Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History

Paul B. Franklin

Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History

Paul B. Franklin

> Before 'being gay' became a political identity as much as a sexual one, anyone arrested in a tearoom [public men's toilet] was considered just as queer as a drag queen or a hustler.
>
> Pat Califia[1]

> Now our butler . . . thought that the word *pissotière* . . . was actually *pistière* . . . Constantly the butler would say: 'Surely M. le Baron de Charlus must have contracted a disease from standing around as long as he does in a *pistière*. That is what happens to an old womaniser . . . This morning, Madame sent me to Neuilly to run an errand. As I passed the *pistière* on the Rue de Bourgogne, I saw M. le Baron de Charlus enter. When I returned from Neuilly, well over an hour later, I saw his yellow trousers in the same *pistière*, in the same place, at the middle bay, where he always stands so that no one sees him.'
>
> Marcel Proust[2]

Comfort stations, bathrooms, water-closets, urinals, lavatories, toilets, rest rooms, loos, *pissoirs*, *pissotières*, *toilettes*, *petits coins*, *lieux*, *vespasiennes*, *édicules*, *cabinets d'aisances*, *chalets de nécessité* . . . and the list goes on. The sheer number of English and French terms invented to describe the public spaces into which individuals enter in order to shit and piss reveal a cultural fascination with these base and basic bodily functions. While such architectural edifices have dotted western cities since antiquity, their presence in modern metropolitan landscapes invariably has triggered anxiety among local citizens and governments. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Paris and New York, for example, individuals and institutions couched their concerns regarding *pissoirs* in the rhetoric of public health. However, behind these worries lingered another more pernicious threat, one putatively indigenous to the urban jungle and exacerbated by the existence of public toilets – male homosexuality. Parisian public health officials and social reformers at the turn of the century believed that 'male homosexuals . . . were attracted to public toilets just as moths were to street lights'.[3] According to historian George Chauncey, 'Of all the spaces to which men had recourse for sexual encounters [in New York between 1890 and 1940], none were more specific to gay men – or more highly contested, both within the gay world and without – than . . . public comfort stations and subway washrooms.'[4] The all-male arena of the *pissoir* is a latently and even a patently queer space; it is, as Lee Edelman maintains, 'a site of a particular heterosexual anxiety about the potential inscriptions of homosexual desire and about the possibility of knowing or recognizing whatever might constitute "homosexual difference"'.[5]

One may wonder what any of this has to do with Marcel Duchamp, the daddy of dada whose credentials as a life-long, card-carrying heterosexual have never been in doubt. While the interwoven histories of *pissoirs* and male-male public sex may not have been part of Duchamp's life story per se, they are part and parcel of his readymade *Fountain*, a mass-produced urinal which he purchased from a plumbing supply store, signed 'R. MUTT 1917' and declared a work of art. In fact, the art-historical legacy that Duchamp inaugurated with *Fountain* haunted him throughout his long life (1887–1968). For example, after he moved to Buenos Aires in 1919, his close friend, the dada artist Francis Picabia, announced that the Frenchman had travelled to the

1. P. Califia, *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex* (Cleis Press: San Francisco, 1994), p. 80.

2. 'Or notre maître d'hôtel . . . croyait que le mot "pissotière" . . . était "pistière" . . . Constamment le maître d'hôtel disait: "Certainement M. le baron de Charlus a pris une maladie pour rester si longtemps dans une pistière. Voilà ce que c'est que d'être un vieux coureur de femmes . . . Ce matin, Madame m'a envoyé faire une course à Neuilly. A la pistière de la rue de Bourgogne, j'ai vu entrer M. le baron de Charlus. En revenant de Neuilly, bien une heure après, j'ai vu ses pantalons jaunes dans la même pistière, à la même place, au milieu, où il se met toujours pour qu'on ne le voie pas."' M. Proust, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Gallimard: Paris, 1988), vol. 3, pp. 694–5.

3. 'Les invertis . . . étaient attirés par les vespasiennes tout autant que les papillons de nuit par les lumières des réverbères.' C. Maillard, *Les Vespasiennes de Paris ou les précieux édicules* (La Jeune Parque: Paris, 1967), p. 68.

4. G. Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (Basic Books: New York, 1994), p. 196. For a related analysis of public men's toilets in Toronto during this era, see Steven Maynard, 'Through a Hole in the Lavatory Wall: Homosexual Subcultures, Police Surveillance, and the Dialectics of Discovery, Toronto, 1890–1930', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 5, no. 2, October 1994, pp. 207–42.

5. L. Edelman, *Homographesis* (Routledge: New York, 1994), p. 160.

Argentine capital 'in order to set up a hygienic service of *Pissotières* [*sic*]', a venture which he jestingly dubbed 'Rady-Made' rather than readymade.[6] Moreover, in late 1920 as a dada homage to Duchamp, Picabia appropriated a mail-order form for books, filled it out and requested ten copies of *Pi-pi-caca-bia*, a fictitious publication whose title is a scatological pun on his surname. Indicating that he would 'attach the sum of shit' as payment, he asked that the books be sent to his gallery which housed his *Collection Gaga*, consisting of a '*pissoir* and flannel vest'.[7] Near the end of his life, wondering how he would be immortalized, Duchamp speculated, 'I will have (later) only a public toilet or underground W. C. in my name.'[8]

Scholars consistently cite *Fountain* as one of the most significant and radical contributions to the history of modern art yet no one, to my knowledge, has contextualized this infamous *objet trouvé* within larger debates in Paris and New York regarding *pissoirs* and their integral place within the flourishing gay male subcultures of these two cosmopolitan centres. With the exception of Jonathan Weinberg, most scholars suffer from interpretative blockage in the face of *Fountain*, unable or unwilling to acknowledge its queer resonance.[9] Following the lead of Duchamp's art-world contemporaries, who perceived *Fountain* as a 'Madonna' and a 'Buddha', several art historians argue that this quintessentially masculine object is feminine in gender and, thus, yet another heterosexual rendering of the white female body.[10] Rosalind Krauss identifies an 'erotic subtext' in *Fountain* but assumes it to be a heterosexual one, 'giving to the lax shape of its hollow interior the suggestion of a uterine form, and to its surface the implied curves of the female body'.[11] In one of his many musings on *Fountain*, Thierry de Duve wonders whether this 'unlikely goddess of love' can be understood as a 'marble Aphrodite'.[12] Amelia Jones employs similarly gendered language, characterizing *Fountain* as 'a urinal shaped like a womb, ready to embrace the ''piss'' ejaculate of every male passerby'.[13] Finally, William Camfield, in his 1989 monograph on *Fountain*, asserts that Duchamp chose this particular plumbing fixture only after being seduced by its feminine aesthetic properties: '*Fountain* quietly exudes sexuality. A masculine association cannot be divorced from the object because the original identity and function of the urinal remain evident, yet the overriding image is one of some generic female form – a smooth, rounded organic shape with flowing curves . . . [Duchamp] transfigured [*Fountain*] from a fixture serving the dirty, biological needs of men to a form suggestive of a serene seated buddha or a chaste, veiled madonna.'[14] While *Fountain* may be 'feminine' in form, it is not a priori a female object. Arguing so presupposes gender to be a natural and unproblematic effect of biological sex, a naive conclusion resolutely disproved in a plethora of recent feminist and queer theory.[15]

In his 1969 catalogue raisonné of Duchamp's *oeuvre*, Arturo Schwarz offered the kernel of a queer reading of *Fountain* when he distinguished its 'autoerotic' quality and 'hermaphroditic overtones'.[16] More recently, David Hopkins proposed a provocative psychoanalytic reading of this readymade, arguing that it dramatizes the conditions by which a 'proto-fetishistic/homosexual masculinity articulates the anxiety of its originary encounter with lack'.[17] In what follows, I amplify and expand upon Schwarz and Hopkins, weaving queer history more tightly into art history. I contend that Duchamp's choice of *Fountain* as a readymade is a revolutionary gesture in the history of art precisely because it questions canonical notions of authorship and the art object by making visible the intimate alliance between certain modes of avant-garde artistic production and queer sexualities. To substantiate this claim, I reconstruct the queer social history surrounding public men's toilets and male-

6. 'Marcel Duchamp parti à Buenos-Ayres pour y organiser un service hygiénique de Pissotières.–(Rady-Made).' Pharmousse [F. Picabia], 'New York–Paris–Zurich–Barcelone', *391*, no. 8, February 1919, p. 8.

7. F. Picabia, *Bulletin de souscription*, Dossiers Picabia, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet (henceforward BLJD), Paris, vol. 4, p. 44. I have ascertained the date of this piece based on the internal chronology of the scrapbook.

8. Duchamp, letter to Dr Raymond Dumouchel and his wife, 25 January 1967. Quoted in J. Gough-Cooper and J. Caumont, 'Ephemerides on and about Marcel Duchamp and Rrose Sélavy, 1887–1968', in P. Hulten (ed.), *Marcel Duchamp, Work and Life* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1993), entry for 25 January 1967.

9. See J. Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 1993), pp. 208–11; and J. Weinberg, 'Urination and Its Discontents', in W. Davis (ed.), *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History* (The Haworth Press, Inc.: New York, 1994), pp. 225–43.

10. Louise Norton, Beatrice Wood, Carl Van Vechten, Alfred Stieglitz and Guillaume Apollinaire all described *Fountain* as either a 'Madonna' or a 'Buddha'. See W. Camfield, *Marcel Duchamp: Fountain* (The Menil Collection and Fine Art Press: Houston, 1989), pp. 33–5, 40–1. Norton first proposed such an interpretation in her unsigned 1917 defence of *Fountain* entitled 'Buddha of the Bathroom' in *The Blind Man*, no. 2, May 1917, pp. 5–6. Both her contemporaries and subsequent art historians, however, have failed to discern the strain of dada irony and sarcasm in Norton's text.

11. R. Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Thames and Hudson: London, 1977), p. 79.

12. T. de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), p. 85.

13. A. Jones, 'Eros, That's Life, Or the Baroness' Penis', in F. Naumann (ed.), *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1996, p. 247 note 35.

14. Camfield, *Fountain*, p. 53.

15. Undoubtedly, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subordination of Identity* (Routledge: New York, 1990) and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (Routledge: New York, 1993) are the most influential examples of such scholarship.

16. A. Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (1969; reprint, Delano Greenidge Editions: New York, 1997), vol. 1, p. 200.

17. D. Hopkins, 'Men Before the Mirror: Duchamp, Man Ray and Masculinity', *Art History*, vol. 21, no. 3, September 1998, p. 319.

male public sex in Paris and New York during the 1910s and 1920s towards which both *Fountain* and Alfred Stieglitz's photographic representation of it gesture. Such a context provides an interpretive framework by which to examine critically the public men's room and the modern art gallery as two similarly contested terrains of sexual exhibitionism and erotic exchange, an affinity which Duchamp's choice of *Fountain* as a readymade as well as several of his subsequent works playfully yet poignantly instantiate. Rather than 'outing' Duchamp, a misdirected and misconstrued goal of queer studies, I instead intend to 'out' his *oeuvre*, analysing it in relation to a body of cultural evidence long overlooked by art historians because of its reputedly unorthodox content. In so doing, I take Duchamp as my interpretive guide, for he sagely acknowledged that 'the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering its inner qualifications and thus adds his [*sic*] contribution to the creative act'.[18]

Public Conveniences, Public Nuisances

The first public toilets appeared on the streets of Paris in 1841. In 1871, 687 *pissoirs* stood in the city, and by 1904 nearly 4,000 such structures dotted its thoroughfares, public squares and parks.[19] From their inauguration until their near total demolition and replacement by underground pay toilets in the 1960s, *pissoirs* ignited endless battles between public health officials, reformers and the Parisian citizenry, regarding their moral and social efficacy. In 1934, Gabriel Chevalier parodied these often contentious conflicts in *Clochemerle*, a highly successful comic novel that recounted the difficulties faced by the mayor of the small town of Clochemerle-en-Beaujolais when he decided to erect a *pissotière* next to the local church. Originally designed to curb men from urinating openly in the streets and on public monuments, many felt these modern conveniences bred moral and hygienic problems far worse than those they ameliorated. In fact, since at least the 1860s, the Paris police regularly raided *pissoirs* in order to stifle homosexual activity, including male prostitution.[20] Such surveillance tactics proved remarkably effective. In a single month in 1905, for example, law enforcement arrested 200 men in the toilets of Les Halles, the city's main market place.[21]

Beginning in the Second Empire with Haussmannization, *pissoirs* became synonymous with Paris itself, a development candidly recorded in the numerous photographs of these majestic *mobiliers urbains* taken by Charles Marville during the 1860s, under the auspices of the municipal government (Fig. 1).[22] Tourists flocked to the City of Light to behold these exalted and reviled landmarks to modern urbanism. Henry Miller, who moved to Paris as a young writer in 1930, noted that 'one of the first things which strikes the eye of the American visitor, which thrills him, warms him to the very gizzard is this ubiquitous urinal'.[23] These monuments also had the dubious distinction of being hotbeds of male-male public sex. In the 1890s, the anarchist and poet Laurent Tailhade described the sexual pleasures available to men who dared to enter these edifices: 'It is nice to go in the evening / To hang out in a *pissoir* / There, the homosexual lives, / He will titillate you and your cock, / And for a bit of money / Let you put it up his ass.'[24] René Rédon, a gay man who migrated to Paris from the Limousin region in 1916, proudly recalled that he met *all* his sexual partners in the *vespasiennes*: 'They were the only thing I knew! I never set foot in a bathhouse! . . . They were active day and night.'[25] Brassaï, who immortalized the *pissotières* in a celebrated series of photographs taken in the early 1930s, made similar observations: 'At nightfall, along with

Also see Juan Antonio Ramírez, *Duchamp: Love and Death, Even*, trans. A. Tulloch (Reaktion Books: London, 1998), pp. 56–9.

18. M. Duchamp, *The Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, eds. M. Sanouillet and E. Peterson (Da Capo Press: New York, 1989), p. 140. Further citations from this work appear parenthetically within the text. As an exceptionally problematic example of recent scholarship which relies upon Duchamp's biography and particularly his sexuality, including a hypothesis regarding his 'homosexuality' or 'bisexuality', as the hermeneutic key to his entire *oeuvre*, see Jerrold Seigel, *The Private Worlds of Marcel Duchamp: Desire, Liberation, and the Self in Modern Culture* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1995).

19. Maillard, *Les Vespasiennes*, pp. 24, 37; Roger-Henri Guerrand, *Les Lieux: histoire des commodités* (Éditions La Découverte: Paris, 1997), pp. 92, 165.

20. Guerrand, *Les Lieux*, p. 117. Sodomy formally was decriminalized in France in 1791, when the Constitutional Assembly omitted this 'crime against nature' from the Penal Code. Law enforcement agents, however, continued to arrest men in *pissoirs* under Articles 330 and 334 of the Penal Code of 1810 which legislated respectively against 'a public offence against decency' and 'facilitating debauchery or corruption of young people of either sex under the age of twenty-one'. See Michael David Sibalis, 'The Regulation of Male Homosexuality in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, 1789–1815', in J. Merrick and B. Ragan (eds.), *Homosexuality in Modern France* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1996), pp. 80–101.

21. Dr P. Gallus, *L'Amour chez les dégénérés: étude anthropologique, philosophique et médicale* (E. Petit: Paris, 1905), p. 191. For one particularly well-publicized arrest, see Christian Gury, *L'Honneur perdu d'un politicien homosexuel en 1876: des clefs pour Flaubert, Maupassant et Proust* (Éditions Kimé: Paris, 1999).

22. On Marville, see Marie de Thézy with Roxane Debuisson, *Marville, Paris* (Hazan: Paris, 1994); Pierre Borhan, *Charles Marville, les vespasiennes* (Paris-Musées: Paris, 1994); and Robert Jay, 'The Late Work of Charles Marville', *History of Photography*, vol. 19, Winter 1995, pp. 328–37.

23. H. Miller, *Black Spring* (1936; reprint, Grove Press: New York, 1963), p. 43.

24. 'Il est doux d'aller le soir / Vadrouiller dans un pissoir. / Là, le pédéraste habite, / Il vous chatouille la bite, / Et pour un petit écu / Se le fourre dans le cul.' L. Tailhade, *Poésies érotiques* (Au dépens de quelques amateurs: Geneva, 1922), p. 2.

25. 'Je n'ai connu que cela! Je n'ai jamais mis les pieds dans un bain de vapeur! . . . Elles fonctionnaient de jour comme de nuit.' Quoted in G. Barbedette and M. Carassou, *Paris gay*

Fig. 1. Charles Marville: *Pissotière in front of 44, rue de Rennes (later 4, place Saint-Germain-des-Prés), Paris*, c.1865–1870. Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Paris.

the street lights, the *vespasiennes* lit up like small chapels subjected to strange forms of worship. Without exception, each public toilet was a place for homosexuals to gather and meet . . . During this epoch, the night-time ballet of the inverts, their comings and goings, lasted throughout the night.'[26] By the mid-1930s, public toilets had become such a popular venue for sex between men that some more prudish gay men expressed disgust for those who engaged in such behaviour. According to Michel du Coglay in his 1937 chronicle of the Parisian sexual underworld, 'the great majority of male inverts supremely despise those who flit from tearoom to tearoom'.[27]

Pissoirs occupied such a privileged status within both the Parisian gay world and the French homosexual imagination that they inspired a genre of gay pornography. Two ink and watercolour drawings, produced in the 1920s by an unidentified French artist and part of two larger series depicting male-male sex in public toilets, exemplify this phenomenon (Figs. 2 and 3). The former pictures a white, dandyish Frenchman sitting on the floor grate inside a *pissotière* masturbating with his right hand and sucking the enormous cock of an

1925 (Presses de la Renaissance: Paris, 1981), p. 76.

26. 'A la tombée de la nuit, en même temps que les réverbères, les vespasiennes s'allumaient, petites chapelles sujettes à d'étranges cultes. Autant d'édicules, autant de point de rassemblement et de fraternisation des homosexuels . . . A cette époque, le ballet noir des invertis, leur allées et venues duraient toute la nuit.' Brassaï, *Le Paris secret des années 30* (Gallimard: Paris, 1976), p. 54.

27. ' . . . la grand masse des invertis dédaigne souverainement ceux qui papillonnent de tasse en tasse.' M. du Coglay, *Chez les mauvais garçons: choses vues* (Éditions Raoul Saillard: Paris, 1937), p. 190.

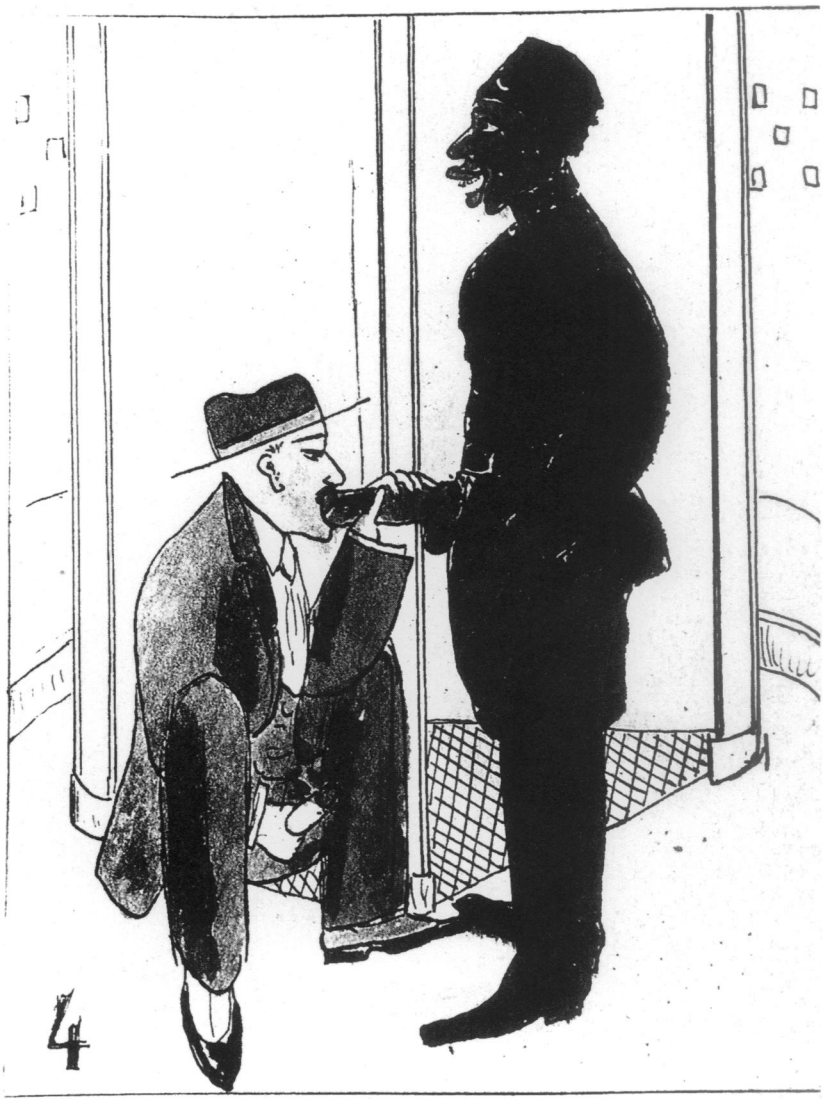

Fig. 2. Anonymous: *Untitled*, c.1920s, ink and water colour on paper, 14.2 × 10.8 cm. Collection of the author.

African soldier who stares off into space with his mouth open, as if moaning in ecstasy. The latter drawing, titled *A la caserne* (In the barracks), shows two French soldiers inside a *toilette à la turque*, one of whom is crouching and masturbating while he sucks his buddy's cock. Among the heterosexual graffiti on the walls, the artist included an image of two naked men engaged in anal sex which, not coincidentally, has been drawn so that the standing soldier appears poised to take the erect penis of the man being penetrated into his own open mouth. The words scrawled beneath this sketch, *aux chiottes* (in the johns), demarcate such spaces as rife with homosexual possibilities, traversing the most entrenched cultural divisions of sexuality, race, ethnicity, class and geography. These provocative representations and the above eye-witness accounts help explain why the utility and visibility of *pissoirs* were so hotly contested in Paris.

In New York, where Duchamp lived from 1915 to 1918, public toilets and

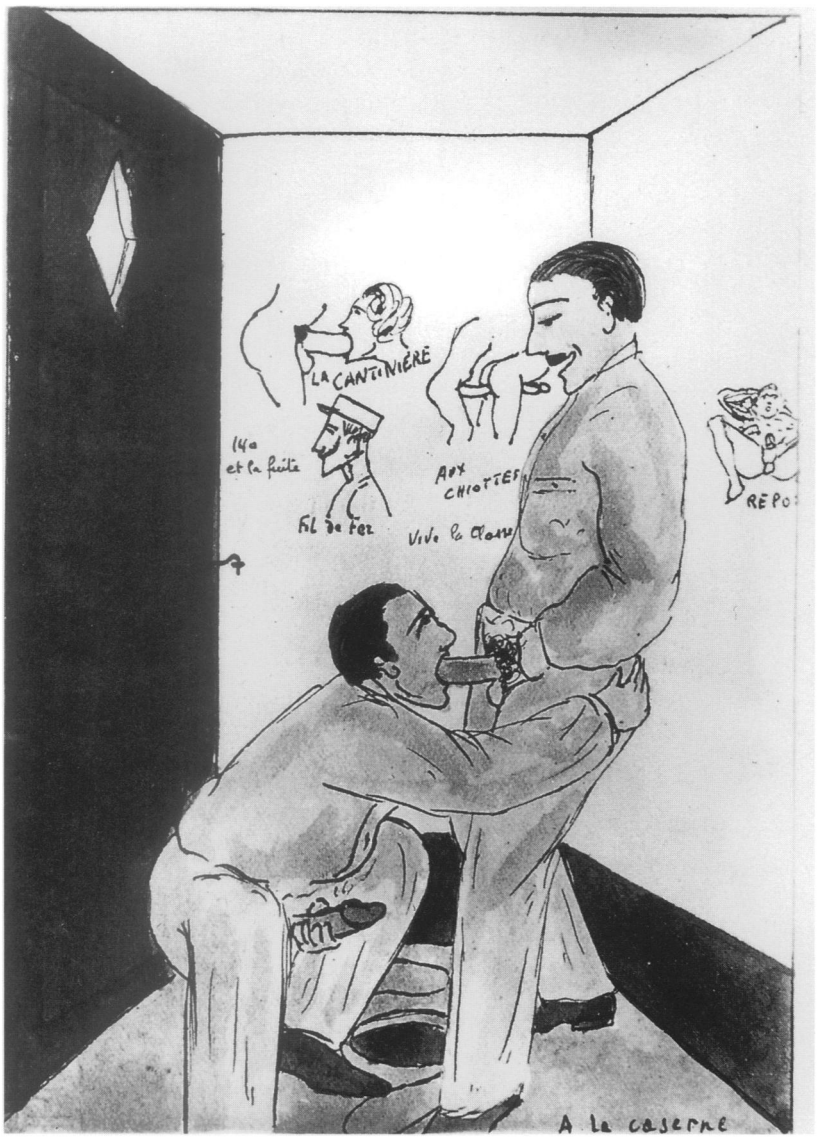

Fig. 3. Anonymous: *A la caserne*, c.1920s, ink and water colour on paper, 16.1 × 11.4 cm. Collection of the author.

public comfort stations were a more recent phenomenon. Following the example of Paris and London, New York authorities unveiled the first such structures in the 1890s. In parks and at major intersections, these edifices provided lower-middle-class and working-class men an alternative to saloons which until then housed the only publicly available toilets.[28] In 1907, there were eight public comfort stations in Manhattan with a total of 209 urinals.[29] By 1925, they numbered eighteen with hundreds more semi-public toilets located in department stores, libraries, hotels, bathhouses, cinemas, train stations and municipal buildings.[30]

Men of diverse backgrounds from throughout the New York metropolitan area flocked to these venues almost immediately after they opened in search of sex with other men. Throughout 1896, police staged a number of raids in at least four comfort stations in lower Manhattan, arresting numerous men for

28. Committee of Seventy, *Preliminary Report of the Sub-Committee on Baths and Lavatories* (Committee of Seventy: New York, 1895), p. 10. As of April 1894, 7,247 licensed saloons were operating in New York City, each presumably with at least one urinal.

29. F. Ford, *Public Comfort Stations* (Department of City Making: Hartford: CT, March 1907), department leaflet no. 14, p. 4.

30. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 196.

lewd conduct.[31] The expansion of the subway system in the 1910s brought with it hundreds of new underground toilets, many of which became well-known enclaves for homosexual activity. Recounting life in the city during these years, the businessman W. Ward Smith wrote: 'I have often wondered . . . how many young boys have had their cocks sucked, or been buggered in the public toilets of the subway stations. It isn't possible to visit these public toilets without finding men standing around either masturbating, or in the act of abusing one another.'[32] By 1921, thirty-eight per cent of the arrests made for male homosexual activity in the city occurred in subway toilets.[33] Despite the dangers inherent in public toilet sex – dangers that many men actually found erotic – these fluid spaces offered a social and sexual meeting place for a cross-section of men in Paris and New York in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Duchamp's Readymade

The controversial history surrounding public men's toilets in Paris and New York during the 1910s and 1920s offers an alternative context for understanding the impetus behind Duchamp's choice of a urinal as a readymade as well as the anxiety this choice produced among his contemporaries. In late March or early April 1917, as a result of a discussion with his friend and patron, Walter Arensberg, and the painter Joseph Stella, Duchamp decided to purchase a urinal and submit it to the upcoming exhibition of the American Society of Independent Artists, a newly founded art organization on whose board he and Arensberg sat.[34] Duchamp intended to test the tolerance of the Society which, like its French forebear, the *Société des Artistes Indépendants*, was founded on the democratic principle of 'no juries, no prizes'. The three men went to the showroom of J. L. Mott Iron Works. Founded in 1828 and located at 118–120 Fifth Avenue, this establishment was one of the largest plumbing supply companies in the United States. At J. L. Mott Iron Works, the three men encountered a vast array of sanitary fixtures which, according to a 1911 sales catalogue, embodied 'the possibilities and perfection of modern plumbing of the highest class'.[35] Presided over by the blue-blooded Jordan Lawrence Mott, the son of the founder, until his death in 1915, this enterprise offered its customers the opportunity to admire and examine its products *in situ* in the form of fully equipped, simulated, sanitary environments, ranging from household bathrooms and shower rooms to public washrooms and, of course, public lavatories.[36] During the 1910s, the company won acclaim at trade conventions for the design of its exhibition booths, typifying the trend in modern merchandizing to aestheticize showroom display irrespective of the functional aspects of the wares being marketed.[37] These 'artistic and beautiful, novel and complete' floor models of the private and public spaces of personal hygiene ensured that even the most priggish or squeamish customer would undergo an aesthetic experience while shopping.[38] Under such optimum conditions, Duchamp, Arensberg and Stella together selected an inexpensive, white porcelain urinal, the model name of which remains unidentified, complete with a flushing rim and 'ears' to attach it to the wall.[39]

Perhaps a conscious recognition of the queer correspondence between the space of the exhibition gallery and the public men's room, as exemplified in the aesthetically-laden showroom displays at J. L. Mott Iron Works, inspired Duchamp, as he and his buddies returned to his studio with their porcelain purchase.[40] The Frenchman christened his urinal *Fountain*, crudely signed it

31. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 196.

32. W. Ward Smith, *A Letter From My Father*, ed. P. Smith (W. H. Allen: London, 1984), vol. 1, p. 69. I thank Eric Concklin for bringing this reference to my attention.

33. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 198.

34. Schwarz, *Complete Works of Duchamp*, vol. 2, p. 648. Duchamp was not alone in introducing sanitary plumbing fixtures into modern art, during this period. In 1917, Morton Schamberg and the dadaist Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven mounted a cast-iron plumbing trap upside down inside a miter box and christened it *God* (Arensberg Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art). In 1919, the Dutch dada artist Paul Citroën created a line drawing titled *Hollandia* (Private collection, Mailand), a realistic rendering of a toilet stool and its exterior plumbing. Between October and November 1925, the American photographer Edward Weston shot his *Excusado* series, seven images of the white, enamelled toilet stool located in the bathroom of his home in Mexico. Unlike *Fountain*, the latter two works gesture toward the private, individual spaces of the domestic bathroom or the enclosed public toilet stall. In her analysis of *Fountain* and its relationship to American debates regarding physical hygiene ('Bathrooms and Kitchens: Cleaning House with Duchamp', in N. Lahiji and D. Friedman (eds.), *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture* (Princeton Architectural Press: New York, 1997), pp. 75–92), Helen Molesworth erroneously conflates the private domestic space of the bathroom with that of the public men's room, failing to distinguish between the urinal and the toilet.

35. J. L. Mott Iron Works, *Modern Plumbing No. 6* (Bartlett and Co.: New York, 1911), p. 7.

36. Jordan Lawrence Mott (1831–1915) went into the family business in 1849, became a partner in the company in 1853 and assumed its presidency in 1866. The factories of J. L. Mott Iron Works originally were located in Mott Haven, on the Harlem River, but were moved to Trenton, New Jersey around 1895. In April 1917, just days after the opening of the Independents' exhibition, the company announced it was transferring its corporate offices from New York to Trenton. See Anon., 'Jordan L. Mott, Former Head of The J. L. Mott Iron Works, New York City, Passes Away', *The Plumbers Trade Journal, Steam and Hot Water Fitters Review*, vol. 59, no. 4, 15 August 1915, p. 246; Anon., 'Jordan L. Mott Dies in 86th Year', *New York Times*, 27 July 1915, p. 9; and *The Plumbers Trade Journal, Steam and Hot Water Fitters Review*, vol. 62, no. 8, 15 April 1915, p. 483.

37. See Anon., 'Some Exhibits at Annual Convention of the National Association of Master Plumbers', *The Plumbers Trade Journal, Steam and Hot Water Fitters Review*, vol. 58, no. 3, 1 August 1915, p. 172. On the aesthetics of

and sent it, along with the requisite membership and entry fees, to the Society under the pseudonym 'Richard Mutt'. He later disclosed that 'Richard' was a pun on *richard*, the vernacular French term for money bags, while 'Mutt' was a word play on both J. L. Mott Iron Works and 'Mutt and Jeff', a wildly popular newspaper comic strip and animated film series of the period.[41]

A major brouhaha ensued when the Society received Richard Mutt's submission. Unaware that Duchamp had masterminded the scheme, the board of the Society overrode their edict of 'no jury' and voted to exclude *Fountain* from the exhibition, publicly proclaiming that this common plumbing fixture 'may be a very useful object in its place, but its place is not an art exhibition, and it is, by no definition, a work of art'.[42] In a private confrontation with Arensberg, George Bellows, an artist and board member, exclaimed: 'It is gross, offensive! There is such a thing as decency.'[43] Disgusted by the hypocrisy and moral righteousness of his fellow board members, Duchamp resigned from the Society and reclaimed his entry. Several days later, he took *Fountain* to 291, the modern art gallery operated by Alfred Stieglitz, and, with the help of his friend and former lover, Beatrice Wood, persuaded the pioneering photographer-dealer to photograph it (Fig. 4).[44] Under somewhat mysterious circumstances, *Fountain* disappeared soon after, never to be seen again.

From its conception to its photographic immortalization, *Fountain* was enmeshed in a telling series of male-male collaborations. Innocently, 'collaboration' denotes work done in common. Less innocently, however, it calls to mind espionage, clandestine dealings with the enemy in order to jeopardize one's presumed allies. By photographing *Fountain*, Stieglitz unknowingly furnished incriminating evidence of Duchamp's collaboration with Arensberg and Stella, a covert operation intended to undermine the Society of Independent Artists.[45] In the photographic process, Stieglitz also implicated himself as a co-conspirator, a fact disclosed soon after in *The Blind Man*. Edited by Duchamp, Beatrice Wood and Henri-Pierre Roché, the second and final issue of this avant-garde periodical, published in May 1917 as a defence of *Fountain*, included a full-page reproduction of Stieglitz's photograph with the caption 'THE EXHIBIT REFUSED BY THE INDEPENDENTS' emblazoned below it as well as the credits 'Fountain by R. Mutt' and 'Photograph by Alfred Stieglitz' printed above it. In associating himself with *Fountain*, Stieglitz, an avant-garde heavyweight and 'safety valve for repressed ideas', as one admirer described him in 1914, lent a degree of legitimacy and prestige to this controversial object.[46] However, he also deftly distanced himself from its crudity. Like the Display Department at J. L. Mott Iron Works, in his photograph, Stieglitz veiled Duchamp's readymade in an aura of aesthetic purity. Shot slightly from below, this close-up image presents *Fountain* as monumental and totemic. Atop a rough wooden pedestal and turned slightly on its axis, the object is lit dramatically from above, accentuating its contours. It also has been rotated ninety degrees from its functional position and lies on its back. All of these formal features of Stieglitz's symbolist aesthetic imbue *Fountain* with a certain anthropomorphic quality.

On one level, the axial rotation of *Fountain* ironically instantiates the transformation of this mass-produced waste receptacle into both a precious source of bodily sustenance and a sanctified work of art. The latter fact is reiterated in Stieglitz's photograph by way of the visible exhibition entry tag that hangs from the object in the lower left. Moreover, the literal reorientation of *Fountain* suggests a metaphoric reorientation of the physical

plumbing display, see Anon., 'The Trenton Potteries Company Exhibit at New Jersey Master Plumbers Convention', *Sanitary Pottery*, vol. 8, no. 3, July 1915, p. 8; and Anon., 'Prize Winning Exhibit of the Peerless Selling Co., Evansville, Ind.', *The Plumbers Trade Journal, Steam and Hot Water Fitters Review*, vol. 59, no. 4, 15 August 1915, p. 240.

38. J. L. Mott, *Modern Plumbing*, p. 7. Marsden Hartley, a gay man and artist who travelled in the same circles as Duchamp, ruminated on the aesthetic properties of plumbing fixtures and the homoerotic pleasure to be garnered from a plumber's handiwork, in his article 'The Beautiful Neglected Arts' (*The Little Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, June 1919, pp. 59–64).

39. Surviving sales catalogues indicate that J. L. Mott Iron Works sold an extraordinary variety of urinals. In a 1905 catalogue (*Mott's Hospital Fixtures* (Bartlett and Co.: New York, 1905), p. 100), the manufacturer specifically targeted customers interested in such fixtures: 'For illustrations, descriptions and prices of other urinals, both porcelain and enameled-iron, as well as urinal troughs, send for our special circulars on this subject.' Camfield (*Fountain*, pp. 24 note 22, 53 note 66) searched extant company sales catalogues in the hope of finding the original model for *Fountain*. The paucity of these documents, however, made a thorough search and a definitive identification impossible. While he proposes that a 1902 Heavy Vitro-adamant Urinal 839-Y may be the type Duchamp purchased and Kirk Varnedoe (*High Low: Modern Art and Popular Culture*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1990, p. 276–77) argues that the flat-back Bedfordshire Urinal sold by the A. Y. MacDonald Company is the model for *Fountain*, my archival research uncovered a third possible model, the standard porcelain flat-back lipped urinal first marketed by the company in the late nineteenth century (J. L. Mott Iron Works, *Catalogue 'G'* (J. L. Mott Iron Works: New York, 1888), p. 232).

40. Max Ernst and Johannes Theodor Baargeld invoked such an association in their April 1920 collaborative exhibition *Dada Ausstellung: Dada–Vorfrühling* (Dada Exhibition: Dada–Early Spring) at the Brauhaus Winter in Cologne. Organized in protest against their exclusion from an exhibition at the Arts and Crafts Museum, Ernst and Baargeld displayed their dada work in a single room which, according to eye witnesses, one could enter and exit only by walking through a public toilet. See W. Camfield, *Max Ernst: Dada and the Dawn of Surrealism* (Prestel: Munich, 1993), pp. 69–71.

41. O. Hahn, 'Passport No. G255300', trans. A. Rabeneck, *Arts and Artists*, vol. 1, no. 4, July 1966, p. 10. On the *Mutt and Jeff* silent movie serial, see Steve Higgins, 'Mutt and Jeff Meet the Horsleys', in E. Bowser (ed.), *The Slapstick Symposium* (Fédération Internationale des Archives du Film: Brussels, 1988), pp. 37–43.

42. Anon., 'His Art Too Crude for

Independents', *New York Herald*, 11 April 1917, p. 6.

43. Quoted in B. Wood, *I Shock Myself: The Autobiography of Beatrice Wood*, ed. L. Smith (Chronicle Books: San Francisco, 1988), p. 29. On the controversy surrounding the exclusion of *Fountain* from the Independents' exhibition, see F. Naumann, *New York Dada 1915–23* (Harry N. Abrams: New York, 1994), pp. 176-91; Camfield, *Fountain*, pp. 24–33; and T. de Duve, 'Given the Richard Mutt Case', in T. de Duve (ed.), *The Definitively Unfinished Marcel Duchamp* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1991), pp. 187–230.

44. In her diary for 13 April 1917 (quoted in Camfield, *Fountain*, p. 33), Wood wrote: 'See Stieglitz about "Fountain".' In a 19 April 1917 letter to Henry McBride (quoted in Camfield, *Fountain*, p. 34) who was the art critic at the *New York Sun* and a gay man, Stieglitz confirmed: 'I have, at the request of Roché, [John] Covert, Miss Wood, Duchamp Co., photographed the rejected "Fountain".'

45. Evidence (Camfield, *Fountain*, p. 35 note 42) indicates that Stieglitz was unaware that Duchamp was the author of *Fountain* when he agreed to photograph it.

46. Quoted in de Duve, *Kant After Duchamp*, p. 119.

47. Hopkins, 'Men Before the Mirror', p. 319.

48. See, for example, John K. Allen, 'Public Comfort Stations', *The Western Architect*, vol. 12, no. 2, August 1908, pp. 16–19; Anon., 'Unique Public Comfort Station', *Municipal Journal and Engineer*, vol. 28, no. 23, 8 June 1910, pp. 823–4; Confederated Supply Associations, 'Planning Public Comfort Stations', *Sanitary Pottery*, vol. 6, no. 12, April 1915, pp. 9–14; and Dr William Paul Gerhard, 'Public Comfort Stations', *The American City*, vol. 14, no. 5, May 1916, pp. 449–57.

49. This symbolic gendering of 291 as 'for men only' momentarily ruptured the already gendered atmosphere of its galleries as 'for women only'. On 3 April 1917, about two weeks prior to photographing *Fountain* at 291, Stieglitz mounted the work of Georgia O'Keeffe, in what was her first solo exhibition. See Richard Whelan, *Alfred Stieglitz: A Biography* (Little, Brown and Company: Boston, 1995), p. 380.

Fig. 4. Alfred Stieglitz: *Fountain* by Duchamp, 1917, gelatin silver print, 23.5 × 17.78 cm. Private collection. All works by Marcel Duchamp ©; 1999 ARS, New York/ADAGP, Paris.

positions and identities of this object and me, the viewer. In effect, we have switched places. The slightly low viewpoint in the original, uncropped photograph casts me in the subservient role of a human urinal, a kind of 'fetishistic/homosexual interpretive position' into which, according to Hopkins, *Fountain* forces all viewers.[47] Erect and symmetrical, this surrogate male figure stands over me and thrusts his bare, thick, round organ (the hollow, porcelain protrusion in the exact centre of the photograph into which a metal flushing valve normally would fit) in my face, as if ready to relieve himself and perhaps even soliciting me to assist him in this biological function.

Mounting and photographing *Fountain* as they did, Duchamp and Stieglitz evoked the raw, malodorous air of a *pissoir*, thus tainting the traditionally antiseptic atmosphere of the modern art gallery, an aesthetic environment that architects, urban planners and public health officials conversely attempted to recreate in the design and decoration of public toilets.[48] In such a context, the notion of 'exhibition' potentially took on homoerotic overtones.[49] Stieglitz's

photograph can be seen to corroborate this hypothesis. In the space behind *Fountain*, one can see details of *The Warriors* (1913), a painting by Marsden Hartley, an American artist whom Stieglitz represented (Fig. 5).[50] A gay man, Hartley lived and worked in Berlin in the 1910s. During these years, the German capital was widely known to be the queer Mecca of Europe.[51] Berlin was also the headquarters of the Prussian military. The pageantry, hypermasculinity and homoeroticism of this all-male institution so enchanted Hartley that he memorialized it in *The Warriors*. Painted one on top of the other in a hieratic composition, anonymous soldiers march toward the sun, shining forth in the top centre. A series of overtly phallic forms, echoing the contours of *Fountain*, frame this celestial body as well as four of the horsemen. The soldiers's erect postures, helmets, shields and the standards they carry all reinforce the phallic quality of these central forms. The unusual viewpoint in *The Warriors* intimates that Hartley's focus was not simply the male body but rather a particular part of its anatomy – its backside. The numerous soldiers and their horses bare their asses as they face the sun. In the homophobic imagination, the anus and anal eroticism allegedly separate male homosexuality from 'normal' (i.e. heterosexual) reproductive genitality. Concentrating on this orifice, Hartley echoed Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud who, in their collaboratively written 1871 poem 'Sonnet to the Asshole', waxed ecstatically about this pleasure zone: 'Dark and wrinkled like a purple carnation / It breathes, humbly nestled away among moss / Still moist with love[. . .]'.[52] Hartley's homoerotic valorization of Prussian posteriors proved a particularly

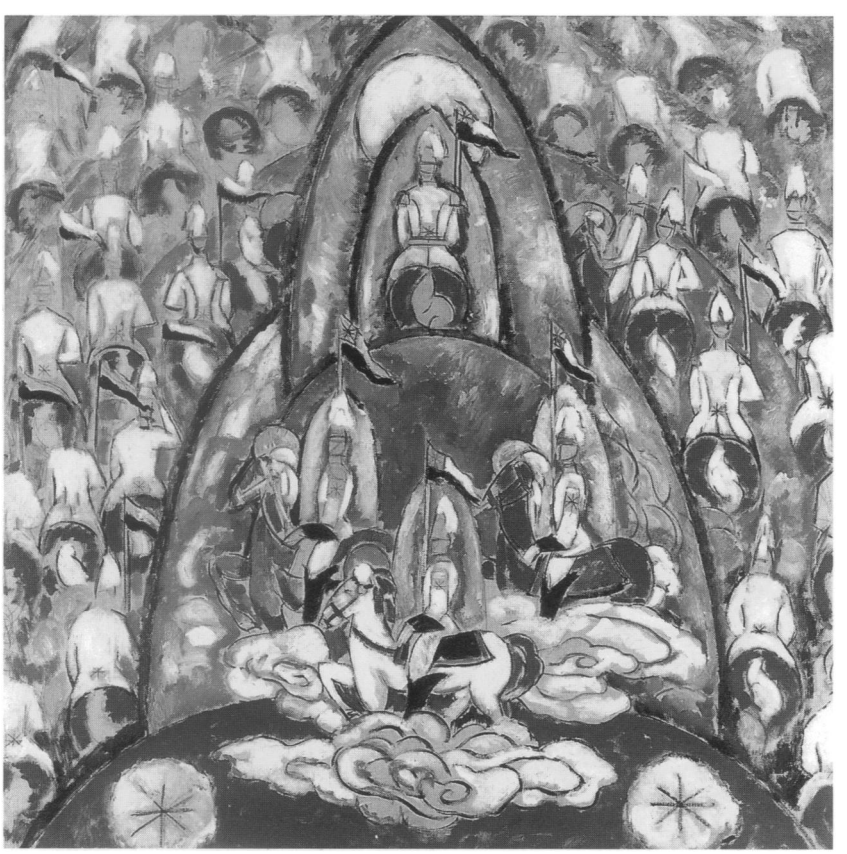

Fig. 5. Marsden Hartley, *The Warriors*, 1913, oil on canvas, 121.29 × 120.65 cm. Curtis Galleries, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

50. With the assistance of Francis Naumann, Camfield (*Fountain*, p. 35) first identified *The Warriors* as the painting behind *Fountain* in Stieglitz's photograph.

51. Hartley (quoted in B. Haskell, *Marsden Hartley*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1980, p. 31) casually informed Stieglitz in a 1915 letter that he 'lived rather gayly in the Berlin fashion – with all that implies'. On the relationship between Hartley's homosexuality and his work, see Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice*.

52. 'Obscur et froncé comme un oeillet violet / Il respire, humblement tapi parmi la mousse / Humide encore d'amour [. . .].' P. Verlaine and A. Rimbaud, 'Le sonnet du trou du cul', *Femmes Hombres*, eds. J.-P. Corsetti and J.-P. Guisto (Terrain Vague: Paris, 1990), p. 120.

provocative backdrop to *Fountain*, especially considering the fact that America officially declared war against Germany on 6 April 1917.

Queer Couplings

Stieglitz's photographic juxtaposition of *The Warriors* and *Fountain* metonymically signifies the queer coupling of the penis and the anus. Nearly perfectly framed by the large, central, phallic forms in Hartley's painting, Duchamp's readymade takes on similar connotations as it stands before this canvas and faces me. The asses of the soldiers depicted on the surface of *The Warriors* and the backside of *Fountain*, as it rests on the wooden pedestal, stand face-to-face, while the painting itself and Duchamp's readymade stand front-to-back in an arrangement suggestive of anal penetration. In this homoerotic choreography, *Fountain* exposes its vulnerable 'asshole' to Hartley's queer canvas which towers over it from behind and stares out at me. When viewed from its posterior, the curvature of *Fountain* as well as the position of its drainage hole uncannily suggest a human figure hunched over as if eagerly awaiting his due from this regiment of horny Prussian soldiers (Fig. 6). The reciprocity and interchangeability of the subject and sexual positions set in motion by the formal and spatial arrangements in Stieglitz's photograph iterate a form of homosexual identification grounded in the anus. As Guy Hocquenghem contends in his 1972 gay-liberationist, Marxist critique of the Freudian subject, 'We only see our anus in the mirror of narcissism, face to face, or rather back to front, with our own clean, private little person.'[53] And, as Freud would have us believe, narcissism is the very crux of male homosexuality.

In his 1914 essay 'On Narcissism', Freud outlined the aetiology of this psychological affliction, arguing that 'perverts and homosexuals . . . in their later choice of love-objects . . . have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed ''narcissistic''.'[54] For Freud, narcissism (self-love) goes hand-in-hand with masturbation (auto-eroticism); it is 'the attitude of a person who treats his own body in the same

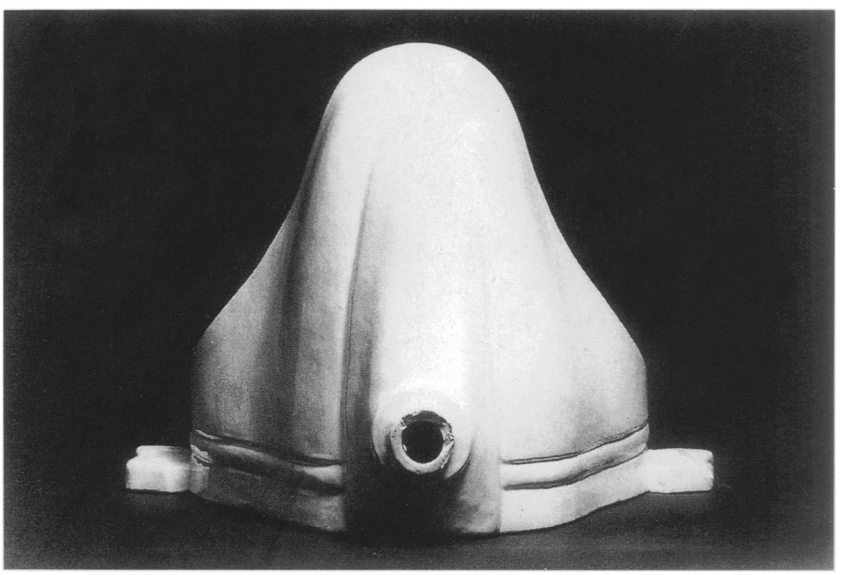

Fig. 6. Marcel Duchamp: *Fountain*, 1964, fourth version, rear view, 35.56 × 49.05 × 62.56 cm. Formally Andy Warhol collection.

53. G. Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, trans. D. Dangoor (1978; reprint Duke University Press: Durham, NC, 1993), p. 100.

54. S. Freud, 'On Narcissism: An Introduction', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (henceforward *SE*), ed. and trans. J. Strachey (Hogarth Press: London, 1964), v. 14, p. 88. Emphasis in the original. While Freud's theories, especially those pertaining to homosexuality, are highly problematic in certain respects, I invoke Freud as a cultural marker and historical palimpsest. After 1909 when Freud first travelled to America and participated in a conference at Clark University, his writings became a popular topic of discussion, particularly among New York bohemians. Dr A. A. Brill, the chief of the Clinic of Psychiatry at Columbia University who translated Freud into English, delivered the first public lecture on psychoanalysis at Mabel Dodge's salon in Greenwich Village, while Dr Elmer Ernest Southard, the director of the Boston Psychopathic Hospital, frequented the salon of Louise and Walter Arensberg. Beatrice Wood (B. Wood Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, microfilm roll 1236, frames 1529–30), a regular visitor to the Arensbergs's apartment on West 67th Street beginning in the winter of 1916–17, recalled: 'It was at a time [when] Freud was top discussion. Walter in his fine library had all of Frued's [*sic*] books.' On Freud's legacy in bohemian America in the 1910s, see Floyd Dell, 'Speaking of Psycho-Analysis', *Vanity Fair*, vol. 5, no. 4, December 1915, p. 53; M. Eastman, 'Exploring the Soul and Healing the Body', *Everybody's Magazine*, vol. 32, no. 6, June 1915, pp. 741–50; Robert M. Crunden, *American Salons: Encounters with European Modernism, 1885–1917* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1993); and Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in America: Freud and the Americans* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1995).

way in which the body of a sexual object is ordinarily treated – who looks at it, that is to say, strokes it and fondles it till he obtains complete satisfaction'.[55] In the professional opinion of many of Freud's contemporaries, frequent masturbation signalled either nascent homosexuality in a boy or latent homosexuality in a man. The spectrum of male homosexual behaviour, therefore, extended from masturbation to anal penetration, where the former was merely a mirror reflection of the latter.

55. Freud, 'On Narcissism', vol. 14, p. 73.

These two not-so-distant poles met in the second issue of *The Blind Man* in which Stieglitz's photograph of *Fountain* made its public debut. Interestingly, the editors chose to place this image on page four rather than on the cover. As a cover illustration, they selected Duchamp's painting *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2* (1914) which later appeared in the lower 'Bachelor' section of *Bride Stripped Bear by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–23), or *Large Glass*, the artist's *magnum opus* (Fig. 7). In a preparatory note for this canvas, Duchamp wrote: '*The bachelor*

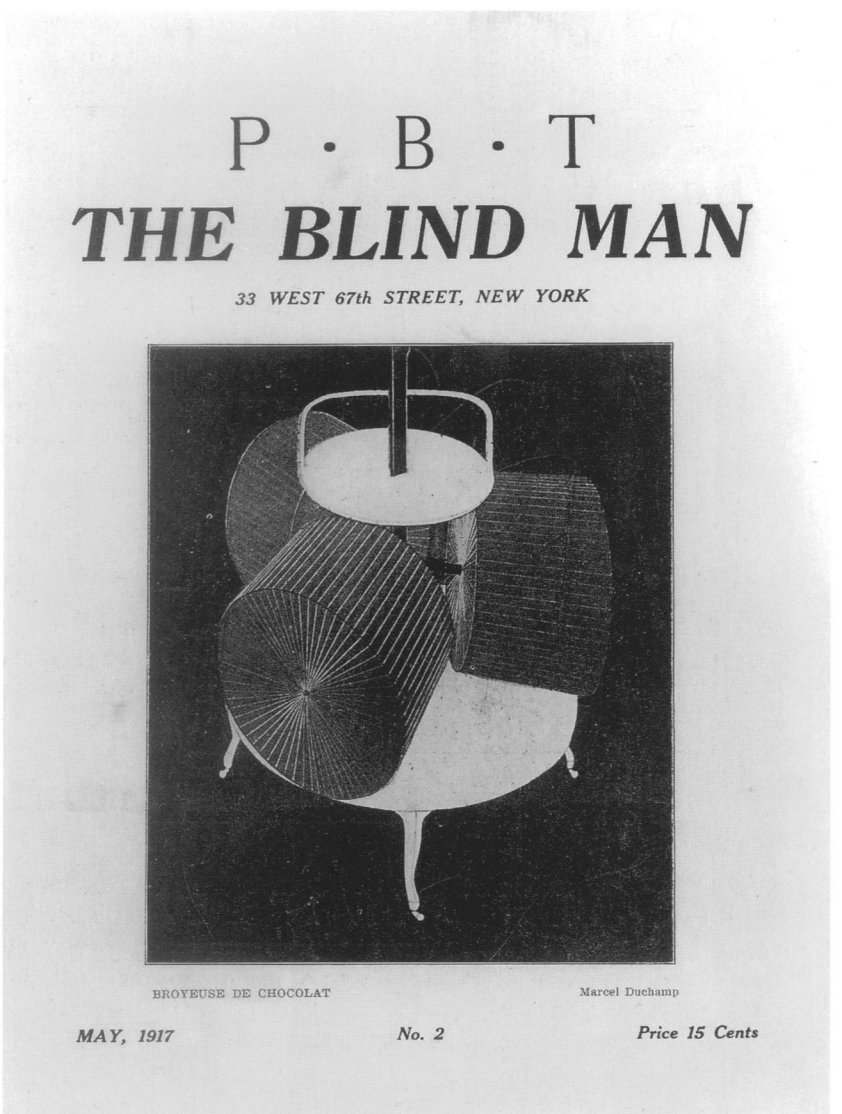

Fig. 7. Cover of *The Blind Man*, no. 2, May 1917, with *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2*, 1914, by Marcel Duchamp, 28.09 × 20.47 cm. Philadephia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Archive.

grinds his chocolate himself' (p. 68). While scholars rightly interpret this statement as a metaphor for masturbation, I would argue that it more specifically alludes to *anal* masturbation where 'chocolate' is a sweetened form of shit. As Freud noted in 1908, cocoa = caca, particularly for male homosexuals (homophobically dubbed 'fudgepackers' in modern American slang), whom he believed were transfixed by 'the anal zone's erotogenic character'.[56] In 1891, the German sexologist Albert Moll articulated the same association between autoerotic anal stimulation and male homosexuality: 'Men with homosexual tendencies have generally masturbated since their earliest age, only instead of rubbing their penis, they introduce any sort of object into their anus.'[57] Whether through anal or penile manipulation, with suitable dexterity and the appropriate *objets trouvés*, the Bachelor brings himself to orgasm. In Duchamp's painting, the product of such grinding appears to drip from the three legs of this mechanical apparatus, all of which possess a striking phallic form. The title of the periodical – *The Blind Man* – emblazoned above *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2* indicates that the Bachelor has ground his chocolate one too many times for, as the old wives's tale forewarned, he has gone blind.[58] He also may be blind with lust for a bride, but a bride of the male sex, that is to say a groom – *Fountain*.

The queer union of *Chocolate Grinder* and *Fountain* in *The Blind Man* recurs in Duchamp's *Box in a Valise* (1935–41), a portable museum of miniature replicas of his major works. Here, he mounted *Fountain*, in its functional position as a urinal, to the left of *Large Glass* and level with *Chocolate Grinder, No. 2*. *Nine Malic Moulds*, abstract phallic forms representing uniformed men in the lower left register of *Large Glass*, stand between these two works and behind the latter in the form of a panel depicting a reproduction of Duchamp's original 1914–15 glass study of them which can be pulled outward to the right (Fig. 8). Like *Fountain*, *Nine Malic Moulds* are hollow, masculine receptacles. The association of these two works delimits this all-male bachelor haven as a *pissoir*, a veritable 'world in yellow', as the artist intended to subtitle *Large Glass* (p. 44). The Malic Moulds, however, are more than merely urinating; they are enraptured, in Duchamp's words, 'by a mirror reflecting back to them their own complexity to the point of their being hallucinated rather onanistically' (p. 51). A spoonerism included in *Box in a Valise* reveals that these onanistic hallucinations manifest themselves in the form of mutual masturbation: '*A charge de revanche et à verge de rechange*' (p. 107). In the safety and comfort of their bachelor pad, each Malic Mould gropes for a 'replacement penis' (*à verge de rechange*) on the body of his neighbour and 'expects the favour to be returned' (*A charge de revanche*), in what amounts to a circle jerk.

Bodily Functions, Medical Theories

The congruence between ejaculation and urination established by Duchamp's arrangement of *Box in a Valise* was a phenomenon of considerable interest to doctors and scientists during the period when the Frenchman, Arensberg and Stella purchased the urinal that became *Fountain*. Professional literature devoted to this subject offers the opportunity to flesh out more thoroughly the queer signification of Duchamp's readymade. For example, Havelock Ellis, the renowned English sexologist whose books circulated widely in various translations, wrote in 1904: 'There appears, indeed, to be a special and intimate connection between the explosion of sexual detumescence and the explosive energy of the bladder; so that they may reinforce each other and to a limited extent act vicariously in relieving each other's tension.'[59] In 1905,

56. S. Freud, 'Character and Anal Eroticism', in *SE*, vol. 9, pp. 171–2 note 2; 175. Picabia (Funny-Guy (Picabia), '391', *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, vol. 1, 10 July 1921, p. 3) reiterated this homophobic stereotype when he described André Gide and the Cubist painter Roger de la Fresnaye, both of whom were gay, as a 'fudgepacker' and a 'fudge painter' respectively: 'Evidently shit and caca are the same thing but a little spray of opopanox on the caca will transform it into cream puffs . . . [P]erhaps M. André Gide . . . does not eat these cream puffs but he slides them carelessly into his pocket where he forgets about them and where they soon will become caca again like the paintings of Roger de la Fresnaye.'

57. Quoted in Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*, p. 100.

58. The belief that masturbation lead to blindness was first popularized in the eighteenth century. See, for example, Anon., *Onania, or the heinous sin of self-pollution and all its frightful consequences (in both sexes) considered, with physical and spiritual advice to those who have already injured themselves by this abominable practice* (1710; reprint, London, 1776), pp. 12–13; and Samuel-Auguste Tissot, *L'Onanisme, ou Dissertation physique sur les maladies produites par la masturbation* (1781; reprint, Éditions de la Différence: Paris, 1991), pp. 33–6.

59. H. Ellis, *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse*, in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (henceforward *SPS*) (F. A. Davis Company: Philadelphia, 1929), vol. 5, p. 50.

Freud asserted that 'the genitals can act as a reminder of the excretory function; and this applies especially to the male member'.[60] Seven years later, he affirmed that the 'excremental function is all too intimately and inseparably bound up with the sexual'.[61] Both medical men also identified an analogy between urination and the emission of water from fountains. According to Freud, since Hippocrates, doctors have understood 'that dreams of fountains and springs indicate a disorder of the bladder'.[62] Ellis maintained that micturition itself sparked the invention of fountains. He distinguished this bodily function as 'a part of the yet unrecognised loveliness of the world, which we already recognise in fountains, though fountains, it is now asserted, have here had their origin'.[63] Jérôme Duquesnoy's *Manneken-Pis* (c. 1619), a small bronze public fountain in Brussels of a standing naked boy with water streaming from his penis, is the most well-known example of Ellis's and Freud's claims regarding the correlation between urination and fountains. Although far less literal, *Fountain*, with its 'excellent references from the Past [*sic*]', as Louise Norton noted, gestures toward this art-historical tradition, if only ironically.[64] This urinal is a kind of fountain designed to be housed in a water-closet.[65]

Ellis's scientific curiosity for urine and urination arose out of his personal sexual interest in this liquid waste and bodily function, a 'trait' he believed he 'inherited' from his mother, who micturated in his presence on several occasions during his youth.[66] His private predilection for what he termed 'urolagnia' and 'undinism' explains the repeated references he made to it throughout his seven-volume treatise *Studies in the Psychology of*

60. S. Freud, 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria', in *SE*, vol. 7, p. 31.

61. S. Freud, 'On the Universal Tendency of Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love, part II)', in *SE*, vol. 11, p. 189.

62. S. Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams (part II)*, in *SE*, vol. 5, p. 402.

63. H. Ellis, *My Life* (William Heinemann: London, 1940), p. 68.

64. Norton, 'Buddha of the Bathroom', p. 6. For an analysis of Rrose Sélavy as a *pisseuse* that draws on both art-historical and popular imagery, see Jean-Jacques Lebel, 'La Vie légendaire de Rrose Sélavy', in *Féminimasculin: le sexe de l'art*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1995, pp. 272–8.

65. Water-closet, or W.C., an ironic idiom for a public toilet, is an eighteenth-century English term that entered the French language in the mid-nineteenth century. See *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*, ed. A. Rey (Dictionnaires Le Robert: Paris, 1994), vol. 2, p. 2294.

66. Ellis, *My Life*, pp. 68–70.

Fig. 8. Marcel Duchamp: *Box in a Valise*, 1935–1941, dimensions vary. Philadephia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Archive.

Sex (1897–1928): 'There is ample evidence to show that, either as a habitual or more usually an occasional act, the impulse to bestow a symbolic value on the act of urination in a beloved person, is not extremely uncommon.'[67] Within dreams, he dared to argue, 'the sexual impulse is a symbol of urination'.[68] Claiming that his own urolagnia 'never developed into a real perversion', Ellis warned that such scatological preoccupations could 'form the basis of sexual obsessions'.[69] His case histories reveal that mainly two groups of individuals, male homosexuals and heterosexual male masochists, suffered from this particular sexual obsession.[70] One male homosexual informed Ellis that in his sexual fantasies 'the central fact became the discharge of urine from my lover over my body and limbs, or, if I were very fond of him, I let it be in my face'.[71] Another patient attributed his adult sexual interest in both men and urination to childhood episodes when he witnessed male farm labourers and his father micturating. 'Overwhelmed with emotion' during these incidents, the man experienced 'stammering speech and bewildered faculties'.[72] Ellis's German colleague, Dr Richard von Krafft-Ebing, classified the sexual fascination that urine and urination held for many male homosexuals as a distinct form of fetishism. In *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), a widely read survey of sexual perversions published in over twenty editions and translated into numerous languages, as an example of this 'perversion', he cited the case of a thirty-five-year-old male homosexual whom he also diagnosed as a masochist and chronic masturbator: 'Beginning in his twenty-seventh year, he came upon a new idea. As the most horrible form of humiliation, he imagined being forced to eat the excrement of his male lover and to drink his urine upon his command. He often fantasised that he was tied up on the ground and that his master sat on top of him, forcing him, in his helpless position . . . , to practice this disgusting act.'[73] In this narrative, the patient fantasized about performing the function of a toilet with his mouth as its basin and his throat as its drain pipe.

Dada, Water Sports and the Writing on the Walls

The penchant for piss and *pissoirs* among certain male homosexuals did not go unacknowledged within the tightly knit Parisian dada brotherhood of which Duchamp was the unequivocal forefather. In 1921, the Russian-born poet and painter Serge Charchoune penned a dada tract protesting the demolition of an imperial *pissoir*. Signing himself 'dadaist deputy to parliament', Charchoune declared:

> Friends, his Majesty the King of Fiume is here! He is passing through Rome in order to oversee personally the removal of his throne-*pissoir* . . . Let us organise a demonstration for next Sunday to be worked out by Cocteau and Picabia . . . Friends, just imagine the miserable situation of the pathetic Cocteau dragging his gigantic swollen testicles across Passy to the closest *pissoir* and you will get down on your knees with us before the King-*Pissoir*. You have attended this moving scene of descending flocks of birds more than once, executing the order of a merciful God to see his urine and to get rid of it as well as his burden as soon as possible.[74]

It is no coincidence that Charchoune depicted Jean Cocteau as dependent upon public toilets and the men inside them for the sexual relief of his swollen testicles, since the poet and playwright was one of the only openly gay members of the Parisian dada fraternity. In fact, such a portrayal of Cocteau was not unique. The 9 April 1921 issue of *Les Hommes du jour* included a satirical notice regarding an apocryphal dada play by Cocteau in which the main character was to be a *pissotière*. Approached by an actress looking for work, the playwright explains the impetus behind his production: 'You know

67. H. Ellis, *Erotic Symbolism*, in *SPS*, vol. 5, p. 59.

68. H. Ellis, 'The Relation of Erotic Dreams to Vesical Dreams', *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, vol. 8, August-September 1913, p. 163.

69. Ellis, *My Life*, p. 68; Ellis, *Analysis of the Sexual Impulse*, pp. 50–1.

70. In his 1905 sexological study of perversion (*L'Amour chez les dégénérés*, p. 245), Dr P. Gallus concluded that the heterosexual male masochist was 'an invert – a psychic invert at the very least – since he desires to submit to a woman rather than to dominate her' and that masochism itself was nothing more than one of 'the modalities of a more or less apparent sexual inversion'.

71. Ellis, *Erotic Symbolism*, p. 57.

72. Ellis, *Sexual Inversion*, in *SPS*, vol. 2, pp. 148–9. The French translation of this book first was published in 1909.

73. 'A partir de sa 27e année il lui vint une nouvelle idée: il se représentait, comme l'humiliation la plus terrible, d'être obligé d'absorber les excréments de l'homme aimé, sur l'ordre de celui-ci, et de boire son urine. Il avait souvent alors la représentation imaginaire, qu'il était ligoté à terre, et que son maître était commodément assis sur lui, le forçant, dans sa situation impuissante . . . à pratiquer cet acte dégoutant.' Dr R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis*, ed. A. Moll, trans. R. Lobstein (Payot: Paris, 1963), pp. 488–9.

74. 'Amis, la Majesté le Roi de Fiume est ici! Il est de passage pour Rome pour diriger personnellement l'enlevement de son trone-pissoir . . . Organisons la demonstration elaborée par Cocteau et Picabia pour dimanche prochain . . . Amis, il faut seulement voir lamentable situation de malheureux Cocteau trainant son couil, gigantesquement gonflé a travers Passy jusque le pissoir devant le plus proche, pour que vous mettiez avec nous a genoux devant le Roi-Pissoir. Vous avez assistez plus d'une fois a cette scene attendrissante de descente des foules d'oiseaux, executant l'ordre de bon Dieux de voir de ça urine pour le debarasser le plutôt possible de son fardeau.' S. Charchoune, *Pour collection intime. Parti Dadaïste. Appel de notre cher représentant au Parlement, Serge Charchoune*, 13 (May?) 1921, Dossiers Picabia, BLJD, vol. 4, p. 149. A native Russian, Charchoune was not fluent in French, and, therefore, his text is riddled with syntactical and spelling errors.

the important role that the *pissotière* plays in urban life. A *pissotière* will be the principal role in my [new] play. Are you interested in playing the part?' He then outlines the *mise en scène*: 'Some men, dressed half like the devil and half like men about town, will hover around you and you will say to them in a doleful voice: Drench me! Drench me!' Shocked by such a prospect, the actress 'pretended to have a serious cold in order to avoid the all-male shower to which she had been invited'.[75] Cocteau would have done better to offer this role to an actor familiar with the goings-on in *pissoirs* and the unique language employed to communicate inside these locales.

The tongue-in-cheek title of Duchamp's readymade, *Fountain*, indicates that he, like Cocteau, was conversant in *littérature de pissotière*, that distinct genre of *écriture* found on the walls of public toilets. He recalled that in the 1910s, 'Titles in general interested me a lot. At that time, I was becoming literary. Words interested me; and the bringing together of words.'[76] It is within the sphere of language that *Fountain* also speaks its queerness, a queerness which, historically speaking, has rarely spoken its name directly. Before gay liberation, gay men relied on intricately coded systems of communication in order to navigate the homophobic terrain of their cultures, locate one another and communicate in mixed company. Such systems still serve an important function within certain sectors of gay culture, including the sexual arena. In the modern American queer lexicon, for example, the act of urination during gay sex is referred to as a 'golden shower', 'golden champagne' or a 'champagne fountain', while the general use of urine during gay sex is termed 'water sports'.[77] The ironic yet deadly serious redemption of piss based on its erotic value suggests that for many gay men this liquid waste is a kind of gastronomic delicacy, like champagne; it is precious, like gold, and vital to their well-being, like water or physical exercise.

Since at least the 1920s, American gay men have peppered their speech with similarly droll terms to describe *pissoirs*. In straight English, a 'tearoom' denoted an elegant café where bourgeois ladies gathered to socialize with one another without the intrusion of drunken men. In gay parlance, however, a 'tearoom' or 't-room' (short for 'toilet-room') referred to a public toilet known to be a sexual meeting ground for men. Inside a 'tearoom', men who 'made tea' ejaculated. Furthermore, a 'tea engagement' denoted an anonymous sexual rendezvous in a *pissoir* scheduled in advance. Those unfortunate men apprehended by police during such episodes were charged with 'tearoom offences'.[78]

These very same terms also entered the French lexicon of gay slang between 1890 and 1910. A *tasse* (cup), *tasse à thé* (teacup) and *théière* (teapot) all described a *pissoir* frequented by male homosexuals and other men in search of sex. *Prendre le thé* (to have tea) referred to gay sex while urine, based on its colour and temperature, was known euphemistically as *thé* (tea).[79] Finally, *faire les tasses* (to do the *pissoirs*) was an euphemism for cruising inside these structures.[80] One gay French man recalled the influence of class on the development of this queer argot: '[Sexual encounters] most often happened at ''bays'' [inside *pissotières*]. The bays were known as ''teacups''. We called them this because we had a coded language. Because of their snobbishness, the queens of the sixteenth district would not say *pissotière*.'[81] In a queer lexicon that characterized a public men's toilet as a 'tearoom' or 'teapot', urine as 'tea' and urination as a 'golden shower', one can imagine a urinal being rechristened a 'fountain'. The 1912 edition of *Petit Larousse illustré*, a standard French-language dictionary, documented the currency of such a connotation, defining *pissotière* as both a 'urinal' and a 'little stream of water' or 'fountain

75. '''Vous savez, lui dit-il, le rôle important que joue dans la vie citadine la pissotière. Une pissotière sera le principal rôle de ma pièce. Vous le tiendrez? . . . Des hommes, habillés moitié en diable, moitié en homme du monde tourneront autour de vous et vous leur direz d'une voix plaintive: Inondez-moi! inondez-moi!'' . . . On dit que la grande comédienne en laissa tomber son face-à-main, et prétexta d'un gros rhume pour éviter l'ondée masculine à laquelle on la conviait.' Anon., 'Échos: Inondation', *Les Hommes du jour*, no. 5, 9 April 1921, p. 10.

76. P. Cabanne, *Dialogues with Marcel Duchamp*, trans. R. Padgett (Viking Press: New York, 1971), p. 40.

77. B. Rodgers, *The Queens' Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon* (Blond and Briggs: London, 1972), p. 97. In his 1949 poem 'Homage to Rrose Sélavy' (*The Collected Poems of Frank O'Hara*, ed. D. Allen (1971; reprint University of California Press: Berkeley, CA, 1995), p. 10), Frank O'Hara, an American poet, accomplished art critic and gay man, aptly described Duchamp's drag persona, Rrose Sélavy, as 'a champagne fountain'.

78. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 197. Chauncey (p. 424 note 61) acknowledges that the etymology of the gay slang term 'tearoom' remains obscure. However, he cites several sources from the 1910s and 1920s which employ 'tearoom' or 'toilet room' to refer to public toilets known to have been locales frequented by men looking for sex with other men.

79. *Dictionnaire du français nonconventionnel*, eds. J. Cellard and A. Rey (Hachette: Paris, 1991), p. 803. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (vol. 17, p. 685), dates the use of 'tea' as a slang term for urine to the early eighteenth century.

80. Jean Gravigny, *Montmartre en 1925* (Éditions Montaigne: Paris, 1924), p. 174.

81. ' . . . se faisaient surtout aux ''baies''. Les baies, c'était les ''tasses''. Nous les appelions ainsi car nous avions un langage codé. Les tantes du XVIe ne disaient pas les pissotières, par snobisme.' Quoted in Barbedette and Carassou, *Paris gay*, p. 58.

that emits little water'.[82] Picabia suggested something similar to this in 1920 when he disparagingly dubbed the dada poet Philippe Soupault a '*cresson de pissotières*'.[83] In French, a *cresson de fontaine* refers to a watercress, a plant that grows submerged or floating on the water of flowing streams. A *cresson de pissotières* or 'piss cress', if such a flora existed, would thrive in the flowing pools of urine found in *pissotières*. Furthermore, since *fontaine* is French for fountain, Picabia's substitution of *pissotière* for *fontaine* likens water-closets to fountains and water to piss.

Duchamp was not alone in distinguishing queer sexualities as a particularly potent strand in a diverse repertoire of inspirations for avant-garde artistic production. The queerly encoded semantic field of 'tearooms', 'tea engagements' and 'making tea' with which *Fountain* resonates also preoccupied Proust, one of the most distinguished homosexual literary figures in the Parisian avant-garde during the 1910s and early 1920s.[84] In the opening pages of *Du côté de chez Swann* (1913), the first volume of Proust's epic *A la recherche du temps perdu*, the narrator recounts an episode from his youth when he came in from out of the cold and welcomed his mother's offer of hot tea, 'something I did not ordinarily take', and a madeleine:

> No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory – this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was me . . . From where could this powerful joy have come to me?[85]

The erotic tone of this celebrated passage suggests that the narrator's ingestion of tea and a madeleine triggered a memory of a sexual and possibly even a homosexual character, a memory which precipitates the narrative flow of the entire novel.[86] As he savours the taste of his *tasse de thé*, the narrator is psychically transported back to a *tasse* of an entirely different order where he, following his mother's example, 'made tea' by giving another man with a 'madeleine' a blowjob. Perhaps the narrator experiences such ecstasy while recalling this childhood episode because the spongy, tea-soaked madeleine also reminds him of his adult avocation as a *soupeur* (supper eater), a unique breed of men so addicted to the stench or flavour of piss that they would deposit pieces of bread in *pissoirs*, return later, collect the urine-drenched morsels and either sniff or eat them.[87] Undoubtedly, the instant 'the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs' touched the *soupeur's* palate or passed under his nose a 'shiver ran through' his body and filled him with 'an extraordinary pleasure'.

Duchamp's written statements regarding the readymade offer a blueprint for staging a tea engagement like those pursued by the Baron de Charlus and rhapsodically recounted by Proust's narrator. In 'Specifications for ''Ready-mades''' (c. 1912–15), subsequently published in his *Green Box* (1934), Duchamp outlined the process of selecting such objects:

> by planning for a moment to come (on such a day, such a date such a minute), *'to inscribe* a readymade'–The readymade can later be looked for (with all kinds of delays)
>
> *The important thing then is just* this matter to timing, this snapshot effect [. . .] It is a kind of rendezvous.
>
> –Naturally inscribe the date, hour, minute, on the readymade as *information*.
> also the serial characteristic of the readymade (32).

82. Linda Dalrymple Henderson (*Duchamp in Context: Science and Technology in the 'Large Glass' and Related Works* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ, 1998), p. 76) first associated these various definitions of *pissotière* with *Fountain*.

83. F. Picabia, 'Avoir le mal de mer sur un transport de joie', *Cannibale*, no. 1, 25 April 1920, p. 16. Picabia dedicated his poem '*A Philippe SOUPAULT, cresson de pissotières*' who later (*Proverbe*, no. 6, 1 July 1921, p. 1) described himself as a 'musical *Pissotière* [*sic*]'.

84. In January 1961, Duchamp made *Anagram for Pierre de Massot* to be sold at a benefit auction for his old friend Pierre de Massot, a dada poet and writer who was bisexual. On black paper covered by wax paper, Duchamp incised the outline of a Parisian *pissotière* and inscribed on it '*de Ma / Pissotierre / j'aperçois / Pierre de Massot*' (from My / *Pissotierre* / I can see / Pierre de Massot). The playful yet purposeful misspelling of *pissotière* relates to the grammatical blunder made by the butler in Proust's *La Prisonnière* (*pistière* instead of *pissotière*). Furthermore, by locating himself inside the *pissotière* and looking out (from My / *Pissotierre*), Duchamp, in effect, became the Baron de Charlus who occupied the same place when the butler spotted him. In an undated note (Duchamp, *Notes*, note 217), Duchamp alluded to Proust and his homosexuality: 'gin and virgin / asstricks / Marcel Post / ginful love/ Clara Twice.'

85. 'Mais à l'instant même où la gorgée mêlée des miettes du gâteau toucha mon palais, je tressaillis, attentif à ce qui se passait d'extraordinaire en moi. Un plaisir délicieux m'avait envahi, isolé, sans la notion de sa cause. Il m'avait aussitôt rendu les vicissitudes de la vie indifférentes, ses désastres inoffensifs, sa brièveté illusoire, de la même façon qu'opère l'amour, en me remplissant d'une essence précieuse: ou plutôt cette essence n'était pas en moi, elle était moi . . . D'où avait pu me venir cette puissante joie?' Proust, *A la recherche*, vol. 1, p. 44.

86. Philippe Lejeune ('Ecriture et sexualité', *Europe*, vol. 49, nos. 502–03, February–March 1971, pp. 113–43) and Serge Doubrovsky (*La place de la madeleine: écriture et fantasme chez Proust* (Mercure de France: Paris, 1974) analyse the sexual symbolism of the madeleine episode but solely in heterosexual terms. An interpretation similar to my own appeared in Jarrod Hayes, 'Proust in the Tearoom', *PMLA*, vol. 110, October 1995, pp. 992–1005. Based in part on Hayes, Julia Kristeva (*Time Sense: Proust and the Experience of Literature*, trans. R. Guberman (Columbia Univerity Press: New York, 1996), pp. 20, 347 note 60) also notes the queer signification of the madeleine episode.

87. *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* (vol. 2, p. 1993) estimates that the first texts to employ *soupeur* in this context date from the 1920s. The term would have been in circulation in spoken French slang prior to this date.

The essential element in the transformation of an *objet trouvé* into a readymade is timing, and timing is everything in a rendezvous, especially a sexual one. In a public rest room, a man who is 'planning for a moment to come' when he and another man or other men will connect in 'a kind of rendezvous' must 'inscribe the date, hour, minute . . . as *information*' on the wall and hope for a reply. Such readymade male-male sexual encounters, which, in their anonymity, possess a certain 'serial characteristic', succeed or fail based on timing. 'Operating under pressures to maintain secrecy and to curtail the time involved, those who seek sex in the tearooms must be able to move quickly through mutually understood identities as they select appropriate strategies', Laud Humphreys observes in his sociological study of these erotic interactions.[88] When the precarious 'matter of timing' is just right, the lucky experience a 'snapshot effect' – ejaculation. If the timing is off or an intruder interrupts the action, however, the unlucky men must arrange other rendezvous or begin anew 'with all kinds of delays'. A man increases his odds of meeting other men in direct proportion to how precise he is in his initial specifications for a readymade rendezvous.

Eugen Wilhelm, an Alsacian judge who was gay and an outspoken early homosexual emancipationist, documented the frequency of such rendezvous in a 1910 pseudo-anthropological study of 114 anonymous inscriptions soliciting homosexual sex which he discovered in fifty-two Parisian *pissoirs*. Revealing a wealth of information regarding the elaborate network of men who searched for sex in public toilets, these jottings express a variety of homosexual desires that range from oral and anal sex to spankings and sex with Jewish men and soldiers. Most men composed such announcements in order to initiate future sexual rendezvous: 'Young man 27 years old desires to be fucked out of curiosity. Set a meeting time here between 5:15 and 5:30 in the morning'; 'Who is going to fuck me on January 1st?' or 'Only here from 6:30 to 7:30. I will suck and jerk off beautiful cocks for 50 *sous* an hour.'[89] When choosing a readymade or searching for sex in a *pissoir*, for the best results, nothing should be left to chance. Duchamp heeded such advice when he scheduled a rendezvous with Stieglitz in the backroom of 291 where they created their own 'snapshot effect' in front of a urinal and behind a camera.

R. Mutt and Rrose Sélavy

I propose that the signature 'R. MUTT 1917' which Duchamp appended to *Fountain* is not a traditional artist's signature at all, but rather a *nom de plume* like those used in the graffiti catalogued by Wilhelm. In one inscription, for instance, a male homosexual proclaimed himself 'Charlie the Fucker from Batignolles'. In another, a male homosexual wittingly feminized his first name and signed his inscription 'Louise B'.[90] André Breton, Louis Aragon and Philippe Soupault, the editors of the dada periodical *Littérature*, spoke to this gender game in 1921, when they called for 'the unknown man who signs the graffiti in the pissoirs Edith Cavell' to identity himself.[91] In an essay on *Fountain*, Arthur Danto explains that graffiti artists customarily 'conceal their identity under special *noms de crayons*'.[92] After submitting *Fountain* to the Society of Independent Artists, Duchamp went to great lengths to conceal his identity as its author. In April 1917, he wrote to his sister: 'One of my female friends under a masculine pseudonym, Richard Mutt, sent in a porcelain urinal as a sculpture.'[93] While this female friend may have been Louise Norton, with whom Duchamp was having an affair at the time, R. Mutt may also represent

88. Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (Aldine Publishing Company: Chicago, 1970), p. 58.

89. 'Jeune homme 27 ans désire se faire enculer par curiosité, ici prendre rendez-vous entre 5 1/4 et 5 1/2 du matin'; 'Qui m'encule le Ie (*sic*) Janvier?'; 'Seul ici de 6 1/2 à 7 1/2 je suce et branle les belles bites à 50 sous l'heure'. N. Praetorius [E. Wilhelm], 'Homosexuelle Pissoirinschriften aus Paris', *Anthropophyteia*, vol. 8, 1911, pp. 411–12, 414.

90. 'Charlot Enculeur des Batignolles'; 'Je cherche un jeune homme de 20 ans pour lui donner la fessée Louise B.' Praetorius [Wilhelm], 'Homosexuelle Pissoirinschriften', p. 413.

91. 'L'inconnu qui signe Edith Cavell les inscriptions des urinoirs.' [A. Breton, L. Aragon and P. Soupault], 'Sont priés de se présenter au Sans Pareil', *Littérature*, no. 19, May 1921, p. 24.

92. A. Danto, *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1986), p. 32.

93. M. Duchamp, 'Affectueusement, Marcel: Ten Letters from Marcel Duchamp to Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti', ed. and trans. F. Naumann, *Archives of American Art Journal*, vol. 22, no. 4, 1982, p. 9.

an early masculine incarnation of Rrose Sélavy, the artist's notorious queer drag persona which he adopted in 1920 as a kind of readymade identity.[94]

Late in life, Duchamp admitted that he 'had written the name ''Mutt'' on it [*Fountain*] to avoid connection with the personal'.[95] His assumption of R. Mutt as a masculine cover for the flagrant effeminacy of Rrose Sélavy closely corresponds to a phenomenon within the burgeoning New York gay subculture at the turn of the century. Just as male homosexuals in this period often adopted feminine pseudonyms to refer to one another, they frequently took on masculine aliases as well in order to protect their anonymity in bars, parks, cafés, bathhouses and public toilets where they socialized and searched for sex. Ralph Werther, an effeminate 'fairy' who went by the pseudonyms Jennie June and Earl Lind and lived in New York in the 1890s and 1900s, explained: 'All impersonators [fairies] belonging to the middle and upper classes also choose a masculine alias, represented in the Underworld to be their legal name. They do not wish to risk disgrace to their family name. Moreover, on their sprees in the bright-light districts, they are careful to wear nothing containing their everyday initials.'[96] Along with R. Mutt, Duchamp assumed, or was assigned, several other masculine pseudonyms during his life, including Marcel Dushit, Martini, Marcel Duche, Morice, Marcellus, Victor, Pierre Delaire, George W. Welch and Totor. Like Rrose Sélavy, these aliases undercut the presumed fixity and legibility of Duchamp's artistic persona.

Originally motivated by a desire to test and trick the Society of Independent Artists, Duchamp's decision to conceal his identity as the author of *Fountain* possessed significant ramifications for avant-garde production. Charles Demuth, an American artist and a gay man who was very close to the artist during his early years in New York, addressed this issue in his poem 'For Richard Mutt' which appeared in *The Blind Man*. 'One must say every thing,–then no one will know. / To know nothing is to say a great deal. / So many say that they say nothing,–but these never really send. / For some there is no stopping. / Most stop or get a style.'[97] In his Steinian verse, Demuth identified the slippage inherent in language – between what one says, whether verbally or visually, and how others interpret it – to be the very crux of creativity. The loopholes inherent in language present endless discursive opportunities for those willing to seize them: 'For the going every thing has an idea. / The going run right along. / The going just keep going.' Demuth speaks to Richard Mutt, his phantom, queer brother, as an art world veteran, assuring him, in his own cryptic language, that Duchamp's silence did not fall on deaf ears. While the polyvalence of language leaves artists open to be misunderstood, it also enables them to resist aesthetic hegemony and cultural assimilation, advantages to which an avant-garde artist and gay man like Demuth certainly could have attested. The secrecy and coded language by which most gay men and lesbians were forced to communicate prior to gay liberation actually empowered them to live and to love without creating suspicion in their heterosexual counterparts. The closet proffered certain queer folk 'in the know' a tactical base from which to formulate and execute all kinds of clandestine, socio-sexual operations. Holed up in his own artistic closet, Duchamp wreaked havoc on the Society of Independent Artists and compelled his contemporaries to grapple with a revolutionary notion of art whereby the potential meanings available in an art object circulate within the dynamic, dangerous and disturbing matrix of 'the unexpressed but intended and the unintentionally expressed' (p. 139).

The masculine pseudonym R. Mutt, derived in part from 'Mutt and Jeff',

94. In an April 1917 letter to McBride informing him about the rejection of *Fountain* by the Independents (quoted in Camfield, *Fountain*, p. 30), Charles Demuth, Duchamp's friend and a fellow artist, wrote: 'P.S. If you wish any more information please phone, Marcel Duchamp, 4225 Columbus, or, Richard Mutte [*sic*], 9255 Schuyler.' Camfield (*Fountain*, p. 30 note 32) has identified the second telephone number as Norton's. Naumann (*New York Dada*, p. 239 note 17) also verified the address on the identification tag attached to *Fountain* and visible in Stieglitz's photograph to be Norton's.

95. Cabanne, *Dialogues*, p. 55.

96. R. Werther, *The Female-Impersonators* (Medico-Legal Journal: New York, 1918), p. 101.

97. C. Demuth, 'For Richard Mutt', *The Blind Man*, no. 2, May 1917, p. 6. On Demuth's homosexuality and its impact on his work, see Weinberg, *Speaking for Vice*.

the first nationally syndicated American newspaper comic strip created in 1908 by Henry Conway 'Bud' Fisher, did little to safeguard the artist's anonymity. Katherine Dreier, a board member of the Society of Independent Artists and Duchamp's patron, instantly suspected a scam, even though she did not know that the Frenchman had instigated it. Writing in April 1917 to William Glackens, an artist and the president of the Independents, Dreier admitted that '"Mutt and Jeff" are too famous not to make people suspect if their name is used the matter is a joke'.[98] Mutt – a tall, thin, moustachioed, evil-minded man – first met Jeff – a small, bearded, good-natured fellow – in an asylum where the latter was confined due to a schizophrenic delusion that he was James J. Jeffries, the African-American heavyweight boxing champion.[99] This comic duo were tried-and-true buddies, inseparable to the end despite their physical and psychological differences. As such, they were a perfectly queer couple.

In the dada comedy that unfolded in the showroom of J. L. Mott Iron Works, Duchamp performed brilliantly as Mutt, while Arensberg and Stella, in their own collaboration, played the part of Jeff. Such homoerotic role playing suggests that for Duchamp both the collaborative process between male artists and the creative product of this union were loaded with homosexual signification. Duchamp affirmed this idea during a 1961 interview with Georges Charbonnier broadcasted on French radio in which he candidly characterized his personal and professional relationship with Breton as one that flourished in the ambiguous interstices between homosociality and homosexuality. Theirs was 'a man-to-man friendship', he declared. 'One could even see in it a homosexual element, if we were indeed homosexuals. We were not, but it is all the same. Our friendship could have turned into a homosexual one if it had not expressed itself in surrealism instead.'[100] Five years later, in another interview, Duchamp described his friendship with Picabia as a 'sort of artistic pederasty'.[101] One of Picabia's compatriots recognized a similar dynamic between him and Tristan Tzara, the other principal dada spokesman in Paris. In a March 1920 letter signed by the dada poet Paul Eluard but written in another hand, the sender included a poem in which the artist and poet, who were living together at the time, are portrayed as lovers: 'In the ass Tzara / Pipi / ACA / Bibi / Poor Tristan / What a nuisance / GOSSIP [. . .] '.[102] In such a schema, male-male artistic creation functions as a thinly veiled allegory for homosocial and possibly even homosexual recreation. The act of scrawling R. Mutt on a public urinal, therefore, reads as a desperate plea on the part of a lonely man in search of a buddy or a lover – a Jeff or a Rrose Sélavy – or both.

98. Quoted in Camfield, *Fountain*, p. 32.

99. H. Filippini, *Dictionnaire de la bande dessinée* (Bordas: Paris, 1989), p. 364.

100. ' . . . une amitié d'homme à homme. On pourrait même y voir une homosexualité, si nous étions des homosexuels. Nous ne le sommes pas, mais ça revient au même. Ça aurait pu se changer en homosexualité plutot que de s'exprimer dans le surréalisme.' G. Charbonnier, 'Souvenirs surréalistes', in *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp* (André Dimanche: Marseille, 1994, p. 73.

101. Hahn, 'Passport No. G255300,' p. 10.

102. 'Au cul Tzara / Pipi / ACA / Bibi / Pauvre Tristan / CANCAN (. . .).' Letter and poem quoted in M. Sanouillet, *Francis Picabia et '391'* (Eric Losfeld: Paris, 1966), p. 111.

103. Quoted in K. Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (Harper and Row: New York, 1962), p. 83.

Rrose Sélavy and the R. Mutt Case

If R. Mutt is Rrose Sélavy in masculine drag, *Fountain* can be understood as the product of their own queer collaboration, 'a little game between "I" and "me"', as Duchamp described his working method.[103] While Stieglitz's photograph of *Fountain* directly implicates R. Mutt in the plot to overthrow the Society of Independent Artists, one must look elsewhere for clues incriminating Rrose Sélavy in this crime against art. Such traces confirm that the queer legacy initiated by *Fountain* lived on in Duchamp's *oeuvre* into the 1920s. The first clue linking Rrose Sélavy to *Fountain* can be found in her name. Initially christened Rose Sélavy, Duchamp added a second 'r' in 1921, thus producing a pun on *eros, c'est la vie*. He employed his revised drag name for the first time when he signed Picabia's *L'Oeil cacodylate* (1921), a collaboratively constructed canvas consisting

entirely of autographs of his friends. *Eros, c'est la vie*, however, is also a homophone of *arroser la vie*, and *arroser* is French for 'to wet' or 'to water', polite expressions for pissing, as well as argot for 'to ejaculate'.

Throughout the 1920s, Rrose Sélavy left behind a paper trail of other evidence verifying her firsthand knowledge of *pissoirs* and male-male public sex, most of which was first published on the back cover of *The Wonderful Book. Reflections on Rrose Sélavy* (1924), a small dada publication by Duchamp's close friend Pierre de Massot, a dada poet and a bisexual, and later in a book of word games aptly titled *Rrose Sélavy* (1939).[104] '*Ruiner, uriner*' is an anagram that unites the seemingly unrelated verbs 'to ruin' and 'to urinate' (p. 115). A man most certainly could be ruined, his social standing irreparably damaged, if he were caught standing before a urinal with the intention of doing more than merely relieving himself. Furthermore, an individual whose health has declined dramatically is said to be *une ruine* (a wreck). Such a downward spiral is one of the possible dangers faced by those who practice water sports. The spoonerism '*Bains de gros thé pour grains de beauté sans trop de Bengué*' posits a causal connection between 'baths in tea' (*bains de gros thé*) and 'beauty marks' (*grains de beauté*), suggesting that engaging in the former will result in the latter 'without too much Ben Gay' (p. 114). A 'bath in tea' sounds like a holistic variation of a 'golden shower'. A third word game, '*Fossettes d'aisances*,' literally translates as 'dimples of ease' (p. 114). *Fossettes*, however, includes the word *fosse* (pit or grave). A *fosse d'aisances* is a cesspool while *lieu d'aisances* and *cabinet d'aisances* are both synonyms for a *pissoir*. Public toilets arguably are cesspools by definition, a characteristic that some men find highly erotic. Brassaï recalled that in the early 1930s in Paris 'neither the stench nor the filthiness of these places inspired repugnance in the champions of Greek love. On the contrary. The more putrid smelling the *édicules*, the more enticing they were.'[105] In his 1920 dada manifesto, Tzara identified *pissoirs* as part of the topography of 'the land of male homosexuals' which one could visit but only if one took 'the necessary precautions'.[106] Although unspecified by Tzara, when visiting such cesspools, one would have taken precautions against everything from toxic odours and unsanitary conditions to unwelcome sexual advances from other men and police entrapment. In a 1920 prose poem, Eluard disclosed that prudence was the most effective precaution when using *pissoirs*: 'I am discreet, I never repeat what I hear in water-closets.'[107] As her writings reveal, Rrose Sélavy rarely kept her mouth shut about what she heard, did or saw inside *pissoirs*.

On one occasion, perhaps following Stieglitz's initiative, Rrose Sélavy dragged her camera inside a public men's toilet and photographed the sexual jottings on its walls, words and images that resemble her own as an author and artist. The photograph subsequently appeared as part of *Nous nous cajolions* (c. 1925) (Fig. 9). A rebus signed by Rrose Sélavy, this drawing in lavender ink, a distinctly homosexual hue in the 1920s, is the most salient piece of visual evidence implicating her in the 'Richard Mutt Case', as the controversy surrounding *Fountain* became known.[108] It portrays a rotund, grinning nanny standing in front of a lion's cage and clutching the hand of a young boy in her care. Below this image, Duchamp inscribed 'NOUS NOUS CAJOLIONS' (we were petting each other) in black ink. When pronounced aloud, this phrase sounds like *nounou; cage au(x) lion(s)* (nanny; lion's cage or cage of lions). In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Freud contended that adult male homosexuals took to 'petting' one another as a result of their unhealthy childhood attachment to their mothers or nannies.[109]

The coy homosexual connotations of the title, *Nous nous cajolions*, are

104. For an analysis of de Massot's relationship to Duchamp and his personal interest in the artist's work, see P. Franklin, 'Portrait d'un poète en jeune homme bi: Pierre de Massot, Marcel Duchamp et l'héritage dada', *Étant donné Marcel Duchamp*, no. 2, forthcoming 2000.

105. 'Ni la puanteur ni la malpropreté de ces lieux n'inspiraient de répugnance aux tenants de l'amour grec. Au contraire. Plus ces édicules étaient malodorants, plus ils attiraient.' Brassaï, *Le Paris secret*, p. 54.

106. 'regarde le contenu de nos W.-C. [. . .] / allez au pays des pédérastes mais prenez les précautions nécessaires[.]' T. Tzara, 'La Deuxième Aventure Céleste de Monsieur Antipyrine', *391*, no. 14, November 1920, p. 2. A *pissotière* appeared, among other images, on the cover of Tzara's dada '*journal transparent*', *Le Coeur à Barbe* (no. 1, April 1922), in which two spoonerisms by Rrose Sélavy appeared.

107. 'Je suis discret, je ne répète jamais ce que j'écoute dans les water-closets.' P. Eluard, 'Au pluriel', *391*, no. 12, March 1920, p. 1.

108. The homosexual signification of lavender seems to have emerged in the late nineteenth century in association with the persona of Oscar Wilde. See Laurence Senelick, *Lovesick: Modernist Plays of Same-Sex Love, 1894–1925* (Routledge: London, 1999), p. 119.

109. S. Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *SE*, vol. 7, p. 145.

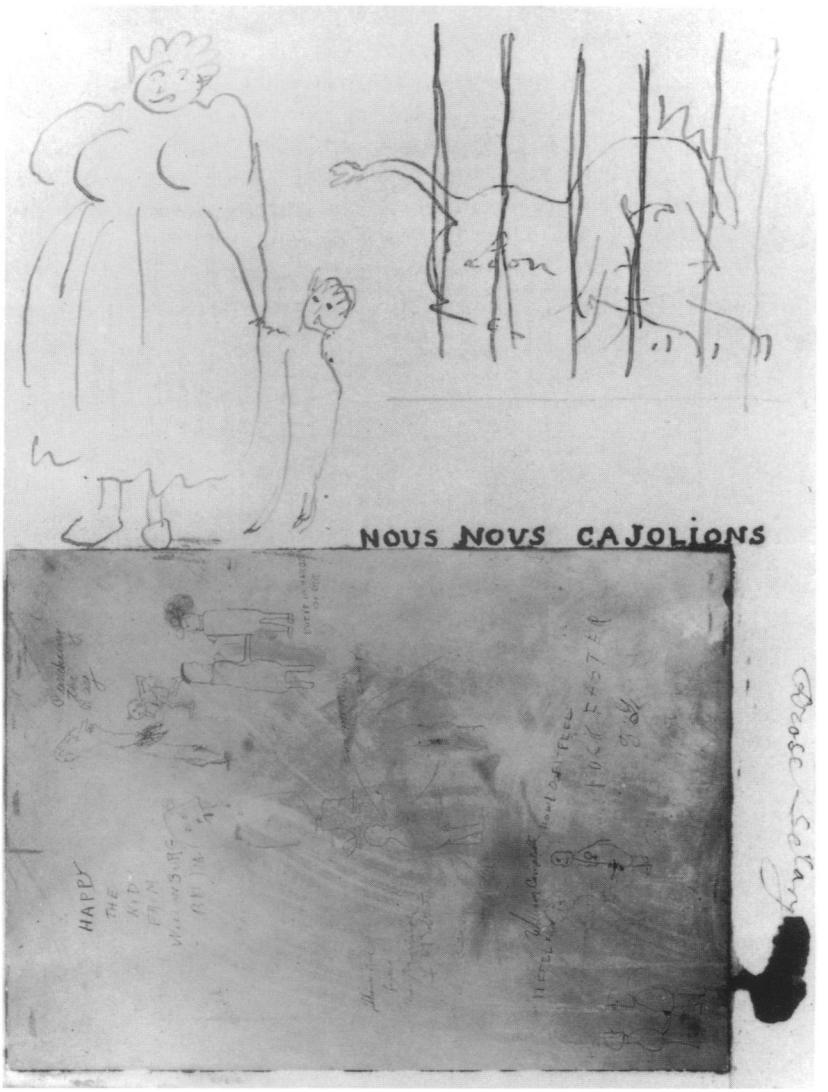

Fig. 9. Marcel Duchamp: *Nous nous cajolions*, c. 1925, ink drawing with collage, 7? × 5½ in. The Solomon Guggenheim Museum, New York, gift, Mr and Mrs Andrew Fuller. Current whereabouts unknown. (Photograph: Robert E. Mates ©; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York.)

represented explicitly in Rrose's photograph collaged to the lower half of the drawing. The image, rotated ninety degrees like *Fountain*, documents graffiti found on the walls of the public men's toilet in the Lincoln Arcade Building (1947 Broadway between 65th and 66th Streets) where Duchamp occupied a studio intermittently between 1915 and 1923. The textual graffiti ('FUCK FASTER', 'HAPPY / THE / KID / FROM / WILLIANBURG [*sic*] / BKLYN [*sic*]', 'HOW DOES IT FEEL') are accompanied by several crude sketches of ambiguously gendered, naked figures engaged in sexual intercourse. In the lower right, the two figures appear more masculine than feminine. In the upper left, a figure with a huge head of hair and a breast is penetrated frontally by another figure who displays both a breast and an elephantine cock. One gleans insight into the identity of this couple from the inscription beneath them. The flamboyantly coiffed figure encourages her partner to 'put it in harder dearie'. Within the American homosexual lexicon of the 1920s,

'dearie' was a common term of endearment employed by effeminate male homosexuals to refer to one another.[110] This odd couple may indeed represent two gay men, one of whom, like Rrose, is a drag queen. The lavender stain in the lower right of the drawing next to Rrose Sélavy's signature, which also has been rotated ninety degrees from the horizontal to the vertical, is her handiwork as well. With her camera in one hand and her erect cock in the other, Rrose Sélavy resorted to 'petting' herself inside the cage of a toilet stall while fantasizing about a butch, lion of a man.

The queer gender inversions pictured by Rrose Sélavy in *Nous nous cajolions* shed light on a note Duchamp wrote in the early 1910s and published in his *Box of 1914*. The note reads: '*–On n'a que : pour femelle la pissotière et on en vit.–*' (–One only has : for *female* the *pissotière* and one lives by it.–') (23). Duchamp cryptically implies that a *pissotière*, like a fountain, is a source of life-giving sustenance (one lives by it), that is to say *sexual* sustenance. The female mentioned in this note does not necessarily refer exclusively to a biologically-sexed woman; it may also allude to a womanly man, a gay man, who, in his dependence on a public toilet and the penis, *le vit* in classic French, for sexual gratification, is gendered feminine. Foster Graham, a character in the 1925 short story 'Distinguished Air' by Robert McAlmon, a flamboyant bisexual whom Duchamp knew, is just such a womanly man. An American painter and veteran *habitué* of the homosexual underworld in post World War I Paris and Berlin, the effeminate Graham recognized that gay men 'must have a tea engagement now and then' but confessed that his own desire for anonymous toilet sex was so strong that he, like a devoted wife, 'was too married to the pissoir'.[111] While flippant and campy, Graham's self-characterization acknowledged the crucial role public toilets played in certain gay subcultures during this period. With *Nous nous cajolions*, Rrose Sélavy, like Graham, confessed to living by and in a *pissoir*.

Duchamp's other writings more directly elucidate the gendered correspondence between certain male homosexuals and heterosexual women based on the putatively synonymous position they occupy in the sexual arena. In an undated note for a proposed project, he wrote: 'Centimeter jelly / (for a jam jar / used by women / and sexually passive gay men) / made in Marseilles (France).'[112] This special brand of lubricant that Duchamp considered manufacturing would have been marketed toward women and gay men in order to facilitate sexual penetration. The 1924 spoonerism 'Oh! do shit again! . . . [*sic*] / Oh! douche it again! . . . [*sic*]', authored by Rrose Sélavy, posits a comparable functional equivalence between the vagina and the rectum (115). Shitting, that bodily function 'undifferentiated by gender', as Edelman theorizes, is likened to douching, a method of feminine hygiene whereby a mixture of water and other substances is sprayed into the vagina in order to cleanse it and prevent conception after sex.[113] In French, a *douche* is a shower and an enema, the process of emptying the rectum of shit through jets of water, is both a kind of douche and a kind of shower. Heterosexual women douche after sex, while gay men often have an enema before or during sex. Furthermore, in the erotic game of water sports, a pissing penis plays the part of a shower spigot.[114] The 'again' in the spoonerism indicates a repetition, a replay in theme and variation that blurs the boundary between before and after and thus the boundary between sexual organs (vagina vs. rectum), sexual behaviours (straight vs. queer sex) and sexual object choice (hetero vs. homo). As the author of this word play, Rrose Sélavy speaks from the voice of experience, for her queer body represents the possibility of gender and sexuality beyond such heteronormative binarisms.

110. 'Dearie' probably entered gay male parlance in America due to Bert Savoy, a wildly popular gay cross-dressing vaudevillian who uttered the word constantly in his New York stage act in the late 1910s and early 1920s. In Robert Scully's gay novel, *A Scarlet Pansy* (W. Faro: New York, 1933), Savoy appears as himself and employs this term repeatedly.

111. R. McAlmon, 'Distinguished Air', in *Distinguished Air (Grim Fairy Tales)* (Contact Editions: Paris, 1925), p. 13. Weinberg (*Speaking for Vice*, p. 208) first associated this quotation with *Fountain*.

112. 'Gelée centimètre / (pour un pot de confitures / à l'usage des femmes / et des tapettes) / made in Marseilles (France).' Duchamp, *Notes*, note 168.

113. Edelman, *Homographesis*, p. 161.

114. In 1945, Duchamp capitalised on the erotic homology between a spigot and a penis, when he attached a water faucet to the outside right thigh of a headless, female mannequin wearing a maid's apron and displayed it as part of a window installation at Brentano's, a book publisher on Fifth Avenue, and later at Gotham Book Mart, advertising the publication of Breton's *Arcane 17*. Titled *Lazy Hardware*, this work circumscribed the kind of gender trouble lurking beneath the aprons of both the phallic woman and the male transvestite.

Object Choice

Chauncey maintains that the popularity of public toilets as sexual meeting places for men 'seemed to offer vivid confirmation of the cultural association of homosexuality with degeneracy by putting homosexuality and homosexuals almost literally in the gutter'.[115] By intending to display *Fountain* in a public exhibition space earmarked for modern art, Duchamp, contrary to Chauncey's claim, proposed an alternative conception of male homosexuality, one which attested to its central role in the avant-garde revolutions of the 1910s. After World War II, as homosexuality itself became a more acceptable topic for public discussion, Duchamp openly confirmed this belief. He first took a public stand on homosexuality at the Western Round Table on Modern Art held in San Francisco in April 1949. When Frank Lloyd Wright asked Duchamp whether he considered homosexuality to be degenerate, the artist resolutely replied, 'No, it is not degenerate.' Alarmed by the Frenchman's liberal response, the homophobic Wright posed a follow-up question: 'You would say that this movement which we call modern art and painting has been greatly, or is greatly, in debt to homosexualism [*sic*]?' Duchamp confessed, 'I admit it, but not in your terms . . . I believe that the homosexual public has shown more interest or curiosity for modern art than the heterosexual [public].'[116] In a 1961 interview, Duchamp reiterated this opinion: 'The receptive public is often a homosexual public. The general public is not interested in new movements.'[117] These statements as well as Duchamp's *oeuvre* in the 1910s and 1920s suggest that during this epoch to be homosexual, in effect, was to be avant-garde and perhaps vice versa.

Equating the art gallery with a *pissoir*, *Fountain* affirmed the overlapping queer history of these two urban spaces, a history which itself made history in 1895 with the trials of Oscar Wilde. In their aftermath, every man who identified as an artist left himself open to being accused, like Wilde, of 'posing as a sodomite'.[118] The anxiety of such a charge probably provoked Marius de Zayas, a Mexican artist and New York gallery owner, to decry in 1915 that the American avant-garde was infected by 'the mentality of homosexuals' who were 'flowers of artificial breeding'.[119] Demuth satirically corroborated de Zayas's homophobic fear in his 1930 watercolour *Distinguished Air* based on McAlmon's short story (Fig. 10). Rather than depict the homosexual underworld of Berlin, Demuth tactically reframed McAlmon's narrative and resituated it in the equally queer context of a modern, American art gallery. A butch sailor and a bourgeois dandy pose in a relaxed, affectionate embrace, contemplating a caricatured representation of Brancusi's notorious *Princess X* (1915–16), the ambiguously abstract form of which echoes both the bust of a woman and the male member. A third gentleman, generally identified as a self-portrait of Demuth, gazes longingly at the sailor's crotch. In response to the erotic energy in the gallery, a woman in a low-cut cocktail dress stands on the right, staring either at the sculpture or at the woman directly opposite her. Holding a fan in her right hand and shielding her vaginal area, her left arm rests behind her back, guarding her buttocks. Demuth's vaguely drawn lines and watercolour patches also suggest that this woman may have thrust her left arm into her diaphanous dress, as if masturbating. The woman opposite her appears entranced by this blatant gesture, and their locked stare insinuates a degree of shock or identification. Perched atop a pedestal and bowing toward this reverent group of modern art devotees, the polymorphous *Princess X* instantiates these various queer unions and demarcates the modern art gallery

115. Chauncey, *Gay New York*, p. 200.

116. 'The Western Round Table on Modern Art', ed. Douglas MacAgy, in R. Motherwell and A. Reinhardt (eds.), *Modern Artists in America* (Wittenborn Schulz: New York, 1951), p. 30.

117. H. Crehan, 'Dada', *Evidence*, no. 3, Fall 1961, p. 37.

118. This was the accusation brought against Wilde by the Marquess of Queensberry, the father of Lord Alfred Douglas, who actually wrote on a card that he left for the author on 18 February 1895: 'To Oscar Wilde posing Somdomite [*sic*].' R. Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (Hamish Hamilton: London, 1987), p. 412.

119. M. de Zayas, 'New York, at first, did not see', *291*, nos. 5–6, July–August 1915, p. 6. In the French version of this text, which appears on the same page in much larger type, de Zayas described the denizens of the American avant-garde as polluted by the '*mentalité de gougnottes*'. In French argot of the period, a '*gougnotte*' referred specifically to a lesbian.

120. O. Wilde, *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde* (Harper Collins: Glasgow, 1994), p. 1121.

121. R. Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1993), p. 142. For an exception to the traditional grouping of the readymades as an ensemble of unified objects, see Molly Nesbit and Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, 'Concept of Nothing: New Notes by Marcel Duchamp and Walter Arensberg', in M. Buskirk and M. Nixon (eds.), *The Duchamp Effect* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 131–75.

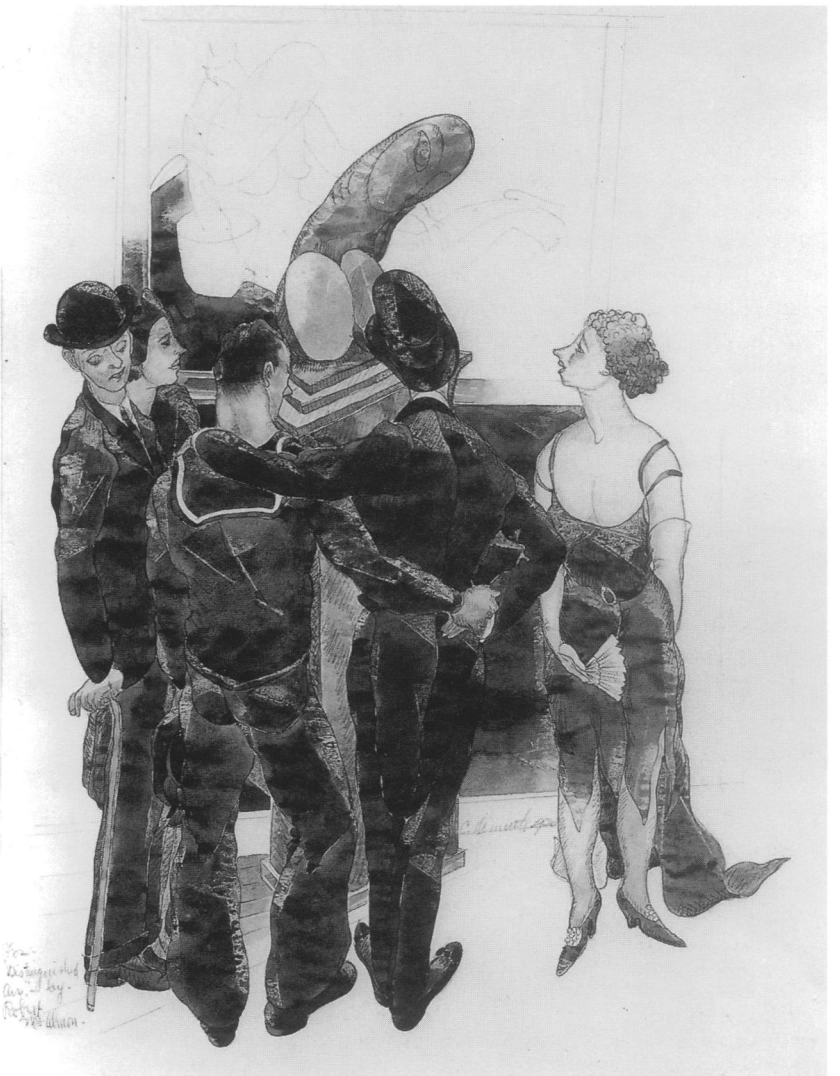

Fig. 10. Charles Demuth: *Distinguished Air*, 1930, watercolour, 35.56 × 30.48 cm. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York. (Photograph: Geoffrey Clements.)

as a safe haven for their negotiation, expression and possibly even their consummation.

Before his death, Wilde proclaimed, 'The one duty we owe to history is to re-write it.'[120] Duchamp attempted to do precisely this with *Fountain*. Art historians traditionally define the readymades as a unified group of mass-produced objects whose appropriation and introduction into the museum enacted a critical commentary on the post-industrial commodification of art and the bourgeois institution of the masterpiece. 'The readymade', Krauss writes, 'attempt[s] to erase the distinction between art and non-art, between the absolute gratuitousness of form and the commodity.'[121] While undeniable, this is only one story of the readymades. *Fountain* begins another story in the history of art, a story that tells the tale of serial production not only as a form of avant-garde artistic production but also as an analogue to homosexual reproduction, one which, according to Judith Butler, exposes heterosexuality (the putative 'original' *par excellence*) as 'an imitation of an imitation, a copy of

a copy for which there is no original . . . an incessant and *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized idealization'.[122] The panic that *Fountain* ignited in the mostly male board of the Society of Independent Artists signified the realization, however unconscious, that within the fetid and frenetic space of a *pissoir* the difference between heterosexual and homosexual makes no difference at all. As Freud reminds us, 'There is absolutely no justification for distinguishing a special homosexual instinct. What constitutes a homosexual is a peculiarity not in his instinctual life but in his *choice of an object*.'[123] With *Fountain*, Duchamp tellingly demonstrated that object choice is both the art of this readymade and the art of queer art history.

Jean-Paul Florentin, Marjorie Garber, Norman Bryson, Angela Rosenthal, Brian Martin, David Getsy, Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, Ari Shapiro and Nicolas Jasson all provided invaluable advice and assistance during the research and writing of this essay. I am particularly indebted to Joseph Koerner, whose prescient and challenging comments on early drafts of the essay did much to enrich its content, and to Jacqueline Matisse Monnier for her steadfast support of my work.

122. J. Butler, 'Imitations and Gender Insubordination', in D. Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York: Routledge Press, 1991), pp. 22–3.

123. S. Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy', in *SE*, vol. 9, pp. 109–10. Emphasis added.