

# Mirrors, TRANS/formation and Slippage in the Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp

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[Editor's note: This article is the author's English translation and updating of his "trucage photographique et déplacement de l'objet: À propos d'une photographie de Marcel Duchamp prise devant un miroir à charnières (1917)," which appeared in *Les Cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne* in 2005.]

To Lawrence D. Steefel, Jr.

... Duchamp is neither more or less a chess player or a painter, but a machine of atomization on all the supports, sifting the time of plans and the space of perspectives, letting the grains trickle away.

- Jean-François Lyotard,  
*Duchamp's TRANS/formers* (81-82)

On May 23, 1917, at the Arensberg's New York apartment, Francis Picabia challenged Henri Pierre Roché to a game of chess, the outcome to determine the fate of their journals, *391* and *Blindman*, respectively. Picabia won and *Blindman* ceased publication (Gough-Cooper and Caumont).<sup>1</sup> Marcel Duchamp and Roché published the score of the match in *Rongwrong* that July (Tomkins 198). On June 21, in the company of Beatrice Wood, Duchamp and Picabia visited the Broadway Photo Shop at 1591 Broadway, where, sitting before a hinged-mirror setup, Duchamp (Figure 1) and Picabia (Figure 2), photographed by an attendant using a photo postcard machine, had their five-way portraits made (Gough-Cooper and Caumont).<sup>2</sup> Sometime after sitting for the five-way portrait illustrated below (Figure 2), Picabia revisited the Broadway Photo Shop where he sat for a second five-way portrait (not illustrated). According to Heinz-Werner Lawo, in this second photograph, which is reproduced in Maria Lluís Borrás's *Picabia* (33), Picabia is wearing a different, dark colored pin striped jacket and has a different hairstyle and facial expression. While it has not been confirmed, it is possible that Picabia accompanied Roché to the Broadway Photo Shop, where he too had his five-way portrait done (Figure 3).



photo  
of Marcel Duchamp, 1917.

Figure 2: (right) Unknown photographer, *Five-Way Portrait of Francis Picabia*, 1917.



Figure 3: Unknown photographer, *Five Way Portrait of Henri Pierre Roché*, 1917.

Of the photographs, this study is most concerned with the one of Marcel Duchamp. Is this seemingly insignificant souvenir of a trip to a photo-booth with friends important? Easily dismissed, this photograph invites consideration of its greater importance within the larger context of Duchamp's work: areas such as readymades, hinges, mirrors, opposing propositions, and questions of identity. Also, the photograph may symbolize what Rosalind E. Krauss recognized in Duchamp's work: "it manifests a kind of trauma of signification, delivered to him by two events: the development by the early teens, of an abstract (or abstracting) pictorial language; and the rise of photography. His art involved a flight from the former and a peculiarly telling analysis of the latter" (Krauss 206).

By 1917, Duchamp had put painting behind him. The readymade had gone through its period of gestation and had assumed a mature form in *Fountain*. *The Large Glass*, with its many references to photography, was under way. Duchamp was formulating a language, one transferring its significance into signs.

### The "Hinged-Mirror" Technique and Photo Post Card Machines

First used for high art portrait photography, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, the hinged-mirror technique found diverse audiences. In 1896 Walter E. Woodbury, referring to the use of the hinged-mirror technique, wrote, “In France it is used to photograph criminals, and thus obtaining a number of different portraits with one exposure” (9). Writing on the subject of trick photography in 1897, Albert A. Hopkins describes the use of hinged mirrors to produce multiphotography: “. . . if a subject is placed in front of two mirrors inclined to each other at an angle of seventy two degrees, four reflected images are produced, plus that of the sitter” (451-53). The illustration from the Hopkins text shows the person to be photographed sitting, back to the camera, facing the mirrors where their inner edges intersect. It also shows the photographer, working in a darkened studio space and behind a blind, carefully framing the subject and its reflections, making them indistinguishable (Figure 4). The role of the photographer in the process appears diminished, made mechanical. (This would have been attractive to Duchamp, who at that time sought to mechanomorph his portrayals of the human figure.)

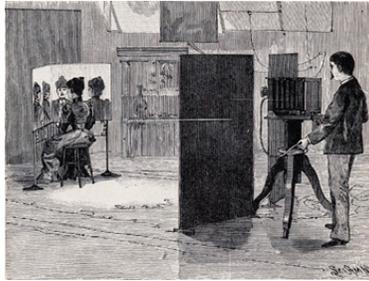


Figure 4: “Illustration of gallery arranged for multiphotography.”

Picture postcards were first introduced in Germany in the 1890s. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the US Congress had passed laws allowing photographs to take up one side of a postcard, the other to be used for the address, stamp, and a short note. A new industry was born. It was at this time, drawn to the booming international postcard fad, that companies like Kodak, Seneca, Chicago Ferrotypes (Mandel cameras), and the Day Dark Specialty Company began marketing cameras, negative plates, and printing papers for amateurs and professionals alike. According to Eastman House records, in the United States, some of the “picture in a minute” photographers in Atlantic City were the first who offered to put pictures of visitors on postcards.<sup>3</sup>

The 1909 edition of *The Complete Self-Instructing Library of Practical Photography* gives advice on how to conduct a profitable business. One of the chapters, “Making Post-Cards for Quick Delivery,” describes how to set up a studio, a laboratory, and operate a business.<sup>4</sup> These studios could be found at expositions, carnivals, amusement parks, and in storefronts where customers, like Umberto Boccioni and Chico Marx, could get multiple image portraits at a cheap price.<sup>5</sup>

Technology would respond, helping entrepreneurs produce photo postcards more cheaply and more rapidly. By 1910, The Chicago Ferrottype company and the Day Dark Specialty Company were marketing cameras as “Photo Post Card Machines.” Claims made in advertisements for these machines help illustrate that the role of the photographer was being usurped by the automated machine: “No plates, film or dark room” and “all the work is done in the machine in open day.” Fast fortunes were promised. The photo postcard machines began to be used by entrepreneurs wherever large crowds provided a source of willing customers.

By 1914 cameras such as the Day Dark Photo Post Card Machine, Model C, Style 2 were being marketed. The Day Dark machine distinguished itself from others because it used a dry plate negative and produced higher quality images printed on postcard stock.<sup>6</sup> Day Dark’s 1914 catalogue proudly stated that this machine produced “genuine black and white photos.” Self-contained, these machines functioned as camera and laboratory, exposing the negative, processing it, and printing “three photo post cards of any object made and delivered on the spot in ten minutes.” Advertisements like these which appeared in repeated issues of *Scientific American* were intended to appeal to entrepreneurs. It was just a matter of time before ingenuity would bring together the use of elaborate backdrops (the hinged-mirror among them) and the new technology of the photo postcard machine.

In *Prairie Fires and Paper Moons, The American Photo Postcard: 1900 - 1920*, Hal Morgan and Andreas Brown observe that “the key to the photographer’s success seems to have been the elaborate backdrops that set their subjects against another more exotic world” (xiv). The Broadway Photo Shop offered a variety of backdrops, one of them the hinged mirror.<sup>7</sup> Posing the subject in front of a hinged mirror backdrop, using a photo postcard machine, multiple prints could be produced rapidly and inexpensively on postcards. In a very few minutes the customer could carry away three five-way portraits printed on postcards. This is what Duchamp and Picabia did, and on a later date Roché (possibly in the company of Picabia) repeated.

### **The Broadway Photo Shop**

Based on notations in Beatrice Wood’s diary we can fix June 21 as the date when the group photograph of her along with Duchamp and Picabia was taken at the Broadway Photo Shop (Figure 5). The clothing worn by Duchamp and Picabia in their five-way portraits (Figures 1 and 2) is the same as that seen in the group photographs. Writing some time later, Duchamp confirms that the five-way portraits and the group portrait were made in the same studio (see note 7). This author concludes, from information given by Wood and Duchamp, along with a comparison of the men’s dress, that all of these photo postcards were made on the same day. Interestingly, even though Wood posed with both men for the group portrait there is no evidence that she, too, sat for a five-way portrait.



Figure 5: Unknown photographer, *Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Beatrice Wood* (recto), 1917, photograph on postcard, 5 1/2 x 3 1/4, Private Collection.

Roché was not a member of the party that day. He would not have been welcome. He had jilted Wood, and Duchamp and Picabia were taking her to Coney Island to console her. Further, according to his own diary, he spent the day in bed with a migraine headache. The exact date when he had his five-way portrait made is uncertain. Notations that Roché made on the verso of two of the postcards of himself give different dates. The notation on the card recently acquired by the Centre Georges Pompidou reads, “Août 1917.” On two separate occasions Roché wrote the date “October 10, 1917” on the card in the Carlton Lake Collection.<sup>8</sup>

A good case can be made that Picabia carried a set of postcards (the five-way portraits of himself, Duchamp, and Roché, along with the group portrait of Duchamp, himself, and Wood) with him when he left New York for Europe around mid-October of 1917. Soon after that he made two small drawings of Duchamp that are of interest to this discussion. One drawing, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, published in the issue of 391 problematically dated July 1917 shows Duchamp in profile (Figure 6).<sup>9</sup> It bears a strong likeness to the image of Duchamp on the far right of the five-way photograph, with the exception that the pipe has been exchanged for a cigarette and the hand is missing. In November or December of that year Picabia did a pen-and-ink portrait of Duchamp identified as a *Sheet of studies including a portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art).<sup>10</sup> Comparing it with the second image from the right (reversed) in the Duchamp photograph, one gets the sense that Picabia used the photograph as his source for both drawings.



Figure 6: Francis Picabia, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, late 1917.

Citations given in the mid-1990's for the Duchamp photograph argue persuasively that at least two examples are known to exist. Francis Naumann, in *New York Dada, 1915-23*, identifies the source of the Duchamp photograph he reproduced as coming from the collection of Y. Poupard-Lieussou, Paris.<sup>11</sup> Writing at roughly the same time, Calvin Tomkins, in his *Marcel Duchamp, a Biography*, labels the example he used (see 197) from the collection of Peter Lyon, Paris.<sup>12</sup> In an email conversation, Mr. Tomkins agreed with this author that Mr. Lyon probably received his print from his mother, Yvonne Chastel, who likely was given it by Duchamp. The Duchamp photograph acquired by the Centre Georges Pompidou in 2004 is stamped on the verso, coming from Roché's collection. Another photo postcard featuring the five-way portrait of Duchamp appeared on the Paris auction market in October, 2008. Like the Pompidou's example, this photo postcard carries the logo for the Broadway Photo Shop on its verso along with inscriptions in Pierre de Massot's handwriting. It may or may not be the third example.

As mentioned above, two examples of the Roché photograph have been located: one in the photography collection at the Centre Georges Pompidou, the other, along with the one known example of Picabia wearing the light colored jacket, in the Carlton Lake Collection. All three have Roché's stamp on the verso. The photo postcards of all three men (as well as the group portrait) were printed on a postcard stock manufactured by Eastman Kodak, and their sizes and formats (5 1/2 x 3 1/4") are the same.<sup>13</sup> One important detail helps identify the fact that all photographs (including the second version of the Picabia portrait) were taken at one location. Examining the imagery, aside from the positions of the sitters in relation to the camera and the hinged-mirror setup, the visible details of the table on which the sitter's arms rest, and their reflected images, are identical in all of the photographs. The Broadway Photo Shop's logo appears on the verso of the two Duchamp and Roché cards. It is not present on the Picabia shown here. (Interestingly, not all of the cards known from this shop carried the logo, e.g., Figure 5.) Roché, in a note on the verso of his postcard (in the Carlton Lake Collection) gives us insight into the studio lighting used, "It's rather ugly but a clever idea. It's taken with movie lighting—which is why I don't have a very healthy look."<sup>14</sup>

### Spaces of Double Regression

The carefully cropped compositional arrangement of the five-way portrait establishes the space of a double regression (an incongruence between spaces); a space without an echo of the real world in which linguistic confusion operates, activated by Duchamp's relationship to the mirrors. His interest in four dimensional geometry likely contributed to his curiosity regarding virtual images, one that led to his exploration of the notion of virtuality and its connections with mirrors (*Writings* 99). On this topic Lyotard contends that the eye "is thrown back onto its own creativity, without being able to lose itself in virtual objects, as the reality effect would have it. A transformation of the perspective its transformation" (Lyotard 34). Roman Jakobson's term "shifter" may be useful here (Mitchell 268-69). He describes it as a category of linguistic sign which is filled with signification only because it is empty. Personal pronouns and articles are examples of shifters. Duchamp's interest in what Jakobson labeled shifters can be found in notes referencing mirrors and "mirrorical return" published in his 1934 *Notes in a Green Box*. One of the more pertinent notes, describing shifts from image to image, discusses the potential role of the never completed "Wilson-Lincoln system." Intended to be part of the *Large Glass* its function was to activate "mirrorical return" within that work's narrative (*Writings* 65).

Arguably, Duchamp's own discovery in 1911 of Marey's chronophotographs, aided his stated desire, as described by Albert Cook, "to transfer the significance of language from words into signs, into visual expressions of words . . ."—visual expressions that question identity and meaning, i.e., shifters (157). In the Marey photographs, just as in the one of Duchamp, our eyes move from image to image, and referents keep changing places.

In her essay, "Notes on the Index, Part 1," Krauss makes the case that the readymade's parallel with the photograph

is established by its process of production. It is about the physical transportation of an object from the continuum of reality into the fixed condition of the art-image by a moment of isolation, or selection. And in this process, it also recalls the function of the shifter. It is a sign which is inherently empty, its significance a function of only this one instance, guaranteed by the existential presence of just this object. It is the meaningless meaning that is insinuated through the terms of the index. (206)

By 1917 Duchamp understood photography's potential for his work, referencing it repeatedly in his notes. Also, he had begun what would become a long-term collaboration with the photographer Man Ray (Foresta 17-18). Krauss provides us with a means for considering the photograph of Duchamp, assisting us in assigning its possible function within the Duchampian lexicon. Discussing photography in general, she notes that "Every photograph is. . . a type of icon, or visual likeness, which bears an indexical relationship to its object. . . Its separation from true icons is felt through the absoluteness of this physical genesis. . . Its power is an index

and its meaning resides in those modes of identification which are associated with the Imaginary. . .” (203). Here Krauss provides us with a “laundry list” for consideration about how Duchamp might have understood the operation of the five-way portrait relative to his own thoughts about “inventing” a language. Charles Sanders Peirce’s studies theorizing the differences among the sign-types—symbol, sign, and index—are important in working out this model. According to Peirce, in order to ensure that the icon is brought into “a dynamic relation” with the actual world, it must be supplemented by an index. He described the index as a sign which would retain its character as a sign even in the absence of an interpretant, but lose its meaning if its object were removed (Goudge 141-51).

Peirce’s index requires a real, existential connection between the index (sign) and the object, like the mirror images of the sitter in the Duchamp photograph. That connection, however, does not necessarily need to be located in reality, but can be located within the image itself (Bal 199). An index can function as a pointer (e.g. Duchamp’s witty use of the hand in *Tu m’*), directing the viewer’s eyes over the surface of the artwork in a specific direction suggested by the indexical sign (Bal 200). In his discussion of the indexical sign, Peirce focuses attention on the reference that a sign makes to an object other than itself, whether this is a material thing or simply a concept (Nelson 20-21). In this case, Duchamp’s posture, the pipe held in his mouth, and the position of his other hand offer, as we shall see, references to an object other than itself.

In conversations with Arturo Schwarz, Duchamp spoke of his use of ideograms around 1915, “to transfer the significance of language from words into signs, into a visual expression of the word, similar to the ideogram of the Chinese language.” According to Schwarz, this was not meant to be an ordinary language, but “a sort of invented language, which would not be intended to communicate physical things, material things.” The process would begin with “prime words,” those “divisible only by themselves and by unity” (Schwarz 30). Cook, in *Dimensions of the Sign in Art*, reflecting on that conversation, observes that Duchamp’s ideograms, “however, surpass the Chinese by being more comprehensive (they keep the visual interacting) and more arbitrary (they are personal and the senses keep multiplying)” (157). As described by this author in “Rose Sélavy: Machinist/Erotaton,” Duchamp viewed himself as a “cunning linguist” (McManus 56). His efforts at constructing a private language are traceable throughout his career, and can be found in notes published in *The Green Box* and in *A l’Infinitif* as well as comments made in various interviews. His alternative seems to have been, as Jerrold Seigel argues, to create a new tripartite language; it would eliminate references to concrete objects in the world, give expression only to its own universe, and represent a private language made up of symbols whose meaning are established by and only known by its author (Seigel 151-54). Considering these factors it is conceivable that Duchamp recognized a correspondence between the ambiguities constructed in the five-way portraits and what this author has identified as his “superposition”<sup>15</sup>; one causing us to occupy the neither/both space (that of double

regression) in between. Thomas McEvilley adds importantly to this discussion, interpreting Duchamp's search for an ambiguous middle-ground between opposing possibilities to be one significantly informed by his readings of the Greek Skeptic Pyrrho, Kant, and Hegel (McEvilley 15-35).<sup>16</sup>

As a result of the carefully designed composition for the five-way portrait, we experience a calculated loss of distinction between the object photographed (in this case Duchamp) and its reflected images, leaving us, like Buridan's Ass, locked between opposing alternatives. (Duchamp's note "Free Will" refers to the apologue of Buridan's Ass (Schwarz 577)). Arturo Schwarz reads this note to mean Duchamp is dwelling on what he describes as the Bachelor's uncertain behavior: ". . . his intention of meeting the Bride is countered by his fear of the consequences . . ." (Schwarz 160). In that same passage Schwarz identifies the *Nine Malic Moulds* as the Bachelor's alter ego. A note from the *Green Box* tells of the *Malic Moulds* trauma:

The gas castings so obtained, would hear the litanies sung by the chariot, refrain of the whole celibate machine, But they will never be able to pass beyond the Mask = They would have been as enveloped, alongside their regrets, by a mirror reflecting back to them their own complexity to the point of their being hallucinated rather onanistically. (*Writings* 51)

Craig Adcock has examined another aspect of the *Malic Moulds*' being. In his 1983 study of the *Large Glass*, Adcock explains a number of notes in *A l'Infinitif* as combining two of Duchamp's central metaphors, mirrors and movement (observable in *Bicycle* and *The Nine Malic Moulds*) as a means to discuss the fourth-dimension. Describing the process that Duchamp used to transfer the design of the *Nine Malic Moulds* to the *Large Glass*, Adcock argues that "This mirror reversed image suggests a four-dimensional rotation. The 'uniforms and liveries' of the 'nine *Malic Molds* recall chess pieces and Duchamp's chess rotations had n-dimensional implications" (Adcock 196).

Following Adcock's lead we observe that the images of Duchamp and his four reflections (like the *Malic Moulds*) rotate around an axis, in this case one created by the line formed where the two mirrors intersect. Just as the *Malic Moulds* recall chess pieces, so does Duchamp's pose. It suggests *opposition* or *trebuchet* where a side is satisfactorily defended, but any move will upset the defense—and they must move, but as we can see they are locked in place.<sup>17</sup> This immobility plus the loss of distinction establishes the space of a double regression (an incongruence between spaces) a space without an echo of the real world in which linguistic confusion operates: an *infra-mince*.<sup>18</sup>

What makes the linguistic confusion work, what makes the sign (the figure before the mirror) empty, is the compositional format of the photograph. The image of the sitter, the mirrors, and the reflections, are carefully cropped, leaving us with no clear understanding of which image is the subject photographed and

which are the reflected images of the sitter. As Ades has observed, “. . . it is rather the absence of the mirror plane than its presence that is remarkable here. Duchamp appears to be looking at himself, but not at himself looking at himself” (98). Each empty sign waits for a referent to be supplied—”I?”, “you?”: shifters.<sup>19</sup>

Movement has taken place, a shifting back and forth, a reconciliation between opposing squares. One of the fascinating qualities of the five-way portrait is the dialectic created between the photographed image (in real space) and the photographed reflections of the image (in virtual space). We are not immediately able to make a distinction between the respective spaces and the images that occupy them. A delay is created. In his notes, Duchamp made repeated references to hinges and mirrors. None seems more important to a discussion about this photograph than this note from *A l'Infinifif*:

For the representation of an angle<sup>4</sup>, 2 mirrors intersecting (at an obtuse angle) depict 2 spaces intersecting along a hinge-plane. For the eye<sup>3</sup> in space<sup>3</sup> i.e. the intersection line of the 2 mirrors. *The hinge-plane of the 2 spaces<sup>3</sup> is behind this line* and gives a clear picture to the eye<sup>3</sup> moving from the right to left without ever being able to catch any part of this plane. (Duchamp, *Writings* 93. italics in original)

This collection of notes was written between 1912 and 1920. Could he be referencing the photograph done with the hinged-mirrors? Or, does the photograph give a visual presence to ideas already expressed in the note, raising the question that the photograph is an unacknowledged Readymade? We can only guess.

In the five-way photograph of Duchamp the indexical function of the images works to convey meaning by referencing the common characteristics of its object, signaling potential meaning to the viewer rather than representing a contained meaning. While it does not remove the object, the five-way portrait puts the discrete identities of the object and index into question, complicating our reading of the images. The indexical functions of imagery are not only analytic in purpose, pointing to hidden or culturally coded meanings within an artwork; they can also be synthetic in that the continual referencing of the object generates multiple interpretations, adding meaning to the sign and generating new signs (Hoopes 124).

Peirce provides us an invitation to venture beyond the iconic and inquire about indexical functions of this photograph's imagery. It is Duchamp's pose in this photograph, his well documented life-long passion for chess, and the chess match between Picabia and Roché, that encourages the following reading of this photograph.

### **Duchamp and the Automaton**

Recalling Adcock's observations about the *Malic Moulds*, the images of Duchamp appear placed, displaced, and replaced around an axis of rotation, affecting not

only the generation of an  $n + 1$  dimensional continuum, but casting Duchamp in the role of automaton—the automaton who appears to create the axis of exchange between appearance and apparition.

Given Duchamp's interest in automatons, this photograph could function metaphorically, the role of the photo postcard machine and the multiple images of Duchamp doubling as the automaton. The photograph of the object refers to the object, or does it? The reflections in the mirror refer to the object, or do they? The “ready made” format causes a calculated loss of distinction between the object photographed and its reflected images. Adcock sees reflections in the surface of the mirror, Duchamp's molding (his mirror casting) as establishing a play between “appearance” and “apparition”; a mirror world in which Duchamp played a game involving “the fact that art is a mirage” (Adcock 196). Referring to Duchamp's notes, Octavio Paz identifies the difference between apparition and appearance in what he labeled as “the axis of speculations of the *White Box*,” describing automata as forms of illusion, images of our uncertain knowledge and our dependence on appearances (143).

In one of his notes, written around the same time and found in *A l'Infinifif*, Duchamp discusses “Appearance and Apparition”:

1° The appearance of this object will be the sum of the usual sensory evidence enabling one to have an ordinary perception of that object . . .

2° Its apparition is the mold of it i.e.

a) There is the *surface apparition* (for a *spatial* object like a chocolate object) which is like a kind of mirror image *looking* as if it were used for the making of this object, like a mold, but this mold of the form is not itself an object . . .

Later in that same note he draws an analogy between the mold and the photographic negative: “By mold is meant: from the point of view of form and color, the *negative* (photographic. . . .)” (*Writings* 84-86).

Duchamp's pose draws us further into inquiry about the automaton—a device capable of acts imitating those of the living body. Automatons were “born” in the middle of the Age of Enlightenment. This period, which was dominated by the scientific spirit, and, more precisely, by the biomechanical conception of the human being, witnessed the birth of artificial creatures intended to be exact replicas of nature. One of the most famous was the chess playing automaton, “the Turk,” which was built in 1769 by Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen (Figure 7).

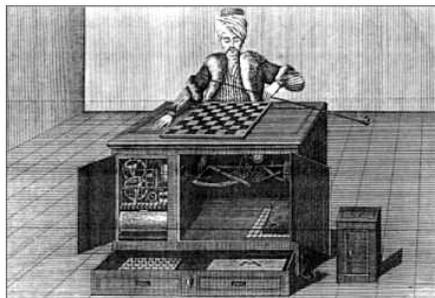


Figure 7: Illustration of Wolfgang von Kempelen's Chess-playing Automaton, the Turk, constructed in 1769.

The Turk, while promoted as a machine driven by a complex series of gear-driven mechanisms, was, in fact, operated by a highly accomplished chess player secreted within the cabinet that supported the seated figure of the Turk and the chessboard. The hidden identity of the Turk's operator (as well as that of Ajeeb, who will be discussed shortly) must have appealed to Duchamp, whose own interest in veiled and masked identities is the topic of this author's study, "*not seen and/or less seen: Hiding in Front of the Camera.*"

The Turk became legendary as he had regularly defeated the best players in Europe, England, and the United States. This automaton had an illustrious career until its "death" in a fire in Philadelphia in 1854. Was it really a machine? Was there a hidden operator? How did it work? These were among the questions posed in running and highly publicized debates. It is interesting to note that none of the proposed explanations, including those by Edgar Allan Poe (1839) or Albert A. Hopkins (in the same 1897 publication where he describes the hinged-mirror technique), have been deemed accurate. In his book, *The Turk; Life and Times of the Famous Eighteenth-Century Chess-Playing Machine*, Tom Standage concludes that many mysteries remain regarding the operation of the Turk.<sup>20</sup>

The Turk, however, is not the most important chess playing automaton to consider. Two others were available to Duchamp around 1915-17. In 1915, in the months prior to Duchamp's departure for New York, the Spanish inventor L. Torres y Quevedo displayed his chess automaton, along with other apparatus designed for military or industrial use, at Paris University. The illustration that accompanied the November 16, 1915 *Scientific American Supplement* article shows that his machine bore no resemblance to a human chess player.

All of its parts and operation were fully exposed. Its game was limited to an end game. The machine played white, having a rook and the king. The spectator played black, had only a king, and was granted the first move ("Torres" 297). The inventor's published remarks draw some interesting comparisons with ideas expressed by Duchamp, whose "machines" parody mechanical precision. Torres was quoted as saying that "The ancient automatons. . . imitate the appearance and movements of living beings, but this one has not practical interest, and what is wanted is a class of apparatus which leaves out the mere visible gestures of man and attempts to accomplish the result which a living person obtains, thus replacing a man by a machine" (296).

The second machine, "*Ajeeb,*" *Automaton: Chess and Check-*

*ers Player* (Figure 8), like the Turk, featured a life-sized male mannequin, seated on top of a cabinet, that purported to be operated by a complex mechanical network of gears, levers, etc. It, too, was operated by an expert chess player secreted in its lower cabinet. Fashioned after “the Turk,” Ajeeb had been built in 1865 by the Bristol cabinet maker Charles Hooper. And, like its predecessor, Ajeeb gained considerable notoriety, taking on and beating the world’s best chess players. In 1885 Ajeeb was brought to New York City.

Figure 8: Unknown photographer, *Eden Musée, 59 West 23rd Street, “Ajeeb” Automaton Chess and Checkers Player*, ca. 1907.

On display at the Eden Musée at 53 West 23rd Street, it was a major attraction until the museum closed at the end of 1915 (“Horrors” 1211-12). In 1916 the museum reopened at 610 Surf Ave, Coney Island. Ajeeb was once again an important attraction. The 1917 catalogue for the Eden Musée announced an extra 10¢ admission to see the chess playing automation, and 25¢ to play against it. Ajeeb remained at the Eden Musée until destroyed in a fire on March 10, 1928 (“Fire Destroys” 1, 17). Given his interest in automatons and chess it seems likely that Duchamp would have been aware of these automatons, and that he might have seen Ajeeb on one of his recorded visits to Coney Island.

We recall that Peirce argued that through the indexical sign our attention focuses on the reference a sign makes to an object other than itself, whether this is a material thing or simply a concept. In this case Duchamp’s posture, the pipe held in his mouth and the position of his other hand offers that reference to an object other than itself—the chess-playing automaton.

Both the Turk and Ajeeb were carefully positioned at the beginning of each match (Standage 23), each holding a pipe in its mouth and the other hand extended, resting on the table, the same pose we see assumed by Duchamp. It

could be easily argued that there was nothing special about Duchamp pictured with a pipe—many images show him with a pipe. On the other hand, Duchamp used photographed images to construct identities such as *Rose Selavy, Wanted*: the figure lathered in shaving cream (1921), *Portrait of a Young Woman* (1921), and *Portrait of a Young Man* (1921). Just as these images functioned as indexical signs, Duchamp's five-way portrait of himself in the five-way photograph (1921) recognized the difference between the real and the virtual as a form of illusion, and he carefully posed images to create a sense of depth. The automated means of the photo postcard reveals another dimension of Duchamp's work: the mechanomorphed.



The five-way portrait of Duchamp does have meaning beyond that of a souvenir. It is an emblem, referencing sets of issues central to Duchamp's work. The two page photo layout from Robert Lebel's 1959 monograph, *Marcel Duchamp*, provides some interesting clues (Figure 9) (20-21). Duchamp is generally credited with the page layout and design of this book.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 9: from Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, 1959 (20-21).

An examination of the selection and arrangement of the images on this two page spread demonstrates Duchamp's utilization of his tripartite language discussed earlier. Here, as commonly found in Duchamp's work, layered meanings present themselves for our consideration. On these pages the five-way portrait of Duchamp, like the other images, operated at Peirce's indexical level: references that

signs make to objects other than themselves. Duchamp uses this opportunity to convey to us the importance of these operational devices in his works, and that he, like the chess automaton, is the player controlling the game. The five-way portrait of Duchamp appears in the upper left-hand corner of the two page layout. Jean Crotti's *Marcel Duchamp* of 1915 (itself suggestive of an armature on which an automaton like the Turk or Ajeeb was built) occupies the middle of the left hand page. At the bottom of this page is the five-way portrait of Roché. On the opposite page, in the upper right-hand corner, is an image of the lower section of the *Large Glass* showing the *Nine Malic Moulds* and a chess board. Below that is Picabia's *Viola la Femme* of 1915 (herself a mechanomorphed figure). Perhaps most interesting, is the group photograph of Duchamp, Picabia and Beatrice Wood also taken at the Broadway Photo Shop in 1917. It could be the key, unlocking our access to Duchamp's references to chess, photography, and machines.

Bill Wilson, in a posting on his "Duchamp Bulletin Board," offers an interesting thought:

D.'s relations with Beatrice Wood suggest a very slow game of love or romance, with three people being moved about a board, and D. in no hurry. I also ask about relations between chess and language. Was D. thinking with the word "pion" when he was in Brazil, "peon" when in France, and "pawn" when in the US? Did he respond to the possible transfiguration of a peon into a Dame, or a pawn into a Queen? The re-designation of a pawn as a queen animates his theme of designations, as in his verbal designation of an object like a bottle-rack as a sculptural work of art, albeit a work of art designated anesthetic rather than aesthetic. (Wilson)

Numerous authors have written about Duchamp's interest in chess, including his study of endgames. Steven B. Gerrard describes an endgame analyzed by Duchamp where each player begins with a pawn and his king (White: Kb5, Pd4. Black: Kf4, Pd5). In the fourth move, black loses his pawn, leaving three players on the board (Gerrard n.p.). Roché is absent, removed from the board. The first casualty in the endgame? Are his regrets being reflected back in the mirrors—the trauma of the *Malic Moulds*? Could his absence also be a clever reference to the chess match in the Arensberg apartment? (Gerrard n.p.).

We come back to the question of the "readymade" itself. In the five-way portrait Duchamp is fitted into a "readymade" format and transformed into what appears a "readymade" image. The results are features that Krauss notes common to both the photograph in general and the readymade: "the physical transportation of an object from the continuum of reality in the fixed condition of the art-image by a moment of isolation, or selection. And, in this process, the five-way portrait also recalls the function of the shifter. It is a sign which is inherently 'empty,' . . . it is the meaningless meaning that is instituted through the terms of the index" (Krauss

206). The photograph of Duchamp conforms to all these criteria: transportation of the object, recall of the function of the shifter, and meaningless meaning. As with his Readymades, questions of authorship and identity are raised. Duchamp's presence before the mirrors appears to make him both the subject and the agent manufacturing those images. Adopting the pose of the then famous chess-playing automaton *Ajeeb*, Duchamp invites us to consider him mechanomorphed—both man and machine. However, like the chess automaton, his true operation is concealed, balancing the viewer in a double regression between apparition and appearance. Duchamp has engineered a *trebuchet*, in this case a set of precision balance scales, that makes his concept of the superposition operational.<sup>23</sup>

Caught, we are delayed, balanced. The mirrors return Duchamp's images. Discussing the function of mirrors, Thomas Singer points out that they do more. They also "play a substantial role in the construction of human identity and the fashioning of self-image" (347). Referring to Duchamp's frequent use of the phrase *renvoi miriorique* (mirrorical return), Singer identifies various possible functions of the word *renvoi*. In addition to meaning "return," it also implies a delay or postponement. Considering the five-way portrait, *renvoi miriorique* moves us back and forth between the images of Duchamp and the suggestion of the automaton.

Our reception of the photograph is like our consideration of the Readymades: oscillating between two states of becoming. While this photograph cannot be labeled a readymade (it was not certified as such), it shares criteria Duchamp spells out in one of the notes in the *Green Box*, "*Specifications for 'Readymades.'*" "The readymade can be looked for. - (with all kinds of delays)." He adds, "*The important thing then is just this matter of timing, this snapshot effect, like a speech delivered on no matter what occasion but at such and such an hour. It is a kind of rendezvous*" (*Writings* 32).

### Figures

1. Unknown photographer, *Five-Way Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (recto), 1917, photograph on postcard, 5 1/2 x 3 1/4", Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou.
2. Unknown photographer, *Five-Way Portrait of Francis Picabia* (recto), 1917, photograph on postcard, 5 1/2 x 3 1/4", The University of Texas at Austin, The Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The Carlton Lake Collection.
3. Unknown photographer, *Five-Way Portrait of Henri Pierre Roché* (recto), 1917, photograph on postcard, 5 1/2 x 3 1/4", Paris, Centre Georges Pompidou.
4. "Illustration of gallery arranged for multiphotography," reprinted from Albert A. Hopkins's *Magic, Stage Illusions and Scientific Diversions, Including Trick Photography*, 1897.
5. Unknown photographer, *Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia and Beatrice Wood* (recto), 1917, photograph on postcard, 5 1/2 x 3 1/4", Private Collection.
6. Francis Picabia, *Portrait of Marcel Duchamp*, late 1917, original lost, reproduced from the 391, July 1917.
7. Illustration of Wolfgang von Kempelen's Chess-playing Automaton, the Turk,

constructed in 1769.

8. Unknown photographer, *Eden Musée, 59 West 23rd Street, "Ajeeb," Automaton Chess and Checkers Player*, ca. 1907, Museum of the City of New York, The Byron Collection.

9. Reproduced from Robert Lebel, *Marcel Duchamp*, 1959 (20-21).

### Notes

I want to extend a special thank you to Francis Naumann for calling my attention to the October 13, 2008 sale at the Maison de Ventes Piasa in Paris where the Duchamp five-way photo postcard was sold. I also am grateful to Heinz-Werner Lawo who alerted me to the second version of the Picabia five-way photo postcard

1. See the entry for May 23, 1917 in "Ephemerides" (unpaginated).

2. See the entry for October 10, 1917 in "Ephemerides." Questions emerge about this citation. It states, "Like Duchamp and Picabia, Roché has a five-way portrait made of himself at the Broadway Photo Shop, 1591 Broadway." Roché's inscription on the verso of his five-way portrait in the Carlton Lake Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, may be a significant contributor to the problem of dating. On that card he wrote the date "October 10, 1917" on two separate occasions. On the verso of his five-way portrait recently acquired by the Centre Georges Pompidou he wrote "Aout, 1917" (see note 13).

3. According to Debra Hamel, Archivist for the George Eastman Archive and Study Center, in an email correspondence of December 21, 2004.

4. See J. B. Schriever, volume 9, chapters 36, "Making Post-cards for Quick Delivery" and 37 "Ping Pong and Penny Pictures."

5. Sometime around 1906 Umberto Boccioni was photographed (probably in Milan) using the hinged mirror technique (see Coen). In 1909, Chico Marx was photographed at Rockaway Beach by a photographer who used the hinged mirror technique. That photograph is reproduced in Groucho Marx and Richard J. Anobile (32). It also appears in Francis Naumann and Beth Venn's *Making Mischief: Dada Invades New York* (221). My thanks to Linda Henderson for reminding me of both photographs.

6. Scott Bilotta, in an email to this author, confirmed the camera's potential to produce the kind of photo postcard under discussion. ". . . your catalogue page of the model C, style 2 clearly shows and describes how the camera can be used for both the direct-positive and negative/plate method. . . . The model C definitely can be used to shoot a glassplate negative, process it and the print the negative onto any available printing paper of the correct size, which means an operator could have chosen to use AZO paper" (January 9, 2005).

7. Two images in Robert Lebel's 1959 *Marcel Duchamp* provide us information that the Broadway Photo Shop used various backgrounds. First is the well known photograph (Lebel's figure 15) of Duchamp, Picabia, and Beatrice (21) This photograph is generally labeled as having been made at Coney Island. However, it,

like the 1956 photograph of Duchamp and Robert Lebel pictured in a horse drawn sleigh (Lebel's figure 47) was taken in the Broadway Photo Shop (64).

See Duchamp's note regarding photograph number 47 (Lebel 99), indicating that the known photograph of Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, and Beatrice Wood, 1917, was also taken in the Broadway Photo Shop. It, like the Duchamp and Roché photographs under discussion, was printed on 5 1/2 x 3 1/4 post card stock. Three originals are known. Two are in private collections, and one in the Walter and Louise Arensberg Archives, the Philadelphia Art Museum. Interestingly, none carries the Broadway Photo Shop logo. Two prints, probably made from one of the originals, are also known. One is in the Alexina and Marcel Duchamp Papers, the Philadelphia Art Museum. The other is reproduced in Olga Mohler's *Album Picabia* (23). In a recent conversation, Francis Naumann pointed out that it is printed backwards.

8. Two examples of the Roché photograph are known. One was recently purchased by the Musée national d'Art moderne - Centre Georges Pompidou and one is in the Carlton Lake Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. On the recto the two are alike. Both have embedded in the upper left hand corner the same set of handwritten numbers, probably made by an operator in the photo gallery. Only partially visible in both prints, the first four numbers cannot be read. The last number, following the hyphen, is "6." The handwritten numbers "4510" run up the left hand side of the Picabia image. Partial numbers, not legible, can be seen running up the right hand side of the Duchamp photograph. The verso of each of the postcards reveals interesting information.

I am grateful to Linda Ashton, Assistant Curator at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, for her detailed information about the Picabia and Roché photographs in the Carlton Lake Collection. Each is printed on postcard stock. The verso of Roché photograph yields the following information. Printed running up and down the left side is "Broadway Photo Shop / 1591 Broadway, N.Y." Two entries of the date October 10, 1917 appear in Roché's hand (see note 2 above). From her experience, Linda Ashton surmises that the entry "New York City - 10 - 10 - 17" is contemporary with the event. The second entry, "New York 1917 - 10 Octob Je," in what she describes as a shaky hand, she believes was added at a later date. Also, Roché added, "It's rather ugly but a clever idea. It's taken with movie lighting - which is why I don't have a very healthy look." At the bottom, in purple ink, is the censor's stamp - "vu: à la censure." The Picabia postcard carries far less information. Handwritten is the name "Francis Picabia." Also on the backside, rubber stamped in red ink, is "Henri Pierre Roché, 99 Boulevard Argo, Paris 14<sup>e</sup>." Both images are printed on the same cardstock, one manufactured by Kodak (see note 12). However, the Picabia card does not carry the logo of the Broadway Photo Shop.

The verso of the Duchamp and Roché photographs, now in the collection of the Musée national d'Art moderne - Centre Georges Pompidou also carry much useful information. Both are printed on the same cardstock as the Roché

and Picabia photographs in the Carlton Lake Collection. The logo identifying the Broadway Photo Shop runs up the left hand side of both cards. On Roché's card, in his hand is "photo apportenant à H. P. Roché. 2 rue Nungesser et Coli, Sevres S. et O" (this address is also rubber stamped in red ink at the bottom of the card). Also rubber stamped, in purple ink, are the numbers "9933." These numbers correspond to the note, "Trianon 9933, 127/10" (written in another hand) that appears in the upper right hand corner. The Trianon stamp and note indicate that this photograph was used for Robert Lebel's 1959 monograph, *Marcel Duchamp*. At the top, in the center is the date "Aout 1917" (written in same shaky hand that Linda Ashton identified). It appears that Roché is suggesting a different date from the one he identified on the print in the Carlton Lake Collection (see note 2). Much less information appears on the Duchamp postcard. The Trianon stamp and notation are present along with the block printed "No. 11, Duchamp a New York, 1917" (a reference to the Lebel monograph).

9. The July 1917 date for that issue of 391 may not be accurate. On July 30, 2004, in response to my inquiry about the July publication date, William Camfield wrote, "These magazines usually do not come out promptly at the date printed on this issue. . . . The July issue could have come out weeks or more later." Mme. Calté, of the Comité Picabia agrees. In an email to this author dated December 15, 2004, she noted that the *Portrait of Duchamp* can be dated "late 1917."

10. In an email to this author on August 2, 2004, William Camfield wrote, ". . . the drawing must date from late November - early December, 1917 when Picabia and his new love, Germaine Everling, were in the Martiniques. The lighter hand is Picabia's; the heavier ink is in Germaine's hand. It reflects the playful, "honeymoon" atmosphere of the moment. Picabia refers to the recent publication of *Cinquante deuz miroirs* that was finished in Barcelona in the fall of 1917 and bears the date of October 1917."

11. See Naumann's *New York Dada* (48).

12. In Tomkins's book, two five-way photographs are illustrated, one of Duchamp (197). The other is of Roché. The photography credits at the end of the book identify the Duchamp incorrectly coming from the Carlton Lake Collection, and the Roché coming from the Collection of Peter Lyon. In a recent conversation Mr. Tomkins confirmed that the citations should be reversed.

13. "Scott's Photographica Collection," <<http://www.vintagephoto.tv/postcard1.shtml>>. He is describing the type of postcard on which the images of Duchamp, Roché, and Picabia are printed. "This postcard has a divided back - the addressee information is written on the right and the message on the left. In 1907 the United States government permitted the use of divided back cards. Difficult to see in this scan, but the word AZO outlines the postage stamp area, and there a four arrows pointing up in each corner of the outline. AZO was an Eastman Kodak brand of printing paper. The four upward pointing arrows indicate that this paper was manufactured between 1904 and 1918." This information allows us to date the photograph to between 1907 and 1918 or perhaps 1919.

14. See note 7.

15. James W. McManus's "Duchamp's Delays: Refracted Revelations Stripped Bare." This unpublished paper describes Duchamp's "superposition" as a strategy that situates us, balancing us between opposites. It can be understood as the simultaneous acceptance/rejection of opposing propositions activating an "either/or - neither/nor" response. His use of the terms "a-artist" and "an-art" are examples of transforming this strategy into an operation.

16. Duchamp's superposition was most likely informed by a variety of sources, melded into what reads as a multivalent concept. To the sources McEvilly identifies, I would add Riemann's concept of an  $n$ -dimensional manifold. However, it is interesting to note that Duchamp's superposition more closely resembles the "complex superposition" (superposed alternative histories), described by Roger Penrose in *The Road to Reality* (667). Penrose is, of course, describing an understanding of spacetime histories drawn from quantum physics, theories not yet defined when Duchamp conceived his readymades.

17. In chess, this is a common *Zugzwang* position, e.g. White Ke5, Pd4; Black Kc4, Pd5. It is worth noting that Duchamp's 1917 readymade, *Trebuchet*, has four hooks mounted on the board that rests on the floor. In "Duchamp's Delight," Shahade writes, "In a hilarious readymade, *Trebuchet*, which literally means "to trip," but also the French term for gambit, Duchamp nails a coat rack to the floor . . . Visitors are thus tricked in a way kind of similar to the Evans Gambit" (35-37)

18. See Duchamp, *Marcel Duchamp, Notes*. See notes 9 [recto], 35 [recto], and 46.

19. See Dawn Ades's "Duchamp's Masquerades." Also, Jacques Lacan's "The Mirror Stage as a Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Écrits*. See also Rosiland Krauss's discussion regarding Vito Acconci's 1973 piece *Airtime* in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*. She describes the artist's relationship with the mirror as narcissistic, "setting up the space of the double regression." A similar scenario is described in the essay "Men Before the Mirror." Written by a friend of Man Ray known only by the initials "L. D.," it was appropriated by Marcel Duchamp and signed by Rose Selavy. Originally published in Man Ray, *Photographies 1920-1934*, it has been reproduced a number of times, including Anthony Hill's *Duchamp: Passam, A Marcel Duchamp Anthology* (178).

20. See Standage's chapter 11, "The Secrets of the Turk."

21. The construction and operation of these masquerades are discussed more thoroughly by this author in "Rose Sélavy: 'Machinist/Erotaton'" and in "Marcel Duchamp - Shadows and Veils: not seen and/or less seen," in the forthcoming National Portrait Gallery exhibition catalogue *Inventing Marcel Duchamp - the Dynamics of Portraiture*.

22. There has been much interesting discussion about Duchamp's role in designing the layout for this book. See for example Ulf Linde's "MARiéc CELibataire."

In this essay Linde notes Duchamp's careful juxtaposition of elements. He cites what he observes as correspondences between three miniaturized versions of readymades and the *Large Glass* in *The Box in a Valise* (60). Later, he claims that Duchamp designed the layout for Robert Lebel's *Marcel Duchamp* (66). Here, too, Linde points out that Duchamp carefully placed images of his work in arrangements designed to construct correspondences. Further discussions of Duchamp's layouts can be found in chapters 13 and 14 in Linda Dalrymple Henderson's *Duchamp in Context, Science and Technology in the Large Glass and Related Works* and Francis M. Naumann, *Marcel Duchamp: The Art of Making Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. References to Robert Lebel and the production of the Duchamp monograph appear throughout this book; also, the reader can find an interesting account of the monograph's production and publication in Calvin Tomkins's *Duchamp* (403-405).

23. *Websters Unabridged Dictionary* 1913, [www.bootlegbooks.com/Reference/Webster/](http://www.bootlegbooks.com/Reference/Webster/). The term *trebuchet*, when discussing Duchamp's coat rack nailed to the floor (1917) is generally assumed to mean "trap" (see note 38). In fact *Trap* is the English language title given to the piece. There is, however, another and, within the context of this discussion, useful meaning for the word; a precision balance, a set of balance scales. If we accept the proposition, positioning the viewer in a double regression (see note 33), a *trebuchet* holds us in balance between apparition and appearance—a delay.

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