

**'TOUT EST TATOU': DADA AS ARTISTIC SUICIDE OR
ALTERNATIVE IDENTITY.**

by

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Abstract

Deliberately difficult, intentionally irritating, Dada exploded into the world as a reaction to the horrors of modernity within war-torn Europe, and is often written off as nihilistic, destructive, or mad. Despite its frequent association with negativity, Dada's unrivalled energy and complex relationship to mindsets continue to fascinate, demonstrable by the movement's enduring position as a subject of academic research, and its constant presence at exhibitions in museums and galleries worldwide.

This thesis explores Dada in relation to artistic suicide, based on the premise that, despite its nihilism, the movement's ultimate goal was the proposition of a radical new alternative identity and, further, that Dada constitutes an eternally relevant redefinition of humanity. This premise is investigated via three themes regarding the development and projection of identity: self-image, self-awareness, and self-reflection, through manifestations of Dada expression in relation to twentieth-century identity-based discourses. Through the analysis of the visual work of Sophie Taeuber-Arp and Marcel Duchamp, the films of Hans Richter and Man Ray, and collaborative avant-garde reviews, an assessment of the geographic and temporal development of the Dada personality will provide the basis for new insights into the suicidally creative tendencies of Dada as a movement.

To Sophie

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Reference to Art Works

Although images have not been included in the body of the thesis, Chapter One refers to five works, all of which can be found in Dickerman (2005, page numbers given after individual titles), and are photos from the Washington National Gallery of Art's Dada exhibition of the same year.

1. Sophie Taeuber
Dada Head, Portrait of Hans Arp (p. 70)
1918
2. Sophie Taeuber
Dada Head (p. 70)
1920 (here referred to as 1920a)
3. Sophie Taeuber
Head, Portrait of Hans Arp (p. 71)
1918/1919
4. Sophie Taeuber
Dada Head (p. 72)
1920 (here referred to as 1920b)
5. Marcel Duchamp
La Mariée mise à nue par ses célibataires, même (Large Glass) (p. 300)
1915-23

List of Abbreviations

Because of the frequent reference to the three Dada reviews *Cabaret Voltaire*, *Dada*, and *Littérature*, for ease of reading these will be abbreviated in references as follows:

CV = *Cabaret Voltaire* (single-issue review)

D(#) = *Dada* (issue number, followed by page number, in parentheses)

L13 = *Littérature* 13 (only issue used).

Introduction

Il n'y a qu'un problème philosophique vraiment sérieux: c'est le suicide [...] Un geste comme celui-ci se prépare dans le silence du cœur au même titre qu'une grande œuvre
- Albert Camus (2006: 221-22)

Essayez, si vous pouvez, d'arrêter un homme qui voyage avec son suicide à la boutonnière
- Jacques Rigaut (1970: 90)

Deliberately difficult, intentionally irritating, Dada exploded into the world as a reaction to the horrors of modernity within a European society that was tumbling into the dystopia of bellicose massacre. A consequence of modernity's foregrounding of death was that 'suicidal representation took on a certain ambivalence, as if life itself were deemed pointless' (Brown 2001: 201). It is easy to see how this would in turn lead to a whole new range of crises of identity, especially within the realms of artistic expression. In the context of gratuitous slaughter, we find a movement obsessed with its own death, and easily written off as nihilistic, destructive, or mad. However, despite its frequent association with negativity, Dada's unrivalled energy and complex relationship to mindsets continue to fascinate, demonstrable by the movement's enduring presence at exhibitions in museums and galleries worldwide, and its academic legacy and unrelenting 'widespread influence across the humanities' (S. Foster ed. 1996: xiv).

The case of Erik Satie provides a springboard for the suggestion that Dada sought to offer something new rather than just do away with the old. Involvement with Dada was often seen as a black mark on one's artistic record, and by association with the movement non-Dada artists were often tarred with the same brush.

Consequently some saw Satie's involvement as the whim of an aging composer, throwing away his established career with this reckless gesture. However, Orledge tells us that Satie's involvement with *Relâche* (1922) 'was, in fact, the very opposite of the deliberate artistic suicide it has been claimed to be, and Satie saw it as the start of a 'new period'' (1990: 178). It is this tension that posits Dada as more than simply aimless destruction, but as a creative nihilistic critique of modern society.

In order to further research Dada's multi-faceted cultural and textual personality, the present thesis endeavours to explore the movement's intricate relationship to artistic identity and artistic suicide,¹ based on the premise that, despite its nihilism, the movement's ultimate goal was the proposition of a radical new alternative identity, and further, that Dada constitutes an eternally relevant redefinition of humanity, in particular in respect to war. This premise will be investigated via three themes regarding the development and projection of identity: self-image, self-awareness, and self-reflection, through manifestations of Dada expression in relation to twentieth-century identity-based discourses. The thesis takes into account the inherent issues raised by the association of identity-based discourses with a movement, rather than an individual, but disputes them on the grounds of its assertion of Dada's personality, and the movement's theoretical weight beyond its historical influence.

Chapter One will address manifestations of self-image in Dada visual art, focusing on four of Sophie Taeuber's *Dada Heads* (1918-1920) and Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1915-1923), and the Dada films *Vormittagsspuk* (Hans

¹ Physical suicide was also a preoccupation for both the Dadas and Surrealists, and Jacques Rigaut, René Crevel and Jacques Vaché each died young at their own hand; Walter Serner and Arthur Cravan mysteriously disappeared (another form of self-erasure).

Richter, 1927) and *Emak Bakia* (Man Ray, 1926). This section will work on the premise of self-image as the first stage of identity formation: the way an individual (in this case a movement) perceives his or her physical and mental 'self', both through introspective image and the resulting projection of particular attributes. This physical recognition and adoption of the self will be based on Lacan's theory of the 'mirror stage', where an infant is able, for the first time, to recognise their own reflection, conceiving of themselves as 'other' while seeing the mirror image simultaneously as self and reflection, and representing both an 'identification' and a 'transformation' (Lacan 1966: 90).

As the two most commonly confirmed starting points for Dada, Zurich- and New York-based art will be crucial to the assessment of Dada's self-image, and Taeuber and Duchamp have been chosen partly on the grounds of their association with these locations. As one of the only native Swiss members of the Zurich branch, and as the retiring female she was seen to be (Richter 1965: 45, 70), Taeuber's simultaneous centrality and ephemerality will be invaluable to our assessment of Dada's self-image. Duchamp's creation of the *Large Glass* corresponds exactly to the duration of New York Dada, and its 'curious monumentality' (Hedges 1983: 111) literally contains evidence of the period (dust settled on the piece: he fixed it in place). Taeuber and Duchamp both worked across the arts, thus exploring a broad range of Dada expression, crucial to a grounded idea of Dada's self-image.

Like Taeuber, the two films have been chosen for their simultaneous ephemerality and importance. Knowles has underlined Man Ray's unique relationship with the avant-garde, participating in both Dada and Surrealism, but also 'act[ing] as a kind of documentor, giving him a certain objective distance' (2009: 10), and *Emak*

Bakia has been chosen for this interesting position. Equally Richter's *Vormittagsspuk* has been described as one of the only uncontested Dada films (Elsaesser in Kuenzli ed. 1996: 15), despite its late arrival on the avant-garde scene. Film as a medium will be considered because of its unique combination of sound and image that links the immediacy of Dada image with the momentum of Dada performance. In this respect, these films have also been chosen because their music is essential to the character of the work, and they will be analysed along with their accompanying scores as presented on *Dada Cinéma* (Re:voir 2005). Richter's work has been described as a move 'away from mimetic representation in order to re-create musical structures through abstract shapes and forms' (Knowles 2009: 39), and Man Ray insisted that music constituted a 'fundamental element of the film's overall structure, contributing to the sense of rhythm and visual dynamism, but also guiding the viewer's expectations and emotional responses' (ibid.: 88). Additionally, music draws the viewer into a film, and reduces the need for narrative despite its own abstract nature.

Chapter Two will examine Dada's self-awareness through the reviews *Cabaret Voltaire* (1916), *Dada* (1917-1921) and *Littérature* (1919-1924). Having explored the development of Dada's self-image, this chapter will move from Dada's face to its mind, focusing on the increasingly outward way that Dada saw itself in relation to others, and the relationship that this has with its provocation of an anticipated response. We will draw out a developing interaction with other parts of the European avant-garde, as well as the weaving of individual personalities and national flavours into a collaborative literary output, heavily influenced by the movement's cabaret beginnings. The analysis of the structure of the review network and the content of the

reviews will draw on two central concepts. Firstly, the tension in the reviews between the aspects of Dada's self-promotion against Tzara's theory of the 'selfcleptomane':

L'homme qui vole – sans penser à son intérêt, à sa volonté, est un cleptomane. Il se vole lui-même. Il fait disparaître les caractères qui l'éloignent de la communauté (1996: 228).

The use of Tzara's own thought will serve to support the idea of a theoretical side to Dada, and the focus on self-kleptomania and self-promotion will highlight the tension between stealing the performative element of the Dada Cabaret act and unleashing it anew in its written, published form. Secondly, Jameson's theory of the 'perpetual present' (in H. Foster ed. 1998: 119) will underline Dada's self-awareness in a detached, timeless isolation, and as an intensified experience which will allow an assessment of the Dada gesture as representative of artistic suicide or alternative identity. Like the art works analysed in the first chapter, these reviews have been chosen with location in mind, but here adding a temporal aspect. *Cabaret Voltaire* and *Littérature* form both the geographical and temporal bookends of the movement (Zurich and Paris respectively), with *Dada* providing an interactive, cross-boundary expansion. Based on Marcel Janco's assignment of positive and negative 'speeds' of Dada to its art and literature respectively (see Lippard 1971: 36-7), the analysis of Dada's identity will take the perspective that self-image is the positive side of ourselves that we actively project, and self-awareness represents the more negative, (self-)critical side of Dada's identity.

Chapter Three will draw together Dada's self-image and self-awareness to explore Dada's self-reflection: the retrospective analysis with which one might assess one's actions, and thus alter one's behaviour accordingly. The chapter will explore

the development and influence of the movement, in its fluid geographical and social identities, and within the short period between its birth in Zurich and its self-proclaimed death in Paris. Activities in these two cities, along with the New York centre (which arguably appeared simultaneously and independently) will be taken as the Dada 'core', and the wider influence will be judged by these standards. The analysis of activities in these very different places will allow a contextualisation of Dada's philosophical, political and social implications. This chapter will take as its basis Žižek's (2006) theory that identity is formed by the self's simultaneous position from within and without, which will be reflected in Dada's unwillingness to put down roots, and which helps to explain its wide geographic and temporal dispersion. This includes the desire for a tabula rasa state that incorporates Dada's self-erasure, in order to embrace in its absence an alternative to socially imposed identity constraints.

Important across the thesis will be Dada's insistence on opposition and negation, especially when considered alongside Derridean *différance*, and Camus's theories of suicide. An important aspect of opposition in Dada will undoubtedly be that of war, as the Dadaists did not oppose society *per se*, rather the society of early twentieth-century war-torn Europe. Dada saw itself as a total revolution that would allow a viable new way of life, and yet devoted much of its output to the revolution process itself. We can then consider Dada's 'negative identity' as the overwhelming aspect of its personality. Furthermore, the Dadas often spread mistruths about themselves in order not to be fixed in history in a particular way, instead giving an impression of fractured identities, showing not only their manifold influence

throughout art and society, but also an accurate (fore-)taste of the (post)modern/present approach to theories of self.

As Dada approaches the centenary of its birth, research in the area remains insufficiently broad, and dominated by historical accounts of the movement and biographical work on the key adherents. Dickerman presents some of the more common criticisms of this field of research: the aforementioned historical, biographical, or anecdotal trend; the pairing of writing on Dada with Surrealism, to the detriment of Dada; the Francocentric stance that consequently comes to characterise writing on Dada (2003: 4-6). However, a recent renewed interest in the movement has opened up the canon to work on its critical and theoretical impact, and this thesis aims to contribute to the philosophical reassessment of Dada in order to fill gaps left by dominant critical trends. In this respect the present work is indebted to a number of key texts. Stephen Foster's edited collection *Crisis and the Arts* (1996-2005) presents a major historical reconsideration of the movement, with contributions from over fifty academics. The division of the series primarily into geographic centres gives a particularly valuable resource for the thesis's third chapter, though its influence will be present throughout. More specifically in the realm of identity, Pegrum (2000) posits Dada between modern and postmodern. The positioning and analysis of Dada against several critical discourses will inform the present assessment of Dada's desire to create an alternative approach to identity and its crises but, where Pegrum considers the way in which modern and postmodern literature has approached Dada, this thesis will address the way in which Dada saw and interpreted the world, and the reaction it hoped to incite. It is through the exploration of Dada's 'self' that we can hope to see beyond its initial provocation of confusion or dismissal, and instead look

to the new philosophical and theoretical approaches proposed by its worldview and multifaceted attitude to mindsets and identity.

Chapter One: Self-image in the Trans-sensory Assault of Dada Visual Art and Film

The image of the human form is gradually disappearing from the painting of these times and all objects appear only in fragments. This is one more proof of how ugly and worn the human countenance has become, and of how all the objects of our environment have become repulsive to us.

One day they will have to admit that we reacted very politely, even movingly.

- Hugo Ball (1974: 55; 67)

Ball's diagnosis of art's relationship to society not only depicts the world in which Dada grew up, but also gives us an insight into Dada's feeling of self-worth, a crucial part of the composition of its self-image. The movement was born out of disgust for that which surrounded it, but manifested a tension between rejection of the world and a fundamental optimism:

Toujours à mi-chemin du désespoir et de l'utopie, la révolte dada implique une conception positive de ce que l'homme et la vie devraient être (Tison-Braun 1977: 7).

This tension contributes to Dada's unique cultural identity, and the idea of Dada as a re-modelling of the human condition, or an 'option for consciousness' (Pichon in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 15), forms the backbone of the present thesis. It is the constant struggle between positive and negative and the play of destruction and creation that raises the question of whether Dada constituted an artistic suicide, or whether its methods aimed at a radical replacement of a failing modern mentality.

Beginning with the representation of Dada's self-image, the first and formative stage of the movement's identity, it seems appropriately Lacanian that Dada's moment of inception should have occurred within the construct of a mirror, through its

headquarters at Spiegelgasse 1 (translated literally: 1, Mirror Lane).² Within the confines of neutral Switzerland, fledgling Dada came into being through the reflection of images of the war that surrounded it. Dada formed the proverbial glass house and the Dadas liked to throw stones. Like Jameson's thoughts on the postmodern Bonaventura Hotel,³ Dada reflected the 'distorted images' of Europe, but within the belligerent climate these images were already a warped version of humanity. If we compare Dada's early steps to Lacan's mirror-stage, then we see a child not so much rejoicing in its image⁴ but rather seeking to shatter the mirror itself. As Huelsenbeck describes, Dada attempts to destroy the foundations of art, 'and this it accomplishes by tearing all the slogans of ethics, culture and inwardness', to replace the aesthetic construction of the self with a more 'primitive relation to the reality of the environment' (in Harrison and Wood eds. 2003: 258). Armed with its shards, Dada is able to perform its multivalent revolt against all that is wrong in the world, but simultaneously reflect that which delights it. In this way, Dada's identity developed as both a self to be viewed and as an eye in its own right, just as Lacan's mirror-stage provides a phonetic crossover with the *I/eye* (*je/yeux*) – a word game that would appeal to both parties. Dada's montaged face draws from the world around it, making it impossible to dismiss without also considering a serious evaluation of oneself. It represents a reassignment of values within identity both as a concept in itself and its formation within the arts, beginning as a 'pilot project in aesthetic anarchy' (Lippard 1971: 4), experimenting not only with the destruction of but also the re-combinations of aesthetics, and extending within its lifetime to a radical redefinition of the self. Dada

² For more on mirrors and prisms in relation to Dada, see Pichon (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 1-35).

³ '[W]hen you seek to look at the hotel's outer walls you cannot see the hotel itself but only the distorted images of everything that surrounds it' (Jameson 1991: 42).

⁴ 'L'assomption jubilatoire de son image spéculaire' (Lacan 1966: 2).

represents an assault on all of the senses, and often in combinations that evoke the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a short-circuiting reminiscent of an externalisation of the synaesthete's private realm. This chapter will specifically focus on the non-written arts, in an effort to identify Dada's self-image through its purest, most abstract engagement with the world, and a reflection of its love of immediacy.

Sartre's theory of the structure of emotion informs the assertion that Dada embraces the crossover of the senses and the arts to create a new self, profoundly rearranging our perception of the world as a means of coping with it:

Lorsque les chemins tracés deviennent trop difficiles ou lorsque nous ne voyons pas de chemin, nous ne pouvons plus demeurer dans un monde si urgent et si difficile. [...] Alors nous essayons de changer le monde (1948: 33).

In this way Dada removing itself from the world simultaneously proffers a nihilistic rejection of society but also an inherent longing for *tabula rasa*. This latter can be seen in the avant-garde obsession with *l'inconnue de la Seine*, whose death mask provides a blank canvas on which to project the self-image of one's choice. The Dadas were intrigued by masks, and explored this medium extensively, and Taeuber's *Dada Heads* have been selected for the combination of their smooth, solid surfaces, and the way in which they ideally lend themselves to the application of the Dada face, where the 'face and the mask have become one' (Riese Hubert in Sawelson-Gorse ed. 1999: 536). They also reflect Dada's love of montage, but instead of creating abstraction from 'reality fragments' (Bürger 1984: 72) Taeuber applies abstract components onto a concrete surface, juxtaposing colours to build 'faces'. However, each of these approaches to montage uses the fragmentation of reality to propose an alternative to the 'real' world, while reflective of the cracks in its

own composition. Dada foresaw its end when it began, and proceeded with this 'nothing to lose' mentality to wreak havoc but also to create a new option for identity from its ashes, leaving a lasting impact from its short yet intense lifetime.

Fragmented Faces and Diaphanous Delay

Taeuber's *Dada Heads* are a series of coloured sculptures in turned wood, of which four will be considered: *Dada Head, Portrait of Hans Arp* (1918); *Dada Head* (1920a); *Head, Portrait of Hans Arp* (1918/1919) and *Dada Head* (1920b). As a group they lack obvious traditional gender markers and, despite their titles, on first glance bear more resemblance to a set of unorthodox hat stands (Riese Hubert in Sawelson-Gorse ed. 1999: 536). Only one (1920a) breaks with the set's fluid androgyny, exhibiting a sign of femininity through its 'wires and beads as accessories' (Hemus 2009: 57). It is through this unique femininity, along with its resemblance to the first *Portrait of Jean Arp* (Taeuber's husband), that we may consider this *Head* to represent a portrait of Taeuber herself. *Portrait of Jean Arp* (1918) is the closest to anatomically accurate positioning of facial features, which in comparison with the others could be a comment on the re-arrangeability of the war-time body and the 'hybrid identity' obtained by re-combining with non-human appendages (cf. Biro 2009). Yet it still lacks ears. Is the Dada head deaf to the world around it, or is it just blocking it out, a silent scream in the vacuum of explosive Europe? The lack of mouths likewise links to the confinement of emotions, and seems to be, like Munch's *Scream* (1893), 'no longer an aural event, but rather something synaesthetically felt and recognized in nature and communicated as a vague unlocated sensation moving through the entire body' (Heller 1973: 87).

Munch's character can at least open its mouth; the mouths of the *Dada Heads* are sealed, mute, in 'silent alterity' (Pegrum 2000: 115).

Taeuber's expressionistic use of geometric shapes and contrasting colours presents fragments that are subdued in colour, yet gain boldness from juxtaposition and lack of blending or shading. Just as in Expressionist paintings, such as the bold works of Kandinsky, 'colour in particular [is] highly intense and non-naturalistic' (Tate Glossary [website] 2005). Riese Hubert suggests that the geometric features of the Dada heads 'point to a liberation from reality which, in addition to their humorous stylistic qualities, can be considered a pertinent Dada feature' (in Sawelson-Gorse ed. 1999: 535). The systematic disposal of sense, rules and tradition that Dada unleashed on the world is evident here. In shape, they clearly represent heads, but the faces, 'the anatomical region which we use to measure identities against one another' (Peterson ed. 2001: 286), are unlike any conventional presentation of the human visage. The frowning features of the two heads titled *Portrait of Hans Arp* emphasise the inherent rebellion in Dada thought. Lacking lids, their fixed open eyes boldly 'stare' directly at the viewer in static provocation, inviting more questions than they answer. The fact that they are bodiless reminds us of the *mutilés de guerre* and the feeling of being violently 'cut off' that must have been prevalent in wartime Zurich. The element of decapitation is reminiscent of Aragon's statement that '[a]t the heart of our projects there was always the gleam of the guillotine' (in Baker 2001: 53). The heads also lack hair, perhaps a Freudian reference to castration, though shorter hair was fashionable as a sign of independence among women at the time (Taeuber, Höch and Hennings themselves all wore bobs), and it does seem truly Dada to remove it entirely when we consider the constant desire for *tabula rasa*. Not only are

the heads separated from their bodies, but the faces themselves are also fragmented. They are divided into shapes, varyingly symmetrical, but always disrupted: a constant reminder of the wartime *gueules cassées*. They are displaced and distorted, but somehow held together in gory fixity.

All four Dada heads wear collars. For most this is a structural consideration: they would fall over without this base to balance the weight and size of the head. However, one (1918) has the base part way up the stem, meaning that this collar is more independent from what would be its shirt. It also means that the construction's head is partially consumed by this collar and, while the others in the set give the impression of decapitation, this one seems more like it is being strangled, especially in conjunction with the dizzying displacement of its bulging eyes. This is arguably the most abstract of the wooden heads, as it is also lacking the long protruding 'nose'. It is the tallest of the selected heads, its 'face' entirely composed of 'eyes', the largest of which, in blue (lack of oxygenated blood to the head?), is cut through by an angry line of black, resembling a frowning eyebrow. This can be seen as a similarity with the first portrait of Arp (1918), which has two eyebrows that frown right down to the middle of the nose.

Taeuber's contributions to Dada, along with those of Sonia Delaunay, in their style of shapes and colours, and particularly their designs for clothing, show a blending of art and life that 'like Dada performances helped break down earlier notions about clothing as a cover for the body, replacing them with an image of the body as a fluid screen, capable of reflecting back a present constantly undergoing redefinition and transformation' (Chadwick 1996: 257). In some ways Duchamp's *Large Glass* (1915-1923) simultaneously contradicts and further expresses the notion

of the 'fluid screen'. Detached from the body, though still metaphorically representative of it, the *Glass* is ultimately fluid in its transparency, but retains a screen-like quality through its fixity.

Though the full name, *La mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*, refers to a longstanding cultural tradition (marriage), the *Glass* is abstract and technical, and filled with 'hypothetical kinetic objects and communicative, depiction-making machines' (Dicker 2010: 272). The piece as a whole works to represent love as reduced to a mechanical procedure, where even the machines do not fulfil logical purposes. Duchamp's mechanistic process could be seen as a retreat into functionality, a withdrawal from the 'straightjacket of avant-garde painting' (Dickerman 2005: 281), but also the nature of the fractured identity of Dada. The piece, like New York Dada, began with America's involvement in the war (ibid.: 278), and it certainly incorporates destructive devices reminiscent of using 'the means at hand, the ruins of the prewar world so efficiently executed by slaughter and rebellion' (Lippard 1971: 9). The fact that Duchamp incorporated (accidental) damage to the work into the final result is characteristic of both Dada's resilience and its passion for chance. The glass was cracked, but is not broken. It is as if the shards of the Zurich mirror are brought together, producing something new from within the despair of destruction.

The glass is reminiscent of a mobile: a montage of hanging objects designed to placate. The colours are muted and because the objects are set in glass they seem to float, frozen in mid-air, Duchamp's 'delay in glass' (Wohl in Kuenzli and Naumann 1989: 169). The glass preserves the pieces in an eerie immobility, 'always turning in upon its own gaze in indefinite reflection' (Tucker 2010: 19), and always out

of reach. Despite the fact that the *Green Box* of Duchamp's notes on the *Glass* indicate that the bride's stripping is voluntary, there remains a linguistic connotation of force: the choice of the word 'stripped', in both English and French, retains an involuntary aspect. In English, the etymology takes us to 'rob' or 'plunder'; in French, 'mettre à nu' can mean 'to expose', or 'to strip' when referring to a wire. So despite her willing, she is still rendered passive, the stripping is done by multiple persons, and we are constantly reminded of the mechanical nature of the 'process': the bride's final dehumanisation. The glass can be viewed from both sides, and is thus robbed of any privacy, as well as being both hemmed in by and permeated by metal strips which simultaneously protect and control the fragility of the glass. At the same time, Duchamp's *Glass* as representative of Dada creates a filter: the glass is not blank, and 'you can randomly and constantly change the background by simply moving' it (Tucker 2010: 21). This 'delay of seeing' (ibid.) is reflected in Dada's continuing influence both as a readily applicable theory and a readymade but flexible identity.

How are we to compare the painstakingly detailed construction of the *Glass* to the 'spectacular ratio of effort to effect' of the readymades (Elsaesser in Kuenzli ed. 1996: 22), particularly Duchamp's own, arguably the ultimate Dada rebellion against art? These very different processes initially seem contradictory, but both show Duchamp's use of familiar objects only to render them incorrigible, which can be seen to link to his 'rules' for the creation of readymades: 'de-contextualisation, titling, limiting the frequency of the act and, the most esoteric of all, the necessity of a 'rendez-vous' – the meeting of the artist and the object' (in Mundy ed. 2008: 126). The co-existence of rules and perceived absence of effort, displayed through shock (the readymades) or visual overload (the *Large Glass*) is suggestive of an underlying

creative nihilism in Dada, by embracing the moment of true nothingness in the shock before a reaction, and not only channelling it into a creative process, but framing it in its raw state. This framing of shock is particularly well explored in Dada film. Whereas the *Glass* represents a mobile screen serving to filter fixed content, the film's screen is fixed and the content is mobile. We can see this as the complementary facet in Dada's self-image: the alternation between an entity to be seen and a seeing being in its own right.

Metonymies of War and Peace

Dada films, though short, present some of the important aspects of self-image that this thesis seeks to bring out. Over *Vormittagsspuk's* (1927) six minutes of action, everyday objects perform a flurry of rebellion against their functions and owners, and in so doing show us the struggles of the Dada mind against the everyday world. *Emak Bakia* (1926) is almost three times as long but, in terms of contemporary film, still short, and reflects Man Ray's preference for short films so as not to induce boredom:

Je pourrais prendre n'importe quel film de deux heures et le réduire à douze minutes au montage, je suis sûr que ça suffirait (Man Ray in Bourgeade 2002: 50).

What are we to make, then, of the brevity of the Dada movement? Was it a deliberate move, including its self-proclaimed death, so as to leave while it still had the world's attention?

Both films include such a plethora of special effects that they take on more importance than the linear logic and content of each but, in trying to destroy

traditional narrative constructs, unwittingly leave behind vestiges of structure. The very act of putting frames in sequence suggests a deliberate temporal and spatial arrangement which will inevitably lead to a presumption of authorial intent. Aiken outlines Man Ray's intention that *Emak Bakia* should be a sequence of dream-like states replacing traditional narrative (1983: 240). However, even dreams have structures and themes, which here betray authorial intent and elements of cause and effect, including an explanatory intertitle which reads 'la raison pour cette extravagance'. Themes key to Dada self-image include some more outwardly associated with the time of their creation, such as: war; fragmentation of the body and clothes; the machine aesthetic; dream and reality; false image. Others are less overtly linked to Dada – animals, birds, flowers and crockery – yet remain visually important aspects of the films, and thus more subtly reflective of Dada's identity and personality.

War was an integral part of the Dada mindset, their horror of armed conflict fuelling much of their artwork, manifestos and critiques. A consequence of this was thematic emphasis on destruction and fragmentation, after an initial passion for the exciting modernism of machinery. This is reflected in the lives of the individual Dadas, some of whom – such as Ball (cf. Robertson 2006: 23) - were initially supportive of the war but who, on seeing live combat, were horrified by the degradation of humanity. A certain amount of physical, not to mention mental, duress was endured, which is evident in Dada's reactive stance:

Not all scars were visible: the war left terrible psychic wounds in its stead (also a dadaist motif) as soldiers were affected not only by having witnessed atrocities and having violence inflicted on them, but also by having inflicted it on others (Dickerman 2005: 4).

The reference to war is immediately evident in *Vormittagsspuk*. Guns appear within minutes, sometimes accompanied by targets, but also dance, creating a tension between negative reaction and light-hearted play, and reflecting perhaps the contrast between the Futurist delight in war and technology, and Dada's cynical response to the horror of mass killing. On several occasions the film gives the impression of robotic marching, a gesture which is exaggerated when performed by multiple actors. Men who follow each other, disappearing behind a lamppost never to come out the other side, are reminiscent of the aimless massacre of thousands of soldiers in battle. They also crawl in rank, and one marches up and up a ladder with no apparent goal, clearly in reference to the laborious and debasing nature of trench warfare. All of these actions have a futile quality to them when replayed *ad infinitum*, not only breaking down narrative structure but also driving the action to the point of madness.⁵ A direct reference is made to fighting in a fisticuffs scene, though the participants end up laughing, despite their broken teeth, implying at least a satirical mimicry of military violence. References to combat even extend to the music, which always maintains a highly structured march rhythm, not only in terms of metre, through strict tempo and the use of simple-time beat divisions, but also through the choice of percussive instrumentation.

War references in *Emak Bakia* are more subtle. The scene that takes place in and around a car involves a multiplicity of uniform objects, giving an eerie reference to the mass mobilisation of able-bodied Europeans. This is explored by the use of a herd of sheep, and through the multiple pairs of disembodied legs that get out of the

⁵ We can see a parallel here to Léger's *Ballet mécanique* (1924), where the artist claimed the following aim: 'I wanted to *amaze* the audience first, then make them uneasy, and then push the adventure to the point of exasperation' (in Kuenzli ed. 1996: 4).

car and gradually become more blurred as we lose count of the mass of limbs. The sheep are juxtaposed with an image of an individual pig lying in mud, which could be read as an almost Orwellian reference to military powers. The sheep are herded against their will, whereas the pig lies back in the mud of his success. This contrasts again with the fish, which are superimposed so lack individuality, but just float around and stare in silent complicity. The mass of sheep can also be compared to the multiple pairs of disembodied legs that get out of the car. Taken literally, this can be seen as a parallel with the mechanisation of fragmentation, the machine spewing forth body parts reminiscent of the corpse-production war machine. Man Ray uses superimposition to increase our awareness of the impossibility of the appearance of so many legs, distorting our vision as well as our sense of reality, in a visual trick similar to Richter's men disappearing behind the lamppost.

Through Dada's satirical stance in reference to mechanisation, fragmentation and violence, we might assume that it was against war in the utmost way. Yet in the two films studied here, the presence of a different bird in each may betray a feeling thus far unexplored. *Vormittagsspuk* contains a goose, *Emak Bakia* several swans. These birds both get their colour from their *white feathers*. Could this be a subtle remark on cowardice, or even conscientious objection? There is naturally irony even within this, however, since a dove was not chosen: we know that Dada was anti-war, but was it pro-peace? After all, its vehemently 'anti' attitude to life and society meant its rebellion took an inherently combative stance. *Emak Bakia* also contains references to white flowers: a field of daisies and the flower superimposed onto a woman's face, a double reference to the apparent peaceful femininity of flowers, but

also to flowers on graves.⁶ However we can see that the Dadas did not entirely surrender to the negativity of war:

[R]ather than blocking the irrational, penning in the devil, subjugating instinct to reason, they wish to release it in a more positive way, through their art and their life practices (Pegrum 2000: 159).

Fragmentation was a common theme in the avant-garde, likely linked to the proliferation of *mutilés de guerre* that were at times paraded around as heroes, and at others hidden away in order to preserve a certain image of the glory of war. These fragments, once 'liberated', could be applied in abstract ways, such as in the work of Otto Dix, which explicitly displays the disfigurement of the human body, sometimes substituting mechanical parts to varying degrees of functionality. Parts could also be misapplied to provide gender and species ambiguity or androgyny:

Dada practice, like the cinematic apparatus, redefines the relation of part to whole, the relation of part to part (Elsaesser in Kuenzli ed. 1996: 25).

Examples of reverse fragmentation are also employed: a plant in *Vormittagsspuk* magically 'grows' leaves from a bare stalk; crockery smashes, only to later float back into place. This could be an ironic reference to the impossibility of putting back together the mutilated body. In Dada, however, one *can* put things back together, and Dada offers this magical alternative to the horror of mutilation, 'comme si les rapports des choses à leurs potentialités n'étaient pas réglés par des processus déterministes, mais par la magie' (Sartre 1948: 33).

The films themselves are divided up somewhat arbitrarily: *Emak Bakia's* episodes and *Vormittagsspuk's* interruptions by the clock do not conform to temporal

⁶ Examples include white lilies, often associated with death, and Frangipani flowers (also white) which are commonly known as 'Singapore Graveyard Flowers' (Kinsey 2011).

organisation as defined in 'reality'. It is from this position that the 'incessant questioning that dadaist and surrealist works demand of their perceivers constitutes an injunction to them to alter their perception of reality' (Hedges 1983: 57). As we have seen, the invitation to question societal norms is not only very Dada, but could prove to be extremely dangerous for those creating it. In this way, *Vormittagsspuk* in particular took great risk by rebelling to such a perceived extreme. Von Hofacker points out the indication of danger through the use of the time five to twelve: '[w]hen the clock strikes twelve no more can be done', and hats, specifically that 'hats that fly from people's heads were a sign of existential danger', because of their association with the bourgeoisie and status quo (in S. Foster ed. 1998: 133). The film shows the feeling of fear that living in belligerent Europe imposed, but also the creative potential of existential questioning, and of the positive alternative identity that Dada offers. The objects rebel, but playfully, and at the end of the day nothing is lost. Dada shook life to the core, not with the sole purpose to destroy, but also to recognise the importance of constructing the self through choice rather than to conform to predetermined societal configurations.

Beyond dismemberment of bodies or body parts, these films also show fragmentation of everyday objects, rendered equally disturbing in these contexts. *Vormittagsspuk's* main 'characters' are hats which are separated from their owners. The clock that begins this film ends it by breaking in two. The pair of dice in *Emak Bakia* also split into halves. But arguably the most striking fragmentary parallel between the two works is the use of shirt collars. *Vormittagsspuk's* first character (Werner Graeff) straightens his bow tie, only for it to spin around his neck and eventually fly off, followed by his collar, and the two then briefly dance together. In

Emak Bakia, the character's reaction to collars is more extreme. True to the actor's (Jacques Rigaut) own habits,⁷ he systematically rips up several collars, before removing his own. As Knowles writes, '[i]t is difficult not to relate [...] the tearing of shirt collars in *Emak Bakia* with a rejection of these bourgeois values, and as representing an act of self-emancipation' (2009: 87). These collars also take on independent life, flying back in the direction from which they came after having been thrown down. A Strauss-esque waltz plays as the man rips off his own collar, which starts a slow, snake-charmer-esque dance. If Man Ray deliberately exploited the control he gained through the film's accompanying music, what are we to make of this reference to a late-Romantic dance? We might assume that it is simply a tongue-in-cheek remark on the pointless circular motion of a waltz. Furthermore the collar, which gives a smart, official impression, usually stays around the neck of the wearer as a constant threat of being choked by the bureaucracy and class discrimination that it silently supports. Even if the Dadas themselves had bourgeois origins, we cannot deny this reference to the destruction of traditional class markers.

The frequent Dada combination of fragmentation and distorted reality is reminiscent of Lacan's theories of the development of the self and the presentation of the *corps morcelé*:

Ce corps morcelé [...] se montre régulièrement dans les rêves, quand la motion de l'analyse touche à un certain niveau de désintégration agressive de l'individu. Il apparaît alors sous la forme de membres disjoints et de ces organes figurés en exoscopie, qui s'aillent et s'arment pour les persécutions intestines (1966: 94).

⁷ Rigaut's specialty was removing buttons and cuffs from people as he spoke to them (Sanouillet 2005: 158).

Reference to image, false image and composite image is common in Dada, not least through their cinema productions. If Elsaesser states that the cinema was not ideal for Dada performance, due to 'the conditions of a reception in the cinema - the dark room, the stable rectangle of the screen, the fixed voyeuristic position of the spectator' (in Kuenzli ed. 1996: 20), it also provides an uninterrupted moment of exposure to a static image of Dada, without the capacity for interaction from the Dadas themselves. Although it gives the possibility to hide behind a polished screen, it simultaneously renders vulnerable any aspects of the Dada personality presented undefended in that moment. However, if Dada was designed to not be remembered in any fixed way, it is then unsurprising that it chooses to embrace its natural contradictions and propose a series of altered or false facets.

Gender ambiguity illustrates this aspect in both films, and most obviously in *Emak Bakia's* woman in a house by the sea. As she beautifies herself at the mirror 'her' androgynous traits become apparent. She is dressing up for an occasion, but then does not leave, simply walks over to the window and watches the seascape (moving from one front to another). In *Vormittagsspuk* four men stroke (fake) beards, and four women sit with their backs to the camera, with bushy (fake) hair. One by one the men lose their beards, and the women lose their hair simultaneously. Since the women sit with their backs to the audience, we cannot know that they are in fact female, and only presume this because of their long hair (though we have already discovered that several Dada women wore theirs short). The rapid alternation of the frame between the two groups implies that this (lack of) distinction is deliberate, a Dada act of rebellion against a fundamentally oppressive society:

Confusing of gender boundaries or sexual orientation undermines the foundations of a patriarchal society, which relies for its power structures on the differentiability of gender, and the sexual and power orientation of intergender relationships (Pegrum 2000: 137).

Additionally, we can see rapid alternation of images as a constant desire to verify one's own existence, especially through cameras and mirrors. Man Ray's woman at the dresser can be compared to the eye on the camera at the beginning of *Emak Bakia*, and further to Rigaut's assessment that '[l]es glaces sont faites pour rappeler à chacun son identité' (1970: 51).

We are led to conclude that the image of Dada is a front. Behind every face is another, proving that the sole intention of showing one's face was to say that it in turn was not the 'true' one. It is paradoxical but instructive that Dada, whose tenets encourage readings beyond the superficial, was so intent on taking things at face value. Sanouillet points out that the Dadas in Paris were taken aback when, 'au lieu de se révolter les prolétaires demandèrent tout bonnement des explications' (2005: 137). One might argue that this contradiction was a deliberate attempt to undermine the values not only of art but also of art criticism. '[B]ecause art as an institution proves indestructible, Dada takes the opposite ploy of turning everything into art' (Pegrum 2000: 224): Dada ultimately challenged the art world by leaving it questioning itself even today. Pegrum shows that Dada comes at a point where humanity is particularly vulnerable and thus ripe for change, 'emerg[ing] in a world where capitalism and society seem to have been rocked to their foundations by the war and where for that very reason a new age appears all the more possible' (ibid.: 42). We might even argue that the world was already waiting for Dada, as Arp

certainly did, stating, 'Bevor Dada da war, war Dada da.' (1955: 48) In this case, the war was simply the catalyst required to set the change in motion.

Dada's self-image was complicated, and we can see from the art works analysed here that Dada's surface image is not necessarily its 'real' face: Dada delighted in its capacity to deceive. Additionally, because the 'road toward a tabula rasa was indicated by the Dada attraction to the hermetic and the invisible' (Lippard 1971: 11), in the utmost Dada way, that which is truly Dada is that which we cannot see, either through invisibility, or because it has been lost or destroyed. However, some Dadas commissioned replicas of their lost works, and Man Ray once stated that 'he liked the reproductions of certain of his works so much that he would often destroy the original (sculpture) and keep the (photographic) document' (Knowles 2009: 284). Is this also the case with Dada's ephemeral nature? Dada destroyed itself, but the movement gains a glossier edge through nostalgic accounts. If the idea of Dada is not to produce a concrete catalogue of its creations, it could be argued that its true self-image simply comes from the provocation to notice and remember it:

Chacun cherche son look. [...] Non pas: j'existe, je suis là, mais: je suis visible, je suis image – look, look! (Baudrillard 1990: 31).

Chapter Two: Self-Awareness in the Literary Tumult of the Dada Reviews

Self-kleptomania and Self-promotion: the Role of the Reviews

The historical function of Dada was [...] to bring a new self-awareness into modern art.

- Hans Richter (1965: 219)

Chaque page doit exploser, soit par le sérieux profond et lourd, le tourbillon, le vertige, le nouveau, l'éternel, par la blague écrasante, par l'enthousiasme des principes ou par la façon d'être imprimée.

- Tristan Tzara (in *Dada* 3 1918: 1)

The journal was Dada's source of propagation into avant-garde circles across Europe and beyond, so a multitude of publications were produced for maximum effect:⁸ 'a lot of little reviews would have a greater public impact than a single one, and the Dadaists responded enthusiastically' (Ades ed. 2006: 244). But it was Tzara's role as enthusiastic 'leader' and propagandist that was the essential springboard for the dissemination of Dada ideas (see for example Schäfer in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 182). Dada was a collective endeavour, and thus the content of the little magazines 'reflected the widest variety of Dada's activities, not only in literature and the visual arts, but also in music, philosophy, politics, architecture - even in advertising' (Shipe 1987). But where Dada's cabaret roots focused inwards to build its self-image through visual art, the reviews document the movement's embracing of the written form, looking outward to interaction with the world. In this respect we have seen how Dada viewed itself as an isolated entity, a physical being and also its mental attitude towards itself. But how did this translate in the way in which it saw itself in relation to others, and the other it saw in itself?

⁸ This also supports Benjamin's theory of Dada's non-marketability (2008: 31).

For a short time, it seems that everyone sees in Dada the Other they fear most. Yet the fact that it can be seen as so many things by so many people implies that it cannot be restricted to any one of these; far more, it includes all of them, and rises above individual Others. It is a dance of all the powerless, all the Others, of creation (Pegrum 2000: 175).

Three central reviews have been chosen for the assessment of Dada's self-awareness. *Cabaret Voltaire* (1916) was the first of the Dada reviews, yet contained many contributions from 'non-Dada' artists. This is essential for the development of truly Dada ideas: many of the movement's influences will be adopted, but also rejected, and it is this combination that will illuminate the path to Dada's strongest self-awareness. *Dada* (1917-1921) is arguably closest to the movement's core, most obviously in name,⁹ but also through its eventual directorship by Tzara and consequent wider-ranging influence. Additionally, it is one of the more typographically adventurous reviews, implying a more intense expressive desire. *Littérature* (1919-1924) represents the more organised corner of Dada, and has arguably the greatest overlap with Surrealism. Because of this overlap, and because *Littérature* was more reserved (and arguably less Dada), only one issue (the thirteenth) will be analysed. This issue is described by Ades as 'the high point of Dada in *Littérature*' (ed. 2006: 164), with its subtitle 'Twenty-three Manifestos of the Dada Movement'.

The review was not only a means of communication across national borders, but represented another way that Dada was able to explore the dissolution of boundaries between the arts, as well as a development from performance to the more organised structure of a 'literary' publication:

⁹ Other than perhaps the Berlin periodical *Der Dada*, or Duchamp and Man Ray's *New York Dada*, but both reviews were published after having requested Tzara's permission to use the movement's name, implying their roles and impact as secondary to *Dada*.

Word and image, word as image and image as word, music and photography could be explored in this portable format, which could be shared with those interested in these ideas, almost simultaneously across the world. The little magazine vied with the manifesto to be seen as the art medium par excellence of the avant garde (Bury ed. 2007: 51).

Bury also points out that Dada existed within the last period in which 'the printed format was the primary mode for communicating information; film and broadcasting were ready to take over' (ibid.: 8). Dada reviews drew their strength from systematically 'violat[ing] every convention of the literary-artistic review' (Shipe 1987), invading literary traditions only to destroy them from within. The little magazines embraced a wide range of stylistic variation, though *Littérature* returned to a more conservative look, likely because this review was created in Paris, which did not share Zurich's status of political safe haven. It also occurred at a point at which certain Paris-based practitioners were inclined to transform Dada into the newly conceived Surrealism. This chapter will assess whether *Cabaret Voltaire*, *Dada*, and *Littérature* represent a developing, dying, or simply differing Dada, through the manifestations of self-kleptomania and self-promotion in selected texts and the changing structure of the review network. In Chapter One we saw that Dada's provocation through the visual came from a desire to be noticed, through the assertion of its 'look'. Here we will see Baudrillard's extension of the 'look' into Dada's self-awareness through the dissemination of the reviews:

Ce n'est même pas du narcissisme, c'est une extraversion sans profondeur, une sorte d'ingénuité publicitaire où chacun devient l'impresario de sa propre apparence (1990: 31).

***Cabaret Voltaire*: for One Issue Only**

Through this review [...] Ball sought to define the activities at the cabaret and to give Dada an identity (Hofmann 1996: 133).

The single issue of *Cabaret Voltaire* represents the movement's tentative yet enthusiastic entry into the published literary world. It is a collection of texts and artworks by a reasonably wide range of authors, including some who would not reappear when the review was replaced by *Dada* and taken over by the (future) main adherents to the movement. *Cabaret Voltaire*, subtitled 'eine Sammlung Künstlerischer und Literarischer Beiträge', can be seen as a collage of fledgling Dada's influences, containing contributions from Expressionists, Cubists and Futurists. In addition, it includes two *parole in libertà*, which would go on to inspire the creation of the Dada sound poems (Ades ed. 2006: 16). Aside from the plethora of artistic influences, *Cabaret Voltaire* comprises a spectrum of nationalities, reflecting the haven that neutral Switzerland provided during the war, essential to the dynamics of the early Dada personality:

Sociologists have suggested that the interaction and validation within a group can radicalize intellectual innovation, leading to positions more extreme than individual members would adopt in isolation. (Dickerman 2005: 2)

The initial favouring of juxtaposition, rather than the visual interaction that would be present in *Dada*, shows how the collection of individuals would come to produce more adventurous texts in collaboration. This is no doubt influenced by the conditions of Dada's early Cabaret days.

Cabaret Voltaire opens with an untitled text by Ball which documents the creation of the Spiegelgasse Cabaret, presenting several of the people involved and

underlining the importance of the international nature of the little establishment. Early Dada ideals are shown through remarks on independent thinking, as well as subtle anti-war, anti-nationalist ideals. Typographically, it remains fairly conservative, and Schäfer states that *Cabaret Voltaire* would not have ‘challenge[d] the reading habits of recipients used to expressionist publications’ (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 178). It is Tzara and the Futurists’ contributions that begin to play not only with language but also with colour and space, fully aware of the reaction these developments would provoke.

Tzara’s ‘L’amiral cherche une maison à louer’ (CV: 6-7) is a trilingual ‘score’ for the simultaneous poem performed at Cabaret Voltaire. The poem demonstrates Dada’s delight in challenging traditional linguistic and performative structures and, though it cannot come anywhere near representing the auditory effect the poem would have created during its performance, it introduces a similar disruption to the published literary medium. Tzara explains in his ‘Note pour les bourgeois’ (printed underneath the poem) this poem’s roots in the work of the Cubist painters, which ‘suscitaient l’envie d’appliquer en poésie les mêmes principes simultans’ (CV: 6), and is reflected in Tzara’s expression of the spatial simultaneity of experiencing the spoken ‘parts’ from all angles. In its written form, the work shows its Futurist influences in its display of temporal simultaneity across the page. The embracing of these two roots raises questions, however, about the real nature of simultaneity across different media. The written version forces a reasoned reading, limiting the amount of information that can be taken in at once, but in its aural form the poem disorientates the listener. To truly listen to all three voices, we lose the ability to hear each as isolated. This gives a feeling of aphasia, and raises the issue of Tzara’s

'selfcleptomane'. By creating a new world for the self, both the Dada and the listener are momentarily disconnected from the 'real' (and undesirable) world. The Dada juxtaposition of multiple languages is described by Demos as a 'utopian Esperanto' (2003: 154), and Hage points out its use as a rejection of linguistic nationalism (2005: 2). Having expanded the parameters of the poem through the admiral's multi-lingual battle, we end with an implosive withdrawal; a (presumed) unison of language, rhythm and content: 'l'amiral n'a rien trouvé' (CV: 7). This contraction into interiority is reasserted in Tzara's 'La Revue Dada 2' (CV: 19), which refers to human organs, and specifically the destruction of these organs through consumption.¹⁰ The inherent nihilism, however, gains a self-protective aspect in relation to the self-kleptomaniac, and ranges from a narcissistic interiorisation to scatological expulsions, both rejecting the outside world. The rejection of the world in this way implies an ingrained crisis of identity in Dada's core, which can only gain existential potency when combined with references to higher beings and churches.¹¹

Ball's 'Das Carousselpferd Johann' (CV: 8) also contains references to an avoidance of the world with a horse's isolation through its protective cotton wool wrapping. The feeling that one could be blown away at any moment seems to be a reference to the fragility of life in a war environment:

Wir haben die Fühlung verloren. Liessen uns da in die Nacht hinein und haben vergessen, Gewichtsteine an uns zu hängen. (CV: 8)

This feeling is especially potent when the characters meet a wall which leads straight up to the heavens, combining detached drifting with being hemmed in. The drifting in

¹⁰ 'il y a un jeune homme qui mange ses poumons'; 'votre dessin dans mes intestins a mangé le mal et le bien'; 'mon cœur je l'ai donné pourboire hihi' (CV: 19).

¹¹ 'il y avait sur chaque'une notre Seigneur et sur chaque seigneur il y avait mon cœur' (CV: 19).

and out of sense reflects the confusion and fear that conflict must have brought. A coping mechanism for Ball was religion: he mentions being taken over by a liturgical cadence when reading his poem 'Elefantenkarawane' at Cabaret Voltaire (1974: 71), and includes a 'Hymne' in the publication (CV: 14).¹² Yet the latter is full of references to brooding violence, including the bruised impressions of purple darkened horizons, contrasting with the 'Gick! Gack!' reminiscent of machine gun fire.¹³ We must wonder whether this poem represents a temporary disenchantment with or an eerie attachment to the liturgical. Alternatively, it could be seen as furthering Chapter One's case of self-severing from the world, as when overwhelmed (Sartre 1948: 33).

In the two futurist *parole in libertà*, Marinetti's 'Dune' (CV: 22-23) and Cangiullo's 'Adioooo' (CV: 30) we can see elements that 'anticipated the dynamic typography of future *Dada* issues' (Schäfer in Pichon and Riha eds.: 178). The sonority of frequent rhyme gives a musical, and also performative, feel to the works, with the Italian language proving apt for an almost operatic approach, rendered all the more effective by the employment of unusual lexical combinations. It is probably these 'systematic calls for revolutionizing the visual, literary, and graphic form' (Drucker 1994: 105) that inspired Tzara's embracing of the increased flexibility of the page, and his extension of these ideals from art to life. These are the aspects of futurism that Dada would take as influences, while rejecting the inherent nationalism associated with the more political Italians. Both *parole in libertà* included in this review transfer a range of dynamic and rhythmic expression onto the page through varying type size (dynamics), and spatial arrangement (rhythm). Marinetti reflects this

¹² Despite many Dadas blaming religion for the war, Ball would eventually return to a religious life.

¹³ If we also note the similarity of 'gack' to 'gackern' (to cackle), we gain an extra level of threat.

in his use of increasingly busy columns of words, and expresses the need to break with syntax to obtain ultimate freedom:

Despite the most skilful deformations, the syntactic sentence always contains a scientific and photographic perspective absolutely contrary to the rights of emotion. With words in freedom this photographic perspective is destroyed and one arrives naturally at the multiform emotional perspective (in Drucker 1994: 128).

Accenting in 'Dune' is also added through bold type, which is particularly effective when teamed with percussive sounds ('zingzang'), where the meaning is secondary to the aural effect. Hissing and growling sounds provide an aggressive fricative contrast with other areas of flowing, bubbling cadences constructed on a softer balance of open vowels. Additionally, the combinations of words provide a multi-sensory attack, including the unpleasant combination of 'ferocious sun', a lunch menu, 'smells of armpits', combined with the projection of images and sound via the variety of resonant syllables and explosions of stars, blood and tears. This need to liberate the word from syntactic rigidity and thus logical meaning fitted in perfectly with Dada's collaborative nature, and we can see its continued influence through Dada's embracing of the simultaneous poem (which arguably liberates the word from the page by restricting effect to its oral form). It is perhaps this influence that takes *Cabaret Voltaire* from the self-kleptomaniacal negativity of Ball's texts to the self-promotion evoked by the exciting typography that is initiated in the *parole in libertà*, and that we will see carried through into *Dada*.

***Dada*: the Heart of the Little Reviews**

Attempting to promulgate Dada ideas throughout Europe, Tzara launched the art and literature review *Dada*. [...] Word of Dada quickly spread: Tzara's new review was purchased widely and found its way into every country in Europe, and its international status was established. (Hofmann 1996: 133)

Dada represents the epicentre of the reviews, and embarks on a more propaganda-like stance than *Cabaret Voltaire*, beginning the (d)evolution into stylistic and linguistic experimentation that the reviews are remembered for. It begins surprisingly reserved, keeping the red cover with its single image, the rarely remarkable typography that we saw in *Cabaret Voltaire*, and subtitles itself 'recueil littéraire et artistique'. This latter reservation would only last for three issues, as Tzara 'moved the graphic appearance of Dada publications away from "art" and toward "life"- in other words, from literature to press' (Drucker 1994: 204). Drucker also highlights *Dada*'s altered authorial status, where it is usually not possible to isolate a 'unified editorial position or voice' (ibid.: 205). We could see this as being entirely within Dada's aims of detachment, and it is arguably here that the review reaches its most 'dada' point.

The first two issues of *Dada* each contain a 'Note sur l'art' by Tzara. Though these maintain the pseudo-formality of the 'recueil littéraire et artistique', they mark the subtle beginning of Dada's subversion of literature and art. 'Note 18' (*D1*: 2) presents calm sentences, in a short piece that reflects its gallery setting, but on closer inspection contains Dadaistic alterations. The piece begins with the noticeably intelligible sentence: 'L'art est à présent la seule chose construite, accomplie en soi, dont on ne peut plus rien dire, tellement richesse vitalité sens sagesse', which sets the tone of an academic treatise only to undermine it with the statement: 'Crapauds

des lampions froids aplatis sur l'intelligence descriptive [*sic*] du ventrerouge'. The latter statement contains the playful elision characteristic of Dada expression (and particularly in the case of Tzara), which appears to serve as an acceleration of thought. Equally 'Note 2' (*D2*: 2) contains rambling passages about nature, but also directly criticises 'man', especially in relation to the destruction of nature, and in contrast to the creativity of the artist. Here we can see Dada beginning to differentiate itself by marking its status as a specific other, which will escalate over the course of the reviews with the various states of 'not being', giving us a sense of 'becoming'.¹⁴

Schäfer tells us that *Dada 3* received press attention, including appraisal in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*:

The third issue of the major periodical of the Dadaists primarily arouses, more so than the previous issues, visual interest; it is printed in random directions and in all variations of Roman angles (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 184).

This review of the little magazine highlighted its capacity to attract attention, but also claims the 'disadvantage' of 'tiring the reader and of annoying him by forcing him to turn each page several times' (*ibid.*). This must have amused the Dadas greatly, since they delighted in annoying their audience, and would likely have taken this as an indication of success. Tzara himself later even stated:

The typography of *Dada 3* is a form of expression in itself: [...] the Dadaists who, wanting to disorganize everything, no longer were worried about aesthetic imperatives (in *ibid.*: 185).

Dada 3's cover embraces the adventurous typography and excitable activity that would come to characterise the review's increasingly content-packed pages. Though

¹⁴ Though we could of course argue that '[e]verything that exists only becomes and never is' (Roffe 2002 on Deleuze).

the cover has lost its bold red paper, the colour is transferred to the title, which is larger than before and dominates the page. A statement falsely attributed to Descartes¹⁵ intersects the page diagonally, simultaneously creating a myth and denying any kind of historical past.¹⁶ By taking on this statement, Dada essentially qualifies itself against a history that does not exist, freeing itself from a certain level of reasoning. Nonetheless, however much Dada may try to alter reality, much of its work is unavoidably linked to the present by the use of montage techniques which borrow from popular and media culture. Additionally, aligning himself with the ‘father of philosophy’ gave Tzara a new ideological weight. In early Dada we see the need to create false truths and histories about itself, perhaps to simulate emphatic power before it had developed its own identity. With *Dada*’s Descartes ‘quote’, this extends to creating false histories about the *world*. Where the earlier flexibility with the truth was part of falsely constructing Dada’s own image, here it is a way of eliciting a response, both positively, through association, and negatively, through the provocation to contradict or oppose it.

This issue of *Dada* is probably most notable for its inclusion of Tzara’s ‘Manifeste Dada 1918’ (*D3*: 1-3), an important moment for the movement’s identity, and which draws together performativity and publishing:

This exemplifies again the fact that the Zurich Dadas included primarily those innovations in their periodicals that had previously been presented in public recitation. (Schäfer in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 185)

¹⁵ ‘Je ne veux même pas savoir s’il y a eu des hommes avant moi.’ Elusive references to historical figures are echoed by Serner in *Dada* 4-5 and *Littérature* 13 (Napoleon), and Picabia in *Littérature* 13 (Louis XIII).

¹⁶ The principle of re-writing history is continued in the title of Savinio’s *Seconde origine de la voie lactée* (*D3*: 9).

The 1918 manifesto reads like a comprehensive guide to Dada principles. Calm in its beginnings, it seems to work itself up into a frenzy, launching, in *Dégoût dadaïste* (D3: 3), into a full speed list of everything that is Dada, repeating the word over and over (eleven times) before collapsing into its final choice: life. The introductory paragraph is highly self-referential: it outlines the aims of writing a manifesto while claiming to be against manifestos in principle, but also against principles. This circling of contradictions serves to set up the phrase: 'J'écris ce manifeste pour montrer qu'on peut faire les actions opposées ensemble' (D3: 1). These contradictions are furthered when the statement 'Dada signifie rien' is followed by a list of encyclopaedic definitions of the word. A brief critique of art reminds us of two of Dada's influences, Cubism and Futurism,¹⁷ while writing off pictorial and plastic art as 'inutile', and seeming to favour literature. Within the present assessment of Dada's developing personality, this supports the idea of the movement's growing self-awareness beyond its initial self-image.

What is striking about this manifesto is Tzara's delving into philosophical ideas, reflective of the presence of theoretical concerns within Dada. While Dada is often written off as nonsensical, paragraphs here not only aim at epistemological and ontological concerns, but also address issues key to the Dada mindset:

Je détruis les tiroirs du cerveau, et ceux de l'organisation sociale [...] de quel côté commencer à regarder la vie, dieu, l'idée, ou les autres apparitions. Tout ce qu'on regarde est faux (D3: 2).

¹⁷ Though Bury reminds us that '[m]anifestos crossed the divide of the 'isms'' (ed. 2007: 16).

Though we have already seen *Dada* categorise itself through affiliation with Descartes, Tzara manifestly claims to be against another ‘founder of discursivity’,¹⁸ Freud, through his distrust of not only psychoanalysis but also (non-utilitarian) science.¹⁹ Instead he advocates ‘jem’enfoutisme’ and ‘[l]a simplicité active’, discarding morality in favour of individuality, and implying that Dada had more long term aims than simple destruction, including concerns for an alternative form of expression and society, but also for the identity of the individual beyond the tabula rasa state.

Dada 3 offers a marked increase in excitable self-promotion within the reviews. Not only does it begin with Tzara’s ambitious three-page manifesto (arguably *the* Dada manifesto), but it also embraces a hyperactive crossover of text and image that will only be outdone by *Dada 4-5*’s multi-coloured pages. *Dada 4-5* represents a major stage in the development of the review as well as in relation to Dada as a movement: it is ‘the most comprehensive collection of Dada works up to that point’ (Schäfer in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 187), and is dubbed ‘Anthologie Dada’. An Arp print reminiscent of a dissected heart appears on one of its covers; Picabia’s ink print ‘Réveil matin’ on another. Though Arp’s is not necessarily a deliberate likeness, the combination of human/animal and mechanical innards gives us the impression that this issue stands as central to Dada’s aims and character. Not only is this issue long, but it is scattered with multi-coloured, multi-lingual pages, and is indicative of the level of determined promotion of Dada ideas.²⁰ Despite the relative formality of

¹⁸ See Foucault (in Lodge ed. 2000: 174-187).

¹⁹ ‘La psychoanalyse [*sic*] est une maladie dangereuse’; ‘La science me répugne dès qu’elle devient spéculative-système’ (*D3*: 2).

²⁰ Though apart from not changing colour mid-text, the assignment of colours to artists or texts/images appears to be arbitrary, and otherwise simply evenly spaced.

early Dada reviews, this one is filled with texts referring to the refusal of rules and structures. Is this why, then, this issue contains a contribution by Cocteau, despite the fact that was disliked by many Dadas?²¹ The resistance to rules is teamed with the red statement 'Lisez le Manifeste Dada 1918' (*D4-5*: 30) as if, ironically, this set of rules will explain Dada. Yet this is on a page with adverts, statements, a print and a poem:

The registers slip so easily, one to the other, that the advertisement becomes part of the poem which is itself continually crossing the boundaries between the language of commodity promotion and that of poetic imagery (Drucker 1994: 212).

This can be compared to Tzara's typographically adventurous 'Bilan' (*D4-5*: 31), which has the look of one of his own inventions, the Dadaist poem ('Prenez des ciseaux...' (Tzara 1996: 228)). The juxtaposition of rules and structure with perspectival and syntactic anarchy increases the impact of Dada's refusal of regulation much more effectively than simple rejection. It is also indicative that although Dada claims to have no internal consistency, structure persists nonetheless.

Although Serner's 'Letzte Lockerung manifest' (*D4-5*: 15-17) displays arguably one of the more extreme Dada outlooks, Richter describes the piece as representing the essence of Dada:

This dissolution was the ultimate in everything that Dada represented, philosophically and morally; everything must be pulled apart, not a screw left in its customary place, the screw-holes wrenched out of shape, the screw, like man himself, set on its way towards new functions which could only be known after the total negation of everything that had existed before. Until then: riot, destruction, defiance, confusion (Richter 1965: 48).

²¹ See, for example, Sanouillet (2005: 165-66).

In referencing this destructive tabula rasa process, we can see a parallel with Tzara's emphasis on 'not being' in his 'Note[s] sur l'art', as a simultaneous continuation and reversal of Deleuze's state of 'becoming', through its 'un-becoming' while aiming for the creation of an alternative way of 'being'. Serner expresses more overtly political, accusatory statements against the bourgeoisie, referencing 'Damenseidenstrümpfe', Gauguin paintings, and 'Geldflüsse' in the same breath as a 'Kotkugel' (*D4-5*: 15). This satirical mix of values mirrors the progression from *Cabaret Voltaire* into *Dada*, which marks an increasing engagement and interaction with the world both positively, through the movement's self-promotion, and negatively, through its rejection of traditional ideals. The move to Paris with Dada's involvement in *Littérature* would reflect this, but engaging with an established literary centre would not necessarily give the propulsion Dada, and particularly Tzara, envisaged.

***Littérature*: Little 'Rature'?**

Une publication de ce genre ne pouvait que recueillir l'adhésion de Tout-Paris littéraire que les audaces, comme on sait, n'effraient point, pourvu qu'elles soient présentées selon les règles du bon goût (Sanouillet 2005: 91).

Returning to a more formal, unadventurous look, *Littérature* marks the structured and less colourful end of Dada, and would lead seamlessly into Surrealism. This little magazine - unlike *Cabaret Voltaire* and *Dada* - had existed independently of Tzara's input,²² but a 'special Dada issue' (number thirteen) was produced on the arrival of Arp, Tzara, Man Ray, Picabia and Ernst in Paris (Hofmann 1996: 140). Not only is it typographically traditional, the first series of *Littérature* does

²² Established by the Paris-based practitioners Breton, Soupault and Aragon.

not contain any images. This fits with the development of Dada's character from self-image to self-awareness, and its changed social environment. Richter explains that '[p]ainters were involved in the metaphysical revolt of the writers but the visual medium could not, by its very nature, give form to pure protest' (1965: 171). To some extent then, Paris Dada represents an evolution in Dada's message to the world but, despite its proclamation of containing twenty-four Dada manifestos, feels like a retreat into the earlier manifestations of self-kleptomania (not to mention that it actually only contains four texts bearing the word 'manifesto' in their titles).

Aragon's nihilistic 'Manifeste du mouvement Dada' (L13: 1) focuses on destruction of all standards – for example of artists, politicians, classes and homelands – in order to begin again from *tabula rasa* which would be 'moins immensément *grotesque*'.²³ It imposes an equality of membership, obliterating hierarchy in favour of giving all members presidency. Aragon's manifesto also introduces a 'plus de' structure taken up in Tzara's self-titled contribution (L13: 2-4), which advocates 'plus de regards' and 'plus de paroles' because Dada 'introduit de nouveaux points de vue'. If Sanouillet states that *Littérature* was initially (and inadvertently) nationalist (2005: 100), it is here that the Zurich influence takes hold. Picabia's 'Dada Philosophe' (L13: 5-6) equates Dada to so many (traits of) nationalities,²⁴ authors and thinkers, various aspects of nature, and to Tzara and himself, that we are given the resonance of another of Tzara's manifestos where he claims that 'tout est Dada' (1996: 227). Picabia also asserts Dada's eternal youth ('DADA a vingt-deux ans depuis toujours' (L13: 6)), thus rendering the movement not only omnipresent but also immortal despite its self-prophesised demise.

²³ Original emphasis.

²⁴ Echoed in Arensberg's 'Dada est américain' (L13: 15).

Breton's 'Patinage Dada' (L13: 9-10) presents Dada as humorous, in particular the name that lends itself so easily to jokes, and despite the fact that its presence in *Littérature* was probably its most austere. Breton's representation of Dada as a joke, in addition to the impression that he considered it to be self-indulgent ('Tout ce qu'on écrit sur DADA est donc pour nous plaire' (L13: 9)), does not seem inaccurate and yet seems to contain a mild element of derision; though considering his future rejection of Dada this is unsurprising. His underlining of the fact that 'il n'y a pas de vérité DADA' is compounded with 'DADA ne promet pas de vous faire aller au ciel' and 'il serait ridicule d'attendre un chef d'œuvre DADA' (ibid.): statements that would not seem out of place within Zurich Dada, but in retrospect again seem to be aimed as an interrogation of Dada's validity (a question that would not, of course, be considered a relevant concern by Dada itself). Short tells us that Breton and the future Paris group was primarily influenced by Tzara's 1918 manifesto (in Peterson ed. 2001: 100). In this case the explosive energy of the manifesto may have given promises it could (or would) not fulfil.

However, Dada's reality on arrival in Paris (compared to the myth projected from Zurich) is not necessarily seen as a disappointment, as Ribemont-Dessaignes exemplifies in 'Les plaisirs de Dada' (L13: 10-11). He outlines Dada's delight in engaging in anarchistic tomfoolery, and crucially a provocation to join in, in order to share this happiness:

Le principal plaisir de Dada est de se voir chez les autres. [...] Avec vous on peut s'amuser. (L13: 10; 11)

We have seen through the reviews that Dada combines nihilism with self-kleptomania in an effort to reject the world, but its compulsion towards self-promotion

simultaneously allows it to embrace joy and fun. If *Littérature* seems to imply a regression into the self-kleptomania of *Cabaret Voltaire* after the self-promotion of *Dada*, it is perhaps more likely the beginnings of the movement's suicide-by-Breton.

[A]t the very core of Dada's apparent nihilism is to be found a thrust towards universal self-realisation. This, indeed, is Dada's often misinterpreted way of saying Yes to life. (Pegrum 2000: 178)

The sometimes contradictory combination of nihilism and joy, in addition to the denial of the past (and the future), leaves Dada suspended in a timeless self-awareness. In this way Dada is, like Jameson's schizophrenic, 'condemned to live a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon' (in H. Foster ed. 1998: 119). Yet, as Jameson expands, this same schizophrenic gains the advantage of having a 'far more intense experience of any given present of the world' (ibid.). These two statements do not present a disadvantage in Dada's case, if it was in fact a blueprint for a re-modelled existence: a short burst of extreme detachment from the world allowed both the breakdown of stagnating traditions and the development of a regained faith in life.

The written medium allowed Dada to gain a new level of interaction through responses both within the movement and further afield, and explores the efficacy of engaging with, versus denial of, the world. Constant self-referentiality through the manifestos, and the 'promotion of other 'like-minded' magazines' (Bury ed. 2007: 38), indicates the intense and constant self-(re)evaluation that we saw in the visual art in Chapter One. This link back to Dada's visual art seems to be indicative of the dependence of self-awareness on self-image, in the same way as language is

dependent on the use of images (Tucker 2010: 29). Chapter Three will show how these two interdependent aspects of identity affect the manifestations of the movement's self-reflection, Dada's own perception of its evolving personality.

Chapter Three: Self-Reflection in Dada's Kaleidoscopic Development

Dada had identified an ahistorical and universal state of mind.

[R]ather than stagnate once established in a particular location, Dada continued to evolve in response to each specific context

- Estera Milman (in Gaughan ed. 2003: 14; 15)

Dada reached and influenced an incredibly wide audience. Yet in accounts such as Van den Berg (2003) we find details of Dada activity but denial of a 'movement' (in this case in Belgium and Holland). Even New York, a widely accepted Dada haven, has been rejected as an official Dada centre, notably by Man Ray on several occasions (cf. Gaughan ed. 2003). How, then, do we decide what was 'official' within Dada? Through analysis of texts such as Van den Berg's, compared to accounts by the movement's protagonists, we will pick out Dada's reflection on its evolution and influences, and isolate the strands that constitute its core identity. The fact that the Dadas were very quick to document the movement, both from within (Ball's diary) and post-facto accounts such as Richter's (1965), show that the progression of the movement was important to its adherents, as well as the desire to play with this recording of progression. This ties in with Dada's heightened self-awareness: its constant need to display, promote and redesign itself leads logically into self-documentation both during and after the movement's lifetime.

Dada's international flavour is essential to its unique character. With many Dadas living and participating in activities in cities and countries other than those of their origins, the movement takes the idea of exile, channels it through a 'haven' and explodes back out onto the international scene. In Chapter One, we explored the idea of (shattered) mirrors, whereas within the realm of Dada's development these

shards become more kaleidoscopic:²⁵ This combination of mirror- and kaleidoscopic imagery is reminiscent of the endless deflections produced when trying to find and focus on Dada's 'core', beyond its beginning, and whether, like Derrida's concept of the centre that is not the centre (2001: 352), this Dada core escapes geographical structurality. This chapter will consider the development and influences of both key and more ephemeral Dada 'centres', and the way in which Dada viewed its own progression.

Dada undeniably began in Zurich, and yet it is said that the New York branch appeared simultaneously and independently (Milman in Gaughan ed. 2003: 15). Picabia recognised 'stylistic affinities' between New York, Zurich and Paris, and considered them 'international coincidences' (ibid.: 27). Equally, Paris is commonly accepted as the place of death of the movement, and yet what does that make the scattered activities that continued after Dada's fateful last soirée? To what extent was Dada limited to its Zurich, Paris and New York centres, leaving the wider scope as mere resonances of influence?

Paris provided Dada with a specific setting, that of a metropolitan capital recovering from war. This setting shaped the movement, which thus differed from Dada in the smaller, more homogeneous cities of Hannover and Cologne, the neutral wartime refuge of Zurich, or the distant urban environment of New York (Dickerman 2005: 349).

Zurich: the End in the Beginning

Pichon posits two concepts of identity within Zurich Dada: 'emigration', and 'liminality' (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 13). The former produces "shadows" of

²⁵ Bergius describes the 'heterogeneity of the individual personalities of Dada as in a kaleidoscope' (2003: 40): here the concept will be used in reference to the makeup of the movement and its branches.

ourselves, we become our own double', whereas liminality is more positive, allowing one to 'see two (or more!) sides (of the self, of the world) *at the same time*' (ibid., original emphasis). These two facets can be extended to Dada as a movement, beyond the experiences of its individual adherents. In its mobility, Dada incites restlessness, but moulds its collection of worldviews into a collage-identity, and simultaneously creates the possibility of fluid, hybrid identities from its multifaceted own:

Zurich Dada represented a radical attempt to model an identity that was immersed in a social space founded on difference and inclusiveness (Demos 2003: 158).

Dada frees identity from traditional constraints, 'perceiv[ing] itself as the unlimited possibilities of states of mind, as the opening up of doors into yet unknown and nonhabitualized worlds' (Pichon in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 16). In this respect Zurich Dada offers a widening of spatial awareness while anticipating temporal development. Dada's Zurich beginnings produced the tabula rasa state necessary for the creation of new identity out of the chaos of the surrounding world, and the 'humiliating age' (Ball 1974: 61) could be the stressor that forced the initially introverted Dada to block out the world, as a defence mechanism. To some extent, we could see the Cabaret Voltaire stage of Zurich Dada as a bottling up, or burying its head in the sand, until the 'little cabaret is about to come apart at the seams and is getting to be a playground for crazy emotions' (ibid.: 51-2). However, since it is in visual and performative Dada (and particularly Zurich) that we have explored the basis of Dada's self-image, it is possible that this bottling up was a gathering of force in order to take on the world. Hugnet confirms that '[t]hose who had taken refuge in

Zurich were not themselves fully conscious of what was going on within them, of that force that in some of them was acquiring substance and becoming explosive' (in Motherwell ed. 1989: 126). The fact that in determinedly neutral Switzerland it was frowned upon to express any strong singular political view (Varisco in Peterson ed. 2001: 279) meant that politics 'never really arrives in Zurich Dada' (Pegrum 2000: 89). The Zurich Dadas were not so much at odds with any particular ideology, nor 'against the war itself[,] as against the principles and institutions which stand behind it and have permitted it to occur' (ibid.: 63). Thus Dada's vehement anti-ideology within such a stifled political environment only exacerbated the escalating inward bubbling of its angry neutrality.

We have established the events of Cabaret Voltaire as 'the original period of Dada in which its unique style is developed: an all-inclusive, all-absorbing, all-exposing chaos' (Winter in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 140). However, its character developed as it moved across the city:

When Dada removed itself from the Niederdorf, it acquired a wider visibility and the use of the venue with the public identity coincided with the Dadas' own heightened public identity in the city (Lewer in ibid.: 54).

From residing in an undesirable area that was 'regarded as a social and hygienic problem' (ibid.: 51), Dada spread across the city, engaging more with Zurich's own character and engaging with increasingly upwardly mobile venues, veering from its smaller, more closed and introverted (humiliated?) cabaret setting to the more respectable *Zunft Häuser* (guildhouses) and finally, to the prestigious new Kaufleutensaal (built in 1915). Here the movement lost a few adherents, notably Ball, perhaps due to his psychic frailty, perhaps because he viewed Dada as selling out.

Its introduction of increasing tariffs contradicts certain Dada principles; as a money making venture Dada's personality would be altered. But viewing this change as 'selling out' is a rather narrow option. It rather demonstrated Dada's evolving identity, allowing it access to the bourgeoisie that it aimed to destroy from within, by rendering the public 'prêt à tout supporter' (Breton in Sanouillet 2005: 410). Additionally, Lewer stresses that Dada 'could not operate effectively on the margins of culture' (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 51-2): had it stayed at the Cabaret, its influence would have been limited to the 'drunken students, revolutionaries, spies, deserters and vagabonds' (ibid.: 51) that frequented it; hardly a crowd that needed proof of global malaise.

Zurich Dada's hive of activity arguably gives us the strongest sense of Dada's self-image, in its predominantly visual- and performance-based output. This can be seen in relation to its location, and consequentially as a reflection of Dada's rejection of war:

When Emmy Hennings sang 'They kill one another with steam and with knives' in Switzerland, which was encircled by fighting armies, she was voicing our collective hatred of the inhumanity of war (Huelsenbeck 1974: 137).

Winter highlights the importance of Zurich Dada's cabaret beginnings, and particularly Cabaret Voltaire's dual role as cabaret and gallery, exhibiting tendencies in the former toward a 'dominance of difference within unity', and in the latter, a 'dominance of unity within multiplicity' (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 145). In embracing these contradictions, Zurich Dada provoked destruction of expectations, but simultaneously a cohabitation of previously incompatible concepts. In this way rationality and irrationality can work together; nothing and everything become

synonymous. Opposites are no longer simply negation, nihilism no longer inherently negative, dissonance is embraced and highlighted, and 'destruction and construction are identical' (Mühsam in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 71).

But however anarchic its beginnings, it became evident that, through the desire to establish itself as a movement – and while denying (the possibility of) its existence – Dada was settling into pseudo-permanence:

The Dadas obviously wanted now to avoid detachment; they were orienting themselves and establishing guidelines (Winter in *ibid.* 1996: 147).

Additionally, we can see that from early on, Tzara wanted to create a 'Paris/Zurich axis – part of a still larger Dada "International" – based on exchanges of work and to build a distribution network' (Short in Peterson ed. 2001: 97). It remains difficult to believe that a movement that claimed to be so intent on (self-)destruction would aim to put down roots in such a way.

Zurich Dada is variably described as 'l'hystérie savamment cultivée' (Sanouillet 2005: 7) and 'laughter on the edge of the abyss' (Döhl in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 112), giving way to an image of the movement's teetering first steps, an emphasis on fun and the child-like, but always aware of the danger that surrounded it as it prepared to explode onto the international scene. It drew in art forms, 'shift[ing] its focus away from the individual work or medium to the hyper-, meta- or transitional work' (Winter in *ibid.*: 141), absorbing all into its collaborative, anarchic stew. Then, shaking off its local limitations, it branched out into Europe, having armed itself with these all-pervasive methods. Richter even claimed that through contact with Dada, 'the public had gained in self-awareness [...] The public was tamed' (1965: 80).

Germany: Ja Ja to Da Da

Dada activities in Germany are mixed, varying according to individual adherents' involvement in the war, but most groups extensively explored the media of collage and photomontage. Three centres stand out as 'main' or 'official': those in Berlin, Cologne and Hanover.

Based on their war experience, Cologne artists modified the image of the world itself. This new world [...] was a collaged world in which images were drawn from many sources, put together to make a world of fragmentary memories (Stokes ed. 1997: 20).

Cologne Dada is usually associated with Arp, Ernst and Baargeld. Here we can see three very different influences coming together. Arp escaped the war by feigning mental unfitness. Ernst, who 'undermined the substance of the world as conventionally defined' (ibid.: 37), fought and was injured in the war, and moved between French and German influences, possibly as a consequence of his friendship with the bilingual Arp. Freedom of linguistic expression was also important to the use of language in Dada montage: 'linguistic elements were a means for the self-reflection of art as well as the reflection of the surrounding world' (Bergius 2003: 141). Baargeld introduced a mild political aspect to Cologne Dada, and was brought in by Arp and Ernst who, knowing his Communist leaning, convinced him that 'Dada went much further than Communism and that its combination of new-found inner freedom and powerful external expression could set the whole world free' (Richter 1965: 160). However, since Dada does not subscribe to a specific political standpoint, Cologne Dada 'gradually relinquishes its political stance to become like the apolitical Dada of Zurich or Paris' (Pegrum 2000: 90). The Cologne centre, as

with German Dada in general, shows a proliferation of art featuring 'war cripples', and 'the awful technology of war that had kept them alive after the trauma to their bodies and minds' (Stokes ed. 1997: 39).

Despite being rejected by the Berlin Club Dada, Schwitters is said to embody 'peut-être mieux qu'aucun autre l'esprit farouchement individualiste, anarchiste et fantasque de Dada' (Sanouillet 2005: 30), and is particularly representative of Hanover Dada. Schwitters took the Dada delight in trans-media work further, creating his new 'Merz' art, and incorporating it into his house and his daily life. Dietrich describes the Merz work as creating 'new connections between different dissociated and newly associated parts' (in Stokes ed. 1997: 120), and Germundson tells us that Schwitters was 'searching not for absolute truth, but for a truth that changes through time' (ibid.: 225). Schwitters's work lends itself to the Dada hybrid identity, where the choice of personality construction lies with the individual and is subject to temporal development. Additionally, Schwitters's *Merz* concept leans toward the *Gesamtkunstwerk* in which Ball took great interest. In engaging across the arts in this way, Schwitters and Ball demonstrated a desire to explore art at its fullest, arguably reflecting a fully formed artistic identity, especially when we combine it with the Dada tendency to reject or spontaneously reassign their connection to the past, 'integrating and disintegrating this cultural heritage' (Dachy 1990: 142).

Arguably the most politically engaged of the Dada centres, Berlin fully embraced the radical technique of montage, giving way to works such as Höch's 'Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands' (1919-1920), an obvious response to German wartime society, and Grosz's 'Ein Opfer der Gesellschaft' (1919) and Dix's

'Kartenspielende Kriegskrüppel' (1920) which respond directly to war-induced disfiguration. Berlin Dada represented a more closed community,²⁶ with groups such as Club Dada, which came across as mildly elitist, through selective membership (in the case of Schwitters), and reclusive, through the fact that they 'never idealized their group activities or posed for photographs' (Bergius 2003: 31). This strikes a discord with the impression of Dada's overall mobility and solubility of boundaries, leaving Berlin Dada in a slightly isolated stance. However, given Berlin Dada's socio-political surroundings, we could see this partial withdrawal as a defence mechanism or 'coping strategy' (S. Foster in Peterson ed. 2001: 194), like Zurich Dada in its early stage, that needed to shelter in a closed environment until ready to embark on its international mission. The Berlin Dadas engaged in the creation of alternative realities, and their critique of existing society 'mirrored this disintegrating reality that was losing its hold on itself' (Bergius 2003: 134). This breakdown allowed the creation of, and 'ironical play' (ibid.: 138) with, new identities from chaos and destruction, through montage of its fragments.

Though German Dada displays some characteristics that were not present in Zurich, it mirrors it in many respects, and primarily in its embracing of contradictions (thus rendering 'differences' equal to affinities). The engagement with politics, however fleeting, can be seen as representative of the differences in social climate between the two centres. To some extent Zurich used its status as safe haven to detach itself from the turmoil of belligerent Europe; Berlin was caught in the middle, and expressed considerable anger at this state. Though Paris was also involved in the conflicts, it was on the side of the 'winners'. Additionally, Dada only came to Paris

²⁶ Though this centre was still subject to various members vying for leadership or notoriety and the conflict that ensued, a trait it would share with its Parisian counterpart (cf. Bergius 2003).

after the war, thus encountering a different worldview, including an ‘aftermath’ tension of a ‘return to order’ which may have contributed to Dada’s demise through Surrealism. Berlin Dada’s timeline overlaps with that of the war, giving rise to negativity and political engagement, but also a desire to start again.

If Everything was Nothing and Nothing the beginning of Everything, Dada intended an artistic-philosophical creation of an endlessly relational abundance and emptiness (Bergius 2003: 21).

Dada Low and Dada East: Dada Goes Viral

Dada’s international influences are widespread, and yet we find that some of the more far-flung centres are only historically appropriated as ‘Dada’. In many places Dada was simply not perceived as such,²⁷ and in some cases it was merely that the term itself was not used, as in Poland, where ‘instead the more positive “futurism” was preferred’ for activities resembling Dada (Janecek in Janecek and Omuka eds.1998: 4). Conversely, in Russia the ‘nothingists’ group issued a firm ‘nyet, nyet’ to Da[]da, rejecting the term due to its overtly affirmative tone in Russian (Bowlit in *ibid.* 1998: 151). In this respect Dada does not always allow for multi-meaning acceptance: while most adherents saw the positive meanings in the seemingly nonsense word,²⁸ its playfulness was not for all. Van den Berg tells us that ‘the history of Dadaism in the Low Countries is a largely fragmented collection of only slightly related individual appropriations and incidental recuperations’ (2002: 18-19) despite the fact that these artists were among the only ‘historical Dadaists’ using the

²⁷ Janecek takes Bulgaria as ‘perhaps the weakest case for an indigenous Dada movement’ (in Janecek and Omuka eds. 1998: 4).

²⁸ In Japanese, ‘dada’ means “childish wilfulness” (Omuka in *ibid.*: 230).

name associated with their location.²⁹ Sanouillet states that Belgian Dada 'n'exista que comme antenne du groupe parisien' (2005: 33). The Eastern Dada offspring have only recently been explored, in part due to their lack of 'official' status. Through these ephemeral manifestations we would expect to see examples of cumulative 'error', with different parts of the Dada personality being transferred to varying degrees of accuracy, and feeding into the heterogeneous nature of the movement, building on the exploration of hybrid identities and cultures: '[t]hat Dada transcended nationality was, on occasions, almost an article of faith for its supporters' (Impey in Janecek and Omuka eds. 1998: 132).

Czech Dada, through the transfer point of Prague, was founded in the form of a 'Czech Dada Society' by Huelsenbeck in 1920 (Janecek in *ibid.*: 2). We could perhaps see Czech Dada as the strongest link among the ephemeral centres, with interest being expressed within one of Dada's contemporaries, poetism, and 'some elements of Dada were in fact further cultivated' (Toman in *ibid.*: 19). We can also see here an element of transplantation of Dada ideals, and specifically because it was two Germans (Huelsenbeck and Hausmann) who exported Dada, from Zurich, into Czech territory (displaying a linguistic, as well as geographical, logic). We have already seen that Paris Dada was shaped by a limited, specific knowledge of Zurich Dada. Short introduces the idea of the children's game, 'Chinese whispers', in relation to the transference of Dada news into Paris (in Peterson 2001: 98). If 'mistakes' were transmitted to Paris, generally accepted as Dada's primary path across Europe, it is safe to say that the differences between Paris and the former

²⁹ 'Dada Holland' and 'Holland Dada'. The Zurich Dadas referred to themselves as 'Galerie Dada' and 'Mouvement Dada' (Van den Berg 2002: 5), perhaps because of being the 'original' and thus to them, they were purely 'Dada'.

Czechoslovakia would be marked. These two cases present an interesting dilemma. Since Zurich Dada dissolved, destroying the perceived original, it remains for the Dada scholar to decide to what extent later or further branches 'match' the original.

A notable Czech Dada adherent is František Halas, who was subject to these 'Chinese whispers' effects. Strongly influenced by Serner's *Letzte Lockerung manifest*, Toman describes Halas's interpretations of Serner as 'occasionally sound[ing] more shocking than Serner's original' (in Janecek and Omuka eds. 1998: 24). This is not to say, however, that Halas only drew from Dada's negative aspect. As he expressed:

[O]ut of Dada comes a lesson for the modern man who is smiling today at what he was horrified by yesterday. Sowing doubts about everything, Dada was the starting point of the process of relativization of our thought. (in *ibid.*: 23-4)

Halas saw the Dada adherent as 'an active and positive type', despite, or even because of, the movement's perceived nihilism (*ibid.*: 24). In this respect Halas almost seems to echo New York Dada, the movement's more upbeat branch.

NYC: Not Your Cousin

[T]he Dada spirit was capable of coming to consciousness spontaneously, independently, and about the same time in different parts of the world (Peterson ed. 2001, p.106).

Despite Peterson's description, New York was often rejected as having been a Dada centre, rather, as a series of Dada-like activities being assigned Dada status as 'an a posteriori construct' (Milman in Gaughan ed. 2003: 29). Sanouillet describes it as 'un mouvement original *de caractère dadaïste*' (2005: 14, emphasis own). It was a

fairly hermetic venture, working out of the Arensburgs' apartment, and was arguably detached from European Dada in that it was not as caught up in the negativity and fear pervading the latter continent. Like Zurich, it provided a haven for exiles in this belligerent climate, including Duchamp and Picabia, but '[u]nlike the Zürich centre, Dada in New York involved indigenous artists, a situation which made it more like Berlin Dada in this respect' (Gaughan ed. 2003: xiii).

Although its concerns arguably remained predominantly 'issues of identity raised by modernisation' (ibid.), New York Dada differed from European centres primarily because it addressed the machine within a wider, mass commodity-based aesthetic, as opposed to the machine as murderous, or as a life-preserving prosthetic that reflected on the horror of war. Additionally, New York Dada presented its machines as non-functional. 'New York had superseded [*sic*] Paris as the world's modern city' (Tashjian in ibid.: 66), and this is reflected in the Dada group's embracing of modern technology in the city. Gaughan underlines the Dada centres' varied responses to Western crisis as 'basic cultural anarchism in Zurich, more politically focused in Berlin, while the technological may be considered a central, if not overdetermining presence in New York' (ed. 2003: 9). Furthermore Europe saw America, and particularly New York, as 'an "other" towards which to aspire, a superior "other" to its cultural situation' (Jones in ibid.: 175).

Richter explains that it was with photography³⁰ and Stieglitz that Dada found its roots in New York; 'not a night-club, not a sceptical philosopher like Ball, but a little photographic gallery and this cheerful, aggressive photographer' (1965: 82). Man Ray sought to exploit photography-as-art-form to the point of rendering it defunct,

³⁰ Not new in its own right, photography was however not widely employed as an art form at this point.

especially through his 'rayographs' which, in the Dada tabula rasa spirit, do not involve a camera, rather a more direct contact with the film itself. Man Ray's and Duchamp's 'readymade' creations explore a similar (anti-)aesthetic, by simultaneously depersonalising the art work, 'anticipating the structuralists' death of the author as a controlling force in the text' (Pegrum 2000: 76), yet having created this 'technique' the two artists (particularly Duchamp) are inserted into the historical canon, re-personalising the work through their own notoriety.

Something that marks out the New York centre is its status as Dada 'à l'état pur, libre de toute interférence "surréaliste"' (Sanouillet 2005: 20). A parallel to New York's detachment can be seen in one of its adherents, Picabia, who was present in the three 'main' Dada centres, Zurich, New York and Paris, but also independently in Barcelona. His financial status meant that he was able to travel about more than many other Dadas, but his liking for fast cars and the fast life (ibid.: 96) predisposed him to boredom, and he flitted about, never in one place for very long, likely known as much for his absence as for his presence. However, Picabia went on to claim Dada for himself, despite his public break with the movement in 1921 (see Dickerman 2003: 145-6) putting himself and Duchamp as the centre around which the movement revolved:

L'esprit dada n'a véritablement existé que durant trois ou quatre ans, il fut exprimé par *Marcel Duchamp et moi* à la fin de 1912 (in Sanouillet 2005: 233, original emphasis)

The fact that no Dada history goes so far back, and that Duchamp himself was tangential to at least the Paris branch, somewhat undermines Picabia's claims.

However, Picabia is credited as the 'originator of Dada' by Claude Rivière (in Richter

1965: 11), and is seen to have had a considerable influence on the movement in Zurich, Paris, and New York.³¹ Additionally, Picabia's stance mirrors Breton's, but where Breton had denied his own involvement, or else renamed it as Surrealist activity, Picabia here claims to have embodied it, despite rejecting it with this break.

Paris Dada: the Beginning in the End

With Dada growing root-bound, Tzara, careful tender of his avant-garden, opted for a transplant to a larger pot (Polizzotti in Peterson ed. 2001: 116).

Paris Dada's group dynamic was a less internationally inclusive endeavour than some other centres, probably because of its wartime positioning and mentality. Short tells us that Paris Dada was strangely skewed in relation to its Zurich predecessor, as their only influence was Tzara and his *Manifeste Dada 1918* (in *ibid.*: 100).³² The city's longstanding literary tradition may have preconditioned the Paris group to find Tzara's dramatic writing appealing, especially when presented in the large pages of *Dada 3* as an all-encompassing life-guide:

Tzara parvenait à exposer sans concessions ni à la forme ni au goût du jour une philosophie, une éthique, un mode de vie qui rendaient aux oreilles des intellectuels de 1919, à peine délivrés de la guerre, et qui se cherchaient une voie, un son singulièrement captivant (Sanouillet 2005: 116).

Paris Dada formed the opposite end of the movement to Zurich, and was its place of death: 'Dada was to come to Paris as the exterminating angel' (Peterson ed. 2001: 102), and ended up exterminating itself in the process. This extends logically

³¹ Richter (1965: 71), Schäfer (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 186) and Short (in Peterson ed. 2001: 101-2) are just a few examples of Picabia's significant impact on the Dada branches in general, and on Tzara in particular.

³² Apparently neither could Picabia 'conceive of anything specifically Dada happening without Tzara being part of it' (Short in Peterson ed. 2001: 108).

Richter's description of the Parisian review *Littérature* as having been 'infected' by Dada (1965: 167). Imagery of Dada as a progressive disease reflects on the movement's views of war as the sickness of the age.³³ Where Zurich had primarily been based in the visual and performance based arts, Paris represented the more structured, literary and theoretical base.³⁴ And if Zurich was a collaborative venture, Paris contained undertones of struggles for power, namely Breton's desire to turn the movement into Surrealism. Like Zurich, Paris Dada was highly dependent on a series of events designed to provoke the public, working within theatres in contrast with the cabaret. In this respect Paris Dada can be seen as a continuation of the increasing respectability of the establishments chosen for Dada events, especially because Paris was already an established art and music scene; Zurich was not.³⁵ Sanouillet points out that '[d]ès son installation à Paris, le mouvement affirma son caractère international' (2005: 363). Equally in this way it may be through the fact of Dada having died in Paris that Surrealism, though not the only route out of Dada, is most frequently crowned as its successor.

Peterson tells us that although Paris Dada began amicably, describing 1920 as its 'annus mirabilis', it soon descended into bickering, with 1922 as 'marked as much by what *did not* come off as by what *did*' and finally dissolving after the fateful Soirée du Cœur à Barbe in 1923 (ed. 2001: 27, original emphasis). Richter writes that the 'French writers seemed to hesitate at first before embarking on the strange adventure of Dada' (1965: 167). Was this the reason that Dada met its end here? Or had it run

³³ Duchamp also reflected on art within the terminology of disease, describing it as a '*habit-forming drug*' and 'wanted to protect [his] 'ready-mades' against such a *contamination*' (in Richter 1965: 90, original emphasis).

³⁴ This is not to say that Paris Dada was sedate. Dada ended the way it had begun: with 'riots, poems, speeches and manifestoes' (Richter 1965: 171).

³⁵ Goergen suggests this as a reason Dada music remains widely uninvestigated (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996: 153).

its natural course? It is true that shock and scandal lose impact on repetition: Breton's audience may have been ready for anything, but Breton himself was only ready for a *coup d'état*.³⁶ It is instructive that the Paris Dada centre should base itself so heavily on Tzara's influence, when the main source of conflict would turn out to be between Tzara and Breton, with Breton later denying affiliation with and the influence of Dada on his Surrealist activity.

It is apparent, despite Paris being the city of Dada's demise, that Paris Dada was of importance not only in its own right but also for the information and wider picture we have of the movement. Short tells us that '[w]ithout Paris Dada, our notion of the movement as a whole would be diminished and fragmentary' (in Peterson ed. 2001: 95), and Pegrum states that Paris 'was long assumed to represent Dada in its entirety, giving rise to the apprehension of Dada as nothing but negative and destructive' (2000: 104). It is perhaps Dada's established detachment from history that gives way not only to nihilism and destruction, but also to a pseudo detachment from itself that both allowed it to see itself in its entirety (including its end), and left it preoccupied with its own (suicidal) death.³⁷

The present that evaporated in the speed of the city was to be compensated for by the eccentric chase of time. Simultaneity thus was not seen as a culmination but as a loss of temporal experience perceiving temporal uniqueness from the perspective of its ending (Bergius 2003: 153).

We can compare simultaneity and Dada's preoccupation with its own demise back to the representation of Jameson's perpetual present through the Dada reviews, with

³⁶ Breton's use of this particular phrase is revealingly present in his letter to Tzara of April 1919, where he claims that 'la préparation du coup d'État peut demander quelques années' (in Sanouillet 2005: 406).

³⁷ This is particularly apt when we consider that at least three suicides associated with Dada were linked to the Paris branch.

the movement's timeless self-awareness exerting a multifaceted influence on the then future of art and culture.

Dada's development as a movement was important during its lifetime, but also for the adherents after the event, who largely saw their involvement as a distinct stage in their lives, and 'most of its members, apart from those who joined the Surrealist ranks, continued to proclaim their allegiance to Dada for the rest of their lives' (Dachy 1990: 185). Given the youth of most of Dada's adherents, we can see the movement as playing a significant role in the evolution of their identities, just as childhood experience is fundamentally formative in shaping adult identity. In shrugging off and rejecting prescribed identities of a failing modernism, Dada opened possibilities for a new, alternative form of identity, with an increased international (anti-)ideological flexibility. Dada's strong assertion of "anti" finds echoes in Žižek, who writes that

Materialism [...] resides in the reflexive twist by means of which I myself am included in the picture constituted by me – it is this reflexive short circuit, this necessary redoubling of myself as standing both outside and inside my picture, that bears witness to my "material existence." Materialism means that the reality I see is never "whole" – not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it (2006: 17).

The capacity to view oneself as both 'outside and inside' finds a parallel with Dada's mirror stage that allowed the simultaneous perception of the image as self and as reflection. Dada upended traditional constructs in favour of a tabula rasa of the self, as well as weaving a network of interdependence from cross-boundary communication and lack of established roots.³⁸ In this way, Dada's homelessness

³⁸ Much like Tzara's characters in *Le cœur à barbe*, who 'are not composites unto themselves, but are, in fact, a collection of composite parts reliant on each other for a singular identity' (Varisco in Peterson ed. 2001: 286).

made everywhere its home, and its flexibility of character made any/everyone and any/everything Dada.

Conclusion

Dada s'applique à tout, et pourtant il n'est rien [...] Dada est inutile comme tout dans la vie.

- Tristan Tzara (1924: 70)

To revolt against life! But there is only one wonderful remedy: suicide.

- Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes (in Motherwell ed. 1989: 105)

Commenting on the history of suicide, Brown tells us that 'from Plato and Socrates onwards, and in pursuit of its time-honoured concern for questions of life and death, philosophy has mediated suicide's meanings in parallel with th[e] creative process' (2001: 8). Brown's remarks highlight the 'radically different attitude to death and suicide' (ibid.: 15) around World War I, coinciding perfectly with Dada and initiating a series of questions around crises of identity that the present thesis has sought to address. On questioning, then, the extent to which Dada represented a suicidal attempt of a movement that opposed society, life, and everything that surrounded it, the problem arises of the conflict between physical suicide, philosophical suicide, and artistic suicide.

Brown underlines the fundamental difference between suicide itself and 'destructive behaviour' (ibid.: 9). Though it was never the intention in this thesis to prove Dada to be a manifestation of suicide proper, it remains useful to make this distinction when considering actual Dada suicides (Vaché, Crevel, Rigaut), and especially when these three men were singled out and re-labelled 'trois héros surréalistes' (Crastre 1947: 6-7, emphasis own). Despite the undeniable relevance of suicide to Dada, the fact that these deaths have been claimed by the Surrealist

canon³⁹ by necessity removes them from the present point of inquiry. Beyond a surface-level preoccupation with death, unsurprising in a war-torn society where 'death was being systematically put under control and the dying removed from sight' (Brown 2001: 202), it is more useful here to consider instead Dada's 'destructive behaviour'. Thus we can trace Dada's desire to destroy the institution of art, in order to live on in an altered and preferable paradigm, and that 'because art as an institution proves indestructible, Dada takes the opposite ploy of turning everything into art' (Pegrum 2000: 224).

The closest we come to physical suicide within the present thesis is the manifestations of destructive behaviour in Chapter One's assessment of Dada's self-image, of tearing up expectations, shattering reflections and creating anew from the scattered shards. Dada's fragmented self-image also exposes its decentred core. In pointing out that Dada is 'located far from the centre of society as well as possessing no unified centre of its own', Pegrum pushes Dada's decentred state further, claiming it also to be 'decentring[,] since Dada is extremely active in attempting to undermine all that is centred in Western society' (2000: 116). As a physical face, Dada's self-image is a front, behind which are only more faces. In satirically reflecting the very world it opposed, Dada broke the cycle of reckless progress, developing as an image to be seen and as a nihilistic critique of society:

In an artistic sense, the Dadaists acted out the stupidity and violence of modern warfare, and gave expression to the contemporary mood of futility, in an art which was all about the worthlessness and the psychotic nature of self. (Brown 2001: 202)

³⁹ And actively expressed in texts such as *Agence générale du suicide* (in Rigaut 1970: 39-40) and the first issue of *La Révolution surréaliste* (1924 in Béhar 2009).

If we then turn to philosophical suicide, we can see that by referring to Camus's work on death and suicide (see *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, 1942 in 2006: 217-315), suicide is not the answer to the absurd: '[p]ourquoi se tuer, quitter ce monde après avoir conquis la liberté?' (ibid.: 293). Surmising that Dada embraced the absurd in life, like existentialism, Dada has the appearance of standing on the brink of suicide, yet the innate optimism of both 'movements' precludes actual suicide. Expanding on Camus's representation of his protagonist, and his concluding statement that 'Il faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux' (ibid.: 304), we find echoes of Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes's 'manifesto' *Les Plaisirs de Dada*, and the conclusion, amid Dada's destructiveness and embracing of meaninglessness – and after a long and often nonsensical list of aimless pleasures – that 'Dada est très content' (in *L13*: 10-11).

When considering the Dada reviews we saw Dada's personality begin to develop its more theoretical, even philosophical side. The fragmented nature that we saw in our explorations of self-image is carried through into self-awareness, but with an added temporal detachment. In Chapter Two this was discussed in relation to Jameson's schizophrenic, who lives without past or future, yet experiences a much more intense version of the world. Additionally, the second chapter aligned this state with Deleuze's theory of 'becoming'. Dada's evolution comprises a plethora of short, intense bursts of activity in a multitude of locations: never fixed and always embracing contradiction, it offers questions instead of solutions, constantly evolving but never 'being'. We can see this as philosophically self-destructive in the way that it insists on cutting itself short of any ideological fixity. When combined with multi-sensory frozen delay and time made material, as we saw with Duchamp's 'delay in glass' and the flurry of repeated activity to no particular end in Richter's

Vormittagsspuk (and trapped within the cinematic frame), we are left with a feeling reminiscent of Tzara's 'morceaux de durée verte [qui] voltigent dans ma chambre' (1918: 28); a return to a synaesthetic cross-wired perception. A key factor in the development of Dada's self-awareness is the increased willingness to embrace the reactions and interactions of others. Where the self-image stage consistently hinted at introversion and rejection, the self-awareness stage invites audience participation ('Avec vous on peut s'amuser').

The short lifespan of the movement is certainly reminiscent of artistic suicide. Dada's preoccupation with its own death, and the death surrounding it, lends its self-prophesied demise a feeling of deliberate self-effacement, as we saw in Chapter One, through Dada's destructive behaviour and, in Chapter Two, through its self-kleptomania. These tendencies, along with Blosche's theory that 'Dada will survive only by ceasing to exist' (in Richter 1965: 192), give us a tension between the perceived aims of Dada's actions: was this a deliberate attempt to kill art by killing itself? In this way we come to the contradictory conclusion that Dada was an attempt at philosophical or artistic suicide, based on its behaviour, but that it simultaneously was not, through its efforts to provide a creative way out of a stifling situation. To a certain extent, then, Dada pushed the art world to its breaking point, then offered itself up as a sacrifice in order to force a new outlook, 'a new way of thinking, a new attitude, a new ethos both in the world of men and in the world of objects, both in art and in thought' (Haftmann in Richter 1965: 192).

In Chapter Three, we saw that Dada created, based on the core of its personality as discussed in Chapters One and Two, a wide network of adherents and influences, making the movement at home simultaneously everywhere and nowhere.

When married with the attempt to leave while it was at maximum effect, this gives the impression of an inherent desire to leave a lasting impression, both in the art world and in the realm of (alternative) identity formation. Through Chapter Three we can see that although Dada manifested many suicidal aspects, its self-reflection indicates more strongly a desire for change. Furthermore, Dada's intense awareness of its own nihilism gives way to a conscious destruction, negating the possibility of artistic suicide since '[o]n se suicide rarement [...] par réflexion' (Camus 2006: 222).

Where we compared Dada's self-awareness to Jameson's perpetual present as a timeless self-perpetuation, Hugnet links the movement's timelessness to its persistent relevance and thus its legacy: 'Dada is always a thing of the present, hence its posthumous activity' (in Motherwell ed. 1989: 127). As a movement simultaneously seen to be complete and to have left an all-permeating legacy, the critic is left in an interesting position regarding Dada's status in the realm of ideas of the self. Sanouillet (who knew several of the Dadas) argues the case of temporal distance being essential to the critic's assessment of the movement, comparing it to a 'psychological trauma' whose symptoms may have a delayed onset (2005: 361). Chapter Three's assessment of the contributing branches and temporal development of the movement mirrors this 'diagnosis', providing numerous cases for symptoms of, or stressors leading to, a mental illness. In addition to the role of the critic, the Dadas' own post-(traumatic)reflection on the movement gives us another counter to the labelling of Dada as artistic suicide, in that involvement with the movement is mostly seen and expressed in a positive light, and that '[a]side from a few, mostly marginal nihilistic figures, the Dadaists attack existing structures in such a way as to facilitate change' (Pegrum 2000: 194).

Despite the negative undertones of the movement and its reception, and the destructive persona it may have embodied, Dada was an intensely creative being. Its negativity lies in an opposition to the world surrounding it, and the resultant desire to detach itself from the past, in order to start afresh. Tzara argued that 'old work' only remained useful as a novelty: '[o]nly contrast links us to the past' (in Jakobson 1987: 39). Therefore although it gave many signs of a suicidal nature, it cannot be argued that it was entirely self-destructive. Rather, its constant insistence on *tabula rasa* sprang from a desire to find an alternative way, and in the case of this thesis, a different approach to identity formation.

[T]he Dadaist's destructive, rebellious act is not nihilistic, but has a positive counterpart: "incomprehensibility" is a refuge, and the refusal to use society's communicational codes brings an isolation and detachment which, for Ball, lead to a deeper self-knowledge, untarnished by the need to compromise with social values (Peterson ed. 2001: 203).

By its very nature, Dada does not offer an explicit idea of what this alternative may be, but in this way increases individual freedom of choice by leaving the options open. Additionally the possibility arises that artistic suicide and alternative identity are not mutually exclusive, much as Sartre links emotions such as anger and joy, which 'ne diffèrent que par l'intensité' (1948: 2). Perhaps the closest idea we have to this proposed alternative identity is the advocacy of a composite identity, formed from 'reality fragments' (Bürger 1984: 72). The embracing of montage is a particularly appropriate technique for proposing an alternative to the 'real' world, while remaining aware of, and often emphasising, the fault lines within its own planes. As Haftmann states, 'Dada led to a new image of the artist. [...] 'Dada' stood for a new vision of humanity!' (in Richter 1965: 218-9). Whether this image is composite, or simply

infinitely interpretable, Dada's suicidal creativity led to the possibility of an expressive alternative to the stultifying rigidity of socially imposed identity formation.

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