

. . . Manufactures, locomotion, travel, housekeeping even, are noise producing factors, and when all these elements are concentrated, as in great cities, they maintain . . . an unintermittent vibration in the air . . . that [leads to] . . . severe molecular disturbance [and neurasthenia].

— George M. Beard, 1881

The movies, the White Ways, and the Coney Islands, which almost every American city boasts in some form or other, are means of giving jaded and throttled people the sensations of living without the direct experience of life—a sort of spiritual masturbation.

— Lewis Mumford, 1922¹²

Beard and Mumford's quotes, respectively, exemplify the psychological and popular discourses on the effects of urban modernity on the subject. For Beard, the city dweller, barraged with the aural and physical shocks of industrial "civilization" (not to mention the effects of the "mental activity of women"!) can only become a neurasthenic. For Mumford, the American city encourages its "jaded and throttled people" to seek escape through the spectacular displays of the theater and other amusements. Both articulate different versions of the prevailing late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century view that city dwellers experienced violent physical and mental stress, and that life would, by necessity, be increasingly oriented toward various methods of countering or draining off the effects of this stress.

A fuller discussion of theories of sublimation will highlight what is at stake in the rationalizing processes of modernity and modernism. In his 1929–1930 essay *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud theorizes the relationship between the ego and the outside world. According to Freud, we have three specific mechanisms for palliating the threats against the ego associated with increased civilization (linked inexorably to urbanization): powerful deflections (making light of our misery and fear), substitutive satisfactions (including the sublimatory strategy of making art), and intoxicating substances (which would include the inebriants that served to lubricate Duchamp's and Picabia's legendary revels, although, as we can see in Picabia's case, overindulgence in drink and drugs can, in turn, lead to self-induced neurasthenia).

In Freud's model, then, making art functions as a mode of sublimation, of channeling instincts into acceptable modes of social communication. Freud notes, "it is

impossible to overlook the extent to which civilization is built up upon a renunciation of instinct, how much it presupposes precisely the non-satisfaction (by suppression, repression or some other means?) of powerful instincts.” Sublimation, then, is the most obvious and acceptable way for the subject to suppress and channel the dangerous “powerful instincts” present (the implication is) in all humans but exacerbated by the stresses of civilization.¹³

Sublimation takes an explicitly gendered and sexualized form.¹⁴ The psychologist Beard, we have seen, points at “the mental activity of women” as one of the major causes of the rampant neurasthenia of urban industrial America. Freud positions women as in “opposition to civilization,” with the “work of civilization . . . increasingly the burden of men” who are compelled to “carry on instinctual sublimations of which women are little capable.”¹⁵ Freud’s model perfectly explains why women were never considered to be great artists in the modern and premodern periods. By his logic, women are not capable of sublimation (making “civilized” art) at all. Hence the usefulness of pairing the Baroness, whose neurasthenic excesses might be dismissed (along Freudian lines) as simply typically feminine failures to sublimate the shocks of urban modernity into appropriate cultural expressions, with Cravan and some of the more interesting failed sublimations of Picabia and Duchamp.

Ultimately, at any rate, it is clear that for Freud sublimation is bound to fail when the subject is feminine—or, one might add, queer in some fashion (behaving or existing against the grain of what queer theorists have called heteronormativity). The irrational—feminine and/or queer—subject explicitly thwarts the rationalizing impulse of sublimation.

Homophobia and misogyny are driven by similar anxieties; both are linked to fears evoked when the subject (usually the subject who is anatomically male) is forced to question the coherence of heteronormative masculine sexuality. The Baroness, for whatever psychic reason, was often sexually drawn to homosexual men as her objects of desire and engaged in deep friendships with lesbians such as Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, Djuna Barnes, and Berenice Abbott.¹⁶ While herself open to experimenting with lesbian relationships (she remarks in her autobiography that she had an affair with one of the bisexual chorus girls she performed with in Berlin—“I’ll do everything once”—but that “our *one* night together did not convince me of the thing”),¹⁷ she herself was largely sexually drawn to men. Nonetheless, given her predilection for gay men, her sexual aggression, and her intense friendship bonds with lesbians—not to mention her overall demeanor and openness to antibourgeois sexual experimentation—the Baroness could be said to have conveyed a resolutely queer sexual persona.

In fact, she once wrote a dream narrative to the editors of the *Little Review* in which a chorus of people call out “It’s a she— / Not—a he— / Sissy!—It’s a freak.” This would seem to describe her perfectly, or at least others’ perceptions of her.¹⁸ And the dream, she notes in her correspondence, takes place at Columbus Circle. In her dream text, the Baroness’s queer irrationality is thus enunciated within the streets of New York City.

Sociological discourses of the modern city from the early twentieth century pivot around anxieties about the dislocating effects of urbanism. In his essay on “The Metropolis and Mental Life” from 1902–1903, Georg Simmel famously extended the discourse on neurasthenia in order to theorize more specifically the psychic effects of the modern industrial city on the subject. As art historian David Joselit has pointed out, for Beard the development of the modern city—the hyperstimulating forces of industrial capitalism and newly minted technologies of transportation and communication—represented a “retooling of the bourgeois body.”¹⁹

In his 1902–1903 essay Simmel notes that the “deepest problems of modern life derive from the claim of the individual to preserve the autonomy and individuality of his existence in the face of overwhelming social forces.”²⁰ Simmel argues that the subject in the metropolis, specifically, must exclude “those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses” that threaten his integrity as a subject (or, as Freud would have it, endanger his [male] ego). These terms, not coincidentally, echo the slightly later language of the discourses of Taylorism and Fordism. For Simmel, the urban subject specifically develops his “intellectuality” as a rationalizing means of re-exerting control, of preserving “subjective life against the overwhelming power of metropolitan life”; ultimately, intellectuality results in a self-protective “blasé attitude.”²¹ And, he argues, the money economy is notably interchangeable with this intellectualizing approach to metropolitan life: both rationalize human relations (as the Baroness put it: “money is sexenergy stored—as is knowledge—combination: culture”).²²

The “blasé attitude” of the aesthete or intellectual is cultivated as a means of countering the “rapidly changing and closely compressed contrasting stimulations of the nerves” in the modern metropolis (Simmel’s description of this attitude thus shows its affinity with Charles Baudelaire’s 1863 description of the flâneur or dandy as “blasé, or pretend[ing] to be so, for reasons of policy and caste”).²³ Duchamp’s famous “indifference,” then, is perfectly explained by Simmel’s model, which the sociologist exemplifies through the case of the blasé person’s lack of concern for the differential values among things, an attitude that entails the belief that “no one object

deserves preference over any other.” It is, in fact (as Duchamp’s readymade practice brilliantly suggests), *money*, “with all its colorlessness and indifference,” that is understood by the blasé urban subject to be the “common denominator of all values.”²⁴ As Joselit argues in his powerful study of Duchamp’s work from this period, Duchamp’s practice can thus be usefully understood as an extended commentary on the nature of economic and sexual *exchange*.²⁵

Duchamp’s indifference, however, is but one side of the coin. As Simmel suggests, the “metropolitan” (who would be typified by Duchamp as the cynical, indifferent peddler in money / in aesthetics) simply expresses the reserve that is natural in the face of the “touch-and-go elements of metropolitan life,” a reserve countered by the demeanor and attitude of the figure who responds to the “bodily proximity and narrowness of space” in the city by developing an individual personal style.²⁶ While the blasé attitude serves to contain the threats of urban modernity through sublimatory gestures of personal indifference, in general urban “man,” Simmel argues,

does not end with the limits of his body or the area comprising his immediate activity. Rather is the range of the person constituted by the sum of effects emanating from him temporally and spatially. . . . The essential point is that the particularity and incomparability, which ultimately every human being possesses, be somehow expressed in the working-out of a way of life.²⁷

The reserved, indifferent aesthete, as we have seen Simmel argue elsewhere, sublimates the threat of the modern city through aesthetic detachment; he finds or makes formalized beauty in/out of the city, which “becomes aesthetic only as a result of increasing distance, abstraction and sublimation.”²⁸ The counterexample to this distanced figure, then, is the person who openly enacts this extension of the body in time and space; instead of working out “a way of life” by making art that sublimates her or his particularity, the *non*-blasé creative figure asserts her or “his own personal-ity [and particularity] within the dimensions of metropolitan life.”²⁹ This returns us again to the queer, fully embodied and desublimated acts of renegades such as the Baroness and Cravan. The fact that they enact their relationship to urban modernity through overt—and highly flamboyant—performances of their embodied particularity positions them, precisely, among those who do not (or cannot) conform to the rationalization of the subject that extends even (as Simmel’s and Freud’s arguments make clear) into discourses of artistic practice via the notion of sublimation.

NEW YORK SEEN THROUGH THE BODY: SUBLIMATED DADA

New York! New York! I should like to inhabit you!

I see there science married to industry,

In an audacious modernity,

And in the Palaces,

Globes,

Dazzling to the retina

By their ultra-violet rays;

The American telephone,

And the Softness/

Of elevators . . .

— Arthur Cravan, 1912

The entire island [of Manhattan] will be honeycombed by swiftly running [subways]. . . . The first day I [went down to the subway] it would not have been a difficult task to send me flying upstairs again. I wasn't exactly frightened, rather nervous. The hustling crowd on the platform didn't give me much chance for reflection, and I entered the first train that I was shoved into—the magnetism of the mob, as [Gustave] Le Bon would say. . . .

New York is full to the brim . . . yes, pretty girls, a bit too rouged, too flimsily attired. . . . The old-time chlorotic American type is vanishing.

— James Huneker, 1915³⁰

Interestingly, the two models explored above (with their gray areas in between) define what we might see as the two major trends in modernism in relation to the artist's negotiation of the city: per the Baroness and Cravan, a highly ambivalent *immersion* into the crowd (and one that, as the arguments noted above make clear, potentially opens the door for a feminine or queer intervention into the spaces of the city); and, per Duchamp, Man Ray, and Picabia, a more controlling response of “distancing, abstraction and sublimation,” as Simmel puts it. These two trends thus provide one way of understanding the works of the artists associated with New York Dada—works that in almost every case negotiate some aspect of industrial urbanism.

In relation to New York from the mid teens to the mid twenties, this would include the speed, noise, dirt, and burgeoning crowds caused, as Huneker's description evokes, by subways being carved out of **the flesh of the city** (see fig. 4.4);³¹ by elevated trains still rattling by; by the clatter of horses vying with cars for right of way on **the whirling streets** (see fig. 4.5);³² by the construction of high-rises, which were going



4.4 Subway construction, Broadway between 32nd and 33rd streets, New York City, c. 1900–1915; photograph from “Both Sides of Broadway,” negative # 75552. Collection of the New-York Historical Society.



4.5 Herald Square, New York City, c. 1909, showing elevated trains, trolleys, cars, and carriages; photograph by G. K. Hall and Son, negative number 73153. Collection of the New-York Historical Society, Hall Collection.

up right and left (during this period “a succession of massive edifices turned Manhattan into a city of canyons”);³³ by the visual clamor of electricity burning forth from every lamppost and Broadway sign; by the population explosion and massive growth of immigrant slums; by the labor unrest and massive labor shifts with the rise of industrialism and men going to war. And these are only some of the technological and psychic shifts with which the citizens of New York (especially its vastly more condensed lower regions) had to contend. As Man Ray put it, “the racket of concrete mixers and steam drills [was] constant,” continuing, “I who had been thinking of turning away from nature to man-made productions . . . with my new surroundings in a busy and changing city, it was inevitable that I change my influences and technique.”³⁴

For Man Ray, the racket and flux of the city were dramatic “influences” on his work, encouraging him to rethink his methods. The Baroness and Cravan, in contrast, came fully to “inhabit” the “audacious modernity” of New York (per Cravan’s poem, cited above), embodying and performing its raucous urbanism. Like Man Ray, Duchamp and Picabia took a more or less sublimatory approach to their negotiation of their urban surroundings, although as always Duchamp is a difficult and ambiguous case.

Duchamp’s *Large Glass* does not contain as much as it comments on the impeded flows of desire in capitalist culture (see fig. 2.21). The wheezing, ineffectual bachelors, with their limp apparatuses endlessly spewing love gas upward toward the disrobed bride, can certainly be engaged on the level of poignant—and terrifying—human loss, lack, and vulnerability. While the *Large Glass* could, in this way, be read not only as a parable of European men’s symbolic castration in the context of World War I, but also as a metaphor of the death of the myth of phallic plenitude that had long sustained the privileging of white male subjects in European and United States culture, it is also emphatically mechanistic and *inorganic*. The *Large Glass* makes form out of the irrational pulsations of modern desire, and the sheen of glass and the rigor of mechanical line aggressively refuse a sensual engagement with this glittering sex machine.³⁵ It sublimates, but in such a literal and overtly failed way that the sublimation is exposed as a lie (through the glass, as it were).

Picabia also more clearly took up the sublimatory approach Simmel recommends (though, of course, his nervous breakdown points to his personal failure to siphon off the threats of urban modernity successfully). Picabia’s evocatively entitled *New York Perceived through the Body* (1913) deploys cubistic abstraction to evoke the rustling surfaces and depths of the body’s experience of New York City (fig. 4.6), yet the painting is more or less conventional in its attempt to synthesize bodily experiences through two-dimensional abstracted geometries (conventional within the rhetoric of avant-garde [painting from the time](#)). As art historian Paul Conrad



4.6 Francis Picabia, *New York Perceived through the Body*, 1913; watercolor on paper, $21\frac{1}{8} \times 29\frac{1}{2}$ in. (55 × 75 cm.). Mark Kelman Collection, New York; © 2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

describes Picabia's abstracting impulse, "Picabia is seeing through New York's body as well as through his own. . . . Americans emerge from this process of meditative digestion abstracted into machines."³⁶

Crucially, then, while his work seems to address the body-city relation, it ends up participating in the rationalizing, sublimatory structure of modernity we have explored at some length. The city is "digested" through Picabia's "body." Although his personal behavior was desublimatory (irrational) to a degree, in his work Picabia is still inhabiting the masculine trajectory inhabited by Simmel's blasé artist or Baudelaire's flâneur: seeing without fully immersing himself in the irrational crowds and spaces of early twentieth-century New York.

In contrast to these representational practices, the Baroness consistently and actively produced herself as a mobile and quintessentially urban sign of sexual power. Like Cravan, she immersed herself in and thereby refashioned the psychic and material logic (or illogic) of the city. Whether consciously or not, the Baroness overtly performed the way in which commodity capitalism inscribed the body—even produced a new kind of subject—rather than disavowing these relations (per Picabia's and Man Ray's machine images) or coyly reiterating their effects (per Duchamp's glass diagrams, or the readymades).³⁷ The Baroness exaggeratedly performed herself, flamboyantly enacting what Simmel calls the "particularity" of the individual subject by making art out of her own peripatetic body and urban detritus.

THE FLÂNEUR, REVISED

What is art? Prostitution.

— Charles Baudelaire, c. 1855

Those who love a city, in its profoundest sense, become the shame of that city, the *détraqués*, the paupers.

— Djuna Barnes, 1936

In commodity society all of us are prostitutes, selling ourselves to strangers.

— Susan Buck-Morss on Walter Benjamin's rereading of the flâneur, 1986³⁸

Simmel's notion of the urban subject's need to "summon . . . the utmost in uniqueness and particularization, in order to preserve his most personal core"³⁹ seems to apply specifically to Baudelaire's description of the flâneur. The flâneur, however, is restricted in ways that are opened up—revised—in the early twentieth-century urban

avant-gardes, especially though excessive figures such as Cravan and the Baroness. In his 1863 essay on the flâneur (which he more or less conflates with the dandy), Baudelaire deploys a machinic metaphor to describe this character as “the lover of universal life [who] enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. . . . He is an ‘I’ with an insatiable appetite for the ‘non-I’.”⁴⁰ Not only a potential voyeur, the flâneur is also *immersed* in the electrified crowd (a crowd that theorists from Nietzsche and Gustave Le Bon in the late nineteenth century defined as terrifying in its engulfing *femininity*).⁴¹ The flâneur thus has his “feminine” (or, more broadly speaking, “queer” or renegade, irrational, and nonnormative) side, being an apparent man with uncomfortably nonmasculine attributes.

Baudelaire’s writings sustain some ambivalence about this figure’s agency, and his gender and sexual identity. While the poet’s misogynistic tendency both to fetishize and excoriate women should not be understated (he describes woman as resolutely other to the flâneur in her role as a “kind of idol, stupid perhaps”),⁴² in his writings on the flâneur as well as in his poetry the figure of the prostitute ultimately confounds his probably unconscious attempts to secure the artist as a resolutely masculine figure. As Walter Benjamin observed in his 1930s reflections on Baudelaire and the Paris arcades, Baudelaire on some level strongly identifies the poet, and his wandering parallel, the flâneur, with the prostitute—circulating “securely in the city’s clogged heart.”⁴³

The flâneur, whatever his partial gender closures in the imaginary of male theorists, thus exhibits enough ambivalence in his position to strike a very different attitude from that advocated by Simmel to ward off neurasthenia. He is never simply a masculine voyeur who, as Simmel called for, distances himself from the frenzy of the industrial metropolis through “increasing distance, abstraction and sublimation.”⁴⁴ At the same time, Baudelaire, and Benjamin following him, want the flâneur to be disinvested of bodily irrationality. Like the commodity (figured by the prostitute), like Cravan himself, the flâneur slips in and out of personae; according to Baudelaire (but refuted by Cravan’s resolutely *embodied* shifts of persona), the flâneur’s body virtually disappears as he becomes a pure figure of disembodied exchange.

But elsewhere Benjamin notes that the prostitute is not only a commodity but is the agent who sells her own flesh (this would leave aside the question of prostitutes who are pimped by others): the prostitute, he remarks, is “both seller and commodity in one.”⁴⁵ The flâneur, then, has some relationship to the *feminine* figure who refuses to sublimate: as Christine Buci-Glucksmann has put it, the feminine is “engraved upon the flâneur’s body.”⁴⁶ Most importantly, in spite of his imperialistic impulses

(passing his soul from body to body, appropriating others like a true colonialist), the flâneur enacts himself as feminine in his willingness to submit himself to a capitalist mode of exchange. As such, while the flâneur attempts to disembody himself as commodity (the slippery signifier that slides from one virtual palm to another), he is *embodied* in his relation to femininity (after all, the prostitute is a commodity, but one who functions as such only because she is embodied).⁴⁷ To this extent, as Dianne Chisholm has pointed out in her brilliant study of queer flânerie, while the flâneur resists “the industriousness of the modern metropolis,” he also immerses itself in its “intoxication.”⁴⁸ He resists but immerses himself at the same time.

And yet, the flâneur’s means of intoxication is consistent with capitalism. The flâneur, then, is radical but within limits; he works his magic largely within the logic of commodity capitalism. Clearly, the paradigm of the flâneur is highly complex. It is useful to view much of the discourse about this figure as attempting to make sense of modern artistic subjectivity by remasculinizing it (disembodying it) in the face of commodity culture’s threatened feminization of all subjectivity—its tendency to give the subject (such as the prostitute) body in order to sell her. It is precisely, I want to suggest, this feminization that motivates Simmel, Mumford, and Freud to argue that the (male) subject should activate sublimatory—disembodying and rationalizing—strategies.

Duchamp is closer than the wandering Baroness or the nomadic Cravan to inhabiting the classic, **Baudelairian position** of the flâneur (see fig. 4.7). He watches, he sustains the distance that Simmel requires (as Charles Sheeler put it, Duchamp was “built with the precision and sensitiveness of an instrument for making scientific machinery”).⁴⁹ Duchamp never immersed himself in the crowd (or even in avant-garde circles) enough to court the danger of losing himself, and yet he continually flirted with the “prostitution” that is “art,” in Baudelaire’s argument. As I have argued vis-à-vis the readymades, all of his interventions into aesthetics work in relation to the commodity system: clearly the readymades do not *overturn* the capitalist art market; they *participate in it*, commenting on its absurd contradictions. If they had overthrown the art market, Duchamp himself would not function as an authorial sign of aesthetic value, in a sense participating in the rationalizing forces of modernity rather than thwarting them or stopping their flow. Perhaps in spite of his own productive ambiguities, Duchamp today has settled into a figure of the resolutely heterosexual male artist who is thus easily appropriated as “origin” for radical avant-gardism (and postmodernism).

The Baroness (like Cravan), conversely, revises the character of the flâneur in a violently feminine and queer direction. Chisholm introduces the figure of the



4.7 Marcel Duchamp, c. 1915–1920? Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

détraqué to mark this kind of extreme, queer *flânerie*. The *détraqué* is someone who has broken down (*détraquer* means to put out of order or out of gear, and thus has machinic associations; the *détraqué* is a figure, like a pauper or homeless person, who is “de-tracked”). Chisholm notes, “the *flâneur* gets drunk on the commodity, the *détraqué* on refuse. . . . The *détraqué* is [like the *flâneur*] . . . objectified, but he is intoxicated with the process of degradation by which he becomes ‘incommunicable’ and unconsumable.”⁵⁰ Duchamp avoided being “consumed” through the coyness of his endless dance with the market; his irony kept him safe from being fully engulfed by the prostitution that is art (although, we shall see, the Baroness thought him a full-fledged prostitute). The Baroness and Cravan avoided such consumption through their self-performance as full-out *détraqués*. The *détraqué* and its streetwalking parallel, the ragpicker, enable us to complicate the Baroness’s relationship to urban capitalism.

Chisholm’s argument about the *détraqué* takes place in a compelling article in which she examines Djuna Barnes’s novel *Nightwood*, whose main character, the *détraqué* Robin Vote, has been argued to have been at least partially modeled after the Baroness.⁵¹ Chisholm argues that books with overt pro-lesbian themes such as Radclyffe Hall’s 1928 novel *The Well of Loneliness* function as reverse discourses, revaluating a lesbian sexuality that, in mainstream culture, has been denigrated; conversely, Barnes’s *Nightwood*, through the “reckless vagrancy” and queer but not explicitly lesbian sexual fantasies of Robin Vote, articulates a “queer antidiscourse” that, ultimately, imagines a possible space for a more effective kind of avant-garde practice. The effectiveness of this practice is, precisely, due to the articulation of “heterogeneous figure[s] of abjection” who provide the “final front against rationalization and *embourgeoisement*.”⁵²

The Baroness, as model for Robin Vote, is precisely such an abject, queer figure or *détraqué*: she can be viewed (I project her here), in her stench, overt sexual displays, and voracious appetite for urban life, as a “final front against rationalization and *embourgeoisement*.” A ragpicker and department store thief, she thwarted the regulatory structures of capitalism that contained the untrammelled flows of capital and desire that, if fully unleashed, would have effectively destroyed patriarchal urban modernity.

THE RAGPICKER

I met her in my Philadelphia studio . . . in the spring of 1917, a few weeks before I enlisted in the Officers' Training Camp. Having asked me, in her harsh, high-pitched German stridency, whether I required a model, I told her I should like to see her in the nude. With a royal gesture she swept apart the folds of a scarlet raincoat. She stood before me quite naked—or nearly so. Over the nipples of her breast were two tin tomato cans, fastened with a green string around her back. Between the tomato cans hung a very small bird-cage and within it a crestfallen canary. One arm was covered from wrist to shoulder with celluloid curtain rings, which she later admitted to have pilfered from a furniture display in Wanamaker's. She removed her hat, which had been . . . trimmed with gilded carrots, beets and other vegetables. Her hair was close cropped and dyed vermilion.

[On another occasion she arrived having made] a clean sweep of Schwarz's Toy Store that morning; and had sewed to her dress some sixty or eighty lead, tin or castiron toys: dolls, soldiers, automobiles, locomotives and music boxes. She wore a scrapbasket in lieu of a hat, with a simple but effective garnishing of parsley; and she led, tied on one string and fastened at different intervals, seven small, starved and terrified curs.

— George Biddle, 1939⁵³

Here the Baroness's friend George Biddle tells one of many tales that position her as a veritable *détraqué* or ragpicker, scavenging the streets and department stores of New York for bits and pieces of things that could later be fashioned into bodily adornments, even as she mined the city for its sounds and languages to be **reconstituted into her poems** (see fig. 4.8). As William Carlos Williams described her kleptomaniacal approach to the city and her general collectomania: a bride lost the heel of her left shoe at the tube station and, “lost, it becomes a jewel, a ruby in La Baronne's miscellany. . . . La Baronne had filled her room with bits of glass, wood, metal, paper and other decorative refuse collected from the street.”⁵⁴

In her evocative tale “Ragtime,” Anaïs Nin evocatively describes such a figure on the margins of the big city:

The ragpicker never looked at anything that was whole. His eyes sought the broken, the worn, the faded, the fragmented. A complete object made him sad. What could one do with a complete object? Put it in a museum. Not touch it. But a torn paper, a shoelace without its double, a cup without saucer, that was stirring. They could be transformed, melted into something else. A twisted piece of pipe. Wonderful, this basket without a



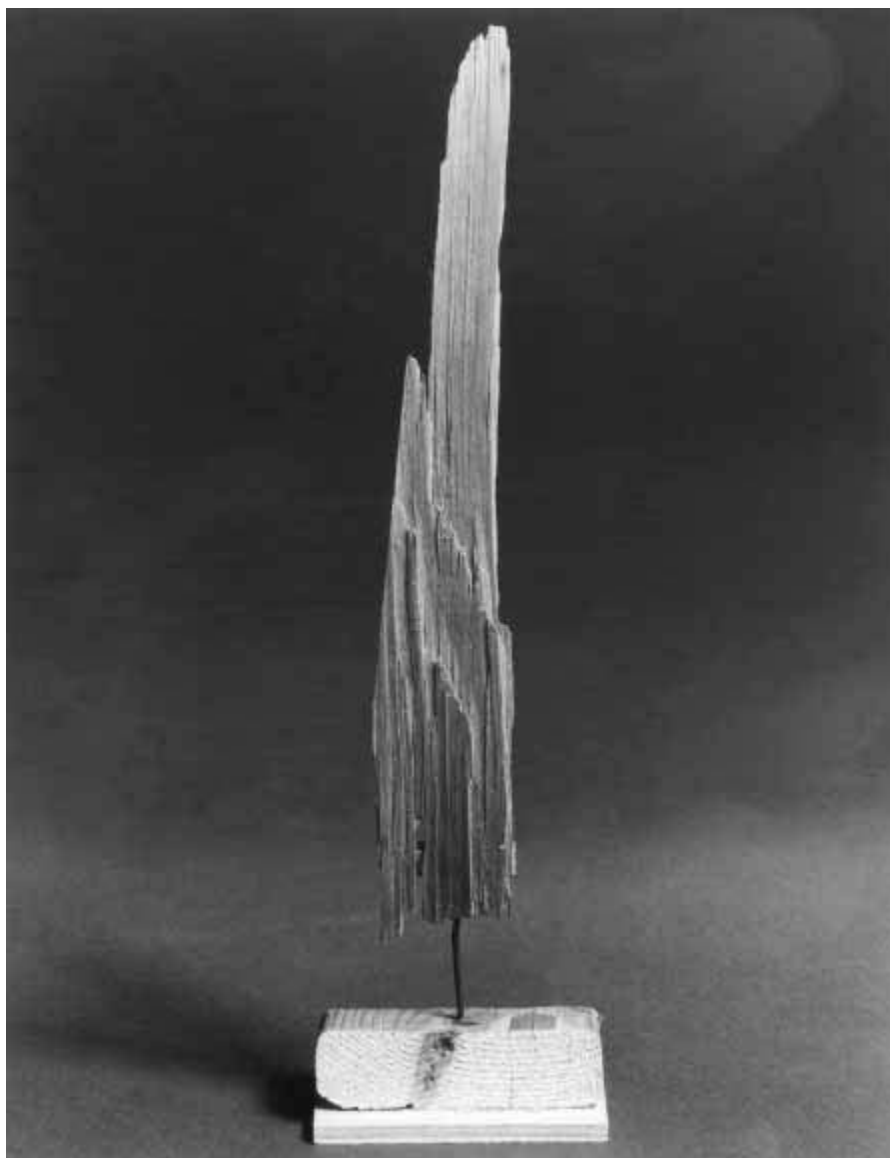
4.8 Man Ray, *Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, 1920; gelatin silver print, $4\frac{1}{8} \times 3\frac{7}{16}$ in. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

handle. Wonderful, this bottle without a stopper. Wonderful, this box without a key. Wonderful, half a dress, the ribbon off a hat, a fan with a feather missing. Wonderful, the camera plate without the camera, the lone bicycle wheel, half a phonograph disk. Fragments, incompleting worlds, rags, detritus, the end of objects, and the beginning of transmutations.⁵⁵

Counterposing the ragpicker's (anti-)aesthetic to that of the artist who makes "complete object[s]" that can be "put in a museum," Nin homes in on a sensibility that seems, more than that of the gender-ambiguous flâneur (who seems continually to want to return, breathless, to a state of coherent masculine agency), to describe the Baroness's way of being in the city. Nin's reference to "a twisted piece of pipe" could perfectly describe the Baroness's contorted plumbing tube refashioned into *God* (interestingly, too, the bicycle wheel calls to mind Duchamp's 1913 mounted *Bicycle Wheel*, supposedly the first readymade).⁵⁶ Duchamp as "maker" of the readymades was perhaps a sort of ragpicker, yet he *put the readymades in the museum*: that was, in fact, precisely how they functioned.⁵⁷ It was the Baroness, then, who more consistently sustained the aesthetic of the *détraqué* or ragpicker in her refashioning of urban detritus into bodily adornments and objects that, until very recently, resisted incorporation into the institutions of art.

Four recently rediscovered found-object pieces bring the numerous anecdotal descriptions of the Baroness's costumes to life and evoke the streets of World War I-era New York in a way that the sleekly displayed readymades do not. I have already discussed the *Enduring Ornament* in the previous chapter. Here, fleshing out (as it were) our understanding of the renegade power of the artist as ragpicker, it is worth looking closely at the other three: *Cathedral* (c. 1918), *Earring-Object* (c. 1917–1919), and *Limbswish* (c. 1917–1919), the latter two of which specifically assemble urban industrial detritus into body ornaments (see figs. 4.9, 4.11, 4.12).

Let's compare first two contemporaneous works: the Baroness's *Cathedral*, simply a 10-inch-long shard of wood mounted on a pedestal,⁵⁸ and Man Ray's *New York*, a series of wood slats of differing lengths held together by a C-clamp to form a *sculptural assemblage* (fig. 4.10). The Baroness's piece, by definition a "readymade" object, is nonetheless resolutely organic in its appearance and textural appeal (the viewer wants to stroke the rough surface of the wood). Yet the split, fragmented piece of wood references a New York skyscraper in its vertical profile and its title. The power of the piece comes from the disjunction between organic irrationality (the



4.9 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Cathedral*, c. 1918; wood fragment, 10⁷/₁₆ in. high. Mark Kelman Collection, New York.



4.10 Man Ray, *New York*, 1917; bronzed (?) wood slats and C-clamp assemblage, original sculpture lost. Photograph courtesy Telimage, Paris; © 2002 Man Ray Trust / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris.

seemingly random splits and cracks in the wood) and the rationalism epitomized by the form of the skyscraper, a “cathedral of commerce” in common parlance of the time.⁵⁹ This is the rationalism that was commented on, as we have seen, in films such as King Vidor’s *The Crowd*, with its visual rhymings between pans of seemingly infinite rows of windows on skyscraper facades and the seemingly endless rows of desks inside.

Man Ray’s piece, in contrast, subordinates the organic (the wood slats) to the kind of sleek formalism that is modernism’s version of industrial rationalization. The wood slats are smooth, even metallic in appearance (and by the time he refabricated it in an aestheticizing edition in 1966, he resorted to bronze, completing its rationalizing appearance and function);⁶⁰ the different lengths of the slats emerge only at the top, suggesting the variegated rooflines common to skyscrapers from the late teens into the 1920s.⁶¹ Man Ray’s rectified readymade is a clever visual and material pun on the rationalized structures of urban modernity. But, rather than countering the formalistic rigidity of these structures, the piece repeats them, rendering found materials into an image (albeit somewhat tongue in cheek) of the formally aestheticized, ineffable modern city.

While the Baroness’s *Cathedral* seems to mock the steel-armored thrust of modernism’s continuing phallocentrism, presenting a shattered, organic shard as a visual metaphor for the skyscraper, Man Ray’s pieces are formal exercises, literalizing the conflation of phallus and penis that underlies the psychic structures of patriarchy and the logic of phallocentrism (in turn, a logic underlying the rationalizing grids and skyscrapers of c. 1920 New York). As Steve Pile has argued, expanding on the work of Henri Lefebvre, the Manhattan skyline could be understood as a manifestation of the “bourgeois coupling of ‘Ego’ and ‘Phallus,’” a sign of space “produced under . . . intersecting, aligned lines of power: masculinity, the bourgeois family, and capitalism.” In concert, he concludes, “these powers produce the rhythms of New York, New York . . . [and] the Manhattan skyline becomes the perpetually acceptable face of capitalism.”⁶² The Baroness’s shard seems to peel apart these intersecting, mutually reinforcing spatial and ideological metaphors, while Man Ray’s rigid, phallic rendition of the skyline (like his *Priapus Paperweight*) seems to substantiate them.

Earring-Object is a fabulous **conglomeration of what** look to be machine parts; on closer look, the object appears to be constructed from a watch spring and dangling prefabricated earring parts, including a hanging triangular pendant. One imagines—even feels—the swing of the large earring as it passes back and forth across the



4.11 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Earring-Object*, c. 1917–1919; mixed media, 4 × 3 × 3 in. Mark Kelman Collection, New York.



4.12 Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Limbswish*, c. 1917–1919; metal spring and curtain tassel, approximately 18 in. high. Mark Kelman Collection, New York.

Baroness's bony and elegant shoulder as she strides purposefully down Fourteenth Street, barely touched by her short, bobbed hair (or dangling free from her shaven head).

Limbswish is equally evocative of **bodily movement**. Here another spiral (a metal spring) loosely encases a dangling, gold curtain tassel, the whole thing a good 18 inches long. The Baroness would have worn this off her hip—I'm sure of it: as Berenice Abbott described her friend, "she invented and introduced trousers with pictures and ornaments painted on them. This was an absolute outrage. . . . Elsa possessed a wonderful figure, statuesque and boyishly lean. I remember her wonderful stride, as she walk[ed] up the street toward my house."⁶³ Swishing back and forth indeed, the Baroness would have signaled the sexual power that could easily be unleashed by the slightest provocation.

The Baroness's poems often add more flesh to such imaginings: for example, in her 1920s poem "Ostentatious," which seems to track her trajectory through the east-west byways—the "ultramarine venues" and "limpid thoroughfares"—of New York City, she spews forth a swirl of urban meanings around *Limbswish*:

Vivid fall's
Bugle sky—
Castle cloud's
Leafy limbswish—
Westward:
Saxophone day's steelblast galaxy—
Eastward:
Big she-moon's cheekflushed travesty
Agog
Ultramarine venues limpid thoroughfare.⁶⁴

These now recovered objects constructed by the Baroness paralleled many others that are now seemingly lost but which are known through descriptions in stories about the Baroness: the modern taillight attached to her bustle, the canary cage attached around her neck, as well as the adornments she fashioned for those close to her (she showered Abbott with "jewelry, gilded eyelashes, a copper belt buckle, and a Duchampian shovel-readymade earring"; to other friends, she sent a "belt made of woven fabric, buttons, wire, key, springs, and metal" and a "pipe decorated in poetical illusions").⁶⁵

As her biographer Irene Gammel puts it, her urban promenades with such evocative assemblages, combined with her tendency to appear at various balls, art openings, and avant-garde venues with a passel of dogs on leash, “accentuated the image of her body as gyrating life force. Confronting her viewers with her ready-made formula—*motion*, *emotion*—her proudly strutting body critically engaged the modern machine age and critically countered the male dadaists’ fetishizing of modern technology.”⁶⁶ Gammel, I think, hits the nail (of rationalism, of “fetishizing . . . modern technology”) on the head with a finely tuned hammer (the imagined Baroness herself), exemplifying the way in which extended attention to this marvelous figure can shift one’s understanding of the New York Dada group and of historical avant-gardism in general.

The implications of the ragpicker, however, go farther than just enabling the radical performance of Dada. Nin evocatively describes the ragpicker looking at her “with his one leaking eye. I pick a basket without a bottom. The rim of a hat. The lining of a coat. Touch myself. Am I complete? Arms? Legs? Hair? Eyes? Where is the sole of my foot? I take off my shoe to see, to feel. Laugh.”⁶⁷ Encountered, the ragpicker, like the *détraqué*, can provoke a radical sense of dislocation (in the best of cases even encouraging a neurasthenic approach to history). The person who encounters the ragpicker or *détraqué* suddenly calls into question her own corporeality, her coherence, her methods of making sense of the world and, even as she is thus destabilized and opened to otherness, is prompted to “see, to feel,” and to “laugh” as she is brought to a new recognition of her embodied engagement with the city and its inhabitants. The confrontation (as the anxious reminiscences of William Carlos Williams, George Biddle, and other male modernists attest) can be very scary. But it can also, when embraced, encourage a radically new opening of the interpretive subject her- or himself.

IMMERSIVE DADA: THE BARONESS AS URBAN WANDERER

In New York—when I did hard posing—I entertained my spirit joyfully.

Posing is an art.

— Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, c. 1924, 1927

Any space implies, contains and dissimulates social relationships—and this despite the fact that a space is not a thing but rather a set of relations among things (objects and products).

— Henri Lefebvre, 1974

Seeing Manhattan from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center. . . . The gigantic mass [the crowd] is immobilized before the eyes. It is transformed into a texturology. . . .

To what erotics of knowledge does the ecstasy of reading such a cosmos belong? . . .

Is the immense texturology spread out before one's eyes anything more than a representation, an optical artifact? . . . The panorama-city is a "theoretical" (that is, visual) simulacrum, in short a picture. . . .

Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. . . . A *migrational*, or metaphorical, city thus slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city.

— Michel de Certeau, 1984⁶⁸

As *performance* the Baroness's contribution to the early twentieth-century avant-garde fleshed out the very spaces of modernity itself, as well as engaging (rather than disavowing) the disorderly forces that enlivened them. To that extent, the Baroness provided just the kind of "strangeness" in her everyday performance of Dada that Michel de Certeau calls for as a counter to the totalizing effects of the rationalized city, which lays itself out in a grid that can be apprehended in its pure (as Le Corbusier would have it, ineffable) spaces by the disembodied eye of the viewer atop a skyscraper. The fact that the very skyscraper from which de Certeau staged his critique of such optical imperialism unfathomably no longer exists, having been destroyed through the same kind of advanced technological means that had contributed to the towers' construction, casts a new light on the potential dangers of spatial rationalization that Lefebvre and de Certeau both attempted to describe but that they could never have imagined as prompting such a violent counterdiscourse.⁶⁹

Michel de Certeau's notion of "practicing space" and Henri Lefebvre's Marxian theorization of urban space will, I hope, make the process of the Baroness's lived Dada, and its disorderly effects, more clear. Her "everyday" practice of an irrational subjective intervention into the rationalized spaces of modernity continually reiterated the

deeply human and inexorably embodied level of urban life, thus pointing to the profound psychological costs of urbanism as well as exposing and celebrating its euphoria-inducing, creative benefits.

Practicing space, de Certeau notes, is quintessentially immersive; it involves “falling from the heights to inside the crowd.”⁷⁰ Extending his model, we could say that the Baroness perfected a rhetoric of walking, moving immersively throughout the city to produce an alternative “space of enunciation,” dramatically *other* to modernity’s spatial politics and cultural as well as artistic versions of rationalism. According to de Certeau’s model, the Baroness’s urban rhetoric is triply articulated, involving: (1) a process of appropriation of a topographical system (the increasingly vertical spaces of New York City, nonetheless traversed through the horizontal trajectories of ambulatory exploration, especially in the labyrinthine premodern streets of Greenwich Village, where the Baroness lived off and on); (2) a spatial acting-out of New York *as comprised of otherness*; (3) an implicit foregrounding of the *relations among* differentiated positions (rather than, as was far more common at the time, the production of absolute difference [woman vs. man; heterosexual vs. homosexual, German enemy vs. French/English/American hero, etc.] such that wartime logic could complete its dichotomizing work).⁷¹

This model of embodied materialization, whereby the urban wanderer performs the city in such a way as to expose the boundaries of “proper” modern subjectivity (and, I am insisting, performs the spaces of the historical avant-garde to point to its limits), is linked in interesting ways to Lefebvre’s model of spatial politics elaborated in his 1974 book *The Production of Space*. In particular, Lefebvre picks up on Marx’s polemic against the abstracting tendencies of capitalism: for example, the reduction of the flâneur to a commodity who exchanges himself among other subjects; or, in the case of the city, the abstraction of space through the rationalizing forces of industrialism. He calls specifically for modes of spatial practice that “de-abstract” space by reclaiming the body’s visceral, weighty relation to it. Such practices refuse the tendency in capitalism for the body to be fragmented into images, for example the replacement of “sex itself” (as he might view the threat of the Baroness’s seductive self-performances) with “the representation of sex” (say, Picabia’s sex machines). Lefebvre expands his critique of these abstracting forces, focusing his opprobrium on representation itself:

Wherever there is illusion, the optical and visual world plays an integral and integrative, active and passive, part in it. It fetishizes abstraction and imposes it as the norm. It detaches the pure form from its impure content—from lived time, everyday time, and from bodies with their opacity

and solidity, their warmth, their life and their death. After its fashion, the image kills. In this it is like all signs.⁷²

While I would not want to align myself with Lefebvre's undying belief in a concrete "sex itself" as preexisting discourse and the spaces of its articulation, nor in his Platonic distrust of representation as a debasement of "the real,"⁷³ I find his model of de-abstracting space highly useful in understanding what the Baroness's promenades—as narrated through her own and others' texts and through the few photographs that remain—can mean in relation to our conception of the history of New York during this period, of New York Dada, and also more generally for our theorization of the historical avant-garde and the ways in which it intervened in bourgeois capitalism. If, according to Lefebvre, space is "at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures," then the Baroness's promenades throughout the streets and art world salons and exhibition spaces of modern New York could be said both to have been conditioned by and to have participated in the psychic and material structuring of the spaces of New York during this period.⁷⁴

Here is but one concrete example. In an oft-repeated anecdote, the Baroness's "finest hour" came, as Greenwich Village chronicler Allen Churchill put it, "on the night she appeared at a soiree in honor of a noted female opera singer," Marguerite D'Alvarez.

For this the Baroness had adorned herself in a bright blue-green dress. She kept the air circulating about her by languidly waving a peacock fan. On her head she wore the lid of a coal scuttle, strapped under her chin like a helmet. Two mustard spoons at the side of this gave the effect of feathers. One side of her face was decorated with canceled postage stamps. Her lips were painted black, her face powdered bright yellow.

Not unnaturally, the guest of honor was somewhat annoyed by all this. . . . Even so, the two ladies conversed, with the prima donna expatiating on the subject of her unusual vocal gifts. "My art is only for humanity, I sing only for humanity," she declared. This was too much for the Baroness, who up to now had listened gravely. "I wouldn't lift a leg for humanity," she shrieked.⁷⁵

Clearly, the Baroness's legendary attitude was at odds with bourgeois conceptions of high art, not to mention of appropriate social behavior. The Baroness's

immersive, performative forays into early twentieth-century New York were more than just fodder for historical anecdote, however (or phantasmagoric projection, for who knows how much of this is Churchill's embellishment?). I want to suggest that they were viewed as radically de-abstracting the rationalizing forces of capitalist modernity (the psychic spaces of high culture, in this case opera and its highly trained practitioner)—forces that, in spite of the power of the gesture of the readymade and the fascinating gender negotiations of the machine works, continue to play a major role in the “abstracting” works of the other New York Dadaists. Unlike Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray, the Baroness put herself on the line in the social and artistic byways of New York City. Through her off-putting but often brilliantly articulated excesses, she peeled away the sublimatory layers of “safe” abstraction to point to what was at stake in artistic discourses (and human subjectivity) during this period. Refusing to “lift a leg for humanity,” the Baroness pissed on and destroyed (if only momentarily) the complacent connection between art and humanism.

Performance, however, is not in and of itself destabilizing. As Judith Butler has put it, it is when performative acts take place outside the spaces marked out for “art” or “cultural” practices that they can have a more radical effect. “In the theatre, one can say, ‘this is just an act,’ and de-realize the act. . . . Because of this distinction, one can maintain one’s sense of reality in the face of this temporary challenge to our existing ontological assumptions about gender arrangements.” On the street, the act becomes dangerous—there are no artistic conventions to help make sense of it.⁷⁶ Unless space is practiced in a particular way—against the grain of accepted norms, outside the walls of accepted venues—the performance can easily be sucked into the vortex of commodity capitalism and its offshoots such as official art history (such as, paradoxically, this book). The readymade, if I can repeat this important point, works within the spaces of the art institution; the Baroness’s performative forays worked against them or at least on their margins.

The Greenwich Village balls came to exemplify the dilemma of performance that Butler sketches. They began as radical sites for alternative behavior in the early teens, serving to raise crucial funds for leftist political causes as well as providing social spaces that allowed for creative types to dress across gender, sexual, and ethnic lines (primitivist costumes, especially those that revealed a lot of flesh, such as **hula skirts, were common**). In a 1924 photograph of revelers at the Kit Kat Ball, a white man in “dark face” is visible at the far right, dressed as an “Indian” (fig. 4.13). Such ethnic and cultural cross-dressing could be far more troubling than gender-crossing in its appropriation and stereotyping of other cultural motifs.⁷⁷



4.13 Jessie Tarbox Beals, revelers at the Kit Kat Ball, 1924. John Sloan Archives, Helen Farr Sloan Library, Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington.

The earliest balls, held at Webster Hall on East 11th Street, were sponsored by the Liberal Club and by the editorial staff of *The Masses* and were at least partly intended as fundraisers for these leftist sponsors.⁷⁸ As George Chauncey has pointed out, among other things the balls became relatively open social spaces where queer sexualities could be flaunted, at least under the guise of cross-dressing; he cites a local vice report from 1918, which noted that a “number of male perverts . . . attend” the dances, “phenomenal men [who] . . . wear expensive gowns, employ rouge[,] use wigs[,] and in short make up an appearance which looks for everything like a young lady.”⁷⁹ The Village, Chauncey argues, thus functioned as a liminal space where gay men and others marginalized by mainstream culture could shed heteronormative social injunctions.

By the late teens, however, the balls had turned into self-parodies of bohemian revelry; drunken brawls and naked or half-naked bodies predominated on the scene.⁸⁰ The balls, as Greenwich Village habitu  and chronicler Floyd Dell put it in his 1926 book *Love in Greenwich Village*, finished the process of commercialization begun by the exaggerated “bohemian” self-performances by Village characters who spotted a chance to make money off tourists. As Dell put it, all America, “sick to death of its machine-made efficiency and scared respectability, wished to share the real Bohemians’ freedom. . . . [By 1920] Greenwich Village . . . was to become a side-show for tourists, a peep-show for vulgarians, a commercial exhibit of tawdry Bohemianism.”⁸¹

The New York Dada group joined in these festivities at the high point of their popularity. On May 25, 1917 (just after *Fountain* had been rejected at the Society of Independent Artists), the Blind Man’s Ball was held, sponsored by Beatrice Wood, Duchamp, and his expatriate friend the writer Henri-Pierre Roch , the editors of the short-lived (two-issue) journal *The Blind Man*. The advertisement for the ball in the final issue of *The Blind Man* describes the incipient event as a “new-fashioned hop, skip and jump to be held . . . at Pre-historic, ultra-Bohemian Webster Hall. . . . The dance will not end till the dawn. The Blind Man must see the sun. Romantic rags are requested . . . guests not in costume must sit in bought-and-paid-for boxes.”⁸²

Cravan attended the pre-ball party at the Arensbergs “wrapped in a sheet evidently ripped at the last minute from his bed, his head swathed in a towel”; at the ball, Japanese dancer Michio Ito danced in a fox costume, while Beatrice Wood attended dressed in the supposed garb of a Russian peasant and Mina Loy in a long, **white cape with flaps** (fig. 4.14).⁸³ While Cravan, at the ball, leered into Loy’s face, “as if at any moment he might vomit disgust in the faces of his twittering companions,” legend has it that Duchamp, increasingly drunk, climbed either (depending on the memoir)



4.14 Mina Loy dressed for the Blind Man's Ball, May 25, 1917. Private collection; courtesy Roger Conover.

a flagpole, a chandelier, or a paper decoration hanging from the ceiling, to proclaim his defiant rejection of something—precisely what remained unclear.⁸⁴

The so-called bohemian balls were in some ways perfectly consistent with the more mainstream “high” culture of New York City during this period. Just before the Blind Man’s Ball, for example, the French author of the “Manifesto of the Futurist Woman,” Valentine de Saint-Point, was set to present a public performance of her “metachorie” or “super dancing” at the Metropolitan Opera House on April 3, 1917, following an exotic performance by Ruth St. Denis’s modern dance troupe of their “Oriental Pageants” on Broadway in March.⁸⁵ The growing compatibility between bohemian and mainstream bourgeois culture might explain the ease with which the balls and other bohemian or avant-garde acts and tales were incorporated into the Village’s tourism trade by the late teens, and came to be advertised in publications such as the 1917 *Guide to Greenwich Village* or in other general tourist guides for the city that included advice on how to find the best amusements around town.⁸⁶ In Butler’s terms, such performative bohemianism can easily become a parody of itself when contained within the marketable urban sites reserved for a certain kind of “cultural” practice.

As memoirs from the period make clear, the Arensberg salon was itself a space not only for those involved in avant-garde experimentation to gather but for riotous parties and sexual flirtation (by all accounts, of the heterosexual variety). As Mina Loy described the scene, “led by mysterious cocktails magically expanding their universe, these scintillating modernists [at the Arensbergs] entered an unusual dimension where men cooed assertively ‘modern’ women into the nests of their astringent lusts, then crushed them ‘tomorrow’ in the contracting pupils of their wandering eyes.” And we remember Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia’s mention of the “orgies of drunkenness and every other excess” in which Duchamp participated as part of the Arensberg group.⁸⁷

The Village during the teens was thus a hotbed of first spontaneous and then increasingly calculated and commodified “bohemian” activity and self-performance. The fabled tales of the Baroness’s exploits in chronicles of the Village attempt to place her within this context, but through her excesses—and the fact that she lived a truly peripatetic, impoverished existence (rather than, as with many bohemians, being supported by family money or by the solicitation of tourist dollars)—she seemed always to resist such incorporations. That is, something always lingers beyond the category of “eccentric” in which these stories place her. Some specific examples will point to the ways in which the Baroness’s practicing of space conditioned and responded to irrational aspects of the city and its avant-gardes—aspects that other, more commercialized modes of bohemian behavior served in the end to sublimate.

THE BARONESS IN CONTEXT: EUROPEAN AND VILLAGE AVANT-GARDES

Why be an industrial slave when you can be crazy?

— Albert Parry, 1933

Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven . . . was one of the “terrors” of the district which cuts below Minetta Lane and above eighteenth street to the west. Wearing the lip of a burnished coal scuttle for a helmet strapped to her head with a scarlet belt which buckled under the chin, Christmas tree balls of yellow and red as ear rings, a tea strainer about her neck, a short yellow skirt barely covering her legs, and over the precision of her breasts a single length of black lace she would walk the city. . . .

She made a great plaster cast of a penis once, & showed it to all the “old maids” she came in contact with.
— Djuna Barnes, c. 1933

The delirious verses of the Baroness Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven titillated me even as did her crazy personality. She was a constant visitor to see me, always gaudily accoutered in rainbow raiment, festooned with barbaric beads and spangles and bangles, and toting along her inevitable poodle in gilded harness. She had such a precious way of petting the poodle with a slap and ejaculating, “Hund-bitch!” Down in Greenwich Village, they made a joke of the Baroness, even the radicals. Some did not believe that she was an authentic baroness. . . . As if that really mattered, when she acted the part so magnificently. Yet she was really titled, although she was a working woman.

— Claude McKay, 1937⁸⁸

Albert Parry, chronicler of Village lore, succinctly sums up the prevailing attitude of a more or less commercialized Village bohemia: an attitude that explicitly poses the “crazy” eccentric against the rationalized “industrial slave” of urban industrial modernity. As the remembrances of the Baroness’s friends Djuna Barnes and Jamaican-born editor of the *Liberator* Claude McKay make clear, however, there was more to the Village (and to the Baroness) than the balls and extravagant moments of self-display.⁸⁹ By maintaining a visceral connection to her own embodiment and pushing the boundaries of heteronormative gender, the Baroness in particular stood out in a city, as Henry McBride put it in a letter to Gertrude Stein, “full of weird artists from all parts of the world.”⁹⁰ There were even published discussions in the *Little Review* about her “insanity”; as Maxwell Bodenheim put it in one of several letters in support of her,

Her poem “Klink-Hratzvenga” . . . is a masterpiece of bitter simplicity, from its choked beginning to its satiated “Vrmm.” Now . . . boys: come on with your “impossible to understand it,” “there’s nothing to understand,”

“charlatan,” “she’s insane,” and other rotten tomatoes. At your best you prefer the complex, intellectual sterilities of a Dorothy Richardson. Any new simplicity confounds you. I have been amused at the serious discussions concerning Else Loringhoven’s “insanity.” She is a rare, normal being who shocks people by taking off her chemise in public. She has the balanced precision of a conscious savage. She does not violate rules: she enters a realm into which they cannot pursue her. Even her shouts rise to discriminating climaxes.⁹¹

As Bodenheim’s letter makes clear, the Baroness shone a raking light on the limits of avant-garde discussions about radical practice, galvanizing debates that often led to the pitching of epithets such as “insane” or “crazy” to dismiss her work as somehow beyond the pale of avant-gardism itself.

At the same time, the Baroness’s mode of “working-out . . . a way of life,” in the terms of Simmel noted earlier, was not completely without a sense-making context. Within her own life, it had developed more or less organically from European roots. While living in Berlin after running away from her family, on her beloved mother’s death and immediate replacement by a stepmother whose “bourgeois harness of respectability,” as Elsa puts it in her autobiography, spurred her to move to the big city as a teenager and to look for a rich lover to keep her “in style,” she appeared seminude in pseudo-artistic tableaux vivants; far from feeling herself victimized as an object of the male gaze, she later stated that she “liked that scrutiny.”⁹²

In her book on the Baroness, Gammel draws on the Baroness’s autobiography but also on a plethora of other sources to flesh out her early years mingling among the German avant-gardes at the turn of the century in order to explore the roots of her interest in self-display.⁹³ Attending acting school in Berlin in the mid 1890s, as Gammel points out, Else Plötz began to cross-dress, playing male roles and generally participating in the opening up of gender roles in theatrical Berlin during this period. As the Baroness later noted, at this time “I was always suspected—in the silly way stage people have—of being ‘homosexual’ too . . . I wore a monocle by fancy—I didn’t put it in the eye—I *couldn’t*—just letting it hang.”⁹⁴ Her queerness, at this point, was limited to having (even hanging) the telling monocle—but not wearing it over her eye.

Associating with the circles of Stefan George, Melchior Lechter, Karl Wolfskehl, and architect/designer August Endell (who became her first husband) in turn-of-the-century Munich, Elsa, Gammel notes, was exposed to their sexual experimentation,

homoeroticism and veiled homosexuality, and, in the case of Wolfskehl's Kosmiker Spectrum group, to a supposed male feminism that celebrated passion and free love. The Kosmiker Spectrum was specifically antirationalist and anti-Enlightenment, embracing the excesses of eros and the ambiguities of androgyny over bourgeois repressions and rigid sex roles. The Baroness, in her typically acerbic way, punctured the pretensions of the group, noting that "any distortion—twist—perversity gave them a suspicion that it was a symbol of life's hidden secrets—because they were all sentimental—had lost sense and knew things by halves and in fits and starts—so that the neurasthenia of a stray sex cripple looked like 'sanctity' to them."⁹⁵ Of all participants in the group, the Baroness already knew the dangers of romanticizing the neurasthenic "sex cripple," since she herself was saved from being one only by her irrepressible sexual vitality.

In 1900, Elsa met Endell, a central figure in the arts-and-crafts-oriented Kunstgewerbler movement, which aspired to apply hand-made arts and crafts to promote a cultural revolution. Crucially, Gammel notes that Elsa had begun working on clothing designs in 1898 in Italy and that with Endell she began fashioning elaborate artistic clothing and displaying these outfits performatively as part of her self-presentation.⁹⁶ It was also during this period that she was exposed to flamboyantly self-performative figures such as Benjamin Wedekind, who notoriously urinated and masturbated on stage, and the Countess Franziska zu Reventlow, who was known for her dramatic costumes, radical promiscuity, and rejection of men's possessiveness.⁹⁷ The Countess's sexual self-presentation was certainly at odds with the same bourgeois conceptions of female sexual deportment that Elsa had rejected by fleeing the home of her father and stepmother.

Elsa's voracious sexuality also flowered during this early period. Soon after moving to Berlin at the age of 18, she contracted gonorrhea and then syphilis. By her own admission, she claimed in her autobiography that during this period she was "mensick up to my eartips—no, over the top of my head—permeating my brain, stabbing out of my eyeballs."⁹⁸ But Elsa's mensickness was never enunciated as passivity or dependence. Always it was part and parcel of her everyday insistence on rearticulating the spatial (and human) relations around her. Her sexual aggressiveness promoted the same kind of "strangeness" de Certeau notes as the province of the everyday wandering that reembodies otherwise rationalized city streets.

After brief periods living in Italy and in Kentucky, the Baroness settled in New York City. While she lived and/or worked also at various times in Harlem, at the Broad-

way Arcade Building across from what is now Lincoln Center, as well as on 18th Street, she also lived at the northern end of Greenwich Village, on 14th Street. The streets of the Village, along with the Arensbergs' salon, would have been the primary context for her promenades and performative interactions during the decade she was in New York.

In the early 1910s, the Village had become a mecca for radical thinkers and for a certain kind of avant-garde artist. The highly politicized socialist journal *The Masses* had offices there, and turbaned, self-exoticized socialite Mabel Dodge ran a salon that embraced discussions of Freud, birth control, cubism, socialism, and other hot topics out of her apartment on Washington Square; the Ashcan School artists largely congregated around 14th Street.⁹⁹ As Djuna Barnes put it in one of her witty descriptions of Village life, while most of New York was as “soulless as a department store,” Greenwich Village evoked “recollections.”¹⁰⁰ In its truly bohemian heyday in the early to mid teens, the Village, then, with its meandering premodern street layout and low-scale buildings, already solicited a less sublimated response to urbanism than the gridded, rationalized streets of the rest of the city.

Barnes goes on to describe some of the Village characters (the very ones Dell was to blame for beginning the commercialization of Village bohemia): Bobbie Edwards with his “Crazy Cat Club,” Guido Bruno and his faux-artistic “garret” and journal, flamboyant figures such as Clara Tice who put in periodic appearances, the swish Baron de Meyer, and, of course, the Baroness.¹⁰¹ Even before prohibition, but especially after, the Village became increasingly known as a site for drinking and partying, even for cross-dressing and the mingling of different social “types” (from gays and blacks—primarily hired to play jazz in the clubs—to hoboes, ragpickers, shopgirls, and, of course, avant-garde artists).¹⁰² The seeds for the Jazz Age were sowed in the riotous parties in Greenwich Village in the teens.

One outrageous Village escapade that was typically bohemian in its spirit of “happy monkeyshines,” as Parry puts it, and which has often been remembered as a sign of the Village artists' wildness and bohemianism, involved John Sloan (the Ashcan School painter), Duchamp, Sloan's student Gertrude Drick, and three friends from the theater world.¹⁰³ As the stories go, in 1916 this small group mounted the interior steps of the Washington Square Arch in the middle of the night, decorating it with Chinese lanterns and balloons and firing toy pistols while reading a declaration of independence insisting on the Village as a “free republic” and a “strife-free zone.”¹⁰⁴ This festive intervention (into what, it was never clear) was documented by John Sloan in his etching *Arch Conspirators* (fig. 4.15).



4.15 John Sloan, *Arch Conspirators*, 1917; etching. Kraushaar Galleries, Inc., New York.

As Dell's comment above suggests, by 1919, when prohibition became law, the Village seemed oriented almost entirely toward tourism, with a spate of "clubs," "teahouses," and other speakeasy joints purveying liquor illegally (as Barnes put it, "after all, it is not where one washes one's neck that counts but where one moistens one's throat").¹⁰⁵ The easy availability of drugs in New York during this period is clear from Picabia's case, as well as from poet Kenneth Rexroth's reminiscence about the Baroness as a "one-woman happening . . . [who] smoked marijuana in a big china German pipe that must have held half an ounce or more."¹⁰⁶

The Jazz Age emptied the Village of many of its artists (some of whom moved to Paris to become what Gertrude Stein called the "lost generation") and even more fully divested it of its political radicality. Further uptown, Broadway was booming as the theater district¹⁰⁷ and the Harlem Renaissance bloomed, Harlem becoming a site of pilgrimage for downtown (white) artists eager to expand their horizons by attaching themselves to the "exoticism" they perceived in black culture.¹⁰⁸ Toward the end of the Village's heyday as an avant-garde hangout, sparked by the example of critic and novelist Carl Van Vechten, Demuth and Duchamp went clubbing together in Harlem, as recorded in Demuth's 1919 watercolor *At the "Golden Swan" Sometimes Called "Hell Hole"* (fig. 4.16).¹⁰⁹ The white bohemians cluster together at their own table, Duchamp and Demuth facing each other as if for self-protection in this dynamic but (to them) alien environment.

The Village, then, was a place of great contradictions. While John Reed, Max Eastman, Henrietta Rodman, and others labored in the teens to support and promote workers' and women's rights by contributing to venues such as *The Masses*, participating in street protests, and even (in Reed's case) reporting directly to his New York audience from the newly formed Soviet Union, the Village on the whole became increasingly oriented toward extravagant socializing and tourism. Too, while the Ashcan School was politicized up to a point (Sloan, for example, contributed to *The Masses*), as the Washington Square Arch story makes clear, by the mid teens Sloan as well as most of the visual artists associated with Dada took a frivolous approach to politics (why "be an industrial slave," as Parry asks in relation to Greenwich Village bohemia in the quotation heading this section, "when you can be crazy?").

This frivolity seems particularly unsettling if viewed in the light of the upheavals in class, race, and gender politics during this period of New York City's history. Huge waves of immigration, for example, were transforming the neighborhoods of New York (immigrant slums pressed in on the Village, while a small community of blacks who had



4.16 Charles Demuth, *At the "Golden Swan" Sometimes Called "Hell Hole,"* 1919; watercolor on paper, $8 \times 10\frac{1}{2}$ in.; the artist and Duchamp are seated just left of lower center. Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Irwin Goldstein; photograph by Bill Jacobson Studio.



4.17 Female suffrage parade, New York City, c. 1917–1918. Photograph © 2002 Hulton-Deutsch Collection, Corbis photo agency.

lived in the Village through the late nineteenth century had largely been forced to move uptown to Harlem seeking more reasonable rents and a new community).¹¹⁰ Massive labor protests (such as the Paterson Strike Pageant, a restaging of the Paterson mills strike at Madison Square Garden in 1913, supported by Mabel Dodge and other Village radicals) and marches for women's suffrage in the teens filled the **streets of the city** (fig. 4.17).¹¹¹

Furthermore, as we have seen in chapter 2, the war was an increasingly overbearing presence in the streets and publications of New York, even before the U.S. entry in spring of 1917, again making such frivolity seem out of place, to say the least. If they could escape the brute carnage of the war, no one in New York could avoid confronting at least the *discourses* (posters, recruiting stands, magazine and newspaper stories, parades, etc.) defining its social meanings.

The notion of the historical avant-gardes as comprised of highly serious, highly politicized groups of artists working deliberately to overthrow capitalism, a notion implied by dominant theories of avant-gardism, needs, in light of these complications, to be revised. The point is not to devalue the artists whose work we have already made so much of, such as Duchamp, but to complicate our understanding of the urban milieu in which he worked so that some of the complexity and ambiguity of his practice is returned. In this way, it might become (productively) more difficult to simplify and fix the readymades as origins of a narrow kind of avant-gardism. Too, through attention to queer, *détraqué* figures such as the Baroness, we might more fully understand the broader context of avant-garde acts from which the readymade at least in part (after its French debut) emerged. Most importantly, we will find that there is more than one way to skin the cat of avant-gardism. The Baroness provides a new kind of knife to do the job.

CRAZY WOMEN

[At Webster Hall] one sees the Baroness leap lightly from one of those new white taxis with seventy black and purple anklets clanking about her secular feet, a foreign postage stamp—cancelled—perched upon her cheek; a wig of purple and gold caught roguishly up with strands from a cable once used to moor importations far from Cathay; red trousers—and catch the subtle, dusty perfume blown back from her—an ancient human notebook on which has been written all the follies of a past generation.

— Djuna Barnes, 1916

[I approached the French consulate] wearing a large wide sugarcoated birthday cake upon my head with 50 flaming candles lit—I felt *just so* punky and affluent [sic]! In my ears I wore sugar plums or match boxes—I forgot which. Also I had put on several stamps as beauty marks on my emerald painted cheeks and my eyelashes were made of gilded porcupine quills—rustling coquettishly—at the consul—with several ropes of dried figs dangling round my neck to give him a suck once and again—to entrance him. I should have liked to wear gaudy colored rubber boots up to my hips with a ballet skirt of genuine gold paper white lace paper covering it—but I couldn't afford *that!* I guess—*that inconsistency* in my costume is to blame for my failure to please the officials? Although my eyelash click seemed to be irresistible! All persons—who are ruthlessly lonely by inner rendering of outer circumstances—must be *mad*—within commonplace life mesh.

— Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, c. 1924¹¹²

Freud explicitly notes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that sublimation does not work when the source of suffering is the person's own body.¹¹³ Cravan's and the Baroness's creative acts, from what we can tell at a distance of eighty-plus years, emanated from the deepest levels of traumatized subjectivity. Expressed throughout Cravan's writings and manifested in all of his performative public acts is his profound connection to and even obsession with his body. His self-proclaimed roles as a poet and boxer merge his creative energies with resolutely physical ones (and radically combine two seemingly incompatible formulations of masculine subjectivity in one body; see fig. 4.18). As Picabia asked in a 1917 issue of *391*, is Cravan a “man of the world or a cowboy?”; as Loy put it, “a certain sleekness of feature gave him the air of a homosexual.”¹¹⁴ Cravan's queerness seems to emanate from his having been traumatized by modernity itself; all of his Dadaistic interventions seem to be aimed at exposing the contradictions of bourgeois culture during a period of incipient and then **full-blown world war**.

The Baroness also negotiated modernity through modes of writerly and performative embodiment. In her autobiography she explicitly outlines a childhood of



4.18 Arthur Cravan, c. 1915; original reproduced in *The Soil* (April 1917). Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven.

mental and physical abuse on the part of her father.¹¹⁵ The Baroness's general neuroschematic approach to life, however, and particularly her breakdown in 1923–1924 just after leaving New York for war-torn Weimar Germany, were clearly wrought not only from these childhood traumas but also from her ongoing attempts to navigate urban industrialism—and the ideologies and spaces of avant-gardism—with the creative body and mind of a woman.

The point of these descriptions is not to claim that Cravan and the Baroness simply acted to externalize childhood traumas, nor to suggest that they were simply pathetic or helpless objects of trauma: neither allowed him/herself to be a victim of any person or circumstance (as the Baroness put it, “I am unfit for victim [. . .] victim is mean—obscure—I must flash radiance for my nature is lovely”).¹¹⁶ Rather, it is to point again to the strategic desublimation of the traumas of the modern city: rather than sublimating their agony (in Freud's terms giving “phantasies body” by channeling them into representations),¹¹⁷ these two turned their bodies inside out, performing the trauma inscribed therein in the most flamboyant of ways. In this way they enacted the very mode of contemporary being that Simmel worried that the city was in danger of effacing, a mode in which “the particularity and incomparability, which ultimately every human being possesses, [is] somehow expressed in the working-out of a way of life.”¹¹⁸

The degree to which any such overt enactment is perceived, experienced, and/or constructed as feminine or queer should be clear by this point in this book. As a case in point, avant-gardes aside, the popular press at the time often telescoped all social changes into the figure of the New Woman, who seemed to epitomize all that was threatening about urban industrialism.¹¹⁹ In a 1917 article in the *New York Evening Sun*, for example, the anonymous author (one imagines a New Woman herself) describes a quintessential “modern woman”: Mina Loy, the poet and artist who participated in or contributed to various New York Dada events and journals and went on to marry Arthur Cravan just before he disappeared.¹²⁰ As the author notes, Loy writes “free verse,” paints lampshades and magazine covers, acts (with the Provincetown Players), and designs her own stage and social costumes. A striking half-Jewish woman from England and an early contributor to *The Masses* (from Italy), perhaps Loy gained her sense of radical performance and poetry as well as her feminism from her marginalization as a woman and a Jew in English culture, and from her stint in Florence, where she hung out in futurist circles and had an affair with Filippo Marinetti.¹²¹ Ultimately, as the *Sun* article claims, the modern woman such as

Loy “flings herself at life and lets herself feel what she does feel.” The article ends with a quote from Loy herself: “No one who has not lived in New York has lived in the Modern world.”¹²²

The web of interconnections among the discursive terms of gender and sexuality, urbanism, and modernity is crystallized in a figure such as Loy. At the same time, in some ways Loy, who had several children (including one with Cravan)¹²³ and some of whose creative work could be more easily categorized among “acceptable” women’s crafts (the article mostly dwells on her fabrication of costumes and emphasizes, with some relief, that they are stylish rather than “odd”), lent herself more to being re-contained by the discourse of the New Woman than the Baroness, who by all accounts courted such extreme neurasthenia that she was often considered to be crazy. Loy, like many of her New Woman colleagues participating in (though usually on the margins of) the various historical avant-gardes, continued to retain acceptable feminine characteristics, making her ultimately less threatening to the masculinist attitudes that still largely dominated these avant-gardes (especially futurism).

Other women associating with Duchamp, Man Ray, and Picabia also cleaved more closely to the traditional role of feminine helpmate, or at least veiled their substantial creative accomplishments under acceptable feminine behavior, from Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia to Louise Arensberg, Yvonne Crotti, Adon Lacroix, Katherine Dreier, Florine Stettheimer, Beatrice Wood, and beyond. All of these remarkable women more or less let the men call the shots. None of them was nearly as aggressive about her need to merge her art with her sexuality and her lived experience of the city as the Baroness. (Interestingly, the lesbians who ran their own shows—Djuna Barnes, Margaret Anderson, Jane Heap, and the like—were another story.)

The Baroness’s merging of art and sex is once again encapsulated by an anecdote from a historical memoir, George Biddle’s account of the Baroness’s attempted seduction of him in her apartment,

[which was filled with] the strange relics which she had purloined over a period of years from the New York gutters. Old bits of ironware, automobile tires, gilded vegetables, a dozen starved dogs, celluloid paintings, ash cans, horrors which to her highly sensitized perception became objects of formal beauty . . . the Baroness *had* validity.

As I stood there, partly in admiration, yet cold with horror, she stepped close to me so that I smelt her filthy body. An expression of cru-

elty yet of fear, spread over her tortured face. She looked at me through her blue-white crazy eyes. She said, “Are you afraid to let me kiss you?” I knew she was suffering agony [and said] . . . “Why not, Elsa?”

She smiled faintly, emerging from her nightmare. Enveloping me slowly, as a snake would its prey, she glued her wet lips on mine. I was shaking all over when I left the dark stairway and came out on 14th Street.¹²⁴

Biddle evocatively points to the terror inspired in male artists by the Baroness (with her “blue-white crazy eyes”) but also, importantly, acknowledges the powerful co-existence of her “suffering” emotional excess, her sexual drive, and her remarkable creativity. Unusually, too, Biddle opens the door to acknowledging the way his own limitations play a role in his inability to sustain a relationship with her.

As Peggy Phelan has noted, “maybe bodies come to be ours when we recognize them as traumatic.”¹²⁵ In that way, for Biddle—as for myself—the Baroness is/was experienced as “ours” through her surfacing of trauma (that is why she was and continues to be so scary).¹²⁶ Going beyond the aesthetic radicalism of a still decorously feminine figure such as Loy, the Baroness physically, psychically, and intellectually crossed even the final frontiers of avant-gardism itself. I imagine it is precisely this inadvertently brave enactment of urban trauma and neurasthenia that drew others to her during her lifetime and simultaneously repelled them, scattering them far to the winds out of their terror of confronting a living embodiment—a mirror—of their own shattered or compromised subjectivities (as Williams put it, his friend the writer Wallace Stevens “was afraid to come below 14th Street when he was in the city because of her”).¹²⁷ Performing a crazed, queer, desublimated urban neurasthenia, she navigated a path that, through bonding with it, helps me exorcise some of my own panicked responses to (late or post-) urban American culture.

WANDERING, NEURASTHENICALLY, AND THE DISSOLUTION OF “ART HISTORY”

[The Baroness] could—on the beach, on the beach of Crotoix, stand over a drowned & decaying dog corpse—& poke a stick into its ribs—to see how it was “put together.” This purely “German grossness” was part of her strength[,] much of her unpleasantness—in the hotel there—because the toilet was truly too obomenable [sic] to use, she did her morning duties on a newspaper & planted it in the window box—when she told me this at lunch, she laughed hoarsely & in great glee & amusement—she had “paid” the house out for their toilet in the one way natural to the grossness in her.

— Djuna Barnes, 1933

[Street haunting,] we are no longer quite ourselves. . . .

Is the true self this which stands on the pavement in January, or that which bends over the balcony in June? Am I here, or am I there? Or is the true self neither this nor that, neither here nor there, but something so varied and wandering that it is only when we give the rein to its wishes and let it take its way unimpeded that we are indeed ourselves.

— Virginia Woolf, 1927¹²⁸

Accounts of the Baroness’s visceral response to her environment return us to the shit of Dada, which is by and large sublimated in canonical accounts of its New York manifestations. The Baroness literally *makes use of her own excrement* (even as Cravan vows to eat his).¹²⁹ The Baroness, with her leaky, smelly, grotesque body and flamboyant costumes cobbled together from urban detritus and stolen commodities, performed an irrational, antimasculinist, and radically queer subjectivity against the grain of New York’s abstracting spaces and phallic skyline. Her “grossness,” as Barnes puts it, makes her the ultimate traumatic body to inhabit for those of us interested in furthering the project of corrupting the rational spaces of modernity (and, now, post-modernity) through a kind of material or virtual “street haunting.” Following Woolf’s evocative essay of this name, it is easy to see how such wandering—if it truly enacts a subject who is open to the world around her (if it is truly *wandering*, then, and not purposeful movement from one place to a destination)—can radically open the subject: “Am I here or am I there?”

In ending this chapter, then, I want finally to give full reign to my own art historical wandering, and acknowledge my own overidentificatory connection to urban trauma and fear, by projecting myself fully into/as the Baroness. The final section of this chapter represents one possible fantasy of how she might have “practiced” the spaces of New York to evoke new, irrational associations (or at least to desublimite

the irrationality that was always lurking just beneath the surface of bourgeois popular culture, high art, and even, we have seen, of much of what has been called radical avant-gardism). I mimic the tone, cadences, and obsessions of her autobiographical writing, which is strident and violent in its bitterness but also funny and poignant.¹³⁰

As Woolf put it so well, such a mode of (here virtual) street haunting promotes a terrifying freedom in one's own body-mind complex. It is the terror of this dislocation that I would embrace, against the tendency to cling to what is safe and known:

Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washerwoman, a publican, a street singer. And what greater delight and wonder can there be than to leave the straight lines of personality and deviate into these footpaths that lead beneath brambles and thick tree trunks into the heart of the forest where live those wild beasts, our fellow men?¹³¹

“Deviat[ing]” from the “straight lines of personality,” my impersonation will (I hope) give the reader a sense of the fantastic, dislocated, irrational poetic voice of the Baroness, and glue this voice to an imagined wandering body; at the same time enacting a kind of overt art historical projection that willfully refuses the claim of objectivity so central to the discipline of art history. Obviously, through such a refusal I do not mean to deflate all of the claims I have made in this book to this point, but to insist that all claims must be viewed in relation to who the writer/historian is and what she is trying—or wants—to say. Not that you, reading this, will “know” me any more than I can “know” the Baroness (nor that I want you to!). But I want you, the reader, to keep in mind the way in which every historical subject, recounted for posterity, is pressed through the psychic mesh of the person retelling the subject's story: this, I have hoped to show, is particularly evident in the case of evasive, marginalized figures such as the Baroness, whom we largely know already only through others' retellings of her appearances and interactions. Art history, I want to say (neurasthenically), is a reciprocal system of action, reaction, and remembering. A giving of flesh that involves bodies/minds on both ends.

STREET HAUNTING WITH/AS THE BARONESS, c. 1919 NEW YORK¹³²

Another tired and tiring day of body selling art disgust. I am precariously situated—this rim of terrific desolation in this city of America, with its unshackledness by past! I am nervesick! Skimming the fouled streets of Greenwich Village in blacknight the stench of uncollected garbage newly cut wood steamy stinking tar fills the air—New York—filled with influenza rot—expands with Europe desolately warruined.¹³³ The sky is still above, breathing heaving Washington Square. The city bounces—horizontals and **verticals—vertiginously.**

Fresh raw effluence of New York, I linger around the Brevoort—that booze and coffee-filled cellar where ideas spring from nothing.¹³⁴ Breathing fetid air I whiff boozy bourbon emanating from the Brevoort's riotously noisy basement room behind a window opened—a crack (the arshole of art—commerce, American-style—everything anything sold here for cash). Stinking lowlife where I belong, in my teutonic power—I am too strictly sex.

Marcel's whinny laugh emanates and I descend into this drink—drunk pit. Marcel vile carcass—I love you like hell Marcel. I—a living tragedy but spunky and affluent with life—proffer myself whole legs and madness as he moves leftward ho towards that pirate Francis P. leaning on Man Ray a besotted group—ugly—and they run from me! I ask you why I am mad—ruthlessly lonely by inner rendering of outer circumstance—within commonplace life mesh—while they cavort scrupulously making machine sex dolls. Signing their names they are artists while I starve—prostitute streetwalking thing in their eyes.

I pass out again into gleaming streets after spit rain—what a whirlpool I am—they want my corpse to shave and dangle forth as DadaMama but not my lifeforce—too hot to touch too living Dada.¹³⁵ My skin, my heart, my bones, my soul strange with beauty wears itself outside—head shaved—like having a new sexexperience—tea ball necklace, coal scuttle helmet, postage stamp ornamented sendmeback, and my redleashed dogs—curs with mangy skin—my only friends who never waver—I am theatre and spectator in one—only not the author.¹³⁶ I am a human organism artist as inside-out body—why can't they see?

Assembled. Bloodchurning sense swinging chaos target spot shot scale fix wheelturn life. They pollute my causeless purity—though, yes, I am a prostitutionally idle painfilled holdout from circumstanced world. Betwixt sensescalelifeswing bloodswirl. My craziness consists in its absence—¹³⁷

They simper over sexdrawings write on me while I starve. Greenwich Village dark and shining and hands reach my way as I traipse thinking they are worse off than I—crazy, some limboff warsoldiers reaching with nothing in the air—I give them my coins pressed into pockets (no palms) and pass on knowing that no dinner will be mine as I starve. For pride I will



4.19 Jessie Tarbox Beals, *Street Scene at Night* (the Brevoort Hotel), c. 1915. Museum of the City of New York; Gift of Mrs. Alexandra Alland (94.104.864).

not go back to M-F-MR who laughed and rid themselves of my fearmuted body—they drowning their fear in pictures and booze never talking about war but always meaning it.¹³⁸

I wear the carnage on this body too limbson but raunchy stretching sadness—tragedy is written on me—stigmatizing me—people, dull as they are perceive it.¹³⁹ I am the vile carcass not Marcel who laughs up his sleeve tongue in cheek largely through the glass of his own fear masquerading as bravado sexmachine pinioning me like an entomologist's needle against the landscape of his dreams.¹⁴⁰ I am lived war—machine for living—he is safe, moneymongering from desperate women.

I bump into KD distraught looking for Her Marcel who is not mine—he has betrayed her motherly grip slipping away to depravity with F-MR fighting their own war far from the front of honest hate cries they have been these years (F shaking from drink and opium).¹⁴¹ She drags me along for a wet block begging me to tell—we end up near whinny laugh and she discovers for herself this betrayal (mother romance is sordid), I aghast at this incest passion turning into pocket money running Marcel. He drinking it down not the good boy—I leave his laugh to KD dreaming of boozy confrontations How could you.

My torn body skirts the Square again—yes I present myself after all posing is an art. All erotic flesh but no birth-breeding-sex I am flexed with revolt—the war the crush of the city hard on my bones the hollow gestures of M-F-MR turning money from antipathy using sad bodies girls fresh flailing coatracks spiders asses me arms raised crotch shaved flaunting sex.¹⁴² The smell of sex deleted from their machine abstractions (girls born without mothers—gears refusing to catch—hot liquid exchanges frozen glassy hard) while I explode flesh feathers forcing huge phallus gifts upon this too cold city grinding on.¹⁴³ Menstruation—(mensickness!).¹⁴⁴ I cannot live for I am proud and heed splendor—Manahatta mangles dreams fleshthoughts artwarmed emptiness.

Cosmic Chemistry:

Life = womb crucible

Spirit = phallus pistil

Matter = ashes

Loss = gain =

Purification¹⁴⁵

I am unfit for this puffed city of gray dust and lost soldiers drinking lost battles in the chasms between buildings making artwar to assuage rather than fight. Unlike them I must flash radiance amidst coal-stained streets and dusky fragments from whole bodies fixed by camera or ruler—but I am darkly disfigured by this time—have no means of defense. If

eternity splinters pulse stops—where? Not here amidst bright promise of new objects and buildings.

I burrow the trashcan in the Square pigeon alighting on my breadcrumb—resolving to return to the stenchy secret booze cellar to beg Marcel to love me with money for soup just one bowl. Hearty with hope I return, across horseshitstained streets marked—it is 1919 after all past the war past animalocomotion—by the rutting scream of automobile tyres, my borrowed boa trailing, birdcage attached, in the effluent—I will stink as much as they from greasemelling city streets. New York. A walking exile¹⁴⁶ here I will always be—alone. KD rushes past me with selfpitysadness coloring her dough face—rejected from maletalk male-group artistspace. I take a deep breath and reenter to lay myself open again the beggar victim—wielded to distance to be not picture but walking strength. I wither blue flesh. They were Bandits out for slaughter. All my vitals are desperately strong—so that I do not collapse.

That we know how to enter:
reception room—drawing room—
banquet hall of:
abyssmal serious jester
whimsical serene power¹⁴⁷

I will not end here. With M-F-MR dropping coins to evade and propel me out, F chanting opiumboozefilled on my escape:

Dada smells of nothing, it is nothing, nothing.
It is like your hopes: nothing.
Like your paradise: nothing.
Like your idols: nothing.
Like your politicians: nothing.
Like your artists: nothing.
Like your religions: nothing.¹⁴⁸

My throat, my flesh ever dry, I stumble on and out—the streets are cold but there I practice space repeating the joyful, silent, terror experience of childhood. I am back in Swinemünde and Berlin hating German rot and putrid stink of warmongering selflove.¹⁴⁹

Across the Square again through wordwaves of protest: more money less time less dirt slobsadworkers chanting slogans “Jobs, jobs, jobs.” Better or worse than women chanting

votes votes votes—for what?¹⁵⁰ Like your idols: nothing. Bolshevik Dada Bolshevik Mama—no voting there but strong rule against human nature. I block out protests for mine is a livingfleshlife from within—no interference. We flare HIGH—mine soul—we are SATISFIED! Mine soul—I am thine body!¹⁵¹ Finally I escape word pollution trashstench booze texture of New York retreating within to my appalling heart.

Must watch for police—tombs stay avoided by leap from trolleyback, running back with dogs to huddle safely—home? heartfilled wandering, more like it—apartment is dirthole with rats, mice, and other friends—they at least don't talk back.¹⁵² There, I imagine neighbors' gossiptalk performance as me that "highstrung spiritual Baroness"—hurtful crush of hateful bodies smashed into buildings one on another on another (heap overproduction). Backyard tincan clutter clatter—rattle—Impossible—dangerous citystrength—¹⁵³

What is the city but my trajectory shuffling object-encumbered with my purple flesh moving so as not to be pictureobject only in artist eyes (enough! M-F-MR). I am only mascot to you, sign of lost Europe of century's end—arts and crafts lives swapping women days amidst genius unravelled—sick stories I hold within mine body.¹⁵⁴

To escape the clutches of burnt and wasted geniuses womanfixing their machine pictures—I unreel in my heartmind city poems—objects—limbswishing my body through dampstreets dimlit—

Appalling Heart

City stir—wind on eardrum—
 dancewind: herbstained—
 flowerstained—silken—rustling—
 tripping—swishing—frolicking—
 courtesing—careening—brushing—
 flowing—lying down—bending—
 teasing—kissing: treearms—grass—
 limbs—lips.

City stir on eardrum—.

In night lonely

peers—:

moon-riding!

pale—with beauty aghast—

too exalted to share!

in space blue—rides she away from mine chest—

illumined strangely—

appalling sister
Herbstained—flowerstained—
shellscented—seafaring—
foresthunting—junglewise—
desert gazing—
rides heart from chest—
lashing with beauty—
afleet—
across chimney—
tinfoil river
to meet
another's dark heart!

*Bless mine feet!*¹⁵⁵

*I am truly withering in the sordid materialism of New York.*¹⁵⁶ *Here, I am*

Misfit
Suspended—
Between—
Space—

Halfcocked Liar

Dismembered
Dissembled
Saliva—
Sweat spattered

Loveclown
Sex agues
Infamous
Damnation
Sticky

Helljunk

Kua-ava!

Passion

Courage

Act

Life

Orgasm

Death

Earth:

Womb—

Cradle

Sun:

Phallus—

Shaft¹⁵⁷

Tailend of mistake: America—this rushing—crushing—exhilarating time of universal revel—in New-zion-York—¹⁵⁸ Soon enough, recovering that money owed me (that \$10 promised by Schamberg!!!)—they will send me back to Germany—to life—to terrible poverty and obligations—I will perish on a formality—winter approaching iced streets unrolling under my unsteady feet—I on the streets—freezing. Then Paris, dreams of modeling school dashed by consular refusal—I left cold once again—again—again. No place for misfits except in their own stories, words, bodies, performances. I have performed beautifully. Always.¹⁵⁹

NEW YORK: LIVING DADA

I flutter down the jocund aisles, the plaintively-garish corridors of New York, bumping into solemn-eyed, three-fourths happy poets, drained, humorous futurist-artists, wives of poets who have short strings to which their husbands are attached, enormous-bearded, bubbling sculptors, prostitutes who are not prostitutes, and Emma Goldman.

— Maxwell Bodenheim to Amy Lowell, c. 1916

Homesick New Yorkers can choose the taxi sounds of “City.” Landlocked Californians can press “Surf’s Up.” Make your own choice to mask out traffic horns, . . . hotel-room noises—with the sounds that soothe you . . . anytime, anywhere.

— *Sharper Image* catalogue, ad for Sound Soother, 2002¹⁶⁰

Sweltering in the glittering heat of Los Angeles in mid July, obsessing over the Baroness meandering through the streets of New York City eighty-five years ago, I stop short at receiving (unsolicited) the new *Sharper Image* catalogue, with its advertisement, quoted above, for the \$129.95 Sound Soother, which includes a “diverse selection” of sounds to “help [the consumer] . . . feel calm, relaxed, clear-headed, rejuvenated,” including a waterfall, ocean waves, rain, and a mother’s heartbeat (fig. 4.20). It seems particularly ironic, given early twentieth-century discourses about the city as a cause of trauma and neurasthenia, that one of the sounds, marketed specifically to New Yorkers, is of the “City.” It is also amusing, given my own urban (or posturban) Californian location, that Californians are urged to mask out traffic horns through the sound of the surf. Putting aside the fact that, increasingly, only the very wealthy (the customer base for Sharper Image?) have access to a room by the sea in California, several things are made clear by this advertisement: New York is still viewed as the site of the quintessential city experience; and we are now (most of us) so thoroughly urbanized (or posturbanized) that the sounds of the city can be thought of as being as soothing as a return to the mother’s womb.¹⁶¹ Returning to Freud’s theory of the uncanny, discussed in chapter 2, the city, as it were, may no longer be *unheimlich* but the essence of homeliness itself.

De Certeau writes that “places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories, pasts that others are not allowed to read, accumulated times that can be unfolded but like stories held in reserve, remaining in an enigmatic state, symbolizations encysted in the pain or pleasure of the body.”¹⁶² New York of the teens was, in the words of Djuna Barnes, “as soulless as a department store,” with, we might add, the pain-encysted body of the Baroness as one of its endlessly circulating commodity-bodies,



Escape to 20 soothing sound environments, at home or away.

Nothing sounds better in the rain, relaxed, close-knit. However, thunder rumbles over surrounding mountains, water sounds carry on the land of dream. Some personal sound construction are places of escape from a world often filled with loud, disturbing sounds that increase concentration, disrupt relaxation, induce stress and raise blood pressure. For which sounds are most soothing? And when? And for whom?

To accommodate the varied differences in individual preferences, our three Sound Soothers™ offer the most diverse selection -- every digitally recorded sound environment that anyone can enjoy in an intimate location or the mouth of a furnace.

Included are innovative soundscapes like "Wind Chimes," "Foghorns" and "Ocean Train." Plus natural sound environments like "Fireplace," "Rainforest" and "Oceanic." Bonus too is "Heartbeat," "Candle" through to "Crackling Fireplace." Harman's New Venture can choose the best sounds of 20.

Unleashed California rain pours "Sea's Up." Make your own choice to rain out of neighbor's stereo, local radio to see -- with the sounds that soothe you...anytime, anywhere.

Each Sound Soother™ has a graceful design and beautiful, simple controls -- the first step toward creating a serene personal environment. There are three models -- one designed especially for travel, but all models are portable and run on batteries. Alternatively, each can be plugged in with an optional adapter. Use your imagination. Created by Harper Design.

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4.20 The Sharper Image catalogue, August 2002; showing "heartbeat" and "city" sounds with the Sound Soother® 20.

but one that also insistently claimed the status of renegade consumer and producer.¹⁶³ We cannot, by studying texts, photographs, or art objects, read the Baroness's body fully, casting a cool discerning light on the meaning(s) of New York's version of Dada and/or the multiple, sometimes contradictory truths of New York's World War I-era labyrinthine alleys, squares, and artistic or political protests. But putting ourselves, as it were, in the Baroness's shoes, we have, in de Certeau's terms, *practiced space*: placed ourselves through desire and identification into the mythic structures of Dada—structures that, after all, were suspended in the concrete corridors of actual cities (themselves mythic structures of human movement both conceptual and embodied at once).

To practice space, de Certeau concludes, is “to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood; it is, in a place, *to be other and to move toward the other*.”¹⁶⁴ As excessive, flamboyant, sex-on-her-sleeve neurasthenic author/artist, the Baroness tested the limits of New York Dada's claimed anticonventionalities. The artists were mesmerized and terrified by her excessive enactments of the very radicalities they claimed to be their own but—through sublimation—kept safely ensconced in representations. Because of her own marginality in the city at large and in relation to the Dada group, the Baroness, I have suggested, provides an ideal body from which to recreate the complexities of Dada's own perversions and exclusions, as well as those of one of the cities that bred its neuroses.

The Baroness points to the borders of the concrete and psychic space that was called New York, and to the way in which those borders stretched far beyond the imaginary spaces of Dada, folded into its own masculinist limitations. It is the Baroness, dancing on the liminal edges of Dada's cultural machinations, who was “other” and “moved toward the other”—while her colleagues stayed dry and well-oiled, male-bonding and carousing in their underground speakeasy cafés. As Woolf and then de Certeau called for, the Baroness performed her histrionic otherness dramatically on and through her already alien body, enacting the radical insecurities of Dada beyond the safely enframed if unconsummated desiring flows of Duchamp's *Large Glass*, Man Ray's phallic objects, or Picabia's feminized machine drawings. The *détraqué*, rag-picking, streetwalking Baroness is—radically—a quintessential figure of the dislocations of gender, class, race, and nation defining the experience of modern urban life in World War I-era New York, a female seller, commodity, and producer/creator in one.

5 “Death in Reverse”: A Provisional Conclusion

History, in everything it displays that was from the beginning untimely, sorrowful, unsuccessful, expresses itself in a face—no, in a skull. . . . It articulates as a riddle, the nature not only of human existence pure and simple, but of the biological historicity of an individual in this, the figure of its greatest natural decay.

— Walter Benjamin, c. 1916–1925

Anecdote [is] . . . the skeleton of life.

— Djuna Barnes, 1916

The high arched nose that smelled everything, the deep set piercing green eyes, the mouth grimly sensuous . . . and the body strong, wiry, durable and irreparably German. . . .

[The Baroness had] the hard, durable weighted skull of a Roman Emperor, the body upright in expectant shyness. . . .

Looking at [the Baroness] one thought of death in reverse.

— Djuna Barnes, 1933¹

The melancholy death mask of the Baroness, commissioned by her friend Djuna Barnes after her suspicious death by gas jet in her Paris apartment on December 14, 1927, speaks to the way in which history can be allegorized, as Benjamin notes, as a human skull.² The skull is like the death mask in that the latter already—in spite of the fact that the flesh still clings to the bone—eerily approximates what is beneath (what will be left by the worms). Both point in dual directions: toward the former existence of a life—a life that one imagines must be remembered, in full, by someone somewhere; and toward a future of nothingness or (if one’s beliefs fall in this direction) eternal bliss or damnation. The skull and the death mask seem to represent our yearning to make a history for ourselves and our others (from anecdotal remains, as it were) in order to disavow our inexorable mortality.

We write and read history because we want to fabricate a past that will cradle our belief in a future. The others of the past come alive but always in relation to our own needs and life stories, those anecdotes with which we surround ourselves to cushion us from the traumas of everyday life—traumas that articulate themselves today, in posturban postmodernity (with threats of terrorism and nuclear holocaust), in ways that the New York Dadaists could never have imagined—and from the anxiety-inducing terror of our always impending death. Our need to write and to study history is born of the need “to keep death in its place.”³

DEATH MASK
OF
ELSA VON FREYTAG-LORINGHOVEN



5.1 *Death Mask of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, from *Transition* (February 1928). Photograph courtesy Research Library, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

If the Baroness is like "death in reverse," as Barnes so evocatively puts it, then retelling her story brings us back to a new beginning. As Benjamin realized, doing history can become a political act if it involves a critical reappropriation of the fragmentary elements of the past with an eye to refashioning our conception of the future; if it involves peeling away—flaying as it were—the ideological layers of the present, leaving behind the skeleton of the past (its contours inflected, of course, by the flayed flesh of the now).⁴

As his colleague Theodor Adorno argued, Benjamin bemoaned the kind of history that involved the extraction of "inmost soul" from the "alienated, reified, dead world" of frozen aesthetic forms in order to make sense of the past.⁵ This dead-world kind of history precisely parallels Simmel's sublimatory art practice, which, as I have argued here, is opposed to the kind of desublimatory, irrational, lived neurasthenic Dada of the Baroness. The dead-world kind of history, then, is the opposite of what I, loosely following Benjamin's model, hope to have traced in this equally neurasthenic art history, leaving lots of shreds of flesh visible on the bones of the past. This is an immersive mode of history that replaces a passive observing of the past with "a proactive interrogating through use and reuse."⁶ Through a kind of historical ragpicking, Benjamin dragged the idea of history "out of infinite distance into infinite proximity."⁷ I hope that I have in some measure begun, through this rather strange and deliberately uneven text (riddled through with bursts of irrationality), a similar gesture of hauling history out into the harsh light of postmodernity, as it were, to bring it closer.

Rather than make sense of New York Dada or provide a pocketbook theory of avant-gardism by pointing to a singular aspect of its practice, I have wanted, if anything, to refuse the understandable but limiting tendency to narrate the doings of the myriad artists and writers associated with this label into a final, cohesive narrative—a narrative that, not surprisingly, would thus tend to exclude from its purview all the troublesome, irrational, marginal figures. I have tried, then, to keep the contradictions and confusions of New York Dada on the surface of this study.

I have wanted to return to this fractious, impossible cultural moment a sense of the irrational—of the grotesque, smelly, profoundly embodied (and so mortal) flesh that filled, contested, and refashioned the otherwise rationalized conceptual/material spaces of urban industrial modernity. In order to do this, I turned to—identifying with as well as projecting onto—the Baroness as a figure who was deeply irrational in her immersive engagements with the spaces of the modernist avant-gardes and, in particular, of New York Dada. Through immersion—my immersion in her, her immersion in World War I-era New York (as imagined by me)—I have tried to begin to break

down the formalized and, indeed, *rationalized* logic of art history itself. At least a little. (This has involved, as will be clear by this point, struggling, and not always successfully, against my own internalization of the Ideological State Apparatus that is the discipline of Art History.)⁸

To this end, I have overtly staged here my struggle to articulate the Baroness and her New York Dada cohorts as paralleling my struggle to articulate myself in the face of my own neurasthenic bodily responses to the noise, heat, stench, speed, spatial configurations, and chiasmic-turned-electronic interpersonal relations of post-urban postmodernity—a posturbanism, as I pointed out in the introduction, that has been theorized as quintessentially exemplified by the city of Los Angeles where I lived and worked as I finished this book.⁹ We postmoderns, too, are fragmented and shattered, but in different ways, immersed as we are in the simulacral postmodern byways of Internet engagements and instant replay news stories of planes crashing into skyscrapers, carnage in Afghanistan and Iraq, and other disasters typical to the global capitalist posturban world of the early twenty-first century. We are truly all neurasthenics now.¹⁰ We know too much, yet we know nothing at all. In this context, a neurasthenic art history seems much more appropriate than the kind that pretends to secure closure as it delivers “true” pictures of the past.

I’d like to end with just a few more, far from fully formed, thoughts on the intersections among femininity, queerness, irrationality, and the world that artists inhabit and create. Barnes described in powerful terms the visceral effects of the Baroness’s embodied presence: “she is strange with beauty, . . . she is high with fear, . . . she is a ‘citizen of terror,’ a contemporary without a country.”¹¹ Beautiful and terrifying at once, the Baroness, with her sexual promenades and verbal onslaughts, demanded that the artist/genius/flâneur/prostitute knot—which (as Benjamin pointed out) provided a foundation for modernity in its cultural forms—begin to be untied.

The death mask of the Baroness, then, is presented here to evoke a life mask for us now. It is the fragment, the “skull,” that signals the presentness and importance of the lived Dada of World War I-era New York for our situation today. The Baroness herself, in a poignant letter sent to Barnes probably just before she moved to Paris in 1926, wrote: “It is not easy to look suicide in the face, though I do not fear death [. . .] Why is life such hell? Hell is heart vibrating in hostile space.” But it was the Baroness’s ultimate ability to rebound in the face of the crushing forces (the “hostile space”) of urban industrial modernity that kept her creatively surviving (until, of course, her death); she also notes, hopefully, “I will change in Paris. Come out of Hell intrepid.

I will be imperishable."¹² It is through her retelling that the Baroness continues to "live"—as imperishable—in and as a fragment of history, reembodied through my neurasthenic imaginings.¹³ By doing so, she sparks life into the doings of her New York Dada cohorts and reminds us of the importance of never giving up the struggle to live creatively and meaningfully in the present by having a mindful, immersive, and compassionate (the Baroness: "*cynicism is famine . . . ignorance is guilt*") view of the past.¹⁴

In closing, let me cite the Baroness's own recognition of the way in which the lived body compresses both past and present: "I was conceited about past. But rightly—in merit—I carry future—yet for that I now suffer. Will past destroy me—me full of future? I struggle."¹⁵ Finally, returning to Benjamin, we might revise his rather melancholic and even in some ways nostalgic model of history by arguing for a model that is equally critical but that functions by returning the skull to life—giving it flesh—through the very identificatory processes that (art) history has long labored to suppress in order to sustain its illusion of objectivity. It is Barnes, then, who hit the nail on the head, with her notion of the Baroness evoking "death in reverse." *That* phrase could, in fact, be a metaphor for all history writing.

NOTES

1 ... The Baroness and Neurasthenic Art History

1. Arthur Cravan, from “L’Exposition des Indépendants,” *Maintenant* 3, no. 4 (March-April 1914), 7 (the original French reads “le génie n’est qu’une manifestation extravagante du corps”); trans. Ralph Mannheim in Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 7, translation modified here. “Do You Strive to Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions? If Not You Are Quite Old Fashioned,” *New York Evening Sun*, February 13, 1917, 10. Hart Crane in a letter sent from Cleveland to Matthew Josephson, cited by Rudolf Kuenzli in “Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and New York Dada,” in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 467–468. John Rod-

ker, “‘Dada’ and Else von Freytag von Loringhoven,” *Little Review* 7, no. 2 (July-August 1920), 33. Autobiographical notes in the Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

2. On the Arensberg salon, see Abraham A. Davidson, “The Arensberg Circle,” in his *Early American Modernist Painting, 1910–1935* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 74–120; Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, “Marcel Duchamp’s ‘Silent Guard’: A Critical Study of Louise and Walter Arensberg,” Ph.D. diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1994; Steven Watson, “‘Midnight at the Arensbergs’: A Readymade Conversation,” in Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, eds., *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 177–205; Francis M. Naumann, “The Arensbergs,” in

- his *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 22–32; and, for a creative take on the doings at the Arensbergs', with imagined intimate details, see Naomi Sawelson-Gorse and Molly Nesbit, "Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg," in Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon, eds., *The Duchamp Effect* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 130–175.
3. See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" (1971), in Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 148.
 4. Berenice Abbott in conversation with Hank O'Neal (Djuna Barnes's biographer), as cited by Robert Reiss, "My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), 82. Reiss's important article was the first to focus on the Baroness in the context of New York Dada.
 5. Jane Heap, "Dada," *Little Review* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1922), 46.
 6. Georges Hugnet, "The Dada Spirit in Painting" (1932 and 1934), rpt. in Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets*, 125–196
 7. Margaret Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 178. Originally published in Chicago, the magazine, coedited by Jane Heap (the "mannish" New Woman who was Anderson's lover as well), moved to New York at the end of 1916; see Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 297.
 8. Paul I. Hjartarson and Douglas O. Spettigue in their introduction to the published version of the autobiography, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, ed. Hjartarson and Spettigue (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1992), 38.
 9. [Anonymous], "Refugee Baroness Poses as a Model: Woman Who Puzzled New York Art School Students Reveals Her Identity," *New York Times*, December 5, 1915, n.p. visible. Indicating the huge effort she put into her self-display, the article also cites her as saying that she has to get up early to model even when "I have sat up making a costume until 3 o'clock."
 10. This incipient commercialism has unfortunately blossomed into full-blown commodification since the publication of Irene Gammel's biography, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity, a Cultural Biography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), and the important exhibition of the Baroness's works by Francis Naumann at his gallery in New York (see the catalogue, *The Art of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* [New York: Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, 2002]). This commodification is manifested in the photographic spread styled by Elizabeth Stewart and entitled "My Heart Belongs to Dada: Channeling Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in "Fashions of the

Times,” *New York Times Magazine*, part 2 (Fall 2002), 190–198. The author of the brief text, René Steinke (who is apparently writing a novel based on the Baroness’s life), notes that these two recent events “finally establish . . . her rightful place as the first American performance artist” (198). While I, too, am obviously recuperating and making use of the Baroness, I hope very much to avoid simply shoving her into such antiquated and problematic categories of artistic originality (not to mention into such hideous and completely overdesigned new fashions as those in this photo spread!). I want at least to be clear about what my investments are in order to expose the impossibility of truly recapturing her for any current concept of style, whether relating to clothing or to my own intellectual ideas.

11. The Baroness’s mother, she claims in her autobiography, was from an upper-class Polish family; her father was a German “master-mason,” a well-to-do builder. Her desire for a rich lover is made clear throughout her autobiographical notes in the collection of the University of Maryland Library, which is also where the phrase “bourgeois harness” comes from; see also Hjartarson and Spettigue, introduction to Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, 16.

12. On her multiple lovers, see her descriptions of them throughout Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*. She met and married the Baron in New York in late 1913; their partnership effectively ended a few months later when he sailed back to Europe to fight in the war, only to be captured by French

soldiers and imprisoned; he committed suicide four years later in a prisoner of war camp in Switzerland, just after the armistice.

13. On their relationship, see Phillip Herrington, *Djuna: The Life and Work of Djuna Barnes* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 112; Hank O’Neal, *Life Is Painful, Nasty, & Short . . . In My Case It Has Only Been Painful & Nasty: Djuna Barnes 1978–1981, an Informal Memoir* (New York: Paragon House, 1990), esp. 51, 57, 139; and Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 338–361 (chap. 13, “Courting Djuna Barnes”).

14. William Carlos Williams, “Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters,” *Contact* 4 (Summer 1921), 11.

15. See, for example, the Baroness’s emotionally overheated, experimental critique of Williams’s work (“Agh—pah! Carlos Williams—you wobbly-legged business satchel-carrying little louse!”), “Thee I Call ‘Hamlet of Wedding-Ring’: Criticism of William Carlos William’s [sic] ‘Kora in Hell’ and Why . . .,” parts 1 and 2, *Little Review* 7, no. 4 (January-March 1921), 48–55, 58–60, and 8, no. 1 (Autumn 1921), 108–111; “louse” quotation on 110. It was partly in response to the first part of this critique that Williams wrote his *Contact* article.

16. In Duchamp’s case, the Baroness perceived him as giving in to American culture rather than simply living a bourgeois life; this is evident in her private letters, which will be cited at greater length in chapter 3, and her poems about him in the *Little Review* (such as

“Love—Chemical Relationship,” in 5, no. 2 [June 1918], 58–59). See Kuenzli’s discussion of the Baroness’s critical position in relation to Duchamp and Williams in his essay “Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and New York Dada,” 448–458.

17. William Carlos Williams, “The Baroness Elsa Freytag von Loringhoven,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 35, no. 3 (September 1989), 280–281, 283. It is important to note that, in this text, Williams also expresses strong appreciation for the Baroness; his ambivalence is violent and exposes the coexisting desire (if repressed) and shame that she evoked in him: “The Baroness laid siege to me for two years when she could easily have walked up my front steps and rung the bell any time she wanted to and my wife would have asked her to come in. / Damn these clandestine fakers. She was one in spite of her value. . . . / The Baroness to me was a great field of cultured bounty in spite of her psychosis, her insanity. She was right. She was courageous to an insane degree. I found myself drinking pure water from her spirit. I found it so that is all. I could not go to bed with her. Disease has no attraction for me. I couldn’t. But I did feel a shame” (283). While the hostility of his tone and language is indefensible and seems an obvious proof of the masculine insecurity she unleashed, Williams’s ambivalence encourages even the most ardent feminist to feel some sympathy for this man who at least admitted how much he admired her. In several journal entries from late February and early March 1928 (as Kuenzli notes), written just after the Baroness died in December of 1927, Williams rational-

ized his need to reject and distance himself from the Baroness: “It can be said that I chose my environment. It can be said that I chose it in order to keep myself from going too far, as a brake to the great liberalities”; he also noted, after her death, in a letter to Jane Heap on January 21, 1928, “I admire her still and couldn’t go near her. . . . What the hell, she had a rare gift.” Kuenzli, “Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven,” journal entries cited on 472, n. 42; the letter to Heap, no source credited, is cited on 456.

18. Williams, “Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters,” 10–13.

19. David Joselit, from an email to me, August 20, 2002. I have discussed Duchamp’s equivocal masculinity at length in my book *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

20. Again, Joselit put it to me brilliantly: “the Baroness . . . undoes masculinity and femininity simultaneously—she just fucks with gender polymorphously and really taps into the monumental fear of everyone that they haven’t gotten their gender house in order”; from an email of September 5, 2002.

21. Sawelson-Gorse, preface to *Women in Dada*, xii. Sawelson-Gorse’s book, crucially, attempts to correct the exclusion of women in histories of Dada and to critique the misogyny within the European and U.S. Dada movements. On women’s double marginalization from the avant-garde, see Susan Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the*

Avant-Garde (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

22. Marisa Januzzi, "Dada through the Looking Glass, or: Mina Loy's Objective," in Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*, 596.

23. Popular press sources include Margery Rex's "'Dada' Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out; It Is on the Way Here," *New York Evening Journal*, January 29, 1921; illustrated in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 199. Man Ray continued to deny that the New Yorkers had any claim to being Dada; in an interview with Arturo Schwarz later in his life, he noted that in New York all that counted was "how much publicity you got and how much money you made. . . . There was no aesthetic movement really; everyone was out for himself. There were no ideas." In Arturo Schwarz, "Interview with Man Ray," in Schwarz, *New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus; Tübingen: Kunsthalle Tübingen; Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1973), 94. In this interview, Schwarz makes note of the only manifesto of American Dada, which he claims was written by Walter Arensberg ("Dada est américain," *Littérature* 2, no. 13 [Paris; May 1920], 15–16); Man Ray responds by noting that Arensberg wrote this essay on his own, maybe "after some talks with Duchamp," in Schwarz, "Interview with Man Ray," 95. (According to Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, Arensberg later denied he wrote it; in a note to me of October, 2002.) In the manifesto, the author borrows the ironic tone of the European Dadaists (and favored by Man Ray) to note that Dada is

American, Russian, Spanish, Swiss, etc., and that all those "who live without formula, who do not love the museums . . . , are DADA" (15); he ends by stating, "I declare that I am against Dada. . . . Vive Dada" (16).

24. On the founding of 291 just after the beginning of World War I, see Willard Bohn, "Visualizing Women in 291," in Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*, 240.

25. For a broader view of the interconnections among these groups, and of the other artists working in tandem with New York Dada, see Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde 1910–1925* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975); Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*; Naumann, *New York Dada*; and Wanda M. Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Picabia's internationalism should be noted here, however: he had close ties to Stieglitz and his colleague at 291 the Mexican cartoonist Marius de Zayas (Picabia had his work shown at the gallery 291 (opening in January 1915) and was a major contributor to the journal 291, cofounded by de Zayas, Paul Haviland, and Agnes Meyer) but was also networked into the international Dada movement. In 1917, first publishing from Barcelona, Picabia himself founded a Dada journal inspired in part by 291 (called 391) and moved back and forth during the World War I period and early 1920s between New York and neutral areas of Europe. The best overview of Picabia's peripatetic avant-

gardism is William Camfield's *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

26. Reiss, “My Baroness”; Hjartarson and Spettigue, introduction to Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*; Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*. Gammel also published a number of articles leading up to this biography, all of which articulate different aspects of her literary critique of the Baroness's life work; she cites these in her bibliography for *Baroness Elsa* (see 501). The many sources of anecdotes about the Baroness, written from the mid teens onward, will be cited throughout the book. I thank Michael Taylor, curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, for warning me against an approach that would simply replicate the strategy of repeating the anecdotes about the Baroness without any sense of criticality.

27. See Naumann, *New York Dada*, and Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*.

28. In particular, my study is indebted to the following studies of the visual arts axis of the group: Schwarz (*New York Dada*), Tashjian (*Skyscraper Primitives*), Kuenzli (*New York Dada*), Naumann (*New York Dada*), Naumann and Venn (*Making Mischief*), and Sawelson-Gorse (*Women in Dada*), as cited above, and Nancy Ring's important “New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States 1913–1921,” Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1991; to general texts relating to the topic of American art and

Dada, including Milton W. Brown, *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); Davidson, *Early American Modernist Painting*; Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets*; William A. Camfield and Jean-Hubert Martin, eds., *Tabu Dada: Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp 1915–1922* (Bern, Switzerland: Kunsthalle Bern, 1983); *4 Dada Suicides: Selected Texts of Arthur Cravan, Jacques Rigaut, Julien Torma, Jacques Vaché*, introduced by Roger Conover, Terry Hale, and Paul Lenti, trans. Terry Hale, Paul Lenti, and Iain White (London: Atlas Press, 1995); Matthew Gale, *Dada & Surrealism* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997); Corn, *The Great American Thing*; Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); and to the work of authors who have studied individual artists associated with New York Dada. Among the dozens that have been published on these individuals, the most important recent books that informed this study are *Arthur Cravan: Poète et boxeur* (Paris: Terrain Vague and Galerie 1900/2000, 1992); Linda Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); David Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910–1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998); David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst: The Bride Shared* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1999); Dawn Ades, Neil Cox, and

David Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999); and, of course, Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*.

29. In particular, it is Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), that solidified the argument that Duchamp's readymades established a basis for this kind of radical critique. Hal Foster extends Bürger's model to the case of postmodernism, posing the readymades as origins of radical postmodernism, in his work on minimalism, to be discussed below. See also his essays in *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985). Buchloh's contributions to the journal *October* have also referenced Duchamp in this way.

30. See his epochal study of the writings of the proto-fascist Freikorps in Germany: Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, especially vol. 1 *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

31. See Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*.

32. See Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (1908), in Ludwig Münz and Gustav Künstler, *Adolf Loos: Pioneer of Modern Architecture* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 226–231; Le Corbusier, *New World of Space* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1948). See also Siegfried Kraucauer on ornament as the aesthetic version of the capitalist production process, in "The Mass Ornament" (1927), trans. Thomas Levin, in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Ed-

ward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 406; Peter Wollen discusses the links between industrial rationalism and aesthetic modernism in his two essays "Fashion/Orientalism/The Body," *New Formations* 1 (Spring 1987), 5–34, and "Cinema/Americanism/The Robot," *New Formations* 8 (Summer 1989), 7–34.

33. Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 35, 40. Not surprisingly, Smith makes reference to the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari on these contradictory processes as part of the "capitalist flow" aimed at creating a "surplus value of flux" and describes how this mechanism also produces a constant struggle between contradictory drives toward a "de-territorialization" and a constraining "territorialization" (40); he is broadly referring to the ideas outlined in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1977), trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).

34. Much of avant-garde practice in the first half of the twentieth century, not to mention national social policy, must be understood in relation to these models of industrialism and their capitalist impulse to regulate flow. The link between American models of industrialism and international politics is discussed by Antonio Gramsci in "Americanism and Fordism" (1929–1935), in Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith

(New York: International Publishers, 1971), 277–318; and by Thomas P. Hughes, “Taylorism + Fordism = Amerikanismus,” in his *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm 1870–1970* (New York: Viking, 1989), 249–294. On the links between culture, avant-gardism, and American models of industrialism, see also Kracauer, “The Mass Ornament,” 404–407, and Stefan Zweig, “The Monotonization of the World” (1925), no translator given, in Kaes, Jay, and Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 397–400. Karen Barber’s arguments about cultural and economic rationalism in relation to the Bauhaus, and the Bauhaus’s embrace of American rationalization, are also important to my understanding of rationalism; see her “‘Techniques of the Body’: Issues of Subjectivity, Technology, and Gender in the Self-Portraits of Florence Henri,” M.A. thesis, University of California, Riverside, 2002, 59ff; she discusses the Heart-field image on 63–64.

35. Le Corbusier, *New World of Space*, 7, 8 (his emphasis). See also Anthony Vidler’s interesting discussion of Le Corbusier’s rationalism and his notion of ineffable space in “Bodies in Space/Subjects in the City: Psychopathologies of Modern Urbanism,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 5, no. 3 (1993), 31–48; and, as later worked through, in his book *Warped Space: Art, Architecture, and Anxiety in Modern Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), especially 51–64. Karen Lucic discusses Le Corbusier’s support of Fordism in *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 80.

36. Le Corbusier, *New World of Space*, 9, 11. Le Corbusier, like Loos, had a very ambivalent attitude toward the machine age. On the one hand, he fully embraced its rationalizing tendencies; on the other hand, he excoriated the mass or popular culture it inaugurated or at least paralleled. Also like Loos, Le Corbusier evinced extreme anxiety about the decorative, specifically connected with kitsch or popular culture. Le Corbusier thus argues: “Disorder! Neurasthenia! That art whose ebbing foam displays its broken fringe along our picture moldings is not the art of the new phenomenon which captures our admiration. Could an esthetic revolution be under way? To satisfy his emotions, it should become normal for man to conceive a cycle of non-utilitarian works, not at all like machines, yet animated by a mathematical feeling, by pure relations, and embodying pure forms” (ibid., 48).

37. Le Corbusier, “La rue” (1925), in Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *Oeuvre complète de 1910–1929* (Zurich: Les Éditions d’architecture Erlenbach, 1948), 117.

38. In “Ornament and Crime” (1908), Loos notes, “cultural evolution is equivalent to the removal of ornament from articles in daily use” (226–227; his emphasis). And, as Siegfried Kracauer put it in 1927, “the mass ornament is only the aesthetic reflex of the rationality aspired to by the prevailing economic system” (“The Mass Ornament,” 406).

39. David Frisby discusses theories of modernity (by Siegfried Kracauer, Walter Benjamin, and others) specifically as reactions

against “the loss of meaning and the loss of individual control [which] are two of the major consequences of the process of rationalization in modern society.” Frisby, *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 1985), 36. Interestingly, this tension informs much of the theorizing about the relationship between “art” and “mass culture,” even on the part of the left. Like Le Corbusier’s rationalized “ineffable” spaces, the Russian formalist and Brechtian idea of *ostranenie* or distancing—of aesthetic shock as a means of distancing the spectator from the insidious embrace of capitalism (more specifically commodity culture)—thus explicitly reclaims the spectator from the irrationality of mass culture. Models of distancing thus have the counterintuitive effect of aligning with the rationalized models of high modernism in that they function to recontain excess flow.

40. I do not mean to imply that the term “avant-gardism” is necessarily still relevant in the same way as it was during the New York Dada period, since we no longer exist in the same conditions of urban industrialism and cultural modernism. However, I am using it throughout this book as a shorthand to indicate the kind of “radical practice” that in some way resists or attempts to grapple with the complete embrace of capitalist institutions and rationalizing logics. The book *The Challenge of the Avant-Garde*, ed. Paul Wood (New Haven and London: Yale University Press in Association with The Open University, 1999), explores the history and limi-

tations of the concept of avant-gardism. See also Andreas Huyssen, “The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde—Technology—Mass Culture” (1980), in his *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3–15.

41. See Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–1930), trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961).

42. Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 1990), 232.

43. Most notably Donald Preziosi in *Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); and Griselda Pollock’s various essays on the masculinism of art history—see especially Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

44. See Mira Schor, “Patrilineage” (1991), reprinted in Schor, *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 98–117, 225–228.

45. Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 15.

46. The exhibition was organized by the Neue Nationalgalerie in Berlin and previously shown at the Tate Modern in London; its Los Angeles venue was the Museum of Contemporary Art (May 25 to August 18, 2002).

47. For example, the supposed radicalism of Andy Warhol's raising of a soup can to high art status (implicitly or explicitly linked to the appropriation of mass-produced objects in the readymade gesture) is crucial to his mass-marketing as cultural icon; the very institutions he is supposed to be critiquing by this gesture are benefiting in explicit economic terms from his status as an "avant-garde" critic of bourgeois culture (an identification that bears little relation to Warhol's actual practice, which overtly embraced kitsch, queer, and lowbrow aesthetics). Where Bürger contended that the historical avant-gardes' most important contribution was the demand that art be reintegrated into the praxis of life, this kind of marketing completely evacuates his idea of critique of any political effect. Vis-à-vis the Andy Warhol retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art, the messiness of Warhol (his overt performance of himself as queer, in particular) has been strategically erased in the massive outflow of publicity relating to the show (the *Los Angeles Times* covered the show almost daily in its first weeks): the *rationalizing* logic of the art market demands the cleansing of Warhol's inappropriate sexuality from the picture. See Holland Carter's excellent critique of the show and this erasure in his review article "Everything about Warhol but the Sex," *New York Times*, July 14, 2002, on-line version <<http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/14/arts/design/14COTT.html>>. For these thoughts I am also indebted to Robert Summers's important work on the suppression of Warhol's sexuality in his "The Queer Warhol: Andy Warhol's Queer Performances, Productions, and Practices," M.A. thesis, University of California, Riverside, 2002, and to Jennifer Doyle, whose brilliant critique of the Museum of Contemporary Art publicity efforts and openings, in her untitled essay of May 23, 2002, has yet to find a publisher willing to take such a risk. See also the book Doyle coedited with Jonathan Flatley and José Esteban Muñoz, *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), and Richard Meyer's "Warhol's Clones," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 1 (1994), 79–109.
48. Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," in *Individuals: A Selected History of Contemporary Art, 1945–1986* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art; New York: Cross River Press, 1986), 162–183; Foster includes a revised version of this essay in his *The Return of the Real: The Avant-garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996). In chapter 2, "Duchamp as 'Generative Patriarch' of American Postmodernists," of my book *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, 29–62, I trace the tendency to connect the readymade to every major contemporary American art movement.
49. Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 175.
50. *Ibid.*, 178. In addition, Anna Chave cites Rosalind Krauss as noting, in her epochal study *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1977), 266, that "the significance of art that emerged in this country in the early 1960s is that it staked everything on the accuracy of a model of meaning severed from the legitimizing claims

of a private self" (Anna Chave, "Minimalism and Biography," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 [March 2000], 153).

51. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1970), in his *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977).

52. Chave, "Minimalism and Biography."

53. I am adding to Chave's list artists such as Chicago and Corse, who practiced actively on the West Coast—too often, even critiques of histories of minimalism forget to look beyond New York.

54. Foster, "The Crux of Minimalism," 176. Foster cites Bürger's model on this page as well; he focuses on the readymade throughout, but especially on 179.

55. Williams, "Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters," 11.

56. On modernism's attempt to exclude smell and privilege vision, see Caroline Jones, "The Modernist Sensorium," in *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming), ms. pp. 1–71. I am indebted to Jones for sharing this brilliant chapter with me before its publication.

57. On the irrationality associated with African art and women, and the confluence of women's sexuality and primitivism in the imaginary of European modernists, see Whitney Chadwick, "Fetishizing Fashion /

Fetishizing Culture: Man Ray's *Noire et blanche*," in Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*, 294–329. Drawing on Chadwick's insights, it becomes clear that the Baroness's attraction and terror for her male colleagues was linked in some deep way to her activation of both poles of desired and feared otherness. Descriptions of her (such as Williams's) pose her as smelly, atavistic, and primitive—terms that serve as a shorthand way of defusing the threat of her uncontrollable and feminine sexual power.

58. A fascinating case of this appropriation of African art to legitimate European modernism can be seen in the writings of Marius de Zayas, himself from Mexico but from an upper-class, Europeanized family. De Zayas was a cartoonist, an important support for Stieglitz's 291 gallery, a cofounder of the journal 291 and of the successor to 291, the Modern Gallery. He mounted several shows of "African Negro Art" at the Modern Gallery, starting in 1915, and wrote a book on the subject, *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art* (New York: Modern Gallery, 1916). See Francis M. Naumann, introduction to Marius de Zayas, *How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York*, ed. Naumann (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), vii–xiv.

59. Throughout her autobiography and letters she makes generalizing comments about many groups, but most disturbingly a number of statements stereotyping Jews; for example, in her autobiography, she describes Karl Wolfskehl, a wealthy scholar with whom Elsa had a flirtatious relationship while living in

Berlin, as being “a pure Jew” and notes that “there never had been sex intercourse [between us]—only attempt—since his penis was of such surpassing size,” going on to comment on “this oriental trait” (Freitag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, 138). In a letter to the editors of the *Little Review*, she is more abrupt: “Jews I hate!” (Undated letter, c. 1922–1924, from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freitag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript p. 10.) She also notes in a July 12, 1924, letter to Djuna Barnes, “I have nothing any more against jews . . . *provided* they are the right sort! It depends on the right mixture—as everywhere! They are movable—They *had* to be . . . pure teuton is past!” (From the Elsa von Freitag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2.)

60. Rosalind Krauss argues in her book *The Optical Unconscious* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993) that the very capacity of the readymade to “erase distinctions between art and non-art, between the absolute gratuitousness of form and the commodity” defines it as desublimatory (specifically noting that “what Clem [as in Clement Greenberg, the maven of modernist formalism] detests in Duchamp’s art is its pressure toward desublimation” [142]). In my view, Krauss is forcing one issue into another in order to make a renewed claim (but one pretty consistent with Foster’s in the 1980s) for Duchamp’s radicality. The readymades’ capacity to perform this critique is hardly desublimatory; rather, this critique precisely follows the bounds of rationalism,

working in relation to its most fundamental structures and turning these around so that rationalism becomes unhinged, perhaps, but not reversed or overthrown. As I will argue further on, desublimation, at least in Freudian terms, has more to do with the violent release of desires and emotions that rupture “appropriate” bounds of social expression. In these terms, as this book makes clear, Duchamp can hardly be claimed to have produced a desublimatory practice—but rather was viewed from the teens onward as restrained, cold, and removed in his personal relations as well as in his, in this way, relatively “safe” aesthetic practice. On the links between the highly rationalizing French school system (with its mechanical drawing requirements), which Duchamp attended in the late nineteenth century, and his mechanical diagrams, see Molly Nesbit’s labyrinthine *Their Common Sense* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2000).

61. The full title of the *Large Glass* is *La mariée mise à nue par ses célibataires, même*, or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*; begun in 1915 and notoriously left unfinished in 1923.

62. I take this term “mad rationality” from the description of global capitalism by the brilliant media theorist Shuddhabrata Sengupta (co-founder of the Indian cyberactivism group the Raqs Collective; May 1, 2002, e-mail on the “Undercurrents” listserve.

63. This is the very irrationality that André Breton and his colleagues active in French Dada were to forge into surrealism around 1924, paradoxically beginning to codify—

- through images and poems produced through the process of psychic automatism—the very experiences of the marvelous, “mad love,” “convulsive beauty,” and chance occurrences that they hoped to mine aesthetically for their capacity to tap and free the unconscious. Hal Foster’s *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993) explores the lure of irrationality in surrealism in relation to the Freudian notion of the “uncanny” and the traumatic shocks of modernity. He does not explore the tendency within surrealism to rationalize in its own fashion—by orienting its explorations toward the ultimate recontainment of femininity, flux, homosexuality, and other kinds of dangerous flows that intrigued the surrealists but which they could not bear to allow to remain unbounded. For a fascinating study of the links between the trauma and dismemberment of World War I and the surrealist tendency to dismember female bodies in their visual imagery, see Amy Lyford, “The Aesthetics of Dismemberment: Surrealism and the Musée du Val-de-Grâce in 1917,” *Cultural Critique* 46 (Fall 2000), 45–79.
64. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (1965), trans. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 3.
65. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 3.
66. Of course, my investment here should be clear: these are the primary areas of my research over the last decade. See my book *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).
67. See note 10.
68. As Anson Rabinbach has put it, in some senses the discourse of neurasthenia and its symptoms can be viewed as one of the sites of a “second order of modernity” itself; Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 160.
69. For a medical account of the neurological processes that lead to anxiety and immune system disorders, see Esther Sternberg, *The Balance Within: The Science Connecting Health and Emotions* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 2000).
70. In “Astral America,” Baudrillard identifies Southern California as epitomizing the “collapse of metaphor” that he associates with postmodernism; in Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1989), 27–73; this quote on 27. Jameson’s description of the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles as the quintessential space of postmodernism is legendary; see his essay “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (1984), reprinted as “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” in *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), on the Bonaventure, 38–45.
71. Medically speaking, the neurasthenic feels everything so acutely that her body can no longer effectively process stimuli; ultimately, the capacity for pleasurable sensory experience disintegrates and all input becomes horrifying or overwhelming in effect.

Emile Durkheim's statement, in his classic study *Suicide* (1897), is evocative of this state of being: "Every impression is a source of discomfort for the neuropath, every movement an exertion; his nerves are disturbed at the least contact, being as it were unprotected; the performance of physiological functions which are usually most automatic is a source of generally painful sensations for him" (quoted in Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*, 154). The evidence I have for the link between neurasthenia and panic disorder is largely experiential, but is also based on my knowledge of cognitive therapy literature on panic disorder, which describes the disorder in ways that clearly mirror (with updated language) descriptions of neurasthenia from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Every symptom I have experienced as someone with panic disorder can be found in texts on neurasthenia.

72. George M. Beard, *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences* (1881; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972), and *Sexual Neurasthenia (Nervous Exhaustion): Its Hygiene, Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment* (1898; rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1972). On war neurosis (also called neurasthenia or shell shock), see Sándor Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Ernst Simmel, and Ernest Jones, *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis*, with an introduction by Sigmund Freud (London, Vienna, and New York: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1921); E. E. Southard, *Shell-Shock and Other Neuropsychiatric Problems: Presented in Five Hundred and Eighty-Nine Case Histories from the War Literature, 1914–1918* (1919; rpt. New York: Arno Press,

1973); W. H. R. Rivers, "War Neuroses and Military Training," in his *Instinct and the Unconscious: A Contribution to a Biological Theory of the Psycho-Neuroses*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 205–227.

73. Brigid Doherty, "See: *We Are All Neurasthenics!* or, the Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 95.

74. Duchamp, from *Marcel Duchamp: Notes*, ed. Paul Matisse (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983), n.p.

75. The autobiographical notes from which the Hjartarson and Spettigue volume was derived were rediscovered among Djuna Barnes's papers at the University of Maryland in the 1970s. Irene Gammel's biography, *Baroness Elsa*, pulls the autobiographical notes together with other historical documentation of her period to flesh in some of the gaps.

76. Djuna Barnes, "Greenwich Village as It Is," originally published in *Pearson's Magazine*, 1916, collected in Barnes, *New York*, ed. Alyce Barry (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1989), 229.

77. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 148, 151–152. See Irit Rogoff, "Gossip as Testimony: A Postmodern Signature," in Griselda Pollock, ed., *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings* (London: Routledge, 1996), 58.

78. The war is often mentioned in passing but not discussed as a determining cultural

factor in the many useful histories of this group. John I. H. Baur's early study, in "The Machine and the Subconscious: Dada in America," *Magazine of Art* 44, no. 6 (October 1951), is typical of this phenomenon in that he mentions the war cursorily as a cause of the Dada attitude of disgust "with man as a rational or moral creature" (235).

79. See Susan Buck-Morss on Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*, "The City as Dreamworld and Catastrophe," *October* 73 (Summer 1995), 7. Buck-Morss discusses his goal of dispelling the "dream" state of capitalism and the dreamworld of the city that mesmerizes people and keeps them passive, and his stated desire to awaken the dreaming collective with a "box on the ears."

80. Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 161.

2 ... War / Equivocal Masculinities

This chapter is a revised and expanded version of the article "Equivocal Masculinity: New York Dada in the Context of World War I," *Art History* 25, no. 2 (April 2002), 162–205.

1. Sigmund Freud, "Thoughts on War and Death" (1915), in *Collected Papers*, vol. 4, trans. Joan Riviere (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1953), 288–289. Huelsenbeck is cited, without a reference, in Matthew Gale, *Dada & Surrealism* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 120. Maxwell Bodenheimer, Letter to the editors, *Little Review* 6, no. 7 (November 1919), 64.

2. Louis Bouché, March 13, 1963, interview with W. E. Woofenden, Archives of American Art, tape #1.

3. The Baroness wrote to Djuna Barnes of her wartime arrest in a later letter, c. 1925, that begins "I am again astonished"; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2.

4. Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 208. Robert Reiss also notes that the Baroness functioned in New York as a sign of the decadence of Europe that had led to the war, in "My Baroness': Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 14 (1985), 92.

5. Hugo Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven (1855–1924) was Lieutenant General, Chief of the Supplementary General Staff of the German Army, and often a spokesperson in international contexts. See "Michaelis Wants a Strong Peace," an essay on the Kaiser's speech opening parliament, and mentioning the Baron's speech as well, *New York Times*, August 6, 1917, section 1, p. 2. The General's incendiary views, as expressed in his book *Deductions from the World War* (which claimed, even before the war ended, that Germany would fight another world war to gain "world-power"), are featured in the anonymous article "What Germany Has Not Learned in This War," *Literary Digest* 56, no. 9 (March 2, 1918), 19–22. The Baroness is clearly identified with the General in the anonymous article "Refugee Baroness Poses as a Model,"

New York Times, December 5, 1915, section 4, p. 18, which describes him as her father-in-law. See also the General's obituary, *New York Times*, October 21, 1924, section 4, p. 23, which notes that his book *Deductions* was "intended for German readers only and its export from the Fatherland was prohibited" but that translations in French and English had appeared already in 1918, generating great public interest.

6. Jane Heap, "Dada," *Little Review* 8, no. 2 (Spring 1922), 46. Heap, along with Margaret Anderson, was one of the Baroness's most solid supporters; the two women published her fantastic modernist poems in the *Little Review*.

7. Daniel Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 8, 67.

8. W. B. Yeats, from his poem "The Second Coming" (1921), cited in Richard Cork, *A Bitter Truth: Avant-Garde Art and the Great War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 260; my emphasis.

9. Milton W. Brown, *American Painting from the Armory Show to the Depression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955), 71.

10. It must be noted that Irene Gammel's biography of the Baroness does discuss the war at some length, but naturally focuses on the Baroness as a figure of its conflicts and views the situation primarily in relation to the literary rather than the visual-art avant-gardes; in her chapter 8, "A Citizen of Terror in War

Time," in *Baroness Elsa*, 206–237. Nancy Ring's Ph.D. dissertation, "New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913–1921" (Northwestern University, 1991), is the only art historical account I know of that examines World War I at any length in relation to New York Dada (at least for seven pages, 16–23), although she situates the war as one of a number of forces conspiring to shift gender relations during this period and thus generally informing the "instability of Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray's figurations of masculinity" (8). Ring's greater emphasis by far is thus on the incursions of feminized popular culture and the threats of the New Woman. See also Caroline Jones's analysis of Picabia's machine imagery as projections of his anxieties about shifting gender roles, in "The Sex of the Machine: Mechanomorphic Art, New Women, and Francis Picabia's Neurasthenic Cure," in Caroline Jones and Peter Galison, eds., *Picturing Science, Producing Art* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 146–150. Like Ring, Jones situates Picabia's anxiety primarily in relation to mechanization and the New Woman and argues that it is projected into negative machine images of women. See also the very recent essay by Michael Taylor, "From Munich to Modernism: John Covert, New York Dada, and the Real Smell of War," in Leo Mazow, *John Covert Rediscovered* (University Park: Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, 2003), 22–34.

11. Cork, *A Bitter Truth*; and Kenneth E. Silver, *Esprit de Corps: The Art of the Parisian Avant-Garde and the First World War*,

1914–1925 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). One could convincingly argue that all analyses of World War I imagery are inherently overdetermined in relation to masculine and feminine identities. Typically enough, however, like the major cultural and political histories of the war in English by Eric Leed (*No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979]), Paul Fussell (*The Great War and Modern Memory* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975]), and John Keegan (*The First World War* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999]), Cork's and Silver's magisterial studies do not directly address issues of gender and sexuality. Nor do they address at any length the artists studied here.

12. Philippe Dagen, *Le silence des peintres: Les artistes face à la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1996), 19; my translations. Criticizing Silver's *Esprit de Corps* for glossing over the general lack of war imagery among the avant-gardes, and for forcing cubism into the category of responses to the war, Dagen's book asks the question "Why so few images of war?" given the "paroxysm" in French culture due to its effects (see especially 15, 16, 18). His point is an excellent one and underlines the importance of the kind of reading I am doing here, which aggressively *reads into* the imagery of the time to locate symptoms of tensions in subjectivity incurred because of the war.

13. In a sense, this chapter could be viewed as a complement to Christine Poggi's brilliant examination of the tensions arising from the

futurists' fixation on constructing and ensuring an armored, militarized male body that was nonetheless still open to amorous adventure (or what Marinetti, unforgettably, calls the "coitus of war, gigantic vulva stirred by the friction of courage"). The work of the New York Dada artists I study here takes its particular meaning, I argue, in relation to their resolute *escape from* such extreme masculine norms (but also from bourgeois masculinity). See Christine Poggi, "Dreams of Metallized Flesh: Futurism and the Masculine Body," *Modernism/Modernity* 4, no. 3 (September 1997), 20; this Marinetti quote, from his 1909 "Let's Murder the Moonshine," appears on 28. See also Dora Apel's interesting examination of how German artists negotiated the complex terrain of masculinity following World War I, "'Heroes' and 'Whores': The Politics of Gender in Weimar Antiwar Imagery," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 3 (September 1997), 366–384. Addressing the antiwar imagery of artists such as Otto Dix, she asks the crucial question: "How did the discourse of manliness survive the critique of militarism?" (366). I thank Karen Lang for bringing this source to my attention.

14. According to military historian John Keegan, only "selective" conscription was enacted in the United States in May of 1917; by 1919, however, almost 3 million men had been drafted, indicating that the conscription was broadened toward the end of the war. Keegan, *The First World War*, see 352, 372–373.

15. As noted, Fussell and Leed clearly address the war's traumatic and unsettling affect

- on masculinity in their studies but do not critically examine these effects in relation to structures of gender identification. Feminist scholars, contrastingly, have foregrounded gender as a constitutive element of war experience. See especially the essays by Elaine Showalter and Sandra Gilbert in Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel, and Margaret Collins Weitz, eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Mary Louise Roberts's *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917-1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); and Klaus Theweleit's brilliant two-volume study of proto-fascist projections of masculine potency in post-World War I Germany, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1 *Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (1977), trans. Stephen Conway, Erica Carter, and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) and vol. 2, *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror* (1978), trans. Erica Carter and Chris Turner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
16. Introduction to Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines*, 4; see also Michele J. Shover, "Roles and Images of Women in World War I Propaganda," *Politics and Society* 5, no. 4 (1975), 469–486.
17. Hugo Ball, cited in Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 2, 210. Leighton's letter is published in *Letters from a Lost Generation: First World War Letters of Vera Brittain and Four Friends*, ed. Alan Bishop and Mark Bostridge (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 401.
18. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 8.
19. Duchamp, "The Trouble with Art in This Country," from an interview with James Johnson Sweeney (1946), reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 123. Typically, Man Ray conveyed a more frivolous and humorous cynicism toward the idea of progress, noting in a later interview, "there is no progress in the human mentality any more than there is progress in art, any more than there is progress in making love. There are just different ways of doing it"; from Arturo Schwarz, "Interview with Man Ray," in Schwarz, *New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus; Tübingen: Kunsthalle Tübingen; Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1973), 99.
20. Parveen Adams, *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Differences* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 50.
21. Along with Duchamp's *Large Glass*, *Fountain* has been the most extensively studied of all of the pieces associated with New York Dada. See especially William Camfield's exhaustive *Marcel Duchamp Fountain* (Houston: Menil Collection and Houston Fine Art Press, 1989); and Michael Taylor's interesting essay "The Fountain and the Brass Bowl: Duchamp, Stieglitz, and the Last Days of

291,” lecture delivered in the “Contextualizing Marcel Duchamp” symposium at the San Francisco Museum of Art, April 30, 2000, publication forthcoming; I am grateful to Taylor for sharing the manuscript of this essay with me.

22. Duchamp’s letter is published in *Affect/ Marcel: The Selected Correspondence of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Francis M. Naumann and Hector Obalk (London: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 46; although English translations by Jill Taylor are published along with the original French text in this book, I have chosen to use my own translations throughout.

23. Gammel’s argument is in her *Baroness Elsa*, 223–238. Indeed, as Gammel notes, Camfield himself, the expert on the piece, admits to a lack of final proof of the piece’s authorship. The fact that Duchamp did, in later years, make numerous copies of the *Fountain* as part of his ongoing readymade reproduction project, thereby effectively asserting authorship of the piece, does not prove his authorship; it merely opens the possibility that Duchamp played with authorship even more profoundly (and more disturbingly, if he took credit for the Baroness’s ideas) than the gesture of the readymade itself suggests. However, it must be noted that there is evidence, if not proof, that Duchamp “authored” the piece; in particular, in Katherine Dreier’s letter to him of April 13, 1917, she attempts to justify her role in rejecting *Fountain*, arguing: “I felt it was of much more vital importance to have you connected with our Society than to have the piece of plumbing which was surseptitiously [sic] stolen, remain. When I

voted ‘No’, I voted on the question of originality . . . it was simply a question of whether a person has a right to buy a readymade object and show it with their name attached at an exhibition? Arensberg tells me that that was in accord with your ‘Readymades’ . . . I did not know you had conceived of single objects [such as this].” Duchamp correspondence, Society Anonyme / Katherine Dreier Papers, folder 1; Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

God also has a contested attribution. The piece was long attributed to Morton Schamberg, who probably was with the Baroness when she assembled it and photographed it for her; the Baroness lived for a brief period in Philadelphia in 1917, where she became friends with Schamberg and posed for George Biddle, possibly becoming his lover, just before he enlisted in Officers’ Training Camp. See Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 200–201. As Francis Naumann has noted, the original attribution of the piece to Schamberg was probably simply due to the fact that Schamberg had photographed it in his studio, after the Baroness had pulled it out and staged it as art; the photograph of the plumbing pipe without the miter box, in front of Schamberg’s 1916 painting *Machine*, is illustrated in Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 129. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, which acquired the piece in the late 1950s along with the rest of the collection of Walter and Louise Arensberg (including much of Duchamp’s work), has in its archives Walter Arensberg’s collection list, which includes *God* under Morton Schamberg’s category but then notes: “This construction was made by both Scham-

berg and Von Loringhoven.” Aside from this notation, *God* has been explicitly attributed to the Baroness alone by R. Schamberg, a descendant of the Schamberg family, who wrote a letter to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (April 18, 1990) noting that “the Morton Livingston Schamberg sculpture *God*, which is in [the Museum’s] . . . Arensberg Collection, is nothing more than an upside down plumbing trap that the Baroness Elsa von Freytay [sic] Loringhoven took out of a vacant house on Chestnut Street in the early 1900s”; unpaginated editorial page from the Philadelphia Museum of Art archives. I am deeply indebted to Michael Taylor, curator at the museum, for sharing the Arensberg list and *Inquirer* letter with me. For the purposes of this book, I am taking the piece to be by the Baroness, an attribution I may be fantasizing out of my *desire* for it to be hers, but which seems much more consistent in terms of her versus Schamberg’s work as well as being corroborated by the *Inquirer* letter.

24. With this reading of *Fountain* I am absolutely intending to imply not only a gender crossing but a queer sexuality that clings to it in spite of tendencies to interpret it as, in Paul Franklin’s words, a “heterosexual rendering of the white female body” or (I would add) as a sign of heroic, implicitly heterosexual male creative genius. However, I must take issue with Franklin’s tendency to oversimplify others’ readings of the piece (including one of my own earlier interpretations) as foreclosing the possibility of queer sexual significations. He cites my description from my essay “Eros, That’s Life, or the Baroness’s Penis,” of the piece as “a urinal shaped like a womb, ready

to embrace the ‘piss’ ejaculate of every male passerby” (in Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, eds., *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* [New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996], 247, n. 35), as an example of such a heterosexualization. However, far from erasing queer meanings, in my view (and per my intention) this reading precisely opens to them—that is, if one deessentializes what one means by queer rather than, as Franklin does, assuming it must be proven through elaborate historical arguments about public *pissoirs* and gay bathhouses. References to feminine anatomy do not preclude queer sexuality—even of the male variety. Too, while his history of debates about public men’s toilets is fascinating, such a reading pivots around a misbegotten tendency to impute intention to Duchamp in relation to the readymades by simply dropping the objects or object into a “historical context,” which, no matter how interesting, cannot be assumed to be a singular explanation for the meaning of the object nor a singular motivating source for Duchamp’s choice of it. Finally, Franklin points all of his laborious efforts toward positioning Duchamp via the readymades (specifically *Fountain*), once again, as the origin of a particular kind of avant-garde critique—but this time, simply one that is (importantly, but still reductively) redefined as a deliberate confusing of the boundaries between heterosexual and homosexuality. See Paul Franklin, “Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History,” *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000), 24, 49–50.

25. *Fountain*’s bigendering has been interestingly elaborated by David Hopkins, “Men

- before the Mirror: Duchamp, Man Ray and Masculinity," *Art History* 21, no. 3 (September 1998), 306.
26. For a brilliant discussion of the effects of the shattering of the male body in World War I combat on post war surrealist practice (informed by what she calls "the aesthetics of dismemberment"), see Amy Lyford, "Body Parts: Surrealism and the Reconstruction of Masculinity," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, Spring 1997, and her article "The Aesthetics of Dismemberment: Surrealism and the Musée du Val-de-Grâce in 1917," *Cultural Critique* 46 (Fall 2000), 45–79.
27. In his celebrated novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928; New York: Fawcett Crest, 1982), Erich Maria Remarque explicitly and with great poignancy outlines this rupture as a generational split, noting that the older generations "let us down so badly. . . . While they continued to write and talk, we saw the wounded and dying. While they taught that duty to one's country is the greatest thing, we already knew that death-throes are stronger. . . . And we saw that there was nothing of their world left" (12–13).
28. Sandra Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," in Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines*, 199.
29. Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (1930; London: Faber and Faber, 1965), 74. Ernst Jünger, *The Storm of Steel: From the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front* (1922), trans. Basil Creighton (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975), 1, 4; originally published in English in 1929.
30. Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, 193–194. For a critique of Sassoon's heroism and a discussion of the homoeroticism of his relationship to his therapist, W. H. R. Rivers (a famous specialist in war neuroses), see Elaine Showalter, "Rivers and Sassoon: The Inscription of Male Gender Anxieties," in Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines*; and a slightly different version, "Male Hysteria: W. H. R. Rivers and the Lessons of Shell Shock," in her *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 167–194.
31. Showalter, "Rivers and Sassoon," 64. The alternatives to Sassoon's approach were grim: either to remain unbalanced, in a state of agonizing, perpetual neurasthenia like the tragic shell-shocked ex-soldier Septimus Warren Smith in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, who finally frees himself from his agony by jumping out a window and killing himself; or to die in no man's land like Richard Leighton, also an officer with literary ambitions, who died just hours before leaving the front to visit his fiancée, Vera Brittain. See Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981), and Vera Brittain, *War Diary 1913–1917: Chronicle of Youth*, ed. Alan Bishop with Terry Smart (London: Victor Gollancz, 1981).
32. Pat Barker's brilliant trilogy effectively evokes not only the mental confusion and trauma of the war but the links between psychic and physical damage and the homoerotic

bonds that developed between men during the war; see *Regeneration* (New York: Viking, 1991); *The Eye in the Door* (New York: Viking, 1993); and *The Ghost Road* (New York: Viking, 1995).

33. Theweleit, *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, 244.

34. Rebecca West, *The Return of the Soldier* (1918; New York: Carroll & Graf, 1996), 187. For an interesting, related take on incommensurability (or what he calls, via Duchamp's notes, "immensurability") as a kind of feminization, or equivocation, of masculinity, see David Joselit's discussion of Duchamp's early paintings in "Mensuration *en abyme*: Marcel Duchamp's Cubism," chapter 1 of his book *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910–1941* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), 9–70. As historians of the period have noted, however, rather than opening the boundaries of gender difference for good, this radical incommensurability also often functioned to reinvent the processes by which masculinity shored itself up to confirm its authority and phallicism. As Jünger's quotation suggests, this is most obvious in the case of Germany, but the retrenchment took place in England, France, and the United States as well. See Steven C. Hause, "More Minerva Than Mars: The French Women's Rights Campaign and the First World War," in Higonet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines*, 99–113.

35. Henri Barbusse, *Under Fire* (published originally in 1916 in French as *Le feu*), trans. Fitzwater Wray (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1926), 17. Leed notes that war neurosis,

which he describes as "a flight from an intolerable, destructive reality through illness," was a psychic effect of the enforced passivity common to industrialized war in particular (*No Man's Land*, 164).

36. Alistair Horne's magisterial history of Verdun, *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916* (1962; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), describes at great length the tragic consequences of the attitude of *élan* among the French armies.

37. Carolyn Dean explores the traumatic effects of this incompatibility in "The Great War, Pornography, and the Violated Social Body," in her *The Frail Social Body: Pornography, Homosexuality, and Other Fantasies in Interwar France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 101–129.

38. John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (New York: George H. Doran, 1921), 240, 331, 415–416.

39. Ford Madox Ford's 1924–1928 epic novel *Parade's End* (rpt. Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1997) explores another similar individual case, here of an upper-class officer, Christopher Tietjens, who submits himself to the moronic directives of the English army. Tietjens almost loses his mind trying to navigate the incompetence and wastefulness of the military powers-that-be in addition to the threats of combat and the dangers to his masculinity represented by his hysterical wife.

40. Zigrosser, "Essay on War," Carl Zigrosser Papers, Archives of American Art, microfilm

- roll 4664, frames 1321–1322; cited in Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 153.
41. See especially Antliff's introduction and his chapter on Man Ray, "Man Ray's Path to Dada," in *Anarchist Modernism*, 2–3, 73–93, where he fills in much-needed material on Man Ray's intellectual and artistic development before he met Duchamp in 1915.
42. Hutchins Hapgood, from his book *An Anarchist Woman* (New York: Duffield, 1909), 153–154; I thank Nancy Ring for calling my attention to this quotation.
43. Jünger, from his 1925 *Fire and Blood*; as cited in Leed, *No Man's Land*, 11.
44. Leed, *No Man's Land*, 164.
45. Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 266–267.
46. W. H. R. Rivers's "War-Neurosis and Military Training" (1918), in his *Instinct and the Unconscious: A Contribution to a Biological Theory of the Psycho-Neuroses*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), 206–207, 208. Rivers notes that the British "public schools," those privately funded institutions of the upper classes, encourage a repression of emotion, while the private soldier "has far fewer scruples about giving expression to his fears" (209). His own class biases lead him as well to note that the officer has a mental life that is "far more complex and varied," leading him to be less content with the "crude" physical solution to his conflict (209). On the class-differentiated symptoms of war neurosis, see also Leed, *No Man's Land*, 163–164. Other psychologists and psychoanalysts at the time viewed all shell shock as symptomatically hysterical; see Sándor Ferenczi in "Symposium," in Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, Ernst Simmel, and Ernest Jones, *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis* (London, Vienna, and New York: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1921), 10, 11. Other recent critical studies of shell shock include Elaine Showalter, "Male Hysteria"; Ruth Leys, "Traumatic Cures: Shell Shock, Janet, and the Question of Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Summer 1994), 623–663; and, in an art historical context, Brigid Doherty's inspired analysis of the works of German Dada as negotiations of the traumatized masculinity of the artists, in "See: *We Are All Neuras-thenics!* or, the Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 82–132.
47. Ernst Simmel, untitled contribution to Ferenczi et al., *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis*, 32.
48. Leed, *No Man's Land*, 163.
49. Thomas W. Salmon, *The Care and Treatment of Diseases and War Neuroses ("Shell Shock") in the British Army* (New York: War Work Committee of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, 1917), 38, 40; his Appendix I lists hundreds of additional contemporaneous sources on shell shock (see 69–77). Salmon was a major in the Medical Officers' Reserve Corps of the United States Army. It

is highly ironic, though the irony seems to be lost on Salmon, that the “reeducation” tasks are often those associated specifically with female labor: basket making, indoor occupations, gardening, etc. (see 39–40). He also describes the “hysterical” (a term he uses to categorize all shell shock victims, not just the private class) in terms aligned with femininity, as would be suggested by the term “hysterical” itself.

50. Abraham, untitled contribution to Ferenczi et al., *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis*, 34.

51. Ferenczi, in “Symposium,” in Ferenczi et al., *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis*, 19.

52. Abraham, untitled contribution to Ferenczi et al., *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis*, 28.

53. On the desublimatory force of war trauma, see Ernest Jones, “War Shock and Freud’s Theory of the Neuroses,” in Ferenczi et al., *Psycho-Analysis and the War Neurosis*, 49; I discuss this model, and its relation to normative masculinity, at some length in my essay “Paul McCarthy’s Inside Out Body and the Desublimation of Masculinity,” in Dan Cameron and Lisa Phillips, eds., *Paul McCarthy* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000), 125–133.

54. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 75.

55. On this homoerotic dimension, see the Barker novels (note 32), which are based on

the Rivers/Sassoon relationship, and Elaine Showalter’s essays “Rivers and Sassoon” and “Male Hysteria.”

56. Thanks to David Joselit for encouraging me to clarify this distinction.

57. Antliff’s book traces these many contradictions through the complex theories that informed anarchism, from those of Bakunin and Nietzsche to those of Trotsky and Emma Goldman; see *Anarchist Modernism*, especially 1–10.

58. In the recent film *Pollock* (directed by Ed Harris, 2000), when asked why he is not enlisted to fight in World War II, Pollock responds gruffly, “4-F, too neurotic”; the film labors to compose a coherent narrative out of the seemingly incompatible illustration of Pollock’s avant-garde “genius” and his hysterical emotional distress and neurotic behavior, the latter of which are encapsulated by this phrase describing his failure to engage in the war.

59. Duchamp from “The European Art Invasion,” *Literary Digest*, November 27, 1915, cited by Calvin Tomkins in *Marcel Duchamp: A Biography* (New York: Henry Holt, 1996), 152–153. Cravan as cited by Mina Loy in Roger Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus’: Arthur Cravan Undressed,” in Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), 112 (the French reads: “On ne me fait pas marcher, moi! . . . Je ne marche pas pour leur art moderne. Je ne marche pas pour la grande guerre!”). Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, “Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp” (1949), in

Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 259.

60. Henri de Saint-Simon, *Opinions littéraires, philosophiques, et industrielles* (Paris, 1825), 341–342; trans. Donald Drew Egbert in *Social Radicalism and the Arts: Western Europe* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 121.

61. The artists, to be sure, facilitated such an erasure. As Dagen puts it, Picabia’s visual artworks “say not a word about the war” (Dagen, *Le silence des peintres*, 267). Duchamp mentioned the war only a few times in private letters and in a few of his notes from the World War I period.

62. Cited by Naumann, *New York Dada*, 47. Naumann states that Duchamp is asleep, which seems misleading as his eyes are apparently open in a kind of glassy stupor.

63. Buffet-Picabia continues, tellingly, “but in a life of license as of asceticism, he preserved his consciousness of purpose: extravagant as his gestures sometimes seemed, they were perfectly adequate to his experimental study of a personality disengaged from the normal contingencies of human life” (Buffet-Picabia, “Some Memories of Pre-Dada,” 260).

64. This letter, the original French version of which has been lost, is reprinted in George Heard Hamilton and William C. Agee, *Raymond Duchamp-Villon, 1876–1918* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 119.

65. Duchamp-Villon, who was also rejected from combat units, volunteered to serve as a medic; in the course of his duties he contracted typhoid and, after a long struggle with this illness, succumbed to blood poisoning late in 1918.

66. Duchamp, *Affect/Marcel*, 27. In this letter he makes rare, relatively extended remarks about the war, describing the situation of his brothers Jacques Villon, on leave from trench duty, and Raymond Duchamp-Villon, who is waiting to go to the front, and his sister-in-law Yvonne Duchamp-Villon, who is working at a local hospital and “enchanted with her life as a nurse.”

67. Quoted in Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 207.

68. See Agee, *Raymond Duchamp-Villon*, 119.

69. See Jean-Jacques Becker, *La France en guerre, 1914–1918* (Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1988), especially 20; thanks to Nancy Ring for bringing this excellent source to my attention. For another view of the pressures on male subjectivity in the context of the French army, see Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France During the First World War*, trans. Helen McPhail (Oxford: Berg Press, 1995). Audoin-Rouzeau discusses the *mentalité* or national sentiment developed in the trenches—the visceral commitment to France, which he contrasts

to the official ideologies of patriotism promoted by the state.

70. Lavedan is cited in Dagen, *Le silence des peintres*, 8; my translation.

71. See Cork on Picasso's experience in Paris of being presented with white feathers "by those eager to discredit the pre-war avant-garde with insinuations of cowardice or treacherous *boche* sympathies" (Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 59). As Joanna Bourke notes, men who did not enlist were viewed as malingerers and "were not deemed to be worthy of active membership in the wider body-politic"; in *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 77. That noncombatant masculinity was viewed as deeply compromised is made clear in the popular novel *La garçonne*, whose main character, the teenaged Monique Lerbier, volunteers to nurse the wounded in a hospital at Hyères: "She is haunted by those haggard eyes, that blink in the sunlight after release from their never-ending night of horror. She cannot understand how the men who fight can accustom themselves to this fearful death which is now their life. No more can she understand how those who pretend to do a little fighting—and so little!—and those who do not fight at all, can accept the slaughter and suffering of the others. / She is stunned at the idea that one part of humanity is bleeding to death whilst the other amuses itself and grows rich." Victor Marguerite, *The Bachelor Girl* (from the French of *La garçonne*), trans. Hugh Burnaby (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923), 17.

72. See Carlton Lee and Linda Ashton, *Henri-Pierre Roché: An Introduction* (Austin: University of Texas, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, 1991), 64.

73. Mina Loy, in Conover, "Mina Loy's 'Colossus,'" 112. Loy quotes Cravan as expressing disgust toward the "handful" who force "millions of men into the jaws of death" and as citing Trotsky as the only sincere political force standing against the war. According to Loy, he actually enlisted briefly before escaping to Barcelona (see *ibid.*, 113). Duchamp noted of Cravan's appearance in New York, "because of his military status he must have had some reckoning to do. No one knew what he had done, and no one wanted to say much about it. Perhaps he scrounged up a passport and beat it for Mexico. These are things people don't talk about." Duchamp also notes, "I didn't like him very much, nor he me," which makes sense given their vastly different aesthetic styles and approaches to life; in Pierre Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (1967), trans. Ron Padgett (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 53. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia also reminisces about Cravan's ongoing escapes from conscription: "How had he succeeded in eluding the vigilance of several frontiers [when he came to Barcelona in 1916]? In crossing three or four belligerent countries without being either found out or arrested? And all this without any clear or normal source of income?" (Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories of Pre-Dada," 138.) Cravan himself commented flippantly, "(à propos of the war) I would be ashamed to let myself be carried away by

- Europe—let her die—I don't have the time," in his "Notes" (c. 1915–1917?), trans. Terry Hale, in *4 Dada Suicides: Selected Texts of Arthur Cravan, Jacques Rigaut, Julien Torma, and Jacques Vaché*, introduced by Roger Conover, Terry Hale, and Paul Lenti, trans. Terry Hale, Paul Lenti, and Iain White (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 69.
74. Roche's point of view is noted in Carolyn Burke, "Recollecting Dada: Juliette Roche," in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 552.
75. See Gale, *Dada & Surrealism*, 32. Other men simply lied about compromising medical conditions in order to enlist; see Bourke, *Dis-membering the Male*, 77. In Germany, Max Beckmann (who was too old to be expected to enlist right away), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Ernst Heckel, John Heartfield, and George Grosz, among others, were in the army in one capacity or another; all of these artists experienced nervous breakdowns. Otto Dix is one of the few well-known artists who not only survived lengthy bouts of trench warfare, as did Fernand Léger, but also went on to produce a body of work associated directly with the war. See *Otto Dix – Der Krieg* (Albstadt: Städtische Galerie Albstadt, 1977), exhibition catalogue.
76. These very useful descriptions are by the American artist Adelheid Lange Roosevelt, as cited by Judith Zilcher in her important essay "In the Face of War: The Last Works of Raymond Duchamp-Villon," *Art Bulletin* 65, no. 1 (1983), 138.
77. For an excellent account of the complex politics of the Parisian avant-garde in relation to the war, see David Cottingham, *Cubism in the Shadow of War: The Avant-Garde and Politics in Paris 1905–1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).
78. On Léger's embrace of the soldiering life see Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 86.
79. As described in Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: A Biography*, 137–140. Duchamp's friend and biographer Robert Lebel describes the distasteful situation a young evader such as Duchamp would have encountered in Paris: "War declared, the atmosphere in Paris . . . became untenable for Duchamp. The artists did not identify themselves any longer but in two categories: the mobilized and the others. Discharged for cardiac weakness with all the exterior appearance of a flourishing state of health, he would at least have been spared malicious reflections on his situation if he had submitted badly to patriotic military orders in the beginning. The hunting of the 'ambushed' was organized, led by a vast benevolent army of old men and of harpies. Jacques Villon was in the army as well as Raymond Duchamp-Villon, and the wife of the latter [Yvonne] didn't hesitate to reproach [Duchamp] for his presence 'behind the lines'." He goes on to note that, in this ambience, Duchamp was hardly able to work tranquilly, nor would he "cede to the warlike emulation of some other artists"; hence his decision to leave for New York in June of 1915. Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp* (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1985), 75–76; my translation.

80. Duchamp from “The 1914 Box,” one of his compilations of notes for *The Large Glass*, reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 23.

81. Duchamp, from the notes in the *Green Box* (1934), reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 51. The eight malic molds are noted as being “gendarme, cuirassier, etc.,” so they might also be police, but still the operative idea is that they work for the state, and that this role is responsible for their castration.

82. Letter of October 8, 1917, in Duchamp, *Affectt/Marcel*, 51. Amazingly enough, as Ettie Stettheimer noted in her journal, Duchamp accompanied her and her two sisters, friends and fellow artists/writers whom he was tutoring in French, to see General Joffré, the leader of the French forces until the end of 1916, who had come to the United States in May of 1917 to mobilize American support for the war. Ettie Stettheimer journals, May 12, 1917; cited in Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: A Biography*, 193.

83. A document from the Local [Medical] Board of the City of New York from August 1917 shows that Duchamp applied for and received an official “Exemption from Military Service” from the U.S. army after this country entered the war; the document notes the grounds for dismissal as being his identity as “an alien”; in the Marcel Duchamp Archives, Philadelphia Museum of Art. I am indebted to Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for calling this document to my attention. Duchamp attributes the trip to Buenos Aires, in a letter to Jean Crotti,

to “several reasons you know about: nothing serious; only a sort of fatigue on the part of the A[rensbergs]”; letter of July 8, 1918, published in Duchamp, *Affectt/Marcel*, 52. It is certainly consistent with Duchamp’s past actions, however, to assume that he also wanted to flee the escalating war propaganda and pressure to conform to the role of proper (enlisted) masculinity in New York.

84. Picabia, as cited in [anonymous], “French Artists Spur On an American Art,” *New York Tribune*, October 24, 1915, section 4, pp. 2–3; reprinted in Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada*, 131–132.

85. William Camfield, *Francis Picabia* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1970), 22–25; Michel Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et ‘391’* (Paris: Losfeld, 1966), 34, 35.

86. I am grateful to William Camfield for supplying a photograph of this sketch.

87. Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et ‘391,’* 35; Picabia, Sanouillet argues, had no comprehension of the war at all: “Picabia simply lived in a world in which the war *did not exist*, in which the international relations among men of good will had never been broken” (33). For a slightly different account, stressing the progression of his work during this period and beyond, see Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, “Francis Picabia (1879–1953),” in Buffet-Picabia, *Rencontres avec Picabia, Apollinaire, Cravan, Duchamp, Arp, Calder* (Paris: Belfond, 1977), 48–50. See also M. Arnault Pierre’s essay “Sources inédites pour l’oeuvre machiniste de Francis Picabia, 1918–1922,” *Bulletin de la*

Société de l'histoire de l'art français (Paris; March 1991), 255, on Picabia throwing himself into work in New York in order to forget the war.

88. Man Ray, from Schwarz, "Interview with Man Ray," 90.

89. Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories of Pre-Dada," 258. It is unclear why Picabia was not court-martialed, since neurasthenia, particularly when not related to combat, would hardly have been held to be a viable excuse for desertion, especially by the French army which tended to interpret war neurosis as malingering (the British were less harsh and tended to interpret it as a legitimate disability).

90. Picabia's friend Georges Herbiet, a.k.a. "Christian," describes Picabia's drug abuse in a manuscript entitled "Souvenirs," written in 1967; see especially his section "La drogue," where he recounts a later Picabia taking Christian's own box of cocaine and never returning it. Yves Poupard-Lieussou Papers, Special Collections, J. Paul Getty Museum; box 7, folder 2.

91. This is Christian's term in *ibid.*

92. Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life*, 2d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); cited by Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* (Fall 1992), 21.

93. Gleizes was posted to the front lines in August 1914; he was demobilized in 1915 and by 1916 was in New York; I thank the Service de Santé des Armées for this information; let-

ter of August 27, 2001. He wrote to Walter Pach in 1915 from the front to describe the "horrifying lie" of the war; letter dated May 16, 1915, from Toul, France, in the Arensberg Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art; cited by Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, 176. Gleizes's discharge was apparently due to Juliette Roche's intervention; impressed by his pacifism and resistance to the war in principle, Roche then married him just after his discharge in August of 1915; see Burke, "Recollecting Dada: Juliette Roche," 552. Roche's politicization, as described by Burke, contrasts strongly with the political passivity of Duchamp and his New York Dada colleagues (of Man Ray, after he moved away from anarchism, at least). Also of note is Roche's impatience with the male artists' (especially Picabia's) immaturity and self-absorption in the face of the war; see 567.

94. Camfield, *Francis Picabia* (1970), 25–27.

95. I am grateful to Françoise Forster-Hahn for stressing this point to me.

96. Arp is quoted without a source by Buffet-Picabia in "Some Memories of Pre-Dada," 264.

97. This is my rather crude and literal translation of Picabia's poem. The French text was published in 391, no. 7 (August 1917), reprinted in Michel Sanouillet, ed., 391: *Revue publiée de 1917 à 1924 par Francis Picabia* (Paris: Terrain Vague, 1960), 54.

98. Ring, "New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity," 21–22.

99. Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (1963; Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), 49.

100. Francis Naumann discusses the genesis and meaning of this painting (which is sometimes reproduced with the truncated title *A.D. MCMXIV*) in *New York Dada*; see 79.

101. Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, 76.

102. See Antliff's thorough discussion of this period of Man Ray's career in *Anarchist Modernism*, 73–94; and Francis Naumann's important earlier essay, "Man Ray and the Ferrer Center: Art and Anarchy in the Pre-Dada Period," *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 14 (1985), 10–30. I am indebted to Nancy Ring who, on reading an earlier draft of this chapter, encouraged me to look more closely at Man Ray's links to anarchism and provided me with a wealth of difficult-to-find materials.

103. I have asked Man Ray's niece, the photographer Naomi Savage, about this; she noted that she never heard him speak of the war at all (in a discussion in April 2002 in Princeton, New Jersey).

104. On Wolff, see Naumann, "Man Ray and the Ferrer Center," 21.

105. Lacroix's poem reads as follows:

Flag—speckled with the blood of
nations,
You are an intended symbol of
courage. . . .
Rag-flag. While we simple soldiers must
forward to slay our brothers—

To our doom. . . .

Fire! . . .

— we kill them all —

Not one is left, but those commanding

Our own kin lie stretched right and

left. . . .

there is no end in sight.

In Alfred Kreymborg, "Man Ray and Adon La Croix, Economists: They Live on Twenty-Five Dollars a Month and Enjoy It," *Morning Telegraph*, March 14, 1915, 7; this heartfelt if somewhat clunky poem (she was not a native English speaker), accompanied by a sketch of Man Ray's war painting *War (A.D.MCMXIV)*, was also published in Lacroix, *A Book of Divers [sic] Writings by Adon Lacroix* (Ridgefield, N.J.: Designed and published by Man Ray, 1915), n.p.

106. Schwarz, "Interview with Man Ray," 94.

107. Man Ray had also contributed a crude but effective anticapitalist cover for the August 1914 issue of *Mother Earth* 9, no. 6. This cover is comprised of a monster whose maw is composed of "capitalism" on one side and "government" on the other, tearing a human figure labeled "humanity" from limb to limb.

108. Bellows and Henri, typical of the radical left, were in principle against the war; Bellows, nonetheless, attempted to enlist; he volunteered for service in the Tank Corps in 1917 but was never sent abroad. On Bellows's attempts to enlist, and his 1918 series of war images, see Glenn C. Peck and Gordon K. Allison, introduction to *George Bellows and the*

War Series of 1918 (New York: Hirschl and Adler Galleries, 1983), 9; on Henri's anarchism, see William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 179–182.

109. Arthur Hepburn, “New York City in War Time: The Dynamo That Provides the Energy upon Which the Great Struggle Depends,” *Vanity Fair* 9, no. 4 (December 1917), 51, 126.

110. L. L. Jones, “When Women Run Things: A Glimpse into a Feminine Future,” *Vanity Fair* 9, no. 5 (January 1918), 40.

111. Wanda Corn makes this point in her *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), xvi.

112. The July issue of *Vanity Fair* includes a number of photographs of these military marches and notes that “parades are almost daily occurrences” in the city streets; see Frederick James Gregg, “New York’s Unceasing Pageantry,” *Vanity Fair* 10, no. 5 (July 1918), 32–33, 80.

113. The first poster is from the archives of the Museum of the City of New York (#43.40.46). These archives, as well as those of the New-York Historical Society, hold a wealth of war-related imagery from the period from the mid teens to the end of the war in the fall of 1918, including posters, propagandistic photographs of women working in factories (filling in for conscripts and/or fabricating military clothing), recruiting stands, and sol-

diers parading with their “sweethearts” before departing for France. See especially the World War I file, New-York Historical Society. Newspapers from the period were also filled with war stories and propaganda; as my discussion of *Vanity Fair* below makes clear, the war was ubiquitous in magazines, from the more popular ones to small magazines such as *The Masses*. Even Gertrude Stein, American expatriate poet living in Paris and volunteer ambulance driver, published the poem “The Great American War Effort,” a more or less straightforward celebration of the U.S. war effort, in the June 1918 issue of *Vanity Fair* (10, no. 4), 31. Stein’s poem and her active role in the war effort once again emphasize that the inactivity of Duchamp, Picabia, and Man Ray would have been highly marked, to say the least.

114. John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), 247; cited by David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 68.

115. Kennedy, *Over Here*, 68. On the virulent anti-German sentiments and actions in the United States during the war, and the anti-German propaganda encouraged by the federal government in its attempt to generate support for direct U.S. involvement, see also Meirion and Susie Harries, *The Last Days of Innocence: America at War, 1917–1918* (New York: Random House, 1997), 293–297. Art Young, cartoonist for the radical socialist journal *The Masses*, made note of anti-German sentiment: “there was no hope for

the human race. . . . Everybody's brain was snapping. . . . Grandmothers (once gentle and kind) were now tearing around looking for Germans to hiss at and to stab if they said anything." Cited in Allen Churchill, *The Improper Bohemians: A Re-Creation of Greenwich Village in Its Heyday* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), 128.

116. The drawing, by Robert Minor, appeared in the July 1916 issue; it is reprinted in William O'Neill, ed., *Echoes of Revolt: The Masses 1911–1917* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1966), 285. Because of its open stance against the war, in 1917 several of the journal's editors and contributors were indicted for violating the Espionage Act; see Churchill, *The Improper Bohemians*, 138–140, and O'Neill, *Echoes of Revolt*, 22, 297–300. Some socialists, however, did support the war; see Kennedy, *Over Here*, 27.

117. On Crowninshield and *Vanity Fair* see Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 204.

118. Bergeret, "Exclamation Points—And Feminine Happiness," *Vanity Fair* 5, no. 2 (October 1915), 59.

119. See, for example, Frederick James Gregg, "American Artists and the War," *Vanity Fair* 10, no. 2 (April 1918), 47, 94; and Marcel Prévost, "United States and France," *Vanity Fair* 5, no. 6 (February 1916), 29–30.

120. These ads all appear in *Vanity Fair's* August 1917 issue. Some of the covers are frivolous, such as the May 1918 image of a

soldier using his bayonet to hold a tarpaulin over a pretty woman to keep her dry from a rainstorm (with an issue of *Vanity Fair* coming out of his rucksack). Others are more aggressively propagandistic, if also in a humorous vein—such as the December 1918 cover, published, of course, after the armistice, including an array of soldiers covering it with the text "There's a Merry Christmas for the Kaiser!"

121. Anonymous, "Mars and the Magazines," *Rogue*, March 15, 1915, 4. *Rogue* was the brainchild of Louise Norton, "Dame Rogue," with whom the Picabias lived during part of their stay in New York. The "Mars" article continues in this humorous tone: "At the start most people were either for the Turks or Germans, or for the English, French, Russians, Belgians, Servians, Montenegrins, etc. As there were very few Turks in this country and too many Germans, most of us were supposed to be for the Allies. As the matter stands to-day, probably very few people care one way or the other. / The War is more monotonous than all the Peaces in the world put together" (4–5). This piece is immediately followed by an imaginary play in which a soldier is simultaneously condemned to the gallows and promoted by the military powers-that-be; this spoof also attributes newly discovered channels on the planet Mars to German entrenchments (5). A later issue of *Rogue* (August 15, 1915) includes a cartoon captioned "Kaveman Kultur" (3), drawing on while also lampooning the virulent anti-German sentiments in the United States at the time.

122. Southard gave a public lecture for the Society of Independent Artists in 1917 on Duchamp's supposedly schizophrenic tendencies, called "Are Cubists Insane?" On the lecture and on Southard's 1916 notes on a conversation with Duchamp, see Frederick P. Gay, *The Open Mind: Elmer Ernest Southard 1876–1920* (Chicago: Normandie House, 1938), 252–253, 315–316. See also Southard's *Shell-Shock and Other Neuro-Psychiatric Problems, Presented in Five Hundred and Eighty-Nine Case Histories, from the War Literature, 1914–1918* (Boston: W. M. Leonard, 1919). Southard, the head of the Boston Psychopathic Hospital, had been Walter Arensberg's classmate in college. At the Arensbergs' he would routinely analyze dreams for the salon participants; this is mentioned in Beatrice Wood's diary, Archives of American Art, roll 1236, entries in January and February; see also Nathan G. Hale, Jr., *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917–1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 14. Walter Arensberg's library included psychoanalytic texts, including a number by Freud, William James, Carl Jung, W. H. R. Rivers, and others; I am very grateful to Naomi Sawelson-Gorse for making available to me the Arensberg book collection list, formerly at the Francis Bacon Library, Claremont, California.
123. The phrase "worn out" is in English in the original; in Duchamp, *Affect/Marcel*, 70.
124. Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 169; on the drug use of the Baroness, Mina Loy, and Dodge, see also 234.
125. Grosz's letter is cited in Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 101; Kirchner's comment is cited in *ibid.*, 109–110.
126. Caroline Jones notes that Picabia's *Fille* might date earlier, to 1913; see "The Sex of the Machine," 176, n. 28. Generally, however, it is dated according to its appearance in 291 in 1915.
127. This version of Kirchner's story, and the rather coy term "irregular," is from Sherwin Simmons, "Ernst Kirchner's Streetwalkers: Art, Luxury, and Immorality in Berlin, 1913–1916," *Art Bulletin* 82, no. 1 (March 2000), 132.
128. Doherty, "See: *We Are All Neurasthenics!*," 105–106.
129. Kirchner's severed right hand reminds the student of World War I of the Kaiser himself with his shriveled left hand, often seen as one cause of his deep insecurity and endlessly anxious thirst for world power.
130. Cited in Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 109.
131. For an extended discussion of Kirchner's misogyny in the broader context of Die Brücke and the *femme fatale*, see Carol Duncan's classic essay "Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting" (1973), reprinted in her *The Aesthetics of Power: Essays in Critical Art History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 81–108.
132. Freud, "Thoughts on War and Death," 305.

133. The manuscript of the poem is found among the Arensberg Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art; it is translated by Francis Naumann and Chantal Combes in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 68.
134. Camfield notes that the “girl born without a mother” is “reversible to a woman as a machine that serves man”; in *Francis Picabia* (1970), 87. See also Duchamp’s broken springs in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 65, and in Linda Henderson, *Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), plate 150. Duchamp calls these “des mèches étonnantes,” or “astounding fuses,” but the coiled scribble looks a great deal like Picabia’s broken spring.
135. Francis Picabia, *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère* (Lausanne: Imprimeries Réunies, 1918); the book is dedicated to “all neurological doctors in general and especially to the doctors Collins (New York), Dupré (Paris), Brunnschweiller (Lausanne)”; my translation. I am grateful to Caroline Jones for pointing this publication out to me.
136. David Hopkins makes an interesting point about Picabia’s dependence on his wife, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, and his mistress, Germaine Everling, during this period. Biographical information points not to his being a domineering or chauvinistic lover but, rather, a frantic and needy one (though, of course, this is not to dismiss the misogynistic effects of his neediness). See Hopkins, “Questioning Dada’s Potency: Picabia’s ‘La Sainte
- Vierge’ and the Dialogue with Duchamp,” *Art History* 15, no. 3 (September 1992), 331, n. 19.
137. In spite (or perhaps because) of the obvious, and sustaining, importance of the homosocial to the maintenance of war ideology, the homophobia of the military is legendary. In the case of World War I, it spurts forth in little bursts from the writing even of the most otherwise sympathetic characters, such as Robert Graves, who, in his war memoir, describes his dear friend Dick having propositioned a corporal and having subsequently been arrested. Far from being sympathetic, Graves is virulent in his condemnation: “This news nearly finished me. I decided that Dick had been driven out of his mind by the War. There was madness in the family, I knew. . . . Well, with so much slaughter about, it would be easy to think of him as dead.” In *Good-Bye to All That* (1929), rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 171.
138. Fussell notes that soldiers bathing is a key “set-piece scene in almost every memory of the war”; *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 299.
139. From the summary of Picabia’s life, “Chronologie,” in Yves Poupard-Lieussou Papers, Special Collections, J. Paul Getty Museum; box 4, folder 5.
140. And, if one particular view of avant-gardism is sustained, along with his avant-gardism in toto. See Benjamin Buchloh’s essay “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Re-

gression" (1981), reprinted in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art after Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 107–134, which argues that the return to representational painting on the part of Picabia and others in the late teens and 1920s betrayed the radical critique of the readymades (and hence betrayed the radicality of the historical avant-gardes such as Dada).

141. Charles Delvert in his journal, January 27, 1916; quoted in Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 152–153. Theweleit in *Male Bodies: Psychoanalyzing the White Terror*, 357. Bourke, *Dis-membering the Male*, 31. Bourke (33) cites at length the incredible statistics of how many soldiers were maimed, mutilated, and killed during World War I; in the French army, for example, there were five casualties for every nine men sent out—Duchamp and Picabia would likely have been maimed or killed had they gone to the front.

142. Mark Seltzer, "Wound Culture: Trauma in the Pathological Public Sphere," *October* 80 (Spring 1997), 3, 25. Romy Golan discusses at length the legacy of what Seltzer calls "wound culture" in relation to French art in her excellent book *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics in France between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

143. Seltzer, "Wound Culture," 11.

144. Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," 152.

145. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 75.

146. On Hartley's homoerotic renderings of German soldiers in *The Warriors* and other paintings from this period (when he was living in Berlin), see Patricia McDonnell, "'Essentially Masculine': Marsden Hartley, Gay Identity, and the Wilhelmine German Military," *Art Journal* 56, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 62–68. Marcia Brennan interprets the photograph as Stieglitz's deliberate attempt to connect the gender-confusing forms of *Fountain* with the homoerotic theme of Hartley's painting (Hartley, who was gay, was, she argues, "openly attracted to the soldiers and reveled in displays such as military parades"), which would place an interesting twist on Paul Franklin's more instrumental reading of the "gay" context of *Fountain* (in his essay "Object Choice"). See Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 58. I am not sure I buy Brennan's imputation of intention on Stieglitz's part; at any rate, he was not likely *consciously* to have admitted his feelings about Hartley's homosexuality, nor to have conflated it with Duchamp's male/female (essentially heterosexual) gender plays. But the connection between *Fountain* and Hartley's military imagery in the photograph is interesting. Wanda Corn also discusses Stieglitz's photograph and Hartley's painting in *The Great American Thing*, 76–77.

147. This note was originally published in *Instead*, February 1948; reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 72.

148. That the trace is the basis of modern Western concepts and practices of represen-

- tation is made clear if we look at the eighteenth-century physiognotrace, an apparatus developed in 1786 by Gilles Louis Chrétien for sketching a person's portrait silhouette by tracing with a pencil the outlines of her shadow as cast upon a translucent piece of paper by a strategically placed light source. A version of this apparatus appears in Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 40.
149. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 67, 68, 85.
150. This argument and the critique of the patriarchal foundations of Cartesianism was introduced by Simone de Beauvoir in her epochal *The Second Sex* (1949), trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953); see especially xxviii.
151. Man Ray, cited by Francis Naumann, "Man Ray 1908–1921: From an Art in Two Dimensions to the Higher Dimension of Ideas," in *Perpetual Motif: The Art of Man Ray* (New York: Abbeville Press; Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1988), 77.
152. An early print of the photograph is labeled "Femme" at the bottom; this and the "Homme" version are both illustrated and discussed in Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," 148–149. According to Francis Naumann, the handwriting on the print labeled "Femme" is not Man Ray's; he conjectures that it may have been Tzara who labeled the photograph with this alternatively gendered title when he entered the photograph in a 1921 exhibition in Paris. See Naumann, "Man Ray, 1908–1921," 86, n. 35.
153. Claude Bragdon, *A Primer of Higher Space (the Fourth Dimension), to Which Is Added "Man the Square, a Higher Space Parable"* (Rochester: Manas Press, 1913), pl. 12; cited by Linda Henderson in *The Fourth Dimension and Non-Euclidean Geometry in Modern Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 200.
154. Duchamp in Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 40. See Duchamp's diagram of the projection of the third and fourth dimensions in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 89.
155. *Femelle* has the connotation in French of "bitch" or female animal.
156. Duchamp, in a letter to Breton of October 4, 1954, published in *Medium*, no. 4 (January 1955); cited by Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, 270, n. 100.
157. Duchamp on "apparition" in his notes collected as *À l'infinifit*, reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 85; on the link between apparitions and mirrors, see David Hopkins's interesting analysis in "Men before the Mirror," where he notes Duchamp's "deconstruction of any form of stable or stereotypical subject position, as mediated by photographic, textual, and mirror inversions" (312). On uniforms and gas castings, see Duchamp's note from *The Green Box* (notes

for the *Large Glass*, written c. 1915–1920 and published in 1934), reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 51.

158. From *The Green Box*, reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 51. The malic molds bear a resemblance to Man Ray's *Sec*, a painting of a hollowed out bottle, viewed as if in cut-away, from 1917. The bottle, dry as it is, also has a phallic shape and thus gives the sense of a dried up (emasculated) male organ. See Naumann and Venn, eds., *Making Mischief*, 84.

159. Letter to Jean Crotti, July 8, 1918, cited in Duchamp, *Affectt/Marcel*, 54. The *Shadows* image and a picture of the *Sculpture for Traveling* in situ are illustrated in Anne D'Haumont and Kynaston McShine, eds., *Marcel Duchamp* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 285, 286.

160. Raymond Duchamp-Villon as cited in Zilczer, "In the Face of War," 144; my translation (note that *corps* is the word for "body" as well for "corpse" and "corps" in French). Duchamp, *Affectt/Marcel*, 62; in a slightly later letter to Ettie Stettheimer, he notes regretfully that Buenos Aires is boring and quiet—there are "pas de sorties" (no parties) in the evening (64).

161. On Duchamp-Villon's illness and death see Hamilton and Agee, *Raymond Duchamp-Villon 1876–1918*, 107. In *Le silence des peintres*, Dagen cites Duchamp's notes and his comment, at the head of this section, about compulsory military service,

connecting these ideas (for the first time, as far as I know) to Duchamp's relationship to the war and his concern for his brothers at the front. Dagen proposes the hypothesis that the *Large Glass* "metaphorically conserves the trace of this event [Duchamp-Villon's death]" (266).

162. He does mention, in a November 15 letter to Walter Pach, Raymond's long illness: "It must have been a terrible agony after two years of suffering"; in Duchamp, *Affectt/Marcel*, 67. Duchamp also, in a postscript to an October 26, 1918, letter to Jean Crotti, writes, "I cannot believe it, so much the less since I have not seen him for such a long time and he was in good health then. I do hope the family bears up!!"; cited in Francis Naumann, "Affectueusement, Marcel," *Archives of American Art Journal* 22, no. 4 (1982), 12. Two additional typically brief references occur in a brief postscript in a November 8, 1918 letter to his friend Ettie Stettheimer, "very bad news that you no doubt already know: my brother Raymond is dead. . . . This is a terrible thing for my family and for me," and in a letter to Louise Arensberg of January 7, 1919, where he notes that he hears little from anyone except "of my family a little . . . because of the death of my brother"; both cited in *Affectt/Marcel*, 65, 69. At the bottom of the latter letter he remarks on the deaths of Morton Schamberg and Apollinaire: "I ask myself where this wave of death came from. . . . It's devastating." Remarkably, it's as if Duchamp was determined to ignore the fact of war and its obvious role in "cette vague de mort"! (Both Apollinaire and Schamberg died of the flu, but, in Apollinaire's case, he had been

severely weakened by a head wound from trench combat; and the flu, of course, would not have devastated Europe and the United States had not many young men been weakened by time at the front.)

163. As Calvin Tomkins argues convincingly, Duchamp's way of dealing with his brother's death "seemed . . . as inadequate" as his general response to the war: "It was not really possible to confront 'with folded arms,' as he had said, a war that decimated his own generation of Frenchmen. By doing so (trying anyway), Duchamp isolated himself from the life of his time, but that course . . . would prove to be in keeping with his own long-term trajectory"; Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: A Biography*, 208–209.

164. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 25.

165. Léger, cited by Dagen in *Le silence des peintres*, 263; Wood, from *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1992), 23. Tomkins gives another side to Duchamp's complex, mythologized personality in his biography, recounting tales of Duchamp's seductiveness and numerous affairs with unnamed women; he discusses Duchamp's legendary coldness as well. While the two set of characteristics seem incompatible, they are both woven into myths about Duchamp from this period; Tomkins, *Marcel Duchamp: A Biography*, 176–177.

166. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Love—Chemical Relationship," *Little Review* 5, no. 2 (June 1918), 58–59.

167. As reported by Louis Bouché in the March 13, 1963, interview with W. E. Woofenden.

168. George Biddle, *An American Artist's Story* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), 138; my emphasis. The portrait was painted on celluloid, which Biddle notes was "*par excellence* her medium" (139). In this sense, the portrait is a kind of still "movie" of Duchamp, but also a transparent picture with its own kind of ephemerality or absence. Gammel discusses the Baroness's relationship with Biddle at some length, noting her crush on him and her sense of loss when he enlisted and went to the front; see *Baroness Elsa*, 201.

169. Letter to Walter Pach, November 15, 1918, in Duchamp, *Affectt/Marcel*, 68.

170. I am indebted to Louis Cicotello, Professor of Fine Arts at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, for reminding me of this piece and its relationship to the timing of Duchamp's having heard about his brother's and Apollinaire's deaths.

171. I am citing Duchamp from Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 61. I discuss the dual authorship of the piece at greater length in my book *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 139–141.

172. Man Ray makes reference, too, to a group of works consisting of "papers arranged in the form of a portrait but without any features"; in *Self Portrait*, 62. Of course, there are extant portraits of Duchamp and others from

the group that give a likeness, such as Florine Stettheimer's fantastic 1923 portrait, in which Duchamp's head floats in space, surrounded by an auratic halo, and the Baroness's portrait of c. 1919, wherein Duchamp's visage is abstracted into orange and green planes amidst a bicycle wheel and other pastel and collage accoutrements. I discuss the former image in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, 119–120.

173. Crotti, from a 1916 statement to *World Magazine*, as quoted in William A. Camfield and Jean-Hubert Martin, eds., *Tabu Dada: Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp, 1915–1922* (Bern, Switzerland: Kunsthalle Bern, 1983), 12.

174. This sketch and another, more complete (and better-known) one are illustrated, along with two views of the sculpture, in Camfield and Martin, eds., *Tabu Dada*, 93. The book notes that the skull drawing, entitled *Herr Professor*, was “according to Suzanne Duchamp a caricature of Marcel Duchamp” (see 89).

175. Francis Naumann argues that these “tapering conelike elements . . . may have been incorporated as conscious allusions to specific theosophical beliefs” in *New York Dada*, 159.

176. I discuss Dreier and Duchamp's relationship and their correspondence at greater length in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, 75.

177. An anonymous review, signed “The Gilder,” from June 16, 1921, newspaper un-

known, found in Dreier's scrapbook and cited by Francis Naumann in *New York Dada*, 159; my emphasis.

178. Two of these are illustrated in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 64; per Man Ray, he dates them 1917. Duchamp's *Rotary Glass Plates* are generally dated 1920, suggesting that Man Ray's dating may be off (and other sources, such as Naumann and Venn, eds., *Making Mischief*, hold to the 1920 date for the photograph); however, Man Ray's account of this photo session does note that this is an early version of the piece which, as noted below, self-destructs, suggesting that 1917 may be the correct date.

179. Man Ray, *Self Portrait*, 62.

180. D. H. Lawrence to Mark Gertler in a letter of September 27, 1916, cited in Cork, *A Bitter Truth*, 137. Leed, *No Man's Land*, 21.

181. The legends are repeated (as fact) throughout tourist pamphlets from the Verdun area monuments; see, for example, *Mémorial de Verdun*, the pamphlet produced by the official war museum in Fleury-devant-Douaumont, just north of the city of Verdun, 3d ed. (Published by Comité National du Souvenir de Verdun, no date given [c. 2000?]). On the continuing presence of World War I in the French consciousness, see also Sherman, *The Construction of Memory in Interwar France*.

182. Freud, “The Uncanny” (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 17, ed. James

Strachey, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), 245.

3 ... Dysfunctional Machines / Dysfunctional Subjects

1. Duchamp-Villon's letter is translated by Judith Zilczer in "In the Face of War: The Last Works of Raymond Duchamp-Villon," *Art Bulletin* 65, no. 1 (1983), 144. Dorothy Richardson, *Revolving Lights* (London: Duckworth, 1923), 78; these are the stream-of-consciousness thoughts and arguments of the main character, Miriam, a feminist who wanders the streets of London.

2. René Descartes, "Sixth Meditation," in Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 162–163; Julien Offray de la Mettrie, *L'homme machine* (Leyden, 1748), trans. Gertrude C. Bussey and M. W. Calkins as *Man a Machine* (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1961), 128.

3. Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 1. See also Mark Seltzer's analysis of the body/machine nexus, and its relation to twentieth-century American culture in particular, in his book *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

4. See Peter Wollen, "Cinema, Americanism, the Robot," *New Formations* 8 (Summer 1989), 7–34; Thomas P. Hughes, *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Tech-*

nological Enthusiasm 1870–1970 (New York: Viking, 1989), chapter 6, "Taylorismus + Fordismus = Amerikanismus," 249–294; and Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), chapter 1, "Américanisme," 43–90.

5. Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (1911), republished in the collected volume *Scientific Management*, with a foreword by Harlow S. Person (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), 63; Antonio Gramsci cites Taylor using the term "trained gorillas" in his essay "Americanism and Fordism," in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 302.

6. Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism," 302.

7. It is worth noting that this is only one of many phallic pieces Man Ray made during this period (such as *By Itself II*, 1918), but *Priapus Paperweight* is the most literal. As with many of the New York Dada works, it is not clear where the original version of the piece is (or whether it has been lost); Man Ray refabricated it as an edition of eight in 1966 (this later version is described as being "silver" by Arturo Schwarz, but surely it could not have been pure silver and more likely was chrome-plated like other examples of Man Ray's refabricated readymades from the 1960s, such as *New York*, 1917/1966). On the *Priapus Paperweight* see Schwarz, *New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (Munich: Städtische

- Galerie im Lenbachhaus; Tübingen: Kunsthalle Tübingen; Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1973), 115, fig. 82; caption information, 220.
8. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–1930), trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 26, 27, 44.
 9. Simmel, from *The Philosophy of Money* (1900), cited in Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30.
 10. Picabia, as cited in the [anonymous] article “French Artists Spur On an American Art,” *New York Tribune*, October 24, 1915, section 4, pp. 2–3; reprinted in Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), 131–132.
 11. John I. H. Baur, “The Machine and the Subconscious: Dada in America,” *Magazine of Art* 44, no. 6 (October 1951), 233, 235. Barbara Zabel argues that the machine images are recuperative, “constitut[ing] a process of recovery—the recovery of the human within the realm of the machine”; see her “The Constructed Self: Gender and Portraiture in Machine-Age America,” in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 25.
 12. Dickran Tashjian, *Skyscraper Primitives: Dada and the American Avant-Garde 1910–1925* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975), 7.
 13. Willard Bohn, “Picabia’s ‘Mechanical Expression’ and the Demise of the Object,” *Art Bulletin* 92, no. 4 (December 1985), 673; Bohn is writing specifically of Picabia’s work. See also William Innes Homer, “Picabia’s *Jeune fille américaine dans l’état de nudité* and Her Friends,” *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 1 (March 1975), 110–115.
 14. Barbara Zabel, “The Machine and New York Dada,” in Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, eds., *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 283; see also Zabel’s “The Constructed Self,” where she argues that Picabia’s notorious *Jeune fille américaine dans l’état de nudité* (1915) is “regressive” and “signals [his response to] a double threat, the threat of control by the machine and by the liberated female” (25, 26–27). See also David Hopkins, “Questioning Dada’s Potency: Picabia’s ‘La Sainte Vierge’ and the Dialogue with Duchamp,” *Art History* 15, no. 3 (September 1992), 317–333; Hopkins argues that the machine/women works relate to Guillaume Apollinaire’s *Les mamelles de Tirésias* where the leading character announces her feminism and metamorphosis into a man; this newly androgynous female type transgresses categories and is linked to the ambiguous human/machine relation.
 15. Nancy Ring, “New York Dada and the Crisis of Masculinity: Man Ray, Francis Picabia, and Marcel Duchamp in the United States, 1913–1921,” Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1991; Caroline Jones, “The Sex of the Machine: Mechanomorphic Art,

New Women, and Francis Picabia's *Neurasthenic Cure*," in Caroline Jones and Peter Galison, eds., *Picturing Science, Producing Art* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 145–180.

16. This notion of projection is linked to an important, and highly strategic, feminist model of critique that pivots around the notion of fetishism. For example, relating to my argument here, Celia Lury draws on the feminist film theory of Mary Ann Doane to argue that the traumatic experience of modernity "is premised upon and produces a masculine subjectivity. It produces both the wish for a superhuman body endowed with new organs, and the denial of the body through the projection of contingency and embodiment on to the white woman or the racial other, the primitive." Lury, *Prosthetic Culture: Photography, Memory and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 100–101.

17. As noted in the previous chapter, Picabia dedicated his book *Poèmes et dessins de la fille née sans mère* (Lausanne: Imprimeries Réunies, 1918) to his doctors, including a "Dr. Collins in New York."

18. Collins, "The Etiology and Treatment of Neurasthenia: An Analysis of 333 Cases," *Medical Record* 55, no. 12 (March 25, 1899), 416, 415; this is cited by Jones in her impeccably researched essay, "The Sex of the Machine," 162.

19. Jones, "The Sex of the Machine," 171. As her younger sister, I am not unused to pursuing openings Caroline Jones has provided;

and yet I often take the opening in a different direction. We differ sharply, for example, in our readings of Duchamp's work. Jones argues that Picabia's "hermaphroditic solution . . . left intact the misogynist trajectory of Dada and Surrealism," which she identifies most closely with Duchamp's *Large Glass* (171). It will be clear that I view Duchamp's mechanosexual diagram pieces such as the *Large Glass* as enacting precisely the kind of leaky hermaphroditism—or compromised masculinity—that Jones proposes as central to Picabia's *Fille née sans mère* drawings and poems.

20. See Zabel, "The Machine and New York Dada," 283; and Bohn, "Picabia's 'Mechanical Expression' and the Demise of the Object," 673. This humanist approach is linked to the attempt to reclaim individual creative power for artists, a fundamentally misplaced effort in my view (one gains more by seeking to understand how individualism was compromised than by trying to recuperate it). Furthermore, such attempts to reclaim individualism become absurd when applied to Dada, which fundamentally resists them.

21. See Francis Naumann, "Style with a Smile," in Naumann and Venn, eds., *Making Mischief*, 17; Naumann is certainly not the only one to make this argument, and, as we have seen, Man Ray, for one, promoted the idea of humor and irony as central to New York Dada.

22. Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body" (1934), no translator cited, in Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter, eds., *Incorporations*,

Zone 6 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; New York: Zone, 1992), 461.

23. The celebratory view, of course, would be epitomized by the futurists or by characters such as Ezra Pound, who noted in his 1927–1930 essay “Machine Art”: “modern man can live and should live in his cities and machine shops with the same kind of swing and exuberance that the savage is supposed to have in his forest.” Reprinted in Pound, *Machine Art and Other Writings: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years*, ed. Maria Luisa Ardizzone (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 79. Pound, like Williams, had some interesting intellectual and personal conflicts with the Baroness; see Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), chap. 10, “The Poetic Feud of William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, and the Baroness,” 262–285.

24. In Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s autobiographical novel *Journey to the End of the Night*, his autobiographical persona visits Ford Industries’ Highland Park plant and describes this bodily dislocation as follows:

I saw some big squat buildings all of glass, . . . inside which you could see men moving, but hardly moving, as if they were struggling against something impossible. . . . And then all around me and above me as far as the sky, the heavy, composite, muffled roar of torrents of machines, hard, wheels obstinately turning, grinding, groaning, always on the point of breaking down, but never breaking down. . . .

Everything trembled in the enormous building, and we ourselves, from our ears to the soles of our feet, were gathered into this trembling, which came from the windows, the floor, and all the clanking metal, tremors that shook the whole building from top to bottom. We ourselves became machines, our flesh trembled in the furious din, it gripped us around our heads and in our bowels and rose up to the eyes in quick continuous jolts. . . .

All outside life must be done away with, made into steel, into something useful. We didn’t love it enough the way it was, that’s why. So it has to be made into an object, into something solid. The Regulations say so. . . .

[We] factory hands . . . were mere echoes and smells of machines, . . . lumps of flesh convulsed with vibrations.

Céline, *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932), trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: New Directions, 1983), 192, 193–194, 195.

25. The film also narrates the continuity between machine rationalization and the role of institutional or psychological rationalization, showing Chaplin’s inability to subordinate himself successfully to various authority figures (the factory boss, a department store manager, a police officer, etc.).

26. Gramsci, “Americanism and Fordism,” 303, 286, 297.

27. Gramsci notes: “The history of industrialism has always been a continuing struggle . . . against the element of ‘animal-

- ity' in man. It has been an uninterrupted, often painful and bloody process of subjugating natural (i.e. animal and primitive) instincts to new, more complex and rigid norms and habits of order, exactitude and precision" in industrial societies (ibid., 298).
28. Ibid., 303.
29. Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1902–1903), trans. Kurt H. Wolff, in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1950), 422. Paul Rosenfeld seconded Simmel's negative view of the machine/body conflation in Taylorism/Fordism, but from a romantic and nostalgic rather than Marxist position: "During a century and a half, the race of machines has been enslaving man and impoverishing his experience. . . . The mechanical use of the new implements . . . has harmed the human psyche. . . . The machine has turned men mechanical." Rosenfeld, *Port of New York* (1924; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 245–246. See also Stefan Zweig on the evils of Taylorism/Fordism and "the complete end of individuality" in his essay "The Monotonization of the World" (1925), no translator given, in Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 398; and Karen Lucic's discussion of Taylorism/Fordism in relation to art world politics from this period in *Charles Sheeler and the Cult of the Machine* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 77–79.
30. Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3.
31. Chaplin's *Modern Times* shows the ubiquity of surveillance, with a Big Brother factory owner watching his workers on a huge screen; and Gramsci notes how central it is to the success of the new industrial models in "Americanism and Fordism," 304. Michel Foucault, of course, identifies surveillance as the key trope of modernity itself: "Our society is one not of spectacle, but of surveillance. . . . the individual is carefully fabricated in [this structure of surveillance]." Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 217.
32. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "The Modest Woman," *Little Review* 7, no. 2 (July–August 1920), 38.
33. Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism," 310.
34. I am grateful to Marita Sturken for bringing this film to my attention. *The Crowd* exposes an ambivalence toward conformism that would flower into full-fledged antagonism in 1950s American culture, with the publications of books critical of the conformism of mass culture such as David Riesman, in collaboration with Reuel Denney and Nathan Glaser, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950).
35. Picabia, from his aphorisms, 391, no. 6 (New York; July 1917), 4; reprinted in Michel Sanouillet, ed., 391: *Revue publiée de 1917 à 1924 par Francis Picabia* (Paris: Terrain Vague, 1960), 52.

36. Gramsci, "Americanism and Fordism," 299, 300, 304. For Gramsci, it is specifically the supposed repression of "sexual instincts" in the trenches that leads to such damaging libertarianism; I would argue against this characterization, however. As should be clear from the previous chapter, I view the war—like industry—as encouraging the *sublimatory* processing of sexuality and rage and fear, rather than as demanding full repression. Gramsci continues further on, "It might seem that in this way [through assembly line rationalization of labor] the actual sexual function has been mechanized, but in reality we are dealing with the growth of a new form of sexual union, shorn of the bright and dazzling colour of the romantic tinsel typical of the petit bourgeois and the Bohemian layabout. The exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with the timed movements of production motions connected with a fully perfected automatism" (304).
37. Freytag-Loringhoven, letter to Peggy Vail [Guggenheim], c. August 1927, 9; cited by Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 229.
38. On the attribution of *God*, see chapter 2, note 23.
39. Roger Conover cites these two Cravan quotations in his introduction to "Arthur Cravan," in *4 Dada Suicides: Selected Texts of Arthur Cravan, Jacques Rigaut, Julien Torma, Jacques Vaché*, introduced by Roger Conover, Terry Hale, and Paul Lenti; trans. Terry Hale, Paul Lenti, and Iain White (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 27, 28; Haviland, "WE ARE LIVING IN THE AGE OF THE MACHINE," 291, nos. 7–8 (September-October 1915), 1.
40. 291, no. 9 (November 1915), center folio; my translation.
41. As Morton Schamberg's industrialist brother-in-law supposedly put it on seeing Schamberg's machine painting abstracted from a diagram of a stocking-making machine, "the goddamn thing wouldn't work." Cited in Abraham Davidson, *Early American Modernist Painting, 1910–1935* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 98. This blunt comment exposes the role of aesthetics and a particular kind of artistic production in removing the thing depicted (in this case a machine) from its useful function. It is precisely this kind of artistic production that is aligned with the process of sublimation.
42. Duchamp to Lawrence Steefel in a 1956 interview; cited in Steefel, "Marcel Duchamp and the Machine," in Anne D'Hamoncourt and Kynaston McShine, eds., *Marcel Duchamp* (1973; Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1989), 71.
43. On the typewriter and its effects, see Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines*, 10; and Katherine Hayles "Virtual Bodies and Electronic Signifiers," *October* 66 (Fall 1993), 70–71. Hayles extends the argument to address the psychic and phenomenological shift incurred by the rise of computer word processing.
44. Schwarz, *New York Dada*, 29.
45. Arnault Pierre calls him a "technicien b n vole" in his essay on Picabia's machine images, "Sources in dites pour l'oeuvre ma-

chiniste de Francis Picabia, 1918–1922,” *Bulletin de la Société de l’histoire de l’art français* (Paris; March 1991), 277–278.

46. See his comments in Pierre Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp* (1967), trans. Ron Padgett (New York: De Capo Press, 1979), 64. As *Little Review* editor Jane Heap put it: “There is a great new race of men in America: the Engineer. He has created a new mechanical world . . . he [must] make a union with the architect and artist”; in her “Machine Age Exposition,” *Little Review* (Spring supplement 1927), 36.

47. Léger recounted this story around 1957, quoted in Pontus Hultén, *The Machine as Seen at the End of the Mechanical Age* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1968), 140. In relation to this story, see Picabia’s *Âne* (Ass or Donkey), 1917, a rendering of a propeller published on the cover of *391*, no. 5 (April 1917).

48. Fernand Léger, “The Esthetics of the Machine: Manufactured Objects, Artisan and Artist,” lecture given at College of France before International Association of Students, published in *Little Review* 9, no. 3 (Spring 1923), 45–49; and 9, no. 4 (Autumn-Winter 1923–1924), 55–58.

49. This formalism reached its apogee in the 1934 Museum of Modern Art exhibition “Machine Art,” organized by Alfred Barr, which included only machines and machine-made appliances and tools, documented in the catalogue through pristine, black and

white modernist photographs; see *Machine Art* (1934), sixtieth-anniversary edition (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Harry N. Abrams, 1994).

50. In Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 47, 48.

51. See my discussion of the refabrication of the readymades in *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 95–96.

52. Duchamp in an unpublished interview with Harriet, Sidney, and Carroll Janis in 1953, cited in D’Harnoncourt and McShine, eds., *Marcel Duchamp*, 281.

53. Although early typewriter operators were not as ubiquitously female as they became in the later modern and postmodern economies, the white-collar worker (per Vidor’s *The Crowd*) is still feminized through his rationalization.

54. See Naomi Sawelson-Gorse and Molly Nesbit, “Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg,” in Martha Buskirk and Mignon Nixon, eds., *The Duchamp Effect* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 141; the result of Duchamp’s first typing effort, a note to Walter Arensberg written in a mixture of English and French, is reproduced there.

55. Letter of the Baroness to Jane Heap, c. 1922, from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson

- and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin: see typescript pp. 3–9. I am indebted to Irene Gammel for pointing me toward this source.
56. As per Charles Baudelaire's comment, "What is art? Prostitution," which will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter; Baudelaire, *Fusées* (c. 1855), published posthumously; see *Écrits intimes* (Paris: Éditions du point du jour, 1946), 8.
57. Letter to Jane Heap, c. 1922, from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript p. 7.
58. On her anti-Semitic comments, see chapter 1, note 59. Although she privileges herself as "teutonic" in this case, in her letters to Barnes written from Berlin after she had left the United States in 1924, she is extremely harsh about the "teutonic" mentality she confronts again in war-torn Germany. See the letters in the Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2; in particular the one beginning "Sweetest Djuna" and dated July 12, 1924 or 1925, which states, "The Germans—the pure Teuton—is *past!*"
59. Arturo Schwarz, *Almanacco Dada* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), 121.
60. The pieces eventually found their way into Mark Kelman's collection; see Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 323.
61. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Subjoyride," from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript pp. 96–97. She also mentions many other brands of commodities and associates them with the actress-celebrity Mary Garden, whom, she notes, "cost the golden key \$1-500-000 smile" (Garden appeared frequently in advertisements). The poem compresses commodity culture emphatically into machine imagery: "Famous fain . . . kept antiseptic with gold dust rapid transit ——— It has raised 3 generations of mince-piston-rings-pie."
62. Picabia's "Fleur Coupée" is collected in Picabia, *Poèmes et dessins*, 20. My translations, assisted by the generous corrections of Solange Schnall.
63. "Hermaphrodisme," in *ibid.*, 67; see also the drawing *Mâle*, with an infinity-like figure eight labeled "Hermaphrodisme" and "fantaisiste," 47. Would that I had the time and space here to analyze this whole array of fantastic poetry and imagery; each image reiterates my points in different ways.
64. From the poem "Pape religieux" (Religious pope), in *ibid.*, 9. As noted in chapter 2, accounts of Picabia's activities during this period vary, but most give some attention to his alcohol and drug use and womanizing.
65. The *Jeune fille* is printed as a huge image right in the center of the 291 issue, which opens as a foldout to reveal the spark plug. Its aggressive, even macho size increases the

sense of the young girl as being in some ways a self-portrait of Picabia. She is not demure. The sense of gender ambiguity is sustained in the contextualization of *Américaine*; the remainder of the issue of 391 includes Picabia's sketch of a man in a beret facing Picabia with the tantalizing word "délucieux" and a text by unidentified author that reads "Cette époque n'est qu'une femme malade" (this epoch is nothing but a sick woman).

66. Wanda Corn discusses electricity and the city in "Américanisme," and Linda Henderson is currently writing a book on the topic of electricity and modernity.

67. Zabel, "The Constructed Self," 27; Homer, "Picabia's *Jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* and Her Friends," 110–115.

68. William Camfield, who has written extensively on Picabia, illustrates what looks to be a page from a scrap album showing Picabia's various cars from 1911 to 1922, carefully labeled in Picabia's handwriting (at the top of the page are the words "Une passion!"). See Camfield, *Francis Picabia: His Art, Life and Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), fig. 9 (unpaginated).

69. Note that Picabia also famously depicted Alfred Stieglitz as a broken camera and Marius de Zayas as a failed electrical circuit that is explicitly feminized by the link between an apparent turbine/electrical wires and a woman's corset, from which a thread connects to a spindle—connecting old and new (masculine and feminine) modes of technol-

ogization. These are illustrated in *ibid.*, figs. 107, 109. Marcia Brennan argues that, with the Stieglitz image, Picabia is commenting on Stieglitz's cultural impotence; see her *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), 44–47.

70. The painting has been lost and is available to view only as a black and white photograph; see Naumann and Venn, eds., *Making Mischief*, 83.

71. Man Ray in *Self Portrait* (1963; Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), 65.

72. Duchamp, notes from the *Green Box* (1934), reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, ed. Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (New York: Da Capo, 1973), 39. Duchamp's insistence on her virginity, given his obsession with male failure in the notes, can be seen as commenting on rather than simply repeating the fixation in Western culture on virginity as the sign of a woman's purity and desirability, and the fantasized "virginal" American girl in particular; I address virginity at greater length below. A fascinating description of Duchamp's glass is laid out as a first-person narration on the part of the character "Victor" (based on Duchamp) to a woman friend "Patricia" (based on Beatrice Wood) in his friend Henri-Pierre Roché's unfinished novel based on Duchamp's life, published as *Victor (Marcel Duchamp)* (Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1977), 69–73.

73. Notably, masturbation was considered to be a chief cause of neurasthenia in the medical discourses of this period. In 1912, Dr. Bernard S. Talmey noted that “repeated orgasm . . . must lead to nervous disorders,” and “as a matter of fact [such] . . . excesses are followed by malaise, nervousness, mental depression, lassitude, fatigue, satiety, heaviness in the head, disposition to sleep, dullness of intellect, indisposition to exercise, want of decision, regrets and ill-humor, and the other symptoms of general neurasthenia,” in *Neurasthenia Sexualis: A Treatise on Sexual Impotence in Men and in Women, for Physicians and Students of Medicine* (New York: Practitioners’ Publishing, 1912), 74–75; Jones cites this text at some length and must be credited for noting a number of interesting sources on neurasthenia in relation to Picabia’s work in particular, in her “The Sex of the Machine,” 163, and notes 44, 46–49 on pp. 177–178. David Joselit also discusses the relationship between discourses of neurasthenia and Duchamp’s work in his *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910–1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 133–137.
74. Notes from the *Green Box* (1934), reprinted in *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 39.
75. The bride’s electricity is linked by Duchamp to “cinematic blossoming,” bringing to bear the whole question of mass media in addition to machine culture proper; see *ibid.*, 42.
76. *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 45. Such claims could be interpreted as stemming from “womb envy”—certainly marking Duchamp’s sense of the impotence and emptiness of masculine subjectivity, at least. He also contradicts himself in various notes, which are clearly working documents rather than final statements; in one note, he states that the “virgin . . . has attained her desire,” while other notes emphasize the failure of consummation.
77. *Ibid.*, 51.
78. George Biddle, *An American Artist’s Story* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), 138.
79. Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 177.
80. The poem can be found in the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript pp. 119–124.
81. From the autobiography, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, ed. Paul Hjartarson and Douglas Spettigue (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1992), 83. Virginité was an obsession even among male avant-gardists: Duchamp’s *Large Glass* aside, Picabia’s hilarious image *La Sainte-Vierge*, which consists simply of a splash of ink, adorned the cover of 391, no. 12 (March 1920); and in his commentary on the Baroness William Carlos Williams has his surrogate picturing America as “a virginal young woman”; see Williams, “Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters,” *Contact* 4 (Summer 1921), 10. The Baroness’s critique of this obsession is consistent with (though a more extreme and more assertive

form of) New Woman discourse during this period. Other women avant-gardists pronounced against the virginity cult, with its inherent hypocrisy, Mina Loy arguing facetiously for the “unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty”; cited by Marisa Januzzi, “Dada through the Looking Glass, or: Mina Loy’s Objective,” in Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*, 591. And, in the best-selling novel *La garçonne* (translated into English as *The Bachelor Girl* in 1923), Victor Marguerite has his main character, the New Woman or “bachelor girl” Monique Leber, break off with her overpossessive male lover in the following way: “I told you you were a cave-man! . . . [author’s ellipses] the cave-man with his thirst for the virgin. . . . Go and talk to modern girls about that sort of thing! ‘Run girls, run! The wild man’s after you!’ You’re out of date, Régis! Ah! now we know! The husband and owner! The supreme lord and master!” (205).

82. Elsewhere Duchamp proposed the *Large Glass* as “above all a negation of women in the social sense of the word, that is to say, the woman-wife, the mother, the children, etc. I carefully avoided all that.” He continues his critique of bourgeois ideals, noting that “the family . . . forces you to abandon your real ideas, to swap them for things it believes in, society and all that paraphernalia!” Duchamp in Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, 76.

83. Tape-recorded interview of Louis Bouché, March 13, 1963, by W. E. Woolfenden; transcript, Archives of American Art.

84. Stobart is quoted from his 1911 book *The Glory of Greece* in Abel Wolman, “The Sanitary Engineer Looks Forward,” *Water and Sewer Works* 93, no. 11 (November 1946), 412; Margaret Morgan cites this passage in her “A Box, a Pipe, and a Piece of Plumbing,” in Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*, 62, and I am indebted to her for pointing me toward this source. Else [sic] von Freytag-Loringhoven, “The Modest Woman,” *Little Review* 7, no. 2 (July-August 1920), 37. As always, the Baroness cuts to the heart of the matter in this piece, connecting the suppression of effluence and the effects of the lived body to the pretensions of high culture; see 37–40.

85. Such channeling is effected in both aesthetics and plumbing not just through the “hardware” of material structures and institutions, but ideologically as well. As Wolman notes, “Political philosophy, financial program, administrative structure and public education are all essential bases for sanitary engineering action. Technology alone will not bring on the rapid correction of the evils engendered by insanitation” (“The Sanitary Engineer Looks Forward,” 412).

86. Louise Norton, “The Richard Mutt Case,” *The Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917), 5. Norton already asks the important questions that would be raised in relation to the readymades in years to come: “To those who say that Mr. Mutt’s exhibit may be Art, but is it the art of Mr. Mutt since a plumber made it? I reply simply that the *Fountain* was not made by a plumber but by the force of an imagination” (6). As Mina Loy notes later on in her

- untitled contribution, “Duchamp meditating the levelling of all values, witnesses the elimination of Sophistication” (in *ibid.*, 12).
87. Francis Picabia, “Medusa,” in *ibid.*, 10.
88. Letter of the Baroness to Jane Heap and Margaret Anderson, from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript p. 39.
89. This photograph is discussed in Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 46–47. The term “praying to the porcelain goddess,” in my own college days, referred to the vomiting fits that occurred after excessive drinking.
90. Paul Franklin, “Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History,” *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1 (2000), 23–50. See chapter 2, note 24.
91. Barr’s diagram thus connects neatly to the logic of architectural modernism—Le Corbusier’s ineffable spaces as well as the violent fixation on purity expressed by Adolf Loos in his writings and architecture. In an article on plumbing, Loos notes that the plumber is the erect “pillar of the Germanic idea of culture.” Loos’s at least partially facetious veneration of the plumber as avatar of industrialism’s efficiency proposes to eliminate the vulgarity and effusiveness of kitsch to ensure a rationalized Germanic culture (ostentation/excess vs. cleanliness/containment: in short, aesthetics and the moral fiber of the German people are at stake). Loos, “Plumbers” (1898), in *Spoken into the Void: Collected Essays 1897–1900*, trans. Jane O. Newman and John H. Smith (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982), 45.
92. These are the terms articulated by Luce Irigaray in her critique of the masculinism and phallocentrism of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis; see her *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), especially “The Law of the Self-Same,” 32–34.
93. See also her sketch, presented as a fake blueprint, *Barr/Loos: Portrait of Modern Art as Sanitary System* (1993), in *Margaret Morgan: A Plumber’s Guide* (Cologne: Galerie Inge Baecker, 1999), 9; a plumbing design from *The Plumber’s Journal* is illustrated on p. 10, and the two installation pieces discussed here are depicted on pp. 11, 20, 21.
94. Picabia instigated his own play on this rationalization, spoofing the categorizing impulses of art discourse in his February 1919 cover for *391*, which is comprised of a gridded diagram of artists’ names and related terms (from “Francis Picabia” and “Guillaume Apollinaire” to “Blind Man,” “Pharamousse” [his own pseudonym], and seemingly non-related terms such as “loué” [rented or hired out]). The diagram is labeled “Moléculaire.”
95. Smith, *Making the Modern*, 43.
96. Such as his 1918 *Turkish Bath Scene with Self-Portrait*; Jonathan Weinberg discusses this image in his pioneering *Speaking for*

Vice: *Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 20. Around 1930, Demuth began creating bolder images of male homosexual encounters in a series of watercolors showing naked or partly naked men in public spaces with erections; see the 1930 watercolors *Three Sailors on the Beach* in Weinberg (plate 2) and *Four Male Figures*, in Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 233.

97. Morgan, “A Box, a Pipe, and a Piece of Plumbing,” 65. Morgan explicitly addresses the Baroness by reproducing a photograph of her in chalk as part of her installation *Out of Order* (1997), reproduced in *Margaret Morgan: A Plumber’s Guide*, 23. See also Morgan’s longer rumination on plumbing and modernism, “The Plumbing of Modern Life,” *Post-colonial Studies* 5, no. 2 (2002), 171–195.

98. Djuna Barnes describes this act in her “Notes from Elsa”; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

99. The Brancusi, which was in the Arensberg collection, would thus have been well known to the New York Dada crowd; it is illustrated in Naumann, *New York Dada*, 29.

100. Corn discusses this piece in *The Great American Thing*, 233–234.

101. Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice*; and Corn, *The Great American Thing*, 196; who is citing Rosenfeld from “Art, Charles Demuth,” *Nation* 133 (October 7, 1931), 372.

102. E. Chadwick, from a 1846 report cited in Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 139.

103. Williams, “Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters,” 11. Stallybrass and White describe smell in particular as encapsulating (in its irrationality and inability to be contained) the disgusting aspects of human and urban life that modernism labors to contain. See *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, 139–140.

104. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, 162, 144, 160.

4 ... The City / Wandering, Neurasthenic Subjects

Some of the passages in this chapter have been revised from earlier essays: “Eros, That’s Life, or the Baroness’s Penis,” in Francis M. Naumann and Beth Venn, eds., *Making Mischievous: Dada Invades New York* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 238–247; “‘Women’ in Dada: Elsa, Rose, and Charlie,” in Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 142–173; and “Practicing Space: WWI-Era New York and the Baroness as Spectacular Flâneuse,” in Jim Drobnick and Jennifer Fisher, eds., *Living Display* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming).

1. Arthur Cravan, cited by Roger Conover in his introduction to “Arthur Cravan” in *4 Dada Suicides: Selected Texts of Arthur Cravan, Jacques Rigaut, Julien Torma, Jacques Vaché*, introduced by Roger Conover, Terry Hale,

and Paul Lenti; trans. Terry Hale, Paul Lenti, and Iain White (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 16. Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, excerpt from the poem “Appalling Heart,” *Little Review* 7, no. 3 (September-December 1920), 47.

2. Louis Aragon, in his marvelous narrative of a flâneurial trajectory through Paris, remarked on the city as a place of “mysterious lives” in urban sites in which a new kind of poetic divinity is being forged. See his *Paris Peasant* (1926), trans. Simon Watson Taylor (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), 27. For a wonderful account of Parisian flânerie during this period see Adrian Rifkin, *Street Noises: Parisian Pleasure, 1900–1940* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1993).

3. Steve Pile, *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space, and Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 176–177.

4. Elizabeth Grosz, “Bodies—Cities,” in her *Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 108.

5. Le Corbusier and Jefferson are both quoted, without original sources, in Norval White, *New York: A Physical History* (New York: Atheneum, 1987), frontispiece, n.p. My emphasis on “oriented” in the Corbusier quote. Norval notes further on that Le Corbusier did not like New York and wanted to rationalize it even more by eliminating the noxious streets and replacing them with skyscrapers with interconnecting highways (122). The grid plan of the city was already imagined by the City

Commissioners in 1811 and, Norval notes, they specifically aimed not only to lay the city out on a grid but to flatten all of its contours (unlike, say, San Francisco, which is laid out on a grid but retains its hills); see 90–91.

6. Elsewhere, in his 1913 poem “Hie!,” Cravan performs this intertwining even more dramatically:

Bodies polished like machines,
A thousand things from China,
Fashions and inventions;
Then, ready to cross town
In the tranquility of automobiles,
Poets and boxers [. . .]
Man of fashion, chemist, whore, drunk,
musician, labourer, painter,
acrobat, actor;
Old man, child, crook, hooligan, angel
and rake; millionaire,
bourgeois, cactus, giraffe, or crow;
Coward, hero, Negro, monkey, Don Juan,
pimp, lord, peasant, hunter,
industrialist,
Flora and fauna:
I am all things, all men and all animals!
What next?
Assume a distinguished air,
Manage to leave behind perhaps
My fatal plurality! [. . .]
—My abstractions
Elaborate variations
On my body’s
harmonies [. . .]

Cravan, “Hie!,” from his journal *Maintenant*, no. 2 (July 1913), trans. Paul Lenti in *4 Dada Suicides*, 45–48.

7. See Cravan's own wild rant about his various identifications, "Poète et Boxeur," *Maintenant*, no. 5 (March-April 1915), reprinted in *Arthur Cravan: Oeuvres: Poèmes, articles, lettres* (Paris: Éditions Gérard Lebovici, 1987), 87–92. Other important sources on Cravan are *Arthur Cravan: Poète et boxeur* (Paris: Terrain Vague and Galerie 1900–2000, 1992); Roger Conover, "Mina Loy's 'Colossus': Arthur Cravan Undressed," and Willard Bohn, "Chasing Butterflies with Arthur Cravan," both in Rudolf E. Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada* (New York: Willis Locker & Owens, 1986), 102–119, 120–123; and the entire section "Arthur Cravan" in *4 Dada Suicides*, 14–89.
8. Conover, introduction to "Arthur Cravan," 17.
9. See, for example, Bohn, "Chasing Butterflies with Arthur Cravan," 120–123.
10. Conover, introduction to "Arthur Cravan," 25, 26.
11. Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, "Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp" (1949), in Robert Motherwell, ed., *The Dada Painters and Poets: An Anthology*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 260. Man Ray describes Cravan tossing his clothing out of a suitcase at the audience. He also takes credit for having been the one to fight off the police, along with Duchamp; this is hard to believe since Man Ray admits in the same interview that he did not even meet Cravan. Arturo Schwarz, "Interview with Man Ray," in Schwarz, *New York Dada: Duchamp, Man Ray, Picabia* (Munich: Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus; Tübingen: Kunsthalle Tübingen; Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1973), 90.
12. George M. Beard, A.M.M.D., *American Nervousness: Its Causes and Consequences, a Supplement to Nervous Exhaustion (Neurasthenia)* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1881), 96, 106–107; Lewis Mumford, "The City," in Harold E. Stearns, ed., *Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1922), 13.
13. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929–1930), trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), 12–13, 22. The idea of sublimation had been brewing here for quite some time. It is worth noting that, aside from the discussions at the Arensbergs about psychoanalytical issues which I noted in chapter 2, earlier in the teens Mabel Dodge had hosted psychoanalytic talks at her salon in Greenwich Village. Too, in 1915 Max Eastman, one of the editors of the radical socialist journal *The Masses*, presented a lecture on Freud's concept of sublimation to a popular audience, describing it as a panacea designed to remove troublesome animal impulses from the unconscious and channel them into a "socially, or professionally, or artistically, creative sphere"; see Leslie Fishbein, "The Culture of Contradiction: The Greenwich Village Rebellion," in Rick Beard and Leslie Cohen Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village: Culture and Counterculture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press; New York: Museum of the City of New York, 1993), 217.

14. Interestingly, this points to the fact that the rise of discourses of neurasthenia and sublimation paralleled the sexualization and commercialization of American culture during the 1910s and 1920s, marking on many different levels what one contemporary called the “repeal of reticence” (the removal of Victorian repression on topics of sexuality); see Kevin White, *The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 13. That New York’s avant-gardes were well aware of these sexualizing discourses is clear from their embrace of psychoanalysis (see the previous note) and from the obsessively sexualized imagery they produced during this period (including the machine/body images of the New York Dadaists).
15. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 50, 51.
16. The Baroness had intense and even consummated affairs with gay or bisexual men including, most notably Felix Paul Greve, with whom she had a relationship from 1902 to 1911, when he escaped from her in the United States and took on the pseudonym of Frederick Grove and adopted a more or less traditional bourgeois heterosexual lifestyle in Canada. Greve/Grove and the Baroness were actually still married when she married the Baron. See Irene Gammel, *Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), chapter 5, “Felix Paul Greve: Elsa’s Sex-Sun,” 122–155.
17. From the autobiography, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, ed. Paul Hjartarson and Douglas Spettigue (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1992), 78. The Baroness was very close to her New York lesbian friends later in her life but she never discussed having sex with them and, given her self-revelatory tendencies (she would certainly not have hesitated to narrate her sexual exploits whether lesbian or not), it is unlikely that these relationships were explicitly sexual.
18. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, “Dreams,” from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript p. 60.
19. David Joselit, *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910–1941* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), 135. Joselit’s examination of Duchamp’s early career touches on many of the issues I explore here. He also cites the French authorities on neurasthenia, who wrote of the “increasing frequency of neurasthenia in our time and its predominance . . . in all circumstances where intellectual culture or commercial and industrial traffic are carried to the highest degree of intensity” (136). From Gilbert Ballet and Achille-Adrien Proust (father of novelist Marcel), *The Treatment of Neurasthenia*, trans. Peter Campbell Smith (London: Henry Kimpton, 1902), 7.
20. Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1902–1903), in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. Kurt H. Wolff

(London: Collier-Macmillan; New York: Free Press, 1950), 409.

21. *Ibid.*, 411–413.

22. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, “Contradictory Speculations on My Own Hook’s Fallibility,” handwritten text, probably written in 1927, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

23. Charles Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life” (1863), from *The Painter of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (New York: Da Capo, 1964), 9.

24. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 414.

25. Specifically, Joselit’s chapter 3 of *Infinite Regress*, “Modern Machines,” comments on Duchamp’s mechanical works as operating as “switching stations between the modern rationalization of the body and newly developing techniques of disciplining the mind, particularly through the colonization or commodification of desire” (6).

26. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 415, 418. The argument I am articulating here, which poses Duchamp at least in partial opposition to a more flamboyant, self-performative artistic style, is at odds with my attempt to align him with the flâneur in my earlier study, *Postmodernism and the Engendering of Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); see chap-

ter 5, “The Ambivalence of Rose Sélavy,” 146–190. The difference in my approach can be attributed to my tendency to elide the flâneur with the dandy in the earlier book. Here, while I acknowledge Baudelaire’s tendency to conflate the two figures, I am more interested in a revised kind of flânerie that is quite different from dandyism. This will become apparent below.

27. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 419.

28. Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, cited in Deborah L. Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30; see my discussion at the beginning of chapter 3.

29. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 419, 420. See White, *The First Sexual Revolution*, on the link between this “culture of character” and shifts in commodity culture, and his discussion of how it affected the “masculine image” (17ff).

30. Arthur Cravan, “Sifflet,” *Maintenant*, no. 1 (April 1912), reprinted in *Arthur Cravan, Oeuvres: Poèmes, articles, lettres*, 27. This translation is from the version published in *The Soil* 1 (December 1916), 36; cited in Wanda Corn, *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity, 1915–1935* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 36. James Huneker, *New Cosmopolis: A Book of Images* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915), 51, 52–53; he goes on to note, “[If steam is English] then electricity

- must be American. . . . In the bowels of New York [one] . . . might find immunity from the lightening stroke, but he would find there lightening, though harnessed. What would the Subway be without the electric ‘juice?’” (53).
31. Notably, subway construction down Sixth Avenue through the Village had accelerated in the late teens as the subways began to replace the elevated trains; this brought eager tourists quickly and efficiently to the Village. On the construction of the transit systems in New York, see Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 106–107, 126–127.
32. As of 1905, there were 418 miles of paved streets in Manhattan and 30 miles of unpaved streets, with 53 miles of elevated railway but only 21 miles of subways (the bulk of the subway system was built between this time and the 1920s). See Harry J. Doyle, *The Tourist’s Hand-book of New York* (New York: Historical Press, 1905), statistics cited inside front cover.
33. Jeff Hirsh, *Between the Rivers: Manhattan, 1880–1920* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 1998), 85.
34. Man Ray, *Self Portrait* (1963; Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), 70, 65, 66.
35. Molly Nesbit has scrupulously researched Duchamp’s mechanical drawing technique in relation to elementary school training in mechanical drawing in late nineteenth-century France; see her “The Language of Industry,” in Thierry de Duve, ed., *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 351–384.
36. Peter Conrad, *The Art of the City: Views and Versions of New York* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 117.
37. The case of the 1920–1921 Rose Sélavy photographs (Duchamp posing as a woman and photographed by Man Ray) needs some reference here. In contrast to the Baroness’s highly public, “living” gender transgressions, the Rose Sélavy photographs were privately composed by Man Ray and Duchamp and only publicly released as an image on the cover of the single 1921 issue of *New York Dada*, an ephemeral journal whose audience was more or less limited to the New York avant-garde. See my “The Ambivalence of Rose Sélavy.” There is some debate about whether one group of these images might have been taken slightly later in Paris; see Dawn Ades, “Duchamp’s Masquerades,” in Graham Clarke, ed., *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 213, n. 34. However, Ades gives no justification for asserting this later, Paris debut for Rose.
38. Charles Baudelaire, from *Fusées* (c. 1855), published posthumously; see Baudelaire, *Écrits intimes* (Paris: Éditions du point du jour, 1946), 8. Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936; New York: New Directions, 1961), 52. Susan Buck-Morss, “The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering,” *New German Critique*, no. 39 (Fall 1986), 104.

39. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 413, 422.
40. Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” 9. Such language propelled feminist thinkers such as Janet Wolff and Griselda Pollock to publish a spate of articles in the 1980s defining the flâneur as a masculine voyeur. See Janet Wolff, “The Invisible Flâneuse: Women and the Literature of Modernity,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 2, no. 3 (1985), 37–48; and Griselda Pollock, “Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity,” in her *Vision and Difference: Femininity, Feminism and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 1988), 67. More recently, I and other feminists such as Deborah Parsons and Wolff herself have drawn on but complicated this reading. I am indebted in this retheorization to Parsons’s wonderful book on modernist women in the city, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, to the equally helpful book by Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), and to Wolff’s “Gender and the Haunting of Cities (or, the Retirement of the Flâneur,” in her *AngloModern: Painting and Modernity in Britain and the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).
41. Nietzsche made his scorn for the opinions of the masses and for crowd behavior (and women) clear in such statements as: “in the theater, one becomes people, herd, female, pharisee, voting cattle, patron, idiot . . .”; in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), 665–666. Le Bon notes in his famous study: “Crowds are everywhere distinguished by feminine characteristics, but Latin crowds are the most feminine of all”; Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd*, with a new introduction by Robert A. Nye (no translator given) (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 59. Everett Dean Martin, a sociologist who hoped to correct some of Le Bon’s oversimplifications, argued that people in crowds revert to primitive, collective behavior, remarking on the “primitive impulses” that are normally “inhibited, resisted, controlled, and diverted to socially acceptable ends” (that is, sublimated) but, within urban crowds, are desublimated; Everett Dean Martin, *The Behavior of Crowds* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1920), 34. On Le Bon, see also Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 52–53; Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City*, 6–7; and Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis*, 43–46.
42. Baudelaire, “The Painter of Modern Life,” 30.
43. Baudelaire, from his poem “Crépuscule du soir,” cited by Benjamin in “The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire,” collected in Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973), 57.
44. See note 28.
45. Walter Benjamin, “Paris: The Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” in Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire*, 157.

46. Christine Buci-Glucksmann, "Catastrophic Utopia: The Feminine as Allegory of the Modern," trans. Katharine Streip, *Representations* 14 (Spring 1986), 222, 228.
47. In Western thought, the body is the province of women. As Simone de Beauvoir argued, "Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out toward other liberties. . . . Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, there is a degradation of existence. . . . Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she—a free and autonomous being like all human creatures—nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego . . . which is essential and sovereign." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), xxviii. On this mechanism of projecting immanence (embodiment) onto women, see also Judith Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*," *Yale French Studies*, no. 72 (1986), 35–50.
48. Dianne Chisholm, "Obscene Modernism: *Eros Noir* and the Profane Illumination of Djuna Barnes," *American Literature* 69, no. 1 (March 1997), 189. See also Chisholm's full-length study of literary queer flânerie, her book *Queer Constellations: Fictions of Space in the Wake of the City* (forthcoming).
49. Cited in Eliza Jane Reilly, "Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," *Woman's Art Journal* 19, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1997), 30.
50. Chisholm, "Obscene Modernism," 189.
51. On the Baroness and/as Robin Vote, see Lynn DeVore, "The Backgrounds of *Nightwood*: Robin, Felix, and Nora," *Journal of Modern Literature* 10, no. 1 (1983), 71–90.
52. Chisholm, "Obscene Modernism," 186, 195.
53. George Biddle, *An American Artist's Story* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939), 137, 139. Greenwich Village chronicler Allen Churchill added his two cents' worth: "The Baroness firmly believed that such utilitarian objects as wastebaskets were made to be worn. For example, it was her custom to stroll around Washington Square wearing a peach basket for a hat. She found postage stamps—in those days a bright pink—particularly stimulating. She papered her apartment walls with them, then pasted them on her cheeks in lieu of rouge. Sometimes, when garbed in her dizzy costumes, the Baroness ran afoul of the police, but she fought arrest with a frenzy that caused the law to surrender in confusion—'She leaped from patrol wagons with such agility that policemen let her go in admiration,' one chronicle states." Allen Churchill, *The Improper Bohemians: A Re-Creation of Greenwich Village in Its Heyday* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1959), 169. Churchill's account of the Baroness is not entirely reliable; much of it is taken directly from Margaret Anderson's firsthand account of the Baroness in her

book *My Thirty Years' War* (London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), 177–194; 210–211.

54. William Carlos Williams, “Sample Prose Piece: The Three Letters,” *Contact* 4 (Summer 1921), 11. Here and in *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1967) he also circulated some of the legends about her periodic arrests for stealing and indecent exposure, her kleptomania, and the fact that she owned animals that acted out exactly what Williams feared in relation to the Baroness herself (copulating on her bed in front of him; see the *Autobiography*, 168). Williams notes that he visited the Baroness in “the most unspeakably filthy tenement in the city. Romantically, mystically dirty, of grimy walls, dark, gaslit halls and narrow stairs, it smelt of black waterclosets, one to a floor, with low gasflame always burning and torn newspapers trodden in the wet. Waves of stench thickened on each landing as one moved up” (“Sample Prose Piece,” 11). Biddle described her extremely sympathetically as “the most sensitive, critically understanding, and emotionally generous” of all the collectors he had known. Biddle, *An American Artist's Story*, 141. He is writing here of her as an art collector, but much of his article is devoted to describing her collection of urban detritus.

55. Anaïs Nin, “Ragtime,” in her *Under a Glass Bell and Other Stories* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1948), 59.

56. The *Bicycle Wheel* is dated 1913 (Duchamp “made” the first version while still in Paris), and Duchamp discusses it as his first readymade in Pierre Cabanne, ed., *Dialogues*

with Marcel Duchamp (1967), trans. Ron Padgett (New York: Da Capo Press, 1979), 47.

57. On Duchamp’s careful placement of his work in museums, see my chapter 3, “The Living Author-Function: Duchamp’s Authority,” in *Postmodernism and the En-Gendering of Marcel Duchamp*, 63–109.

58. *Cathedral* is miscatalogued as four inches high in Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, plate 10, n.p.; and in *The Art of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* (New York: Francis M. Naumann Fine Art, 2002), 8. I am grateful to Gammel for providing me in a personal email with the accurate height, 10⁷/₁₆ in.

59. As Wanda Corn has noted, the Woolworth Building was known as the Cathedral of Commerce; see *The Great American Thing*, 156. See also Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 235 on the Baroness’s title.

60. The original piece was lost or destroyed, although Man Ray’s photograph of it remains. The bronze version is reproduced in Schwarz, *New York Dada*, 106, fig. 68.

61. In 1916 a new building code restricted the circumference of skyscraper towers to 25 percent of the footprint of the building for fear that large, bulky towers would block out all the light in the city; this code led to the building of hundreds of stepped-back buildings, producing exactly the kind of ragged skyline Man Ray’s piece imitates. See Hirsh, *Between the Rivers*, 91.

62. Pile, *The Body and the City*, 221, 223.

63. Berenice Abbott, from an interview with Gisela von Freytag-Loringhoven, a descendant of the Baron's family who has taken an interest in the Baroness; cited in her afterword to Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 396. See also Gammel's rich analysis of the many levels of meaning evoked by *Limbswish* (188–189). Gammel points out the wordplay of the piece, as well as the connection between “swish” and homosexual male culture from that period.
64. From a handwritten manuscript in the Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2. The strange punctuation here is original; the words handwritten by the Baroness are in all capitals but I have chosen only to capitalize the first letters of each line as this was generally how her poems were published at the time.
65. These descriptions are cited from Irene Gammel's “Lashing with Beauty: Baroness Elsa and the emergence of Assemblage Art in America,” in *The Art of Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven*, 14. This catalogue accompanied the first single-woman show devoted to the Baroness's life work. Thanks to Francis Naumann's generosity, I was able to see this show, and the four remaining assemblage objects (other than *God*, which is on display at the Philadelphia Museum of Art), before it officially opened.
66. Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 189.
67. Nin, “Ragtime,” 60.
68. The first sentence from the Baroness is from a letter c. 1924 to Eleanor Fitzgerald; the second is from her long 1927 letter to Peggy Guggenheim requesting a grant; both from the Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974), trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 83. Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 91, 92, 93.
69. Both of the World Trade Towers were destroyed on the morning of September 11, 2001, by commercial airplanes that had been hijacked, apparently by members of the fundamentalist Islamic group Al Qaeda, and flown into them. The planes acted as bombs, essentially melting the steel structures from within so that they collapsed shortly after they were hit.
70. De Certeau, “Walking in the City,” 92.
71. *Ibid.*, 97–99.
72. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 97. On this aspect of Lefebvre's argument, see Pile, *The Body and the City*, 164.
73. I specifically avoid the suggestion that there is, indeed, something like “sex itself”; one could argue that the *threat* of the Baroness is the feeling she provoked that an erotic encounter with her would necessarily expose

the radical lack of an “itself” of male sexuality. In fact, counter to Lefebvre, I would argue that the Baroness’s performances are just as representational as Picabia’s images (or, as I have suggested, that both are equally “real” as enactments that in some ways collapse the usual distance between signifier and signified). It is the way in which the Baroness’s promenades functioned and continue to function that makes them incendiary, not some ontological priority they have as being more “real.”

74. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 85.

75. Churchill, *The Improper Bohemians*, 169; he has taken his rendering of the incident from Margaret Anderson in *My Thirty Years War*, 193–195.

76. Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988), 527.

77. The photograph is discussed in Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, 101, fig. 42.

78. Churchill illustrates “animal” costumes from and cites the handbill for a typical Masses ball, which reads: “Are You a Radical? / Whether or Not, Come to the Greenwich Village carnival / Old Home Celebration / Costume Dance / Given By / The Editors of the Masses / and / Artists and Writers of Greenwich Village”; in *The Improper Bohemians*, 110–111.

79. Cited in George Chauncey, “Long-Haired Men and Short-Haired Women: Building a Gay World in the Heart of Bohemia,” in Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, 159. See also Chauncey’s much more exhaustive study, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

80. As Djuna Barnes puts it (so wonderfully, as always) in her account of Village amusements, these various balls and parties involved increasingly desperate forms of amusement: “to enjoy the lovemaking of another woman’s husband . . . [to] rip up objects of art . . . [to] wear purple ties and yellow bathrobes . . . [and to] lose one’s reputation”; in “How the Villagers Amuse Themselves,” from *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*, November 26, 1916, reprinted in Alyce Barry, ed., *New York* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1989), 249, 251. See also the reminiscences of Ruth Wittenberg, a Village activist, about the balls at Webster Hall: “The Women were more imaginative than the men. . . . Later on there was a lot of nakedness. The balls had a reputation for that. There were just a lot of people who wanted notoriety. People wanted recognition, something to distinguish them from the herds”; cited in Jeff Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This: An Oral History of Manhattan from the 1890s to World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 452. And the depressing tale of a party spiraling out of control, which features a character inspired by the Baroness

dancing on the body of another character (clearly modeled after Djuna Barnes), by Mary Butts, “The Master’s Last Dancing,” story written probably in the 1920s, based on a wild party in Paris at Ford Maddox Ford’s, published in the *New Yorker*, March 30, 1998, 110–113. Mary Butts was a contributor to the *Little Review* and thus probably knew the Baroness personally.

81. Floyd Dell, *Love in Greenwich Village* (New York: George H. Doran, 1926), 298, 299, 296. Dell notes that the *physical* aspects that made the Village an ideal site for bohemia were also being destroyed: “the tangle of crooked streets would be pierced by a great straight road, the beautiful crumbling houses of great rooms and high ceilings and deep-embasured windows would be ruthlessly torn down to make room for modern apartment-buildings; the place would become like all the rest of New York City” (296). On the commercialization of the Village bohemia, see also John Quinn’s letter to Ezra Pound (January 12, 1917): “I don’t know whether you know the pseudo-Bohemianism of Washington Square. It is nauseating to a decent man who doesn’t need artificial sexual stimulation. It is a vulgar, disgusting conglomerate of second and third-rate artists and would-be artists, or I. W. W. agitators, of sluts kept or casual, clean and unclean, of Socialists and near Socialists, of poetasters and pimps, of fornicators and dancers and those who dance to enable them to fornicate—But hell, words fail me to express my contempt for the whole damned bunch.” Cited in Steven Watson, *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 228.

82. *The Blind Man*, no. 2 (May 1917), 2.

83. Cravan’s outfit is described by Loy, as cited in Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus,’” 105; See the illustration of Loy in Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, 321; and of Wood and Ito in Francis M. Naumann, *New York Dada, 1915–23* (New York: Abrams, 1994), 187.

84. Loy on Cravan in Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus,’” 106; she goes on to quote Cravan begging to take her home at a later date, and his statement that “the mere idea of sleeping in my own place makes me neurasthenic” (107). Duchamp’s friend Roché wrote that Duchamp’s point was to proclaim “Don’t be afraid to be different and play it to the hilt”; from “Souvenirs” (1959), cited in Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, 321.

85. See “Mme. de Saint-Point takes Opera House to Show Her Geometric Poem-Dances” and “Ruth St. Denis and Her Dancers Bring Oriental Pageants to Broadway,” *New York Herald*, March 18, 1917, section 3, pp. 6, 9.

86. On the *Guide to Greenwich Village*, see Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, 231. In the *Five Cent Guide and Street Directory of New York City + Town Tips* (New York: Home Life Publishing Company, 1909), Greenwich Village is not yet singled out as a bohemian paradise, but a large section on “amusements” stresses the theaters, music halls, and other venues of popular culture in the city (see 2).

87. Loy cited in Roger Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus,’” 108. Buffet-Picabia, “Some

Memories of Pre-Dada,” 260. There are many other accounts of bacchanals at the Arensbergs’ and at Greenwich Village venues; see, for example, William Carlos Williams’s “Painters and Parties,” in *The Autobiography of Williams Carlos Williams*, 134–142.

88. Albert Parry, *Garrets and Pretenders: A History of Bohemianism in America* (1933), rev. ed. with chapter by Harry T. Moore on “Enter Beatniks” (New York: Dover, 1960), 305. Djuna Barnes, “Notes from Elsa,” Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1. McKay, *A Long Way from Home* (1937; New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), 104–105.

89. McKay respected the Baroness as an artist and writer; he published her poem “Dornröschen” (Sleeping Beauty) in the *Liberator* in January 1922; Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 282.

90. Letter from McBride to Stein, January 7, 1915, Gertrude Stein Collection, Yale Collection of American Literature, cited in Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, 237.

91. Maxwell Bodenheimer, letter to the *Little Review* about “The March Number,” *Little Review* 6, no. 11 (April 1920), 61. Obviously I do not agree that “normality” is a useful category in discussing the Baroness, but for Bodenheimer, in the context of defending her, it has a certain efficacy. The March 1920 issue of the *Little Review* (7, no. 4, January-March), to which Bodenheimer is referring, had included the Baroness’s poem “Irrender König (an Leo-

pold von Freytag-Loringhoven),” and “Klink Hratzvenga (Death Wail) Narin-Tzarisam-nili.” See also Bodenheimer’s defense of her “Cast-Iron Lover” poem, where he notes, “Most sensualists write with an obliquely repressed savageness or a drained staidness. It is refreshing to see someone claw aside the veils and rush forth howling, vomiting, and leaping nakedly”; *Little Review* 6, no. 7 (November 1919), 64.

92. For “bourgeois harness,” see Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, 42; on her posing as a “Marble Figure” at the Wintergarten Theater and liking the scrutiny, see 44–45.

93. This section is indebted to Gammel’s account, which is the only one to explore at any length the Baroness’s connections to the German avant-gardes; see part II, “Modernities in Berlin and Munich,” in her *Baroness Elsa*, especially 56–98.

94. See Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, 78.

95. *Ibid.*, 83.

96. Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 117.

97. Gammel notes that Wedekind’s performances were influential for Hugo Ball, one of the instigators of the performative Zurich Dada founded in 1916 at the Cabaret Voltaire, and that the Baroness knew Wedekind personally; Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 118; on the Countess see 107.

98. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Baroness Elsa*, 43.

99. For a contemporaneous view of Dodge's salon, see Arnold Hughes, "Portrait of Mabel Dodge," *Vanity Fair* 4, no. 3 (May 1915), 30. On the artists of 14th Street, see Ellen Wiley Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
100. Djuna Barnes, "Greenwich Village as It Is" (originally published in *Pearson's Magazine*, 1916), collected in Barry, ed., *New York*, 225.
101. On Edwards's Crazy Cat Club see *ibid.*, 229. Edwards also fashioned ukeleles out of cigar boxes painted with modernist designs, which he sold through the burgeoning Village tourist trade; see Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, 337, fig. 126. Bruno, a huckster whose real name was Kurt Josef Kisch (and who had a bourgeois home complete with wife and kids in Yonkers), constructed himself as a rather outdated kind of bohemian complete with pinky ring, brocaded waistcoat, and green fedora. He billed his "garret," really a perfectly inhabitable suite of rooms on Thomson Street, as a "First Aid Station for Struggling Genius." See Jan Seidler Ramirez, "The Tourist Trade Takes Hold," in Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, 375–376.
102. On blacks and gays as "types," see Hutchins Hapgood's *Types from City Streets* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910). On cross-dressing and the burgeoning of a semi-public gay community and on the nightlife subcultures, see also Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890–1930* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981).
103. "Monkeyshines" is from Parry, *Garrets and Pretenders*, 275–277.
104. On "strife-free zone," see Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, 341.
105. Barnes, "Greenwich Village as It Is," 231.
106. Kenneth Rexroth, *American Poetry in the Twentieth Century* (1973), cited in Gammel, *Baroness Elsa*, 234.
107. On the shift of entertainment uptown see James L. Ford, "The Shifting Night Life of New York," *Vanity Fair* 7, no. 6 (February 1917), 37, 96B.
108. On the move to Harlem for a reinvigorated connection to "real life" in the 1920s, see Lewis Erenberg, "Greenwich Village Nightlife 1910–1950," in Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, 364; and Ann Douglas's extensive account of the interactions between black and white Manhattan in *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995). In terms of the role of race in New York Dada's avant-gardism, a role largely hidden in art historical discourse, some interesting cases emerge: in 1913 (before his move to New York) Picabia made an abstract watercolor

with vaguely organic forms called *Negro Song*; and around 1915 Juliette Roche (the wife of painter Albert Gleizes and a hanger-on with the Arensberg crowd) wrote a poem, “Chanteurs nègres” (Black singers), which romanticizes black dancers as blending “exoticism and geometry”; see Carolyn Burke, “Recollecting Dada: Juliette Roche,” in Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada*, 555. As noted at the beginning of this section, the Baroness was friends with the black, Jamaican-born poet Claude McKay, who was the associate editor of the *Liberator*.

109. On Duchamp and Demuth’s jaunts, see Jonathan Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 76. Carl Van Vechten served as a catalyst for bringing whites to Harlem from the Village and a supporter (and exploiter) of black culture; see his melodramatic novel *Nigger Heaven* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), in which he boldly narrates a story of an African-American woman who falls in love with a black man who comes to be defeated by racism, disintegrating into verbal violence from the heights of a college education. On Van Vechten’s cultural efforts and his relationship to the painter Florine Stettheimer, see Linda Nochlin, “Rococo Subversive” (1980), reprinted in Elisabeth Sussman and Barbara J. Bloemink, *Florine Stettheimer: Manhattan Fantastica* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art and Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 105–106; see also Cécile Whiting’s interesting account of Van Vech-

ten and Stettheimer in “Decorating with Stettheimer and the Boys,” *American Art* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 24–49. 25–30.

110. See Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City*, “Tenements,” 110–111; “The Ethnic City,” 136–137; and “Harlem,” 138–139.

111. See the photographs illustrating these events in Beard and Berlowitz, eds., *Greenwich Village*, figs. 79 (the strike pageant poster), 80 (the pageant itself), and 82 (a suffragist march in Washington Mews in the teens), pp. 191, 192, 194.

112. Djuna Barnes, “How the Villagers Amuse Themselves,” from *New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*, November 26, 1916, reprinted in Barry, ed., *New York*, 249. The Baroness quote from a long, undated letter to Djuna Barnes, c. 1924, and from a short letter to Barnes, n.d.; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2.

113. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 44, 27.

114. Picabia’s art world gossip in 391, no. 1 (January 1917), n.p.; reprinted in Michel Sanouillet, ed., *391: Revue publiée de 1917 à 1924 par Francis Picabia* (Paris: Terrain Vague, 1960), 17–20; Loy’s remark is from her unpublished “Colossus,” excerpts of which are published in Conover, “Mina Loy’s ‘Colossus,’” 104. Loy writes a fascinating account of

the skewed masculinity of both Cravan and Duchamp, who was “slick as a prestidigitator” and “could insinuate his hand under a woman’s bodice and caress her with utter grace” (107). The poet, of course, has traditionally been connected with the feminized dandy or aesthete (as in Baudelaire’s writings); the boxer, conversely, is the quintessential “man’s man.” On boxing as a lower-class “underworld” activity allowing for the expression of otherwise forbidden “primitive” and violent aspects of masculinity, see White, *The First Sexual Revolution*, 9–10.

115. On her abuse by her father, see her autobiographical notes to Barnes, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

116. From Barnes’s retyped “Notes from Elsa,” Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

117. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 26.

118. Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” 419.

119. On the New Woman in relation to New York artistic avant-gardes see Todd, *The “New Woman” Revised*. On this topic, I am also indebted to Karen Barber, whose well-researched M.A. thesis reminded me of the important sources on the New Woman and rationalization: “‘Techniques of the Body’: Issues of Subjectivity, Technology, and Gender in

the Self-Portraits of Florence Henri,” M.A. thesis, University of California, Riverside, 2002.

120. Anonymous, “Do You Strive to Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions? If Not You Are Quite Old Fashioned,” *New York Evening Sun*, February 13, 1917, 10; the author continues, with some strong feminist insight, “but, then, some people think woman is to blame for everything they don’t like or don’t understand.” As is indicated by some of Picabia’s machine images (such as *Américaine*), from a European point of view the New Woman was often viewed as an American phenomenon or import (like Taylorism and Fordism)—and was thus linked to American-style urbanism and capitalism. See the article “The American Girl” by the Italian critic Bergeret (who goes by only one name), *Vanity Fair* (April 1915), 45, 86.

121. Carolyn Burke’s biography, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), is an excellent source on this fascinating woman’s life. On Marinetti, see 151–194.

122. Anonymous, “Do You Strive to Capture the Symbols of Your Reactions?,” 10.

123. On the issue of childbearing and women’s bohemianism, see Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 98. Douglas points out that the radical black male bohemians, like many of the more radical women, often chose to avoid having children; they couldn’t afford the compromise to their already limited opportunities for creative freedom any more than could the women, white or black.

124. Biddle, *An American Artist's Story*, 140.
125. Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 18.
126. In her 1923 novel *Revolving Lights* (London: Duckworth, 1923), which traces the steps of her feminist heroine, Miriam, through the streets of London, Dorothy Richardson explains the genesis of the “crazy women” associating with avant-gardes: “Artists . . . associate with queer people, and some of them are dissipated. They can only rest, stop being artists, by getting *away*. That is why so many women get nervy and break down. The only way they can rest, is by being nobody to nobody, leaving off for a while giving out any atmosphere” (45).
127. Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*, 168–169.
128. Barnes, “Notes from Elsa,” Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1. Virginia Woolf, “Street Haunting: A London Adventure” (1927), in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 4, 1925-1928, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London: Hogarth Press, 1994), 481, 486; I thank Andrew Stephenson for urging me to look at this wonderful essay.
129. Per Cravan’s announcement, cited in chapter 3, “I would eat my shit . . .”; cited in Conover, introduction to “Arthur Cravan,” 27.
130. The Baroness wrote in all capitals, giving her writing the effect of shouting; I have chosen not to mimic this aspect of her writing, however, as it is too distracting for the reader (and for me as I write).
131. Woolf, “Street Haunting,” 490–491.
132. There are some compressions of historical events in this imagined wandering; prohibition did not actually go into effect until January of 1920, after the influenza epidemic, etc. I hope the reader will forgive my desire to squeeze in a broad texture of events and places active from the late teens to the early 1920s.
133. New York, like the rest of the Western world, suffered a terrible influenza epidemic in 1918–1919.
134. The Brevoort Hotel on the corner of 8th Street and Fifth Avenue was a popular hangout for the artists who also lingered at the Arensberg Salon; it had been purchased by a French businessman around the turn of the century and its French touches drew the expatriates such as Duchamp and Gleizes to its downstairs café, where, one local reminisced, “you could sit . . . all day, and drinks were very inexpensive”; see the reminiscences of Ruth Wittenberg, a Village activist from the twenties, cited in Kisseloff, *You Must Remember This*, 442–443. Wittenberg points out that the physical structure of the Village, with its older housing stock and small apartments, encouraged the bohemians and activists to congregate in the numerous cafés and bars in

the area, such as Polly's and the Brevoort, where Max Eastman and other radicals also hung out. See also Henri-Pierre Roché's description of "Victor" (Duchamp) and "François" (Picabia) cavorting at the Brevoort with "Patricia" (Beatrice Wood), in his fictionalized account of the period, the novel *Victor (Marcel Duchamp)* (Paris: Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou, Musée National d'Art Moderne, 1977), 15.

135. This reference to shaving is to Man Ray and Duchamp's lost film project of the Baroness shaving her pubic hair; a frame and a half of the film, printed out, were attached to the letter Man Ray sent to Tristan in 1921 with which I opened the introduction of this book; see Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, 265. The extant clip does not show the Baroness shaving herself but rather, pubis already shaved, flaunting her naked body.

136. The descriptive part of this sentence is paraphrased from Djuna Barnes's notes for the introduction of the Baroness's autobiography; the latter section ("theatre and spectator in one") is from the Baroness's own text; both in the Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1. It is according to Margaret Anderson that the Baroness proclaimed that "shaving one's head is like having a new love experience"; she writes about the Baroness in *My Thirty Years' War*, 177–183.

137. This paragraph paraphrases the Baroness in her rambling notes to Djuna Barnes, this portion entitled "Statements by Cir-

cumstanced Me," written around 1924; in Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

138. As Buffet-Picabia put it, World War I was, whether acknowledged by the artists or not, "the world's anguish that everyone consciously or not bore within himself"; in "Some Memories of Pre-Dada," 259.

139. The last sentence is from a letter written by the Baroness from Germany, where she moved in 1923, supported by funds from American friends, including William Carlos Williams and Djuna Barnes; the letter, which was published in the *Little Review*, is reprinted in Anderson, *My Thirty Years' War*, 183. The Baroness was extremely poor and sold newspapers on the street to make money in Germany. She then moved to Paris, where she died in 1927.

140. This sentence refers to several works by Duchamp: *With My Tongue in My Cheek* (1959), the *Large Glass* (1915–1923), and *Étant donnés* (1946–1966); the latter pins a naked female form lying in a landscape setting under the gaze of the voyeur who peers through two holes in a wooden door.

141. KD refers to Katherine Dreier, blundering artist-patron (of "Wagnerian proportions," according to Aline Saarinen) and, as a daughter of German immigrants, linked to the Baroness culturally. See Ruth L. Bohan, "Katherine Sophie Dreier and New York Dada," *Arts Magazine* 51, no. 9 (May 1977), 97.

142. These latter descriptions are of images of women in Man Ray's photographic oeuvre, including the infamous film strip of the naked Baroness (see note 135).
143. This passage implicitly contrasts Duchamp and Picabia's sex machine works (often, in Picabia's case, with the machine gendered female) to the Baroness's *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (c. 1919–1920), an assemblage of feathers, wire, and other detritus exploding from a wine glass; it also refers to the giant penis that the Baroness allegedly carried through the streets of New York, noted by Barnes above. See Francis M. Naumann, "Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven," in his *New York Dada*, 173, 174; on the phallic object, see chapter 3, note 98 above.
144. "Menstruation—(*mensickness!*)" is the Baroness's phrase in an undated (c. 1923–1924) letter to Djuna Barnes, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 2, Box 2.
145. From the Baroness's draft of the poem in the Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 3. All of the poems cited here were written in the late teens and early 1920s.
146. In "Walking in the City," de Certeau writes of travel as a "walking exile," which produces "precisely the body of legends that is currently lacking in one's own vicinity. It is a fiction" (107). This seems to sum up the Baroness's relationship to every city in which she lived, always as a kind of traveler on the fringes.
147. This is an excerpt from the Baroness's poem "Holy Skirts," reprinted in Willard Bohn, trans. *The Dada Market: An Anthology of Poetry* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 89.
148. Picabia, as quoted in Margery Rex, "'Dada' Will Get You if You Don't Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here," *New York Evening Journal*, January 29, 1921; reprinted in Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada*, 141.
149. The Baroness was born in Swinemünde in northeast Germany (now Poland).
150. The scene of protesters indicates the severe labor unrest and suffragist movement activities in the United States in the late teens.
151. An excerpt from Baroness's poem "Mine Soul—This Is What Mine Soul Singeth," reprinted in Robert Reiss, "'My Baroness,'" in Kuenzli, ed., *New York Dada*, 90.
152. On the Baroness's various arrests for vagrancy and shoplifting see William Carlos Williams's account in *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*, 164; and Barnes in "Elsa—Notes," "Notes from Elsa," Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.
153. The Baroness's poem "Caught in Greenwich Village," from which these two

sentences come, creatively evokes her overhearing her neighbors cruelly talking about her and mimicking her. From the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript pp. 69–70.

154. This section refers to the Baroness's resonance on the New York avant-garde scene as a sign of European fin-de-siècle decadence, and to her connection with the German Jugendstil group at the turn of the century (she was briefly married to Jugendstil architect August Endell). Reiss discusses this symbolic resonance of the Baroness in "My Baroness," 92.

155. This is the Baroness's poem "Appalling Heart," published in the *Little Review* 7, no. 3 (September-December 1920), 47.

156. The "sordid materialism" phrase is George Biddle's, from *An American Artist's Story*, 141.

157. Untitled poem (she might have intended what looks to be the first line, "To Fit Glory," as its title), from the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript pp. 81–83.

158. This sentence is from the Baroness's unpublished poem "Tailend of mistake: America," from *ibid.*; see typescript p. 87.

159. The Baroness mentioned in several places fees supposedly owed to her by friends

for whom she had done favors or for whom she had modeled; she borrowed or tried to retrieve money from many friends in order to get passage fare for Germany, succeeding in 1923. Just after arriving back in Germany, her father died and she was apprised of her disinheritance by him. She had to sell newspapers on the streets of Berlin to support herself. It was during this time that she began her correspondence with Barnes. In 1926 she moved to Paris and briefly opened a modeling school. See the latter portion of Irene Gammel's concise chronology of the Baroness's life in *Baroness Elsa*, xx–xxi.

160. Maxwell Bodenheim, from a letter quoted in Watson, *Strange Bedfellows*, 226. *The Sharper Image* (Catalogue, August 2002), 18–19.

161. This idea is complicated by Gaston Bachelard's wonderful musings on city noise: "When insomnia, which is the philosopher's ailment, is increased through irritation caused by city noises; or when, late at night, the hum of automobiles and trucks rumbling through the Place Maubert causes me to curse my city-dweller's fate, I can recover my calm by living the metaphors of the ocean. . . . My bed is a small boat lost at sea; that sudden whistling is the wind in the sails. . . . And I fall asleep, lulled by the noise of Paris." In *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Spaces* (1958), trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 28. Bachelard gets at something profound about the irritations of modern urban life—that the noise and other sensory input are far less bothersome if viewed as unintentional (like the

sounds of the ocean) rather than caused deliberately by individuals who impinge on our personal psychic space.

162. De Certeau, “Walking in the City,” 108.

163. Barnes, “Greenwich Village as It Is,” 225.

164. De Certeau, “Walking in the City,” 109–110.

5 ... “Death in Reverse”: A Provisional Conclusion

1. Walter Benjamin, *Trauerspiel* study (c. 1916–1925), cited in Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), 161. Djuna Barnes, “Greenwich Village as It Is” (originally published in *Pearson’s Magazine*, 1916), in Alyce Barry, ed., *New York* (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1989), 229. Djuna Barnes, from her text marked “Preface,” dated December 7, 1924, probably intended as a preface to the Baroness’s autobiography; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collections, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.

2. The death mask was reproduced, along with Barnes’s eulogy and excerpts from some of the Baroness’s letters, in *Transition* 11 (February 1928), 19–30, death mask on 33; as reprinted (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1967).

3. These are the words of English biographer Michael Holroyd, cited in Bernadette Murphy, “Engaging Compilation Celebrates the Craft of Biography,” a review of his book *Works on Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography*, in the *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 2002, E3.

4. Of course, the best source on Benjamin is Benjamin himself; the *Passagenwerk* (1927–1940), the primary source for my understanding of Benjamin’s historical model, has recently been translated more or less in full as *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999). Peter Wollen beautifully describes his own historical project, inspired by the work of Benjamin, as follows: “A recapturing of lost configurations of fragmentary images of urban life, webs of affinity and correspondence, which, by restoring to memory what was lost to everyday experience, could also suggest the lineaments of a hoped-for future”; in Wollen, “Cinema, Americanism, the Robot,” *New Formations* 8 (Summer 1989), 20.

5. Theodor W. Adorno, “Der Idee der Naturgeschichte” (1932), translated and cited by Buck-Morss in *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 160.

6. These are Donald Preziosi’s evocative terms, describing Benjamin’s project in his unpublished paper “The Inconstant Object: Walter Benjamin’s Dialectical Imaging in the *Passagenwerk*” (July 2002), manuscript p. 4. I am indebted to Preziosi for sharing this paper with me.

7. Adorno, "Der Idee der Naturgeschichte," cited and translated in Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*, 160.
8. See Louis Althusser's classic study of the insidious ideological force of internalized "state" regulatory logics, including the "capitalist education system" (132): "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, trans. B. Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186.
9. I have since moved to Manchester, England, a quintessential industrial (now post-industrial) city.
10. These are the words of German Dadaist George Grosz, in his short poem "Kaffeehaus" (1917), written shortly after his release from military mental hospital where he went to cure what he called his "shattered nerves"; the poem reads: "I am a machine whose pressure gauge has gone to pieces! / And all the cylinders run in a circle—/ See: *we are all neurasthenics!*" Cited in Brigid Doherty, "See: *We Are All Neurasthenics!* or, the Trauma of Dada Montage," *Critical Inquiry* 24, no. 1 (Fall 1997), 95.
11. Barnes, from her "Preface," dated December 7, 1924; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.
12. Typescript "Notes from Elsa," Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 2.
13. The fabulous reimagining of the Baroness by Vaginal Davis at the Parlour Club in West Hollywood, California, on March 7, 2003 (password for entry: Ezra Pound), also exemplified such a creative embodiment, and a refreshing performance (by this six-foot-seven-inch African-American transvestite) of the Baroness's queer radicality.
14. Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, "Contradictory Speculations on My Own Hook's Fallibility," handwritten text, probably written in 1927, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1.
15. Barnes probably recopied this text as she pulled together her notes on the Baroness in 1933; it is among her "Elsa—Notes," dated April 24, 1933, at the end; Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven Collection, Special Collections, University of Maryland at College Park Libraries, Series 1, Box 1. The mid-1920s texts the Baroness wrote and sent to Barnes, collected in the University of Maryland archives, all show the signs of a delusional personality (including, in her text "Christ—Don Quixote—St. George," her identifications with these three divine or mythic figures). Elsewhere, in a letter to the editors of the *Little Review*, she remarked: "I never, never thought I were Christ. I hate Christ. . . . I hate myself as Christ! So did he!" (From the Correspondence of Elsa von Freytag-Loring-

hoben to Margaret Anderson and Jane Heap, Golda Meir Library, University of Wisconsin; see typescript p. 92.) Toward the end of her life, the Baroness seems literally to have hovered on the line between sanity and insanity; her writings show the intensity with which she resisted the threat of a breakdown of her ego, a merging of self into the ultimate—divine—other. Such delusions of grandeur are characteristic of clinically insane people, of course, but also of those men in patriarchy who project themselves into mythical transcendence as a way of denying their own immanence. Artists, of course, are aligned with the latter character type by traditional art historical discourse. On this mechanism of projection see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (1949), trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953); on its manifestation in art history, see Griselda Pollock and Rozsika Parker, “God’s Little Artist,” in their *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 82–113.

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