

help of a crane, he bent the metal so that — once cooled — they retained the mark of the effort to which they had been subjected: so that they *denoted*, therefore, at the same time connoted that physical and manual, besides mechanical effort. For this reason, for the direct intervention of the operator, these works present themselves as correspondence to an authentic idea and not as achievements made by a third party on the basis of simple schemes, of comfortable sketches, or indications that «came from nowhere».

3) Proportional relationship between the works of the last three years

The value of the proportional relationship in the ambit of visual art in general but especially of plastic art, has often been invoked; not always rightly so and not always properly. In the case of Spagnulo this relationship is particularly evident and often it is sufficient to single out one of the reasons of the being of each work. I refer as an example, to those already quoted (*Black Panther, A. Davis*), where the very dimension of the work is an end to itself and is able to determine its significance. (I recall the effect that these sculptures stirred in the courtyard of Palazzo Reale, in the square of Libreria Einaudi, in Milan, in front of the «am Ostwall Museum» in Dortmund and at the Venice Biennale).

It is not easy and often it obtains the opposite effect, to «magnify» a plastic work, if the latter was not conceived from the beginning for that particular size. In this case, precisely the «right» size is the one conceived and only in it the work has reached its authentic vitality.

However, Spagnulo knows how to offer us with the same authority, examples of the opposite situation: that of certain works definitely small, of reduced dimensions, unusual in today's sculpture, brought as they are to the level of «knick knacks» (not of jewellery, I hasten to add: how often we were forced to state that certain statues were nothing but gulliverized jewellery, and that the jewellery was nothing but «lilliputian» monuments as far as many other artists are concerned), and notwithstanding this, they maintain intact all their rashness. Which rashness, far from diminishing, appears to grow because of the possibility the spectator has to grab and handle them directly. The spectator, in fact, lifts these pieces — with the instinctive impulse to «straighten them» — finds himself instead placed in front of the irremovable solidity of their cleavages, the gashes, and he senses with greater immediacy their meaning and value.

Not only, but so reduced in size and «miniaturized», these that we could define as «materialized»

ideas, acquire a vaguely surreal connotation, which in a sense difficult to specify, almost relates them to certain *merz* by Schwitters or to certain «activated» ready-mades of the early surrealists.

Obviously: no effective relationship between these crude, brutal, spontaneous sculptures and the over elaborations of the early dada. But one fact is certain: even in this case, and not only in the big, monumental works with a precise political intention, Spagnulo allowed himself to be led by a will of adhesion and adaptation to the existent situation of our time: the violence, the split, intolerance, that so often agitate our daily existence; the latent rebellion against impositions from high places; and on the other hand the useless delinquent violence of organized crime, find in these recent works — broken, chipped, contorted, ready for an outburst that the immobility of the material would not seem to allow — one of their surprising reflections.

Gillo Dorfles

MARCEL DUCHAMP

alias

ROSE SELAVY

alias

MARCHAND DU SEL

alias

BELLE HALEINE

by Arturo Schwarz

The importance of anagrams in the alchemical tradition is as great as that of puns; this too is stressed by Fulcanelli and he mentions among other examples, Tiphaigne de la Roche, who concealed the title of his alchemical treatise published in 1753, *Alchimie ou la crème d'Aum* under the anagram *Amilec ou la graine d'hommes*. And these esoteric anagrams were not restricted to concealing the contents of the teachings or the titles of the works; they also involved the very names of the initiates.

Marchand du Sel (salt merchant), an anagram on Marcel Duchamp, is one of the three pseudonyms adopted by Duchamp; the other two are Rose Sélavy and Belle Haleine.

An analysis of these three pseudonyms can prove most rewarding.

Rose Sélavy

Duchamp's description of the circumstances that led him to coin this pseudonym and to add another «r» to Rose have already been related elsewhere, and here they are of no particular importance. Here we can concentrate on the analysis of the latent motivations that Duchamp did *not* reveal.

Rose (the Mystical Rose, to be precise) is but another name for the Philosopher's Stone. In this case Rose (a feminine name) implies for Duchamp a double sexual identity which is also one of the physical characteristics of the Rebis.

The Rebis, in turn, is, again, but

another name for the Stone. The creative and regenerative powers of the stone are hinted at in the double *r* of Rose. Cirlot reminds us that «the trilled *r* is onomatopoeic, alluding to thunder as the symbol of creative power (it is for this reason that most verbs in almost all languages contain the letter *r*)».

This idea is further confirmed by the fact that the (eight-petalled) rose is a symbol of regeneration and of consummate achievement. The mythological significance of the rose enables Duchamp to give a highly poetic identification to the Bride. The flower (standing for the stone) reserved to the Adept in the closed garden of the Hesperides is a rose; and the rose is also the emblem of Venus. Since, as has already been mentioned, the Bride is to be identified with Venus, we recognize in the choice of Rose a further manifestation of the Bachelor's unconscious tendency to identify himself with the Bride.

Sélavy sounds in French *c'est la vie* (that's life). Thus Duchamp's pseudonym reads: the Philosopher's Stone (Rose) is life (Sélavy) and/or the Bride is my life. But this is not all. Rose Sélavy also sounds *Eros c'est la vie*. We remember the importance attributed by Duchamp to eroticism. «Eroticism is a subject very dear to me, and I certainly applied this liking, this love, to my Glass. In fact, I thought the only excuse for doing anything is to introduce eroticism into life. Erotic is close to life, closer than philosophy or anything like it».

The anagram on the anagram equates not only life to Eros (taken in all its multiple alchemical and mythological meanings) but also Eros to the Bride (taken in both its exoteric and esoteric significance) since Rose (the Bride) is life (Eros).

With the two simple words that compose his pseudonym which he transforms into his motto, Duchamp reveals and at the same time hides the philosophical premises of his life and of the Ready-mades.

Just as the Philosopher's Stone, although «familiar to all men» since it is «under you, and near you, and above you and around you» (*Artis auriferae*), is recognized only by the initiate, life too is synonymous with the arcane magistry if only we can come to understand it.

In several interviews, when Duchamp was asked about his occupation, he replied «I am a breather», and thus he equated his creative activities with the very fact of life itself. And further, the magistry — transmuting baser metals into gold — is paralleled by Duchamp's transmuting the common everyday object into a work of art. The perception of beauty, like the discovery of the Philosopher's Stone, is simply a question of higher consciousness. Duchamp invites us to acquire this awareness by opening our minds and our eyes to the

beauty which surrounds us. His pseudonym shows the way.

Marchand du Sel

It would have been difficult to choose a more appropriate pseudonym than *Rose Sélavy*. Only another poet could succeed in equalling this feat. I am thinking of Robert Desnos, the surrealist poet who, in the course of one of his mediumistic sleep sessions anagrammatized Marcel Duchamp into *Marchand du Sel*.

To understand the full implications of this second pseudonym born in 1922, two years after *Rose Sélavy*, we must dedicate some attention to the meanings of *Marchand* (merchant) and *Sel* (salt).

First of all *Sel* is homophone of *scel* (seal: signature) and in 1922 Duchamp had already been devoting himself to Ready-mades for several years. For Duchamp, the mere signing of a common manufactured object was sufficient to elevate it to the rank of a work of art. But *scel* (signature) also comprises the concept of *idea*, and *sel* has the metaphorical meaning of *sapientia* (wisdom). Thus the whole idea behind the Ready-mades is contained in this three-lettered word.

Only wisdom is necessary to recognize that beauty lies in the common object, and it is sufficient to distinguish it with a seal or signature to consecrate it.

It was during this period (1920-1924) that Duchamp also wrote the bulk of his best known anagrams and puns. *Sel* (salt) in both its exoteric (salt) and esoteric (*spiritus*) meanings stand for wit, intelligence, and pungency. It therefore admirably epitomizes this aspect of Duchamp's activity too.

The word *Marchand* (*merchant*) involves the concept of commerce (*commercium*); the secondary common meaning of this word coincides with its primary original meaning: intellectual or spiritual interchange, communion, familiarity. It is obvious that Duchamp is indeed familiar with wisdom and wit; these two aspects of the intellect are the cornerstones of his creative activity.

More than fifty years ago Robert Desnos, by coining this pseudonym for Duchamp, had recognized him to be a master of a kind of conceptual art, where the term «conceptual» is used in the original Duchampian sense, i.e. as opposed to retinal.

The analysis of the homophone of «*Sel*» — *scel* (seal) — in the light of the alchemical tradition is even more instructive. For the *artifex*, the success of his endeavours depended upon his being able to process mercury until it acquired transmuting powers. The exterior sign of the success of the magistry was the appearance in mercury of a geometrical pattern known as the Seal of Hermes. In the course of time the effect was identified with its cause and the Seal of Hermes, which sealed the success of the *opus*,

became synonymous with the Stone. Another point worth mentioning in connection with the Seal of Hermes is that Hermes Trismegistus («thrice greatest», the patron of the alchemists) was also called the Father of Words. Duchamp's activity in linguistics, his invention not only of words but of a whole new language, certainly entitles him to share his patron's surname. Salt plays a considerable part in the alchemical tradition as a Fulcanelli proves. It is a short step that takes the alchemist from recognizing the cardinal role of salt in the magistry to granting it the status of the Philosopher's Stone. After mentioning that in philosophical alchemy salt is a cosmic principle that has the same paradoxical double nature of the arcane substance, Jung quotes a great number of alchemical sources that again confirm the identification of salt with the Philosopher's Stone. «*Sal* is one of the many designations for the arcane substance. This connotation seems to have developed in the early Middle Ages under Arabic influence. [...] The *Rosarium*, which leans very heavily on the old Latin sources, remarks that the «whole secret lies in the prepared common salt», and that the «root of the art is the soap of the sages» (*sapo sapientum*), which is the «mineral» of all salts and is called the «bitter salt» (*sal amarum*). Whoever knows the salt knows the secret of the old sages. «Salts and alums are the helpers of the stone». When *Young Man and Girl in Spring* was discussed, Duchamp was identified with Eros and Mercurius. It is not irrelevant to note now that for Jung salt is interpreted as Eros and Mercurius is also identified with salt. Mercury (the mineral), we can remember, was also called the loyal servant and the *seal of the earth*. Moreover we have already noted the aspiration of Duchamp's psyche towards *immortality*; and the parallel between Duchamp's *solitude* and that of the alchemist has also been mentioned. We find both ideas implied in the symbolic significance of the salamander, the mythical immortal being that, Duchamp once told me he would choose to be if he could be reborn in the form of an animal.

Salamander (Latin *salamandra*) is composed of the two radicals *sal* (salt) and *mandra* (rock, solitude, hermitage). This is why *salamandra* is the name given to rock salt, also called *solitary salt*. The Greek root of salamander is equally revealing. *Sála*: agitated, or *sálos* or *zále*: tempest, agitated waters and *mándra* which has the same meaning as in Latin. Only in solitude can one reconcile oneself with the tempest, the agitated waters, i.e. the inner conflicts, of one's psyche.

Belle Haleine

The third of Duchamp's pseudonyms appeared in 1921; *Belle Haleine* was

born one year after *Rose Sélavy*. (In 1920 Duchamp spelled *Rose* with one *r*. It was towards the middle of the following year that he adopted the spelling with the double *r*.)

«*Belle Haleine*» (Beautiful Breath) is a pun on *Belle Hélène* (Beautiful Helen). Duchamp coined this pseudonym for the label of a bottle of *Eau de Violette* (Violet Water) which he punned, by transposing a single vowel, into «*Eau de Voilette*» (Veil Water). The words «*Belle Haleine*» are the trade mark (his *seal*) for this imaginary brand of «*Veil Water*». These words are printed under a photograph where Duchamp appears in a woman's guise, wearing a large hat.

The story of Helen, the beautiful daughter of Zeus and Leda, reveals striking correspondences with the story of the Bride. Helen too was involved in an incestuous relationship (as a matter of fact, a double incest: first with one of her own brothers, then with Deiphobus, her first husband's brother); she was to meet the same tragic end (Helen was hanged); she is identified with a tree (at Rhodes Helen was worshiped under the name of Dendritis - the tree goddess): the Bride too, in Duchamp's words, was «*arbor type*».

It is not difficult to infer that one of the unconscious motivations for the choice of this pseudonym and for the fact that Duchamp appears here as a woman was the desire to identify himself with the Bride, to become «*flesh of her own flesh*», as is revealed by the dedication he inscribed on the back of the painting *Young Man and Girl in Spring*.

Belle Haleine (Beautiful Breath) is equally revelatory. In all esoteric writings breath is associated with initiation. In the Indian tradition breath is associated with the word, and especially with its initiatory value. Holding the breath is a feat characteristic of the Indian magician and in Yoga the power conferred by *Pranayama* (breath control) enables the yogin to detach himself from this world. In the Shamanic tradition breath is associated with the passage of sexual identity. Breath (*haleine* in the French original; *halare*, *anima*, *anhelare*, in Latin; *psyche* in Greek) has an interesting etymology that confirms our analysis. Thass-Thienemann points out that *psyche* and *anima* relate to the immortal essence of man; these two terms «refer generally to respiration. They perceive respiration as the continuous exchange of the inside and outside world, as the invisible communication between the subjective and the objective reality; thus respiration became the carrier of the immortal and divine share of man». Considering the various elements, I trust it will not appear farfetched to advance the hypothesis that by choosing this pseudonym Duchamp

implied that he has reached the status of the adept. He is likewise endowed with the physical (androgyny), temporal (immortality) and spiritual (awareness) qualities that distinguish him from the profane. In this manner he is fully qualified to act as the initiator of his *soror mystica*, the Bride.

The initiatory significance of Belle Haleine is reinforced by the alchemical meaning of both the veil and the water. Let us hence examine Veil Water - Duchamp's pun for Violet Water.

The alchemists used the word «veil» in its original antithetic meaning of veil (*velum*, concealment) and unveil (*revelare*, reveal, pull back the veil or cover again with a veil). For the alchemists the veil was impenetrable only for the profane; for the adept it became transparent, indeed it actually unveiled the eyes of his intellect.

Water is the name given by the alchemist to mercury, the element of the *prima materia*, as well as to Mercurius, the end-product of the magistry. We have already recognized Duchamp in Mercurius and hence the Water/Mercurius identification confirms once more the Duchamp/Adept doublet. At the same time, since water also stands for the Bride, we can assume that Duchamp identifies himself with her once again and/or that it is the Bride who is to be initiated. And Duchamp's starting point for his Veil Water, Violet Water (Eau de voilette) enriches the pun still more. The alchemists called shooting stars «celestial flowers». When the assemblage *Genre Allegory* is examined in the following chapter we shall see that the Bride too is a shooting star. Jung mentions that the alchemists also called the *aqua permanens* (permanent water) a «flower» while the five-petalled sapphire blue flower is the flower of the hermaphrodite. The violet is a star-like five-petalled flower, whose violet color is the result of the addition of red (the color of immortality) to blue.

The original esoteric significance of the violet has been preserved to this day by the slang «pansy» used to designate an effeminate man or a male homosexual (the exoteric counterparts of the esoteric hermaphrodite or androgyne). All these different symbolic meanings continue to lead us in the same direction. The Bride is equated to a violet which in turn is equated to the Bachelor (the violet symbolises androgyny). Bride and Bachelor are again one.

Let us notice now that Duchamp's portrait on the label for the bottle of Belle Haleine, *Eau de Voilette*, shows mainly his head, and that the relationship between the words «head» and «vessel» can be seen in the light both of an etymological analysis and of the alchemical tradition.

The step that takes us from the semantic identification «head/vessel» to the alchemical equation «head/alchemical vessel» (the alembic, the *vas hermeticum*) is a short one and it is Jung who helps us in taking it when he points out «the head or skull (*testa capitis*) in Sabaeen alchemy served as the vessel of transformation.

The Sabaeen alchemists were figuratively anticipating what Dorn was to demand from the Adept a few centuries later: «Transform yourselves from dead stones into living philosophical stones» a demand that, again with the leap of a few centuries, was also formulated by the Surrealists when, paraphrasing Dorn, they printed in one of their leaflets the trenchant injunction «You who have lead in your head, melt it to transform it into surrealist gold». As has been pointed out in our first chapter, the material liberation of philosophic gold from vulgar metal is a metaphor for the psychological processes concerned with the liberation of man from life's basic contradictions. And the object of this liberation/transformation is man's mind.

The equation head/alchemical vessel finds its third factor in the Philosopher's Stone. Let us first observe that the significance of the *vas*-symbol in alchemy was of the greatest importance to the artifex. The *vas hermeticum* was as important as the *prima materia*; as a matter of fact the alembic was equated also to the end-product of the opus, the *lapis-philosophorum*.

From here it is not difficult to understand how the head, which has also the subsidiary meaning of the *corpus rotundum* (spherical body), stands for the arcane substance itself similarly designated as the *corpus rotundum*.

Now we need to take only one more step to consolidate our conclusions. The fact that the Philosopher's Stone has been equated with Duchamp and the Bride, that Duchamp is identified with Mercurius, that the *coniunctio oppositorum* of the Brother-Sister pair yields the Philosopher's Stone, that the seat of this conjunction and of the arcane transmutation is the brain, all find confirmation in a short sentence of the alchemical code *Artis auriferae*. «the brain... is the birthplace of the Brother-Sister pair». This equivalence can also be found in Greek alchemy, where the *lithos enkephalos* (Brain-stone, or Philosopher's Stone) is equated with the *lithos u lithos* (the stone that is no stone, i.e., the brain). Jung also mentions that it was in the *cucurbita* (gourd, a Latin colloquialism for head that survives in the modern Italian where *zucca* (gourd) is familiarly used for head) that the alchemists saw «the alchemical consummation of the royal marriage». Jung interprets the fact that the *coniunctio oppositorum* takes place

in the head as an indication of the psychic nature of the event.

The three pseudonyms that Duchamp chose for himself appeared in quick succession: Rose Sélavy in 1920, Belle Haleine in 1921 and Marchand du Sel in 1922. The three allegorical self-portraits that we shall deal with now immediately preceded and somewhat paved the way to those three pseudonyms. *Apolinère Enameled* was made in 1916-17, *Tonsure* and *L.H.O.O.Q.* were both made in 1919, one year before Rose Sélavy.

Tonsure

The full alchemical significance of *Belle Haleine* is epitomized in another photo of Duchamp's head taken two years before it. In this earlier photo Duchamp's head is seen from the back, with the hair shaved to form a bald spot in the shape of a five-pointed star.

The very fact of shaving one's hair takes us back to the familiar pattern of the androgyne. «The sacerdotal sacrifice of hair is likewise a symbol of emasculation... The sacrifice of men's hair is an ancient mark of priesthood, from the baldness of Egyptian hierophants to the tonsure of Catholic priests and Buddhist monks. Notwithstanding the great disparities of religious views, hairlessness is always associated with sexual abstinence and celibacy, i.e., with symbolic self-castration». The importance of androgyny in the alchemical tradition needs no longer to be stressed. Let us only remember that this pattern is a distinguishing feature of Mercurius and of the *soror mystica* (the Bride). In alchemical writings the five-pointed star is equated to mercury (Mercurius). At the same time the alchemists also saw in the star the symbol of the Virgin (the Bride) — one more element to buttress our proposed Bride/star identification. We can also note that the seventeenth major enigma of the Tarots is the Star and that its astrological correspondence is Venus. The significance of this card is equally instructive — it symbolizes the cycle of eternal renewal and immortality.

Finally, and here we meet the third and most important factor of our equation, the star is also the symbol of the Philosopher's Stone, of the union of the sky (the Bachelor) with the earth (the Bride).

A star-shaped geometrical pattern (denominated the Seal of Salomon) appeared only at the end of the magistry to announce that the *opus* had been successful.

When Duchamp shapes on his head (the alchemical vessel) the star as symbol of the *coniunctio oppositorum* he expresses figuratively what Gerhard Dorn had already understood—namely, that the magistry is «perceived not with the outward eyes, but solely by the mind».

The alchemical symbolism of the Star admirably contains the complex and dramatic scenario of the

Bride-Bachelor nuptial union which is enacted in and on Duchamp's head (the alchemical consummation of the royal marriage takes place in the Adept's mind) — for him to live mentally, for us to behold and understand if it is true that «the viewers are those who make the painting».

L.H.O.O.Q.

The three pseudonyms Duchamp chose for himself disguised his name. In the two allegorical self-portraits that will be dealt with now he also disguised his person, assuming, in both cases, a different physical and sexual identity.

In *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919, Duchamp added in pencil a moustache and goatee to a reproduction of Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*. At the bottom of this reproduction he inscribed the letters *L.H.O.O.Q.* which read in French *Elle a chaud au cul* (She has a hot bottom).

There are many interesting points of contact between Leonardo and Duchamp: both were sons of a notary; the number of surviving works in both cases is very small; their major works were abandoned unfinished; they were greatly interested in anagrams and puns; Leonardo's scientific games (as well as his interest in mirror-writing and shadows) provide an interesting parallel with Duchamp's playful physics (and his interest in «mirrorial return» and «Cast shadows»); they share a common androgynous psychic pattern; finally Leonardo's plea for painting to be more intellectual than physical is echoed in Duchamp's concern that painting should be not «only retinal or visual; it should have to do with the gray matter of our understanding».

The *Mona Lisa* has often been suspected of being the picture of a young man, and by adding a moustache and goatee to its reproduction Duchamp has emphasized the androgyny of the model. Duchamp commented on this transformation, «The curious thing about that moustache and goatee is that when you look at it the *Mona Lisa* becomes a man. It is not a woman disguised as a man; it is a real man, and that was my discovery, without realizing it at the time».

What is of real interest to us in this context is to decode the five enigmatic letters *L.H.O.O.Q.* In this case again Duchamp provided the first clue. Forty-two years after writing this cryptogram under the portrait of *Mona Lisa* he explained «a loose translation of them [the five letters] would be "there is fire down below"». Why didn't Duchamp give the literal translation of these letters (she has a hot bottom)? «Down below» comprises a manifest (exoteric) and latent (esoteric) meaning. The bottom is that region of the body which, in the Kabbala, is the seat of immortality and which

even in the secular connotation preserves some suggestion of the sacred. At the base of the spinal column the composite bone which unites with the vertebrae to form the pelvis is still called the sacrum. In the Tantric tradition, this region of the body is the seat of the Sleeping Serpent (*Kundalini sakti*) — again associated with resurrection and immortality — through whose energy man may achieve individuation. In the alchemical tradition the bottom acquires an equally rich connotation. For the alchemists the concepts of bottom/earth/passive came to coincide with the concepts of moon/water/feminine. These esoteric (immortality) and alchemical (femininity) concepts came to be synthesized in the secular expression *l'éternel féminin* (the eternal feminine) used to define the permanent traits of women's psychology.

In the alchemical system of polarities what is above, fire/sun has a masculine and active connotation, while what is below moon/water has a feminine and passive connotation. At first sight we would say that the «fire down below» expresses in lapidary style the union of what is above (man/fire/sun) with what is below (woman/water/moon). That is to say, in alchemical terms, the *coniunctio oppositorum* between Sol (the Sun-Bachelor) and Luna (the Moon-Bride). Let us check this assumption by discussing the significance of fire in the alchemical doctrine.

Fire has the same mediatory role in the magistry as that fulfilled by Mercurius and salt and it thus came to be identified with both. Fire, like Mercurius and Salt, is an agent of transmutation, it reconciles the contradictions. «In alchemy the fire purifies, but it also melts the opposites into a unity».

Jung draws a most interesting parallel between the concepts of fire and that of the unconscious. If we take the liberty to paraphrase Jung's analysis of Maier's peregrinations, we might say that when Duchamp's conscious starts the descent into his unconscious he gets «hot down below» as he discovers the Bride (i.e. the *anima*, the unconscious female principle in man). Let us recall that the third stage (*rubedo* or *iosis*) of the magistry is denoted by an increase of warmth and light. For Jung «this corresponds to the increasing participation of consciousness, which now begins to react emotionally to the contents produced by the unconscious. At first the process of integration is a "fiery" conflict, but gradually it leads over to the "melting" or synthesis of the opposites. The alchemists termed this the *rubedo*, in which the marriage of the red man and the white woman, Sol and Luna, is consummated».

To summarize our findings, with the

cryptogram *L.H.O.O.Q.*, Duchamp describes three levels of events: the *coniunctio oppositorum* is taking place (the Sun/Bachelor has come from above to unite below with the Moon/Bride); this *coniunctio* leads to a higher awareness (evidenced by the increase of heat, the «fire below»); and since the increase of heat also distinguishes, when successful, the magistry's third stage, this incestuous union has happily brought Bride and Bachelor together into the androgynous Adept a fact which in turn explains the addition of the moustache and goatee which complete the no longer enigmatic smile of *Mona Lisa*. That all this should be the outcome of an (outwardly) iconoclastic gesture and an (apparently) dirty joke characterizes *L.H.O.O.Q.* as a paradigm of Duchamp's method and procedure in thinking.

Apolinère Enameled

In 1916, the year after his arrival in New York, Duchamp's interest was aroused by a common cardboard and painted tin advertisement for the Sapolin brand of enamel house paints. He asked for it in a paintshop and transformed it into one of his most enigmatic works, *Apolinère Enameled*, his first allegorical self-portrait. It precedes *L.H.O.O.Q.* by two years.

Duchamp performed three operations on this piece of painted tin. He anagrammatized Sapolin enamel into Apolinère Enameled; he inscribed at the bottom the cryptic sentence *Any Act, Red by Her Ten or Epergne*; on the mirror, above the chest of drawers, he added the reflection of the hair of the girl who is painting the bed.

When the anonymous artist designed the tin-and-cardboard advertisement for a brand of house paints, he unconsciously drew elements from the collective unconscious shared by us all. Let us try to find out which elements in this advertisement struck Duchamp's unconscious to the point of motivating the desire to own such a banal example of advertising art. This can help us to understand the meaning of the three operations he performed on it, and gain an insight into the unconscious train of thoughts that were triggered by this ad. *Apolinère Enameled* reads, of course, Apollinaire enameled. Guillaume Apollinaire, the greatest French poet of the early twenties, was Duchamp's close friend, he had been severely wounded that same year (1917) in the course of a war action and was to die less than a year after Duchamp had completed this work which perpetuates the poet's name. Enamel is a glassy substance applied not only as an ornament but especially for protection, the action of «enamelling» Apollinaire takes an enriched significance if we remember that prehistoric man used to paint the body of the deceased in the belief that this would grant

the deceased an afterlife. This death rite is universally disseminated and Duchamp unconsciously reverted to it also when he painted in red the Nine Malic Moulds (i.e. himself) that rest in the Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries.

If Duchamp identifies himself with Apollinaire, the title of this item bears witness not only to Duchamp's extraordinary premonitory faculties; it is also one more proof of his psyche's urge towards immortality. Let us recall some of the common traits that may have unconsciously favoured this Duchamp/Apollinaire identification. Throughout his life Duchamp considered himself a poet rather than a painter; being a poet was for him at least as important as being an artist. In 1917 the poet closest to his sensibility was Apollinaire who, after Lautréamont, had been the first to anticipate the idea of the Ready-made in poetry, especially in *Alcools* (1913) and in *Calligrammes* (1918).

The idea of the hermaphrodite had occupied Duchamp ever since 1911. The same idea haunted Apollinaire as well and he chose a feminine pseudonym (Louise Lalanne) in 1909. He also completed a play concerning a couple of hermaphrodites, *Les Mamelles de Tiresias*, in the same year (1917) in which Duchamp did *Apolinère Enameled*.

Although Duchamp had not seen this play since it was first shown in Montmartre in June 1917 while he was staying in New York, it is of interest to note that some of the situations in the play find a parallel in Duchamp's own works of these years. In the first scene of the first act — the play tells the story of a young couple's (Thérèse-Tiresias and her husband) interchange of sexual identity — Thérèse loses her feminine attribute and grows a beard and moustache — like Duchamp's 1919 *L.H.O.O.Q.* In the third scene she throws out of the window, among other objects, a urinal — i.e. the same object which Duchamp that same year (1917) was to choose to exhibit at the Independent Artist's show in New York. Thérèse-Tiresias's husband appears in feminine guise in the fourth scene — Duchamp was similarly dressed in *Belle Haleine* (1921).

In 1911 Apollinaire had been unjustly accused of having had something to do with the theft of the Mona Lisa from the Louvre. The supposed robber and the thing robbed are identified by Duchamp's unconscious in the same way as the Mona Lisa is identified with Duchamp and hence with Apollinaire. The fact that Apollinaire was transferred to the Censorship Department of the Military Command (Direction générale des relations avec la Presse), again in 1917, may find an echo in the cryptic censored sentence: «Any act red by her ten or epergne» that

Duchamp composed by using some of the letters (covering with paint the others) of the commercial slogan printed at the lower right hand side of the advertisement panel. This conjecture is reinforced if it is found that this sentence has something to do with Apollinaire, and this seems to be the case. In 1914 Apollinaire, who had a tenor-voice, half sang half read three poems for a record produced by Ferdinand Brunot. Is this the fact hinted at by this sentence? Let us try to decipher the sentence in the light of this event: *act* may be substituted by *poem* in the same way as Goethe substituted *act* to *word* in the biblical sentence «at the beginning was the *word*» (the poem): at the beginning was the act — in *Faust*; *red* is a substitute for its homophone *read*; *ten* or *is* to be read *tenor*; *epergne* may stand for *épargne* (French for *to save*; the *a* of *épargne* is changed into *e* in *epergne*, so that the *a* is missing in both the words *red* — for *read* — and *epergne* — for *épargne*). The sentence may thus read: «Any poem read by a tenor is saved»: Apollinaire was not at all recognized in those days and the sentence predicts the fame he now enjoys, his poems having been saved for posterity.

In 1912, Apollinaire wrote the first chapter of a collective novel (that should have been written in cooperation with six other writers) titled *The Rainbow*, and in *Apolinère Enameled* the young girl is painting the bedsteads in the colors of the rainbow.

Bed and chest of drawers suggest a bedroom and Duchamp asked for this solid tin bedroom after having accidentally broken the fragile glass bedroom bridal chamber to be more precise) of the Nine Malic Moulds, 1914-15. The *Nine Malic Moulds* (the personification of Eros/the Bachelor) stand in what Duchamp called the Cemetery of Uniforms and Liveries. I have shown elsewhere that this cemetery is really the bride chamber of Eros/the Bachelor — the Greek root for cemetery (koimeterion) conveys the ambivalent meaning of cemetery and bridal chamber. In common language the bed evokes (not only in sex-minded people like you and me), sexual intercourse. In the alchemical tradition it is the bridal couch on which the *coniunctio oppositorum* of the Brother-Sister pair (the King and Queen) is consummated, and as such it is similar to the alchemical vessel where the chymical nuptials of *Sol* and *Luna* are celebrated.

The squaring of a circle is one of the most frequent allegories for the accomplishment of the magistry. Basilus Valentinus, a seventeenth century alchemist, associates the square, the circle and the bed to express the same concept: «The Mother's Bed which erstwhile was a Square / Is shortly after made Orbicular». The bedstead in this

tin-ad features the same association: a square and a circle.

The bars of the bedstead are all painted in different colors. The importance of color in alchemy will be discussed later. For the time being it is sufficient to mention that this display of colors (the *cauda pavonis*, peacock's tail) heralds for the Adept the imminent synthesis of all qualities and elements which are united in the Philosophical Stone. The psychological significance of this display of colors for Jung is that «during the assimilation of the unconscious the personality passes through many transformations, which show it in different lights and are followed by ever-changing moods».

The young girl in the ad is painting the bedstead — she is a painter. like Suzanne (the Bride). She is standing in the Bride chamber of Eros. The Bride chamber is no longer an unfriendly room for the melancholic and solitary Bachelor, it is cheered by the presence of the Bride, by the flood of light which enters the room from the drawn curtains, by the lively colors with which the Young girl (the Bride) paints the bed.

The fact that the young girl (Suzanne/the Bride) is painting the bed (the alchemical vessel/the head/ hence Duchamp) suggests that the person being enameled is not Apollinaire but the Bachelor-Duchamp. We are back to the already proposed Duchamp-Apollinaire identification. By adding in the mirror the reflection of the back of the girl's head Duchamp kills two birds with one stone: he draws our attention to the mirror as well as to the girl's hair.

The mirror has a relevant space in Duchamp's oeuvre. It is of fundamental importance in the Large Glass both as a structural part (the Oculist Witnesses) and a theoretical element (the Bride's domain is the «mirrorical return» of the Bachelor's domain). The association between the mirror and Duchamp is very close. Duchamp has been identified with Narcissus, Narcissus and the mirror are as closely linked as an object and its mirrored image. Duchamp's first work involving the use of the mirror, *Glider Containing a Water-Mill in Neighboring Metals*, 1913-15, had been completed the year preceding *Apolinère Enameled*. In a great number of notes Duchamp stresses the importance of the mirror in his work. This complex and ambivalent symbolism of the mirror conveys a large amount of relevant information. It is a symbol of the imagination or consciousness. It is related to moon-symbolism because of its reflective and passive characteristics for it receives images as the moon receives the light of the sun. At the same time it also stands for twins, a concept which, in the alchemical tradition refers to the *Rebis* (the double thing), hence, in the

mirror we find alongside *Luna*, what it reflects: *Sol*. And as far as the girl's hair is concerned, it is easy to understand the importance it acquires for Duchamp in the alchemical context of the hermaphrodite. The importance of the absence or the presence of hair has already been stressed when *Tonsure* and *L.H.O.O.Q.* were discussed. Let us remember that in *Belle Haleine*, it is the abundant long hair that characterizes Duchamp as a woman. What is still more striking is that the reflection of the young girl's hair in the mirror looks like the reflection of the Mona Lisa's and/or Belle Haleine's hair seen from the same point of view. This might hint at the fact that the Bachelor is the mirrorical return of the Bride (and vice-versa) — a fact that has already been mentioned when the Large Glass was discussed: the Bride's Domain is the mirrorical return of the Bachelor's (or vice-versa). Once again the monistic pattern of alchemical thought moulds the aesthetic pattern of Duchamp's symbolism: the Young Girl is at one and the same time Apollinaire, Suzanne and Marcel. Each of these three personages acquires the qualities of the other two, so that the final personage is both painter and poet, male and female, in a word, the hermaphroditic Rebis.

Arturo Schwarz

Dialogue with Fernando De Filippi

DE FILIPPI — This cycle of work began around 1969. Having exhausted the cycle of my previous exhibition, I tried to set myself another theme: the life of Lenin. At the beginning I gave it an almost epic interpretation, using the paintings of Soviet realism as material and presenting them again with contemporary techniques. It was like revisiting a particular phase of history and art form. As the work grew gradually clearer I began to get to know this character in a different measure — closer and yet more detached at the same time — and to live with him. I felt the need for the faithfulness of a document; the necessity of experiencing it through moments of reality and not through a hagiographic relationship. I felt that to evoke him in experienced moments of time would also serve to establish a mediumistic type of relationship and enable me to step into his shoes. So for two years I lived next to Lenin, or at any rate to what Lenin was for me, that is, the material I had got hold of, appropriated, and in which I recognised him. I have never seen Lenin but I have seen what information, books and printed evidence have told me about him.

TRINI — Your opening statement is that the current cycle on Lenin is the outcome of a ripening of your work and raises new questions in your painting. There is a new relationship

with the subject: an autobiographical rapport. The autobiography does not tell us about De Filippi as a man, who exists, but bears witness only to De Filippi as a painter. Formally speaking, the break with the past is clean.

The previous work was encrusted, if I may put it that way, by an «ideologism» which in turn was clad in a «pictorialism». I'm talking about the political intention and about the expressive intentions. The ideologism consisted of celebrating the revolutionary Lenin, as symbol of armed struggle or of class struggle; the pictorialism consisted of the expressionistic intentionality of the violence or abnormal situations; also in the use of colours. If you look carefully, in cases where a picture is built up out of ideological stereotypes, pictorialism always comes into it; that is to say, the comment by a person saying: yes, I've done a portrait of Stalin, but I'm a painter. It's the extreme corrective. Then, with the first paintings on Lenin the pictorialism diminished. Because you immediately resorted to stereotypes, to the red flag, the man leading the Masses, the hammer and sickle, etc., and in my opinion this brief interval of socialist realism was useful. In your new work the subject is Lenin, a private Lenin, but it is also your own long study of his iconography. The technique is realistic, positively photographic, the real accent is on the documentary intention. This documentation, however, is not mechanical; it is transcribed with the airgraph and grey or black colours. In short, it is painting that doesn't transcribe nature, but culture — the culture of old photographs retrieved from printed matter of that period. Clearly the ideology is there, but it is so plain that it does not need to be messed up beyond or against the painting. Since you portray Lenin, people know at once who you are, where you stand, what you want — and at the same time, however, their conscience is chased towards the language solutions you propose. So the ideology is your doing painting. You said that to the extent in which you made yourself familiar with Lenin's image, you altered your ideological and commemorative, point of view, which was whereas now it is documentary and much more mental. Yours is the realism of someone who wants to transcribe a pictorial experience in which he himself is definitely the leading figure.

DE FILIPPI — It's not a passive realism.

TRINI — You're right, it is not a passive realism. Mec-art is passive realism, and so is all figurative painting that contents itself with a purely naturalistic system. Your work is at the antipodes. This is why I would like you to tell me whether there are any differences between the resumption of a certain

kind of realism today and the social realism of the Forties.

DE FILIPPI — First of all one has to consider the connection and the differentiations with which neo-realism or, for example, the new German objectivity, make use of the real image, that is, the model. In the Italian instance there seems to me to be a link-up with a certain romanticism in painting, a certain passionate way of looking at painting. Whereas in the new German objectivity there is a more mental objectiveness than what in Italy is a burning situation, almost a political identification and a shrieking, impotent castration. In my case the subject is more detached.

What I give is not a poetic product but I would say it is almost a form of unnatural realism.

The colour used by the American photorealists is not natural but it is the colour of the four-colour print, just as this black and white is unnatural and determined by the scale of greys in the documents. You have a type of relationship with nature which is no longer direct but constrained by the transfer imposed on it by information tools. Taken to the extreme, when we watch television we are so accustomed to see an image in black and white that if we happened to see a character in the flesh we would not recognise him; and the same applies to the cinema or press. The documentary evidence in this case, therefore, becomes a memorial fact. So I do not see a passionate work but, on the contrary, an essentially mental operation that duly takes into account everything that the avant-garde has produced in the past years. The difference seems to me to be substantial.

TRINI — As the transcription of a photograph by means of painting, every new painting you do implies at least the alteration of the context. I mean, we come out of the context of the historiographic and political document, and enter into the context of art — and that means farewell to the realistic representation of reality. The other alteration is the unnaturalness of a painting devoid of colour or which at any rate imitates the gradations of grey found in black and white photographic reproduction. So this takes us quite a long way from the plane of realism. With the term realism, and then new objectivity, then *nouveau réalisme*, and now photo-realism or «relative realism», too many different experiences and indeed often conflicting experiences, have been covered for the notion of Realism still to be used with any effectiveness and point. It is a complementary notion to the *question of art*, just as the idea of reality is complementary to art. Philosophically speaking, realism in art stands for opposition and struggle against the idealistic substance of the whole artistic system.