THE AUTHENTICITY OF AMBIGUITY: DADA AND EXISTENTIALISM

by

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- ABSTRACT -

Dada is often dismissed as an anti-art movement that engaged with a limited and merely destructive theoretical impetus. French Existentialism is often condemned for its perceived quietist implications. However, closer analysis reveals a preoccupation with philosophy in the former and with art in the latter. Neither was nonsensical or meaningless, but both reveal a rich individualist ethics aimed at the amelioration of the individual and society. It is through their combined analysis that we can view and productively utilise their alignment.

Offering new critical aesthetic and philosophical approaches to Dada as a quintessential part of the European Avant-Garde, this thesis performs a reassessment of the movement as a form of (proto-)Existentialist philosophy. The thesis represents the first major comparative study of Dada and Existentialism, contributing a new perspective on Dada as a movement, a historical legacy, and a philosophical field of study. The five chapters analyse a range of Dada work through a lens of Existentialist literary and theoretical works across the themes of choice, alienation, responsibility, freedom and truth. These themes contribute to the overarching claim of the thesis that Dada and Existentialism both advocate the creation of a self that aims for authenticity through ambiguity.

To my teachers, in all of their guises.

- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS -

Publications from this thesis:

Chapter One is published in part as 'Designing Identity: Sophie Taeuber, Dada, and the (Re)Construction of the Fragmented Self', in *Desearch*, issue 3 (2013).

Chapter Two is published in part and in altered form as 'The Sound(track) of Silence: Hearing Things in Dada Film', in *HARTS & Minds*, vol. 1.4 (Spring 2014).

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- LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS -

- LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS -

For reasons of space as well as ease of identification, several frequently occurring core primary texts will be abbreviated as follows:

AA   *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, Hans Richter. First published 1964 (German).

AB   *L'Affaire Barrès*, Marguerite Bonnet. 1987 collated text of 1921 Barrès trial.

D   *Dada*, 1917-1921, Zurich and Paris. References followed by issue number.

DE   'Dada and Existentialism', Richard Huelsenbeck, essay first published in Willy Verkauf, *Dada: Monograph of a Movement* (1957). Here cited from *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* (1974 [1969]).

E   *L'Étranger*, Albert Camus. First published 1942.

EH   *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme*, Jean-Paul Sartre. First published 1946.

EN   *L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Sartre. First published 1943.

FT   *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, Hugo Ball. First published 1927 (German).

HC   *Huis Clos*, Sartre. First published 1947.

HR   *L'Homme révolté*, Camus. First published 1951.

L   *Littérature*, 1919-1924, Paris. References followed by issue number.

MA   *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*, Simone de Beauvoir. First published 1947.

MS   *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*, Camus. First published 1942.

N   *La Nausée*, Sartre. First published 1938.

P   *La Peste*, Camus. First published 1947.

PP   *Phénoménologie de la perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. First published 1945.

T   *Travesties*, Tom Stoppard. First performed 10 June 1974.

ZC   'Zurich Chronicle', Tristan Tzara, first published in Richard Huelsenbeck, *Dada Almanach* (1920) (French).

Wherever possible, art works will be referred to in the language of their original titles. Where originals are not in English or French, translations will be provided in brackets.

- INTRODUCTION -
'JE ME REVOLTE, DONC NOUS SOMMES'

Dada, in other words, is but one symptom in the great spiritual revolt of our time. It may be called the existential revolt, for all its elements can be understood through human existence, by means of psychology.

(*DE*: 146)

More and more people are going to psychoanalysts, because they doubt the meaning and value of life, because they live in an 'existential vacuum'.

(*AA*: 204)

'Dada and Existentialism'

When Richard Huelsenbeck posited Dada as an Existentialist phenomenon in 1957, he expressed a feeling that had been relatively unexplored critically but that had existed as an undercurrent in the movement since its beginnings: Dada not only had philosophical content, but also could be used constructively as both a commentary on, and a positive, productive analysis of, the human condition. A movement that appeared to proclaim loudly the death of all values, Dada advocated revolt beyond simple nihilism. The Dada rebel, like Albert Camus's rebel, is '[u]n homme qui dit non', but 's'il refuse, il ne renonce pas: c'est aussi un homme qui dit oui, dès son premier mouvement' (*HR*: 27). Like Camus's delineation of the rebel, Huelsenbeck underlines that '[t]he fact that the Dadaists said no was less important than the manner in which they said it' (*DE*: 144). Huelsenbeck's essay presents Dada, post facto, as a self-aware movement that increasingly drew near (in retrospect) to French Existentialism, stating that '[i]t was that absolute audacity which brought Dadaism so close to existentialism in those days' (*DE*: 145). Furthermore, he claims that Dada 'was that two-sided, perhaps even double-tongued form of existence taken from life itself, which despises ideals' (ibid.). Fundamentally, Huelsenbeck foregrounds

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aspects of Dada that are concerned with life as actively experienced and as a desire to take on the problematic of existence as a starting point.

Huelsenbeck had already boldly (and falsely) asserted in his *Dada Manifesto 1949* that Jean-Paul Sartre had declared himself the 'Nouveau Dada' as part of a wider claim that Dada pre-empted the Existentialist sentiment:

> Unconsciously or semi-consciously, Dadaism anticipated many formulations that are now current […]. It is no accident that Sartre calls himself "the Nouveau Dada." But we believe that there is an essential difference between Dadaism and Existentialism. Existentialism is essentially negative,[1] whereas Dada lived its extreme despair, expressed it in art, and in this "participation créatrice" found a therapy for itself. (Huelsenbeck in Motherwell ed. 1989: 400)

The description of Sartre as the 'Nouveau Dada' is reiterated in *Dada and Existentialism* almost a decade later:

> When Sartre, in one of his essays on existentialist philosophy, loudly proclaimed: "I am the new dada," people pricked up their ears. Why did he not hesitate to profess to be the descendant of a small group of painters and writers who were smiled at by all intellectuals? (*DE*: 142-43)

This need to make associations with famous figures is frequently found in Dada writing, as exemplified by claims that Charlie Chaplin belonged to the movement (see for example Sanouillet 2009: 109-10), and in the false, and prominent, quoting of René Descartes on the cover of the third issue of the eponymous journal *Dada* (1918). The falsification of these alignments with historical figures and their lasting effects questions whether 'arbitrary' association is all that is necessary in a world where truth is subjective. Indeed the fact that these names continue to be linked to Dada demonstrates a level of success of the original attempt.

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[1] It is instructive and ironic that Dada and Existentialist thinkers each accused the other movement of negativity, when both fought to be seen in their positive, productive light against their external critics. Werner Haftmann writes in his postscript to *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* that 'the basic impulse of Dada is not despair and protest but a rebellious feeling of joy inspired by new discoveries' (*AA*: 216).

In addition to Dada's general love of association with famous names, a relationship with Existentialism confers a certain credibility: the Existentialists' incorporation of opinions on Dada in their works prompts a reader to suspect that it is not impossible that the Existentialists related to Dada ideas, and indeed that Sartre should claim to be 'the new dada'. Camus refers to Dada in *L'Homme révolté* (1951), citing the oft-quoted Dada sentiment that '[l]es vrais dadas sont contre Dada. Tout le monde est directeur de Dada' (*HR*: 122). Simone de Beauvoir incorporates Dada into her consideration of the nihilist and negation:

> La constante négation du mot par le mot, de l'acte par l'acte, de l'art par l'art, s'est trouvée réalisée par l'incohérence dadaïste; en appliquant une consigne de désordre et d'anarchie, on obtenait une abolition de toutes les conduites, donc de toutes les fins et de soi-même. (*MA*: 69-70)

Through this it is evident that just as several of the Dadas went on to indicate affiliation with Existentialist thought, so our central Existentialists included Dada as part of their accounts of rebellion.

Although Huelsenbeck was the only Dada to enunciate separately and coherently the relationship between Dada and Existentialism, traces of the desire to link the two movements can be found scattered across core Dada texts. Hans Richter highlights shared tenets in his seminal text *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (1965). In a chapter ominously named 'nihil', he designates Marcel Duchamp's readymades as evidence that '[a]rt has been 'thought through to a conclusion'; in other words eliminated' (*AA*: 91), and in doing so Richter draws these works close to the nothingness that is left. However, he claims that this notion of nothingness is 'free from cynicism and

from regret' (ibid.). Richter most explicitly incorporates his thoughts on Existentialism in a section on anti-art:

> Existentialism has made a clean break with all emotionally-charged attitudes to the self and to the world. What remains is a mirror in which nothing is reflected but the individual self. This work of clearance has been undertaken with the conceptual and exploratory tools of a scientific age, an age which regards scientific method as the only secure anchor in a sea of nothingness. When all moral and ethical values fail, this anchor represents hope. (*AA*: 93)

While we may not wish to conclude from this statement that Existentialism constitutes a direct descendant of Dada, Richter certainly implies that it represents a desirable outcome. Furthermore, it expresses a sentiment similar to that found in Huelsenbeck's particularly Existentialist statement: '[t]he dada attitude is basically the paradox of forgetting the human in order to reveal it all the more penetratingly' (*DE*: 139).

Hugo Ball also alludes to Existentialism in several places in his diary, *Flight out of Time* (1974), despite never explicitly mentioning the philosophy. Selected quotations demonstrate that he had a comparable preoccupation with Existentialist concerns to Richter and Huelsenbeck. Ball writes that:

> What we call dada is a farce of nothingness in which all higher questions are involved […] the dadaist loves the extraordinary and the absurd […] He no longer believes in the comprehension of things from *one* point of view, and yet he is still so convinced of the unity of all beings […] he cultivates the curiosity of one who feels joy at even the most questionable forms of rebellion. (*FT*: 65-66; original emphasis)

Ball foregrounds an interest in subjectivity of perspective, while maintaining an underlying interest in humanity as a whole. Both concerns are shared by Sartre: the former in the emphatically individual creation of values, and the latter in that 's'il est impossible de trouver en chaque homme une essence universelle qui serait la nature

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humaine, il existe pourtant une universalité humaine de *condition*' (*EH*: 59; original

emphasis), and that 'en créant l'homme que nous voulons être, [on] crée en même

temps une image de l'homme tel que nous estimons qu'il doit être' (*EH*: 31-32). We

can link this to Camus's statement: 'Je me révolte, donc nous sommes' (*HR*: 38). This

relationship between the individual and humanity, and specifically through

rebellion, draws Ball's remarks close not only to Huelsenbeck, but also to Sartre and

Camus.

Dada through Existentialism: Structuring the Thesis

I seek through this thesis to take up Huelsenbeck's invitation and re-evaluate

the development of Dada through and as a form of Existentialist philosophy. In so

doing I will consider Huelsenbeck's suggestions for aligning the two movements,

bearing in mind smaller references from other Dadas, and branching out his analysis

to examine a range of Dada works as well as Existentialist texts. In presenting Dada

as a form of proto-Existential(ist) philosophy the thesis will necessarily follow a

broadly chronological arrangement. Additionally, this sequential organisation allows

for a temporal overlap of Dada with French Existentialism, to create a solid common

ground for a convergence of the philosophies of both movements and their

respective legacies.

Thematically, the five chapters of the thesis will comparatively analyse aspects

of both movements through a set of key terms[2] - choice, alienation, responsibility,

freedom and truth – but also moving from in-depth analysis of individual artists and

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[2] While these terms will be briefly outlined here, the greater part of their definition will be reserved for analysis in the chapters themselves.

works, through crucial events, to the death and dispersion of the movement into Neo-Dada, postmodernism, and beyond. Martin Gaughan writes that '[t]here is a tendency in Dada criticism to equate the radical gesture with cultural critique without attempting to account for the levels at which the gesture might possibly be operating' (in Foster ed. 1996: 57). This thesis will address these levels of gesture in order to synthesise the usefulness of both the radical gestures and their commonly held cultural critique, as well as suggest alternative interpretations of Dada's 'critique' of society. In this respect, Existentialism will be used as a methodological tool and as such, will be used only textually and theoretically.

While I intend to initiate a dialogue between these two movements, my aim is the reassessment of Dada through an Existentialist lens. Therefore while the events and lives of Dada and its adherents will be considered, this will not extend to the Existentialist equivalent. Additionally this focus will necessitate a varying inclusion of Existentialist content in general, including lesser integration when concentrated analysis of Dada works is required, bringing in Existentialist concepts as and when pertinent. This is done with the intention of sharpening a focus on Dada, rather than comparing the two movements in a more reductive manner. For the same reason the thesis will focus on a body of core Existentialist texts, a condensed but realistic scope for comparison of tenets of the movement with a greater variety of Dada work. This Existentialist core will be based in the works of Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus and, to a lesser extent, Maurice Merleau-Ponty. In addition to a central Existentialist

methodology, the thesis will draw upon a range of European critical theorists as and
when useful.

Chapter One will begin my exploration of the relationship between Dada and
Existentialism by investigating choice and individuality through the use of masks in
Dada, to posit the idea of hybrid, fluid identity within the constructed individual
self, and to position this self in relation to others and as a reaction to society. As the
opening chapter of the thesis, Chapter One will take a stronger focus on Dada work,
with a view to gradually bringing out Existentialist threads, which will be drawn
upon more strongly as the thesis progresses. The chapter will centre on the work of
Sophie Taeuber, an artist involved with Dada who has nevertheless been widely
neglected, both by her Dada peers and in secondary literature for many years after
the movement's primary lifespan. The chapter will consider whether the deceptive
simplicity of the works of Taeuber and other Dadas hides a greater comment on
avant-garde notions of the self, and additionally elucidate the Existentialist value of
work that extensively and deliberately transcends the boundaries of artistic media.
Chapter One explores the theme of individuality through choice, concepts that arise
less through explicit definition by Existentialist authors than from the study of
subjectivity, especially through their privileging of personal morality. Sartre uses the
highlighting of individuality in his *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* ([1945] 1996) –
notably a text that was written to clarify (his) Existentialist theory to a wider public –
to warn against the numbing homogenisation of systems. Chapter One will perform
its analysis of Dada works against this background of individuality as subjectivity.

The chapter will scrutinise manifestations of physical and mental selfhood across Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe* [Dada Heads] (1918), *König Hirsch* [King Stag] puppets (1918), dance and costumes, as well as her 'self-portraits' taken with the *Dada-Köpfe*, exposing identity in all its wrappings, surfaces and fragments, and alongside its form as assemblage. The chapter will analyse these different art forms individually but also the way in which they interact: the likeness between the *Dada-Köpfe* and the puppets, the way in which the *König Hirsch* puppets' movements relate to Taeuber's own movement, and the relationship between costume and body, circling back on the wrapping nature of the colours on the *Dada-Köpfe*. This analysis will take place alongside selected other Dada self-based works: Raoul Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf (Der Geist unserer Zeit)* [Mechanical Head (Spirit of our Time)] (1919), Hannah Höch's *Dada Puppen* [Dada Dolls] (1916) and Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* (1926). The chapter will begin to assess Dada art alongside such Existentialist concepts as Sartre's 'look', Camus's thoughts on silence and music, and Beauvoirian ambiguity. I will posit that the self is a complex and multifaceted construction based in various ways of masking, unmasking and remasking, a manipulation of 'truth' to allow for a being founded on individual, subjective choice.

Chapter Two will consider Dada film in relation to notions of alienation and reality, alongside Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's theories of perception, as well as briefly taking into account Deleuze's writings on cinema as an interrogation of movement over time. The chapter will investigate the way in which our perception of space and time changes with Dada's extensive manipulation of the film reel, as well

as the effect on the filmic experience in its own right. I will posit the medium of film as a means of perpetually (re)constructing meaning through simultaneous, multifaceted memories or remanence. How can we construct our framework of reality, if truth is subjective and situational, and when we are no longer sure of the fundamental reliability of our memories? Is our perception of reality based upon a fluctuating position of the self inside and outside of itself? Chapter Two's use of alienation will fit more overtly with the Existentialist sense of the term than Chapter One's use of concepts, that is, alienation is the state in which an individual inevitably feels, at various points, detached (alienated) from the world in which they exist by virtue of being a thinking self. This continues our notions of individuality from Chapter One, in terms of individuality as marking difference. Chapter Two will use this alienation in a positive sense, a way of viewing and constructing the self from an external position, a productive distance from the self within itself. The chapter will evaluate this relationship through the theories of perception in Sartre's *L'Être et le néant* (1943) and Merleau-Ponty's *Phénoménologie de la perception* (1945), taking a primarily theoretical route that is suited for combination in a raw analysis with film as a single art form.

The chapter will analyse Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* (1923) and *Emak Bakia* (1926), Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy's *Le Ballet mécanique* (1924) and René Clair and Francis Picabia's *Entr'acte* (1924). It will address the fundamental question of the primacy of seeing, particularly in relation to the perception of sound, and especially when this auditory quality is presented in the form of an out-of-field

soundtrack, as is the case in three of these four films. The chapter is organised around a set of pairs of concepts relating to perception, including presence and absence, sound and silence, and light and shadow. These dichotomies will be interrogated to posit a mid-point, or petering-out, a point of potential in which opposites cohabit to produce a new or hybrid form, an ambiguity which presents a filtering, merging and coexistence of realities and allows for creative, individual interpretations of perception.

Chapter Three will discuss Dada and Existentialist views on responsibility and justice through examples of trials represented in their respective literatures. The chapter will take a slightly different structure than the four others, focusing on just two texts with little external influence, so as to do justice to the greater depth of textual analysis afforded by the material itself. The notion of responsibility as defined in Existentialist thought will be examined with a view to its more general connections with the concept of the individual's compulsion to choose, to assert and therefore own their own morality, as introduced in Chapters One and Two. The chapter will use literary Existentialist manifestations of justice to assess the notion of responsibility for one's actions, based in an individual ethics. This will be done through a comparative analysis of Dada's mock trial of Maurice Barrès (1921) and Camus's trial of his protagonist Meursault in *L'Étranger* (1942). These texts maintain an instructive relationship with reality, through their existence as fiction, event, and event-as-text. This is particularly important in the Barrès trial, which took the form of an event but was also published as a report in *Littérature* (1921), and was furthermore

later published by Marguerite Bonnet as an autonomous text under the title *L'Affaire Barrès* (1987). In this respect, its role evolves over time, moving from event to transcript, and later gaining the quality of an avant-garde play through its structure and layout. This chapter will begin to confront more directly the notion of authenticity, particularly through considering the possibility of degrees or scales of authenticity.

The analysis of these two trials will highlight Dada and Existentialism's engagement with justice both as a physical reality and a philosophical notion, especially the limits of such a concept. Furthermore, by looking at their relationships with, and particularly the parody of, the justice system, the chapter will seek to address the fundamental (in)authenticity of society itself. The chapter will form a hinge point between the first part of the thesis, which focuses on individuals and art forms within the Dada and Existentialist movements, and the second part, which takes a wider notion of art works and events while focusing more strongly on philosophical and theoretical content. Furthermore, Chapter Three will mark a move into an increased literary focus in terms of Existentialist content, incorporating and paralleling Dada and Existentialism's creative endeavours as applications of their philosophies.

Chapter Four will scrutinise the concepts of censorship and freedom through manifestations of Dada provocation, as well as examples from their Neo-Dada and postmodern counterparts, alongside Camus's *La Peste* (1947). This chapter will assess the notion of the acceptance, normalisation and non-repeatability of the censored and

the deviant, through the complex relationship between shock and the new. The chapter will build upon notions of blankness established through overloading of the senses (as explored in Chapter Two) to posit a 'zero point shock value' in relation to works such as the Dada readymades, examples of Dada altercations with authority, as well as the extensive literary techniques employed to avoid censorship at the peak of European nationalism. The chapter will investigate the multitude of media through which Dada rebellion takes place: Duchamp's relationship with the rules of aesthetics; Kurt Schwitters's active rejection of the notion of the unwanted; the use of authority as a distraction technique; creating rebellion through its own normalisation. This will build upon the inevitable incorporation of the deviant into societal narrative. Chapter Four will continue to appraise literary uses of Existentialist theory while simultaneously drawing upon non-fictional philosophy. The chapter will productively analyse the literary expressions of censorship in Camus's *La Peste* alongside various of Sartre's texts, as well as Beauvoir's *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* (1947). As such, this chapter will begin to more strongly pull together Existentialist thought in relation to Dada, in contrast with Chapter One's exploratory purpose.

This chapter will evaluate the extent to which creativity flourishes under censorship, or as Sartre states, '[ê]tre libre, c'est être perpétuellement *en instance de liberté*' (*EN*: 547; original emphasis). To this end, freedom and censorship will initially be posited as opposites, in order to later reveal their interdependence. In this way, the chapter's eventual aim is to assess freedom *through* censorship. George Jagger

claims that *La Peste* 'deals essentially with man's fate as Pascal saw it, and as Voltaire faced it' (1948: 125). We can draw links from this both to Existentialism, through Pascal's proto-Existentialist writings, and to Dada, through the naming of Dada's birthplace as 'Cabaret Voltaire'. This name was by no means chosen at random: Ball refers to 'ideals of culture and of art as a program for a variety show – that is our kind of *Candide* against the times' (*FT*: 67). It is instructive that Ball ties the Cabaret to this famous comment on the human condition: this chapter will posit the centrality of deviance, censorship, normalisation and freedom in the development of the self.

Chapter Five will examine the concept of truth through the ever-expanding repertoire of the stories and histories of Dada, alongside Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), as well as examples from a postmodern counterpart, Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (1975). We have seen that Dada enjoyed aligning and misaligning itself with historical figures, perhaps in an attempt to shake off labels and engage in a never-ending game with historicity. Stoppard's play continues this game from the outside, contributing to Dada lineage while highlighting its own 'falsehood' through its design as a credible contribution with deliberately inserted 'flaws'. The chapter will work back from this postmodern example through a selection of central Dada diaries as 'first-hand' accounts – Richter's *Dada: Art and Anti-Art* (1965), Ball's *Flight out of Time: a Dada Diary* (1974) and Huelsenbeck's *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* (1974)[3] – ending on an analysis of the Dada manifesto as an archive of core Dada(ist) thought. Chapter

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[3] I will be using the English translations of these texts. The original German titles for these are *Dada: Kunst und Anti-Kunst* (Richter), *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (Ball) and *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze: auf den Spuren des Dadaismus* (Huelsenbeck).

Five will work within a similar vein to Chapter Four, foregrounding a literary text while drawing strongly upon its theoretical implications, here through those of Sartre and Beauvoir. The discussion of truth will move away from a standard definition of containing a predominant element of objectivity, in order to redirect towards truth as primarily subjective. Through this Chapter Five will bring the thesis thematically back round to Chapter One's focus on individuality and subjectivity, in order to lead into our concluding remarks on the fruitful conversation between Dada and Existentialism as an expression of the authenticity of ambiguity.

This chapter by no means attempts to prove the truthfulness of Dada histories (where we take 'histories' to mean accounts that seek to document the movement, either chronologically or philosophically), nor to produce truth itself; rather, it seeks to assess the impact of the multiplicity and/or subjectivity of truth, especially in relation to the notion of reality as we experience it, and the resulting combination of truths as a hybrid identity of the movement and its artists. The chapter will analyse the effect of this confusion and manipulation on the memory of Dada as a phenomenon, and its continued use and relevance across art and academia. The chapter will evaluate both Dada's and Existentialism's resistance to simplistic or concrete definition. As Eduardo Mendieta states, '[t]he self consists of diverse layers of stories. We are the stories we tell, not just about the world but also about ourselves' (in Judaken and Bernasconi eds 2012: 184). It is through this that we might posit a productively ambiguous relationship between identity as chosen from within and as assigned from without. Chapter Five will draw together all four Existentialist

thinkers to explore our final theme of truth, as well as bringing out aspects of all four preceding chapters, to provide a last assessment of Dada and Existentialism from a contemporary standpoint.

Common Ground

Even from these initial explorations it has been clear that Dada and Existentialism share concerns that form an intrinsic part of their core tenets, and it is this crossover between the two movements that necessitates their study alongside one another. From this cohabitation we can draw fundamental common ground on a basis of which a critical analysis may take place, while recognising the limits of this convergence, as well as the heterogeneity of both movements. Despite common perceptions, not only did Dada explicitly articulate an attachment to philosophy, but additionally the drawing together of our two movements is supported by a common theoretical and philosophical background to Dada and Existentialist thinking.

Ball maintained an interest in the anarchist works of Mikhail Bakunin (see Hubert Van den Berg in Pichon and Riha eds 1996: 76). Sartre and Tristan Tzara were both influenced by the theories of Henri Bergson. Huelsenbeck references Paul Tillich in *Dada and Existentialism* (*DE*: 145), showing admiration for the seminal Existentialist text *The Courage to Be* (1952). Huelsenbeck, who claims that '[m]y intellectual legacy does not derive just from Picasso, the cubists, or modern architecture, it also comes from Goethe, *Nietzsche*, *Husserl*, *Heidegger*, and the American pragmatists' (1974: 65; my emphasis), has a number of evident theoretical influences in common with Sartre. Richter shares this link with Martin Heidegger, citing him on the subjectivity of (and,

in the case of Dada, the disintegration of) reality: 'How can I know that this world is not simply a dream, a shimmering hallucination, a horizon no longer suffused with its own light but with mine?' (in *AA*: 91). This is something that will be highlighted throughout the thesis, through our emphasis on ambiguity and subjectivity, as well as the individual's role in the creative interpretation of reality.

A final theoretical crossover is that of Ball and Heidegger, for their focus on the individual's being in time. In his introduction to Ball's *Flight out of Time* John Elderfield explains that

> For Heidegger, man was "thrown" into time, into a one-directional momentum that ended only in death, and sought, inevitably, some definition of himself "beyond" this predetermined material existence. For Ball distancing himself from the times was the path to this "beyond." "We did not flee from life," he wrote in 1921, "we sought it out." But his search for authenticity meant first a rejection of things as they were. Man's "ascribed statuses" stifled the initiative and individuality of those who assumed them, like masks hiding the true self, and it was these that needed exposing. (in *FT*: xlii)

What is important to draw from Elderfield's statement is Ball's simultaneous need for otherness and authenticity, something that I will be seeking to foreground throughout the thesis. The element of being 'thrown into' and desiring a 'flight out of' time are varyingly echoed across Dada and Existentialist literature, with an increased attention on self-alterity. For example, on attempting to settle into life in Zurich Tzara stated that 'je devins peu à peu un étranger pour moi-même' (in Buot 2002: 35); Camus explained that the absurd individual describes themselves as 'toujours […] étranger à moi-même' (*MS*: 36); and Sartre claimed that 'l'homme est constamment hors de lui-même' (*EH*: 76). As an expansion of this latter, Sartre stated in his earlier work that 'la fuite hors de soi est fuite vers soi, et le monde apparaît

comme pure distance de soi à soi' (*EN*: 288). These statements imply a fundamental

Existential question: is it necessary to be an outsider, even to oneself, in order to be

able to redefine the human condition?

Limitations and Boundaries

While capitalising on the plethora of similarities between Dada and

Existentialism, the thesis acknowledges the danger of combining two discrete

philosophies. I do not wish to suggest in this thesis that Dada and Existentialism are

one and the same philosophically, nor do I wish to engage in an assumption, through

the movements' temporal proximity to World War I and II respectively, that war can

be said to lead to or cause Dada and/or Existentialism. This would trivialise both

movements, as well as falling into the fundamental error of genericising war. This is

not, of course, to infer that the movements and their wars are mutually exclusive, but

that beyond this initial connection, both movements have wider scope than

belligerent nationalism.

The Dadas consciously marked out the boundary between reactions to war and

productive revolt against something more profound. While Huelsenbeck accepts the

relevance of war, he seeks to move beyond it as a cause of Dada's rebellion: 'Dada

was a moral protest not only against the war but also against the malaise of the time;

it was an awareness that something was very wrong' (*DE*: xiv). Ball states that '[t]he

dadaist fights against the agony and the death throes of this age' (*FT*: 66), his

temporal ambiguity indicating a longer term breakdown in society. Marcel Janco

reflects upon the broader sense of malaise within the movement, noting that '[w]e

were beside ourselves with rage and grief at the suffering and humiliation of mankind' (in *AA*: 25). As Huelsenbeck further states, 'there exists a kind of Dadaist man, a Dadaist fundamental way of life, which is not only characteristic of our time, but is congruent with many assertions of modern thought' (*DE*: 143). Instructively linking Dada, Existentialism and the notion of rebellion through a crisis of the age, Jonathan Judaken claims that 'Existentialism is a Modernism' (in Judaken and Bernasconi eds 2012: 9).

The thesis recognises its self-imposed predominant focus on French atheistic Existentialism. The logical extremity of atheistic Existentialism is my primary reason for foregrounding it over its religious counterpart. As John Killinger states, '[o]nce man has begun a campaign for human freedom and integrity, it is rationally plausible to go all the way and assert his freedom even from a divine being' (1961: 310). Furthermore, Sartre advocates atheism, not in a celebration of the death of God, and despite the fact that 'il est très gênant que Dieu n'existe pas', because any reliance on readymade moral values is removed (and this is a good thing): 'avec lui disparaît toute possibilité de trouver des valeurs dans un ciel intelligible; il ne peut plus y avoir de valeur de bien *a priori* puisqu'il n'y a pas de conscience infinie et parfaite pour le penser' (*EH*: 38). Judaken highlights that Sartre and Beauvoir both 'insisted that only an atheistic existentialism had the courage to assume responsibility for the creation of values at the heart of the human condition' (in Judaken and Bernasconi eds 2012: 25). Furthermore, Ron Aronson elucidates that 'existentialism is neither immoral nor amoral; rather its ethics and morality are not

the conventional kinds imposed from on high that give people recipes for living' (in ibid.: 262).

My choice to analyse Dada alongside French Existentialism also resides in its strong links with literature, something which is predominantly absent in, for example, its German counterpart. This literary output allows additional access to, and alternative angles on, Existentialist thought, as well as inspiring a close correlation for a textual reading of the two movements. Further to this, Jeff Malpas notes that 'philosophy in France has always tended to spill over what might be thought to be its disciplinary boundaries, never remaining within the confines of the academy alone' (in Crowell ed. 2012: 294). This blurring is perfectly suited both to Dada's tumultuous relationship with the academy and its desire to break down boundaries between the arts themselves. A final reason for the pairing of Dada with French Existentialism is the strong affinity with Sartre shown by Huelsenbeck in 'Dada and Existentialism', the text from whose combination this thesis takes its inspiration.

Beyond the springboard of Huelsenbeck's text, there are a number of reasons for my privileging a comparison of Existentialism with Dada rather than with Surrealism, despite the closer temporal proximity of Surrealism to Existentialism, as well as Surrealism's more concentrated French (and specifically Paris-based) contingent. While work exists linking Sartre with Surrealism (for example, Beaujour 1963; Plank 1981), I would argue that the combination is less compatible than that of Existentialism (beyond just Sartre) and Dada for several reasons. Frances Morris

writes that Sartre 'had rejected Surrealism's preoccupation with the unconscious and with dreams because it ignored the totality of man, allowing only for the liberation of "pure imagination"' (1993: 22). Furthermore, Surrealism 'tries to evade the limits of human life and its responsibilities' (Beaujour 1963: 86), something that is fundamentally incompatible with Existentialist tenets of individual choice and responsibility for these choices as well as the actions based upon them. We have already seen through Huelsenbeck that Dada was grounded in a desire to take life as a starting point: the constant provocation to experience life at face value can be posited as an acceptance of self-responsibility of the movement and its values.

Sartre's opposition to Surrealism is shared by Camus in both his actions and his texts. Olivier Todd underlines Camus's creation of the GLI (Groupes de liaison internationale) as running counter to André Breton's Surrealist tenets (2000: 250). In *L'Homme révolté*'s chapter on Surrealism (*HR*: 118-30), Camus is initially appreciative of Surrealism, in that he considers Surrealists specialists in revolt, but his comments become less favourable because '[ils] ont cru exalter le meurtre[4] et le suicide', and he particularly rejects the way that the Surrealists 'ont parlé du suicide comme d'une solution' (*HR*: 123). Camus concludes that their attitude toward revolution is not fitting with Existentialism, in that '[l]a révolution pour les surréalistes n'était pas une fin qu'on réalise au jour le jour, dans l'action, mais un mythe absolu et consolateur' (ibid.: 126). Camus's statement draws parallel with Dada's views on religion: faith in

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[4] One example of this is Breton's 'simplest surrealist act', in which he suggests shooting at random into a crowd with revolvers (1979: 74). While we may consider this a ludic and/or ironic Bretonism, its flagrantly flippant attitude toward the destruction of human life is objectionable on the part of Existentialism.

homogenising narratives was frequently cited as having led to armed conflict and the debasement of humanity. Ironically, Surrealism's self-designed structure as a systematised evolution of Dada places it closer to religious narratives and Camus's 'mythe absolu et consolateur'. It is important to note that neither Camus nor Dada are necessarily *anti*-religious, and might better be described as *a*-religious. Camus himself said 'I do not believe in God and I am not an atheist' (2008: 112).

Todd highlights Camus's objection to Breton's foregrounding of suicide as a solution, in that '[t]o celebrate self-destruction to the point of rushing to do it in the company of others does honor to no one' (Todd 2000: 304). Although Todd also points out the 'excessively negative' nature of Camus's attack on Surrealism (ibid.), it is useful in this case because the aspects of Surrealism with which Camus so strongly disagreed are comparable with those which mark out Surrealism from Dada. Sartre and Camus rejected Surrealism on the grounds of its tendency towards evasion of responsibility and the construction of performed myth: in short, Surrealism can be said to have lived in a perpetual state of inauthenticity. Through this thesis I will prove that Dada, on the other hand, sought out authenticity above all else.

Whether or not Camus can be called an Existentialist has long been the subject of intellectual debate.[5] Camus himself refused the label, yet went on to recognise several links between his thought and that of Existentialism, as indicated in Olivier Salazar-Ferrer's entry on Existentialism in Jeanyves Guérin's *Dictionnaire Albert*

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[5] The status of Merleau-Ponty as Existentialist is less debated, primarily because of his status as Existential Phenomenologist. Moreover, his close literal and theoretical relationship with the French Existentialists, the lesser extent to which I will be using his work, as well as its use not alone but in tandem with Sartre and Beauvoir, justify his inclusion in this thesis.

Camus: 'Camus déclare en 1959 dans son dernier interview que "Si les premises de l'existentialisme se trouvent, comme je crois, chez Pascal, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard et Chestov, alors je suis d'accord avec elles"' (ed. 2009: 310). We must of course bear in mind that rejection of a term by a thinker does not necessarily negate its significance (as we will see particularly in Chapter Five's notions of internal and external truth in relation to labels), and we must also remember that

> Sartre had refused to allow Gabriel Marcel to apply this adjective ['Existentialist'] to him. 'My philosophy is a philosophy of existence; I don't even know what Existentialism is.' I shared his irritation. […] But our protests were in vain. In the end, we took the epithet that everyone used for us and used it for our own purposes. (Beauvoir 1968: 45-46)

If we consider that Camus, Sartre and Beauvoir all rejected the term, and yet all clearly exhibit theories that correspond with the contemporary concept(s) of Existentialism (as well as all eventually coming to accept the label), we can accept it as a valid assignment, as well as one that is perhaps more suited to application from without. As David E. Cooper writes, '[i]t would be too hasty, however, to treat this refusal as good reason to doubt the reality of a distinctive existentialist tendency' and that a 'number of twentieth-century thinkers are reasonably regarded as belonging to just such a family in virtue of their subscribing to a number of philosophical ideas' (in Crowell ed. 2012: 28; 29). For these reasons I will not shy away from labelling Camus an Existentialist, or aligning his thought with the more 'established' Existentialists. Neither will I resort to the more vague term of 'existential', primarily for the reason for which Malpas states these terms can (and should, in my opinion) be differentiated:

> "Existential" refers to that which pertains to existence […], whereas "existentialist" (and "existentialism") refers to a particular philosophical attitude or mode of philosophical inquiry – an attitude or mood that, in general terms, thematizes the problematic character of human existence in a world in which there is no pre-given source of meaning or significance. (in Crowell ed. 2012: 293)

I posit that it is precisely this distinction that will anchor the linking of Dada and Existentialism, in that both perform the problematic of how to meaningfully proceed in a meaningless world.

For consistency and ease of reading, throughout this thesis I will maintain a capitalisation of the words 'Existentialist' and 'Existentialism' in all of its uses, and particularly in conjunction with the capitalisation of 'Dada' and its derivatives. Equally, given wide dispute over the use of 'Dada/ism' (for the movement itself) and 'Dada/ist' (for its adherents and adjectival use), I will use 'Dada' (for the adjective, movement and its adherents), since there is no risk of confusion with general use: all references to Dada refer to Dada proper. Thus it is not necessary to make an 'ism' of the word. Despite this, I will forward, toward the end of this thesis, the possibile use of 'Dadaism' as a philosophy of Dada, as a result of the systematic exploration of the tenets of the movement as a theoretical phenomenon. Additionally, discussions of notions of identity and self(hood) refer to abstract notions of Dada and Existentialist theories of the self as advocated by their philosophies (the 'Dada/Existentialist self'). This self does not refer to Dada/Existentialist adherents nor to Dada/Existentialism as movements.

Situating the Thesis

Although Huelsenbeck introduced the concept of the convergence of Dada and Existentialist ideas, his short essay remains primarily limited to a perspective of Berlin Dada as viewed from New York, and as such does not perform a comprehensive analysis of the connection between the two movements, lacking both content and detail and dropping the subject after only six pages. Existing academic research has not sought to pick up this dropped thread, and it is this gap that my thesis aims to address: to reattach, and fully investigate, the links between these two movements. As such the thesis represents the first extended analysis of Dada and Existentialism alongside one another, and aims to contribute to the opening up of the Dada canon towards work on the theoretical and philosophical content of Dada activity, and the study of Dada as formative of identity. Such works thus far include studies of Dada in relation to gender (Hemus, Sawelson-Gorse), cyber theory (Biro), anarchism (Papanikolas) and post/modernism (Pegrum, Sheppard).

Where there is a tendency in work within the fields of both Dada and Existentialism to either perform a historical, biographical or, in the case of Existentialism, a philosophical account, my research seeks to adopt a more holistic assessment of their cultural impact. The Dadas themselves were open to theory, and yet traditionally critics of the movement have largely avoided its theoretical implications. The Existentialists' extensive interest in art will form the basis of a productive comparison with the theoretical implications discovered in Dada. I will produce new critical Dada research, using an Existentialist methodology to evaluate

and understand the role of rebellion, absurdity and otherness within the Dada movement. The thesis aims to assess the cultural, artistic and philosophical impact of Dada and Existentialism, bringing forward aspects that highlight the inherent optimism in their responses to the atrocities of human reality.

Beyond its contribution as an original study in this area, the thesis also adds to and emerges from recent research developments. Work on Dada has recently begun to capitalise on the theoretical relevance of the movement, in an effort to enrich historical accounts with philosophical and cultural theory. This trend is also present in recent developments in literature on Existentialism(s) and Existentialist thinkers. Research on both Dada and Existentialism has taken parallel steps in the opening up of the canon, in two significant ways. Firstly, through the use of thematic approaches to the movements as a whole. Secondly, through a focus on individual members, but while offering in-depth analyses of their works or core themes of their opus. Through an analysis of these directions it will be demonstrated how the present thesis fits with, but also moves away from, work in the field.

Elza Adamowicz and Eric Robertson's two edited volumes *Dada and Beyond* (2011-2012) represent an important reassessment of the history of Dada and its heritage, which will be particularly relevant to Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. The first volume, *Dada Discourses*, seeks to revisit the movement's diverse primary output, incorporating in-depth textual analysis of Dada works, but also seeking to link them to their historical successors, 'consider[ing] the role of Dada in shaping a wide range of artistic, literary and cultural phenomena, from Surrealism to

Situationism, post-war Czech cinema, the films of Chris Marker, performance and body art' (2011: 11). The second volume, *Dada and its Legacies*, takes up where the first leaves off, tracing Dada's influence further into twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, while maintaining links with original Dada works. Adamowicz and Robertson's two volumes provide a critical expansion and reappraisal of the ongoing relevance of Dada work both in its own right and through its varyingly obvious influences. In the case of the present thesis, this type of work is valuable both for the combination of Dada with the theoretical implications of Existentialism, and for the assessment of post-Dada murmurs, particularly toward the end of the thesis. Additionally, these volumes show the necessity and usefulness of writing on multiple art forms as part of a wider theoretical whole.

Recent philosophical research in general has picked up a renewed interest in Existentialism, and shows a similar desire to that of the field of Dada to reassert the movement's cultural implications. Judaken and Robert Bernasconi's edited collection *Situating Existentialism* (2012) foregrounds a strong focus on the trans- and inter-national nature of Existentialism, as well as its continued relevance in the twenty-first century. Likewise, while the arrival of the *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (Crowell ed. 2012) is late compared with its volumes on individual Existentialists, with almost a decade's delay on the *Companions* to Merleau-Ponty (Carman and Hansen eds 2004) and Beauvoir (Card ed. 2003), and twenty years after that on Sartre (Howells ed. 1992), it devotes a section to 'The Reach of Existential Philosophy', including a chapter on Existentialism and contemporary psychiatry. Furthermore,

Steven Crowell's introductory chapter highlights the advantage of its publication date, stating that '[r]eflecting on the classics of existentialism from the vantage point of contemporary thought reveals new dimensions in them, which in turn may suggest further perspectives on contemporary problems' (2012: 5). It is from a similarly removed vantage point that I aim to comment on and reveal new dimensions of crossover between Dada and Existentialism to build upon those initially proposed by Huelsenbeck (*DE*).

Christina Daigle's (ed. 2006) *Existentialist Thinkers and Ethics* also works to insert Existentialist philosophy into the contemporary concerns of ethics, despite the often expressed assumption that an Existentialist ethics is in itself impossible (an assumption that Beauvoir sought to refute in *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* (1947)). Crowell claims that '[e]ach of the major existentialists […] (with the notable exception of Simone de Beauvoir) has been accused either of lacking an ethics or else paying insufficient attention to the distinction between ethics and politics' (ed. 2012: 6). Additional works that seek to highlight Existentialism's ongoing relevance include the two edited collections *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema*, which devotes its first volume to *A Sartrean Perspective* (Boulé and McCaffrey eds 2011) and its second to *A Beauvoirian Perspective* (Boulé and Tidd eds 2012). These works usefully draw out thematic correspondence between Existentialism and a selection of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century films, from a standpoint of these two central Existentialist thinkers. While neither text considers Dada film, both are

valuable for their analysis of the applicability of Existentialism to film, which will be particularly useful for Chapter Two of the thesis.

The focus on individual thinkers and artists has also seen developments in the last decade. While earlier biographical accounts are beneficial to the continuation of research on the movement, recent Dada scholarship has sought to (re-)engage in detailed textual analysis within the lives of the individual Dada adherents. Hemus provides a particularly notable account of five Dadas in her 2009 monograph *Dada's Women*, critically analysing works which are often neglected due to the marginalised nature of their authors. The book's section on Taeuber will be valuable to Chapter One's focus on this significant figure, while moving away from Hemus's emphasis on Taeuber's role as a woman artist toward an analysis of the Existentialist potential of her work across the arts. Robertson (2006) offers an assessment of key thematic developments in the work of a single artist, Jean/Hans Arp, and Stephen Forcer (2006) meticulously dissects the formerly underestimated linguistic value of Tzara's poetry across the artist's career. Both Robertson and Forcer take a chronological approach to the artists' work, imperative for a proper appraisal of the progression of artistic ideas, while moving away from a purely biographical perspective: while biographical aspects are important and inevitable, textual analysis is foregrounded.

We can trace a similar trend in research on Existentialism. Attention has been given to individual Existentialists, but often in combination with textual and thematic analysis, and/or in combination with other thinkers, writers or artists. Bradley Stephens exemplifies this trend with his text *Victor Hugo, Jean-Paul Sartre,*

and the Liability of Liberty (2011), drawing into question definitions of the term (liberty) that is not only central within literature and Existentialism, but that also is a word that is widely employed (in multiple of its definitions) and often abused in contemporary society and politics. Stephens brings together two authors from two consecutive centuries to successfully highlight the continuing importance and limitations of the theme of liberty. Similarly the present thesis seeks to demonstrate, through its division via key terms, not only the thematic convergence of Dada and Existentialism but also the continuing importance of the themes and movements alike. Stephens's focus on the novels of Hugo and Sartre thus represents a significant inspiration for my choice of the centralisation of literary texts. Sonia Kruks assesses Beauvoir and politics in her 2012 text *Simone de Beauvoir and the Politics of Ambiguity*, taking on a single thinker and a single theme (ambiguity being a central term in Beauvoirian thought), but also using them to confront the practicalities of politics. The text will be useful to the thesis as a whole, as an insight into a shared thematic concern, as well as an application of Existentialism outside of its core philosophical field.

The desire to combine art and philosophy, as well as comparing movements from similar domains, is also evident in recent literature. Morris (1993) suggests a strong link between art and Existentialism, in her work based on a Tate Gallery exhibition of artists of the post-war period. I seek to differ from this approach, in order to avoid a simple temporal and geographic cohabitation of thinkers and artists in their shared experience of post (Second) World War French cultural life. Instead

the thesis will show fundamental theoretical interaction between – and yet outside of – Dada and Existentialism. Beyond the copious number of texts assessing Dada alongside Surrealism, Pegrum (2000) and Sheppard (2000) investigate Dada in the context of Modernism and Postmodernism. Sheppard devotes sections of his text to Dada and Futurism, Dada and Expressionism, and Dada and Mysticism. Pegrum's notions of Dada as 'Voicing the Other' and 'Visions of Change' will be particularly pertinent to the delineation of Dada's desire to offer a positive alternative to modernist life.

Papanikolas (2010) addresses Paris Dada in relation to Anarchism, and in particular anarcho-individualism. Papanikolas productively investigates side by side two radical, reactionary movements, relating Dada as a 'wilful negation of history at the center of a debate over the role of artistic tradition in the creation of a new modern age' (2010: 65). I aim to prove, particularly through Chapter Four's analysis of Dada and its context, that Dada did not entirely negate its past, but rather selectively reacted against and incorporated the ideas of its predecessors in this 'creation of a new modern age'. Additionally, nihilistic destruction (negation) does not constitute Dada's singular facet: close analysis will show that the development of Dada's artistic identity was complex, contradictory and multidimensional.

The Ambiguity of Authenticity

> *[T]he existentialist imperative of authenticity calls on people, not to perform or desist from any particular actions, but only to choose decisively and without illusions*
>
> (Cooper in Crowell ed. 2012: 45)

In beginning an analysis of Dada and Existentialism alongside each other, an initial concern seems to join them: if life is inherently meaningless, how, and why, am I to live it? How should I respond to the world in which I live? Are my actions futile, and do I have to be responsible for them? Camus writes that '[j]uger que la vie vaut ou ne vaut pas la peine d'être vécue, c'est répondre à la question fondamentale de la philosophie' (*MS*: 17), and furthermore that 'ce qu'on appelle une raison de vivre est en même temps une excellente raison de mourir' (ibid.: 18). Through the exploration of our five key themes the thesis will assess the position of the individual in terms of their existing relationship with the world around them. Beyond this interrogation of meaning, the thesis will seek to draw out results of this thematic analysis, through a broader discussion of authenticity and, more specifically, the attainment of authenticity through ambiguity.

Authenticity is a notion that is not explicitly defined in Existentialist thought,[6] but is undeniably implicitly central to it. We can build an Existentialist definition of authenticity through the word's standard use. The term is defined as 'of undisputed origin or authorship: genuine', 'accurate in representation of the facts; trustworthy; reliable' (*World English Dictionary*), lending the term an air of objectivity that is not as much use to us as its element of individuality through its description as 'genuine'. It

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[6] Sartre begins to mention the term in *L'Être et le néant*, only to claim that 'la description [de l'authenticité] n'a pas [*sic*] place ici' (*EN*: 106). Nonetheless, the term occurs eleven times across the text.

is instructive, however, that if we consult the word's etymology, we can begin to make connections with the Existentialist sense, that is, the Latin 'authenticus', 'coming from the author', and the Greek 'authentikos', 'one who acts independently' (ibid.). Here we have a much stronger sense that that which is authentic is that which relies upon the individual. We have established that the creation of values should lie in the individual. Sartre further develops this idea alongside the concepts of bad faith, good faith and through this, authenticity, towards the latter two of which an individual should aspire. As he states, 'l'authenticité et l'individualité se gagnent' (*EN*: 285). Furthermore, although authenticity is based in the individual's subjective choices, free from external pressures, Sartre claims that striving toward individual authenticity has a reciprocal effect on others: 'je me dévoile à moi-même dans l'authenticité et les autres aussi je les élève avec moi vers l'authentique' (*EN*: 285).

The relationship between the inherent freedom of the individual and their inevitable, inherent facticity is what characterises Beauvoir's notion of ambiguity. Beauvoir's definition of the term in its basic form largely matches a standard definition, that is, 'vagueness or uncertainty of meaning', or 'the possibility of interpreting an expression in two or more distinct ways' (*World English Dictionary*). It is this plurality of sense that unites the standard and the Existentialist definitions, particularly through its creative, epistemological, aesthetic, political and ethical potential. In a way that corresponds with the authentic individual's constant development of self-definition, Beauvoir states that 'dire qu[e l'existence] est ambiguë, c'est poser que le sens n'en est jamais fixé, qu'il doit sans cesse se

conquérir' (*MA*: 160). Furthermore, she links ambiguity, through authenticity, back to a way of finding meaning and value in life: 'Essayons d'assumer notre fondamentale ambiguïté. C'est dans la connaissance des conditions authentiques de notre vie qu'il faut puiser la force de vivre et des raisons d'agir' (ibid.: 14).

From the definitions of authenticity and ambiguity explored above we are able to draw some fundamental guiding principles. Firstly, there are elements to an individual that are concrete, defining themselves through facticity. Secondly, we should neither privilege these as our foremost traits, nor should we let them define us, especially since they are things that we cannot change. From this we can postulate that what is important for the individual is the authentic realisation of their own choice, a constantly developing assemblage of morals, opinions, and active decisions. Consequently ambiguity is not only inevitable but also desirable, a state of multiple interpretive possibilities.

It is my aim in this thesis to delineate the extent to which Dada practices and theory identify with these definitions of authenticity and ambiguity. Through my thematic exploration of choice, alienation, responsibility, freedom, and truth in Dada and Existentialist texts, I will raise and discuss the following questions. How can we use Dada and Existentialist ideas to not only critique but to improve the human condition? Given the total revolutionary approach adopted by the two movements, are they rebelling for rebellion's sake, or do they genuinely believe they have the potential to instigate change? How do the ideals and aims of the nature of revolt in these two movements compare to the outcomes? In pursuing analytical responses to

these questions I will posit that Dada and Existentialism both represent a

fundamentally positive affirmation of humanity through the perpetual quest for

authenticity, and that this authenticity is most effectively achieved through

ambiguity.

- CHAPTER ONE -
ME, MYSELF AND I: CHOICE AND INDIVIDUALITY IN THE MANY MASKS OF DADA

The dadaist […] welcomes any kind of mask. Any game of hide-and-seek, with its inherent power to deceive.
(*FT*: 65)

All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks.
(Melville 1892: 157)

Art in Society, Art and Life

The interdisciplinarity that is immediately apparent in any study of Dada expresses a unification and blending of art and life that is present throughout Dada and Existentialist thought alike. It is upon this that we may begin to explore the presence of philosophical currents in Dada, and an artistic side to Existentialism. Highlighting the importance of art to Sartre, Morris posits that '[c]reative endeavour was, naturally, of crucial significance to a philosophy which called upon man to seek his own essence, defining himself through his actions', and further, that 'Sartre drew on the artist as a paradigm for authentic existence' (1993: 18). Morris's mention of this close relationship through Sartre's *tabula rasa* attitude toward the artist ('personne ne peut dire ce que sera la peinture de demain' (*EH*: 65)) speaks to Dada's notorious desire to destroy and start anew. To this shared 'fresh start' approach we can add Sartre's personal preferences within art for 'light and ephemeral materials, hesitant and incomplete images, qualities that evoked notions of becoming rather than the fixity of 'being'' (Morris 1993: 19). While 'light' and 'hesitant' are not adjectives we would automatically associate with Dada, an insistence on ephemerality,

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incompleteness and becoming is certainly apt in a movement that focused its abundant energy on the abstract and the new.

Fundamentally these qualities rely on an additive and interpretive approach to the individual self: as Sartre states, 'nous pouvons dire qu'il y a une universalité de l'homme; mais elle n'est pas donnée, elle est perpétuellement construite' (*EH*: 61). This is something that is particularly actively explored in Dada art, especially through the use of multiple media and the physicality of Dada events. Van Meter Ames describes Existentialism as 'fundamentally a philosophy of art and the artist', and states that to the Existentialist 'only the artist, or a person living like an artist, is really living […] The hero is the artist who shakes off habits, teachings and achievements, in continual revolt against whatever would confine or control him' (1951: 252). The artist therefore maintains an evolving essence, while engaging with a constant revolt, a rebellion defined by its 'principe d'activité surabondante et d'énergie' (*HR*: 32).

Through this initial alignment of art and philosophy, Dada and Existentialism both reveal an immediate insistence that 'il faut partir de la subjectivité' (*EH*: 26).[7] Both movements rail against conformity – within themselves[8] as well as foregrounding such a principle in their tenets – as most explicitly expressed through

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[7] This particular phrase is Sartre's own re-wording of his quintessential theory that 'existence precedes essence'. Although Sartre technically defines this latter statement as applying to (human) consciousnesses, and as such the reverse applies to manufactured objects (production precedes existence), the fact that the objects studied in this chapter are to be conceived as representations of the self can be considered sufficient to incorporate while moving on from this paradox.

[8] This is enacted in both movements through their desire to reject labels, including 'Dada' and 'Existentialist'.

their views on systems. Tristan Tzara notably claimed in his 1918 manifesto that '[j]e suis contre les systèmes, le plus acceptable des systèmes est celui de n'avoir [*sic*] par principe aucun' (in *D*3: 2). Mikel Dufrenne underlines that 'Existentialism represents the perpetual revolt of subjectivity against systems, any system which objectifies and enslaves it' (1965: 53). Through these two movements' refusal of stultifying systematisation we can begin to investigate its opposite, individuality, and its links, through ambiguity, with authenticity.

This first chapter sets out to assess artistic and philosophical approaches to individuality through the notion of choice. A key concept in French Existentialist thought, choice is important to the individual since beyond being a simple option, it is a process in which we are *compelled* to engage ourselves because 'ce qui n'est pas possible, c'est de ne pas choisir' (*EH*: 63); not choosing is a choice in its own right. While Sartre refers primarily to the need within an individual to choose the way in which they live their life (morally and physically), in order to fulfil the role of an authentic individual, we can also apply this to choice within artistic endeavours, as part of the construction of an authentic artistic identity. This underscores the importance of constant redefinition through choice, a developing self that does not allow itself to be concretely defined by external fetters. Additionally we might say that this continual (re)construction has a quality of Gilles Deleuze's 'paradox of infinite identity' (2004: 4), whereby every existing being maintains a perpetual state of 'becoming', but never simply 'is'. We will see that in both Dada and Existentialism

this constant state of becoming is fundamentally positive, because it allows the individual to engage in a continually mutable relationship with their own identity.

Sartre's comment on the perpetually constructed nature of humankind is readily applicable to the atmosphere of early Dada performances and exhibitions, especially those of the Cabaret Voltaire. From its beginnings in 1916, the Cabaret was a melting pot for a plethora of different arts, nationalities, and personalities, giving it a flavour of collage, collaboration, and a continually developing character, which Malcolm Green describes as a 'synthesis of the modern' (in Huelsenbeck ed. 1993: i). Ball himself summarised that the 'sole purpose' of the Cabaret was 'to highlight, *transcending war and nationalism*, the few independent spirits who live for other ideals' (*Cabaret Voltaire*: 5; my emphasis and translation), rejecting overt identification with the ideals of the warring nations, ideals that we can consider broadly externally imposed, and thus objectionable as passively accepted. The Cabaret was international and interdisciplinary, but predominantly performative, a constant active expression of changing thought. This performative element is important and instructive if considered as an interdisciplinary approach in itself, especially through the interest in masks from Dada's beginnings, both as integral to a performance and as an artwork in their own right. Janco's masks in particular are noted to have incited group frenzy: 'in the relatively small space of the cabaret they ha[d] a sensational effect' (*FT*: 64). An analysis of the various masks of Dada within their contexts will explicate their consequences beyond effect as given.

Leah Dickerman claims that the mask was a crucial source of inspiration for the Zurich group 'car il permet de remettre en question la conception traditionnelle du portrait fondé sur la ressemblance physique' (in Le Bon ed. 2005: 1011). Mimetic portraiture is but one of Dada's list of 'narratives' scheduled for interrogation and destruction, a list considered to be to blame for having led to the wartime atmosphere that was the movement's contextual backdrop. As Ball notes,

> 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. (*FT*: 55)

This chapter will investigate the rejection of the traditional human form, as well as its replacement in fragmented form in the use of masks in Dada, through the work of Sophie Taeuber. Although it is notable that Taeuber herself was required to mask her involvement in Dada events, the chapter will suggest the role of the mask not only as simply dissimulatory, but also to move beyond this deception to posit the process of masking as an exploration and externalisation of a constructed, subjective identity, through the flexibility of the fragmented or hybrid image, as well as the notion of multiple masks as options for choice. As an extension of this, I will posit that the composite mask provides a pathway to aesthetic interdisciplinarity, as well as the ways in which the assumption of multiple art forms leads to something new, not only as the sum of its independent parts, but as a hybrid product. This hybrid product will be shown to fit with Sartre's notions of perpetually constructed essences as part of a wider whole, a common ground that is nonetheless based in active

choice. Furthermore, as Sartre states, '[le masque] renvoie à des possibles [*sic*], à une situation dans le monde' (*EN*: 128).

The examination of selected Taeuber works will take place alongside other comparable Dada works, all of which display a thematic of masks and masking, as part of a wider investigation of the role of masks and dissimulation in Dada as a movement, exposing the assemblage of identity in all of its guises and wrappings. As such the works will maintain a predominantly artistic comparison (rather than chronological or geographic). The *Dada-Köpfe* [Dada Heads] (Zurich: 1918-1920) will be explored alongside Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf (Der Geist unserer Zeit)* [Mechanical Head (Spirit of our Time)] (Berlin: 1919); the *König Hirsch* [King Stag] puppets (Zurich: 1918) will be examined in relation to Höch's *Dada Puppen* [Dada Dolls] (Hanover: 1916); the dances and costumes will be evaluated in the context of their respective events, as well as alongside Janco's masks. Finally, Taeuber's *Self-Portrait with Dada-Kopf* (Zurich: 1926) will be assessed in relation to Man Ray's *Noire et blanche* (Paris: 1926).

The discussion will take our analysis through the varying interactions between masking and identity, from replacement of the self (the *Köpfe*, puppets), through wrapping and embellishment of self, or self-as-mask (the dance and costumes), to self-alongside-mask. This is not to propose this order as a progression but rather a number of independent yet interrelating ways in which we might consider a group of aspects of expression-through-mask. The chapter aims to address the ways in which a fragmented self is not simply a broken entity, but a delicate balance of

expressive spontaneity and a complex collection of carefully chosen elements, a constant act of conscious choice. We will see how this foregrounding of subjectivity combines authentic choice through Sartre with the freedom of ambiguity through Beauvoir.

Accounts of Dada by the movement's adherents tend to gloss over Taeuber's role in the group, labelling her 'shy', 'thoughtful', 'unassuming' or 'quiet' (in *AA*: 45-46; 70), and relegating her to the background of artistic activities and events. Later accounts often reductively pair her with her husband Arp, a trend that is particularly inappropriate considering the Taeuber-Arps' egalitarian and collaborational artistic relationship (see for example Krupp in Adamowicz and Robertson eds 2011: 157-67). Yet her widely interdisciplinary artistic creations are noteworthy even within a movement that is famously interdisciplinary itself. The frequent dismissal of Taeuber as a primary character by her fellow adherents has led to her neglect in the current field of research.[9] However, on investigating accounts of her involvement and engaging in an analysis of her work it becomes evident that she enthusiastically embraced Dada's energy and matched the endeavours of her male counterparts to produce new, innovative works and unleash pure, abstract expression.

Furthermore as Willy Rotzler describes,

> Taeuber had already made attempts to express her esthetic ideas in all kinds of ways during the dada period […] thereby fulfilling the avant-garde requirements of integrating art in society and regarding all man's creative impulses and skills as a unified whole. (1993: 86)

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[9] Notable exceptions include Hemus's chapter dedicated to Taeuber in her 2009 monograph *Dada's Women*, and Roswitha Mair's biographical *Von Ihren Träumen sprach sie nie: Das Leben der Künstlerin Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (1998). The latter, however, has a self-confessed reliance on authorial fabrication.

Not only did Taeuber foreground a particularly well-rounded form of creation but she also actively articulated artistic theories:

> Only if we plunge deep into ourselves and try to be completely true will we succeed in producing things of value, living things, and at the same time work on creating a new style that is appropriate to us. […] Rules cannot be drawn up, not for form, and not for colour. (in Afuhs and Reble eds 2007: 36)

Taeuber expresses tenets that we have already seen in Existentialist philosophy, through the desire for individuality by looking within rather than searching for external influence and rules. She advocates, through self-interrogation in art, a personal style that leads to personal values. Taeuber's outlook of 'creating a new style that is appropriate to us' mirrors Sartre's notion that the individual 'existe d'abord, […] se définit après' (*EH*: 29). In this way the example of Taeuber represents an ideal place to begin our comparison with French Existentialism.

Richter notes that Taeuber 'had acquired the skill of reducing the world of lines, surfaces, forms and colours to its simplest and most exact form' (*AA*: 46), implying that this unassuming purity draws not only from the core of her character but also the essence of her work. Hemus reiterates this point, stating that

> What distinguishes Taeuber's work as an artist from that of her contemporaries in Dada at the time is that her challenge to mimesis, and her interrogation of the language of the visual image, led her to employ the most pared-down geometric shapes. (2009: 73)

The most productive result of the combination of Taeuber's thoughts with those of Richter and Hemus is an insistence on the rejection of systems, a need to break (away) to create anew, particularly without the burden of superfluous ornamentation. Additionally Taeuber's constant rearrangement furthers Sartre's

tabula rasa desire seen above (*EH*: 65) in that not only can we not know the painting of tomorrow but also, by Taeuber's standards, we may no longer be able to define it in the same way.

Portraits and Playthings: Constructing the Dada Head

> *Dada fait valser les têtes: portraits rectifiés […] travestis[10] […], décomposés […], et autrement recomposés – car Dada se danse masqué.*
> (Lemonnier in Le Bon ed. 2005: 934)

Our first example of the Dada mask is Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe* (1918-1920), a series of approximately eight[11] coloured wooden sculptures of which we will consider two here: *Dada-Kopf (Portrait of Hans Arp)* (1918, Fig. 1), and *Dada-Kopf* (1920, Fig. 2).[12] Each under twenty-five centimetres tall (including their chunky bases), these diminutive sculptures are more than simple externalised heads, exhibiting characteristics of dolls or puppets, with simple, neat features and very little extending from their core shape. The *Dada-Köpfe* retain an overall 'normal' positioning of facial features – one eye on each side and a large, straight nose down the middle of the face – yet the surfaces are made up of geometric, coloured fragments. These coloured parts, through their direct application to the wooden head, form a kind of childish or theatrical application of make-up, or a provocatively violent war paint: a balance of ludic and aggressive interpretations characteristic of Dada. The identity of these heads is painted and applied to a surface in an abstractly assembled wrapping or mask.

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[10] This important choice of word will be further explored in Chapter Five.
[11] Anne Lemonnier (in Le Bon ed. 2005: 934) highlights that most of these sculptures, like much Dada work, were lost. One of the lost heads can be found photographed in *Merz* 6 (63).
[12] Hereafter referred to as *Portrait of Hans Arp* and *Dada-Kopf* respectively, for ease of differentiation.

The hourglass-shaped bases of the *Dada-Köpfe* introduce a performative doll metaphor through their ease of being held or played with, and through this inviting movement. This rendering of the model into a doll foregrounds a spontaneous and improvisatory feel to their identities, interpreted and reinterpreted at each moment of play, like Sartre's notion of the mask as referring to possible situations of the world (cf. *EN*: 128). Furthermore the notion of the base as a handle forms such a relationship as a hand mirror, their faces taking the place of the reflective surface. We are reminded through this interaction of Schwitters's *Assemblage on a Hand Mirror* (Hanover: 1920/1922, Fig. 3), whose surface is covered in a collage of fragments instead of the smooth reflective glass that one would expect from the original object. Any space between attached items is painted over, blocking all reflective possibility. Both Taeuber's and Schwitters's works in this respect act as a form of both choice and control over the reflection of the self. As Lemonnier states describing the *Dada-Köpfe*, '[c]es sculptures reflètent en miroir plusieurs visages de Sophie Taeuber' (in Le Bon ed. 2005: 934). By maintaining this personal element, the artist is able to present a composed representation, yet from which the viewer can draw any number of interpretations of the artist, the work, or themselves.

The comparison of Taeuber's *Köpfe* to handheld mirrors can be instructively analysed alongside Sartre's statement that 'il n'y a pas entre ces deux aspects de mon être [être-pour-soi/être-pour-autrui] une différence d'apparence à être, comme si j'étais à moi-même la verité de moi-même et comme si autrui ne possédait de moi qu'une image déformée' (*EN*: 92). The head provides a frank objectification and

extension of the self into a fragmented appendage. Appearance and being become

one and the same in this constructed self-image as an ironic interrogation of the

'image déformée' that the other has of the self. Both Taeuber's and Schwitters's

objects perfom, through their foregrounding of the active nature of looking at oneself

in the mirror, Sartre's notion of the 'look' (*EN*: 292-341), by which we struggle with

the idea of the other as subject, and consequently the self as object. Furthermore,

there are rippling consequences of the other's look, notably through transformation

of both the self and of the world: 'Le regard d'autrui m'atteint à travers le monde et

n'est pas seulement transformation de moi-même, mais métamorphose totale du

monde' (*EN*: 308; original emphasis).

In an extension of this mirroring of the single head, the two analysed here

display a certain consistent crossover of features that may lead us to believe that they

form a set, drawing from this that the unnamed *Dada-Kopf* loosely represents Taeuber

herself. Hemus supports this through gender stereotyping in reasoning that the wire

and bead embellishments make this the 'female' head (2009: 57). While Hemus

presents this as a plain fact, I would instead consider this simple and obvious

difference between the two heads an ironic comment on the part of Taeuber,

highlighting that the only difference between the artist and her husband is the

societal assignment of gendered accessories. The Taeuber-Arps are known for their

deliberate ambiguity through their highly collaborative works. Furthermore, the

sculptures remain faithful to Dada's rejection of mimetic portraiture as neither bears

any 'real' resemblance to the Taeuber-Arps. A small, humorous likeness may be

posited between the *Portrait of Hans Arp* and its subject, who share a high forehead and receding 'hairline'. Richter describes Arp as his model for his 'head fantasies', because of 'the classic oval shape of his head and his triangular cubist nose' (*AA*: 80). Nonetheless we can consider this inspiration as a simple springboard for the destruction of mimesis.

The *Dada-Köpfe* broadly reject most distinctive markers of external identity, rather like later conceptions of the cyborg such as Donna Haraway's, which Matthew Biro summarises as 'defin[ing] a fundamentally hybrid form of human identity that undermined traditional distinctions between gender, race and class' (2009: 5). The only remaining marker of the heads seems to be their status as human, but it is an altered, as well as only partial, human. Robert A. Varisco refers to the face as 'the anatomical region which we use to measure identities against one another' (in Peterson ed. 2001: 286). Is this Dada's rejection of, or dismissal of the possibility of, the 'measuring of identity'? We may posit that Dada's destruction of normalcy, through the destruction of socially constructed measures and boundaries of identity, was to be considered the only route to freedom of the individual. These two heads' mimetic relations to each other, as well as their ambiguous representation of their author, externalise both self and other, eternally self-reflecting from an 'hors de soi' position.

In contrast with their shared characteristics, the two *Dada-Köpfe* differ in their implications of emotional content. The frowning features of *Portrait of Hans Arp* point to an aggressive provocation which is not present in *Dada-Kopf*, whose pale, unseeing

eyes – one of which is not only barely perceptible but also upside down – both blend

into the geometric arrangement of the head's features in a blank or unreadable

expression. *Dada-Kopf* is considerably more abstract than its partner, with its

structural shape (including its off-white, bony nose) forming the only symmetrical

unity between the pair. If we consider *Dada-Kopf* to be a portrait of Taeuber, should

we assume that the self-portrait is necessarily vaguer than that of another, or that it

simply leaves room for (re)interpretation and change? This builds on Sartre's notion

of the differing self-image with the 'image déformée' that the other sees, while not

necessarily being dependent on negative connotations of this description.

This ambivalence and engagement with aesthetic freedom can be said to 'point

to a liberation from reality which, in addition to [the] humorous stylistic qualities,

can be considered a pertinent Dada feature' (Riese Hubert in Sawelson-Gorse ed.

1999: 535). We might unpick the definition of this 'liberation from reality' to posit

Dada's liberal or ambiguous relationship with reality that allows for a creative

modification of the world. In the context of the liberation of our relationship with

reality we can consider in Taeuber's Dada works a creative modification that

liberates reality itself. This capitalises on Sartre's statement that 'le monde apparaît

comme pure distance de soi à soi' (*EN*: 288). If the world appears as this distance

within the self, constant reinterpretation of reality works precisely within this gap

from within and without.[13]

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[13] We will further discuss Dada's reimagining of reality in Chapter Two.

An instructive point of comparison in our analysis of the Dada head is

Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf (Der Geist unserer Zeit)* (Berlin: 1919, Fig. 4). This head

is also wooden, but unpainted. This bare simplicity highlights its status as a

commercial, reproducible object (it is a hat maker's dummy head, and in this respect

might be labelled an assisted or rectified readymade[14]), and has the simultaneous

function of allowing contrast with the objects that embellish its surface. This

replacement head, like Taeuber's sculptures, functions as a base on which to build

(for instance, hats). Like its Taeuber counterparts, the head retains normal

positioning of facial features, but differs in that these features are actively designed

to represent a human face.

A singular and striking way in which *Mechanischer Kopf* diverges from this

human resemblance is that it has no optic detail: like Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe*, it has

blank, unseeing eyes. This foregrounds the fact that it is a generic face: not meant to

represent any particular individual, its role is simply to display objects placed on it.

Notably, although the head is demonstrably generic, it is not geometrically perfect:

the left eye is a little lower than the right, the nose is not straight, and the head itself

is a slightly misshapen oval. This serves to highlight the delicate notion of ideal

proportion, upon which 'correct' or generic human features are designed (and which

can often hinder accuracy in portraiture, since real human faces usually diverge from

these standards). In this way Hausmann's head functions more like an early self-

portrait of Pablo Picasso (cf. *Self Portrait* of 1900), where deviations from expectation

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[14] For more on readymades in relation to Duchamp, see Chapter Four.

are both disquieting and personal. Additionally this misleading from the symmetrical, as well as the lack of ocular functionality, plays with the look of the other in a similar way to the comparison with Schwitters's hand mirror. The other through this face distorts expectation (we anticipate it mirroring our own), and its blank stare prevents it from completing the look. If we build our self-image through its relationship with the view of the other, this blankness disrupts our ability to relate.

Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf* parodies the notion of the face as primary reference point in measuring identity, through attaching mechanical measuring instruments all over its cranial surface (although instructively not obscuring the main aspect of the face). This has the effect of simultaneously externalising and reciprocating the measuring of identities. Angela Lampe tells us that Hausmann wrote of having 'découvert que les gens n'ont pas de caractère et que leur visage n'est qu'une image faite par le coiffeur. Je voulais, précise-t-il, dévoiler l'esprit de notre temps, l'esprit de chacun dans son état rudimentaire' (2007: n.p.). Unlike the Taeuber *Dada-Köpfe*, *Mechanischer Kopf* has no stand or base, but simply sits on its neck. It can do this where the *Dada-Köpfe* cannot, because of its maintenance of human proportions (Taeuber's require bases because their 'necks' are slim poles). However, this means that interaction with the object is necessarily more direct than with the Taeuber heads. If we are to consider both types of head as playthings or objects of manipulation, the Hausmann must be held by its main 'body', whereas the Taeuber heads can be held by their stands. This is made yet more complicated in the

case of Hausmann's sculpture, since to hold it entails working around its various appendages. This plays upon the vulnerability of the self in its 'état rudimentaire'.[15] The blankness of the look of the externalised self as other is replaced by this direct and active contact. We might argue in this respect that art (especially of this kind) allows for a realisation and thus resolution of Sartre's paradox that 'je suis hors de moi sans pouvoir jamais ni la [that which is outside of myself] réaliser ni même l'atteindre' (*EN*: 326).

The fragmented construction created in the mask function of Taeuber's and Hausmann's head sculptures foregrounds a concern with the fragility of the body, especially if we are to consider the wartime context of their creation and the proliferation of the human-machine hybrid body, as well as the aesthetic representation of military horrors in such works as those by Otto Dix, whose 'war cripples' are adorned with extensive, yet ostensibly useless, mechanical prosthetics.[16] This is additionally transferred to incapacity in the heads: the presence and normal positioning of (some) sensory organs is contradicted by their lack of connection to their functions, and the notable lack of ears and mouths in Taeuber's, and of course hands in both artists' work, quite literally cuts off the remaining senses.

This deprivation extends to emotion and expression, and with no bodies to carry the senses' resonance the expression of the sculptures is concentrated in, and confined to, its source. The combination of these characteristics visually

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[15] We will see more on the deliberate foregrounding of vulnerability in Dada Film in Chapter Two.
[16] For more on war injuries and prosthetics and their relationship with the avant-garde, see Amy Lyford (2007).

demonstrates Arp's description of Dada's creative style: 'While guns rumbled in the distance, we sang, painted, made collages and wrote poems with all our might' (in *AA*: 25). Arp's depiction of deferral of fear through creation is evoked here in the *Dada-Köpfe* through the apparent hasty arrangement of their eclectic collections of features. However, this seeming recklessness conflicts with the measured care with which Taeuber worked, amplifying the encapsulation of panic through disturbingly calm application.

The notion of confinement is particularly pertinent if we consider the context of Taeuber's creations, wartime Zurich and its locked-in position in continental Europe, as well as Hausmann's position in a belligerent nation (Germany). Additionally, both foreground the rejection of language, which, particularly because of its intrinsic link with dominant narratives, was something that Dada considered to be one of the problems of modern civilisation (cf. *FT*: 70; 76).[17] Without hair or bodies, both Taeuber's and Hausmann's head sculptures are exposed and raw, but also boldly new and autonomous, not dependent on limbs or attachments to transmit their message. This bottling up of senses and emotions, a de- and re-construction of language, is both rebellious and creatively enhanced. We might rephrase this in Camus's words, when he states that '[l]orsque le cri le plus déchirant trouve son langage le plus ferme, la révolte satisfait à sa vraie exigence et tire de cette fidelité à elle-même une force de création' (*HR*: 338).

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[17] The rejection of language(s) is especially pertinent in Switzerland, which has an impressive four official languages.

Beyond their interpretation as a comment on the brutality of war, Taeuber's and Hausmann's sculptures present an altered manifestation of a (de)constructed self, one that is at once provocative and highly evocative. All three heads foreground a tension of emotive concentration that we might liken to Camus's 'cri le plus déchirant' through a shared sense of severance. The crosswiring effect produced by the redirection of expression is also similar to that invoked by the central figure of Edvard Munch's *Skrik* [The Scream] (1893), whose cry is described as 'no longer an aural event, but something synaesthetically felt and recognised in nature' (Heller 1973: 87). The foregrounding of chromatic ambiguity in Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe* suggests that the gesture of their own synaesthetic scream is both reactive and a source of creation. We can posit that this captures an assemblage of the self as gesture that is not restricted to language. As Ball remarked, '[l]anguage is not the only means of expression. It is not capable of communicating the most profound experiences' (*FT*: 76).

The scream's cross-sensory articulation can also be analysed in terms of chromatic ambiguity: Taeuber's non-natural use of colour disrupts expectation in a way so strikingly unique as to imitate the synaesthete's private realm of perception. In particular her use of blue and green shades, not normally seen on the natural face, can be interpreted as expressive additions, especially as they are located around the eyes, the point by which we might presume to perceive reality. Instructively, Taeuber's use of green across her two heads contrasts with Henri Matisse's famously unusual use in his 'green stripe' painting of his wife (*La Raie verte*, 1905), in that

Matisse nevertheless used the green streak as an artificial shadow line, whereas Taeuber's use is predominantly geometric: the face shows no reliance on the traditional notion of a lighter and a darker side, or in Matisse's case, a cooler and a warmer side. In this respect Matisse remained within the realms of traditional portraiture; Tauber broke away from it.

The heads we have analysed present an external mask that foregrounds a singular body part, in a partial, but independent, externalisation of the self. While it is unsurprising that the head should be selected for this role, it highlights the dialectic of head-as-thinking and face-as-representing. However, it is more likely within its Dada context that this is a parody of traditional Cartesian philosophy, as all of these head sculptures, as surfaces and as vessels, reject mimetic portraiture and contain nothing but the solid wood that makes up their material structure. This is particularly apt for Hausmann's head, as the instruments covering the object are fixed in place and, with the exception of the forehead's tape measure, measure nothing. Additionally, since the tape measure indicates the distance between brow and 'hairline', it could be a simple reference back to hat making. The head itself is labelled '22', reminiscent of Ball's poem reciting costume with its blank face and number 13 (Fig. 5). As Lampe describe's Hausmann's sculpture, 'un morceau de mètre de couturière et un petit carton blanc portant le chiffre 22 sont collés sur le front, car, comme l'affirme Hausmann, "l'esprit de notre temps n'avait qu'une signification numérique"' (2007: n.p.). The label simply introduces a frustrating collection of misleading semiotics.

We might consider that this numeric nonsense acts, beyond the aforementioned rejection of mimetic portraiture, as a wider refusal of the representation of the self in relation to the past. Both of these rejections work to deliberately refuse the bad faith of the self that is trying too hard to imitate an externally constructed identity (cf. Sartre's waiter who plays at *being* a waiter (*EN*: 94)). Lemonnier writes that Taeuber's heads are situated 'à la frontière entre les arts appliqués, la sculpture et la peinture' (in Le Bon ed. 2005: 934). In just one work, Taeuber embraces significant interdisciplinarity. While Hausmann arguably only dabbles in sculpture through his *Mechanischer Kopf*, the use of measuring instruments shows implicit integration of other disciplines, including mathematics, biology and phrenology. This fragmented method of composition can be considered a selective foregrounding of desirable (and even undesirable) aspects, resulting in a hybridity with a strong indication of personal value(s), as well as the underlying desire for choice. In their adjustments from the 'normal', these works constantly assert their authors' desire for subjectivity and, through this, for authenticity.

Puppet, Poupée, Puppen: Manipulating the Human Figure

Owing to its extraordinary capacity to absorb empathy, […] the doll is the first figure to impose on a child the experience of estrangement. Staring blankly, it offers a comforting presence while cruelly inflicting a silence both un-comprehending and incomprehensible. A pivotal figure in human development, the doll prefigures relationships with others and, subsequently and figuratively, with the spaces of architecture and the world.
(Koss 2003: 734)

Taeuber's 1918 *König Hirsch* [King Stag] marionettes (Figures 6-13) were designed for an adaptation of Carlo Gozzi's play *Il Re Cervo* (originally 1762). The play itself revolves around conflicting amorous connections and characters vying for

power, expedited by magical means of deception (see Gozzi 1989). Taeuber's puppets

are assembled from cones and cylinders, many reminiscent of cotton reels, perhaps a

reference to her work in textiles, or to Dada's creative use of unexpected materials,

including the playful incorporation of 'rubbish' into artistic works. Although they are

wooden like the *Dada-Köpfe*, the puppets exhibit a certain fluidity in their multi-

jointed movement. Richter described them as moving 'with a grace not of this earth'

(in Motherwell ed. 1989: 288): not being subject to gravity allows them far greater

capacity for agility and unrestrained leaping than the human dancer. This grace,

along with creating an alternative world of the puppet stage, reinforces the Sartrean

idea explored in the heads of otherness as transforming the self as well as the world

(cf. *EN*: 308).

Further advantages of the puppet are depicted in Heinrich von Kleist's 'On the

Marionette Theatre' (1810):

> puppets have the advantage of being for all practical purposes weightless. They are not afflicted
> with the inertia of matter, the property most resistant to dance. The force which raises them into
> the air is greater than the one which draws them to the ground. […] Puppets need the ground
> only to glance against lightly, like elves, and through this momentary check to renew the swing
> of their limbs. (Herr C. in Kleist and Neumiller 1972: 24)

Although Kleist's descriptions predate Taeuber's puppets, important shared

elements can be drawn from this citation. The flexibility of the *König Hirsch*

characters' limbs certainly gains from their reduced contact with the ground, which

can be used as a point of resistance to curve the limbs without the puppets needing

to support their own weight. This facilitates a more abstract construction as well as a

unique interdisciplinarity which 'combines Laban's geometric dance principles, the black humour of Dada and the mechanics of textile production' (Fell 1999: 271).

Hemus highlights that the use of puppets 'allows the artist to investigate the total removal of the human subject or body, replacing it with a manipulatable object' (2009: 61). I would argue that instead of total removal and thus absence of the human subject or body, the puppets allow an externalised yet continuing presence of the self, especially as 'manipulatable object'. The distance or height created through this effort to be 'hors de soi', along with Gozzi's thematic of deception, allows *identity* to be presented as object to be manipulated, not only representing but also constructing identity through the intentionality of artistic gesture. Additionally, the manipulation of the rules (of physics) through the ostensible irrelevance of gravity builds upon our notion of Dada and Existentialist rejection of systems.

The puppets have been likened to a group of insects, from the striped, bee-like *Dr Komplex* (Fig. 6) to the spidery *Wache* [Sentry] (Fig. 7), as well as the segmented bodies of most of the puppets (Minges 1996: n.p.).[18] This lends the characters a sinister, 'creepy crawly' quality, as well as the delving into the foreign, microscopic world of insect life. We can also associate these Kafkaesque transformations with the prosthetics seen so widely on victims of the First World War, and which we saw on the *Dada-Köpfe*. Almost entirely constructed from articulated appendages, the puppets form assemblages of identity, retaining an eerie and unnatural movement, not to mention the ghost-like capacity of their 'flight'. Though their main structural

[18] Characters will be refered to in italics to emphasise not only on their fictional nature, but also their function as individual artworks in Taeuber's œuvre.

material is wood, they depend on tiny metal links between the segments to maintain their swinging motions: their movements are simultaneously limp and precisely controlled. The puppets are liberated from human concerns (gravity, normal distribution of joints), but are still constrained to passively respond to another's force. This combines chance and deliberate choice in a way that provides a productive arena for subjective creation. In this way the relationship between choice and its situation corresponds with Beauvoir's theory that 'le monde nous renvoie le reflet d'un choix qui se confirme à travers ce monde qu'il a façonné' (*MA*: 53). Our relationship with the world is subjective and situational, but also reciprocal.

Like the *Dada-Köpfe*, the puppets are hairless, though they all wear hats: a choice of feature that appears to signify relative social standing. Golden headwear, with its clear regal connotations, ranges from *König* [King] *Deramo*'s (Fig. 8) slightly unconventional crown, and the golden antlers of *Hirsch* [Stag] (Fig. 9), to the high intellectual status of *Freud* (Fig. 10), *Dr Komplex*, and *Tartaglia* (Fig. 11) the King's Prime Minister. Within this set there is variation between the intricacies of royal headwear, and the simple, smaller ornamentation of political or psychological power. *Angela* (Fig. 12) and *Truffaldino* (Fig. 13), on the other hand, wear plain, coloured hats but have alternative signifiers, their tulle and feather accoutrements denoting a different kind of social role. *Truffaldino*'s feathers give a clear reference to his profession of birdcatcher. He also has two hands per arm, which we can presume to be an advantage in his line of work, or which could indicate a link between his character and his name, which literally translates as 'swindler'.

Angela's adornment alludes to her status as *König Deramo*'s future bride, most obviously through the use of the colour white, but also in that tulle is a common fabric in wedding dresses. Renée Riese Hubert argues that this use of fabric suggests a scopophilic gesture (in Sawelson-Gorse ed. 1999: 535). I disagree, since the body underneath is already clothed, insofar as the puppets' bodies are painted, with no bare wood visible. The body and clothing are one. Taeuber's attachments then play a positive associative role, as small, extra indications of character. I would also argue that although scopophilia has been read into the attitudes and work of the movement in a more general sense, Taeuber's individual work and character do not necessarily lend themselves to it. In some respects, applying translucent fabric over an opaque, block version of the *same* (or similar) colour serves to amplify colour and texture, rather than encourage a penetrating gaze. This is particularly so since the latter would be more effectively evoked by the use of contrasting colour.

These physical markers perform an interrogation of the meaningfulness of symbolic connotations, ironically displayed through their abstract construction. It is significant and instructive that the Dada interpretation chooses to substitute Gozzi's magician and apprentice with *Freud* and *Dr Komplex* (Riese Hubert in Sawelson-Gorse ed. 1999: 534), replacing magical scheming with contemporary psychological manipulation. Furthermore, the use of a play whose plot centres around deception, masks and disguise projects Dada's love of play and façade through the spontaneous momentum of its performative roots in the Cabaret Voltaire. The performance of this complex relationship through the puppet at arm's length is illustrative of the positive

expression of an internal distancing of the self. As Beauvoir states, the individual 'ne se rejoint que dans la mesure où il consent à demeurer à distance de soi-même' (*MA*: 19). Notably sustaining this alignment with Beauvoir, Taeuber's (and, as we will see, Höch's) dolls do not claim to be a form of escapism through this distance, for as Beauvoir relates 'se mettre "dehors", c'est encore une manière de vivre le fait inéluctable qu'on est dedans' (*MA*: 96). The puppets maintain a simultaneous position of inside and outside, literal suspensions of being.

The way in which these characters mimic and mock contemporary psychologists demonstrates Dada's typical rejection of grand narratives and systems such as psychoanalysis. One of Dada's pet peeves, psychoanalysis is condemned by Tzara in the movement's eponymous publication: 'La psycho-analyse [*sic*] est une maladie dangereuse [qui] endort les penchants anti-réels de l'homme et systématise la bourgeoisie' (in *D*3: 2). *Tartaglia* parodies this opinion in his most important moment, at which he is attributed the line "Kill me, kill me. I have not analysed myself and can't stand it anymore!" (in Dickerman ed. 2005: 31). This parody of mental states and treatments foregrounds Dada's attachment to states of madness as reactions to trauma. Several members had avoided conscription through feigning madness, and consequently it might be suggested that they came to identify with this mental state, where it seemed to them that it was the world itself that had gone mad.[19] Additionally, we may wonder whether the parody of narratives, especially the dominant theme of psychoanalysis, puts the puppets into the theatrical role of the

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[19] Furthermore, feigning madness was a strategic and inherently sensible means of staying alive in a wartime situation: in this respect, madness = sanity.

fool, who traditionally is able to call into question societal norms without facing the punishment associated with such an action. The fool performs societal concerns, externalising them to the point of condemning or denying them. As Juliet Koss states on Bauhaus theatre, '[b]lending child's play with serious adult activity, performances could serve both as entertainment and as psychological ventilation' (2003: 728). Dada puppetry (and its performance more widely) does just this.

This notion of play as both escape and ventilation allows us to compare Taeuber's puppets to Hannah Höch's *Dada Puppen* [Dada Dolls] (1916, Fig. 14), predominantly through their role as passive playthings, but also as full-body externalisations of the self. It is notable that Höch's role in Dada, though arguably more acknowledged than Taeuber's, is also often downplayed by her male counterparts. Richter describes her as 'quiet', and a 'good girl', noting that '[h]er tiny voice would only have been drowned by the roars of her masculine colleagues' (*AA*: 132). Since 'Puppet' (a word notably similar to the German 'Puppen') and 'doll' share a common etymology through the Old French *popette* ('little doll') and in turn from the Latin *pupa* ('girl, doll') (*Online Etymology Dictionary*), we may consider that both Taeuber and Höch used this particular medium to reject the uninvited 'good girl' image assigned to them. This again demonstrates a desire to throw off an assumed image created by the other – even if this was by their fellow (male) Dadas – based upon a societally created stereotype.

Unlike Taeuber's puppets, Höch's *Puppen* are constructed from fabric, board and beads, so lose some of the (literal and metaphorical) 'wooden' qualities of the

König Hirsch characters. Höch's dolls are furthermore not controlled by strings, demanding either lesser interaction (moving the doll as a whole instead of a sum of its parts), or greater interaction (physically handling the limbs instead of tugging on strings) on the part of the user, a contrast that we have seen between Taeuber's and Hausmann's *Heads*. This differing involvement in combination with Höch's choice of beads as a decorative material initially suggests greater similitude with Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe*, yet the beads go beyond adornment in Höch's case. Here they act as dividers between body parts, both through being more markedly extrusive, and also through contrasting their hardness with the softness of the stuffed, fabric bodies. The beads loosely perform the role of extremities, often rendering more abstract the body parts' original functions. In this respect they perform the same manipulation of senses as we saw in the Dada heads: supplanting eyes, mouths and hands, these beads replace traditional representations of the senses with hardened, restricted shapes. As with the Dada heads, this alteration of sensory function gives the dolls an air of confinement or blockedness.

Like Taeuber's puppets, Höch's *Puppen* are fragmented: their divisions are highlighted by changing colours and conform structurally to pattern pieces in dressmaking (for example, sleeves, bodice, skirt). They maintain for the most part a normal division of human anatomy, lacking Taeuber's 'multijointed' approach. Notably though, both *Dada Puppen* are embellished at the neck, something that introduces a conflict of implicit severance of the head from the body. These embellishments cut off and constrict, without literally severing. This conflict is

something that we have seen carried across from Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe* and puppets

which divide and re-combine in constant manipulation of expression.

Physically the *Puppen* are less androgynous than the *König Hirsch* puppets, with

the exception of their hair, which maintains a mid-level length not unusual in either

gender.[20] The dolls maintain the pinched waists of a traditionally 'feminine' figure, as

well as being dressed in skirts. However, the curved female figure was notably

rebelled against in the Western world in the 1920s, so while 'maintaining' this aspect

it may also be one of parody. As Hemus explains, '[w]ith mismatched eyes and

straggly hair, they appear clownish and grotesque. Their breasts, made out of

circular fabric and beads and sewn on the outside, give them an overtly sexual

aspect' (2009: 121). This does not necessarily give the dolls a conclusively negative

image; Maud Lavin states that Höch's 'androgynous images depict a pleasure in the

movement between gender positions and a deliberate deconstruction of rigid

masculine and feminine identities' (1990: 67). Furthermore, '[Höch's] representation

of androgyny introduced a radical and non-hierarchal sexual ambiguity' (ibid.: 79).

In this respect, Höch's *Puppen* are aggressive but egalitarian: by caricaturing sexual

difference, the artist allows for a levelling of identities, as we already saw in the

Dada-Köpfe and their accessories.

This mockery and breakdown of gender binaries can be compared to Taeuber's

parody of psychoanalysis through the *König Hirsch* characters. Both the puppets and

the dolls perform a blurring of traditional boundaries which enables an ambiguous,

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[20] Both Taeuber and Höch wore their hair in a cropped style, an established sign of independence.

constructed identity through this external representation. Gustaf Almenberg states that Dada 'sought to provoke or even alienate the spectator', unlike Participatory Art, which 'invites the spectator to contribute her or his own creativity in order to experience it' (2010: 13-14). Through the puppets and dolls analysed here, however, I disagree with this claim. It is precisely their focus on manipulation and play that can be said to provoke the spectator *into* contributing their own creativity. Furthermore, the ability, through the puppets, to create these creatures while remaining hidden behind the strings allows the artist to take an outside view of their own identity. These creations provide a fundamental othering of the self, and as Sartre claims, '[p]our obtenir une vérité quelconque sur moi, il faut que je passe par l'autre' (*EH*: 59). The puppets allow for a flexible and positive reciprocity of self and other from this self as other.

Hemus states that '[i]deologically, the use of puppets questions agency and authorship, foregrounding questions about the artist's role, as well as about self-determination more broadly' (2009: 62). We can connect this to the puppets' exemplification of the cabaret performance style: by acting out roles and constructing a façade as new assemblage for artistic expression, the performer-as-puppet projects and enacts a deliberate blurring of truth, reality, current self and potential self. As 'kinetic' or 'participatory' art (Almenberg 2010: 54),[21] Taeuber's puppets dissolve the boundary between art and the artist, embracing a carnivalesque play between the

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[21] Almenberg points out that, as Participatory Art, Dada works such as Taeuber's also had a significant impact on the audience, taking away the role of 'passive spectator' and replacing it with that of an 'intended provoké' (2010: 55).

reality of the artist and the concept of the character, versus the concept of the artist and the concrete art work.[22] This is embodied in a contradiction between the apparent ultimate freedom of the puppet, which is nevertheless controlled by its strings.

Sartre's account of the look specifically describes the notion of seeing the other as 'rien d'autre qu'une poupée' (*EN*: 293), a rendering of the other's 'thingness' that enables us to perceive our own existence as object. The puppets and dolls we have looked at can be used to represent an extension of the external mask. Both Taeuber's and Hausmann's head sculptures showed an externalisation of the face, as well as a focus on the masking of thought and emotion. Through the puppet and doll figures, we can transfer this notion of masking to its representation by the full body. Executed in miniature, these Dada bodies can be seen in full, as well as in relation to their surroundings. Their status as figurines permits their manipulation, either by strings with the puppets, or by direct manipulation of the dolls' soft bodies. This allows for a distancing from the self and an emphasis on the assemblage of features from without. Additionally, it creates a space for the self to be viewed as other, a creative interrogation of identity. We will now see how this distance is maintained when viewed from within.

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[22] This is an area on which pressure is maintained across Dada work, as we will see through Chapter Three's 'characters', as well as in a wider sense of performed identity in Chapter Five.

Fabric Faces and Musical Mimesis: Performing the Mask

Mlle. S. Taeuber: bizarrerie délirante dans l'araignée de la main vibre rhythme rapidement ascendant vers le paroxysme d'une démence goguenarde[23] capricieuse belle.

(Tzara in *D*1: 16)

Taeuber's dance and costume design is an integral part of her interdisciplinary œuvre. Unfortunately, much of her work in these areas has become inaccessible either through the inherent ephemerality of the medium or the lack of recording technology at the time of performance. Her work was also under-documented due to objections made by the Zurich School of Applied Arts (where she taught) regarding her involvement with a group like Dada, a connection that was considered inappropriate due to the movement's disorderly and provocative nature. In this respect her continued involvement with the movement in masked form showed a desire to reject externally imposed behavioural constructs in favour of an actively chosen existence, in the manner of the Existentialist tenets of individuality and authenticity demonstrated thus far. The little that we know of Taeuber's work in these areas comes through accounts from fellow Dadas, as well as very few remaining photographs (see Figures 15-16). Both of these types of records are problematic to evaluate with any objective certainty: Dada accounts are known for fabrication (as well as distinct lack of documentation of female participants), and it is often (deliberately) problematic to identify the dancer behind the mask, especially when records rely on the aforementioned Dada accounts.

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[23] 'Goguenard', according to the Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, combines 'goguette' ('propos joyeux, plaisanterie') with the suffix '-enard' ('menteux'), giving us the sense of enjoyment in deception certainly foregrounded in Dada dance and costume.

A further problem encountered in assessing Taeuber's Dada dancing is elucidated by Jill Fell, who relates that '[t]he difficulty in isolating Taeuber's individual contribution to the Dada group effort is that the concept of uplifting the individual over a combined effort ran contrary to her personal philosophy as an artist' (in Adamowicz and Robertson eds 2012: 17). I do not entirely agree with this, given the extensive individuality promoted by the artist, yet Taeuber's unwillingness to highlight a *single* individual illustrates the Existentialist tendency toward equal coexistence. Building upon the insistence of the equality of differing personal values, Sartre states that

> la première démarche de l'existentialisme est de mettre tout homme en possession de ce qu'il est et de faire reposer sur lui la responsabilité totale de son existence. Et, quand nous disons que l'homme est responsable de lui-même, nous ne voulons pas dire que l'homme est responsable de sa stricte individualité, mais qu'il est responsable de tous les hommes. (*EH*: 31)

It is precisely this complex relationship between the individual and the group that makes Taeuber's role in the events of Zurich Dada so important and instructive. This section will investigate the role of costume as mask, of body as mask, as well as mask as expression through movement and dance, both for the individual and as group activity.

Janco retrospectively described Taeuber's performance style as 'jerky and syncopated expressions exactly like the chords of good jazz or the restrained and dignified sadness of American blues' ([1957] in Verkauf ed. 1975: 23). Janco's depiction of Taeuber's movement is instructive if we consider its implications as reproducing the improvised (yet structured) excitement of jazz and the expressive lilt of blues. Janco specifically compares Taeuber to the *chords* of jazz, perhaps the most

structured element underneath the fluid and winding solo part(s) of this particular

musical form. Additionally, while jazz music gives the impression of embracing

freeform style, especially through improvisation, it remains grounded in (and

restricted by) patters of tonality and rhythm. Structure and organisation are two

fundamental principles across Taeuber's work as well as within her own personality,

so we may presume that this juxtaposition of excitement and structure was one on

which Janco chose to capitalise.

Taeuber danced not only to music but also alone in 'silence' (in terms of lack of

deliberate, organised sound) – as was Laban's style[24] – and to poetry read by Dadas

at the raucous soirées. The relationship of Taeuber's dancing with music and silence

enacts Camus's theory that

> Le monde n'est jamais silencieux; son mutisme même répète éternellement les mêmes notes, selon les vibrations qui nous échappent. Quant à celles que nous percevons, elles nous délivrent des sons, rarement un accord, jamais une mélodie. Pourtant la musique existe où les symphonies s'achèvent, où la mélodie donne sa forme à des sons qui, par eux-mêmes, n'en ont pas, où une disposition privilégiée des notes, enfin, tire du désordre naturel une unité satisfaisante pour l'esprit et le cœur. (*HR*: 320)

In this respect Taeuber's dancing brings out the less obvious elements of music put

forward by Camus: vibrations and underlying structures that are often overlooked in

the focus on melody. Furthermore, both Taeuber and Camus underline the

mutability of music and sound, and of sound and movement. Taeuber's work can

certainly be interpreted to 'tire[r] du désordre naturel une unité satisfaisante pour

l'esprit et le cœur', through her careful constructions as well as the evident pleasure

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[24] For more detailed research on Laban and music, see Vera Maletić (1987: 160).

she gained from systematic unity and harmony. As Taeuber herself expressed, '[a] strong, discriminating sense of color is a constant source of joy' (in Rotzler 1993: 89).

We can imagine the effect of this unity alongside the idea of Taeuber dancing accompanied by (or accompanying) Dada poetry, especially if we consider the medium of the sound and simultaneous poems that were read at the cabaret. For example, Tzara, Huelsenbeck and Janco's *L'Amiral cherche une maison à louer* (1916, in *Cabaret Voltaire*: 6-7) is structured in a way that removes attention from a traditional 'melody line'. Of particular relevance in this work is the sonority of the verse: it is not only in three-part linguistic 'harmony' but is also polyphonic, inherently representative of Dada's tendency for being 'orchestrated noise to a dulling melody' (Allen in Foster ed. 1996: 60).

Through *L'Amiral*'s air of incomprehensibility, the poem creates a substitute sonic universe where the combined sound overrides its constituent parts. Because of this dense construction of albeit 'rampantly independent' voices (Forcer in Tarantino and Caruso ed. 2009: 194), *L'Amiral* rarely has a striking 'melody', bar occasional moments where only one voice is active, yet the final measure ('l'amiral n'a rien trouvé') again can be said to 'tire[r] du désordre naturel une unité satisfaisante…': despite the negative content, the voices are in complete unison. Thus its playful idioglossia reflects the rebel both in its creation of a new world and in its rejection of dominant (multi-)linguistic structures. Taeuber's dancing foregrounds this play of disorder and unity: the fragmented costumes and the jerky, ragged movements are predominantly meaningful through their composite form. Like the voices in *L'Amiral*,

the collection of contrasting fragments (aim to) provide a substitute 'out of this world' option for the self, or 'option for consciousness' (Pichon in Pichon and Riha eds 1996: 15).

This poem, especially in relation to the events of the Cabaret Voltaire more broadly, is an instructive comment on otherness. As T. J. Demos elucidates,

> the poem became a cosmopolitan stage for multilingual interaction, nonhierarchically intermingling the plural speech of displaced subjects – words inevitably mixed with others from different languages, each continually invaded by an otherness not only foreign but also an integral part of the poem. One striking conclusion is that belonging and foreignness become identical, as the poem dismantles the exclusionary basis of national identity. (in Dickerman and Witkowsky eds 2005: 12)

Fundamentally it can be said that it is from the basis of this multi- and inter-linguality that Dada's interdisciplinarity thrived, creating a composite mask hinging on a core sense of belonging and foreignness as identical, coexisting displacements on which to build a constantly mutating, heterogeneous whole. Furthermore, the rejection of standard linguistic sense as well as a focus on the primary medium of sound implies, as we saw through Taeuber's thoughts on art, a refusal of the 'rules' that represent obstacles in the way of the dialogue within and without the self.

Taeuber's experience as a dancer proves an influence across her art: a certain grace and flow in her fabric constructions, as well as movement in the puppets that mimicked, if not enhanced, her 'hundred-jointed' gestures and 'fantastic movements' (*FT*: 102). It is instructive that Taeuber would have been one of the only trained dancers at the Cabaret: Fell writes that '[t]he Dada creed demanded no dancing skill from the performers', but also that the interaction between the Laban dancers and the

Dadas resulted in a 'cross-pollination of skills and ideas between the two groups' (in Adamowicz and Robertson 2012: 17). This likely had a positive effect on the hybrid identity of Dada. Ball 'implies that she made herself into a puppet' (Fell 1999: 278), an object manipulated at will by the poet and the gong beat(er). The dance is then not only influenced by the expression of the dancer, but also interprets the medium of vocalised poetry and the simultaneously percussive and enharmonic qualities of the gong.[25] It is this constant multi-directional flow of influence that gives Taeuber's work such artistic and philosophical weight. It remains difficult to tell which, if any, was her primary art form, and her interdisciplinarity lends itself to Dada's preference for constantly evolving, hybrid identities, as well as the sense of 'becoming' that we saw through Deleuze, and the perpetual constructedness of identity seen through Sartre (cf., for example, *EH*: 26).

Taeuber's dancing is inextricably linked to her costumes, which have further been tied to Janco's Dada masks through the ludic performances and antics of the Cabaret Voltaire: 'Taeuber's dances, as she acted out the spirit of the mask, generated real excitement with their sharp, absurd angles and jagged aggression, recreating the energy of the primitive and soaring towards apparent delirium' (Fell 1999: 283). Yet for all the references to Taeuber's movements being jagged, sharp and jerky, Emmy Hennings described her thus:

> her walk and all her movements were full of natural grace and charm. A pupil of the Laban school of dance, there was nothing stiff or rigid about her. But even her almost playfully

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[25] Because gongs are enharmonic, they produce the whole spectrum of pitches simultaneously. In this respect they offer a 'hundred-jointed' gesture of their own.

confident control of her limbs was surpassed by her control of her spiritual being, which had no trace of anything exaggerated or overdone (in Rotzler 1993: 85)

We must assume then that the aggression of the dances required great input and control on the dancer's part. Ball's accounts detail the masks' effect on the performer – 'not only did the mask immediately call for a costume; it also demanded a quite definite, passionate gesture, bordering on madness' (*FT*: 64) – and elements of these masks are visible in the rare photographs of Taeuber's dancing.

In one photograph (Fig. 15), Taeuber wears a costume designed by Arp, with a mask by Janco. The jagged costume mirrors the sharp, bold edges of the mask, and both display a collection of shards of material. The arm tubes, while in some ways restricting the motion of the elbows and wrists, impose a different kind of movement on the dancer. Freest at the shoulder, the arm loses some of its hinging motions and foregrounds a pendular swinging action reminiscent of the puppets with their metal links. Although the arms are still able to bend, they are made heavier and more imposing on their lower ends, finished off with menacing claws. The bodily wrappings give the impression of a collage of rags, and in this photo the legs are left in the dark,[26] their invisibility lending itself to a floating, 'abstract, guignolesque dance' (Fell 1999: 271) shared with the puppets. These elements combine to suggest a whirling, ragtime play of colour, form and sound: a constant tension between playful fragmentation and immaculate structure present across Taeuber's work.

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[26] This aspect is reminiscent of Man Ray's *Portemanteau* (1920), which uses a black stocking against a black background to mimic removal of the lower limb. However, the Taeuber photo conveys a dynamic sense of movement, whereas the Man Ray photograph is posed and static.

Ball wrote of Janco's masks that their 'varied individuality inspired us to invent dances' (*FT*: 64). Furthermore, a passage within his diaries leads us to wonder whether the dancer described refers to Taeuber in our photo:

> The dancing figure starts from the crouching position, gets straight up, and moves forward. The mouth of the mask is wide open, the nose is broad and in the wrong place. The performer's arms, menacingly raised, are elongated by special tubes. […] Long, cutout [*sic*], golden hands on the curved arms. The figure turns a few times to the left and to the right, then slowly turns on its axis, and finally collapses abruptly to return slowly to the first movement. (*FT*: 64)[27]

This unique description, through its likeness to the costume worn by Taeuber, potentially represents one of the only accounts we have of the physical gestures that made up Taeuber's dancing. The ambiguity of identity raised by Taeuber as masked dancer is instructive as an externalisation and interrogation of formal characteristics of an individual, as well as their relationship with their temporal and social context. As Ball states, '[w]hat fascinates us about the masks is that they represent not human characters and passions, but characters and passions that are larger than life. The horror of our time, the paralyzing background of events, is made visible' (*FT*: 64-65).

Ball's description of this quintessential Dada mask event at the Cabaret Voltaire not only foregrounds the externalisation of 'larger than life' characters and emotions, exploring close up the concerns of the time, but also shows how the mask brings the wearer 'hors de soi' through its demand for 'madness'. We can draw together this reference to madness with Tzara's description of Taeuber as evocative of a certain 'démence', which breaks down etymologically to de + mens = out(side) of one's mind (*Online Etymology Dictionary*). Additionally, this notion of madness provoked

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[27] It is instructive that Ball's depiction of the dancing figure is markedly gender neutral, since this supports our notion of the levelling of identities discussed earlier.

by the masks fits with Sartre's idea quoted earlier, that of the other having a 'deformed image' of the self in relation to one's own self-image. This flitting between deformity and fragmentation opens up possibilities for a more ambiguous (and flexible) self.

Taeuber's own 'Hopi Indian' full-body costumes (Fig. 16) provide a stark contrast with the Janco-Arp costume discussed above.[28] Unlike the ragged splinters of Janco's mask, Taeuber's own masks recall some of the geometric shapes, colours[29] and lack of blending or shading that we saw in the Dada Heads. The costume that Taeuber wears is complete with beads as accessories, like the *Dada-Kopf* we compared to a portrait of the artist, and more loosely, the *Dada Puppen*. Like Janco's, the masks are larger than a human head, but instead of the elongated facial mask which sits on the surface of the face her box-like creations appear to entirely encompass the head. Additionally, they seem to be made from coloured fabric, unlike Janco's use of paper, cardboard and paint. Taeuber's full costumes then retain a certain fluidity from head to body: where Janco and Arp's mask/costume combination gives the impression of a fragmented collage of jagged shards, Taeuber's full costume represents a systematic unity ('unité satisfaisante'?) within its division into geometric shapes. We might additionally wonder if and how this would affect the dances produced when wearing the different costumes, if the dancing was

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[28] For further detail on the history of the Hopi Kachina doll, see Harold S. Colton (1959). The fact that Taeuber chose to incorporate elements of another culture's dolls into her costumes draws the doll metaphor forward from the *Heads* and puppets into her dance.

[29] Although photographs of these costumes are in black and white format, Taeuber's sketches indicate that the masks were designed to continue both the patterns and the colours of the costumes. See for example Schick, Kornhoff and von Asten eds (2009: 38-39).

indeed inspired by the masks and costumes. The collage of shards would certainly make a noisier dance than if wearing fabric costumes.

Arp's costume to go with Janco's mask looks improvised, whereas Taeuber's body costume is composed and structured within standard clothing construction (again, like the *Dada Puppen*), and respects the natural contours of the body (thus presumably not greatly hindering movement). Instructively, the single exception to the 'human-shaped' aspect of this design is the head, which represents the costume's most unnaturally constructed part. What is the significance of this marked inflation of the head, and distortion of facial features? We are reminded of the foregrounding of these aspects in the *Dada-Köpfe* (and the *Mechanischer Kopf*), and the constant centralisation of the measuring of identity through the face, as well as the psychological notion of the location of the self in the head.

The masks, costumes and their wearers examined above create a series of reflections which are nonetheless independent of mirrors, recalling Sartre's depiction of the inevitable influence of definitions of the self through the other in his *Huis Clos*. Sartre's play is entirely set in a room with no reflections, forcing the inhabitants to see themselves through each other. The character Estelle even questions her own existence through not being able to see herself, saying that 'quand je ne me vois pas, j'ai beau me tâter, je me demande si j'existe pour de vrai' (*HC*: 44). In contrast with the room in *Huis Clos*, which 'is no room at all, but rather the open arena of incriminating exposure and persecution' (Simon 1963: 66), we can posit the room(s) of the Cabaret as an exploring ground: its activities are exposed, but as a means of

catharsis through the highlighting of the 'horror of our time, the paralyzing

background of events' (cf. *FT*: 65). Additionally, while the characters of *Huis Clos* are

doomed to an eternity of 'incriminating' reflection, the Dada mask was used as a

means to create an alternative visage and identity.

Taeuber's need to mask her participation in Dada events, both physically and

pseudonomically, gains new freedom from this close relationship with façade.

Through Dada's fluctuating relationship with masks and the truth, we are reminded

that, ordinarily, we see a mask and expect to be deceived. Sometimes, however, what

you see is what you get. As expressed by Sartre, 'il faut prendre les choses comme

elles sont' (*EH*: 73-74). These masks and their relationship with truth and deception[30]

are intrinsically linked to the relationship with the other, as well as the self as other.

Indeed as Sartre states, 'la structure du monde implique que nous ne pouvons voir

sans être visibles' (*EN*: 357). We have seen that in Dada art, the notion of selfhood is

often projected outside the self, as in the *Dada Heads* and puppets, where traditional

mimesis is rejected in favour of fragmentation, and yet where the human aspect is

maintained to the extent that we can view it is an intention of the exploration of

identity.

Sartre's concept of the look is fundamental to the experiences described in this

chapter. The transfer of the objectivity of the other to the objectness of the self to the

other creates a mutual need for the reassessment of identity as a whole. The masks in

particular provide a creative externalisation of the performed self, an 'hors de soi'

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[30] Truth and deception will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

position that allows for increased emphasis on individual choice, and awareness of its effects. As George Ross Ridge comments on *Huis Clos*, 'there are no mirrors in the salon because no one can look at himself objectively; each dresses the different mannequins of his own personality for the other two' (1957: 437). While this may be indicative of bad faith in the case of Garcin, Inès and Estelle, the Dada performers' dressing, through costumes and masks, displays attributes of Sartre's definitions of choice, and the authenticity of forwarding characteristics that one has chosen without the pressure of external fetters. Through Garcin and Inès's respective comments that 'on est ce qu'on veut', and 'tu n'es rien d'autre que ta vie' (*HC*: 90) Sartre prefigures his own later statement that 'l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait' (*EH*: 30). The notion of the look is an intrinsic part of being-for-others, by which we create our relationships around how others make us feel. Ball related that 'each one of us [tried] to outdo the other in inventiveness' (*FT*: 64): through this competition the dancers were able to feed off and build upon each other's creativity. Through this constantly fluctuating awareness of self and others, a new, ever becoming, changing and adapting identity is formed.

Conclusion

> [L]a photo devient le masque des apparences extérieures, et le masque semble révéler des vérités intérieures
> (Dickerman in Le Bon ed. 2005: 1011)

Through our analysis of the use of masks in the work of Taeuber within its Dada context, we have seen varying levels of interaction with the self: expansion, extension, and externalisation. These have demonstrated reciprocity between the self

and the mask and self as mask. One final notion to consider is the self-alongside-

mask, which can be analysed particularly productively through two photographs of

Taueber entitled *Self Portrait with Dada Kopf* (1920 and 1926, Figures 17-18) and two

photographs of Kiki of Montparnasse entitled *Noire et blanche* (Man Ray: 1926,

Figures 19-20). Taeuber's two self-portraits contain the same subjects, that of Taeuber

with another 1920 *Dada-Kopf* (not discussed here), but differ greatly in mood of

composition. The 1920 portrait (Fig. 17) shows a smiling Taeuber, frank and

unadorned, half-hidden on her left-hand side by the *Dada-Kopf*. The 1926 photo (Fig.

18), in contrast, shows a significantly more wrapped, unsmiling version of the artist.

Taeuber wears a collared top, a bowler hat and a lace veil over her face.[31] The *Dada-

Kopf* sits at a similar angle and distance from her face, but covers its right-hand side.

Man Ray's *Noire et Blanche* is a set of two photos of Kiki of Montparnasse alongside

an African mask,[32] one of which is a negative of the other. It is immediately useful to

address these images as a pair because, as their title indicates, they play on the

black/white binary in a way that the use of the negative extends.

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[31] We have seen that the use of translucent fabric can have varying effects on the surface upon which it sits. In this case the veil has a simultaneous effect of dissimulation and highlighting, its patterns interacting with the facial features of the artist in a way that does not obstruct her mouth, nose or eyes, and yet which adds further facial divisions across the cheek that share characteristics with the Dada Heads.

[32] Both the use of this mask and the anonymous nature of its own artist or background highlight Dada's somewhat naively condescending/colonial use of 'primitive' cultures. However, we can interpret this tendency as a search for a lost or former self, a redemption for the horrors of the day through tracing a more innocent art and way of life. Additionally, despite the negative connotations we might associate with this kind of appropriation, we might view it as part of Dada's rejection of early twentieth-century societal convention, through its levelling, if not privileging, of non-European art, especially through its use as an aesthetic inspiration rather than exploiting its 'authentic' artefacts for monetary gain. As Camus states, '[c]haque révolte est nostalgie d'innocence et appel vers l'être' (*HR*: 139). Dada performs an ambiguous position 'somewhere between the two strains [of] the 'civilised' and the 'primitive'' (Pegrum 2000: 119).

Both artists highlight the fragile symmetry of the human face, as well as its expressive capacity. Each Taeuber photo hides a different side of her face, yet underlines a similarity between the two pictures. It is the facial covering that changes the mood of the picture, and which also renders Taeuber's neutral expression gloomier or heavier. This is also the case in the blank expression of Kiki in *Noire et blanche*, which although unsmiling remains open and calm. The contrast between the two Taeuber photographs, as well as in comparison with the pair that make up *Noire et blanche*, highlight the many levels on which a mask can operate. The mood of the two 'self-portraits' is drastically different, depending on the layers of mask present. The veil in the Taeuber pictures, and the use of the negative (both chromatically and spatially) in the Man Ray photographs, foreground a difference in intended perception controlled by the artist.

Beyond their presentation as self-alongside-mask, we can also view these photographs (and photography more broadly) as a self-outside-itself, or a self-without-itself. This is most notably through the notion of non-identicality with the self: the photograph exactly reproduces an image of, yet *is not*, the subject, simultaneously demonstrably 'same', yet externalised from the self. This embodies two Sartrean paradoxes. Firstly that '[à] la limite de la coïncidence avec soi, en effet, le soi s'évanouit pour laisser place à l'être identique' (*EN*: 112). Secondly, that

> l'apparition du regard est saisie par moi comme surgissement d'un rapport ek-statique d'être, dont l'un des termes est moi, en tant que pour-soi qui est ce qu'il n'est pas et qui n'est pas ce qu'il est, et dont l'autre terme est encore moi, mais hors de ma portée. (*EN*: 307)

From this we can posit that the photograph represents this limit of the self, especially if we consider that a photograph can easily outlive an individual.

Through our analysis of a selection of Taeuber's art, we find a unique and distinctive interdisciplinarity where artistic media are treated as part of an organic whole. As incorporative of so many techniques (and we must remember that Dada was only one of Taeuber's many commitments, both in terms of profession and artistic movements), Taeuber's œuvre proposes a full expressive possibility through art. Rotzler remarks that '[o]nce she had found the form, it became viable only when it was used in different contexts and fulfilled specific purposes. Thus the form assumed a universal character and became the cornerstone of a harmonious whole' (Rotzler 1993: 90). This multi-directional flow between media simultaneously reminds us of, and encourages us to question, notions of mask as self and self as mask.

In the work we have analysed here, emphasis is put on this relationship: behind every face is another; fragments are neatly arranged yet the cracks remain highlighted. Realist portraiture is rejected in favour of collages of abstract fragments. 'Free' movement is ever dependent on chain links, yet this facilitates the extension of normal human capacities of motion. Clothing is reflective of faces, blurring the boundaries of the human form between surface wrapping and body. In turn the body becomes a 'fluid screen, capable of reflecting back a present constantly undergoing redefinition and transformation' (Chadwick 1996: 257), but also for the projection of multiple or hybrid identities, where the surface is not always the real face, and where

the mask and the face can become one. Fragments or aspects of identity can be collaged and layered to reflect genuine individual choice, a self-assembled self-image. When identity is malleable, the individual can always remain authentic in themselves, building and remodelling at will as an expression of the self in flux.

This chapter set out to respond to one of Sartre's central Existentialist tenets, that 'il faut partir de la subjectivité' (*EH*: 26), as well as to apply his theories of the 'look' to Dada articulations of self and other. From our examples of Dada works and events, we can certainly confirm Dada's desire to foreground the personal creation of values. Although critics of Existentialism often deem this quality indicative of a self-interested quietism, we must not consider it an introversion taken to the point of indifference towards the wellbeing of the other or indeed the world. Beyond this introspection, we can discern in Dada and its critics the need to apply its own theory to humanity more broadly. Micheline Tison-Braun states that 'la révolte dada implique une conception positive de ce que l'homme et la vie *devraient être*' (1977: 7; original emphasis). This can be used in conjunction with Sartrean subjectivity, in that 'en créant l'homme que nous voulons être, [on] crée en même temps une image de l'homme tel que nous estimons qu'il doit être' (*EH*: 31-32).

The chapter has initiated the thesis's overarching aim of investigating the ways in which the Dada movement in general, and its art works in particular, proleptically react to the crisis of the post/modern individual in a way that aligns with a new philosophical outlook, particularly that of the French Existentialists. The use of interdisciplinarity and a constant sense of 'becoming' has begun to posit the

importance of ambiguity in Dada work and philosophy. The mask has been shown to form a central aspect of early Dada, geographically through the Zurich hub, and specifically through Taeuber, but also weaves its way throughout the movement, as we have seen through our Taeuber-satellite examples. Through both positive and negative aspects of fragmentation and assemblage we have seen how Existentialist notions of choice are important in Dada plastic arts and performance, contributing to the movement's conception of selfhood in the artistic world. We will now move into the exploration of a singular art form, film, in order to analyse notions of reality, building upon this first chapter's sense of the necessity to be 'hors de soi' to assess alienation in Dada cinema.
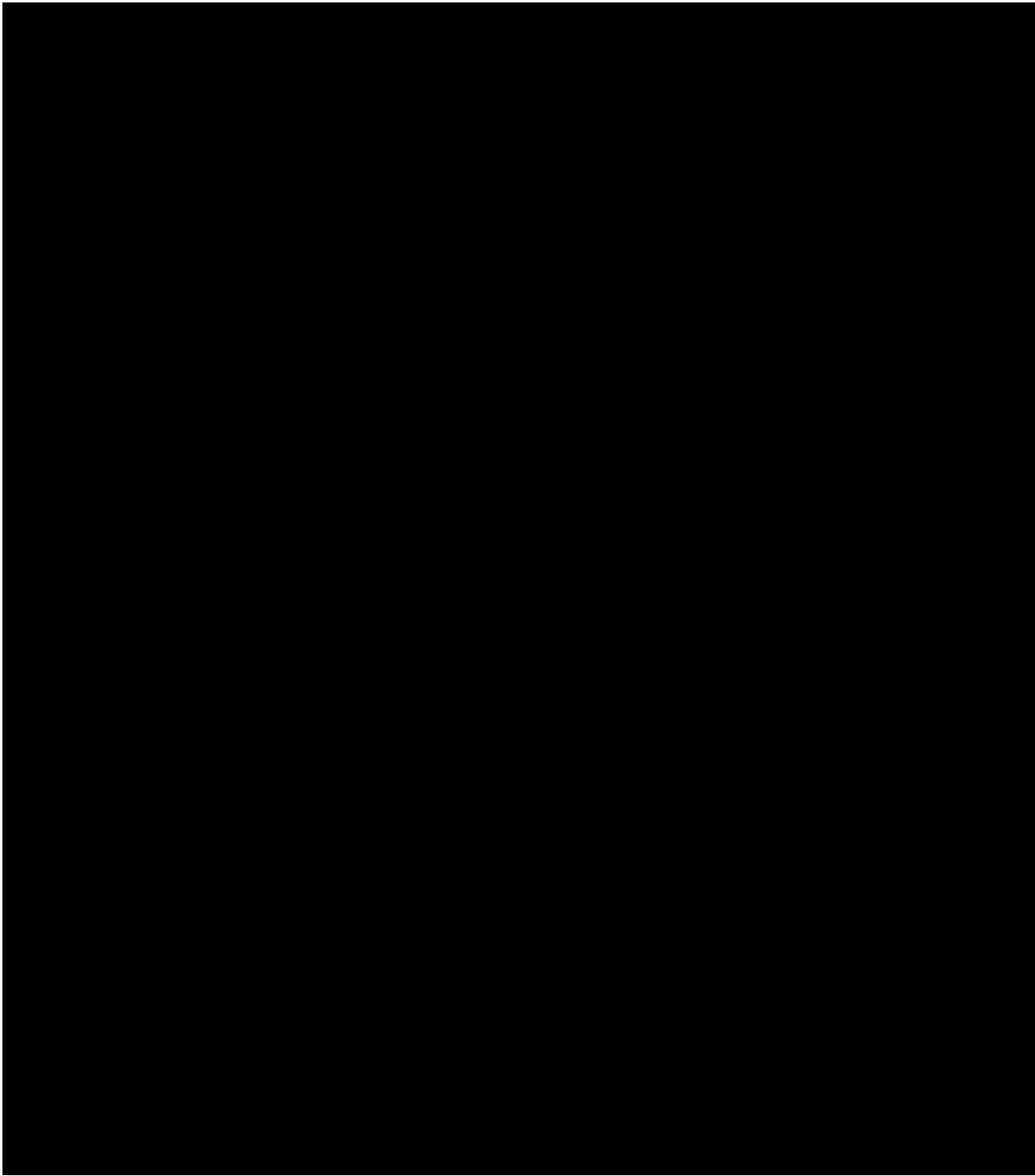
Figures 1-2:
Dada-Kopf (Portrait of Hans Arp) (1918), *Dada-Kopf* (1920)
Sophie Taeuber
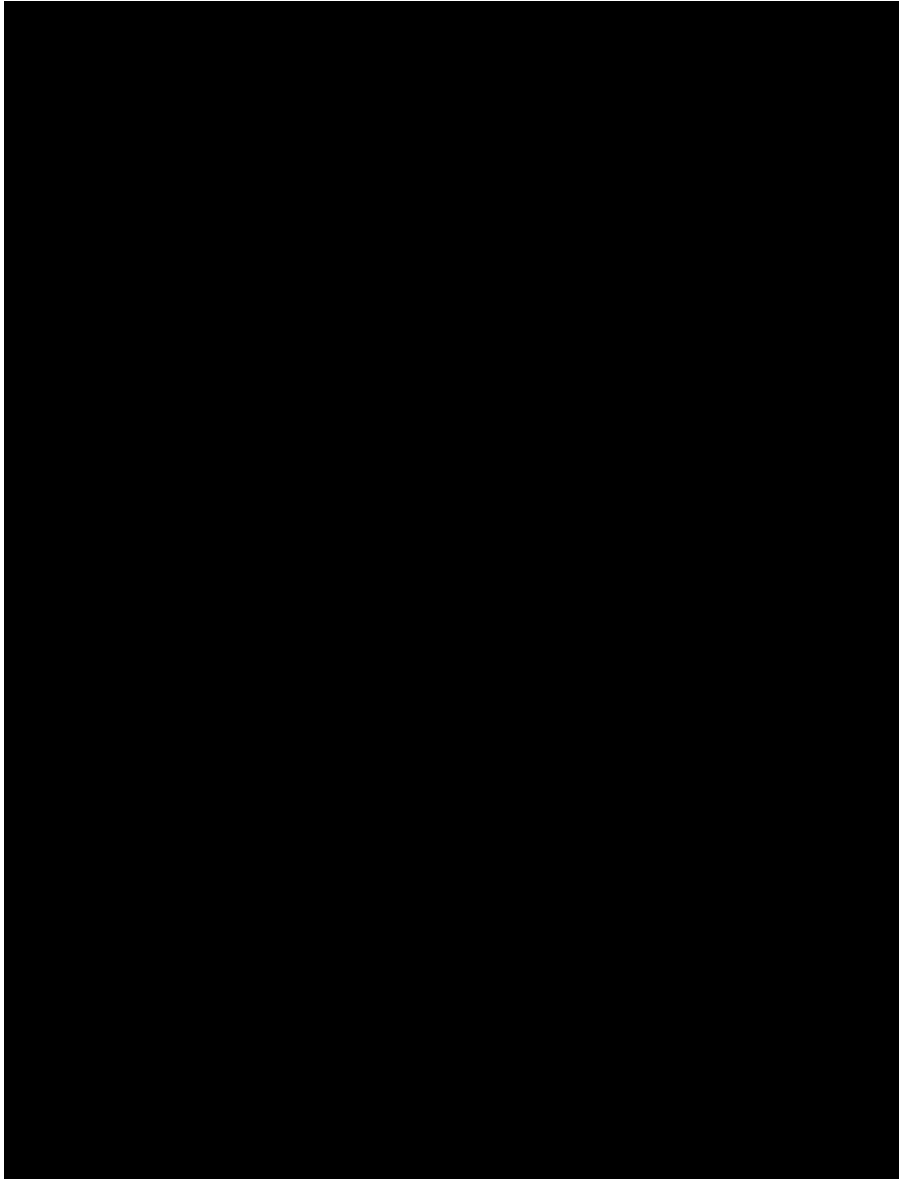
Fig. 3:
Assemblage on a Hand Mirror 1920/1922)
Kurt Schwitters
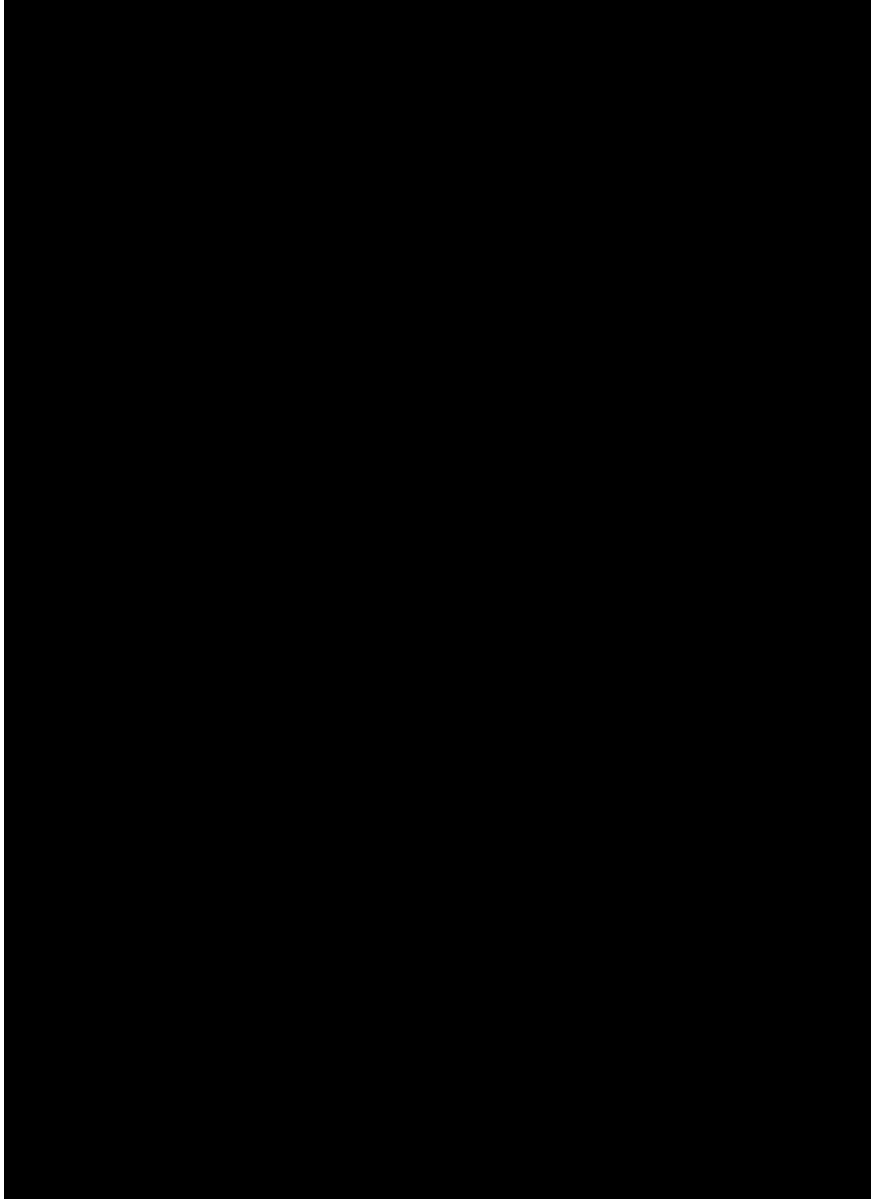
Fig. 4:
Mechanischer Kopf (der Geist unserer Zeit) (1919)
Raoul Hausmann

Fig. 5:
Hugo Ball Reciting his Sound Poem
1916
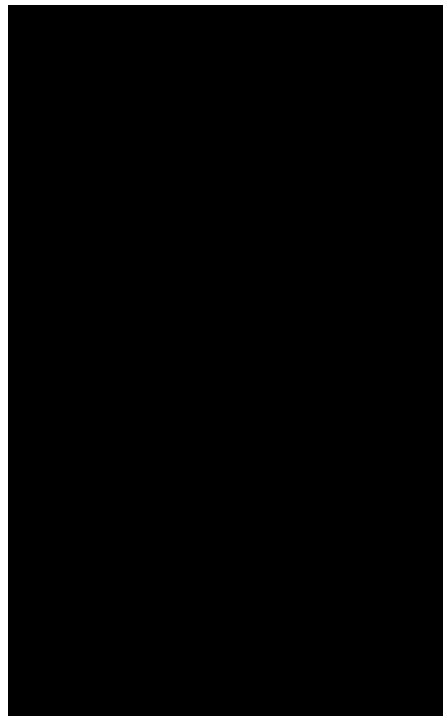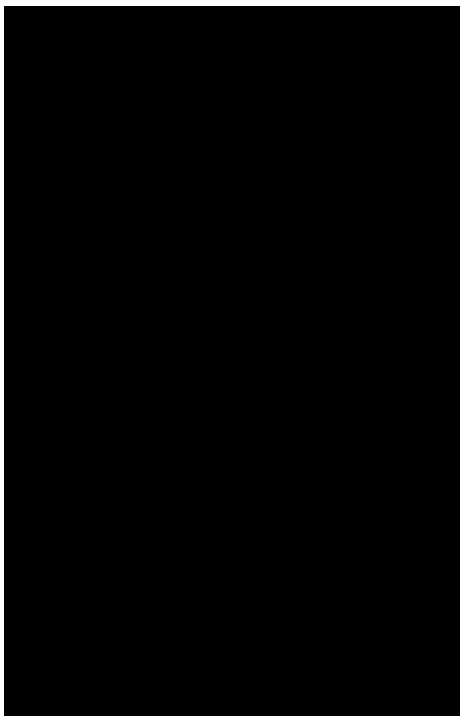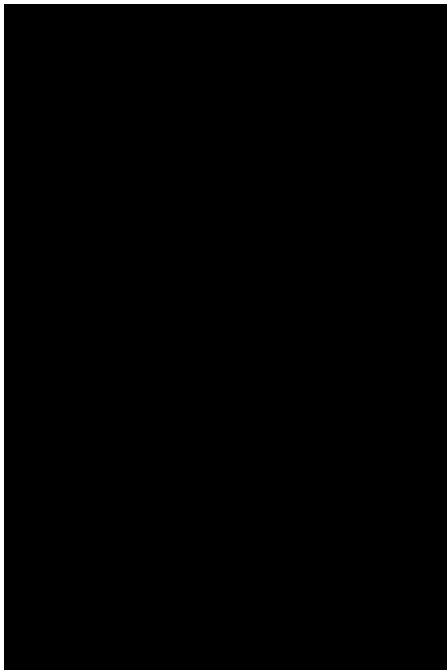
Figures 6-9 (c/w from t/l):
König Hirsch Puppets
Sophie Taeuber, 1918
Clockwise from top left: *Dr Komplex*, *Wache*, *König Deramo, Hirsch*
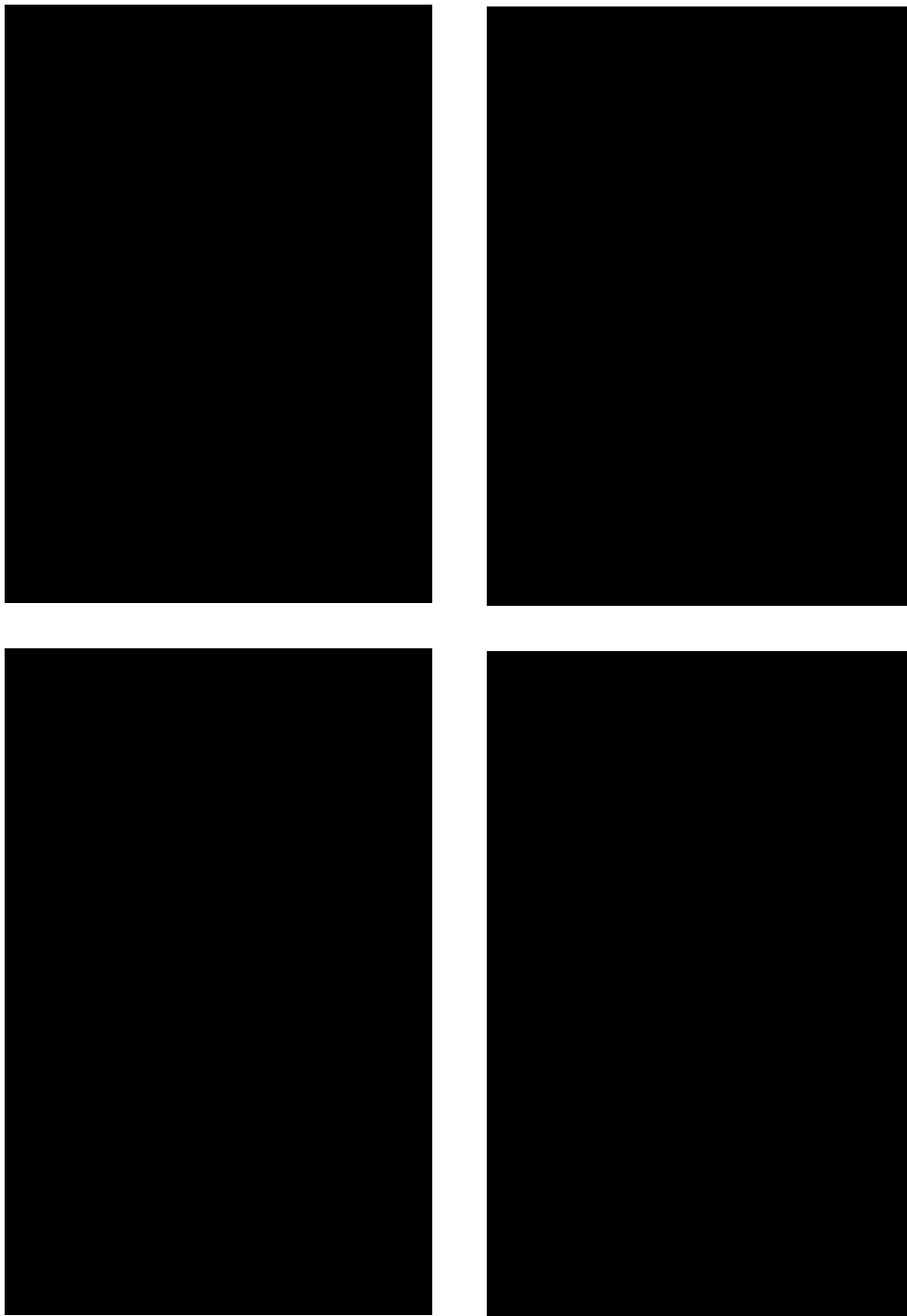
Figures 10-13 (c/w from t/l):
König Hirsch Puppets
Sophie Taeuber, 1918
Clockwise from top left: *Freud Analytikus, Tartaglia, Angela, Truffaldino*
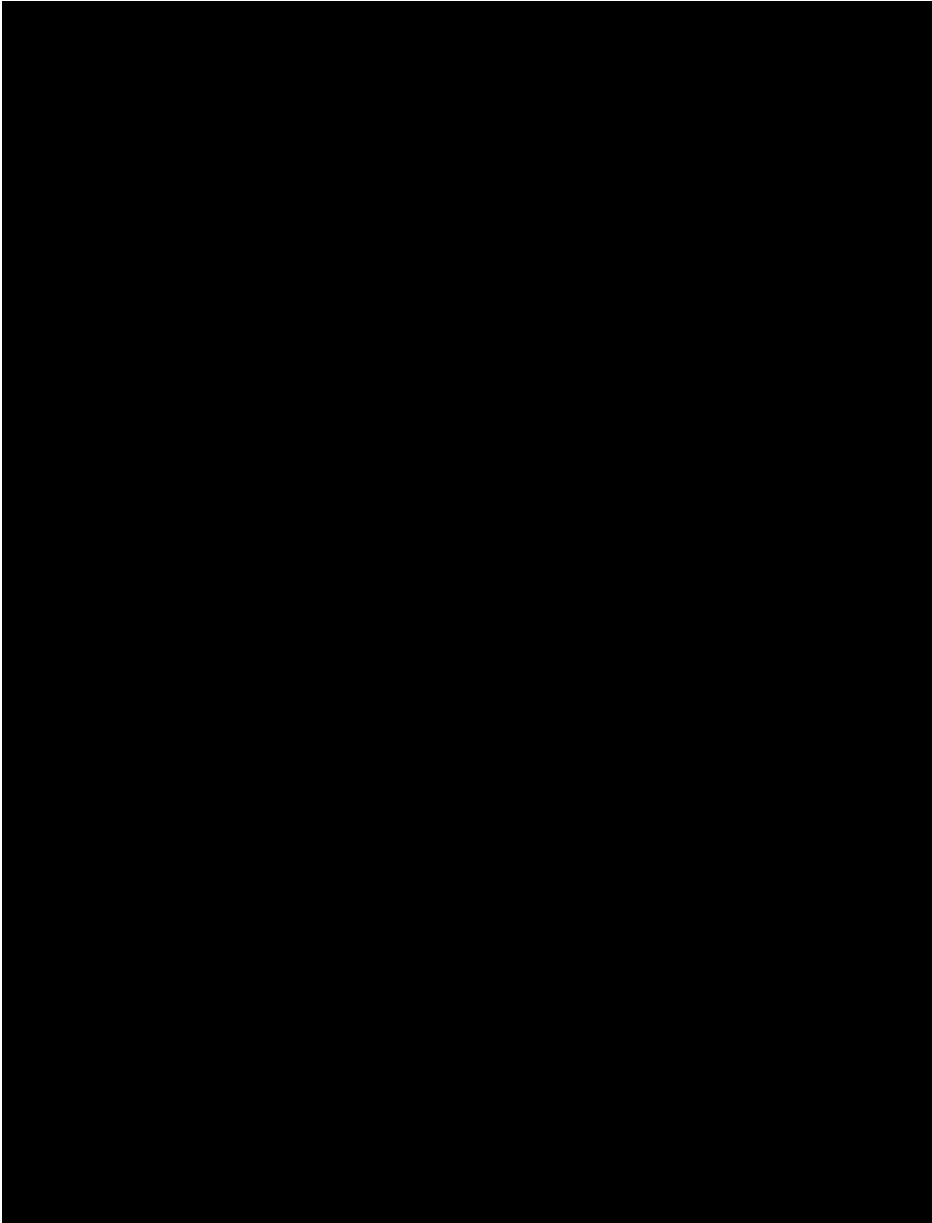
Fig. 14:
Dada Puppen
Hannah Höch, 1916
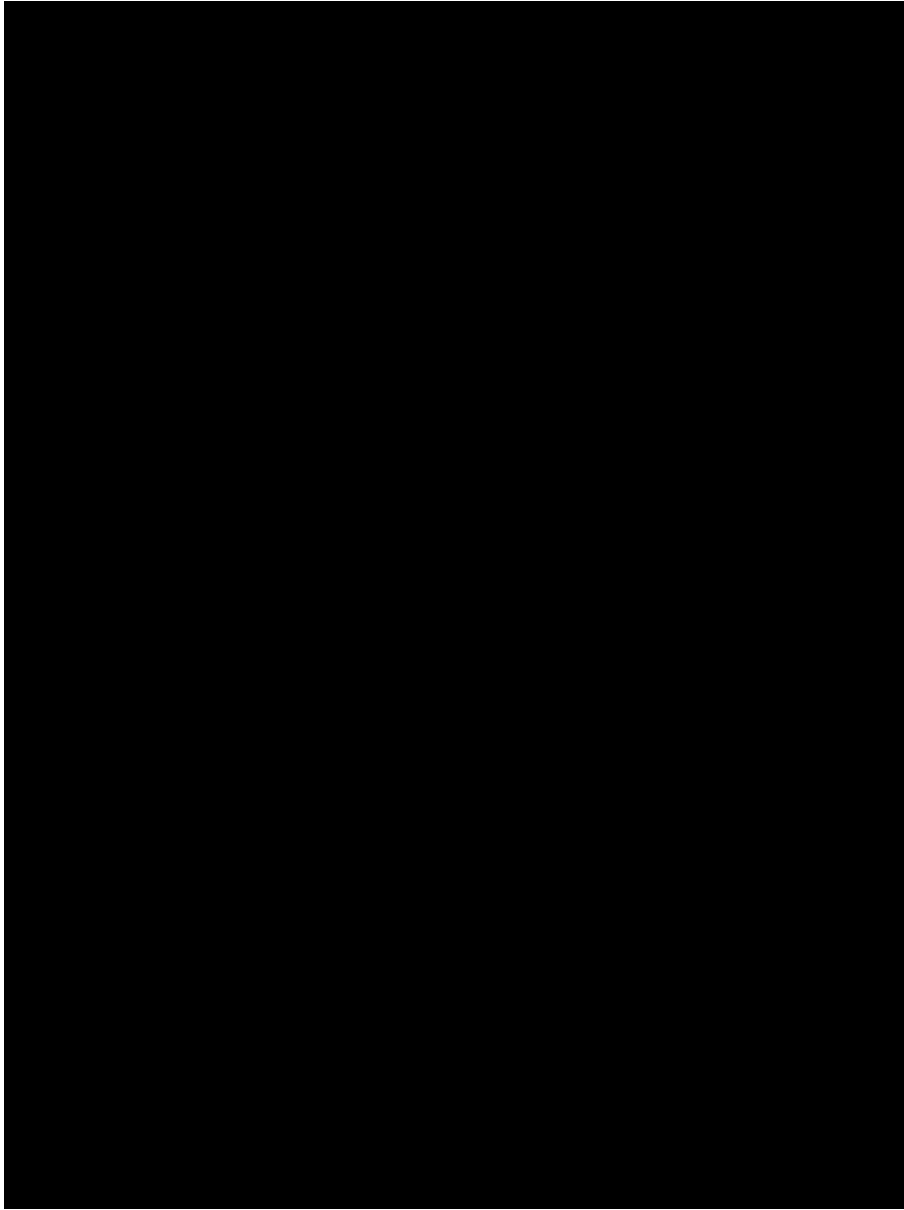
Fig. 15:
Masked Dada Dancer (Sophie Taeuber?)
Costume by Marcel Janco and Jean/Hans Arp, 1916
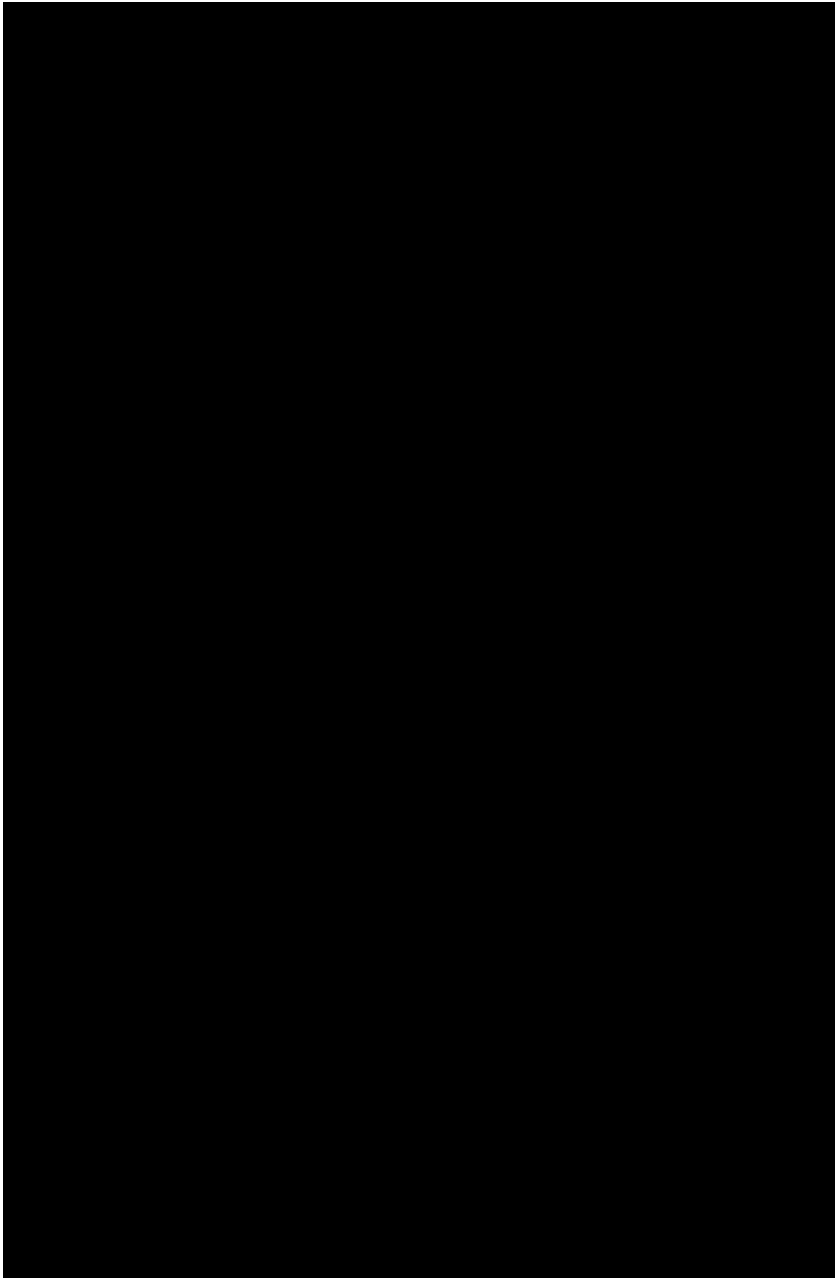
Fig. 16:
Sophie Taeuber and Erika Schlegel Wearing 'Hopi Indian' Costumes
Costumes by Sophie Taeuber, 1918-1920
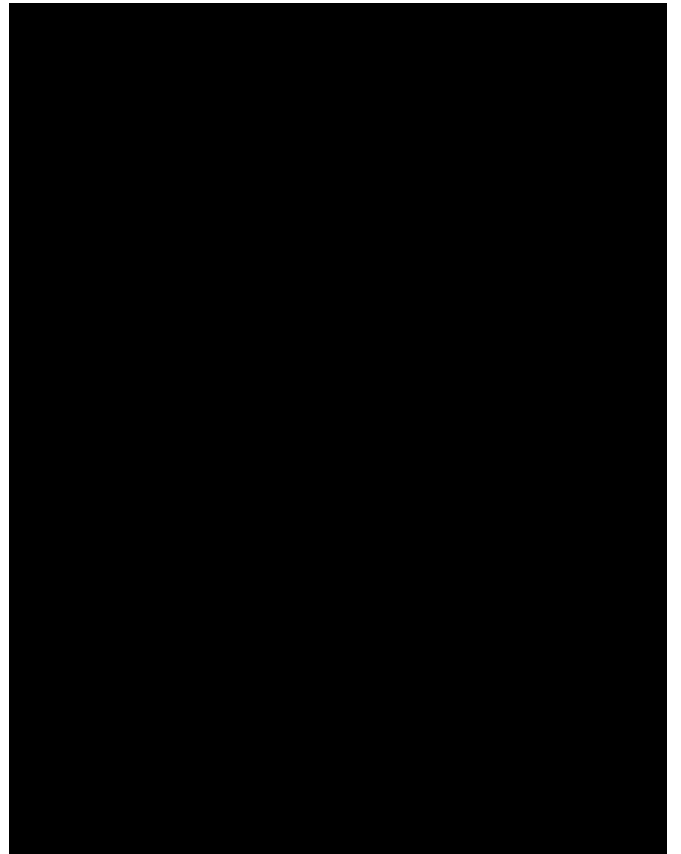
Figures 17-18:
Self-Portrait with Dada Kopf: 1, 2
Sophie Taeuber, 1920, 1926
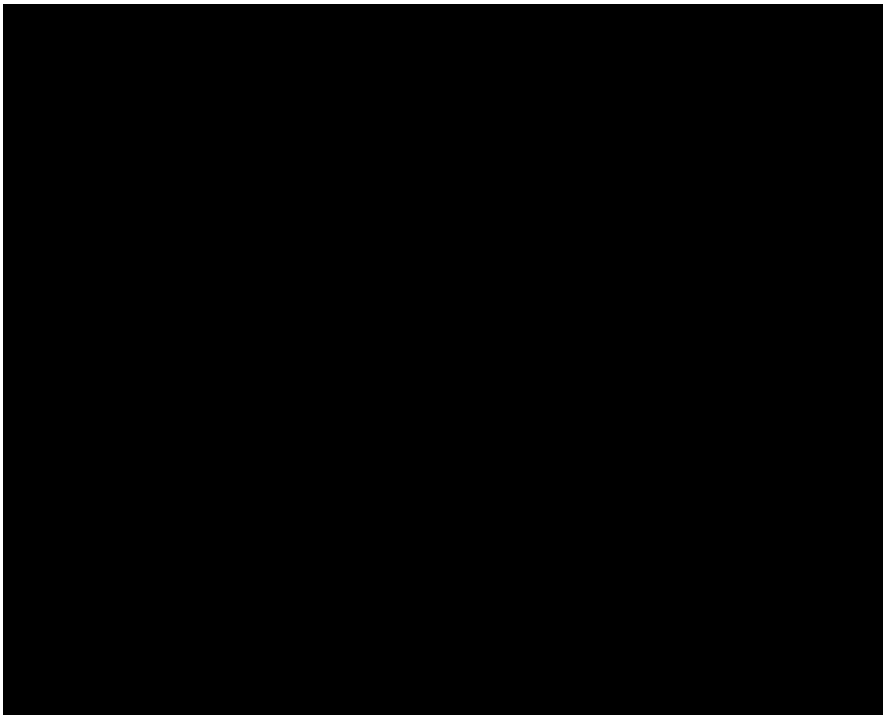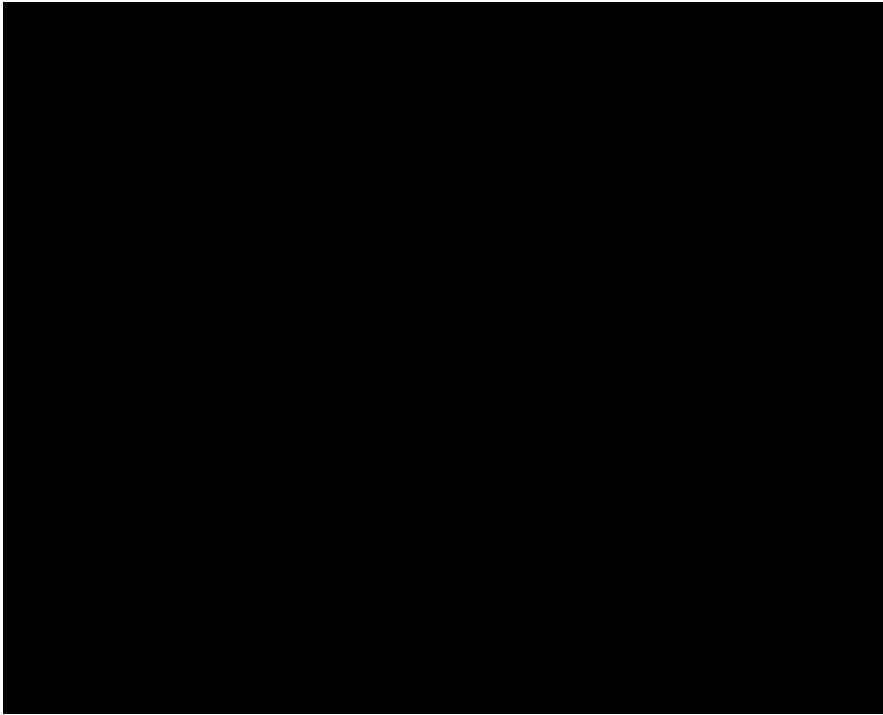
Figures 19-20:
Noire et blanche: 1, 2
Man Ray, 1926

- CHAPTER TWO -
'HOW AM I NOT MYSELF?' ALIENATION AND REALITY IN DADA FILM

Tempor(e)ality and Alienation

In his writing on the perception of temporality, Sartre deconstructs the notion of past and future, stating that 'le passé n'est plus, l'avenir n'est pas encore, quant au présent instantané, chacun sait bien qu'il n'est pas du tout, il est la limite d'une division infinie, comme le point sans dimension' (*EN*: 142). This insistence on the present is critically visible in cinema, which not only alters our sense of temporality, but its illusion of movement also masks an infinite division of life into snapshots, frames and 'dimensionless' reference points, allowing a temporary disengagement with lived experience of the world, a disconnection from standard associations and participation in a creative interpretation of reality. Dada film,[33] an abstract assemblage of flickering fragments, diaphanous distortion and constructed continuity, builds a rhythmic remanence that modifies perception with the view to destroy traditional narratives and blur artistic boundaries and reality.

Dada film embraces cinematic representation while revealing it as a construct of technology: this ambivalent relationship allows for a self-referential, self-critiquing approach that exposes the notion of truth as subjective and malleable. This approach constantly interrogates the notion of perception-as-construct as an extension of the Sartrean concept of the 'look' instigated in Chapter One, foregrounding an

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[33] While strictly speaking the notion of 'Dada' film is anachronistic, Elsaesser puts forward a number of compelling reasons to retrospectively consider and label several films in this way, including the testimony of Dadas such as Richter (see Kuenzli ed. 1996: 13-27). It is for these reasons, as well as a personal opinion of the presence of Dada characteristics in the films studied in this chapter, that I will apply the Dada label to several works.

externalisation of the Dada self '[en] se projetant et en se perdant hors de lui' (*EH*: 76). This use of vocabulary is instructive as it overlaps with that of film, through the use of '(se) projeter'. This is useful if we are to consider film as a projection of the self outside of the self, especially in relation to Sartre's notion that the individual is 'constamment hors de lui-même', giving an additional layer of alterity to this outsiderness.

This second chapter will investigate interpretations of alienation and the perception of reality in four Dada films: Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* (1923) and *Emak Bakia* (1926), Léger and Murphy's *Le Ballet mécanique* (1924) and Clair and Picabia's *Entr'acte* (1924). These four films will be analysed as presented (including assigned accompanying music) on the Re:Voir DVD. The music for *Entr'acte* and *Ballet mécanique* were both written for purpose, *Emak Bakia*'s involved post-production selection from Man Ray's private collection (informed by, but not identical to, the original screening conditions), and *Le Retour à la raison* was and always has been silent. The chapter will follow Chapter One's structure by maintaining a core focus on the work of Man Ray in interaction with a set of satellites.

These films will be scrutinised while drawing on their parallels with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's theories of perception and temporality, particularly through manipulation of both concepts as alienation of the self from reality. Man Ray achieves the effect of alienation through disconnection with reality not only through filming objects as external and physical presences, but also through working directly

onto the film reel in the form of his 'rayographs'. Léger and Murphy combine the filming of 'real' objects with shapes created and modified on frames, incorporating not only text but also colour, meticulously applied to their flickering geometric shapes. Clair and Picabia experiment with reality through speed and direction, manipulating both to question the viewer's perception of time.

In this chapter we will see that Dada film manipulates time, movement, and materiality to assemble meaning through patterns in, and essentially infinite alterations of, perception and reality, including aphasia,[34] pareidolia,[35] and a synaesthetic cross-wiring of senses.[36] The chapter will respond to this manipulation to ask: how does direct and indirect contact with the photographic film (through rayographs, chromatic alterations, and visual effects) alter the incredibly individual notion of the perception of space and time? Through this deliberate distortion of meaning, does Dada impose an aesthetic of perception, or *anaesthetic* of perception, an obliteration of reality or an alternative option? How should I continue to perceive myself, if I cannot be sure of the fundamental basis of my own perception? We have seen that Tzara, Camus and Sartre all considered the fundamental necessity of a viewpoint from a position outside of oneself (cf. Tzara in Buot 2002: 35; *MS*: 36; *EH*: 76). I will investigate the implications of being outside of oneself alongside the notion

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[34] Aphasia is a disorder in which the sufferer experiences disruptions in their ability to produce and interpret language.

[35] Pareidolia is a phenomenon which describes the way in which we might read images into others in an effort to impose order on the chaos of the world. A common example is the perception of recognisable shapes in clouds.

[36] Synaesthesia is a condition in which an individual experiences unusual sensory connections. A common example is seeing colours on hearing sounds.

of alienation, and starting from an existential question from a popular contemporary

film: 'How am I not myself?'.[37]

Filtering Reality

> *It is not so much the reality of the matter and its problematic solidity, as its representation of landmarks to designate space, making us conscious of it through time and our own existence, which attaches the thing of representative form to our mental life.*
> (Tzara in Schwarz ed. 1971: 104)

> *Reality only begins at the point where things peter out.*
> (*FT*: 53)

Man Ray had his own unconventional and active way of viewing and (re-)

interpreting film, filtering reality to suit his abstract approach. Describing his

behaviour during cinema visits, he says '[j]'ai inventé un système de prisme que

j'adaptais sur mes lunettes: je voyais ainsi, en couleurs et en images abstraites, des

films en noir et blanc qui m'ennuyaient' (in Hammond ed. 2001: 133). Ado Kyrou

relates that 'Man Ray has told me that if a film bores him he spontaneously

transforms it by blinking his eyes rapidly, by moving his fingers in front of his eyes,

making grilles of them, or placing a semi-transparent cloth over his face' (in ibid.

2001: 131). Man Ray's application of his unique filter to film is clearly reproduced in

his own work, forming his individual idea of how the world should appear.

By adapting the work of others with physical filters such as his hands, Man Ray

can be said to fulfil Tzara's above focus on designations of space through his

phalangeal 'landmarks' to individualise the films to his own time and experience.

These aspects are primarily evident in *Le Retour*, which is predominantly made up of

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[37] *I ♥ Huckabees* (2004): this quotation, within the general purview of the film, foregrounds an exploration of the nature of authentic identity.

rayographs. Additionally, we can transfer Man Ray's manipulation to *Ballet mécanique* which, although it does not use rayography, presents a rapid flickering of images reminiscent of Man Ray's spontaneous transformations through blinking. *Ballet mécanique* is a tightly packed flurry of incessant movement, a film which highlights and drives to absurdity the process of repetition, and the way in which any movement, natural or machine, can be mechanised when (re)presented over and over.

If we assume, via Merleau-Ponty (*PP*), that perception is learned through imitation and facilitated through experience, we still feel compelled to attach meaning to the meaningless and this will be done in an individualistic manner. This tension between experience and interpretation is evidenced in reactions to pictorial-based psychological tests (Rorschach, Gestalt), in which images are predetermined to resemble certain objects, and which have two important contrasting results. Most individuals will respond in a similar fashion to the identification of the images, but not to the interpretation of the effect of these images on them as individuals. Indeed, a notable by-product of these tests is the designation of non-standard responses as problematic. The fact then that images in Dada film (particularly rayograph images) often do not ostensibly carry a preconceived definition compounds the individualistic reaction to them.

Extending from this, we can posit movement of images as paradoxically assisting recognition, or improving perception, while presenting a decontextualised, false relation of movement to reality. *Emak Bakia* creates this effect by frequently

presenting objects that are perfectly recognisable, but non-functional (for example, a rotating shirt collar with no shirt or wearer). The use of objects in this way plays with their function in a similar way to the readymades: decontextualised, they become objects of aesthetic contemplation in their own right. While traditional meaning is never entirely lost, it becomes secondary, in these sequences, to the new sense provided by these dancing shapes.

Deleuze states that 'cinematographic movement is both condemned as unfaithful to the conditions of perception and also exalted as the new story capable of "drawing close to" the perceived and the perceiver, the world and perception' (1992: 57). Dada film embodies this paradox: the movement of images gives the false impression of providing context and sense to the objects, while clarifying nothing at all. This delicate balance between the habitually interpretable and the bewildering is reflected by Merleau-Ponty:

> Si la liberté ne souffre en face d'elle aucun motif, mon être au monde habituel est à chaque moment aussi fragile, les complexes que j'ai nourris de ma complaisaince pendant des années restent toujours aussi anodins, le geste de la liberté peut sans aucun effort les faire voler en éclats à l'instant. (*PP*: 505)

This ability of the free act to 'faire voler en éclats' is particularly applicable to the scattered, fragmented nature of many of Dada film's non-habitual images, and their effect on our dependence on habits of perception. Even *Entr'acte*, which is constructed around a form of narrative, is distorted to such an extent that it carefully (and ludically) destroys our sense of reality. Similarly, *Ballet mécanique* incorporates a Cubist Charlie Chaplin, who is identifiable as such but is demonstrably 'not himself'. Notably he ends the film being made to 'voler en éclats'.

Le Retour is made up largely of rayographs: images produced by placing objects

directly onto the photographic film and exposing them as pictures, 'contact imagery'

(Adams Sitney 1979: 100) that allows objects to be inscribed directly onto the film, as

if being experienced immediately and physically by the lens or eye, and thus

significantly reducing the distance between, or 'drawing close', the perceiver and the

perceived. These images produce an eerie effect of simultaneous presence and

absence, and of past and present, a suspension of being in time. As Knowles explains,

> The rayograph process provides a perfect example of a suspension since the images are literally suspended between presence and absence. The black background is the ultimate representation of nothingness, whilst the white imprint of the image delineates only where the object *was*. (2009: 72)

Thus Man Ray appears to simultaneously remove any distance between the (image

of the) object and the camera and remove the object entirely. What we perceive to be

the object is simply a (physical) memory of it. Through the realisation of this visual

trick we are left with a gap in perception, or an anti-perception: we perceive the

object precisely through its lack of being. In a sense, then, the rayographs align with

Sartre's theory that 'il s'agit de constituer la réalité-humaine comme un être qui est ce

qu'il n'est pas et qui n'est pas ce qu'il est' (*EN*: 93).

We may thus posit that Man Ray's 'contact imagery' provides the closest means

possible to overcoming the eye/camera divide through its ambiguous relationship

with absence. The rayographs are created, and viewed, purely through play of light.

Le Retour's combination of rayographs and 'real' filming lends a certain artificiality to

real objects, and a reality to the directly exposed objects. Fusing these two positions

of the camera, there is a point in *Emak Bakia* at which the camera is thrown into the

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air, thus becoming involved in the finished film, a disinterested participant as both subject and object through its absent physicality in this bizarre shot. Man Ray plays with this presence in his self-referential act that yet relinquishes authorial control, making the spectator more aware of the processes, and subjective creativity, of looking and seeing.

What is the significance of the removal of the camera from the photographic process? The direct physical contact with objects leads us to be tempted to view all cinematic shots in this new way (as flattened images), reducing depth of perception, as well as highlighting the mechanical process of cinema. How is the experience of perception affected by the use of juxtaposed sequences and unrelated, if not unrecognisable, images? We have seen that we learn to interpret the world through experience, so perhaps we do not recognise some of these objects because we have no experience of them from this unique perspective: 'there is a *rupture* between the image and the object to which it refers' (Knowles 2009: 105; my emphasis). In this way Man Ray succeeds in breaking down visual expectations, and with it standard patterns of association and disassociation.

There is a correlation between rayography and Christian Metz's analysis of film through his discussion of photography and Barthes:

> When we look at a photograph, says Roland Barthes, we do not see a presence "being there" – for this definition is too loose and can be applied to any copy – but a presence that "has been there." "We therefore have a new category of space-time: place present but time past – so that in still photography there is an illogical conjunction of *here* and *then*." This explains the photograph's quality of "real unreality". (1974: 5-6; original emphasis)

Barthes's designation of the photograph as displaying something as 'here and then' fits with the rayographs' rendering of objects simultaneously present and absent, in that the image is a simple remanence of an object that *was* present. The rayograph seems to answer the question 'How am I not myself?' with another question: 'Where was I myself?'. Furthermore, this space/time rupture renders the image 'étrang[ère] à [elle-]même' through its non-coincidence with self, an extension of the photographic non-identicality that we saw in Chapter One.

Like Man Ray, Léger expressed the desire to overexpose objects to reveal them in a new way. This is notably done through two effective techniques. Firstly, through excessive repetition, Léger noted that '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). Secondly, through exaggerated close-up viewing, '[v]ous les verrez tous ces fragments grandis cent fois, devenant un tout absolu, dramatique, comique, plastique, plus émouvant, plus captivant que le personnage du théâtre d'à côté' (Léger in Robertson 2011: 20). Through such close viewing we are presented with a paradox: the objects become 'un tout absolu' by their filling of the screen, and yet the limits of the screen often remove their natural edges. Through this the objects become simultaneously less identifiable (much like a sound with its attack removed), and a new whole in terms of their abstract assemblage, rather than a product of their traditionally quantifiable representational expectations.

Robertson states that

Although the film relies on the human body and everyday objects, the use of extreme close up and the rhythmic editing of its sequences decontextualizes these elements of reality and emphasizes them as pure form (2011: 21).

Both Léger and Man Ray's exposures evade meaning by their extremely close focus: their 'pure form' becomes more important than any meaningful association. Merleau-Ponty states that '[q]uand, dans un film, l'appareil se braque sur un objet et s'en rapproche pour nous le donner en gros plan, nous pouvons bien nous *rappeler* qu'il s'agit du cendrier ou de la main d'un personnage, nous ne l'identifions pas effectivement' (*PP*: 96; original emphasis). However, Man Ray and Léger rarely give us a view of the initial object: since we are forced to perceive purely in close-up, we cannot remember and instead have to find a way to identify what we see. Merleau-Ponty relates the close-up to the reinterpretation of the 'blank': 'en regardant attentivement la neige je décompose sa "blancheur" apparente qui se résout en un monde de reflets et de transparences' (*PP*: 255): we de- and reconstruct the pure form of the screen to produce new subjective possibilities.

Ballet mécanique shares *Le Retour*'s foregrounding of visual absence through a delight in manipulation of imagery, particularly through swinging or rotating objects, and reflective surfaces. These reflective objects play on presence and absence through their status both as object to be observed, and surface on which to perceive shapes, play of light, and even occasional views of the camera and authors. *Ballet mécanique* additionally exhibits an emphasis on verbal, written distortion. Although there is little written content, the single sequence, centred around the sentence 'on a volé un collier de perles de 5 millions', is layered with significance. This is a subtle

but not infrequent characteristic of Dada film, and while perhaps a residual attachment to traditional narrative, its lack of context usually removes our ability to relate to it, thus contributing to its destruction. It was reported in *Vogue* that the use of this sentence 'is upsetting because one's mind, hampered by literature, concludes that there must be meaning in it, whereas there isn't' (anonymous author, cited in Marcus 2007: 287). We might instead say that while the presence of disjointed written language in Dada film foregrounds a frustrating collection of linguistic shards, these fragments nevertheless carry semantic residue. The statement of 'on a volé' is therefore either (or both) declaimed as an impartial, independent event, objectively presented in clear white figures on a black background, or simply a starting point for a number of other interpretations.

The sentence itself makes explicit reference to removal, notably of a very valuable necklace. However, the absence of currency means that we are only presented with a large number, of empty significance. The fragmentation and repetition of this phrase adds to the sense of absence, as various pieces of information are removed, as well as altered. The number 5 is on one occasion replaced by a 3, bringing into question the validity or value of the theft. An insistence on the '0' figure visualises this nothingness on several levels, fitting with Sartre's claim that 'le néant introduit la quasi-multiplicité au sein de l'être' (*EN*: 172), multiple levels of nihilation that yet stem from the same source. Not only does the '0' figure often follow the fragment 'on a volé', thus negating the incidence (or the sense of accomplishment) of the theft entirely but, if this insistence on the white rounds is

representative of the constitutive pearls of said necklace, the shapes are yet hollow and empty. Finally we could interpret this succession as a rapid blinking of eyes or gaping mouths in shock (or sardonic enjoyment) at this bold claim.

This use of both visual and verbal absence and removal gives rise to a feeling of aphasia. As Merleau-Ponty describes the condition,

> quand il s'agit de troubles de l'intention verbale, comme dans la paraphasie littérale, où des lettres sont omises, déplacées ou ajoutées, et où le rhythme du mot est altéré, [il s'agit] d'un nivellement de la figure et du fond, d'une impuissance à structurer le mot et à en saisir la physionomie articulaire. (*PP*: 237)

Through this levelling of the figure and the background, our conventional ability to balance grounds is disrupted, and the consequent sense of removal effectively disconnects objects and sequences from potential meaning. Often partial meaning is given without indication of how to fill in the gaps, attempting to give us not nonsense but no-sense. We have seen this displacement through the 'on a volé' sequence in *Ballet mécanique*, but it is also particularly explicitly explored in *Le Retour*, which introduces a piece of 'writing' entirely made up of word-shaped blocks of black. The word-shaped blocks are suspended toward the out-of-field, in a state of simultaneous presence and absence. It is as if every word has been redacted, perhaps a humorous play on the idea of Ball's 'Verse ohne Worte' [Poems without Words].

Le Retour includes handwritten shapes in negative as rayographs, on which the artist's name is faintly inscribed and fleetingly presented, and the writing is made significantly less legible not only because it is backwards, but also because of their placement within the frame (that is, the frame becomes a cut-off point). The familiarity of handwriting is alienated from its usual function as the asemic becomes

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the 'tout absolu'. The constant tension between presence and absence in these films

provides a third option, that is, neither present nor absent, but both. We have seen

that the resulting effect of aphasia relies upon a removal of meaning, yet our films

show us that sense remains: a creative sense that stems from the viewer. We will now

look at a further example of the creative manipulation of perception: varying levels

of consciousness, through memory and dream.

Emerging Realities: Dreams and (Mis-)Remembering

[L]e souvenir nous présente l'être que nous étions avec une plénitude d'être qui lui confère une sorte de poésie.
(*EN*: 154)

Tant qu'on admet le rêve, la folie ou la perception, au moins comme absences de la réflexion […] on n'a pas le droit de niveler toutes les expériences en un seul monde, toutes les modalités de l'existence en une seule conscience.
(*PP*: 342)

On several occasions within *Emak Bakia* we are presented with the idea that

preceding material may have been false, imagined, or dreamed. For example, in a

sequence that plays on the eye/camera relationship, a woman in a car has false eyes

over her lids; later, natural lids open to natural eyes; later still, eyes painted on

eyelids open and close as if to render completely ambiguous the notion of

awakeness, as well as the objectivity of seeing. This layering can be used to illustrate

an 'anti-nivellement' of experiences and consciousness in relation to Merleau-Ponty's

description of the alternative worlds of dreams, reality and perception. As Edward

A. Aiken describes, '[b]oth the eye of the camera (its lens) and the painted eye are

boundaries between the inner world of dreams and memory and the outer world of

wakefulness and history' (1983: 243). Man Ray expressed the desire to blur

boundaries in this way when he described his artistic methods. He writes that 'I photographed as I painted, transforming the subject as a painter would, idealizing or deforming as freely as does a painter' (2012: 143). This method is evident in the painting of eyelids: filming and painting were part of the same creative process. The feeling of dream-like lack of explanation is exaggerated by the film's single intertitle, which reads 'La raison de cette extravagance', and is followed by a sequence which does nothing to explain the preceding sections. This ludic reference to reason while displaying the opposite is carried through from *Le Retour*, whose title implies that the film is the result of such a return. But a return from what? Is the disorder of Dada the return from a more disturbing external world?

Throughout *Emak Bakia*, narrative is implied but rarely satisfied. Knowles writes that '[c]onventional film relies heavily on memory for the piecing together of a gradually building narrative' (2009: 98), and Nichols that narrative 'overcomes the fetishizing lure of spectacle' and 'supplies techniques by which to introduce the moralizing perspective or social belief of an author' (2001: 589; 591). *Emak Bakia*'s refusal of narrative, through its continual insistence on waking, sleeping and re-arranging fragmented memories, demonstrates Dada's desire not only to embrace and project spectacle but also to repeatedly overwrite reality with multiple alternatives, perhaps as a response to the trauma of its time. Such responses are present in the photomontage works of many German Dadas: replacing parts of the imagery of war and destruction with comic alternatives provides a ludic rejection of

the events of the time of Dada, as well as an expressive venting seen through our puppets and dolls.

The reconstruction of memories additionally serves to change the present, which in turn leaves the future open as 'la possibilisation continuelle des possibles' (*EN*: 164). Stephen Foster states that 'Man Ray's objects permit initiation into the possible; they never demand it; they rarely ask for it' (in Peterson ed. 2001: 192): we can extend this designation of 'object' through photography and especially rayography, where the printed surface is the final result and not the object itself. We might assume that if Dada film lacked narrative, by Nichols's extension it also lacks morals to impose on the viewer. However, through Man Ray's film and Foster's analysis, we can posit instead that Dada simply did not wish to moral*ise*.

Entr'acte plays with the idea of memory and dream by distorting sequential action through repetition, and through the use of unreal speed and unnatural visual effects. Unlike *Emak Bakia* (and much Dada film), *Entr'acte* engages with narrative, yet it does this specifically through a ludic sequence of events which is consistent only in itself. This creates a feel of dreaming or mis-remembering, through the engagement with absurd events that nevertheless retain a sense of logical consistency in context. Sometimes we view events from an external or bird's eye point of view, at other times we are 'actively' involved through the use of first person (for instance, we can perceive ourselves to be present on the rollercoaster, whereas we watch the events of the chess game as a passive spectator). To this we can apply a playful take on Sartre's theory of the look as reciprocally objectifying of others and the self (*EN*:

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292-341), as well as representing an active engagement with the self from within and without (as initiated in Chapter One).

Entr'acte is structured around a journey turned on its head. It begins with a funeral procession (an ending), and ends with a false ending, the expulsion of a character through a screen marked "FIN", only to be kicked back whence he came. This final scene contains humorous connotations of birth or emergence through the bursting through of the character: an enforced new beginning through the (literal) destruction of 'the end'. The narrative progression speeds up as the film evolves, not only reducing any feeling of control over this dream, but also playing with the perception of the passage of time.[38] This notion of bodily journey as well as changing perspective can be compared to Merleau-Ponty's statement that

> quand je m'absorbe dans mon corps, mes yeux ne me donnent que l'enveloppe sensible des choses et celle des autres hommes, les choses elles-mêmes sont frappées d'irréalité, les comportements se décomposent dans l'absurde, le présent même, comme dans la fausse reconnaissance, perd sa consistance et vire à l'éternité. (*PP*: 203-04)

Entr'acte creates a narrative in which the body folds in on itself, foregrounding a sense of 'irréalité' that devolves over the course of the accelerating film into a timeless absurdity.

In addition to this ludic relationship with dream and reality, through its use of superimposition *Entr'acte* engages in a sense of pareidolia. This is done most notably through a building structured from columns, which then multiply and are set in

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[38] This additionally correlates with the concept of time seeming to pass more quickly with age, by virtue of a time value constantly representing a smaller percentage of a lifespan. Thus, we perceive action and events as passing more quickly as the life of the film comes to a close.

motion. This not only makes us question their directionality and purpose, but also

allows us to see other things developing from their distortion. For instance, at one

point the columns are made to look like stairs, at another a grid or chess board.

Another instance of pareidolic superimposition is the filming of an ominous looking

pair of upside-down eyes over water, with the addition of the movement of a

ballerina dancing. Though the eyes stare statically at us, we are given the impression

of blinking motion through the fluttering of the ballerina's skirts. The 'look' is

distorted by our own misperception. This pareidolia is strengthened by the film's

obsessive rhythm which, as Turvey writes, 'functions – along with plastic properties

such as shape and texture – to encourage the spectator to notice abstract similarities

between the mechanical and the non-mechanical objects the shots depict' (2011: 59). I

would argue that it is more than this: the rhythm functions to disrupt our perception

of connections between objects in order that we reorganise reality for ourselves.

Through our analysis of these effects it is clear that when we are confronted

with visual ambiguity, we are inclined to instinctively invent and impose our own

sense of logic on what we see. In the opening sequence of *Le Retour*, we are presented

with a set of grainy rayographs which Man Ray made by sprinkling salt and pepper

across the film strip. The setting in motion of these prints provokes ghostly white

images to form across the gritty screen even though beyond the arbitrary sprinkling

of fragments, there can be perceived to be 'nothing there'. Through the animation of

areas of increased density, we can perceive in these 'whiter' parts a shapeless form

moving from left to right, followed by a flutter of particles that suggests a

kaleidoscope of butterflies. Described as 'une curieuse chute de neige métallique' (Kyrou 1963: 174), these sequences allow Man Ray to elevate mundane fragments of reality by exposing them close-up, animating the inanimate, and inviting new expressive possibilities. These enlargements allow us to see objects in a detail that we would not normally perceive, as well as allowing objects to be 'revealed – and reveiled, […] in all their fulsome, hieratic mystery' (Hammond ed.: 7). Man Ray exchanges the goal of the faithful reproduction of reality for one of re-interpretation, seeking to replace commonly accepted normalcy with a constructed perception, or an evolving, creative receptivity.

The multifaceted interpretability of these images allows for new, multiple truth through ambiguity.[39] This relationship between truth and reality creates composite perception that is both additive and interpretive. Dada film plays on memory and dream in a similar way as it does on presence and absence: the world is presented in such a way that we are made to believe we are dreaming, but that does not indicate what aspects are to be considered 'waking' reality. Merleau-Ponty states that '[s]ans le réveil, les rêves ne seraient que des modulations instantanées et n'existeraient pas même pour nous' (*PP*: 345). Thus ambiguity of waking reality puts our perception into a state of simultaneous position of presence and absence, 'suspended' like the rayographs.

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[39] This ambiguity is also present in Dada plastic art, for instance in the work of Arp, whose 'radically simplified forms open them up to various possible interpretations which sometimes conflict with their designated labels' (Robertson in Adamowicz and Robertson eds 2011: 88).

A further extension of the worlds of dreaming and waking is afforded via the notion of darkness and light. Sartre describes a particular example of this through blinking in his *Huis Clos*:

> Un clin d'œil, ça s'appelait. Un petit éclair noir, un rideau qui tombe et qui se relève: la coupure est faite. L'œil s'humecte, le monde s'anéantit. Vous ne pouvez pas savoir combien c'était rafraîchissant. Quatre mille repos dans une heure. Quatre mille petites évasions. (*HC*: 17-18)

Sartre's character presents a description of the blink of an eye which reminds us not only of Man Ray's filtering techniques (including blinking) but also of the cinematic process itelf, which our minds perceive to present image after image but which actually totals over a third darkness. We are generally not consciously aware of the 'coupure' that blinking imposes, nor are we conscious of the darkness that separates the cinematic images. In fact, it is thought to aid our perception of movement.[40]

Man Ray plays on our perceptions of dark and light, bringing in – especially through *Le Retour* – a strong contrast between light and shadow or, as Levy describes it, 'painting with light' (1936: 22). An extension of the theme of presence and absence, Man Ray's use of light and shadow evokes the aforementioned images of the Gestalt method, and invite us to question, through the use of both images and their negatives, whether we are seeing an object or its surroundings. As Sartre tells us, '[a]ucun objet, aucun groupe d'objets n'est spécialement désigné pour s'organiser en fond ou en forme: tout dépend de la direction de mon attention' (*EN*: 44). There is a deliberate misdirecting of attention within Dada film: despite the inevitable linearity of the film strip, we are not given direction in which to guide our viewing of a

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[40] This is notably disrupted in contemporary cinema's recent experiments with HFR, which received mixed reviews as the process was found by many viewers to be disorientating.

collage of image sequences. We have seen that through this ambiguity of light, shadow and shape, we sometimes imagine movement, and of course with the rayographs we are always viewing an object in its absence: we see it only through its shadow of being.

Notably, most light used in Man Ray's films is artificial, which contributes to the constructed nature of the cinematic process, as well as being indicative of both a fascination for modern life and a desire for artistic control. However, *Le Retour* demonstrates a manipulation of the indeterminacy of natural light: a nude female torso turns back and forth in the light filtering through a slatted blind in a way that gently stripes and distorts the body. Ramona Fotiade highlights that '[t]he moving torso serves as a screen on which shadows of the curtain pattern are projected', and that this creates a 'stunning transformation of the human body into a quasi-spectral apparition, through the play of light and shadow' (in Adamowicz and Robertson eds 2012: 90). This (literally) embodies Levy's description of 'painting with light', and highlights a certain grace not acquired through the use of artificial light. This grace is reflected when an egg-crate is suspended and turned, and its shadow forms as important a part of the frame as the original object.

These sections contrast with the use of light and shadow in the rayographs, in the latter's fixed, exposed nature. The moments of natural light go some way to disguising the mechanical nature of cinema and reversing the rayographs' flattening of the field of perception. Both of these distortions playfully interact with perception in a way that brings into question the subjectivity of seeing: Sartre states that 'le jeu

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[…] enlève au réel sa réalité', and that 'le jeu, en effet […] délivre la subjectivité' (*EN*: 626). Dada film foregrounds the usefulness of play through its ability to highlight the fragile status of the 'real' appearance of 'reality', and to release a greater sense of subjectivity based in choice.

While rayographs demonstrate a fascination with the manipulation of light and shadow through the flattening of images, *Emak Bakia* extends this into an interrogation of the shades of separation, breaking down this binary through the use of focus and blurring. A particular point of importance is a sequence in which a glass cube is rotated, all the while moving in and out of focus. This has the effect of reducing the object to a 2D construction, foregrounding the formal properties of the image and the effect this has on the composition of the screen. We are made aware of the shapes and surfaces of objects, which then become a play on light and shadow, disassociating with the meaning or function of the object itself, as well as the idea of figure and ground (as we saw through Sartre and Merleau-Ponty). We become aware of the objects' shared edges with their environment as part of a greater pictoral whole. The use of mirrors and prisms furthers this flattening: distorting shapes to render them unrecognisable patterns on the surface of the screen, in perpetually subjectless self-reflection as a reinterpretation of time and space. Combined with varying speeds of image rotation, the process highlights the necessity of slower movement in allowing for 'the formal details of the object to be absorbed' (Knowles 2009: 80). This notion of absorption of qualities of the object continues our tension between learned and active perception.

In an additional connection with Man Ray's playful light and shadow painting, we see briefly in *Emak Bakia* the filming of windows, through which light and shadow are allowed to pass and play. However, in this case the windows initially appear as the white shapes they form on the surface of the film rather than as transparent means of viewing the world. Similarly, we do not perceive them as reflections (which would be one means of explaining their opacity). Rather, the most immediately recognisable shapes dominate, especially in continuation of the rayographs and Man Ray's presentation of objects as geometrically symmetrical. This presentation privileges a reduction of depth of focus over the interpretation of these objects in their practical function, perhaps because of their movement, which disrupts perception through the distortion of anticipated qualities of the object.

Man Ray's use of shadow also leads us to question the nature of 'blank' in film: can it be either white *or* black? We can relate this to the nature of viewing through either projection onto a white screen, as would have been the case at the time, and viewing today on a television or computer screen, which is black, backlit in a way that reverses the direction of projected light in relation to the viewer and thereby plays with our notions of looking and being seen, and in extension, our notions of self as subject and object. In both cases the physicality of the screen is unaltered through the performance: any modifications are illusory. Knowles describes light as 'formless' and shadow as having 'defined contours' (2009: 130). However, we might argue that Man Ray creates a balance in which we are not able to objectively identify the defining focus of attention, thus making both light and shadow occupy the same

level of formlessness through their mutual dependence. The point at which light and shadow meet is often foregrounded, especially when images are used both as originals and in their negative (and as we saw in Chapter One's photographs). Moreover if the inversion of absence is also absence, these objects are only perceivable as memory. As Merleau-Ponty states, '[l]'intérieur et l'extérieur sont inséparables. Le monde est tout au-dedans et je suis tout hors de moi' (*PP*: 469).

Our analysis of limits and contours in light and shadow leads us to scrutinise the idea of edges and frames. The frame, in terms of the edges of the screen, presents shots as 'slices of space' that are 'not just to be seen': they are 'legible as well as visible' (Deleuze 1992: 25; 12; ibid.), hence our inherent desire to see (or 'read') things in formless images, a pareidolic effort to make sense of chaos. We saw in Chapter One the importance of the reciprocity of looking; here it is transferred from looking to seeing, and from seeing to interpreting. But the frame is also important because of what it *excludes*. Thus even though the sequences of rayographs appear illogical and their content aleatoric, the selection of images in *Le Retour* gain significance from having been chosen, and the content of those images as cut off at a certain point. We have also seen that the presence of particular content can then lead us to remember things that were not technically there.

This tension is additionally instructive when considered in the context of *Le Retour*'s original screening, where the film broke several times. This not only introduced additional edges for the viewer through cuts, but was also a source of appreciation for Man Ray, who wrote that the breaking 'may have induced the public

to imagine that there was much more to the film, and that they had missed the import of the *Return to Reason*' (2012: 262). Man Ray's playing with edges reminds us of the 'idea that the frame need not constitute the fixed edges of a work, and the related notion that the canvas [screen/frame] can be considered as simply a convenient extract of a much larger whole' (Lejeune 2012: 142). Man Ray's work plays on a tension between images that have been selected, and images that are simply part of a larger pattern.

Beyond the frame is the out-of-field, which Deleuze claims 'refers to what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present' (1992: 16). This is made particularly explicit in the 'merry-go-round' sequences of *Le Retour*, which focus on the movement of the lights on the top of the construction, cutting out the mechanism which makes this movement possible. This is also cut out when the camera is moved to ride on the merry-go-round: we see the 'outside' passing by, yet we cannot see what makes us, in the point-of-view shot, move.[41] Although the two types of filming initially seem very different, there remains a certain consistency between the contact and non-contact imagery. While there is a difference in movement – the rayographs have a flickering effect; the 'real' objects revolve – when it comes to the framing of the content, there is a notable shared quality. That is, the notion of the frame as not only containing, but also cutting off.

Of the non-contact imagery, only the egg-crate is seen in its entirety, and even then only briefly, as well as remaining attached to the line by which it spins. All other

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[41] We saw a similar effect created in *Entr'acte* with its manipulation of personal perspective, particularly through the rollercoaster sequence.

objects are cut off before their edges: in this respect the photographic film creates new edges where there was continuity, giving a level of artistic control, as well as a feeling of continuity between the two different kinds of 'close up' filming. This notion of being outside of the field of vision can be related to the notion of self and other, and through this, to an anxious sense of alienation. Through the out-of-field's constant presence a gaze beyond the viewer's control is created. Additionally, the edges of the screen create a keyhole not unlike Sartre's example of the 'look', whereby the individual is alienated from themselves through being viewed in this overtly active looking position. Sartre writes that 'l'aliénation de moi qu'est *l'être-regardé* implique l'aliénation du monde que j'organise' (*EN*: 302; original emphasis). Thus Dada film's notion of cutting off and viewing through the keyhole constituted by the frame places the viewer in a constant state of uncertainty of their relationship with (the representation of) reality.

We have seen the use of geometric shapes in *Ballet mécanique* as alterable repetition, but they can also be considered templates, or frames. Their translucent, coloured middles select a part of the frame to be viewed, yet are only altered by colour. A similar use of frames within frames can be seen through the use of shapes that move over a face, dividing it into fragments and creating slices of space through slices of face. Deleuze's comments on the out-of-field are particularly relevant here: at any given moment sections of the face are 'neither seen nor understood', but 'perfectly present' (in the case of the face we write in its missing parts through our relationship with our experience of ideal proportion). Yet since at any moment the

out-of-field can (and does) become in-field, the frame is misleading and ambiguous: everything is simultaneously both present and absent. It is the frame and the edges of field that move, rather than the content. This is compounded when the woman changes her expression, then combines passing a hand over her face while again changing expression. The further division of the screen means that frame, content, and frame within content are all in motion simultaneously, something that is extended when combined with the aforementioned kaleidoscopic vision produced by prisms, which subdivide the frame while multiplying its content.[42] This has the additional effect of multiplying the look by multiplying the 'keyhole', made particularly evident through the use of a human subject.

Beyond the effects of the visual out-of-field, *Emak Bakia* demonstrates a linguistic out-of-field in the scenes where words made up of lights pass the screen, but are cut in various places to deprive us of their whole message. The messages appear to be advertisements for events, with examples such as 'chaque soir à 'magic city'' which are playfully inviting but never fully informative (knowing what happens in 'magic city' necessitates external familiarity with the fairground of this name). Meaning is either lost or must be replaced, yet no indication is given of the content of this replacement. We have seen this emphasised in the film's single intertitle, 'La raison de cette extravagance', which is almost a complete sentence, yet lacks both the written information required to complete it, and the visual continuity

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[42] We also see the edges of the frame that the woman holds and moves over her face. Another example of a frame within a frame is the 'on a volé' sequence, when focus is put on the '0' figure. The round makes a frame, but simply frames part of the black background. Essentially, it frames (highlights) nothingness itself.

to support it.[43] Knowles writes that '[t]he nonsensical nature of the bulletin seems to refer to the illogical progression of images, since they both evade conventional cinematic systems of signification' (in Adamowicz and Robertson eds 2012: 83). We can then designate the intertitle as even more illogical: it makes no sense by itself and it does nothing to explain the 'illogical progression of images'. The relationship between edges and frames and the out-of-field expands our aforementioned explorations of presence and absence. The out-of-field is simultaneously present and absent, and this latter is particularly strongly highlighted through its inaccessibility to the viewer in the finished product of the film.

Merging Realities: The Superimposition of Time and Space

Man Ray described *Emak Bakia* as '[a] series of fragments, a cine-poem with a certain optical sequence mak[ing] up a whole that still remains a fragment' (1927: 40), imparting upon it an additional, yet implicit, layer of signification. Fragments always imply a temporally displaced whole, either as a thing that once was or a thing that will be, in the Deleuzian 'paradox of infinite identity' (2004: 4). This gives a multifaceted and assembled memory to the construction of the sequences, linking memory and poetry by a 'plénitude d'être' (*EN*: 154). The fragmentation that Man Ray achieves allows for the replacement of narrative with episodes, memories or dreams, and through montage as 'the determination of the whole […] by means of continuities, cutting and false continuities' (Deleuze 1992: 29).

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[43]Aiken notes that '[t]he motion and the cryptic nature of the worded electric sign also form a bridge between the opening titles and subsequent worded shots' (1983: 242). This simultaneously provides a sense of continuity and a false sense of meaning, in a very Dada manipulation of reality.

This fragmentation of the whole is emphasised in *Le Retour*, which is structured in such a way that difference is highlighted strongly. Two of the ways in which this is effective with the rayographs is the juxtaposition of singularity with multiplicity – as in the single tack and the scattered nails – and also through symmetry of shapes and frames. The nails are identical and perfectly symmetrical, whereas the tack becomes deformed and asymmetric, something which is underlined by its solo appearance. Yet through its deformation, the tack forms a fragmented whole of black and white parts, a highly individual, contained multiplicity as instructively seen in our analysis of Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe*. We also see a number of springs filmed, as well as an isolated single spring. The multiplicity draws out a focus on the undifferentiated mass; when one is singled out, we are more aware of the object's formal qualities (and lack thereof through the spring's non-habitual fixity), as well as those of the screen itself. Shared edges begin to break down the idea of foreground/background, adding to the idea of positive and negative space.

Ballet mécanique plays on the possibility of multiplicity through the repetition of the singular, especially in relation to the mechanisation of human aspects. Faces and bodies are made into objects, and human actions are rendered objective, alienating the notion of the self from its humanity. A particularly explicit mechanisation of the human is the scene portraying a washerwoman's ascent of a flight of stairs. The repetition of this action initially gives an impression of ease, since the heavy burden is able to be transported several times with no extra effort. However, it simultaneously gives a sense of strain on the viewer, or 'exasperation' (as we have

seen Léger describe it). In a sense the task is depersonalised: it becomes a source of mass irritation beyond its original function of personal and individual endurance. Also notable is the reduction of the sound at this point: not in terms of volume, but in terms of texture. The repetition is highlighted all the more by its simplicity.

Colour in *Ballet mécanique* is subtly used to alter repetition: we are aware of a flickering between circles and triangles, and assume them to be identical and repeating. However, the coloured versions demonstrate a difference within this uniformity. Blotches and inconsistencies indicate the fact that each of these frames has been individually hand-painted. This very human difference contrasts with the synthetic multiplicity acquired from the use of mirrors and prisms: the repetition is precise and ostensibly identical,[44] and yet we are less inclined to believe it. The artificial multiplicity strikingly raises the impression of the subjectivity of vision, with its tendency to 'correct' the imperfection of the coloured shapes as incorporated into our sense of progression. In contrast the cubist fragmentation of objects via their reflections is left to stand out. Although we do not understand it, we accept the aporetic symbolism of the geometric shapes, while we question the fragments even though they carry more signifiers.

Within the context of shapes we can note a difference in the treatment of dimensionality. Some shapes, as we saw with the tack, are flattened and given a two-dimensional quality, highlighting their contours as part of the surface of the

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[44] As well as self-referential in its self-replication. This reaches disturbing proportions when a repeated action of a machine is viewed through the prism, multiplying its insect-like limbs without revealing its purpose. The motion is not affected when the machine is moved around as a whole: it simply continues indefinitely.

photographic film. Others, as in the building blocks used in *Emak Bakia*, are used in a three-dimensional function, allowing for a greater depth of field (and perception?), and furthermore are used to build other things. The building blocks are stacked and assembled to form a somewhat abstract building: meaninglessness is foregrounded though functionality is implicit. These blocks are all symmetrical and yet are stacked in such a way that resembles a quasi-organised chaos. They are also placed in front of – and from a surface perspective, also on top of – a two-dimensional image, creating a tangle of visual imagery and implying a hierarchy of dimensions (in this case, 3D over 2D).

We have seen that the disjointed feel evoked by fragmentation is accentuated by the use of textual 'markers' such as 'La raison de cette extravagance'. This can be compared to the rayographs' suspension of presence and absence through lack, as well as through the use of superimposition, which creates a different kind of suspension through multiplicity, stretching the limits of perception *ad absurdum*. These superimpositions maintain a translucency that presents the objects as ghost-like quasi-presences, a gradual build-up of visual residue on the image and a remanence of fragmented memories. This fragmentation highlights the lack of narrative through *Le Retour* and *Emak Bakia*, but also the action contained within these fragments. Through both of these treatments of multiplicity, repetition and varying dimensionality we are reminded of Sartre's notions of the non-possibility of identicality, or coincidence with self as seen in Chapter One. Perhaps a subconscious

awareness of this alienation is what makes watching these films so disruptive of our normal state of perception.

Emak Bakia foregrounds an insistence on perpetual (physical) movement as well as a playful disruption of the idea of time. These aspects fit with a dimension of becoming which Deleuze describes as 'a pure becoming without measure, a veritable becoming-mad, which never rests' (2004: 3). Movement's direction is continually distorted: turning motions are made to look like sideways motion through the stillness of the screen as the images move by. Mobiles are created by suspending objects which initially appear to turn freely, and yet are always dragged back to repeat by the cinematic process. Even the filming of waves on a beach is denatured when the camera is upturned, reversing sky and sea, and with it, our notions of forward/backward motion. The filming of waves on a beach may initially imply a foregrounding of the endlessly repeating and timeless motion of the water. Yet the turning of the camera makes us conscious of our own place in this movement, and simultaneously creates a start and end point for the sequence, since it is neither a smooth circle, nor is it repeated.

This alinearity and distortion of space is reflected and exaggerated in the next sequence showing a group of fish in unidentified water, which loses the rhythm of the sea and generally slows the mood to a sluggish, directionless flow. This disruption of our perception of motion can be grounded in Sartre's discussion of motion, in which 'si le mouvement est un accident de l'être, le mouvement et le repos sont indiscernables' (*EN*: 247). Through its setting in motion of immobile objects

(particularly through the rayograph), and its immobilising of repeated motion through its fixing in the frame, Dada film deconstructs our ability to distinguish between movement and rest as described by Sartre.

We might expect *Entr'acte*, which engages most fully (of our four films) with a sense of narrative and time, to reduce the tension between the visible and the out-of-field, the comprehensible and the no(n)sensical. However, it exploits this assumption of familiarity and Merleau-Ponty's notion of perception's grounding in experience by playing with both unreal speed and illogical progression. Mourners begin their procession by leaping after the coffin in exaggerated slow motion only to speed up in a race against the cart. The whole film builds from expanded time to an ever increasing pace, ending in the almost total lack of control of the rollercoaster ride (which is yet still constricted to its tracks). The coffin is presented before the victim meets his fate, and the same victim is later found to be alive, reflecting the aforementioned manipulation of the journey sequence, as well as birth and death. It is instructive that when the victim then climbs out of his coffin he has become a magician, and proves this by vanishing the coffin and his spectators one by one, then solemnly doing the same to himself. Notably, though, while the others disappear immediately on the touch of the wand, the magician himself fades out. This sequence of events plays with the notion of "FIN" as much as the end proper does. This fading makes us aware of an implicitly different relationship with this particular character – are we to relate ourselves to this protagonist? This anxious attachment to the central character then suggests that we are much less able to conceive of our own non-

existence than that of others. Indeed, Sartre notes that 'l'existence même de la *mort* nous aliène tout entier' (*EN*: 588; original emphasis).

Entr'acte's manipulation of time is compounded by the frequent compression of space, predominantly by the use of superimposition. From the film's opening sequence this compression is foregrounded in the use of cramped and tangled rooftops, which then regain their singularity and space only when projected into small shop windows. This along with the shifting columns and the face superimposed over water gives an impression of reduced space, through being trapped or drowning. All of these features relate to the building blocks in *Emak Bakia*: though less neatly stacked than the children's blocks (in that they are trying to occupy the same space, rather than fitting together), they sit on top of each other as the blocks sit on top of the two-dimensional human figure. These superimpositions seem to humorously realise Sartre's statement that 'je vois tous les êtres au travers' (*EN*: 639), and Merleau-Ponty's view that 'l'homme superpose au monde donné le monde selon l'homme' (*PP*: 229). Through this layering, superimposition foregrounds the subjectivity of (the perception of) reality.

Another occasion on which space is compacted is when the coffin hurtles down the road of its own accord: at this point the frame is mirrored at its centre, and appears to bend inwards from both sides. This represents a compression of both time and space, as the cart is at its fastest and squashed in on itself (in fact, the vehicle itself cannot be seen at this point). This compression of space can be contrasted with the rayographs, whose compression flattens the depth of field. That of *Entr'acte*

builds on the depth of field, but compresses from the surrounding angles of its sides. Space is manipulated in a way that disrupts the relationship between objects. As Sartre claims, '[l]'espace n'est pas le fond ni la forme, mais l'idéalité du fond en tant qu'il peut toujours se désagréger en formes, il n'est ni le continu ni le discontinu, mais le passage permanent du continu au discontinu' (*EN*: 220). The examples we have seen through Dada film emphasise space's status as 'idéalité du fond': the use of mirrors and prisms (quite literally) reflects its ability to 'désagréger en formes', or indeed 'faire voler en éclats' (cf. *PP*: 505).

Through these examples temporality is also broken down and replaced with visual effect, building an altered sense of time and movement, as well as highlighting the forced nature of the passing of time in film, through its physical passing by when projected. How does the perception of temporal progression change with the manipulation of space and movement? Does repetition give us a false sense of memory? The flickering of images in both films gives the impression that being and memory are fleeting, in line with Sartre's claims that 'tout est présent', 'le présent est une fuite perpétuelle en face de l'être' and that 'l'être est partout et nulle part: où qu'on cherche à le saisir, il est en face, il s'est échappé' (*EN*: 143; 158; 177). Often double exposure and superimposition is of incomplete shapes or images – for instance, legs without bodies and collars without shirts – leading us to question whether this technique makes the images more complete, or simply highlights their lacking, or 'fuite perpétuelle' as slices of space and time. Each image can be considered a slice of the present, perpetually self-replicating and self-replacing.

However, to move beyond this duality, it might be said that the fragmentation and superimposition of images neither completes them nor denigrates them. Rather, it presents them as hybrid and encourages their perception as such. As we saw in Chapter One, the fragmented entity is not to be considered broken, but rather an abstract assemblage of a new whole.

Coexisting Realities: Tactility and the Sound of Silence

The merging of realities can be expanded to consider the simultaneous coexistence of multifaceted meaning through deliberate ambiguity. This is shown particularly strongly through experimentation with the potentiality of objects of play, especially in Man Ray's films, such as in the sequences involving dice, part of a string instrument, and building blocks as from a child's toy box. In their fragmented forms, they are made to dance in a play of false movement, but are almost entirely removed from their original purpose. The objects are 'forced to find new conditions for their reality' (Foster in Peterson ed. 2001: 187). Their ludic movements remind us of Duchamp's readymades, especially his *Roue de bicyclette* (1913), where objects are altered and suspended as repurposed mobiles, and invite interference. Yet both of these constructions are ironically removed from Dada's 'Please touch' policy, the former through its role as a film sequence, and as such 'belong[ing] to a game largely played ahead of time' (ibid: 184), and the latter through its itchingly static presentation out of reach in its multiple gallery homes. Notably, though, the wheel is not physically out of reach: the distance is maintained by the institutionalisation of the art work and the consequent unspoken rule of non-interaction. Through the

museum context, objects of this tactile nature move from interactivity to interpassivity.[45]

We could argue that Man Ray's selection of objects enacts a transfer of his aforementioned filtering of reality. Something that is particularly notable, if not immediately apparent, is the transfer of a tactile element explored by the use of grilled fingers and cloths into a regular viewing of the film. The nature of these objects is to be touched, picked up, held, played with, and made to produce (numbers in dice, sound in instruments, compound forms in the building blocks). Here they are reassigned to include other purposes and short circuit the senses. We can compare this intersensory (mis)interaction to Merleau-Ponty's description of our inherent incorporation of multiple senses:

> Cette tache rouge que je vois sur le tapis, elle n'est rouge que compte tenu d'une ombre qui la traverse, sa qualité n'apparaît qu'en rapport avec les jeux de la lumière, et donc comme élément d'une configuration spatiale. D'ailleurs, la couleur n'est déterminée que si elle s'étale sur une certaine surface, une surface trop petite serait inqualifiable. Enfin, ce rouge ne serait à la lettre pas le même s'il n'était le "rouge laineux" d'un tapis. (*PP*: 27)

Whereas Merleau-Ponty describes the senses working together to perceive this 'rouge laineux' – through our associations of the visible with qualities such as texture – Man Ray encourages alternative combinations.

A clear example is *Le Retour*, which neither has music nor references sound in its title, yet the content of the film itself very strongly references multiple senses. This is evident right from its construction:

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[45] For more on interactivity and interpassivity see Žižek in Wright and Wright (1999: 102-110)

> On some strips I sprinkled salt and pepper, like a cook preparing a roast, on other strips I threw pins and thumbtacks at random; then I turned on the white light for a second or two, as I had done for my Rayographs. (Man Ray 2012: 260)

This quotation not only evokes the sense of touch (from the sprinkling of rough-edged objects), smell (through the use of the word 'roast') and taste (through the allegorical comparison with the preparation of a meal), but also creates a sense of sound in the scattering of hard objects onto the surface of the film strip. Many of these senses are carried across to the viewing process through their creation of visual noise, particularly the salt-and-pepper sequences, which provide an image of white noise (a source of irritation for many contemporary viewers). This evocation of crowding gives a visual overload transferable across the senses, especially through the intrinsic linking of white noise with both sight and sound. This intense combination of senses creates a quasi-synaesthetic reaction, through presenting only the visual but effectively evoking the other senses.

Man Ray's filming of objects as a 'game largely played ahead of time' is particularly explicit both in his rayographs that are strategically placed in series before playing, and with the filming of the manipulation of objects beyond their original or traditional purpose. We might say that the game that is planned with his films – especially the two analysed in this chapter – is a deliberate rewriting of anticipated moves in an effort to subvert expectation, and putting play entirely into the hands of the artist. This is particularly apparent in the use of dice in *Emak Bakia*, objects which are normally symbolic of chance and/or risk, here simply placed rather than allowed to land, and later split into halves to completely remove their original

shape and purpose. If the dice lose some of their inherent multiplicity from not being thrown, they gain some of it back through being sliced and recombined.[46]

This repurposing is furthered by the decapitated scrolls, in that any sound that the string instrument may produce is removed by its lack of strings and body, and overwritten with the film's post-production montaged soundtrack. This effect is reproduced in a scene with a pair of (bodiless) dancing legs which appear to be accompanied by a banjo. Although the illusion is given that the banjo is producing the sound that we and the dancer hear, again it is external. The instrument is thereby rendered doubly mute, silent itself and written over with an alternative that is strikingly similar to the original, comparable enough to initially convince the listener that their visual and aural perceptions are aligned. Additionally, in some ways this creates a new level of fragmentation, because we are initially convinced that we are perceiving a unified sensory whole, only to realise the deception. Most of the music is obsessively rhythmic, linking seeing and hearing back to tactility through music's tendency to have a physical effect on the body, both through following the beat, and specifically through the physicality of sonic vibrations.

Another instance of muted reality in *Emak Bakia* is experienced in a sequence where a woman mouths unrecognisable syllables at the camera. The lack of sound – though arguably no more misleading than non-diagetic sound – most obviously represents this mutedness, yet another layer of frustration is applied when we cannot

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[46] We are reminded here of the title of Mallarmé's famous poem: 'un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard'. Notably, Mallarmé also slices and distorts the shape of the poem, distributing the words across the page almost like a rayograph construction. For more on Man Ray and Mallarmé, see Man Ray (2012).

even interpret the movements of her lips, despite clues from facial expressions (for example, raised eyebrows for surprise or expectation) which then come up empty. We saw through *Ballet mécanique's* insistence on written nothingness a feeling of aphasia: this moment evokes a more explicit, physical sense of this distressing effect, in that we have partial information and are unable to fill in the gaps, giving us not nonsense but no-sense. The levelling of figure and ground that we saw in Merleau-Ponty's description of aphasia (*PP*: 237) is foregrounded here through the human figure that becomes nothing more than a collection of shapes on the filmic screen. The combination of women that Man Ray presents who are silent and in various stages of (false) consciousness recall the suffocating inability to speak when frozen with fear, dreaming or being underwater. This additionally marks a point of comparison between the women and the superimposed fish, through opening and closing motions of the mouth and staring eyes in the former, and gaping mouths and lidless eyes in the latter.

The disruption of movement, direction and time is exaggerated by the use of music in *Emak Bakia* (further contrasting this film with the silent *Le Retour*), which is itself formed into episodes, yet with no apparent link to the 'action' of the film. This is due to the film having originally been silent, with the music added later from Man Ray's own record collection. The greater part of the film is accompanied by light-hearted jazz,[47] which is then countered by the use of significantly more classical

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[47] This choice of genre is instructive as it is the exception to the general lack of attention paid to music by the Existentialists. McBride writes that 'jazz came to be regarded, at least during the period of the "existentialist offensive," as a particularly appropriate existentialist form of music, perhaps in part because of its "contingent," improvisational nature – its refusal to follow a fixed, unalterable score' (in

music after the intertitle break. The use of these two distinct genres plays with the aforementioned hint of dreaming, yet we are not given any indication of which is to be considered normal, and of course neither type has any direct interaction with the filmed sequences. As such the music occupies an 'out-of-field' position of sorts, a level of simultaneous presence and absence similar to that of the rayographs and superimposition, as a layer of abstract diegesis which has been applied to create the final product. In this respect the editing process takes on an important role in highlighting firstly the artificiality of the medium, and secondly the levels of authorial control and the impact this has on the interpretation of meaning in their product. This authorial control can be interrogated by the fact that we occasionally (and seemingly accidentally) catch glimpses of Man Ray. While the incorporation of the artist cannot conclusively be defined as deliberate, especially as the occurrences are reflections rather than direct filming, the fact that he did not remove this reference implies a lack of desire to fully remove himself from the process.

Music as abstract diegesis and its role in the out-of-field can be contrasted in *Emak Bakia* and that of *Ballet mécanique* and *Entr'acte*. While all three were originally silent, the latter two had purpose-written scores, only applied later. The difference made on the viewing of the films without and with their accompaniment is considerable, as sound is an integral part of our perception of the world around us. It has already been mentioned that *Ballet mécanique*'s soundtrack (written by George Antheil) is entirely percussive, which fits with the nature of the film's anxiety-

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Crowell ed. 2012: 63). We saw in Chapter One that Taeuber's dancing was deemed to match the expression of jazz through the pair's shared improvised/structured composite form.

inducing flickering, as well as mechanical in the case of several instruments, dehumanising all aspects of the work. This is exacerbated by the use of a siren, which goes off at several points throughout the film. Additionally, the siren adds an exaggerated element of indeterminate pitch, thus adding to the ambiguity of the ensemble as well as the inability to relate to the sounds. The rapidly changing imagery and manic percussive wall of sound compound with the sonic remanence of the sound of the siren to produce an effect of alienation through anxiety. However, as we saw through close up viewing of objects and the resulting de- and re-construction of form through Merleau-Ponty's example of snow, we can continue through this into sound to find our own interpretive experience: 'de même on peut découvrir à l'intérieur du son une "micro-mélodie" et l'intervalle sonore n'est que la mise en forme finale d'une certaine tension d'abord éprouvée dans tout le corps' (*PP*: 255).

Entr'acte's music (written by Erik Satie), though arguably more 'human' than *Ballet mécanique* through the use of non-automatic instruments, also focuses on a neurotically rhythmic approach, which is inherently and inevitably transferred to a certain tactility.[48] This is not only done through rhythm but also through pitch. For example, the sequence on the rollercoaster is accompanied by a motif in several different instruments that oscillates around pairs of notes. This creates a multitude of alarm-like sounds as the film races to its fastest point. The use of a short motif obsessively repeated reminds us of Léger's desire to 'push the adventure to the point of exasperation'. The exploration of music and tactility foregrounds the necessity of

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[48] Furthermore Ted Perry notes that *Entr'acte* was designed to provoke a kinaesthetic response (ed. 2006: 75).

multiple senses to compose the perception and interpretation of reality. While the visual is often privileged, Dada films distort our reliance on vision to encourage the incorporation of other means of perception, as well as unusual combinations of these senses.

These examples of sound and silence in film can be contrasted with another Dada activity and art form, that of the sound and simultaneous poems, where, instead of lacking information, we are bombarded with it. Yet the effect is similar: we have so much information that we are unable to process it, leaving us as wordless as the muted woman in *Emak Bakia*. We can compare this with Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe*, whose lack of ears and mouths yet bombardment of colours illustrate the problematic disorientation created from an insistence on either end of the spectrum of presence/absence of meaning. We might consider that overloading the senses in this way (somewhat unexpectedly) allows an increased blankness – and potential clarity – of mind from which to draw individual meaning.

Merleau-Ponty states that '[p]arce que nous sommes au monde, nous sommes *condamnés au sens*' (*PP*: 20; original emphasis). We are unable to perceive without imposing meaning on the world. Is it the responsibility of the spectator to find meaning or interpret these images and films? Merleau-Ponty's statement reminds us of Sartre's claim that the individual is both 'condamné à être libre' (*EH*: 39), and also condemned to choose (cf. *EH*: 63). Thus although the individual is born into a preconditioned set of logic and sense, they are responsible for assigning the value and hierarchy of meaning to their perception. Additionally, as is particularly strongly

highlighted through Dada art, singular meaning is not imperative, and multiple interpretation is often positively encouraged: 'All true experiences of the works are equally truths' (Foster in Peterson ed. 2001: 194).

Conclusion

La réalité-humaine est le dépassement perpétuel vers une coïncidence avec soi qui n'est jamais donnée.
(*EN*: 125-26)

The films studied in this chapter are influenced by several dichotomies – presence and absence, singularity and multiplicity, light and shadow, to name a few – in order to question the very basis on which we rest our notion of perception both in itself and of reality. Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes described Man Ray's art as 'one solution to the crisis of Reality which is outside everything tragic in existence' (in Schwarz ed. 1971: 90). We might reflect on Ball's comment at the beginning of this chapter in relation to reality's occurrence 'at the point where things peter out', and compare this point to our dichotomies. Instead of viewing these pairs as two ends of a spectrum, we may consider the mid-point as a petering out of sorts, as we have seen particularly markedly in Man Ray's work through its tendency to provide a blurred crossover of complementary opposites (for example, his highlighting of the grey area *between* light and shadow). This is furthered by the accompanying use of music, which appears as a simultaneous but separate reality, allowing for multiple coexistences of realities, added later as an extra layer of perceptive substance. On many occasions, the viewer is put in a position of perceptive ambiguity, and it is from this point of suspension that they must creatively interpret their own reality.

These examples of the manipulation of perception have been analysed alongside an Existentialist notion of alienation. Perception is a concept that maintains a tension between the assumption of inherence and the inclination to interpret. Dada film's incessant highlighting of the construction of the cinematic image through time questions both aspects of this perception, drawing both the concept of film and the viewer themselves 'hors de soi' to externalise their relationship with reality. The suggestion through these films that observations and memories can be revealed to be false invites – or rather provokes – the spectator as 'principal actor' (Man Ray in Hammond ed. 2001: 133) to devise their own interpretation(s) of both cinema and the world as a malleable (re)memory. Foster writes that '[t]he approach to, and evaluation of [Man Ray's] work, require of the spectator/critic an active and creative role throughout his or her transaction of the pieces; a role not unlike, in kind, that reflected in the artist's own intentionality' (in Peterson ed. 2001: 174). The constant replacement of ideas implies a reliance on a perpetually present state, or as Sartre claims, '[t]out se passe comme si le présent était un perpétuel trou d'être, aussitôt comblé et perpétuellement renaissant' (*EN*: 182). Furthermore, the spectator can be considered to be the only source of 'reality' in a world of illusion, in a continually self-(re)constructing remanence of being.

Chapter Two has developed the notion of subjectivity and choice introduced in Chapter One into the creative reinterpretation and projection of reality through Dada film. The works explored in Chapter One represented composite selves of fragments and contradictions, as such finished products for considered contemplation. Though

these works nevertheless offer constant opportunity to be (re)interpreted, the movement into the medium of film shows a development of the subjectivity of perception while offering a subject that holds a different level of presence and absence, a 'quasi-multiplicity' of negation (cf. Sartre) through its status as partly (over a third) blank yet undeniably present, creating logic of perception precisely and simply through the ephemerality of its motion.

The example of Man Ray and the breaking of his film during a particular screening additionally introduces the notion of the film as event, a particular set of perceptive criteria that yet varies between individual viewers. Chapter Three will pick up where this less-explored notion left off through the (recording of the) trial of Maurice Barrès by members of the Dada movement, compared with Camus's assessment of justice in *L'Étranger*. The chapter will interrogate notions of text and event, comparative experience for both actors and readers, as well as the philosophical implications of the trial as event by which an individual is brought under scrutiny. In this respect Chapter Three will carry through and continue to develop some of the concepts of reality as defined in the current chapter.

- CHAPTER THREE -
BARRÈS VS MEURSAULT: RESPONSIBILITY AND JUSTICE IN THE DADA LITERARY EVENT

Il s'agissait de juger Maurice Barrès […] d'accuser Maurice Barrès d'attentat à la sureté de l'esprit
(*AB*: 23-24)

[J]*'accuse cet homme d'avoir enterré une mère avec un cœur de criminel*
(*E*: 97)

'L'homme est pleinement responsable'

A critical consequence of the assignment of creation of values to the individual, as well as of the authenticity of those choices made without succumbing to external pressure, is the inherent responsibility over one's choices, as well as the responsibility for the consequences of such choice. As Sartre remarks on this moral obligation,

> si vraiment l'existence précède l'essence, l'homme est responsable de ce qu'il est. Ainsi, la première démarche de l'existentialisme est de mettre tout homme en possession de ce qu'il est et de faire reposer sur lui la responsabilité totale de son existence. Et, quand nous disons que l'homme est responsable de lui-même, nous ne voulons pas dire que l'homme est responsable de sa stricte individualité, mais qu'il est responsable de tous les hommes. (*EH*: 31)

Sartre's comments on responsibility link in with our notions of choice and individuality from Chapter One, that is, for Sartre we choose under the belief that our choices are universally applicable. This allows Existentialism to refute charges of moral quietism, since it does not, through the placement of value judgement in the individual, advocate an 'anything goes' policy. Instead, it creates an implicit sense of mutuality, an invitation to 'treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself'. Because of this, Sartre claims that 'on peut juger […] car, comme je vous l'ai dit, on choisit en face des autres, et on se choisit en face des autres' (*EH*: 67). The main basis on which this statement is founded is the notion of the judgement of the behaviour of

others against the notion of good and bad faith, which circles back round to our concept of authenticity being based in choices stemming from the individual. Through this Existentialist mode, therefore, 'nous rappelons à l'homme qu'il n'y a d'autre législateur que lui-même' (*EH*: 76).

Notions of justice and responsibility stem from a long lineage of political and literary explorations of the concepts and their consequences. From the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* and the judicial defence of such rights, through the development of the intervention of the intellectual into public affairs of justice, to the interrogation of justice and punishment in literature, society has repeatedly demonstrated a preoccupation with the responsibility for an individual's life and moral choices. It is perhaps through literature that we can best analyse this preoccupation: as an expression of the active and creative exploration of ideals, literary works can be used as a reflection of the advancing views of society. We can trace a post-Revolutionary concern for methods (and theory) of punishment to Victor Hugo's *Le Dernier jour d'un condamné* (1829), which explicitly condemns the death penalty as hypocritical, reproducing the original crime through its 'eye for an eye' logic. Furthermore as Robespierre commented in 1791, 'la peine de mort est essentiellement injuste […] elle n'est pas la plus réprimante des peines' (in Royer et al eds 1995: 339). Hugo's text highlights the fallibility of the justice system in the long term or as a complete system, since it simply upholds a set of laws based upon a temporally-specific, 'objective' moral code.

Dostoevsky would explore a similar theme forty years later in his *Crime and Punishment* (1866), in which the protagonist successfully evades the justice system, only to be overcome by guilt. It is only this guilt which means he is prosecuted, highlighting not only the inevitability of moral concerns, but also the chance of not being brought to justice in the event of insufficient evidence. Kafka's *Der Process* [The Trial] (1925) would sixty years later evoke the absurdity of a judicial system in a way that would directly influence Camus's writing,[49] including the flexibility of truth, innocence and guilt. Kafka's protagonist, Josef K, is never informed of the crime of which he is being accused, and, like Camus's Meursault, struggles to follow his trial.[50] Through these examples we are invited to question the possibility of justice through a systematic approach.

As demonstrated by its literary and philosophical precedent, justice is a key concern in twentieth-century, and particularly Existentialist, thought. Camus's rebel enacts the tension of being '[celui qui] oppose le principe de justice qui est en lui au principe d'injustice qu'il voit à l'œuvre dans le monde' (*HR*: 42). Through this the rebel pits their inner, personal sense of justice against the injustice present in the world, the latter perhaps a result of institutional or external, generic justice. This opposition is expressed in Dada's engagement with the philosophy of justice, through its rejection of oppressive societal constructs. We can interpret this as an aspiration to obliterate injustice in terms of freedom from oppression, but Dada also

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[49] This is expressed explicitly in Camus's own analysis of Kafka, 'L'espoir et l'absurde dans l'œuvre de Franz Kafka', which he included as an appendix to *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (*MS*: 169-87).
[50] In both cases this is metaphorically represented through atmospheric conditions: Josef K suffers from his dark surroundings; Meursault from the stifling heat and blinding sun.

opposes the system of justice in its own right, as is particularly clear through its mock trial of Maurice Barrès. This chapter will interrogate this Dada engagement with the notion of justice through the trial of Barrès in comparison with Camus's trial of his protagonist, Meursault, in his 1942 novel *L'Étranger*.

These two trials will be used to assess Dada and Existentialism's interaction with justice both as a physical reality and a philosophical notion, and particularly the limits of such a concept, in alignment with its consequences for the idea of responsibility. Both trials occupy a unique position within literature and history: representing both literary events and literary texts, they invite a critique of justice in relation to degrees of reality and fiction.[51] The key notions of responsibility and justice will be explored by scrutinising several elements of a trial – the crimes, charges, sentences, and the witnesses – in order to address the further consequences of systems of justice, including the individual's place in society. These trials will be used to question the status of a system as ultimately powerful in the creation, control, and enforcement of societal rules. How are morals created, decided upon and/or systematised? What is the difference between these systematised morals and the ethics of the individual? Can a society ever claim to be acting justly, or authentically, if it judges others based on externally imposed ethics, ignoring the personal morality of the individual?

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[51] This is a notion that will be picked up again in Chapter Five in relation to the concept of truth.

Against Without For the Accused

An instructive starting point in the indictment of these individuals is an analysis of their selection. Camus created Meursault to embody a certain set of principles and characteristics, and yet does not portray him as the traditional hero, nor any more than a distinctly average individual. The status of Meursault in the novel's in-world society as 'normal' appears to be a deliberate attempt to demonstrate the constant potential for the unremarkable (unintentionally) to not conform, and consequently be pursued and executed by an external source of justice through the law.[52] Highlighting Meursault simultaneously banalises crime and foregrounds the ease with which external moral codes can be broken. Through taking this process to its absurd extreme Camus reflects upon the threat posed by an amoral individual to tradition and societal normalcy, as well as the common need to expel such an individual on these grounds.

In contrast with Camus's protagonist, the figure indicted by Dada was a real individual, Maurice Barrès, and the underlying justification for his 'bringing to justice' is perhaps more complex. Barrès had been a literary role model to several of the young Paris-based Dadas (see Sanouillet 2009: 186-87), so we might wonder what prompted them to suddenly change their opinion of him in such an extreme fashion (and only two years before the author's death). The writer and politician's own change of heart and conversion to nationalism and anti-Semitism, including his vocal role in the infamous Dreyfus Affair, had occurred before the birth of most of the

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[52] A reader might not disagree that Meursault has done something wrong, yet inevitably is affected by his demise.

Dadas, and thus these young artists would have already been aware of Barrès's history, implying that they had idolised him despite some quite major flaws. Was their objection then to Barrès's lifetime inconsistencies? Did he disappoint the Dadas, because '[h]is early quest for identity ended in a retreat into the comfortable haven of cultural parochialism' (Soucy 1972: 94)?

We might consider that Dada's own rampant search for identity inspired this outcry at the betrayal of one's own values in favour of the path of least resistance. Additionally, Barrès belonged to a group of intellectuals once admired by the Dadas, but who contributed to 'the bankruptcy of a language which could shamelessly attach itself to the gross and inhuman machinery of the war effort' (Arnold n.d.: n.p.). To some extent, then, we can attribute Dada's attitude to a generational grudge against the masters considered as having been unable to prevent, or unwilling to rebel against, the stagnation or rotting away of poetic identity, just as the movement resented the world's national powers for having produced the conditions for war.

In addition to the Dadas' issues with Barrès it is instructive that he was a target for indictment by a wider audience, including both Camus and Sartre. While Camus retains an element of respect for Barrès, his text *Maurice Barrès et la querelle des héritiers* (in Camus 2006: 874-76) presents the slightly contradictory relationship that intellectuals have with this author. According to Camus, '[c]eux qui se réclament de lui ne sont pas dignes de son œuvre. Et ceux qui sont dignes de cette œuvre ne se réclament point de lui' (ibid.: 874-75). In the same piece, Camus labels Barrès nostalgic, having 'plus d'esprit que d'âme' (ibid.: 875) and furthermore that 'ce genre

d'hommes nous est aujourd'hui inutile' (ibid.: 876), a conclusion that the Dadas had already expressed in withdrawing their respect for Barrès. Camus's more serious consideration of Barrès's legacy contrasts with Sartre's depiction in *La Nausée*, where his protagonist dreams of spanking Barrès to the point of torture. Roquentin notes in his diary that '[j]'ai fessé Maurice Barrès […] nous l'avons fessé jusqu'au sang' (*N*: 91). Both Camus's and Sartre's presentations of Barrès point to a similar sense of deception to that of the Dadas: Barrès has been described as espousing elements of Existentialist thought in his earlier work, which is somewhat negated in his later engagements. Additionally, '[i]n contrast with later Existentialists such as Sartre, Barrès denied that existence preceded essence' (Soucy 1972: 74-75), a fundamentally divisive difference due to the status of the phrase as a quintessential Sartrean Existentialist tenet.

In considering the reasoning behind Dada and Existentialist criticism of Barrès, we might wonder why both movements foreground a humorous approach (particularly Sartre's spontaneous spanking episode). Was Barrès's life, in retrospect, so inconsistent that vicious caricature was the most useful interpretation of his person(ality)? The tendency within Dada critique toward general absurdity suggests the trial as a natural extension of the movement's ludic nature. Within Existentialism, we may wish to define this parody as an efficient means of highlighting inauthentic behaviour through Barrès's conflicting ideals. Both use parody in a way that we have already seen through Chapter One, that of the fool as a means to vent issues without fear of retribution. Through these differing means of reacting against Barrès,

especially through Dada's very practical application, we can examine where Dada and Existentialist attitudes toward (in)authenticity, responsibility and justice converge, as well as the limits to this comparison. A comparative analysis of Dada's trial of Barrès with the literary trial of Meursault will allow us to assess two forms of critique of society. The caricaturing of Barrès's career can be used as a reflective criticism of a society which allows such intellectually changeable individuals to rise to positions of authority. On the other hand, Meursault's reliably stable character emphasises the flippancy of the judicial system, as well as the inherent need to judge, sort and 'fix' individuals.

On the stand, then, we have a well-known literary figure and historical *grand homme*, and a notably unnotable citizen, with no particular distinguishing characteristics other than ostensible indifference to life. Their greatly differing personas will be instructive in the discussion of their treatment through their respective trials, especially in their status as 'equals' before the law. Their authenticity as characters will be contrasted with the authenticity of their trials, particularly within the role of each as fictional.

Barrès's 'trial' took place on 13 May 1921, at the Salle des Sociétés Savantes, and was performed in his absence by the Paris branch of Dada, who accused him of 'crimes against the security of the mind' (*AB*: 24). This 'inimitable spectacle of intellectual justice' (Ribemont-Dessaignes in Motherwell ed. 1989: 116) not only questioned the authenticity of an individual who finds it acceptable to betray one's fundamental values, but also raised the issue of the validity of any judgement of said

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individual. As Breton later explained, '[t]he problem was to determine the extent to which a man could be held accountable if his will to power led him to champion conformist values that diametrically opposed ideals of his youth' (1993: 53). Despite this event having raised fundamental divisive issues in the group, a full, 'official' report was published in the Paris Dada journal *Littérature*, alongside other Dada literary works. In this respect the piece gains authority through being published, and authenticity through being classed among Dada works.

This piece's unique combination of engagement with traditional judicial structures and ludic roleplaying gives it the feel of an avant-garde play. However, responsibility is left with the reader on deciding where the piece lies on a scale of reality. This tension between the trial's status as event, text, and event-as-text, underscores Dada's desire to break down artistic barriers and leaves an ambiguous and/or multifaceted legacy for the work. The text referred to throughout this piece will be Bonnet's 1987 *L'Affaire Barrès* (*AB*), because of its bringing together of texts relating to the trial. However, this chapter will treat the parts of the text taken from the 'transcript' of the trial as published in *Littérature* (*L*20, August 1921) as the 'avant-garde play' aspect of the text, and Bonnet's extra documents as supporting documents or accompanying notes.

In Camus's *L'Étranger*, the protagonist, Meursault, is arrested after having shot and killed a man in cold blood. Meursault's nameless victim is set up as an anonymous pawn in society's desire to persecute Meursault as a scapegoat, as the embodiment of its flaws. Camus continually reminds us that Meursault is brought to

justice because he does not fit in with the society of his time. As Sartre succinctly

concluded in his account of Meursault, 'c'est justement un de ces terribles innocents

qui font le scandale d'une société parce qu'ils n'acceptent pas les règles de son jeu'

(1947a: 104). While the Barrès trial was an event that became a piece of literature,

Meursault's trial is an in-world event. As such, Meursault's trial offers greater

linguistic coherence, but maintains an absurd relationship with judicial precedent,

and consequently a greater dependence on the perceived authenticity of social

constructs than Barrès's trial, which only maintains enough of a link to judicial

structures to enact its scathing parody.

'Attentat à la sureté de l'esprit'

The transcript of Barrès's trial begins with a lengthy indictment by Breton, who

lists eight constituent crimes to the overarching accusation of 'attentat à la sureté de

l'esprit'. First he takes the time to introduce the writer, though his detailed

explanation is little more than an objective, exhaustive list of the life events of the

individual on the stand:

> Maurice Barrès, auteur des trois volumes réunis sous le titre *Le Culte du Moi*, de *L'Ennemi des lois*, de *Huit jours chez M. Renan*, écrivain décadent, propagandiste de l'école romane, auteur des *Déracinés*, de *Colette Baudoche* et d'une *Chronique de la Grande Guerre*, ancien socialiste, député, athée, un des piliers du boulangisme, un des lieutenants de Paul Déroulède, un des instigateurs de l'affaire Dreyfus, un des dénonciateurs de Panama, nationaliste, apôtre du culte des morts, président de la Ligue des Patriotes, académician, rédacteur à *L'Echo de Paris*, conférencier populaire, auteur de *La Grande Pitié des églises de France*, partisan de la revanche, l'homme de la statue de Strasbourg, l'homme de l'annexion de la rive gauche du Rhin, l'homme de Jeanne d'Arc, président d'honneur de cent soixante-quinze sociétés de bienfaisance […]. (*AB*: 25)

In Chapter Two we saw a Dada tendency to give fragments of information without

any indication of direction or overall sense. Here we are given a vast and varied list

of characteristics, yet are not told which are to be considered most important, or even

positive and negative. From this we might consider that what is important here is that they are all considered to be true. However, we can further attribute it to Dada's wide-ranging indictment of a whole host of ideologies and institutions. Breton's listing takes on a similar style to that of Louis Aragon's 'Manifeste du mouvement Dada' (1920), which details a number of Dada's personal grudges to which it wishes there to be an end: 'plus de religions, plus de républicains, plus de royalistes, plus d'impérialistes, plus d'anarchistes, plus de socialistes, plus de bolcheviques, plus de politiques […] enfin assez de toutes ces imbécilités' (in *L*13: 2). Several of Aragon's indicted ideologies (primarily through political alignments) are alluded to in Breton's introduction, demonstrating from the outset an underlying structure of targeted characteristics.

All of these highlighted attributes are implied to contribute to Barrès's self-definition as 'un homme de génie', given the juxtaposition of the list and Breton's latter accusation. A further perceived unfair advantage of this is that Barrès's status allowed him to be 'à l'abri de toute investigation profonde, de tout contrôle, de toute sanction' (*AB*: 25-26). The notion of an infallible, unchanging individual runs counter to both Dada and Existentialist tenets, as no individual should have this kind of intellectual immunity. A particularly strong point of contention across the trial is Barrès's role as 'président de la Ligue des patriotes', an evident reference to Dada's anti-nationalist stance. The phrase appears twice in Breton's opening words, once in Tzara's witness section, and once in Soupault's plea, but then becomes an obsessive

focal point in Ribemont-Dessaignes's closing speech, appearing seven times in quick succession.

The neurotic repetition of this phrase parallels Meursault's outburst at a similar end-point in the novel, where he angrily repeats the phrase 'qu'importait…' (*E*: 119). Both of these phrases in constant repetition invoke an aggressive revolutionary spirit, as well as being rendered equally meaningless through pushing them to the point of absurdity and highlighting their status as simply words lined up in a particular way. Meursault's outburst opposes the chaplain's position within organised religion just as Ribemont-Dessaigne's rejects nationalist narratives. Instructively these two points represent not only apexes in the structure of their respective works but also points of lucidity in both. In the case of the Barrès trial it is a point of clarity amid typical Dada antics and in *L'Étranger*, it represents Meursault's breaking point, but also the point after which he comes to certain realisations, such as the fact that he is happy in the face of death. Meursault confesses after his outburst that 'je m'ouvrais pour la première fois à la tendre indifférence du monde. De l'éprouver si pareil à moi, si fraternel enfin, j'ai senti que j'avais été heureux, et que je l'étais encore' (*E*: 120). These two outbursts show an energy achieved through rebellion, which reveals an ethics worth fighting for.

The eight charges levelled against Barrès are illuminating on the part of Dada, since they (inadvertently) highlight concerns that plagued the movement. The first charge is that Barrès's books are 'proprement illisibles', and as such '[il] a donc usurpé la réputation de penseur' (*AB*: 26). This charge from a movement that

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revelled in illogicity and distortion of meaning, as well as a healthy wariness of institutionalised thinking, exposes Dada's preoccupation with theory as something to be simultaneously engaged in and rejected. Furthermore, the charge is indicative of a sense of disappointment in empty promises from this literary idol, ironically enough for a movement that claimed to be a lot of things, including 'nothing'. The second charge is based in contradiction, claiming that Barrès led a bi-partite life in which the 'second Barrès' betrayed the 'first', and that in changing so radically with the goal of becoming 'un homme opulent' he merely succeeded in becoming a 'démenti formel' (*AB*: 28).

While contradiction is a primary characteristic of Dada, the objection here is to Barrès's becoming something with which the adherents fundamentally disagreed. This can be linked to the third charge, which essentially re-expresses disappointment in Barrès's conformism, particularly through servile and cowardly behaviour. His retreat into aggressive ideologies such as anti-Semitism and fascism shows a desire to be led by an overriding narrative that allows blame and fears to be assigned to a 'foreign' enemy. Robert Soucy claims that on Barrès's conversion to rootedness he also set out upon 'a sharp contraction of his intellectual life, […] a deliberate narrowing of his cultural horizons' (1972: 81). This behaviour and the language used to describe it parallels Dada's hatred for the stagnation of European behaviour that had led to international conflict. Additionally those who depend on patriotism/nationality for identity can be described as lacking authenticity or individuality in that they defer responsibility for their choices and rely on a

predetermined definition of selfhood based in facticity. This can be contrasted with the makeup of the original Dada group (though not necessarily the Paris branch), which welcomed a plethora of nationalities and revelled in the incorporation of multiple languages into its texts. Nationality of adherents was not important as long as they were (or wished to be) Dada, and notably nationalities of non-Dada centres are often incorporated into lists such as Walter Arensburg's: 'DADA est américain, DADA est russe, DADA est espagnol, DADA est suisse, DADA est allemand, DADA est français, belge, norvégien, suédois, monégasque. Tous ceux qui vivent sans formule, qui n'aiment des musées que le parquet,[53] sont DADA' (in *L*13: 16).

The fourth and fifth charges relate to the consequences of empty promises (the Dadas' own disappointment in Barrès), and the effects that a person's life, especially that of a *grand homme*, has on others. The notion of effect on others expresses Sartre's assertion that we choose our morals and actions based on the fundamental assumption that they are universally applicable. Thus Barrès had a series of beliefs that did not fit with this ideal, particularly through his increasing 'cultural parochialism', and his retreat into regional identity. This not only betrayed his earlier love of travel and foreign culture, but also Dada's *art sans frontières* approach. Barrès's cultural narrowing is presented by Breton in his reference to the 'image d'Epinal' which can be interpreted in two ways: an image of the town itself, situated not far from Barrès's native Charmes/Nancy, or the eponymic prints produced there,

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[53] Arensburg's choice of architectural point has a notable crossover with the terminology of judgement through 'parquet' as a part of the court.

which displayed an idealised and traditional, if not naïve conception of French values.

The sixth charge accuses Barrès of having fallen into a 19th-century trend of analysis of the human soul, as well as a nihilistic and perpetual self-interrogation, whereas Breton claims that 'le nihilisme ne peut aucunement être contemplatif' (*AB*: 31). This accusation highlights an instructive aspect of Dada's own relationship with nihilism. We may wonder whether this moment represents a key point at which Breton wished to begin to distance himself with Dada, especially considering the consequent demise of the movement. Equally, and perhaps more importantly, we may consider that this is due to Dada's status as nihilistic being mis-administered, and as such this accusation is a parody of its own perception. Charles Doty writes that in Paris, Barrès 'fell into a nihilistic rebellion against all the conventions of his origins, education, and society' (1976: 19), which is in keeping with Dada's endeavour to go against all of the rotten aspects of the past. Perhaps Dada recognised Barrès's nihilism as a futile part of his early life, and instead saw its own nihilistic-adjacent qualities as something more like a creative nihilism (when) seen through to its end.

The seventh charge is threefold, attacking Barrès not only on the grounds of having never been a free man, but also for having given the impression of being learned, and thirdly for his questionable wartime position. The former two sub-charges respond to Barrès's change of mind about the role of the intellectual when, having had a youth of reading as much as he could lay his hands on, he decided that

the intellectual should not have to be well-read to gain status, let alone through

foreign literature. The latter goes hand in hand with his developing nationalism and

his evolving concern for external enemies rather than his earlier preoccupation with

internal foes.

The final charge links with Camus's later criticism of Barrès that he was all talk

and no action: 'les idées n'ont point de valeur en elles-mêmes; elles ne valent que par

l'enjeu dont on les accompagne; et les idées de Barrès n'ont jamais été accompagnées

d'aucun enjeu' (*AB*: 32). This reinforces Camus's later accusations: we may consider

that both Dada and the French Existentialists reject Barrès on his lack of willingness

to act. Furthermore, he seemed to later lose his ability to theorise, being accused of

having a 'closed mind' by André Gide, Henri Massis and Jérôme Tharaud, and of

'intellectual relativism' by Gide (Soucy 1972: 89; 105). These final three accusations

run fundamentally counter to Dada activities: events and works indicate a good deal

of cultural capital, as well as an expression of desire for creative, linguistic, and

personal freedom.

Through their chosen accusation of '[un] attentat à la sûreté de l'esprit', the

Paris Dada group tried Barrès on the grounds of what is, for all intents and purposes,

a fictional crime,[54] in that it would not stand up in a courthouse. Additionally, within

the in-text world of the event it is a crime that is self-confessedly impossible to

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[54] It should, however, be noted that, in a linguistic turn that cannot be entirely coincidental, an 'attentat contre la sûreté de *l'Etat*' (my emphasis) is a real and punishable crime. What, then, can we consider an 'attentat contre la sûreté de l'esprit' to entail? We are reminded of Orwellian 'thoughtcrime', in which crimes can be committed simply by thinking against established order, yet through Dada's parodic reversal, crimes toward the individual's mind (beyond the crime of the policing of thought) become the most invasive and/or offensive.

commit: as Soupault pointed out in his speech for the defence, 'il n'est pas plus du pouvoir de Maurice Barrès que de n'importe qui d'attenter à la sûreté de l'esprit' (*AB*: 82). However, Dada's indictment of their fellow literary figure was based in outrage at Barrès's extreme change of ideals: he was perceived to have betrayed his own values, as well as those of several Dadas. As Ribemont-Dessaignes describes, 'après avoir entraîné la jeunesse dans le sens d'un individualisme total, il avait tourné casaque, brûlé ce qu'il avait adoré, et adoré les idoles les plus despotiques qui soient, le sol, la patrie, la race, et quoi encore?' (1958: 139). In short, the fundamental character trait under judgement is the heinous crime of conformism, an engagement with inauthenticity which was not in keeping with Dada's tenets both in the realm of rejection of narratives, and also in terms of the importance of the subjective individual that we saw in Chapter One.

In a striking parallel with Barrès's fictional crime, *L'Étranger*'s Meursault is accused – beyond his 'official' crime of murder – of having 'enterré sa mère avec un cœur de criminel' (*E*: 97). While intent is an important part of a 'real' crime, this accusation against Meursault rests on a tenuous relationship with mental precedent, and is not directly related to the crime for which he was arrested. Moreover, while hindsight allows us to take offence at the idea of the acceptability of murder on the grounds of colonial political climate, it is made clear in the novel that until Meursault's indifference to society is uncovered his crime would not have induced a heavy punishment, and certainly not the execution awarded for this indifference. Meursault's crime of murder, then, becomes secondary to his reaction to his crime:

that of apparent indifference, and with it, the presumption of guilt on other accounts. Meursault, in a state of incomprehension, does not hear his indictment,[55] though later learns, still vaguely, that he is accused of being '"coupable de meurtre"… "premeditation"… "circonstances atténuantes"' (*E*: 105; original formatting). This set of indictments does not provide any more meaningful an accusation than 'attentat à la sûreté de l'esprit' of which Barrès was accused, and its scattered, broken up presentation adds a level of panic and absurdity that we saw through fragmentation and manipulation of sensory information in Dada film. With the addition of the debilitating heat to which Meursault is subject during his trial (also an indirect cause for his original crime), he is not able to even try to follow his proceedings, whether or not he has the legal competence to do so.

It is instructive to analyse Meursault's crime in its deconstructed form, since the three parts occupy differing places within an Existentialist viewpoint. We have seen that murder is condemned, both explicitly through Camus's discussion of the Surrealists (*HR*: 123), and implicitly through the notion that the soundest ethics is that of mutually applicable morals (murder being undeniably one-way). The second part of the charge, premeditation, can be argued to be a positive attribute, since it rests on a thought-out decision rather than spontaneous psychopathy, and taken out of context can be considered an authentic mode of thinking. The third provides a middle point, since it introduces an element of contingency to the crime. Nevertheless, overdependence on attenuating circumstances contains indications of

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[55] Barrès would equally have not heard his indictment in person, since he was absent from the proceedings.

inauthenticity since an individual's facticity is unchosen and unalterable, thus not strictly something to be relied upon when making an active choice.

The sentences of these two individuals share qualities through both their severity and their changeability, in that Barrès 'received' twenty years of hard labour, whereas Meursault is sentenced to death. Instructively, Breton apparently expected capital punishment for Barrès (Sanouillet 2009: 193), whereas execution would not initially have been Meursault's punishment, and only comes into play late in the trial, by which point he is being punished for the crimes of others as well as his own.[56] This matching discrepancy leads us to wonder which sentence is more severe or out of the ordinary, considering Barrès's absence and lack of breaking any culturally 'real' law, but that Meursault's colonial cultural climate dictated that his murder of the Arab would not normally have entailed execution. We may furthermore posit that if both of these individuals were brought to trial for not fitting a certain intellectual ideal, they are essentially being accused of the same crime. The judge in *L'Étranger* even suggests that Meursault's intelligence is an inherent indication of guilt (*E*: 100): as such, he represents a threat to mass (herd) mentality. Because of this ironic relationship with intellectual precedent, both trials escalate to Kafkaesque[57] dimensions through the piling on of unfounded accusations, giving us

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[56] Today, we may view capital punishment as not only barbaric, but also obsolete (since 1965 in England and 1981 in France, at least), but at the time of either trial, the death penalty was still a very real threat in France, despite being a target of protest since the Revolution.
[57] Because of the ludic yet threatening nature of the Dada trial, we may go even further and compare it to the absurdity of the court in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, complete with nonsense, characters arguing for both sides, and of course regular outbursts of 'Off with his/her head!'.

the impression of an absurd spectacle in which it is no longer possible to define who is being accused of what, and to ends beyond the accused's control.

The Witnesses

Continuing the theme of the absurd spectacle, both trials analysed here diverge from the traditional in terms of witnesses, whom we might presume to be selected according to their particular status within the life of the accused. Meursault's trial draws upon a needlessly all-encompassing witness list, ironically not lending the case any great clarity through its wide basis. In Barrès's case the witnesses, several of whom had little to do with Dada (or Barrès himself), appear to be selected at random. Through this we might suggest that the witnesses in Barrès's case are biased toward those who have a particular reason to parody the writer, an intellectual bone to pick. In both cases, the selection of witnesses (as we saw in the charges) reveals more about their in-world social group than about the accused. The indiscriminate choice of witnesses in Barrès's trial, especially through the use of outsiders in the prosecution (Dada), further parodies the notion of justice, through conforming to structures or form while mocking content.

Sanouillet describes that the witnesses (chosen by Breton) were 'recruited here and there for rather obscure reasons' (2009: 188), offering three explanations for these: in order for Dada to 'claim a place in the sunlight', to 'flesh out the cast of characters', or to weaken Tzara's resistance to the event (ibid.: 188-89). This latter is ironic given that it is perhaps Tzara's resistance *during* the event that led to the demise of not only the trial but also the movement itself, probably because of the

status of the trial as Breton's effort to 'instil a greater sense of purpose into Dada in the face of Tzara's mockery of such authoritarianism' (Ades and Gale: n.d.). Additionally, while using witnesses to 'flesh out the cast of characters' might simply add to the farce of the Barrès trial, the use of prestigious individuals ended up contributing to an increased reception of the event.[58] In this respect, the trial as both text and event relies on a pre-defined conception of the participants' social positions and personas through their established literary authority. We have already seen that Dada exploited even the least tenable links to famous figures to garner attention, whether it be positive, or (preferably) negative.

Through the revealing nature of the choice of witnesses we may consider the questions asked of the witnesses as important as their responses. Additionally in both cases the fictional nature of the witnesses creates an instructive relationship with the events as literature: in the Barrès trial, the witnesses were actors and as such, do not claim a real-world link to the accused;[59] in Meursault's trial, the witnesses are as real as he is, yet the trial itself never actually happened. Thus in both cases a constant level of fictionality is maintained. We can compare the seemingly random selection of witnesses in Dada's mock trial to Meursault's wide-ranging set, many of whom do not know the accused very well. This reinforces the notion of the accused as outsider, and is replicated in the lack of familiarity with Barrès among his witnesses, the most extreme being Tzara, whose knowledge of Barrès apparently

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[58] This notion of a cast of characters or actors lends weight to our viewing the trial as an avant-garde play.

[59] The only exception to this is Rochelle, whose connection is absorbed into the fictive whole through the ambiguity and parody of the witness statements in general.

only extended to his name (Sanouillet 2009: 186). Tzara's distance from the accused is reflected by Barrès's own knowledge of the event: despite knowing of its occurrence, he showed no reaction to it (ibid.: 579n). Though he never mentions the trial, some five months before the event Barrès wrote briefly and rather positively of Dada in his *Cahiers*: 'Nos dadaïstes veulent retrouver la fraîcheur, le neuf, le primitif […] C'est l'équivalent du retour au folklore, à l'ingénu, au spontané' (Barrès 1950: 31). This statement, of which the Dadas would not have been aware, adds an extra element of parody in that Barrès, despite the accusations against him, seems to have been supportive of Dada's own work, including his personal use of the possessive.

Barrès's first witness, Serge Romoff,[60] starts the trend of not knowing the accused, admitting to this and not being familiar with the writer's works or ideals. Additionally Romoff had little connection to Dada, rendering his testimony tenuous at best. Despite this, he claims that Barrès cannot be considered a man of genius, because the latter had 'exercé une influence néfaste sur la collectivité' (*AB*: 35). This notably reinforces the notion we have already evoked of Barrès as going against the Existentialist tenet of making choices that are applicable (beneficial) to the collective (*EH*: 31). Romoff accuses Barrès of 'quite vulgar bourgeois anarchism' (ibid.: 36) and destructive nationalism. Although he judges every man to be sincere, he feels indifferent to the idea of the death of Barrès, as well as expressing that the accused is detrimental to his life (ibid: 37).

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[60] Bonnet provides what we might call 'character profiles' for the non-Dada actors within the trial, as footnotes to the main text: 'Serge Romoff (1883-1939), menchevik né en Ukraine, se réfugia à Paris vers 1905; personnalité en vue dans le milieu des artistes et écrivain russes, il anime en 1922-1923 la revue *Oudar*, chronique des arts et des lettres' (*AB*: 34).

How reliable is this testimony, when we consider that some witnesses, including Romoff, were apparently 'grateful to [Breton] for dictating their answers to them' (Sanouillet 2009: 191)? Is Romoff's somewhat prompted testimony any less reliable than an autonomous Dada answer, coming from a movement whose fundamental tenets included farce and deception? Moreover, are statements attributed to him any better than any given testimony in a trial based on a crime concocted for personal and/or literary means? When compared to Meursault's trial (or any other normal trial), we might interrogate the possibility of the triumph of justice, when individuals construct their statements based upon the advice of a lawyer whose sole aim is 'winning'. Meursault's lawyer advises him at one point to 'répondre brièvement aux questions qu'on me poserait, de ne pas prendre d'initiatives et de me reposer sur lui pour le reste' (*E*: 86), proving that intimate knowledge of the legal system (and its loopholes) is often more valuable than truth itself. It is a reminder, perhaps, that narrative is no more controlled by the protagonist than judicial fate is in the hands of the accused individual.

Giuseppe Ungaretti[61] is the only witness to explicitly agree with the accusation against Barrès of 'crimes against the security of the mind', but claims that it was Barrès's role to do so. Furthermore, Ungaretti states that 'le mot volonté a plutôt un sens ironique dans la vie' (*AB*: 48), focusing on the facticity of an individual to claim that destiny is not only beyond our control, but also in part down to chance. Despite

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[61] 'Le poète italien Giuseppe Ungaretti (1883-1970), lié dans l'avant-guerre à Apollinaire, à Modigliani, aux cubistes, responsable à Paris en septembre 1918 d'un journal destiné aux troupes italiennes, y rencontre Desnos, Paulhan, puis tout le groupe de Littérature. Breton lui dédicace "Cartes sur les dunes" dans son recueil *Clair de terre*' (*AB*: 48).

this, he states that '[l]a vie d'un homme ne peut être considérée que par les rapports qu'elle crée' (*AB*: 49). These statements indicate a preoccupation with the paradox of being simultaneously free to and condemned to choose that we saw in Sartre's concept of choice in Chapter One, as well as his theory that 'l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait' (*EH*: 30). Ungaretti's preference for total indifference is not unlike Meursault's relationship with the world, yet contains a negative element that is not part of Meursault's outlook.

Jacques Rigaut echoes Ungaretti's (negative) Existentialist sentiment, in equating the optimism of revolt with absolute passivity, and advocating revolt while declaring it pointless (*AB*: 53). Nevertheless Rigaut highlights an ambiguity that might be said to foreground our aforementioned notion of the individual creating their own meaning. Breton's questioning of Rigaut is additionally indicative of a desire to manipulate both the witnesses and the audience, lingering on the subject of suicide (irrelevant to Barrès's case) and invoking issues that were not only applicable to Rigaut, but also to the audience (Sanouillet 2009: 191). Breton's accusations then render the audience complicit in the judgement, as well as making them aware that the witnesses themselves are not immune to his scrutiny.

In contrast with Romoff's dictated Bretonian answers, Mme Rachilde's[62] testimony is simply a statement on the nature of judgement, and does not even contain any questions from Breton. Rachilde's bizarre appearance on the stand is

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[62] 'Mme Rachilde (1860-1953) […] se fit connaître par de nombreux romans audacieux pour son époque, dont le plus célèbre est *Monsieur Vénus* (1884). Chroniqueuse abondante et influente, hostile à Dada, elle préconisait à son égard 'Le Sourire silencieux' (article publié dans *Comœdia*, 1er avril 1920) mais fut intéressée par l'idée même du "procès" Barrès' (*AB*: 51).

indicative of a tentative relationship with Dada: formerly a strong adversary of the movement, she had recently been '"converted" by Picabia' and appears to be wary of over-emphasising her 'brand-new faith' in public (both Sanouillet 2009: 189). However, Sanouillet notes that the newspapers' depiction of the event described an attempted rescue of Dada from its abusive audience (ibid.: 190). We might conclude from this that her engagement was only to be on her own terms, particularly given the personally probing nature of Breton's questions and their lack of relation to the case. We can compare this to the personal nature of the questions asked of Meursault's witnesses that are relevant to the accused, but not specifically to the crime itself.

Breton's questioning of the Dada witnesses reveals both an indictment of the judicial system and moreover a desire to undermine Dada as a movement. Rachilde herself, through agreeing in principle with this judgement of Barrès, undermines Dada's integrity by implying that having set a precedent as a group of jokers, an audience will never take them seriously:

> Jetez-leur [l'audience], une fois, des pois ou des haricots à la figure, ils seront indignés si vous vous contentez de leur faire une conférence plus ou moins intelligente sur un individu ou une œuvre. Alors ils jetteront, de leur côté, les haricots et les pois au visage nouveau que vous leur montrez. (*AB*: 51)

It is notable that the Dadas (minus Breton) would have revelled in such a reaction, and thus we can to a certain extent attribute this new-found parody through seriousness and the illusion of conformity to an additional way of outraging the audience, who had no doubt become accustomed to the usual raucous provocation,

and furthermore a greater means to undermine a system.[63] This attitude is evident in

Meursault's trial, which provoked outrage through crimes other than murder (and

other than Meursault's) in order to obtain the death sentence desired from the start.

Given Pierre Drieu la Rochelle's (later) alignment with Barrès's nationalism,

fascism and anti-Semitism (Rochelle is described by Soucy as a 'self-proclaimed

French Fascist' (1972: 14)), the contemporary reader is inclined to view his testimony

as holding the strongest or most serious link to Barrès himself. This testimony also

gains the ability to leave a lasting impression through being the last. Rochelle claims

that Barrès failed in his duty, rejecting his change of heart and yet maintaining a

certain respect for the accused (perhaps because he would go on to do the same).

Instructively, Breton criticises Rochelle's mode of assessment: 'Si bien que le

jugement que vous rendez sur un homme dépend de ceux qui le jugent et de la

manière dont ils le jugent, ce qui est une attitude purement aristocratique' (*AB*: 60).

Breton's comment is notably hypocritical for one who chose the witnesses himself,

and particularly for his 'obscure reasons' (cf. Sanouillet 2009: 188). Additionally,

Breton's provocation of the witnesses implies that he was trying to influence the

direction that the judgement took, making him guilty of his own accusation.

However, we may attribute this to a parody of the justice system whereby

questioning is structured to obtain specific information, and which of course 'dépend

de ceux qui le jugent et de la manière dont ils le jugent'. We have seen that linguistic

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[63] The normalisation of deviance will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

manipulation is normal in legal situations, as well as being an indication of skill in cases where success is deemed unlikely.

Though Tzara's testimony comes second among the witnesses, it is worth bringing it out to conclude our analysis of the Barrès trial, because not only is it the longest of the six by far, but it also goes the furthest to break down the event, erode any serious tone the trial may have been aiming for, and has the widest-ranging consequences for Dada. Tzara claims at first to know nothing about Barrès, but later declares three times to have met him, across Tzara's literary, poetic, and 'political' career (Tzara would not express any real political interest until later in life). Most importantly, Tzara goes on to dismiss the idea of justice: '[j]e n'ai aucune confiance dans la justice, même si cette justice est faite par Dada' (*AB*: 38). This statement alone successfully (and no doubt deliberately) takes away all credibility from his words, and rocks the foundations of the event, which he did not feel to be in line with Dada. Instructively, Breton later commented on the Barrès trial that '[t]he issues raised, which were of an ethical nature, might have interested several others among us, taken individually; but Dada, because of its conscious bias toward indifference, had absolutely nothing to do with them' (1993: 53). While I agree with Breton's first point, I disagree on the matter of Dada's indifference. Instead I believe that Dada feigned a studied indifference while expressing strong concerns about several issues within its activities.

Breton detailed that Tzara 'contented himself with farcical statements and, to top it off, broke into an inept song' (ibid.), something that we might argue to be not

entirely unprovoked or uninvited, given that the witness bar was a music stand. Tzara furthermore incited Breton to ask if he was in fact a witness for the defence, through his claim that he had nothing against the accused. Are we to consider Tzara's testimony less reliable for its inherent contradiction? What about *L'Étranger*'s Marie, who cries and changes her statement, based on perceived consequences? Tzara's belligerent refusal to comply with Breton's questioning invited accusations that Tzara harboured a desire to commit an 'attentat à la sûreté de l'esprit' himself. In hindsight we might interpret this as either Breton's way of fending off intellectual threat, or simply an excuse to threaten Tzara. From this personal jibing we may posit that the trial was more successful in highlighting the cracks in the moribund Dada movement[64] than in revealing the flaws of the accused. Meursault's case and the Barrès trial bring out the inauthenticity of both the in-world society and the external social environment.

Like the Barrès testimonies, the witnesses in the Meursault trial are sped through, not gleaning much information from any given individual. A heavy weighting is put on the staff of Mme Meursault's home, social authority figures who nevertheless know very little about Meursault. The manager of the home highlights Meursault as an absent carer, additionally expressing surprise at Meursault's 'calm' at his mother's funeral (*E*: 90). The manager does not consider that Meursault's indifference could have been any combination of symptoms of grief, including shock

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[64] And indeed the personal worries of the Dadas themselves. As Tzara states, 'je tiens à me faire passer pour un parfait imbécile, mais je ne cherche pas à m'échapper de l'asile dans lequel je passe ma vie' (*AB*: 42).

and denial, which can lead to out-of-the-'ordinary' behaviour. The centrality of

Meursault's mother from the beginning of the questioning of the witnesses is

indicative that the murder is not the real issue at stake. This devolution also occurs in

the Barrès trial, which lost its thread almost immediately and instead provoked a

number of other issues to come to a head. In both cases an element of sensationalism

is created not from the opening aim or crime, but from the surrounding or

underlying concerns, such as the case of Benjamin Péret's manifestation of the

Unknown Soldier, whose sole purpose seemed to be to cause outrage.[65] The case

against Meursault is built upon perceived social ineptitude, something that makes

the members of the courthouse uneasy and/or threatened in their normalcy.

Further references to normalcy and social convention are brought up by the

concierge of Mme Meursault's home, who relates Meursault's demonstrably

unaffected behaviour around his mother's dead body. In this respect society is

already condemning Meursault for not fitting in, but now also for exhibiting regular

daily behaviour (sleeping, drinking coffee), demonstrating that full conformity to a

predetermined set of behavioural principles is the only acceptable option. This is

particularly questionable when it is deemed abnormal that Meursault does not wish

to view his mother's body. We might interrogate this condemnation of not wishing to

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[65] It succeeded, including scathing review in the press (*AB*: 91-92). For example *Comœdia* reported that '[c]e fut une manifestation piteuse, grotesque, odieuse même par l'introduction dans cette mascarade sans gaieté, du symbole que le Soldat inconnu représente pour l'immense majorité des Français' (ibid.: 91). Sanouillet writes that '[a] wave of anti-Dadaist diatribes arose over the following days in the press, a wave that would erupt all the way onto the benches of the Chamber of Deputies' (2009: 190). This raises further issues of the press as body of judgement, something that is parodied in Meursault's trial through a journalist's explanation of the large press presence: 'Vous savez, nous avons monté un peu votre affaire. L'été, c'est la saison creuse pour les journaux.' (*E*: 85).

see a loved one after their death, and consider that Meursault found it preferable to preserve a living memory.

This stands in stark contrast with Meursault's relationship with his crime. The pause between his gunshots provides an indeterminate space for reflection, highlighting his ambivalence toward the four final shots. This is particularly instructive when we consider the levity of Meursault's case before the changed sentence: it is apparently acceptable to kill a person in cold blood, but not to show an aversion to interacting with the corpse of a relative. This can be notably compared to the unacceptability of the concierge's offering of coffee, which is written off as polite convention, shifting the blame to Meursault's acceptance. This manipulation of events demonstrates that Meursault's guilt is already sealed, confirmed by the resignation of Meursault's lawyer following his initial confidence of success: 'Mon avocat a haussé les épaules et essuyé la sueur qui couvrait son front. Mais lui-même paraissait ébranlé et j'ai compris que les choses n'allaient pas bien pour moi' (*E*: 97). We can compare this to Aragon's behaviour in the Barrès trial, where he 'acted as counsel for the defense and asked for the death of his client' (Kirby 1972: 107). Is this any worse than a lawyer who will argue semantics to win an ostensibly hopeless case, despite obvious indications of guilt? At this point a trial becomes less about crimes and more about (linguistic) interpretations of banalities.

This emphasis on the tenuous personal nature of Meursault's trial is heightened through the ambiguous testimony of Mme Meursault's 'fiancé', Thomas Perez. The use of his statement relies on a double negative: he did not see Meursault crying at

the funeral, but neither did he see him not crying. The conflicting and subjective nature of events is raised at this point: '"Voilà l'image de ce procès. Tout est vrai et rien n'est vrai!"' (*E*: 92), rendering Meursault's trial as absurd as the contradictions of the Barrès trial. Neither trial takes into account the little-informed situation of some of the witnesses, and both appear to put significant weight on the testimonies of the witnesses with the weakest connection to the accused.

The testimonies of the two individuals who did have personal relationships with Meursault (his girlfriend Marie, and his friend Raymond Sintès) are varyingly dismissed and manipulated. During Marie's testimony the judge fixates on the negative implications of Meursault's unacceptable activities the day after his mother's death, ignoring Marie's own opinion of Meursault's personal traits. This is ironic given the intrusive comments made on Meursault's character by those who are demonstrably not familiar with it. Moreover, might we not consider that Meursault's sudden, whirlwind romance may be a result of grief or of displaced affection? Although Meursault lives alone with no great trouble, he closes in on himself within his apartment after his mother leaving, abandoning the rest of the flat to live in one room. We may then attribute his engagement with (and later to) Marie to the trigger of his mother's death, a cry for comfort and intimacy long lost, yet suddenly highlighted. Furthermore, Meursault's apparent indifference can be challenged with his vocabulary of affection. As Sartre states, Meursault 'désigne toujours sa mère du mot tendre et enfantin de "maman" et il ne manque pas une occasion de la comprendre et de s'identifier à elle' (1947a: 108). The inhabitual method of grieving is

displaced by an underlying connection that the members of the court (choose to) ignore.

The rejection of Raymond's personal assessment of Meursault's character compounds our sense that '[e]very detail of the trial adds up to the conclusion that the judges resent the murderer not for what he did but for what he is' (Girard 1964: 521). It is instructive that Raymond's own self-confessed involvement in Meursault's crime is not deemed important enough to make him an accomplice. Is this because Raymond's lifestyle is quite open in its immorality (he is mocked but not persecuted for this), and thus he is deemed not a threat to society? Raymond's behaviour can be compared to Meursault's in that the former is deemed immoral and the latter amoral, the former breaks with convention (unconventional) but the latter is *outside of* it (aconventional). Through this it would be considered possible to 'correct' Raymond; Meursault is beyond correction, necessitating his further removal.

This is particularly strongly presented by the prosecutor's accusations that Meursault has no soul:

> Il disait qu'il s'était penché sur [mon âme] et qu'il n'avait rien trouvé, messieurs les jurés. Il disait qu'à la vérité, je n'en avais point, d'âme, et que rien d'humain, et pas un des principes moraux qui gardent le cœur des hommes ne m'était accessible. "Sans doute, ajoutait-il, nous ne saurions le lui reprocher. Ce qu'il ne saurait acquérir, nous ne pouvons nous plaindre qu'il en manque. Mais quand il s'agit de cette cour, la vertu toute négative de la tolérance doit se muer en celle, moins facile, mais plus élevée, de la justice. Surtout lorsque le vide du cœur tel qu'on le découvre chez cet homme devient un gouffre où la société peut succomber." (*E*: 100-01)

The prosecutor not only crosses into religious terminology, pre-empting the chaplain, but he also introduces a paradox in the judicial system. Meursault is pitied for not having a soul, even rendered blameless ('nous ne saurions le lui reprocher'), yet is

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deemed unsaveable and prosecuted on this very basis. This foregrounds the real

nature of the judiciary system as a way of removing threats to mass morality.

Furthermore, Meursault raises a crucial issue through his rejection of easy justice:

justice *should* be difficult, because a system must be able to commit to serious

decisions that are life-changing (or -ending) for the accused. From the point of view

of individual or inner justice, it remains important to thoroughly consider one's

personal ethics, where ease could be equated with flippancy or, in extension,

inauthenticity. While it can be argued that 'natural' justice is innate, reflection is

required for a functional relationship with others.

Systematic Societies and Individual Ethics

These two examples of Dada and Existentialist trials interrogate the usefulness

of a system of justice. The trials of Meursault and Barrès engage in an effort to attack

the authenticity (in terms of justifiability) of judgement, parodying the acquired

human need for a system of judging and sorting people, according to the

'appropriate' guilt assigned to their actions. Both trials show the limits of justice as an

extension of objective morality: as long as trials are based on precedent,[66] individuals

and their cases will never be fully gauged on their own attributes. Meursault's trial is

based on forward-thinking precedent: he is blamed for the crime that is next on the

agenda, as if it is proof of his guilt. Additionally, Meursault's failure to react to the

charges against him makes the system nervous in its failed attempts to provoke him,

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[66] This is certainly true of British law, and other countries practising common law. However, while the Francophone system of civil law is centred on a case-by-case construct, basing its decisions on general principles and abstractions rather than case precedent, in practice any system based on a codified law is broadly working on a premise of precedent.

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which produces the need to punish him for a new reason: lack of remorse. In addition to putting various systems and ideologies on trial, Dada was putting itself on trial. By falling into the attitudes of judgement that it resented, it judged itself (and, as we have seen through its demise, appeared to find itself guilty).

Both trials enact an absurd parody bordering on madness to highlight the flaws in their respective systems. In relation to *L'Étranger*, René Girard states that '[t]he presentation of the trial as a parody of justice contains at least an implicit indictment of the judges' (1964: 519). This indictment is quite explicit in Dada's trial of Barrès, which 'appl[ied] Dada's ironic posture to the more serious moral issue of preserving commitment to one's beliefs', and 'offered a clear (though still hilarious) replacement for Dada chaos by aping the solemnity and pompousness of traditional judicial procedure' (Papanikolas in Spiteri ed. 2003: 44). Through analysing these parodies of the judicial system, we are led to wonder if justice is a concept that can be systematised, or if indeed it should. What is the purpose of systematising human behaviour? Does its organisation assist its comprehension? Or does it simply set up a rigid system that is doomed to fail, through the relative ease of its abuse? Furthermore, these cases highlight a weakness in systematised justice, in that any system left unquestioned can be manipulated for wrongdoing, as evidenced by Dada's foregrounding of narratives such as nationalism and religion as causes of the systematised destruction and debasement of humanity during the First World War.

Within each of our cases, the characters engage as individuals on different levels with both society and the systems of justice and, through this, with the

concepts of truth, reality and authenticity. The reality of the court's qualification to judge in *L'Étranger* is undermined by their fictional existence. Conversely the real existence of Barrès's 'judges' is undone by their lack of legal qualifications. Equally Barrès was not present for his trial, played instead by a (mute) mannequin. Meursault on the other hand attends his trial, but his accusers and even his lawyer act as if he is not there, and though he is not mute, his voice is lost in the courtroom's apparent lack of attention to his words. Is justice always decided in the absence of the accused? The law is outside of the individual, and the verdict is to some extent out of his or her control (through the finality of the decision, or in cases of wrong accusation). Furthermore, traditional law is structured on a rigid dependence on moral and judicial precedent. While this may give the appearance of consistency, is it not an expression of inauthenticity in that it will almost always bend to the pressures of the times? Moreover, as Thomas Hanna points out, 'any life, placed under the judgement of absolute moral standards, is guilty and monstrous' (1958: 56).

Ribemont-Dessaignes and Tzara share this distaste at the 'objective' judgement of others. The former states in his closing speech that 'Dada ne pense pas. Dada ne pense rien. Il sait cependant ce qu'il ne pense pas: c'est-à-dire tout' (*AB*: 66). Tzara had already testified that '[j]e ne juge pas. Je ne juge rien. Je me juge tout le temps et je me trouve un petit et dégoûtant individu […] Tout ceci est relatif' (*AB*: 45). Soupault further rejects Dada judgement in his 'plea', and additionally implies that the crime of which Barrès is accused is an impossible feat:

> Un acte, une pensée, l'acte ou la pensée contraires [*sic*] ne peuvent compromettre l'esprit ni chez celui qui le commet ou la conçoit, ni l'esprit en général, ni celui d'individus susceptibles d'en subir l'influence. (*AB*: 82)

We can compare this rejection of concern to Meursault's court, which was threatened not by his acts but by his mentality.

The ridiculous nature of both trials serves to imply that the accusers are at fault for feeling intellectually threatened. In one last effort to highlight the futile nature of the trial, Soupault ends by insulting members of the court, calling Tzara 'sénile et délirant', Drieu la Rochelle '[un] abruti', and Rachilde 'folle' (*AB*: 83), essentially carrying through Tzara's earlier mockeries, including calling himself and all of his co-Dadas (among others) 'cochons' and 'salauds' (*AB*: 38-41). In a similar alignment with Dada's *réquisitoire* and *plaidoyer* for Barrès, Meursault comments that he feels that the statements of the judge and of his lawyer are not so different after all (*E*: 98). The fact that this also continues his thought that there is not much difference between absurdities and crime highlights a (perhaps unconscious) criticism of judgement and the law: if the line of guilt is blurred and/or subjective, it can be twisted to assure a continuation of an 'acceptable' society.

It took the trial of Barrès for it to become clear that Dada was not suited to a judgemental position. As Ribemont-Dessaignes expressed, '[c]e simulacre de justice, accompli sérieusement, se situait hors de Dada' (1958: 139).[67] Perhaps this is the foremost reason for it causing the rift between the Breton- and Tzara-camps: '[t]he débâcle surrounding the 'trial' of Maurice Barrès […] confirms the status of

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[67] It is instructive that Barrès does not fit with our 'hors de' paradigm: according to Jacques Madaule, 'Barrès's great weakness, truly, was not to have known how to get outside himself' (in Soucy 1972: 90).

judgement as intrinsic to *surrealist* attempts at self-definition' (Baker 2007: 129; my emphasis). On the other hand it took the trial of Meursault for the novel's society to realise it *did* want to persecute him. Initially the murder charges would not have entailed any great punishment because of a colonial indifference, but the trial caused a highlighting of undesirable character traits on the part of the accused, who then 'needed' to be executed for his crime. Murder does not entail execution, but the wrong mindset is considered beyond correction.

How does this reflect on society and its compulsion to correct and punish? Both Existentialism's and Dada's attachment to the systems that they hope to destroy gives them the upper hand in destroying systems (art, justice) from within. Although both trials examined here exhibit certain signs of failure – in Meursault's case to try him for the crime he committed; in Barrès's to try him at all – they both effectively highlight fundamental societal flaws. Both trials demonstrate the difficulties raised by engaging in a judgement of a subjective individual through an 'objective' moral system. This is expressed elsewhere in the use of declarations of insanity to override or influence a guilty verdict. Furthermore, the continued dependence on establishing a criminal as detached from normalcy maintains the status of the outsider that justifies the law, convincing the majority of society that the system works for them.

Conclusion

Both the Barrès trial and that of *L'Étranger's* Meursault highlight the fundamental injustice of a society whose rules are more important than the individual (though it is of course more difficult to find evidence that Dada actually

wished to right the wrongs of the world beyond pointing them out). We saw that in Meursault's trial, he suffered greatly from the heat and was unable to comprehend a significant part of his trial. Is this any better treatment of an individual than Barrès's trial, at which he was not present (but to which he apparently was invited)? In an instructive parallel, the Dreyfus Affair is said to have (figuratively) taken place in his absence (see Thomas 1961), as his case took a secondary role to the divisive issues it produced. As Léon Blum summarised, 'on se battait pour ou contre la République' (in Royer et al 1995: 760). Through the link of Barrès, this is evident in Dada's trial, and its many thinly veiled indictments of institutions and ideologies.

The trials explored in this chapter raise questions of authenticity of the accused individuals, but also in terms of the implications for the society which is accusing them. Dada's accusation that Maurice Barrès betrayed his own personal values in favour of conforming to reigning narratives might be interpreted as an Existentialist interrogation of Barrès as an example of an inauthentic individual. However, the event and its literary counterpart served to highlight inconsistencies in the movement itself, including the realisation that Dada had assumed the very judgemental position that it so detested in society. The self-destruction of the movement arguably allows Dada to regain a level of authenticity, through countering its own flaws. Conversely, Meursault is tried for *not* fitting in to society. As readers, we know that Meursault is guilty of murder, despite his lack of premeditation. And yet we are compelled to sympathise with this individual, feeling that his fate is unjust. Does this make us complicit in his criminality? Or do we see

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the justice system as having inauthentically processed the accused? Do we feel personally wronged that the court sentences Meursault to death for his 'criminal heart', his indifference to society, and the resulting blame not only for his own murderous act but also for the parricide which is next on the judicial agenda?

Both cases can be used to highlight a difference between authenticity in terms of the 'real', the 'genuine', conforming to certain standards, and the Existentialist sense of the term. In the case of Meursault, his breaking with societal norms would perhaps make him or his behaviour inauthentic in terms of traditional standards. However, within an Existentialist definition, his refusal to fit with established normalcy, even when doing so could save his life, is demonstrative of authentic behaviour.[68] Both trials encourage the reader to challenge the 'natural' authenticity of social constructs and narratives. Through this we may wonder whether it is ever possible for a system of justice to ever engage with anything more than a standard definition of authenticity. A system is faithful to itself, but has no element of conscious decision, as it will always bow to external pressures, a characteristic of Existentialist inauthenticity. As a consequence, we may conclude that it is necessary to rebel against oppressive systematisation to gain individual authenticity.

Both trials highlight the problematic nature of a black-and-white moral judgement of an individual when truth itself is subjective and situational. Through an analysis of these two trials, we can conclude that not only are the ideas of justice

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[68] One notable point of tension against an Existentialist perspective is the assumption that because Camus raises Meursault up as a model, he is therefore a model to be followed: something that Camus never sought to do.

and morality flexible and idiosyncratic, but that literature's relationship with these aspects of society draws upon different degrees of authenticity, through its fluctuating relationship with reality, truth, deception and façade. The texts show that the line of 'fiction' is blurry, reflecting invented situations but also faithfully reproducing real, yet farcical, events. In a certain respect, we must consider Meursault's trial to be no more fictional than Barrès's, since it represents a comment on humanity, and is certainly not detached from the social and political concerns of its time. In this way, Dada's indictment of Barrès is no less authentic for taking place in the absence of the accused. Existentialist and Dada provocations to question the validity of any text forces the reader to be aware of the perpetual necessity for authentic choices in their own life. Perhaps the highest degree of authenticity in literature is inversely proportional to truth, in that its negative link to society provides genuine critique, inviting the reader to become not only aware of the subjectivity of the world, but also to become the creative source of their own authenticity.

This third chapter has delved into a side-by-side textual analysis of two literary examples of Dada and Existentialist expressions of justice and responsibility. We may draw these two themes together to answer our question regarding Meursault: why, if we know that he is guilty, are we yet affected by his fate? Because we feel responsible, not only for being complicit in the sentencing to death of a fellow human being, but for his inconsistent treatment through his changing judgement based progressively less on his crime. In this respect the Barrès trial took the notion of

subjective judgement to its logical extremity: through parodying unrelated and wildly varying aspects of the accused's personality, Dada was provoked into a self-reassessment. The implications for authenticity are instructive in relation to Sartre's statement that 'nous rappelons à l'homme qu'il n'y a d'autre législateur que lui-même' (*EH*: 76), an emphasis on the necessity for an individual ethics that nonetheless is universally applicable. Through these Dada and Existentialist attacks on objectivity, we can posit the importance of a case-by-case approach, as advocated by Beauvoir in her theories of ambiguity and through subjectivity, rather than a dependence on universalising morals and judicial precedent.

Chapter Three began to address the ways in which Dada and Existentialist individuals can be viewed as outsiders to society, tradition and notions of normalcy. In the case of Dada we saw the extent of its rebellion leading to the movement's self-destruction. Chapter Four will develop this notion of deviance in relation to censorship and freedom, returning to Dada's early days of the readymade but also exploring the repercussions of post-Dada ripplings, including neo-Dada and pop art. Where Chapter Three highlighted society's need to isolate and alienate the threat of the different, Chapter Four will scrutinise the inevitable integration of such deviance through the normalisation of shock. Later, Chapter Five will pick up the thread briefly explored here of the notions of truth in relation to fiction and multiple interpretations of events. We have seen in this chapter how different relationships and renderings of events can affect the future of both individuals and movements

within their context. Chapter Five will further dissect this effect and its continuing

importance across art and academia.

- CHAPTER FOUR -
CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM: 'COMMENT JE SUIS DEVENU CHARMANT, SYMPATHIQUE ET DELICIEUX'[69]

Le seul plan sur lequel nous pouvons situer le refus du sujet, c'est celui de la censure.
(*EN*: 87)

Liberté: DADA DADA DADA, hurlement des couleurs crispées, entrelacement des contraires et de toutes les contradictions, des grotesques, des inconséquences: LA VIE.
(Tzara in *D3*:3)

When Dada exploded into the world in 1916, it was met with disapproval by the good people of Zurich. Simultaneously in New York, Duchamp's urinal was rejected as degenerate. In Paris, Dada events often ended in violence (against and within the group of performers) and occasionally with the police being called. Dada spread mischief in every city that it called home, seeking to shake society into readdressing its role within the madness of wartime 'civilisation'. Deviance was Dada's status quo and scandal was its modus operandi. Yet within a few short years, Dada declared itself dead; the avant-garde's most notorious group of misfits disbanded and moved on, several members denying any continuing association. A notable example is Breton, who tried to reappropriate Dada in his own recollections as simply a stepping stone toward his own Surrealism. Almost a century later, Dada has been incorporated into galleries and academic research; anti-art has become viewed as art. In short, the Dada that was once pelted with rotten vegetables has become acceptable, desired, and commodified. Previously censored words, acts and artworks are now celebrated – including through their hefty price tags – instead of reviled. Has the designation of respectability become a form of censorship in its own right?

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[69] Title of a 1920 manifesto by Tzara (in Tzara 1996: 236-37)

This chapter will scrutinise manifestations of Dada provocation, as well as examples from their Neo-Dada and postmodern counterparts, in order to answer the following questions. How, why, and at what point does the censored become acceptable? How can we explain the temporal normalisation of deviance? Is shock simply unrepeatable, or has the contemporary spectator become unshockable? When shock is gone, what is left? The chapter will assess the possibility of a 'zero point' in shock value in the artistic world. Richter uses the term 'zero point' as a title for a section on Dada and Neo-Dada (*AA*: 208-09), referring to the way in which Roger Shattuck describes artworks such as Duchamp's bicycle wheel on second viewing: 'the (anti-)artistic value they used to possess has gone back to zero' (ibid.: 208). Richter does not explicitly define his term 'zero-point' and it is for this reason that I will be investigating its potential for application here. This will be done in relation to works such as the Dada readymades, examples of Dada altercations with authority, and its complex relationship with Neo-Dada. The development of both external and internal censorship (the latter within the movement and in the case of individual Dada members) will be traced geographically, linguistically, and temporally: geographically, through the differing effects of censorship in Dada's various hometowns; linguistically, through the specifics of language use and both internal and external rejection; temporally, over the course of the movement and its legacy.

This analysis will be undertaken in relation to Existentialist ideas of censorship and freedom, especially through the increasing levels and varying types of censorship in Camus's depictions of a plague-infested society in his novel *La Peste*

(1947): the rats, the early cases of plague, quarantine, responses to the plague. The rats will be read in relation to the phenomenon of the readymades, particularly those of Duchamp, alongside the found art of Schwitters. The use of and reactions to quarantine will be interpreted with reference to Dada events which involved the intervention of the authorities. Finally, the return of the rats and recuperation from the plague will be explored in relation to the emergence of Neo-Dada, its relationship with Dada, and its on-going and combined legacy. Colin Davis writes that *La Peste* 'can be read as an act of containment, in which what is at stake is how to eradicate the threat of the unwanted other' (2007: 1008). This chapter seeks to reveal the ways in which Dada responded to its adversaries with confrontation, rejection and/or integration of the 'unwanted other'. Additionally, it will consider Dada itself as unwanted other, from both without and within the movement. While *La Peste* is traditionally read as an allegory of the German Occupation of France during the Second World War, here it will be analysed instead on several different levels in regard to censorship, freedom, and rebellion.

Freedom and Exile

> *La liberté est la source d'où surgissent toutes les significations et toutes les valeurs; elle est la condition originelle de toute justification de l'existence*
> (*MA*: 31-32)

> *Ils éprouvaient ainsi la souffrance de tous les prisonniers et de tous les exilés, qui est de vivre avec une mémoire qui ne sert à rien*
> (*P*: 81)

An important concept to Existentialist writers and theory in general, freedom is a particularly central aspect for Sartre in *L'Être et le néant*. What is specifically useful to this chapter is his close linking of freedom with a lack thereof, that is, limits or

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restraints, or for our purposes censorship. Because of Beauvoir's aim of producing an Existentialist ethics (and in this respect often providing a practical synthesis of Sartrean thought), her writing on freedom (as exemplified in *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*) will also be used to draw conclusions from our analysis. We have already seen that to be free is to be 'condemned to be free' but, despite this, Sartre states that

> La liberté est totale et infinie, ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'elle *n'ait pas* de limites mais qu'elle *ne les rencontre* jamais. Les seules limites que la liberté heurte à chaque instant, ce sont celles qu'elle s'impose à elle-même (*EN*: 576; original emphasis)

Furthermore, Sartrean freedom does not depend on temporal circumstance, rather, 'être libre n'est pas choisir le monde historique où l'on surgit – ce qui n'aurait point de sens – mais se choisir dans le monde, quel qu'il soit' (*EN*: 566).[70] Through this an individual must be able to differentiate between political and social freedoms, and psychological freedom: 'même les tenailles du bourreau ne nous dispensent pas d'être libres' (*EN*: 551). It is the individual's responsibility to assume their own freedom, creating their own values in order to live an authentic existence: 'on ne pourra jamais expliquer par référence à une nature humaine donnée et figée; autrement dit, il n'y a pas de déterminisme, *l'homme est libre, l'homme est liberté*' (*EH*: 39; my emphasis).

The first level on which we can perceive censorship in relation to Dada is its very beginnings in Zurich. It is well known that most Dada adherents were present in Switzerland at this time because of pressures of nationalism and conscription in their belligerent home nations. In this sense they flee a 'mémoire qui ne sert à rien'

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[70] We saw a notable example of this through Taeuber's fragmented hybrid creations, which reflect upon and creatively incorporate, but are not defined by, influence of their context.

(cf. *P*: 81), seeking to cut themselves off from their national past. Even their methods of avoidance of fighting stem from a sense of self-censorship, with adherents such as Arp feigning mental instability in order to be excluded from conscription. Huelsenbeck writes of his interaction with the German authorities to obtain permission to escape to Switzerland: 'I had already made up my mind never to return. Three months or six or twenty meant nothing to me. I had to get out forever, come what might' (1974: 7). Tzara's memory of leaving his native Romania for Zurich expresses a similar desire for escape, if only from the mundane or habitual nature of his former existence: 'L'inconnu aurifère éblouissait déjà l'incandescence d'un rêve écervelé' (in Buot 2002: 31). Tzara's statement furthers the aforementioned mental escape, ironically replacing a mind-numbing provincial life with a self-censoring 'rêve écervelé', to be further replaced with the unknown. This constant sense of removal from self suggests a fundamental need to be 'hors de soi' that we have seen consistently in Dada and Existentialist works over the course of the thesis.

In line with this self-censoring flight from self, outside of Switzerland, there is the externally imposed exile of Schwitters from Germany to Norway, and later Norway to England, which furthermore led him to fully abandon his native language of German, because despite speaking 'comic English' (*AA*: 154), he felt the need to purge himself of this national marker. Huelsenbeck remarks on Germanic exile that even after Dada the movement's adherents continued to be persecuted:

> Hitler, in his psychotic writings, in *Mein Kampf*, had said that dada was one of the most anti-German, destructive and unpatriotic movements. (He was right.) What this meant practically,

though, was that any person who had been active in dada could expect to be destroyed in a concentration camp, scientifically – smoothly, so to speak, not brutally. (1974: 185)[71]

How are we to interpret the rejection of nationality within Dada? Was Dada international, or a-national? The embracing of multiple languages in Zurich implies not only a desire to break down boundaries between languages, but also to create from this chaos a hybridised language, drawing from many to reject a singular nationality.

Sartre states that 'faute de savoir ce que j'exprime en fait, pour autrui, je constitue mon langage comme un phénomène incomplet de fuite hors de moi' (*EN*: 413-14). How does this relate not only to the other but also to the sustained use of a foreign/second language? We are always already tainted with language, in that our environment precedes us, and yet it does not have to define us. If the inability to be born languageless is inevitable facticity, we may consider the choice of a single or multiple foreign language(s) to be an assertion of freedom, especially in the case of Dada's hybridisation of languages in their works,[72] as well as a flight out of self towards a more complete linguistic being. As we saw through Demos in Chapter One, 'belonging and foreignness become identical' (cf. in Dickerman and Witkowsky eds 2005: 12).

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[71] This reference to the scientific hygiene of killing is also present in *L'Étranger*, when Meursault claims that 'on était tué discrètement, avec un peu de honte et beaucoup de précision' (*E*: 111). Furthering Huelsenbeck's depiction of 'smooth' destruction, Meursault brings out an element of 'quiet' removal, not only through the use of 'discrètement' but also the more subtle play on the phonetic crossover of the past participles of taire and tuer: tu(é).

[72] It is notable that Neo-Dada had a significant Anglophone dominance, especially since Dada was ostensibly multilingual. We might posit this as a further diluting of Dada's deviance as Neo-Dada became Dada's more easily digestible next course.

Sartre writes that '[l]a liberté se donne les choses comme adverses, c'est-à-dire leur confère une signification qui les fait choses;[73] mais c'est en assumant le donné même qu'il sera signifiant, c'est-à-dire *en assumant pour le dépasser son exil au milieu d'un en-soi indifférent*' (*EN*: 553; my emphasis). Can we consider Switzerland representative of the indifferent in-itself? This allows us to assess the fundamental links but also the differences between neutrality and indifference. The former term is generally perceived in a positive way, and the latter acquires a negative tone. However, both have a pointed ideologically grounded concern. Additionally, it will be necessary to contrast this semi-self-imposed ideological exile with the externally imposed quarantine of *La Peste*'s town of Oran.

This indifference of Zurich and external indifference towards Oran can be summarised through Sartre's statement that 'la liberté implique donc l'existence des entours à changer: obstacles à franchir, outils à utiliser. Certes, c'est elle qui les révèle comme obstacles, mais elle ne peut qu'interpréter par son libre choix le *sens* de leur être' (*EN*: 551; original emphasis). Freedom reveals the environment's obstacles, but also enables the assignment of meaning to them. Furthermore, Sartre implies that the 'project of freedom' in some ways requires the presence of obstacles, of resistance to overcome:

> le projet même d'une liberté en général est un choix qui implique la prévision et l'acceptation de résistances par ailleurs quelconques. Non seulement c'est la liberté qui constitue le cadre où des

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[73] Dada also exhibits this tendency to make 'things', notably words, sonically through the performance of the simultaneous poem and visually in poetry in its written form. We have seen links between Man Ray and influences from Mallarmé and visual poetics: 'one possible direction implied by "Un coup de dés" was the so-called *chosiste* or "concrete poetry" of later modernism. Here words tended to be reduced to nothing but their material thingness on the page, virtually without any communicative, representational, or even aural potential (they were impossible to read aloud)' (Jay 1993: 179).

> en-soi par ailleurs indifférents se révéleront comme des résistances, mais encore son projet même, en général, est projet de *faire* dans un monde résistant, par victoire sur ses résistances. (*EN*: 552; original emphasis)

Freedom comes about through resistance, not only through victory over it, but also through the process of opposition itself. We will see, through our analysis of Dada texts and events in relation to the events of *La Peste*, how these obstacles and resistances are met in each case, and the consequences this has for the concept of freedom.

(Always al)Readymades and Objets (re)trouvés

> *In one sense, the readymade becomes the perfect vehicle of a pure idea*
> (Goldsmith 1983: 201)

> *The readymade prescribes amnesia.*[74] [...] *The readymade eviscerates the eye's power of assimilation*
> (Luisetti and Sharp 2008: 84)

The readymade is a self-evident example of censorship, in the negative reception of its attempt to engage with artistic authority.[75] We know that Duchamp submitted *Fountain* (1917, Fig. 21) to the Salon des Indépendants only to have it rejected, despite the Society's own aim to exhibit any work providing an entry fee had been paid. But beyond this obvious example of *Fountain*'s rebuff from the art establishment, how do the readymades respond to (or provoke) censorship, and to what extent do they really break down the strictures of the art world? What issues or questions do they raise about respectability of the artist and the art work? Do the readymades represent a failure to infiltrate the artistic elite, or is their subversion

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[74] It is instructive that the readymades should be linked to amnesia. The development of the thesis has shown, particularly through feelings of aphasia in Chapter Two, that loss in the form of debilitating mental states forms a fundamental part of Dada work. This loss acts as a form of censorship in its own right.

[75] Also through its rejection of meaning: 'The ready-made was the logical consequence of Duchamp's rejection of art and of his suspicion that life was without a meaning' (*AA*: 88).

indicative of a stronger engagement than one might initially assume?[76] Thierry de Duve infers that the readymade is an inevitable product of its time, in that '[i]t is a rule of modernism that a convention of art practice be tested by being tampered with, subverted, or even jettisoned' (1994: 71).

What are the underlying ideological aims and results of this game that Duchamp played with authority? Several critics have claimed that the readymade as exemplified by Duchamp does not succeed in breaking down tradition. As Steven Goldsmith states, the readymades

> can become the vehicles of either aesthetic egalitarianism or elitism, depending mainly on whether they are perceived formally or conceptually […]. As an intriguing physical presence, the readymade destroys the framework of art. […] As a vehicle for the communication of ideas, however, the readymade reaffirms the traditional art world. (1983: 198)

It is instructive that the readymades should foreground this tension or balance between egalitarianism and elitism, and destruction and affirmation, because of their significant play on contradiction and the resulting dependence on ambiguity. We will later measure how this ambiguity was important for Dada's continuing impact on the art world.

The readymades interact with the art world in a comparable way to the first sign of the plague in *La Peste*: the sudden appearance of dead rats in public places. From a sanitary point of view, both *Fountain* and the rats are linked to the undesirable locus of the sewer, despite both being physically removed from it. The urinal is removed from its function and as a newly manufactured object, was never

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[76] We saw another example of this in Dada film's lingering relationship with narrative.

connected, and the rats, although once connected to the sewers, are now 'out of place' (see *P*: 16 quotation below). The rats' status as first sign of plague aligns with the readymades as one of the earliest forms of Dada art: in this respect they both represent a brewing *potential* for infection.[77] This is instructive in relation to Dada as many intellectuals were wary of being involved or associated with the movement due to its disruptive and destructive reputation, or because of its crossing of international boundaries that could entail problematic consequences in a wartime context. A notable Dada avoider was Apollinaire, who declined invitations to publish in *Dada*, 'a journal that, however good its character, has Germans among its contributors, however Allied-friendly they may be' (in Dickerman and Witkovsky eds 2005: 293n). We have seen that Taeuber's involvement with Dada was externally frowned upon. A further example is Satie, whose involvement with *Relâche* was labelled 'artistic suicide' (see Orledge 1990: 178).

A productive focal point for our analysis of the rats and the readymades is the opening paragraph of the novel proper:[78]

> Le matin du 16 avril, le docteur Bernard Rieux sortit de son cabinet et buta sur un rat mort, au milieu du palier. Sur le moment, il écarta la bête sans y prendre garde et descendit l'escalier. Mais, arrivé dans la rue, la pensée lui vint que ce rat n'était pas à sa place et il retourna sur ses pas pour avertir le concierge. Devant la réaction du vieux M. Michel, il sentit mieux ce que sa découverte avait d'insolite. La présence de ce rat mort lui avait paru seulement bizarre tandis que, pour le concierge, elle constituait un scandale. La position de ce dernier était d'ailleurs catégorique: il n'y avait pas de rats dans la maison. Le docteur eut beau l'assurer qu'il y en avait un sur le palier du premier étage, et probablement mort, la conviction de M. Michel restait entière. Il n'y avait pas de rats dans la maison, il fallait donc qu'on eût apporté celui-ci du dehors. Bref, il s'agissait d'une farce. (*P*: 16)

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[77] The language of infection is carried into Paris Dada by Richter, who states that 'by the second issue, *Littérature* had been infected with Dada by way of Zurich' (*AA*: 167).

[78] The novel begins with a note from the as yet unidentified narrator: the novel proper begins with the opening of the events in Oran (*P*: 16).

Davis highlights three defences given for the presence of dead rats, which he classes a 'raisonnement de chaudron', in which several defences are given to counter an accusation, all of which alone are legitimate, but together contradict each other: that is, the combination 'La présence de ce rat…constituait un scandale' – 'il n'y avait pas de rats dans la maison' – 'il s'agissait d'une farce'. This can directly be compared to the rejection of Duchamp's urinal in that its submission to the Salon des Indépendants *constituait un scandale*, precisely because *il n'y avait pas* [ce type d'objet] *dans la maison*, and that in the eyes of the Society, it *s'agissait* [peut-être] *d'une farce*. In any case it can be argued that conceptually speaking it was a joke, if the Society would believe that no artist in their right mind would enter such an object. We might additionally consider the rebuff of Duchamp's urinal as like that of the pushing aside of the rat, 'sans y prendre garde'. The urinal came back (metaphorically and physically, in multiple editions) to haunt the same world that ignored it, just like the plague in Oran.

As Davis remarks, '[t]he point is not the truth or falsehood of any of these claims; rather, each of them serves the same purpose, which is to deny that the concierge could have any responsibility for the rodent's presence' (2007: 1013). This same shirking of responsibility is active in the Society's rejection of an object which would later be acknowledged by the very same art world. Furthermore, Davis writes that there is a 'persistent implication in the text that some sort of elemental or even moral significance lies behind their appearance' (ibid.: 1014). What is the elemental or

moral significance of the readymade? We may consider it a point of no return, in that after the readymade art was no longer contemplated in the same way.

We can regard the success of the readymade in relation to both the proliferation of the dead rats in Oran and the authorities' initial reluctance to get rid of them. *Fountain* may have been removed from entry into the Salon, but it was not possible to remove its effect: 'Perhaps, if the mess is removed too quickly, something is lost which might have been worth preserving' (Davis 2007: 1009). As Richter states, '[a]fter the *Fountain* and Duchamp's break with the New York *Salon des Indépendants*, there appeared a whole series of puzzling objects' (*AA*: 90). And as the narrator of *La Peste* relates, 'partout où nos concitoyens rassemblaient, les rats attendaient en tas […] [n]os concitoyens stupéfaits les découvraient aux endroits plus fréquentés de la ville' (*P*: 23-24).

After this initial flurry in both cases, the proliferation loses its effect (in the case of the rats, they disappear almost entirely). However, Davis writes that '[i]f the rats disappear from the novel after its early stages, it is not because the challenge to security and authority has been overcome, but because it is now all-pervasive. The rats' thematic presence is no longer necessary' (2007: 1014). The readymades, as both an early stage in, and as particularly symbolic of, the Dada revolt, are no longer quite as necessary beyond their initial effect. The metaphorical floodgate had been opened, and the idea of the readymade was all-pervasive. Perhaps this is why their shock factor is distinctly diminished after their original viewing, too. As Richter comments on the waning meaning of the readymade over its lifespan:

> The second time one sees them, the coal shovel, the wheel, etc., are simple articles of use with no implications, whether they stand in their appointed place in one's house or whether they make a pretentious appearance at an exhibition. They no longer have any anti-aesthetic or anti-artistic function whatever, only a practical function. Their artistic or anti-artistic content is reduced to nothing after the first shock effect. At this point they could be thrown away, put in some store or returned to their normal functions. (*AA*: 208)

Is this new anti-value actually what Duchamp was aiming for? The objects no longer shock, but also invite problematic contemplation, if they can be said to have no value other than their practical use.

How are we to compare this depiction of a 'return to purpose' to the altered readymades?[79] Duchamp's urinal may be relegated to the bathroom, but others can no longer fulfil their original function as ordinary objects. For example, Man Ray's *Cadeau* (1921, Fig. 22) was initially a simple flat-iron and, if presented as such, could be used again after being contextualised as art. However, the artist glued a line of tacks along the centre of its flat side, the very part that provides its function. Thus not only does the work as readymade feed into Richter's statements on loss of shock value, but the decontextualisation of the work through being reassigned to its traditional function is no longer possible. An instructive point of tension with Duchamp's urinal is the 1993 act of Pierre Pinoncelli, who 'used' one of its replicas in the gallery setting and was consequently arrested for vandalism (*Cabinet Magazine* 2007b). What is striking here is that the lost shock value is regained precisely by the normalisation of the deviance of the original urinal: the item is at once de- and re-contextualised. Furthermore, Pinoncelli continues Duchamp's prank through a play on the notion of 'taking the piss' with this act and work of art, an extension of Arturo

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[79] A linguistic comparison can be made here between a return to purpose and *Le Retour à la raison*, which uses objects as readymade filmic subjects.

Schwarz's definition of the readymade as 'the three-dimensional projection of a pun' (in Mundy ed. 2008: 127).

Referring back to *La Peste*'s rats, the iron is not only 'out of place' as a work for exhibition, as the rats were in their state of being out in the open and in buildings, but in its customised state it is also rendered as disturbing as the rats in their trifold divergence from normalcy: they are visible, dead, and have bloody snouts. Davis states that 'the rats are not just rats; they are bearers of meaning, though no one can quite settle what the meaning might be' (2007: 1014). We can effect a simple substitution here of 'rats' to 'the readymades are not just objects […]', and our analogy of confusion is complete. This is particularly relevant in the case of *Cadeau*, which retains its mysterious semantic residue, without maintaining its shock value. We might argue through the analogy of residue that *Cadeau* maintains a stronger status as anti-art than *Fountain*, despite the latter's relative ubiquity compared to the former.

We might further suggest the conceptual creation of a compound readymade if we bear in mind Duchamp's idea of the reciprocal readymade: 'use a Rembrandt as an ironing board' (in Sanouillet and Peterson 1973: 32).[80] Does *Cadeau* – alterations and all – invite its reuse in its original function? In which case, it would seem appropriate that this particular iron require a special ironing board. Furthermore, would this represent the total destruction of the work of art? Or does it offer the capacity for creating a new one? A work that responds to both of these questions is

[80] *Cadeau* is also already a double-artist work, through the input of Satie in the creative process. By this extension it would become a meta-compound readymade.

Indestructible Object (or Object to be Destroyed) (Man Ray, 1923, Fig. 23), since it

presents itself as simultaneously self-destructive and eternal. The fact that the object

is constructed from a metronome reinforces this reference to the indestructible

passage of time, as well as the inevitable decomposition of all things. Additionally, if

we read 'object' in its parenthesised title as a verb instead of a noun, we can consider

the work an extra layer of declamation of censorship (as in, 'object, [if you want] to

be destroyed').

Despite *Fountain*'s initial shock value, the readymade was quickly incorporated

into the traditional art world. Since this anti-exhibition,

> *Fountain* has been the centre-piece of countless exhibitions. At the Dada exhibition held at the
> Sidney Janis gallery in the late 'fifties, it hung over the main entrance, where everyone had to
> pass under it…It was filled with geraniums. No trace of the initial shock remained. (*AA*: 89)

Perhaps this is because Duchamp tried to focus on an object centred on a

disconnected present, breaking from all tradition. Not only did the readymade's

audience play exactly into the reaction Duchamp anticipated – and after all, shock is

still an aesthetic reaction, albeit negative – but it left an unexpected trace on the art

world for years to come. We saw in Chapter Two that perception is always grounded

in experience. Does this mean that a work of art, too, is always already tainted by the

past? The objects that make up *Cadeau* certainly imply meaning if only by the

deliberate distortion of functionality. Yet this is not to infer that the readymades are

unoriginal, through their perception as a simple elevation of the mundane.

Schwarz states that 'the readymade, far from being an iconoclastic operation –

as, so often, it is superficially defined – is a highly sophisticated philosophical

performance springing from a very special brand of humour' (in Mundy ed. 2008:

128). While Schwarz rightly highlights the risk of superficiality of such a definition,

we might instead say that the readymade is much *more than* an iconoclastic

operation. The iconoclastic quality of the readymades – particularly *Fountain* – is

evidenced by its relationship with both censorship and the art world more broadly.

Additionally, there is no reason why the readymade cannot be both iconoclastic and

a 'sophisticated philosophical performance'. Referring back to our rats, Davis

suggests that they 'represent a residue or semantic excess through which the

questions of ethical choice and action are posed' (2007: 1008). In a similar way, the

readymades, compromised by residue, create both a visual and semantic excess

primarily because of the plethora of questions of aesthetic choice and action that they

provoke, and the answers that they refuse to provide.

We may also consider the readymades to be always-already-made. Firstly

because Duchamp, aware of the problematic relationship between the mass-made

object and the artist, designated 'rules' for creating, or *choosing*, a readymade.

Schwarz states that:

> the elevation of a common object to the level of a work of art did not consist in merely choosing
> and signing it. It implied following a set of four rules: 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: 127)

So although the readymade appears to spring from a desire to reject aesthetic

intentionality, Duchamp's rules imply that '[t]he mass-produced repetition is not,

bang-bang, mechanical: it contains longings for individual greatness, dreams of

national prosperity, and fears of loss' (Nesbit 1986: 53-54).

Secondly, and further to this 'longing for individual greatness', Ivars Peterson (2000) believes that the photographs of the readymades (all that remains in certain cases of the original art work) were manipulated by Duchamp: an extra layer of artistic interference that supports the idea that these objects are not simply plucked from a production line, ready-made, but have the potential for compound self-referentiality, or a 'multiple and deferred location' (Luisetti and Sharp 2008: 79). For example, Duchamp's own face can apparently be distinguished as having been superimposed over his moustachioed Mona Lisa, lending an additional personal quality (Peterson 2000: 10). We can compare and also contrast this superimposition with Duchamp's alter-ego, Rrose Sélavy, which is achieved by layering make-up, clothes and other 'feminine' paraphernalia onto Duchamp himself. Both methods imply an idea of the layering of identity, an active hybridisation of characters. This hybridisation, layering and deferral contributes in advance to the work and the artist's notoriety for years to come:

> [Duchamp] was a multidimensional individual who could function in the context of his own era, scandalizing society and exerting a powerful influence on the artistic community. Yet he could also look far deeper and farther, exploiting the acceptability of artistic idiosyncrasy to orchestrate an elaborate game of hide-and-seek with posterity. (ibid.)

We might consider Duchamp's relationship with temporality as an extension of the subjectivity of identity that we saw in Chapter One: by continuing to surprise for years to come, both the artist and his works refuse concrete external definition.

The manipulation of object functionality as anti-art is labelled the 'Uselessness Effect' by Richter, who notes that 'it was precisely because these things were useless that we found them moving and lyrical' (*AA*: 96). While Richter is primarily

discussing Picabia, Duchamp and Man Ray, the near-kleptomaniacal work of Schwitters engages in a similar relationship with objects. Like Duchamp and Man Ray, Schwitters had a penchant for incorporating the useless, or the mundane, into his work. We can also link Schwitters with the rats and readymades (cf. *Fountain*) via the initial emphasis on sewage. As a collection of waste, sewage is related to Schwitters's collage style through the collection of discarded items, of rubbish and general disposal. However, we can consider Schwitters's work as also *clearing up* this rubbish, and/or reducing its environmental impact, thus removing its negative aspect. We can also see this in *Fountain*, which is nonetheless a *clean* (unused, at time of creation) urinal.[81]

Schwitters's work, particularly that of his *Merz* series, collates and presents the often unwanted, as well as incorporating 'residue and semantic excess' through his use of items associated with consumer goods, such as tickets and food packaging. We may be inclined to call Merz art an assisted readymade: if objects such as train tickets are already readymades,[82] the collaged nature of Schwitters's work represents a compounding of this principle. As Dorothea Dietrich remarks, 'in building with fragments, Schwitters attempts to conquer the very process of fragmentation' (1991: 91). Even the word Merz is a fragment or scrap (of 'Kommerz und Privatbank'), and in keeping with our analogies of waste and sewage, also draws phonetically near to the French 'merde'.

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[81] For more on Duchamp and ecological theory, see Patrick Suter in Adamowicz and Robertson eds 2012.

[82] However, Schwitters notes that '[a] bus ticket has been printed for controlling the passenger, the MERZ picture uses it only as colour' (in Chambers and Orchard eds 2013: 60) – does this represent a 'freeing' of the passenger/spectator from this control?

Schwitters elevated his concept of Merz into a way of life, as well as a distinctive period in his own artistic career, raising the art form to a mode of existence:

> Merz stands for freedom from all fetters, for the sake of artistic creation. Freedom is not lack of restraint, but the product of strict artistic discipline. Merz also means tolerance towards any artistically motivated limitation. Every artist must be allowed to mold a picture out of nothing but blotting paper for example, provided he is capable of molding a picture. (Schwitters in Lippard 1971: 102)

It is instructive that Schwitters foregrounds freedom as a central aspect of Merz. Furthermore, the desire to be free 'from all fetters' is something that we could translate into Existentialist terms as the desire to act based upon no pre-ordained system. Additionally, like Sartre he denies the conclusion that this would lead to anarchic tendencies, instead claiming it as a 'product of strict artistic discipline'. This fulfils the Existentialist notion that choice should be a conscious, active process in the individual, as well as considering freedom as not primarily constrained by external factors (here through limitations being self-imposed, or 'artistically motivated').

We can pick out a number of these elements in Schwitters's Merz pictures. The 1919 *Merzbild 1A Der Irrenarzt* [Merzpicture 1 A The Psychiatrist] (Fig. 24) features a multi-coloured head with wheel/cog items on top. We saw a comparable desire to build over things in Chapter Two in Man Ray's building blocks sequence in *Emak Bakia*, as well as the use of mechanical additions to the human form in Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf* in Chapter One. These artists foreground an apparent need to cover over human aspects of their works, leading us to wonder if this represents replacement, improvement, or dehumanisation (especially in the manner of many

Dada works that interrogate the brutal mechanisation of war). This is an additive

process, but in the case of Schwitters's *Merzbild* it is also revealing, if we consider

these fragments the contents of one's head and, by extension, the private workings of

the mind. The relevance of the implicit authority of the title of this piece ('The

Psychiatrist') takes on a disquieting quality in this respect.

This strong externalisation of the personal and internal is expository but can

also be considered a mark of honesty. Does this work (and its message) attain greater

authenticity through its transparency (an expression of Dada's common 'what you

see is what you get' mode)? It certainly supports the necessity to be free 'from all

fetters'. The additive nature of much of Schwitters's art evokes an insistence on the

present that we saw in *Fountain*. Where *Fountain* does this by emphasising the

moment, however, the *Merzbilder* achieve a similar effect by constantly building upon

the same space: instead of expanding the edges of the canvas (a special construct

with a temporal implication), Schwitters constantly alters the current, the 'now'

point. In this way the Merz work is not only always already tainted with a residue of

the past, but it insists on a hybridisation of this trace through combination of pasts.

It is notable that the originals for many readymades, including *Fountain* and

Cadeau, as well as Schwitters's architectural Merz constructions, have been lost and,

as such, only exist as memory or as a rippling of their effects. As Duve claims,

> *Fountain* only exists as the lost referent of a series of ostensive statements […] that swear to the fact that it existed but that it no longer exists at the moment one learns of its existence, and that's why its whole public belongs to the progeny of *The Blind Man.* (1994: 89)[83]

Similarly, beyond the initial disturbing appearance of the rats in Oran, the memory of their existence (until their reappearance) is only proven by their shared symptoms of plague in the community. Though they are frequently mentioned as a point of concern, no one will accept responsibility for them. Notably, the human victims suffer the same fate as their rat counterparts: post mortem, they are initially simply removed; later, when the number of corpses gets too high, both are incinerated without ceremony. However, despite the emphasis placed on the worthlessness of the Dada objects (with Duchamp originally not caring if they were lost or destroyed, sometimes inviting it), the artist would later commission copies to reinsert the work into the museum world.

Museums today are keen to exhibit 'genuine reproductions' of Duchamp's urinal, as notably seen at the Barbican's retrospective (2013), thus continuing the artist's game with posterity: the readymade has been elevated to the very status ('art') it claimed to destroy. With reference to *Cabinet Magazine*'s collection of information on the seventeen known reproductions of this work (2007a: n.p.), the Barbican's copy appears to be the earliest reproduction (1950), as well as being the copy used at the Sidney Janis Gallery exhibition of 1953 to which Richter refers. Its relationship with the original is as follows: the urinal itself was not picked out (nor commissioned) by Duchamp, but was signed by the artist. This highlights the

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[83] The only remaining form of the 'original' *Fountain* is its photograph in this magazine.

varying relationship the copies have with the originals, as well as representing an everlasting interrogation of the notion of authenticity (in terms of 'of the author') in art. Additionally, these works maintain an ephemerality through their status as destroyed or lost, but also inherently reproducible, particularly in the case of *Fountain* and its multiple offspring, where 'the problem of legitimacy remains relevant as unauthorised urinals have been discovered circulating in Italy' (*The Economist* 2010: n.p).[84] Schwitters's Merz building work was destroyed in situations beyond his control, and thus their loss was not actively encouraged by the artist (*Merzbau* in particular was painstakingly recreated several times).

How can we compare the recreation of lost objects between artists like Man Ray and Duchamp, who claimed not to care about their loss, and Schwitters, who would not have chosen to destroy his work? How does this relate to the re-commissioning of works, versus the careful reconstruction by the artist themselves? This draws upon a fundamental issue in artistic reproduction: recommissioning can simultaneously be considered a deliberate distancing between the artist and the work, and an inauthentic reproduction (arguably also deliberate). Careful reconstruction maintains the artist's authentic personal touch (maintaining intention, if not necessarily original), yet becomes inauthentic in its desire to *be* the original in this bizarre non-

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[84] This varying and disputed dispersion of *Fountain* plays with the notion of the 'truth' and 'history' of Dada, themes to be discussed in Chapter Five. The 'false' urinals also distort the notion of Dada deviance beyond the authorised multiple reproduction to the extent that censorship from the art world turns back on itself.

identicality.[85] We will now evaluate how the game with posterity created by the above works interacts with the game with authority, as we explore a range of Dada events.

(anti-)Altercations with Authority

> *C'était là une des façons qu'avait la maladie de détourner l'attention et de brouiller les cartes.*
>
> (*P*: 83)

Like the readymades, the various Dada exhibitions and events provoked a plethora of reactions in the public, as well as in the authorities. These reactions not only tested the (dis)tastes of the public, pointing out its limitations, but also served to highlight the presence of the very things the authorities were trying to censor. The Dada personality varied from place to place: two quite extreme examples are Zurich and Berlin. Zurich represented a neutral ground to which Dada artists had fled, and maintained 'a sort of psychic equilibrium' (*AA*: 122), whereas the political tension in wartime Berlin created an atmosphere of frustrated belligerence, and 'encouraged rebels there to turn their rebelliousness even against each other' (ibid.). This aggression led to a problematic post-war atmosphere, in that there was a 'vacuum created by the sudden arrival of freedom' (ibid.).[86] We can analyse these reactions against the varying responses to the plague, from medical resistance to the illness to escape attempts, as well as authorities' reactions to reactions to the plague, from quarantine to the imposition of prison sentences.

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[85] This creates a hierarchy of identicality in contrasting these works with the photography discussed in Chapter One. Both types of work are not identical to their originals, but the photograph is demonstrably 'more identical' than the reproduction.

[86] Richter's account is foregrounded here because of its two essential values: it productively centralises information on these centres, and is one of the most comprehensive primary Dada texts.

Responses to Dada events from both the public and the authorities proved wildly varying. The early Zurich exhibitions had a rather restrained reception, giving Dada, 'for the first time, some slight appearance of seriousness in the eyes of the Zurich public' (*AA*: 39).[87] This did not prevent the works being labelled 'frightful' (ibid.), but it represents quite an unusual level of acceptance by the public. Furthermore, Richter writes that the events prepared the public 'for Dada to be, if not loved or understood, at least tolerated with a sort of disapproving curiosity', yet '[i]t was not always possible to avoid nasty scenes', something that Richter puts down to 'envy' and 'vanity' (ibid.: 40). We have seen that this provocation became Dada's *modus vivendi*, with widely varying results. Notably Berlin Dada's events incited decidedly more inflammatory reactions from the authorities than those in Zurich, no doubt influenced by their varying wartime political atmospheres. This was in no small part due to frequent misleading advertising on the part of the adherents themselves, who 'often advertised harmless lectures which they had no intention of presenting' (*AA*: 129). This has the effect not only of drawing a different, specific type of audience, but also lends a certain guarantee of outrage (especially as they were usually directly insulted by the performers). In Berlin the Dadas' deliberate misleading led to frequent riots, and a consequent engagement with the public and altercations with the police. However, a welcome result of this tumultuous atmosphere was wide and varying coverage in the press.

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[87] This is something that we will see again with the advent of Neo-Dada. We might consider that the nature of exhibitions gave an opportunity for quiet contemplation, something which would not have been offered at the Dada performances.

This relationship of rebellion and revolt with the press can be compared to *La Peste* when the authorities begin to enforce quarantine measures, fearing rebellion from the plague-inflicted population. The narrator writes that '[l]es journaux publièrent des décrets qui renouvelaient l'interdiction de sortir et menaçaient de peines de prison les contrevenants' (*P*: 119). As we have seen, in neither case did these interventions stop the proliferation of that which it sought to contain. We may even consider that Dada flourished under censorship (in varying ways in its varying centres), just as *La Peste*'s Cottard begins to profit from the plague's proliferation, selling contraband goods and eventually dreading the end of quarantine.

A particularly strong interaction with the authorities was the First International Dada Fair (Berlin, 1920), which was closed down by the German police. Wieland Herzfelde and Brigit Doherty describe a dual relationship of the event with the world of art:

> the Dada Fair "maintained" the art trade to the extent that it put Dadaist products on the market; at the same time, and indeed thereby, the exhibition aimed to generate within the walls of a well-situated Berlin art gallery an affront to public taste that would "eradicate" the market into which its products were launched, as if, again thereby, to "elevate" the enterprise of dealing in works of art in the first place. (2003: 93)

Herzfelde and Doherty go on to explain that the organisers were subject to fines of nine hundred marks 'on charges of having slandered the German military by putting *Gott mit uns* on public view' (2003: 94). The use of the phrase 'Gott mit uns' used in parody highlights the problematic relationship between higher being as protector and as justification for (sometimes questionable) actions. The Dada work foregrounds the dependence on context for interpretation of this phrase. To the

authorities of the time, it was clearly acceptable for German soldiers to wear such insignia, despite its use for destructive military means. Yet its parody is unacceptably slanderous, something that unwittingly played directly into Dada's game of revelling in negative reception.

The explicit reference to divine authority can be compared with the two notable sermons of *La Peste*'s Jesuit priest, Paneloux. Paneloux decrees the plague first a punishment, and later a test of faith for the citizens of Oran. The way in which the citizens of Oran react to these sermons can be compared to Dada's parody of religion through *Gott mit uns*. The citizens, who have until the point of the plague been as a whole rather religiously indifferent, gain a sudden interest on being told that the disease is punishment for their sins. This misuse of religion is extended later not only when the public turns to superstition ('Ils portaient plus volontiers des médailles protectrices […] qu'ils n'allaient à la messe' (*P*: 224)), but also in Paneloux's second sermon which is notably less well-attended than the first, because 'ce genre de spectacle n'avait plus l'attrait de la nouveauté pour nos concitoyens' (ibid.).[88] This attitude is comparable to the dwindling interest in Dada in its later years: scandal loses impetus with repetition, just as newness and self-interest affected the church-going desires of the people of Oran.

The Berlin Dada Fair interacted with the authorities in a similar way as the readymades interacted with the authority of the institution of art. Both left a lasting mark, despite their rejection, and both simultaneously broke down and maintained

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[88] Instructively it is at this point that Paneloux 'ne disait plus "vous", mais "nous"' (*P*: 225), an ironic sense of complicity that we saw in *Gott mit uns*.

the institution with which they engaged. As Goldsmith states in relation to the

conservative nature of defining readymades:

> Conceptual definitions are necessarily exclusive; they focus on particular, selected
> characteristics at the expense of actual uniqueness or diversity. They allow us to order our
> experience by grouping certain things together and leaving others out. If Marcel Duchamp
> presents an object that radically questions the borders of any definition of art, an object that
> cannot be ignored because it has been accepted in practice as art, the conservative critic seeks to
> enlarge the borders of theory and thus absorb the rebellion. While the peculiar, irresolvable
> nature of the readymade threatens to undermine this endeavor with the assertion that
> everything (or, of course, nothing) is art, it also surprisingly helps to further the conventional
> cause. (1983: 197)

Goldsmith's statement can be used to link these two manifestations. Both the Dada

Fair and the readymades broke with traditional definitions of art, yet both were

eventually absorbed into them. These changing definitions match Zurich Dada's

interaction with the police: as Huelsenbeck mentioned in a 1970 lecture on Dada,

'ironically the police took an interest in our carrying-on while leaving completely

undisturbed a politician who was preparing a great revolution. I am referring to

Lenin, who was our neighbor at the Cabaret Voltaire' (1974: xiv). Not only is

authority developed and altered in order to incorporate specific breaches, but it can

also be misled by explicit, loud rebellion and blind to implicit, quiet musings. Hence

retrospectively we can either consider authority misguided, or simply as redefined.

Just as the authorities in Oran were wrong to ignore the early cases of plague, for

many the ignorance of the early signs of Leninist revolution would be retrospectively

regretted.

Herzfelde and Doherty write that 'The Dada Fair also received dozens of

published reviews, both in Germany and abroad. Most of those reviews were hostile,

a good number venomously so' (2003: 94). However, we know that Dada thrived on

hostility from its audience, and Marc Dachy writes that '[t]he press involuntarily

proved to be one of the active promoters of Dada' (1990: 137). This is carried through

to Paris Dada, particularly in reference to the Festival Dada at the Salle Gaveau in

1920. Richter writes that the event was

> an enormous *succès de scandale*, both with the audience, which immensely enjoyed its active
> participation, and with the press, which tore Dada to bits and spat out the pieces. […] Everyone
> was discussing Dada and reacting, whether positively or negatively, to its programme, which
> consisted of anti-authority, anti-conduct, anti-church, anti-art, anti-order, daemonic humour.
> (*AA*: 182)

This relationship with the press can be compared to *le Courrier de l'Épidémie*, which is

created in Oran 'pour tâche d'"informer nos concitoyens, dans un souci de

scrupuleuse objectivité, des progrès ou des reculs de la maladie; de leur fournir les

témoignages les plus autorisés sur l'avenir de l'épidémie["]' (*P*: 125). While the press

generally maintains the same claims of reporting 'truth', we have seen that Dada

successfully distorted it on several occasions. And just as *le Courrier de l'Épidémie*

's'est borné très rapidement à publier des annonces de nouveaux produits, infallibles

pour prévenir la peste' (*P*: 126), Dada used its own little press to (falsely) advertise

products that neither worked nor existed, such as the perfume *Belle Haleine* or the

hair product *Haarstärkendes Kopfwasser*. In this way the Dada press had the further

effect of breaking down the relationship between advert and art, as well as the

language and material of advertising and poetry.

Richter writes of the Gaveau Festival Dada: 'Tomatoes and eggs were thrown

on stage. "In the interval, some [members of the audience] even went to a local

butcher's shop and provided themselves with *escalopes and beef-steaks*"[89] […] An appropriate accompaniment to the poems, manifestoes and sketches of Paul Dermée, Éluard, Tzara, Ribemont-Dessaignes and Breton!' (*AA*: 181-82; my emphasis). There is an implicit note of flattery in this remark, as if the projectiles had been upgraded, as well as the additional effort on the part of the audience to obtain them. Dada delighted in being (quite literally) egged on, and the cultural and monetary implications of being showered with steaks are clear. The effort required to produce these projectiles implies that the audience was quite invested in the performance, despite apparently being insulted by – and perhaps in conjunction with – its choice of venue. Sanouillet writes that 'the choice itself was an insult to the Saint-Honoré quarter's good taste, and to the prestige of the theatre whose great organs and grand pianos were reserved for the lofty music of Bach or Mozart' (2009: 125). Furthermore, a 'sizeable crowd' (ibid.: 126) of people came to the event (and paid entry), despite having been warned of its disturbing content. Additionally, it is said that this choice of venue turned out to be auspicious, since the spectators 'enjoyed themselves immensely, perhaps because they had been given the chance, for once, to play an active role in this hall usually devoted to falling asleep to classical music' (ibid.). This latter statement highlights the delicate relationship between rejection of the unwanted and delight in the disapproved-of, a not wanting to look while wanting to see.

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[89] It is unclear who Richter is citing at this point, due to his style of inserting uncredited quotations into the body of his text. We might suggest attributing it to a later mention of Ribemont-Dessaignes, since this is the closest mention of a voice other than Richter's.

This tension between censorship and delight was reflected in the distorted press coverage of the event, which notably listed projectiles in great detail, but omitted the steaks, and reported that 'we attended the funeral of Dada' (in Sanouillet 2009: 126). Did this represent a waning interest in Dada, or an attempt at selective censorship? The perceived upgrade in projectiles was replaced by a declaration of the end of the movement, censoring both content and the life span of the movement itself. Furthermore, Hanne Bergius underlines that 'Dada's play with publicity carried with it the danger of being quietly integrated by those very media that Dada was using for its activities and anti-cultural propaganda' (2003: 30): as we saw in the readymades, once zero-point shock has been reached, aestheticisation and acceptance are not far behind. In addition to external censorship, these events also show examples of Dada's own self-censorship. At the Festival Dada, one of the Dadas (Soupault, according to Sanouillet) 'allegedly called upon the police to throw out a troublemaker' (ibid.: 128). Whether or not Soupault called the police, the allegation implies a level of self-censorship (the Dadas filtering their events' audiences), while also being an attempt to both degrade and publicise Dada's status.

This self-censorship rests upon 'le refus du sujet' (cf. Sartre); a manifestation of the self as 'unwanted other'. Dada evidently thrived on aggressive audience participation, as well as the audience enjoying, despite themselves, this increased interaction with the performance. We have seen through these examples of censorship that good or bad, this feedback contributed to an on-going and indelible presence of Dada. Tzara quotes the critic Jean Paulhan as having written about the

Festival: 'If you must speak of Dada you must speak of Dada. If you must not speak of Dada, you must still speak of Dada' (in Young 1981: 30). Bad press may represent a form of censorship, but in Dada's case it allowed a continuation of its own anti-self. We will now assess just how successful these Chinese whispers were.

What's New About Neo-Dada?

[I]*ls pariaient en somme sur le hasard et le hasard n'est à personne*
(*P*: 198)

After Dada proudly proclaimed itself dead, it seems odd that after a period of time a movement bearing its name should spring up anew. However, this oddness is lessened when we consider Daniel Spoerri's suggestion that between Dada's death and the end of the Second World War Dada documents were simply not available: 'many things were still hidden, not yet worked on or not yet accessible' (in Kuenzli ed. 2006: 41). This is a level of censorship that would have significantly affected Dada's legacy, but also performs a gap that allows us perspective on the relationship between the two movements. How does the Neo-Dada resurgence, which involved none of the original Dadas, relate to the original movement? Burton Wasserman tells us that '[a]s Dada grew out of what it was partly against (abstraction and Expressionism), so too, Pop [Art] is both a by-product of and a rebellion against Abstract Expressionism' (1966: 13). Despite this initial oscillating pattern of influences and reactions, we might wonder in what ways Neo-Dada was an authentic or substantive continuation of Dada. An analysis of the reaction to and criticism of Neo-Dada by the Dadas themselves will allow us to draw out the positive aspects of this re-birth of the movement. It will be necessary to investigate the

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reciprocity of Dada and Neo-Dada art. We will then go on to evaluate the state of

Dada today, as illustrated by continued exhibitions dedicated to the movement, its

adherents and its legacy.

Since our analysis of Neo-Dada is to centre around the return of the rats and the

recuperation of the population, let us briefly revisit the readymades. Goldsmith

claims that '[r]ather than destroying institutional art, [the readymade] has fathered a

long line of conceptual pieces that promote philosophical inquiry in the scholastic

tradition – complex, self-explorative pieces that question the very nature of their own

existence as art' (1983: 200). We will examine this claim in relation to Neo-Dada art

works, as well as the altered nature of Oran before and after the plague. The rats in

Oran reappear in a way that could describe the birth of Neo-Dada:

> Ça y est, disait-il, ils sortent encore. | Qui? | Eh bien! Les rats! | Depuis le mois d'avril, aucun rat mort n'avait été découvert. | Est-ce que ça va recommencer? Dit Tarrou à Rieux. Le vieux se frottait les mains. | Il faut les voir courir! C'est un plaisir. | Il avait vu deux rats vivants entrer chez lui, par la porte de la rue. Des voisins lui avaient rapporté que, chez eux aussi, les bêtes avaient fait leur réapparition. Dans certaines charpentes, on entendait de nouveau le remue-ménage oublié depuis des mois. Rieux attendit la publication des statistiques générales qui avaient lieu au début de chaque semaine. Elles révélaient un recul de la maladie. (*P*: 266-67)

The similarities that Neo-Dada has with original Dada are evident not only through

materials and style in their artworks, but also through a 'Dada-like sense of paradox

and ambiguity' (MoCA 2010: n.p.). We will see that Neo-Dada represented a more

aesthetically acceptable version of Dada, something that can be analogised through

the return of the rats: originally (in their dead and bleeding form) objects of fear and

repulsion, their reappearance was celebrated. This symmetry can be posited in

relation to Neo-Dada, which in its commercialised, museum-friendly form, represented this 'recul de la maladie' of Dada.

Justin Wolf suggests that Neo-Dada's primary material characteristics were a penchant for found objects and performance (2012: n.p.), which mimicks some of Dada's favoured art forms. We could add numerous other forms, including Neo-Dada's 'happenings' (cf. the Dada 'excursions'), the specific foregrounding within performance of dance, and an emphasis on chance which can be linked in both movements to non-Western thought and/or religion. Wolf further links the two movements by comparing their perceived 'goals':

> [Neo-Dada] artists reinterpreted the goals of the original movement in the context of mid-twentieth-century America. […] the artists of the Neo-Dada movement viewed their varied methods and mediums as a way to expand the boundaries of fine art, while the original Dadaists sought to deconstruct modern society and culture through their art. (2012: n.p.)

To what extent does it matter that Neo-Dada 'reinterpreted the goals' of Dada in its particular context? Are we to consider it inauthentic, not least unoriginal, if it is simply a repetition based on former and external values? Or can we view this in a positive light, because Dada thus appropriated can be therein used as a critical theory or approach to art, life and philosophy? Pastiche may be considered inauthentic in its unquestioning imitation of external tenets, yet it may also be said to remain authentic, since this imitation is still based in choice. It can initially be argued that Neo-Dada goes against Dada's fundamental principles, in that the latter proposed itself as an ephemeral, unrepeatable phenomenon, against itself as much as it stood against others. However, certain occurrences may suggest not only that Dada was not as dead as it seemed (cf. the re-commissioning of lost art works), but also

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that its principles were viewed as so continuingly influential as to be all-pervasive in the art world.

One of the fundamental ways in which Neo-Dada contradicts Dada ideals is its mainstream aesthetic celebration of mundane objects as art. Richter states that '[t]he anti-aesthetic gesture of the 'ready-made', and the blasphemies of Picabia, now reappear in Neo-Dada in the guise of folk-art – as comic strips or as crushed automobile bodies. These are neither non-art nor anti-art but objects to be enjoyed' (*AA*: 205). In addition to Richter's consideration of the aestheticisation of non-art and anti-art, he questions Neo-Dada's underlying theoretical concerns, somewhat biasedly claiming that '[u]ncompromising revolt has been replaced by unconditional adjustment' (ibid.). Practically and theoretically, then, Neo-Dada does not maintain Dada's desire to shock, to *épater la bourgeoisie*, despite its best intentions. Neo-Dada art was created in the knowledge that the museum context would welcome it.

Francis Naumann writes that '[w]ith Pop art considered the most important artistic tendency of the 1960s, Duchamp – and by association, Dada – were suddenly resuscitated and elevated to the status of subjects worthy of serious discussion' (1994: 222). This goes against Dada's fundamentally unserious intial gesture, and integrates the movement into a new respectability that is a form of censorship in its own right. Yet from an academic standpoint, it represents a productive instigation of the consideration of the deeper meaning of the ostensibly meaningless. Despite not being involved in Neo-Dada, former Dadas recognised the link between the movements, albeit in a somewhat negative sense. We can posit this as reciprocal censorship, in

response to Neo-Dada's lessening of Dada's destructive, and self-destructive, intent. Hausmann poetically writes that 'Dada fell like a raindrop from Heaven. The Neo-Dadaists have learnt to imitate the fall, but not the raindrop' (in *AA*: 203). We will now look at two examples of Neo-Dada art alongside a comparable Dada companion, in order to scrutinise the differing ways in which they interact with the institution of art and the notion of censorship, as well as with each other.

In 1953 Robert Rauschenberg created his *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (Fig. 25), a piece which was a deliberate provocation and interrogation of the nature of the work of art.[90] Rauschenberg requested a drawing from Willem de Kooning, with the intention of erasing it as completely as possible, in order to create a new type of work (with the original work remaining unknown to its audience). As the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art advertises the piece, 'Rauschenberg set out to discover whether an artwork could be produced entirely through erasure – the removal of marks from a sheet of paper rather than the addition of them to it' (2013: n.p). Despite its seeming originality, however, we can propose a direct precedent in Dada happenings.

Tzara describes an event (Dada Matinée, 23 January 1920, Palais des Fêtes, Paris) at which a similar work was produced:

> Picabia, who has undergone so many influences, particularly those of the clear and powerful mind of Marcel Duchamp, exhibited a number of pictures, one of which was a drawing done in

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[90] John Cage later cited *4′33″* as having been influenced by Rauschenberg's works in 'blankness' (Katz 2006: n.p.). *4′33″* occupies a unique position as an 'empty' piece despite being full of (ambient) sound. Furthermore it was constructed as such, rather than being an original piece that was erased. In this respect we can contrast Rauschenberg's white canvasses (constructed) with 'Erased de Kooning Drawing' (deconstructed).

chalk on a blackboard and erased on the stage; that is to say, the picture was only valid for two hours. (in Young 1981: 28)

How are we to compare these two pieces, in light of our conclusions on the authenticity of Neo-Dada? Is the Rauschenberg simply a rip-off of the Picabia, 'imitat[ing] the fall, but not the raindrop'? If we consider the fall to be the conceptual grounding of the pieces, we could designate the Rauschenberg an imitation of the Picabia. However, the end results – the raindrop as it were – show a number of divergences. The Dada drawing was defined by its performance, the original was seen, and the end result was not framed and kept. In a certain respect, the Rauschenberg 'version' destroys its own notion of erasure, since it is carefully preserved. However, does this represent the erasure of erasure and thus the creation of a compound version of itself, a self-censoring work while maintaining its place in the art world? Picabia's piece, entering and leaving the world as event, maintains no place except for that of account. Additionally, Picabia's piece is irreparably lost to history (books), whereas the Rauschenberg maintains a museum presence.

So strong is academic/human curiosity (as well as commercial/institutional interest), that the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art undertook a project to recapture the original de Kooning image (results of which can be seen on the museum's website). Instructively, the museum admits to the negative result of this curiosity:

the sight of this approximation of de Kooning's drawing does not markedly transform our understanding of Rauschenberg's finished artwork. Ultimately the power of Erased de Kooning Drawing derives from the mystery of the unseen and from the perplexity of Rauschenberg's decision to erase a de Kooning. Was it an act of homage, provocation, humor, patricide,

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destruction, or, as Rauschenberg once suggested, celebration? Erased de Kooning Drawing eludes easy answers and stands as a landmark of postwar art. (SFMoMA 2013: n.p)

If the retrievable image does not add anything to the work, perhaps Picabia's irretrievable work is more effective. However, the Rauschenberg maintains status as a 'landmark of postwar art'; the Picabia, lost, is censored both by itself and inadvertently by the art world. Furthermore, we can only say of Picabia that his work *was* art. The Rauschenberg continues to exist as perhaps the definitive work of anti-art, secure in its place in the gallery. It is only when we look at the process, and consider it the *performance* of anti-art, that we may choose Picabia's as the ultimate in removal.

The persistent inclusion of Rauschenberg's 'Erased de Kooning Drawing' in the art world reminds us of Schwitters's statement that '[e]very artist must be allowed to mold a picture out of nothing but blotting paper for example, provided he is capable of molding a picture' (cf. Schwitters in Lippard 1971: 102): in this respect not only are we inclined to believe that this work *must* be considered an authentic example of art, but also that it may be considered an example of Merz art. Additionally, the resistance of Rauschenberg's work against attempts to 'solve' it remind us of Sartre's theories on censorship and freedom in that 'la liberté […] est projet de faire dans un monde résistant, par victoire sur ses résistances' (*EN*: 552; emphasis removed). The art world rails against the invisible drawing, and even when revealed, the drawing resists closure. Picabia's drawing furthers this, through resisting being seen in a more permanent way.

Another example that can be compared to a Dada's 'original' is Roy Lichtenstein's *I Can See the Whole Room…and There's Nobody in It!* (1961, Fig. 26). The work is a graphite and oil rendition of a *Steve Roper* cartoon, reproducing it almost exactly but incorporating colour through the use of Ben-Day dots. The painting, in which a man peers into a dark room through a peephole, has an affinity with Duchamp's *Étant donnés* (1946-1966, Fig. 27), in which a construction is viewed through two peepholes in a door set a certain distance before it. What these two pieces immediately have in common is their interrogation of the gaze, building on the sense of alienation that we explored in Chaper Two. Duchamp's piece allows (or rather forces) the viewer to be a (somewhat self-conscious) voyeur.

As Martin Jay writes on *Étant donnés*,

> Rather than the picture returning the gaze of the beholder in the manner of, say, Manet's *Olympia*, which suggests the possibility of reciprocity, the viewer becomes the uneasy object of a gaze from behind – that of those waiting to stare at the peep show. (1993: 170)

Lichtenstein's work interacts with the gaze in a similar way to Jay's depiction of that of *Olympia*, turning the direction of viewing around and implying a certain reciprocity. However, as the character does not look directly at the viewer, we are both indirectly subject to the character's gaze and speech bubble comment, and negated by his claim that there is 'nobody there'.[91] It is notable that Lichtenstein's is a flattened version of this viewing scene, which not only emphasises monocular vision (hence implicit flattened perspective), but it also has nothing 'behind' it (unless we

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[91] We can compare this to the rayographs in Chapter Two, in which we perceived images even though there was 'nothing there': here the claim that there is 'nobody there' plays with the notion of the relevance of the viewer.

count the changing viewer). Duchamp's piece has two eye holes, and looks onto a 3D installation through a further hole in a brick wall, pulling the viewer into a strong focus on the subject of the installation: a naked woman splayed out on a patch of grass.[92]

Peterson's claim that Duchamp plays a game of 'hide and seek with posterity' (cf. Peterson 2000: 10) is particularly applicable through the artist's use of eye holes on the doors which (in a museum context) form part of the work. This means that the contemporary viewer's voyeuristic stance is extended into a necessary tactile interaction with the work, as opposed to the Lichtenstein which can be mounted on a wall, and kept at a distance from its audience. We have seen that Dada artefacts such as the readymades are often removed from the viewer's touch: *Étant donnés* makes it impossible for the art institution to impose this removal, while maintaining its own internal distance through its construction as a box. Notably, the 'floor' of the installation is coloured like a chess board. It is as if Duchamp is knowingly playing games with the art world, especially since during the period when *Étant donnés* was being created it was believed that he had given up art (removed himself) for good [for chess].

We might initially consider these examples as highlighting a fundamental difference between Dada and Neo-Dada, that of destruction of the art world in the former, and expansion of its boundaries in the latter (cf. Wolf 2012). However, we might posit a less divisive stance through a shared characteristic of expansion of

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[92] For further analysis of the construction and history of the piece, see Høy (2000: n.p.).

artistic boundaries in both Dada and Neo-Dada, as well as an expansion *through*

destruction highlighted throughout this thesis. An additional counter to the division

of these movements is the fact that Duchamp's secret work unknowingly crosses the

temporal divide between movements, while not claiming to belong to either.

Duchamp expands on his desire to offend that we saw in the readymades,

positioning the viewer as voyeur, as well as making them physically interact with the

work. This continues to undermine art as an object of placid aesthetic contemplation.

Lichtenstein's work does not require (or allow) this kind of shocked reaction, but

allows for the art work to look not at or away from, but behind or beyond, the

viewer. In this way we might say that Duchamp's work has a more productive

relationship with boundaries and limitations than Lichtenstein's, because the former

constantly challenges the art institution's formalisation of such works through its

playful relationship with exhibition(ism).[93]

We might furthermore consider these comparisons with our aforementioned

link with Paneloux's sermons in *La Peste*. The contrasting of Dada works with Neo-

Dada examples shows two different, yet intrinsically linked, relationships with the

art world, considered here as destruction or expansion of artistic boundaries. We can

compare Dada to Paneloux's original diagnosis of the plague (a punishment for the

citizens' sins): as a punishment through reaction against both a stagnating art world

and the rotting morals of wartime European society. In expansion of this we can

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[93] This is an effect that is reproduced in Duchamp's *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même (Le Grand Verre)* (1915-1923), whose content varies according to both its location and that of the viewer, due to its transparency. Additionally it plays into this sense of exhibitionism through the enforced (if abstract) nudity of its subject.

designate Neo-Dada as Paneloux's changed claim of the plague as test of faith: by constantly seeking to expand the boundaries of the art world, while maintaining a strong link to the museum context, Neo-Dada tests the limits of artistic acceptance. Jagger writes on *La Peste* that '[t]he scourge continues in ever increasing violence until all human values, all time values become meaningless, and man's degradation is completed in the denial of the sacred burial rites which had given diginity to death' (1948: 126). We can interpret the progression of Dada within itself, as well as its movement into and through Neo-Dada, as a 'scourge' in the art world, rendering traditional artistic values meaningless, completed in the denial of aesthetic opinion: if everything is art, nothing is.

Conclusion

> *La seule façon de mettre les gens ensemble, c'est encore de leur envoyer la peste.*
> (*P*: 199)

> [T]*out le monde, aujourd'hui, se trouve un peu pestiféré.*
> (*P*: 255)

We have seen, through these examples of Dada interaction with censorship, as well as its on-going legacy within the art world, that Dada's deviance was not only successful – inviting appalled reactions from all directions – and on-going, but also may have not been as shocking as we initially might think, as well as having been very quickly and effectively institutionalised. While Dada may have wished to break with the past (and therefore been disappointed by its residue), we might justify it through Beauvoir's suggestion that lingering reliance on posterity is not problematic:

> Ainsi se développe heureusement, sans jamais se figer en facticité injustifiée, une liberté créatrice. Le créateur s'appuie sur les créations antérieures pour créer la possibilité de créations

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nouvelles; son projet présent embrasse le passé et fait à la liberté à venir une confiance qui n'est jamais démentie. À chaque instant, il dévoile l'être à fin d'un dévoilement ultérieur; à chaque instant sa liberté se confirme à travers la création tout entière. (*MA*: 36-37)

As a result of this inevitability of always already bearing a trace of the past, we should not be surprised that the censored rapidly becomes acceptable, particularly today but even in the time of Dada, almost a century ago. By deliberately foregrounding the offensive we are not only forced to confront it, but also realise that it is not so offensive in the first place, if it always already carries a trace of our own experience. By being provoked, we are cathartically facing the undesirable and the shocking. As we have seen through Dada, sometimes we seek such experience for precisely this reason. We saw that Richter considered that readymades could (and should) be returned to their original function once their shock value has been reduced to zero. However, more often than not, shocking art objects and works are not returned to their original purpose. They are left at this 'zero point'. Yet they are not of zero value. While the contemporary viewer is inevitably born into Richter's dubbed 'unconditional adjustment' (*AA*: 205), shock is not lost, and novelty can still be created. When shock is 'gone', we are left with contemplation. But more importantly, we are incited to question.

We saw that Neo-Dada sought not only to resuscitate Dada but also to redefine its principles for its own purposes. Bürger indirectly summarises, through the indexing of his text, the neo-avant-garde as 'institutionalized avant-garde as art' and 'as manifestation void of sense' (1984: 132). While we might argue that Neo-Dada presented a fully institutionalised (fully realised?) version of Dada, I fundamentally

disagree that the works are void of sense. It makes sense that Neo-Dada attempts to

continue the tradition of Dada 'can no longer attain the protest value of Dadaist

manifestations, even though they are prepared and executed more perfectly than the

former' (ibid.: 57). Bürger explains that this is because 'the neo-avant-garde

institutionalizes the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste

intentions' (ibid.: 58; original emphasis). Yet it might be considered that Bürger is

fixated on an ideal of Dada that could never be achieved, a quasi-fetishisation of a

'pure' Dada, and he moreover does not elucidate what he thought would constitute

an authentic Dada.

Furthermore, it can be argued that the later works have more deliberate sense,

whereas Dada enthusiastically embraced the lack thereof. Dada works were

knowingly senseless (and yet knowingly meaningful), and aimed at an unsuspecting

audience who were not prepared to interpret them. By the time of Neo-Dada, not

only was the audience aware of this type of work, but the creator also worked with

this expectation. Meaning is always already present, not simply from the original

purpose of a prefabricated object (as with *Fountain*), but from an established tradition

of disruption. As Benjamin notes: '"A work of art," said André Breton, "has value

only in so far as it quivers with reflections of the future"' (2008: 48n). Perhaps Neo-

Dada is evidence, then, of Dada's success: a collection of reflections of this original

quivering. Based on these quiverings, we might consider that Dada and Neo-Dada

work together in posterity to fulfil Beauvoir's statement that

> En vérité, pour que ma liberté ne risque pas de venir mourir contre l'obstacle qu'a suscité son
> engagement même, pour qu'elle puisse encore à travers l'échec poursuivre son mouvement, il

faut que, se donnant un contenu singulier, elle vise à travers lui une fin qui ne soit aucune chose, mais précisément le libre mouvement de l'existence. (*MA*: 38-39)

Through the readymades and beyond Neo-Dada, the art world has succumbed to a dominance of the conceptual, a model of art as idea rather than aesthetic becoming largely the standard model. Conceptual art, 'qui ne soit aucune chose', can then be posited as 'précisément le libre mouvement de l'existence'.

This chapter has drawn upon themes explored in Chapters One and Two, those of choice and subjectivity, as well as the creative interpretation of reality, to posit the notion of alterity as a creative state of being. The chapter additionally developed the notion of attempts at normalisation of deviation from standard behavioural patterns initiated in Chapter Three. The exploration of the concepts of censorship and deviance in Chapter Four has shown that Dada and Existentialism both interrogated and worked within the margin of acceptability. The chapter showed that freedom is often found precisely through censorship, and indeed that the censored and the shocking are only temporarily so. We have problematized Dada's (retrospective) relationship with Neo-Dada, expecting not to be convinced by the latter's productive role in the art world. Yet in examining both movements alongside Existentialist notions of authenticity, Neo-Dada is brought into new light. This turns back round on censorship: while Neo-Dada may not shock, it still manages to subvert the art world by its very acceptance. Through this, we might argue that shock has become not non-shock, but anti-shock. Chapter Five will draw the thesis to a close by taking this notion of normalisation through integration into the notions of subjectivity of

truth and history, to posit that truth is individual in its subjectivity, and plural as a result.

Fig. 21:
Fountain
Marcel Duchamp, 1917
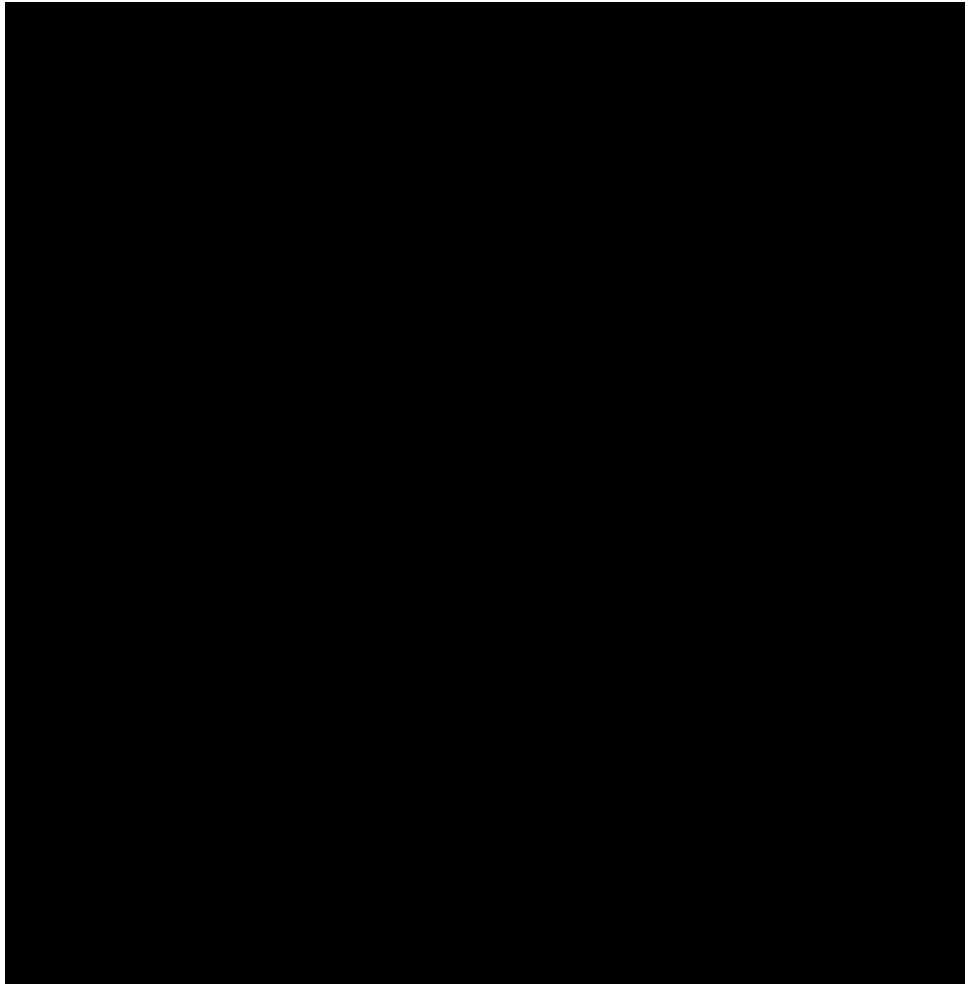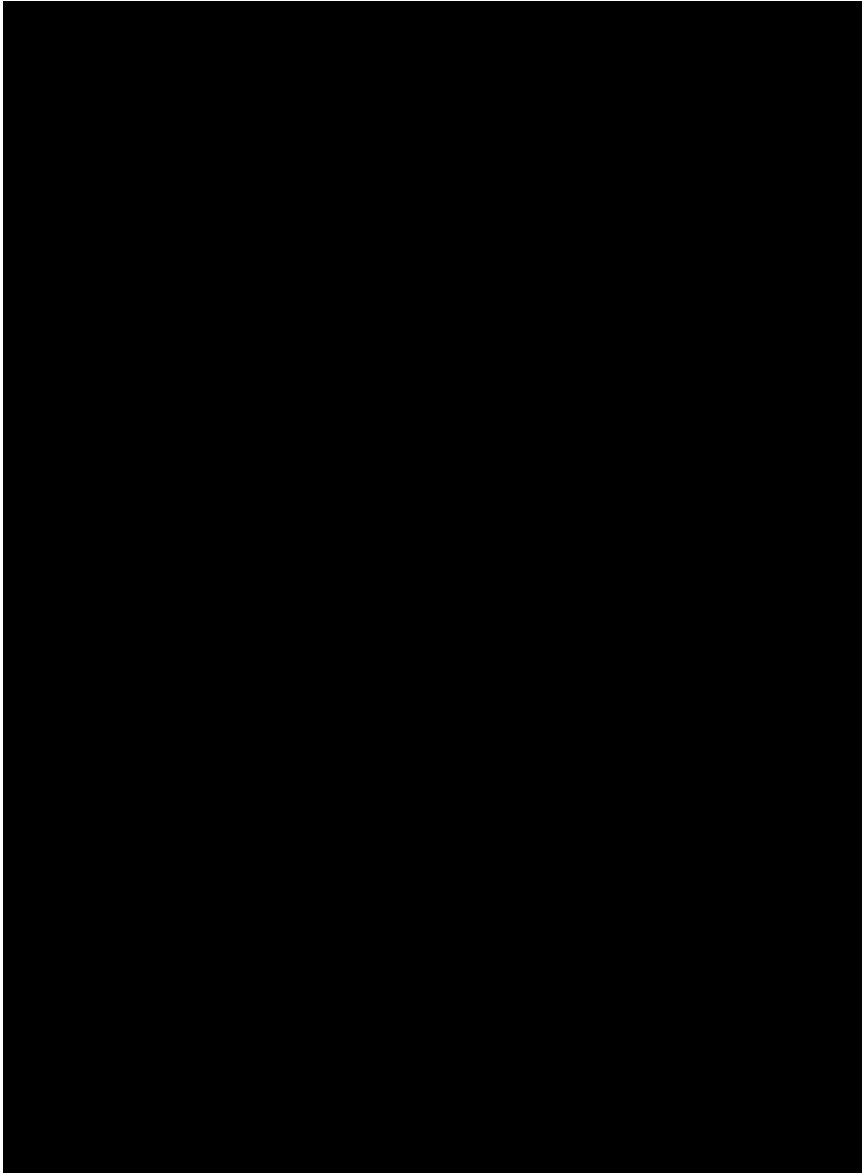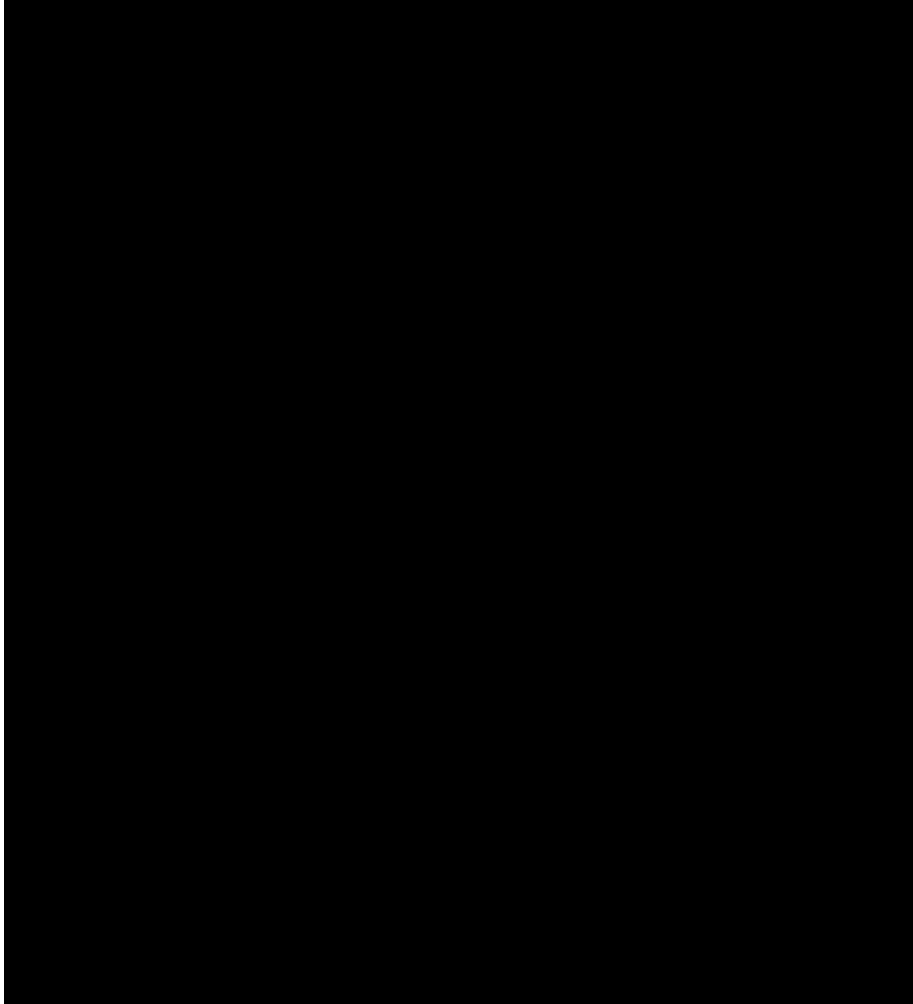
Fig. 22:
Cadeau
Man Ray, 1921

Fig. 23:
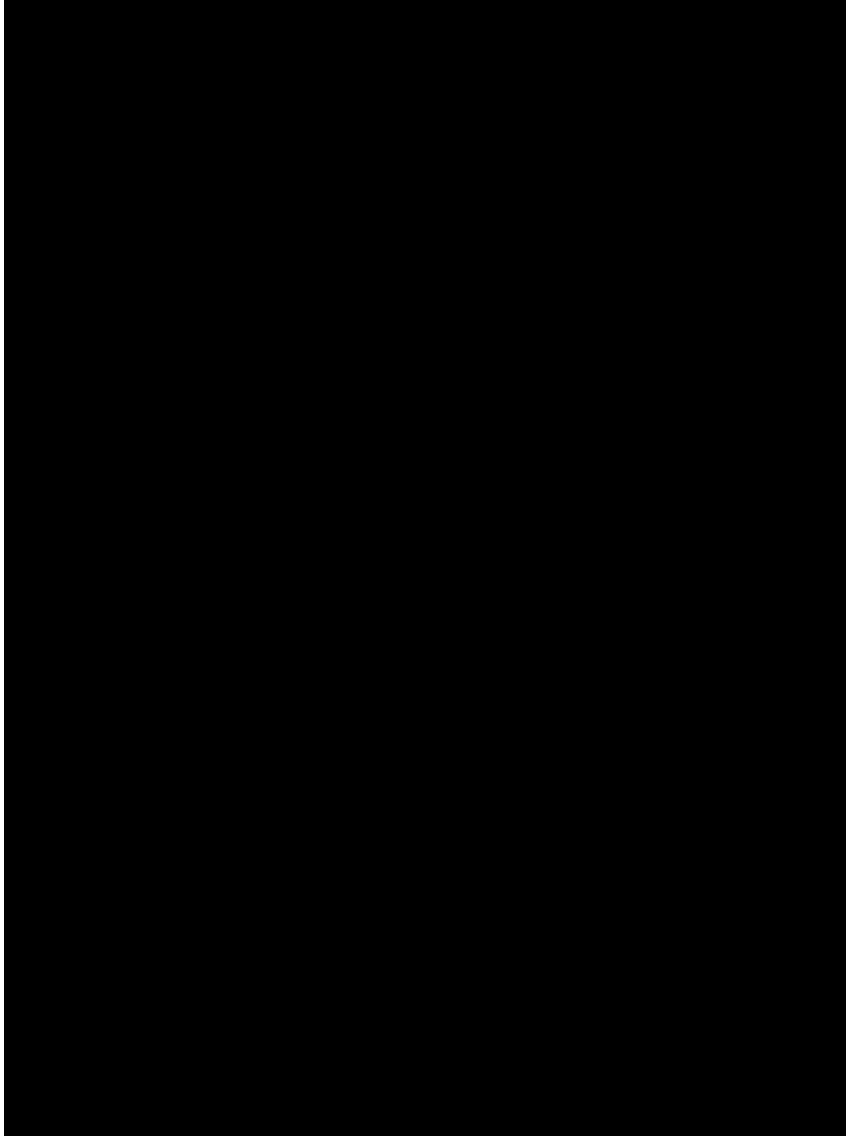*Indestructible Object (or Object to be Destroyed)*
Man Ray, 1923

Fig. 24:
Merzbild 1A Der Irrenarzt
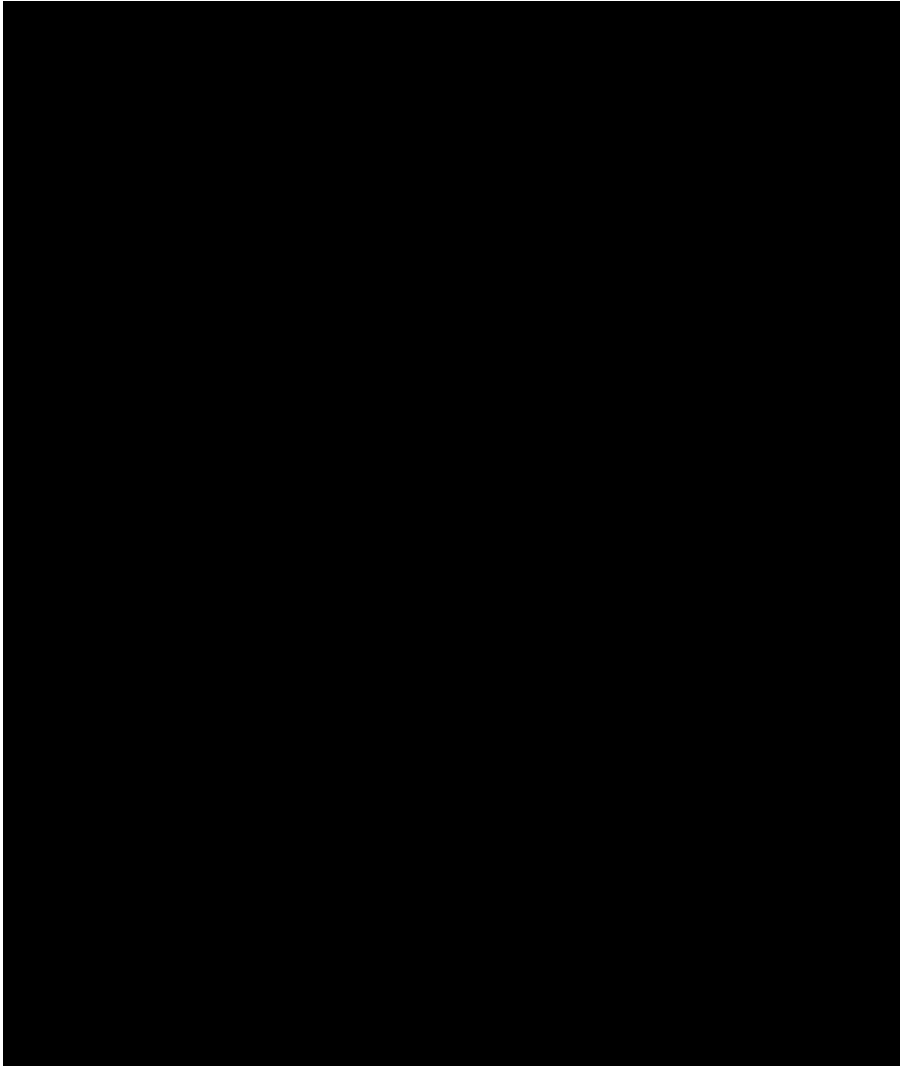Kurt Schwitters, 1919

Fig. 25:
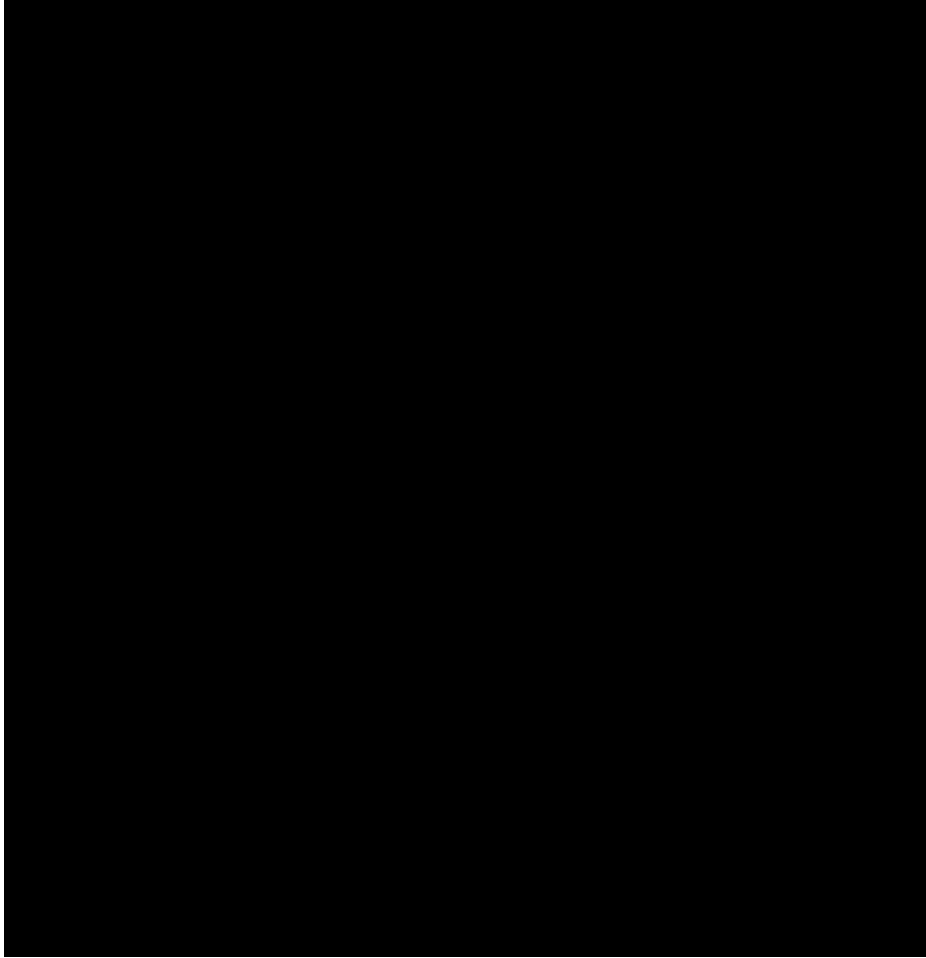*Erased de Kooning Drawing*
Robert Rauschenberg, 1953

Fig. 26:
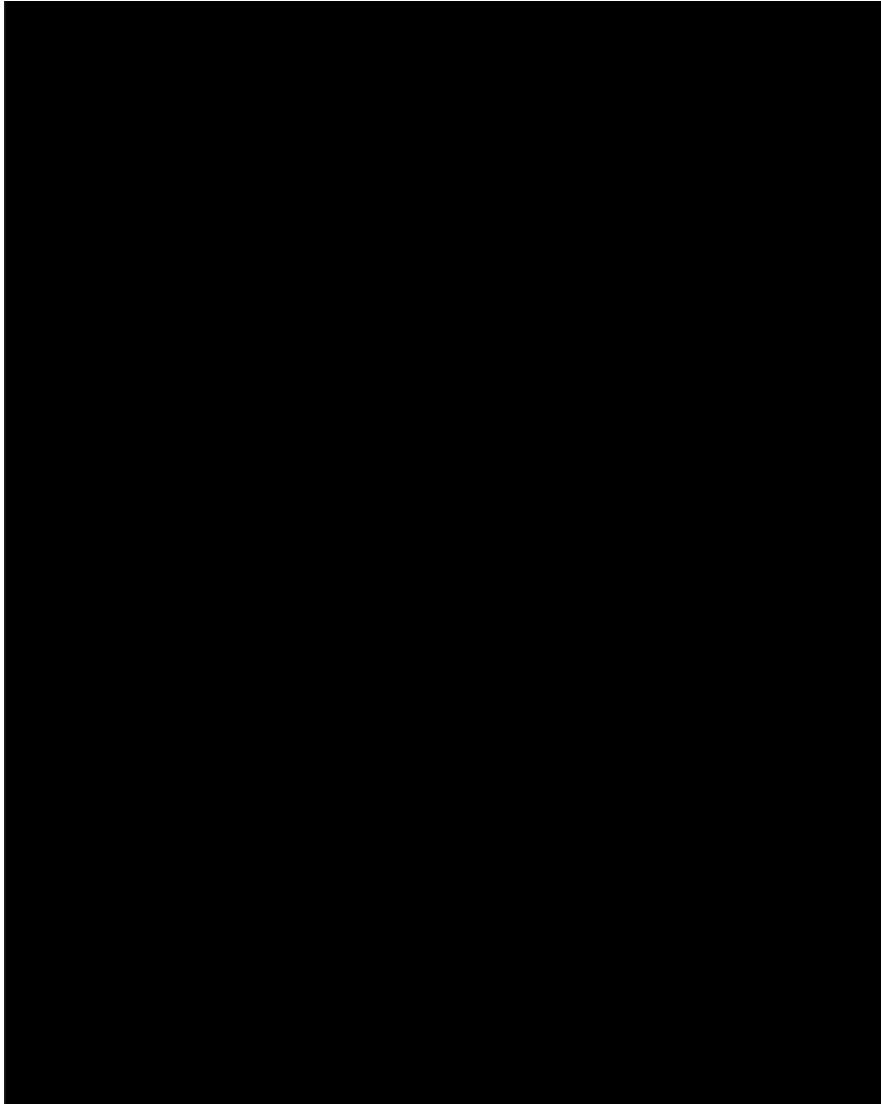*I Can See the Whole Room…and there's Nobody in It!*
Roy Lichtenstein, 1961

Fig. 27:
Étant donnés (side/deconstructed view)
Marcel Duchamp, 1946-1966

- CHAPTER FIVE -
TRUTH AND TRAVESTIES: THE TELLING AND RETELLING OF DADA (HI)STORIES

He knows a hundred different truths, and one is as true to him as another
(*FT*: 7)

[I]*n a real sense, there are as many 'Dadas' as there are Dadaists*
(Last in Sheppard 2000: 172)

Dada scholars are bombarded with varied and often contradictory primary accounts of a movement that refused concrete definition, and whose claims of rejecting all labels are widespread and well-known. Through the movement's dis- and re-assembling of art, language and life, a desire to re-write history becomes apparent. Accounts of the movement, especially those related by adherents themselves, are rife with ambiguity, fiction, and (varyingly absurd) claims to authority. In this respect it is also a parody of historiography, *in medias res* of the actual cultural phenomenon that is Dada. The name of the movement itself presents, beyond its initial appearance as an infantile repetition of a single syllable, a word whose polyvalent associations give us 'hobbyhorse' in French, 'yes, yes' in various Slavic languages, and in English a child's early paternal moniker; yet together, these definitions only contribute to its linguistic inexactitude. Furthermore we know that despite all attempts to attach meaning to the word, Tzara famously claimed that that 'Dada ne signifie rien' (*D*3: 1).[94] Pegrum explains that '[t]he word Dada itself has an undermining, destabilising function', and that Picabia '[found] that its importance lies in the fact that it 'rest[e] le

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[94] It is instructive but not surprising that Da(da) is a word with functioning meaning (beyond its use as an infantile sound, or indeed as indicating the movement itself) in most common world languages, including 'nothing' in Irish, perhaps unknowingly proving Tzara's claim that Dada means nothing. I use the word 'most' based on a sample of seventy languages, fifty-one of which present coherent meaning for 'da' or 'dada'.

même dans toutes les langues, ne précisant rien, ne limitant rien'' (2000: 173). From this we can posit that the word is both asemic and polysemic, providing a productive basis in ambiguity on which to build a movement that reveled in confusion.

Further exploration of accounts of Dada by its adherents on the origin and choice of this name are yet more convoluted. Ball's early diary entry claims '[m]y proposal to call it Dada is accepted' (*FT*: 63). Ball's statement relates to the eponymous review, rather than the movement, but the suggestion of ownership and/or invention of the name remains. While Huelsenbeck allows for Ball's involvement, he does not give him sole ownership of the term, and writes that '[t]he word Dada was accidentally discovered by Ball and myself in a German-French dictionary when we were looking for a stage-name for Madame Le Roy, the singer in our cabaret' (in *AA*: 32). Richter writes retrospectively that 'I heard the two Rumanians Tzara and Janco punctuating their torrents of Rumanian talk with the affirmative 'da, da'. I assumed […] that the name Dada, applied to our movement, had some connection with the joyous Slavonic affirmative 'da, da' – and to me this seemed wholly appropriate' (*AA*: 31).

Despite his historical status as 'leader' of Dada, an account from Tzara lays no claim to invention of the word, stating that '[a] word was born, no one knows how' (in ibid.: 32). Tzara's statement reflects the performative nature of his 'characteristic' immodesty,[95] and is (part) denied by Arp's claim that 'I hereby declare that Tzara

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[95] Accounts reference in great detail Tzara's impresario character and boisterous performances. However, his more fragile side is less often referenced, which gives a skewed impression wherein the self-assured and self-promoting person of the history books dominates. Buot relates, however, that on

invented the word Dada on 6th February 1916, at 6pm. I was there with my 12

children when Tzara first uttered the word…it happened in the Café de la Terrasse in

Zurich, and I was wearing a brioche in my left nostril' (in ibid.).[96] These varying

accounts not only demonstrate the privileging of performative artistic identity, but

also highlight the parodic nature of Dada's relationship with (cultural) history, the

reification of which will be brought out in this chapter.

If, as Last claims, there are 'as many 'Dadas' as there are Dadaists', what are we

to draw from the varying texts as scholars of the movement? Is it possible, or even

advisable, to arrange these accounts in terms of a hierarchy of truthful content?

Should we favour the account of Ball, arguably the first Dada, who established the

movement's birthplace, the Cabaret Voltaire, yet who was among the first to distance

himself from it? That of Huelsenbeck, who wrote notoriously bitter accounts and

vied for leadership with other members of the movement?[97] Arp, long-time Dada

adherent whose pseudo-formal account is sprinkled with perceivable absurdities,

perhaps in a deliberate attempt to undermine its own credibility? Or Tzara, who is

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the decline of the Cabaret Voltaire and the departure of Huelsenbeck and Ball, '[p]longé dans une forte dépression, Tzara a du mal à sortir de sa chambre' (2002: 60). This reveals a dependence on both activity and the presence of others which somewhat undermines the notion of his indefatigable confidence.

[96] *Travesties* references a similar episode involving pastries and facial orifices, in which it is noted that 'Arp, as usual, was inserting a warm croissant into his nose' (in *T*: 27). This reference has a comic counterpart in *La Nausée* when Roquentin, experiencing a bout of nausea in a café, suddenly becomes aware of the 'enormous nostrils' of the café's patrons (*N*: 39). These two humorous episodes introduce an 'inflation' of the senses when falsehood or bad faith is created that is reminiscent of the classic tale of Pinocchio. Are our senses inflated as a visual representation of the commonly caricatured pricking up of ears as a heightening of the senses in order to perceive things more clearly?

[97] An example of this can be found in his obituary to Tzara, in which he actively disputes Tzara's 'claim' to having named the movement (Huelsenbeck 1974: 103). Moreover, Huelsenbeck claims that Tzara 'permitted himself to live all his life off a fame for an arrogated founding of dada' (ibid.).

historically accepted as the founder and/or leader of Dada and yet who denies ownership of the movement's name?

Moving from this series of questions emerging from the discussion of the invention of the word 'Dada', along with its associated meaning(s) as both a word in its own right and as the name of the movement, this chapter will examine a selection of the 'stories' and histories of Dada, alongside Existentialist notions of 'truth', as well as in contrast with its opposing concepts: lies, untruth, and doubt. Through its analysis of truth and travesties in a foregrounding of written texts from Dada and beyond, this chapter will explore the importance of writing as not only a documenting of, but also a (de)construction of, the self. As Chapter Four traced freedom through censorship, so Chapter Five will evaluate the possibility of new truth through lies.

This investigation will be performed through three 'non-fiction' Dada methods – the memoir, the diary, and the manifesto – against three fictional texts. Firstly we will consider the memoirs of Richter (*Dada: Art and Anti-art*, 1965) and Huelsenbeck (*Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, 1974). These will be analysed alongside two works of Tom Stoppard, a postmodernist writer whose works often involve significant references to Dada: *Travesties* (1975), a play that is designed as a feasible fake, filled with genuine anecdotes and sprinkled with historical accuracy, and *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972), more evidently fictitious and yet which references a plethora of names, places and events, with a characteristic postmodern confusion. Both plays are constructed in such a way that they fold back on themselves and partially repeat in

an effort to destabilise the perception of a 'correct' storyline. Secondly we will assess

the role of the journal as illustrated in Ball's *Flight out of Time: a Dada Diary* (1974),

and Tzara's 'Zurich Chronicle' (1915-1919). These will be compared with Sartre's *La

Nausée*, a novel whose use of a protagonist in existential crisis promotes the

importance of diary form as an Existentialist exploration and development of the self,

as well as a constant re-writing of the truth. The manifestos will be analysed

primarily in their own right, but with the view to bringing out Dada's own

philosophy (as well as its alignment with core Existentialist thought), through its

most clearly proclaimed expression of identity. This is particularly applicable if we

consider the etymology of 'manifesto', which comes from the Latin *manifesta*: clear,

conspicuous (*Latdict*).

The discussion of language and its relation with the Dada self will be central to

this analysis, especially regarding Existentialist thought on the reciprocity of the

creation and implementation of values. The memoirs will be analysed with a view to

assessing the usefulness of different types of retrospective, as well as comparing the

notions of 'lasting impressions' and 'fading memories', and furthermore the

Stoppard as a text entirely constructed from false memory. The diaries will address

the significance of the writing of the self at the time of happening, as well as its

relationship with being seen and/or published, especially in regards to the process of

editing. These texts will deliberately be analysed approximately in reverse

chronological order. This is so as to begin from the most distant memory (as defined

by inevitable loss through temporal distance), and progress toward the most

concentrated and 'in the moment' idea of Dada values. This also works toward the structure of the thesis as a whole: Chapter One started in Dada's core, the three middle chapters moved steadily outwards geographically, philosophically and temporally, and this final chapter will hone in backwards on 'original' Dada from a contemporary perspective. As such it will perform a final test on the correlation between Dada and Existentialism before our concluding synthesis of the thesis itself.

Truth and Lies, Faith and Disguise

> *C'est que chacun, regardant dans le même miroir, voit les choses à sa façon.*
> (Ribemont-Dessaignes 1958: 83)

> *Let us rewrite life every day.*
> (*FT*: 56)

Before analysing our key texts, is useful to consider the etymology behind our terms 'travesty' and 'truth', in order to assess their relationship with the accounts and principles of Dada. The word 'travesty' is rooted in the French *travesti*, 'disguised' (from Latin trans- + vestire (to clothe)). Conversely, 'truth' derives from the Old English *trēowth,* cognate of the Old Norse *tryggth*, 'faith' (*All Dictionary.com*). We saw in Chapter One that the ways in which disguise can be used to deceive are closely related to the ways in which truth (and, by extension, faith) can be manipulated, including deception by feigning to deceive. In Stoppard's *Travesties*, the character *Henry Carr*[98] states (on *Tzara*) that '[h]e is obviously trying to pass himself

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[98] Names of Stoppard's characters will be placed in italics, as they are fictional by design and are not to be confused with the individuals outside of the play.

off as a spy' (*T*: 12),[99] and later, that '[t]o *masquerade* as a decadent nihilist – or at any rate to ruminate in different colours and display the results in the Bahnhofstrasse – would be hypocritical' (ibid.: 47; original emphasis). This chapter will seek to evaluate the pertinent underlying similarities and differences between these two terms, both of which are fundamental to an understanding of Dada and its (hi)stories. Is disguise essentially deception, or rather a reimagining of the truth? Is a travesty always to be considered a disaster, or can the word be used in a positive, creative sense?

Beyond these common definitions, it is also necessary to explore the Existentialist definitions of truth as expressed by Sartre, Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty. We have already seen that French Existentialist thought places the creation of values in the individual: we will assess how this relates to definitions and usage of 'truth' and its associated terms including 'lies' and 'doubt'. Existentialist writing foregrounds subjectivity, and this includes subjectivity (or even non-existence) of truth. Sartre states that '[l]a connaissance nous met en présence de l'absolu et il y a une vérité de la connaissance. Mais cette vérité, quoique ne nous livrant rien de plus et rien de moins que l'absolu, *demeure strictement humaine*' (*EN*: 255; my emphasis). Merleau-Ponty continues this embracing of the subjectivity of truth, stating that 'toutes mes vérités *ne sont après tout que des évidences pour moi* et pour une pensée faite comme la mienne, elles sont solidaires de ma constitution psychophysiologique et

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[99] The link between spies and Zurich is not unfounded. Keith Jeffery states that around the time of Dada '[t]he Swiss resented the use of their country as a kind of intelligence 'clearing-house' where spies from every belligerent power engaged in an espionage free-for-all' (2010: 90).

l'existence de ce monde-ci' (*PP*: 458; my emphasis). Beauvoir relates truth to ambiguity and, through this, back to subjectivity: 'pour atteindre sa vérité l'homme ne doit pas tenter de dissiper l'ambiguïté de son être, mais au contraire accepter de la réaliser' (*MA*: 19). We have seen constantly throughout the thesis the apparent necessity to access a position 'hors de soi' in order to view one's sense of self more clearly. Here we will explore its combination with ambiguity as a pathway to individual truth.

Truth is productively connected to its opposite, the lie, or untruth, through Beauvoir, who posits 'les vérités *nécessairement partielles* que dévoile tout engagement humain' (*MA*: 87; my emphasis). The homonymically dual function of the English word 'partial' is instructive in relation to subjectivity of truth because 'l'esprit indépendant, c'est encore un homme avec sa situation singulière dans le monde, et ce qu'il définit comme vérité objective, c'est l'objet de son propre choix' (ibid.). Furthermore, Beauvoir elucidates that 'le mot mensonge a un sens par opposition à la vérité établie par les hommes mêmes, mais l'Humanité ne saurait se mystifier tout entière puisque *c'est précisément elle qui crée les critères du vrai ou du faux*' (*MA*: 195; my emphasis). We can extend this subjectivity while relating back to Chapter Two through Merleau-Ponty, who theorises that 'la vérité ou la fausseté d'une expérience ne doivent pas consister dans son rapport à un réel extérieur' (*PP*: 393).

Fitting with our exploration of the many stories of Dada, in terms of being experienced and related as two very different things, Sartre states that 'l'essence du mensonge implique, en effet, que le menteur soit complètement au fait de la vérité

qu'il déguise' (*EN*: 82),[100] and furthermore that '[i]l y a une *vérité* des conduites du

trompeur: si le trompé pouvait les rattacher à la situation où se trouve le trompeur et

à son projet de mensonge, elles deviendraient parties intégrantes de la vérité, à titre

de conduites mensongères' (*EN*: 84-85; original emphasis). In lying to the press, and

to history more broadly, the Dadas were not only aware of the truth of their

situation, but also were creating a plurality of truth through the lie.

Connected tightly with the multiplicity of truth and the lie is doubt, which

Sartre analyses in detail (cf. *EN*: 191-92). He instructively notes that '[l]e doute paraît

sur le fond d'une compréhension préontologique du *connaître* et d'exigences

concernant le vrai' (ibid.: 191; original emphasis), foregrounding that the implicit

way in which we relate to knowledge (a version of truth) and doubt are intrinsically

linked. Sartre develops this notion of doubt in relation to temporality, stating that

> Se découvrir doutant, c'est déjà être en avant de soi-même dans le futur qui recèle le but, la
> cessation et la signification de ce doute, en arrière de soi dans le passé qui recèle les motivations
> constituantes du doute et ses phases, hors de soi dans le monde comme présence à l'objet dont
> on doute. (*EN*: 191-92)

Sartre's discussion of the importance of doubt is reminiscent of a frequently occuring

(sarcastic) line in *Travesties*: 'Intellectual curiosity is not so common that one can

afford to discourage it' (*T*: 47, among others). Stoppard's comment on the state of

affairs in early twentieth-century Europe, as well as the compulsion to create

material with which the questioning intellectual can engage, can be filtered through a

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[100] We will see that this is particularly evident in *Travesties*, through the deliberate deception of
characters pretending to be others.

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point of view of Dada's desire not only to *épater la bourgeoisie*, but also to introduce a provocation of intrigue in Dada scholars for years to come.

Through the existence of Dada's many tales the scholar is required to constantly research further, and will find not *the* truth, but a number of truths about the movement. Additionally, it might be said that this is part of Dada's aim of provocation as a means to self-knowledge. Tzara claimed that 'Dada doute de tout', and warned '[m]éfiez-vous de Dada' (1996: 227). Perhaps this is part of a wider incitement for the reader to question traditions and narratives. Furthermore, we will see how in weaving falsities into the recording of history, Dada activities forward Sartre's notion of 'se découvrir doutant', as well as being 'en avant de soi-même dans le futur', 'en arrière de soi dans le passé', and 'hors de soi dans le monde comme présence à l'objet dont on doute'. Dada created a relationship with itself that moved in and out of coincidence with reality, as well as a flexible approach to time that concealed the creation of false truths enough to introduce a lasting ambiguity. We saw in Chapter Two the desire to create this ambiguity through states of dreaming. Here we can link it to the truth through Tzara, who theorised that '[l]e sommeil est un jardin entouré de doutes. On ne distingue pas la vérité du mensonge' (cited in Buot 2002: 22).

Further to this, Merleau-Ponty suggests that every action or thought is a truth of some sort, stating that

> il n'est pas une de mes actions, pas une de mes pensées même erronées, du moment que j'y ai adhéré, qui n'ait visé une valeur ou une vérité et qui ne garde en consequence son actualité dans la suite de ma vie non seulement comme fait ineffaçable, mais encore comme étape

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> nécessaire vers les vérités ou les valeurs plus complètes que j'ai reconnues dans la suite. Mes vérités ont été construites avec ces erreurs et les entraînent dans leur éternité. (*PP*: 454)

Not only does Merleau-Ponty's statement on the omnipresence of truth have value in relation to Dada's outlook on the multiplicity of truth, but his emphasis on the importance of error reminds us of Beauvoir's theory of 'sans échec, pas de morale' (*MA*: 15). We may consider that this constant re-writing is not only a method of self-exploration, but also a means to finding personal truth: 'Tout serait vérité dans la conscience' (*PP*: 437). This is not only instructive in the sense of the subjectivity of truth, but also if we consider that we are never really able to know that that which we perceive is reality: everything is reality as we know it.

Memoirs of (a) Dada, or, the Importance of Being…Tzara

> *Stoppard knows that audiences prefer entertainment to accuracy.*
> (Nadel 2008: 488)

> *Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us* […] *Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened.*
> (Oscar Wilde)[101]

Stoppard's *Travesties* (1975) is a fictional account of the fictional meeting of Henry Carr with Tristan Tzara, James Joyce, and Lenin in wartime Zürich, all loosely based around the plot of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). The play presents a collection of retellings by a rather senile *Carr*, giving the effect of Dada's various reports and diaries. *Travesties* integrates a number of postmodern techniques which are shared with its Dada counterpart, including playfulness,

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[101] Cited in programme notes: interview with director Philip Wilson of 2011 performance run of *Travesties*.

intertextuality, and of course fabulation.[102] Stoppard's play was first performed in the

same year that the English translations of Ball's diaries and Huelsenbeck's memoirs

were published (1974), lending the movement and its fictional successor a notable

temporal crossover.

Stoppard based his historical references on Richter's account, as well as

Motherwell's *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1989).[103] Yet *Travesties* is a self-aware, self-

confessedly less-than-accurate account: is this more important than the inevitable

bias the author risks portraying through his choice of source(s)? Ira Nadel claims that

Stoppard would consider historical accuracy secondary to 'the imaginative

encounter, the possibility that these figures might have met and what they could

have said', and furthermore that '[t]ruth is not only imaginative but irregular' (2008:

482). Indeed such parallels are not unprecedented: not only was the real James Joyce

acquainted with Dada, but he was also once believed to be the movement's founder

(ibid. 486); the varyingly hypothetical (yet highly possible) meeting of Lenin and

Tzara is frequently posited, especially due to the apparent proximity of the Cabaret

Voltaire to Lenin's temporary living quarters on Spiegelgasse.[104]

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[102] For more specific work on Dada's relationship with Postmodernism, see Pegrum (2000) and Sheppard (2000).

[103] Huelsenbeck details that even during the production of Motherwell's anthology a dispute broke out between Tzara and himself, allegedly over content (Huelsenbeck 1974: 80-81), proving that perceptions of the movement and its historicisation differed, and that adherents never stopped vying for leadership.

[104] Accounts include Codrescu (2009), Harskamp and Dijstelberge (2012), and Pichon and Riha (eds 1996). Richter supports the claim (in *AA*: 16), and perhaps most tellingly, Tzara claimed (in a BBC recording in 1959): 'Je peux dire que j'ai connu personnellement Lénine à Zurich avec lequel je jouais aux échecs. Mais à ma grande honte, je dois avouer à ce moment-là, je ne savais pas que Lénine était Lénine. Je l'ai appris bien plus tard' (in Buot 2002: 50-51). Whether this is true or part of a long-

Travesties is constructed as two acts of *Carr*'s memories, that he recalls in a way that they become repeated and recycled. The predictable Chinese whispers effect created by this method is compounded by the second act's inclusion of Wildean farce, centred on *Carr*'s deception of *Cecily* by pretending to be *Tristan Tzara*. Meanwhile the 'real' *Tristan Tzara* is revealed to be posing as his fictional brother named *Jack* ('my name is Tristan in the Meierei Bar and Jack in the library' (*T*: 27)). It is thus clear that 'the merging or collapsing of identities and differences is the biographical fantasy at the center of the play' (Nadel 2008: 483). The storyline of deception is based on *The Importance of Being Earnest*, a play in which the real Carr actually starred in Zurich in 1918 (*T*: ix).

As a text that has little or no known connection to Dada or its adherents, and certainly no claim by its author, *Travesties* not only shows Dada's continued use as a literary and artistic reference point throughout the twentieth century, but also raises questions about the nature of truth and telling. *Travesties* therefore might potentially be considered a Dada text in its own right, making us wonder whether Stoppard himself could be considered the (or a) 'nouveau dada' (cf. Huelsenbeck). Additionally, this fulfils Richter's conditions of the Dada myth through his statement that:

> From the beginning, Dada was thus replaced by a thoroughly blurred image of itself. Since then even the mirror has broken. Anyone who finds a fragment of it can now read into it his own image of Dada, conditioned by his own aesthetic, national, historical or personal beliefs or preferences. Thus Dada has become a myth. (*AA*: 10)

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standing Dada prank, the element of embarrassment is certainly indicative of a lack of awareness that allows for the meeting to be simultaneously 'true' and 'false'.

It is instructive that Richter chooses to call Dada a 'myth', since the construction of myth is based in a delicate balance of truth and doubt, linking the two in the same way that we saw in Sartre. His description of Dada as fragments of a mirror also reiterates our findings in Chapter One on the subjectivity of selfhood.

We have already considered much of the content of Richter's *Art and Anti-Art*, but this chapter will focus on the way in which Richter collects together memories that are not always his, as well as analysing the choice of content for what is one of Dada's definitive primary sources. Published for the first time in German in 1964, it was quickly followed by its English translation in 1965. Richter was not present or active in each individual Dada centre that he describes, and confesses in his account both to inevitable bias, and the reliance on the stories of others:

> I shall not be able to confine myself within the bounds of academic art-history. I shall depend above all on my own memories and those of my surviving friends. […] Having been involved in this revolt myself, I shall try to tell what I experienced, what I heard, and how I remember it. I hope to do justice to the age, to the history of art, and to my friends, dead and living. (*AA*: 7)

From the outset it is clear that Richter's account will unavoidably be affected by his personal relationships, as well as inferring an edge of 'fond memory' rather than an entirely objective outlook. We can instantly compare this to Stoppard's *Carr*, who recounts his memories with fondness, as well as a slightly senile inaccuracy (within himself/the fictional world of *Travesties* as well as what we know of 'non-fictional' Dada itself). *Carr* gets around this by claiming that 'No apologies required, constant digression being the saving grace of senile reminiscence' (*T*: 6).

Continuing his discussion of the reliability of accounts in relation to actual events, Richter states that

> the image of Dada is still [i.e. in 1965] full of contradictions. This is not surprising. Dada invited, or rather defied, the world to misunderstand it, and fostered every kind of confusion. This was done from caprice and from a principle of contradiction. Dada has reaped the harvest of confusion that it sowed. (*AA*: 9)[105]

Perhaps Dada, like Stoppard, knew its audience, and preferred to privilege the process of storytelling over the accuracy of its content, a fundamental part of mythmaking. Yet despite this portrayal of Dada as something as simultaneously undefinable and multiplicitously definable as its name, Richter still claims three categories for 'proof' that events happened (which he forwards as having been his criteria for inclusion of 'facts' and 'events' in his text):

> 1. Dates and facts supported by published documents, diaries, etc., dating from the period itself.
> 2. Dates and facts for which there is no documentary proof dating from the period, but for which there are at least two disinterested witnesses or testimonies.
> 3. Dates and facts which can only be attested to by the author or one friend. (*AA*: 10)

Was Richter genuinely trying to provide an accurate account of his former movement? Or is this yet another tongue-in-cheek refusal of the authority of the written text?

Richter's own text does not always clarify who is 'talking', nor does he reference consistently or clearly. This initially suggests the problematic notion of Richter's account being interpreted as a desire for a single, homogenised viewpoint, reducing Dada's wildly heterogeneous individuality. However, we might instead say

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[105] Richter's statement is particularly relevant in relation to Chapter Four's analysis of the destruction, recommission and reproduction of art works, highlighting a strong delight in contradiction and ambiguity.

that this text is a fond memory of a movement that refused definition, faithfully preserved in its ambiguity and productively incorporative of 'errors' (cf. Beauvoir (*MA*: 38-39); Merleau-Ponty (*PP*: 454)). Richter's text instructively highlights an often overlooked crossover between primary text and post facto account, primarily because it straddles the divide between primary and secondary source itself, but also because it effectively calls into question the authority of both texts written by Dada adherents and secondary accounts.

Both Richter's account and *Travesties* foreground the the notion of playing a role, or playing an identity, whether this is constructing and projecting a self-created identity, or absorbing an externally conceived image of the self, inadvertently or deliberately perpetuating the character in the course and recording of history. We have seen this particularly strongly in the historicised 'character' of Tzara. I would argue that this began through the creation of the name: on taking on a multi-faceted moniker,[106] the former Samuel Rosenstock initiated a play of not only words, but also identity. Disengagement with the past was a key Dada theme: here Tzara could be argued to be the most disengaged of all adherents, fully changing his name in 1915, just before embarking on Dada (so not changing it *for* Dada, nonetheless). Tzara was not the only Dada who changed his name around the time of or because of the movement. Others include: Hannah Höch (Schwitters added the 'h' to the end of Hannah to make it a palindrome), John Heartfield (b. Helmut Herzfeld), and George Grosz (b. Georg Ehrenfried Groß). The common theme of nationality is no

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[106] 'Tristan Tzara' has varyingly been assigned meanings in French, German and Romanian, and even attributed connections to Wagner (*Tristan und Isolde*) and Nietzsche (*Also Sprach* [T]*Zarathustra*).

coincidence: often German(ic) members changed their name to distance themselves from national or political association.

Nadel's suggestion that *Travesties* is a 'merging or collapsing of identities' is replicated in Richter's account, which displays an occasional lack of differentiation between 'characters'. However, through the constant need to reinvent that is brought out by the name-changing habits of the Dadas (including such grandiose epithets as Dadamax (Max Ernst) and Oberdada (Johannes Baader)), we can posit not a merging but a multiplicity of identities. This no doubt stems from the movement's refusal of concrete definition, as the presentation of a perpetual non-coincidence with the self challenges the reader to question every account. Furthermore, breaking with while remaining in a creative relationship with the past links Dada and the individual Dadas with Beauvoir's theory that '[o]n n'aime pas le passé dans sa vérité vivante si on s'obstine à en maintenir les formes figées et momifiées. Le passé est un appel, c'est un appel vers l'avenir qui parfois ne peut le sauver qu'en le détruisant' (*MA*: 118). Through Dada accounts we can perceive a need to both consider the truth a living (and thus malleable) present entity, but also a desire to change the potential future(s), and moreover fundamentally more than the 'willful negation' that Papanikolas presents the movement as embodying (cf. 2010: 65).

Brigitte Pichon states that 'the writing of history is the writing – the construction – of stories' (in Pichon and Riha eds 1996: 7). In order to illustrate the desire for ambiguity of cultural and historical memory construction through the distortion of 'truth' in Dada, we can look at an example of an event that was reported

in different ways: the mock duel between Tzara and Arp near Zurich. We have seen that one of Dada's strongest tools in the construction of hybrid or ambiguous meaning was manipulation of the press. Because of its scandalous reputation as a movement, yet which nevertheless maintained a productive relationship with the European cultural scene, members were able to feed stories to the media, sowing confusion at the time, and weaving in a subtle manipulation of history for years to come. The announcement for the Rehalp duel was sent by the Dadas to around thirty Swiss and international newspapers:

> Sensational Duel. We have received this report from Zurich, dated 2nd July [1919]: A pistol duel occurred yesterday on the Rehalp near Zurich between Tristan Tzara, the renowned founder of Dadaism, and the Dadaistic painter Hans Arp. Four shots were fired. At the fourth exchange Arp received a slight graze to his left thigh, whereupon the two opponents left the scene unreconciled. […] We have learned that the Zurich prosecutor's office has already opened up an investigation into all those involved. Its findings the [*sic*] will certainly interest the public greatly. (in *ZC*: 34)

Tzara recorded the same event, in his 'Zurich Chronicle' (1915-1919) as 'mock duel Arp + Tzara on the Rehalp with cannon but aimed in the same direction audience invited to celebrate a private bluish victory' (*ZC*: 34). Does Tzara's statement mean that the duel did not, as we suspect, happen at all, or does it simply imply that the event was staged? We are told by Richter that one of the cited 'witnesses' of the event, the poet Jakob Heer, sent in a disclaimer to the press, only to be countered by a Dada response from two (Dada) witnesses, confirming Heer's presence.[107] Huelsenbeck notes that the report was 'a COMPLETE FABRICATION

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[107] Ball cites Heer as 'one of our most regular customers' at the Cabaret Voltaire, whose 'voluminous cloak sweeps the glasses off the tables when he walks past' (*FT*: 58). Is Heer's denied presence another Dada-style prank on the part of the poet? It is arguably exactly this position at which the telling of multiple truths aims, a simultaneous presence and absence that we saw in Chapter Two.

from someone wishing us ill' (in ibid.). We must bear in mind that according to Richter's own rules both would be considered true accounts, owing to the presence of witnesses and documents to support each side. The event was reported, along with dates, in the Zurich press, as well as in Tzara's diary (both dating from the period itself). Witnesses backed up these accounts: for Tzara, Walter Serner and Heer, and for Arp, Otto Kokoschka and Picabia (ibid.). Finally, Richter himself attests to the occurrence of the event. In this way, all three of Richter's rules have been adhered to, giving the event a certain logical consistency, even if it is only in the context of the movement itself.[108]

By infiltrating the press in this way, Dada erodes our foundations of truth in relation to authority. Sheppard explicates that the point of sending in false reports such as the duel was 'to unmask the unreliability of the printed word and so generate an attitude of scepticism toward "authorities" in general and the authority of the press in particular' (2000: 181). One may be naturally more inclined to believe or respect printed word, especially that of a newspaper, despite the fact that evidently neither being published, nor simply claiming something as fact, makes it true. But what are the consequences and effects on the reader? And how does it affect the creators of the fiction? The creator is allowed the possibility of freely interpreting truth and fiction, and the reader is obliged to interpret what they see, rather than blindly accepting it.

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[108] We have seen this technique used in Dada film (particularly *Entr'acte*) in Chapter Two. Here it is transferred to 'real' events.

Richter claims that 'the public likes nothing better than to be made fun of, provoked and insulted', because it is 'the moment when the public finally begins to think'. So by lying to the readers in this way, 'they all go home with a contented feeling that self-knowledge is the first step towards reforming oneself' (*AA*: 66-67). This represents a useful provocation of personal truth and a consequent proposing of authenticity through choice, an incitement not to simply take on pre-packaged values as so flagrantly offered by traditional narratives. Additionally, while Sheppard highlights the undermining of authority as a purpose of this type of venture, we might suggest that beyond this Dada was asserting its own authority, by levelling notions of reliability in this way. As a self-reflexive product thereof, we may also consider this an effort to undermine authority, level authority, *and* undermine itself as authority: a compound and perpetually replicating process that we began to explore in Chapter Four's concepts of authority and deviance.

We have seen that the invention of the word Dada was openly ambiguous. However, Richter writes that 'The word Dada first appeared *in print* at the Cabaret Voltaire on 15th June 1916; this is a fact' (*AA*: 32; my emphasis). Richter's use of the word 'fact' is instructive because of its reliance upon the authenticity lent to a statement through its occurrence in print or in the press. We also know that the word dada (in its general, lower case sense) did not literally appear in print for the first time under the circumstances that Richter presents, but it may have done in the specific context of the little magazine and/or the movement. If Dada deliberately undercuts the authority of the press, this statement about its own press cements the

movement's parodic relationship with historicity. Additionally, the highlighting of their own press as 'to be questioned' underlines Dada's desire to not be taken as an authority, especially as it was those in traditional positions of authority who (mis)used this power to wage war. We will discuss toward the end of this chapter how this mistrust of (self-) authority interacts with the creation of a 'system' of morality.

Memoirs of a Dada Drummer is a collection of essays by Huelsenbeck, written after the Dada period. Huelsenbeck's account presents an aggressive attempt to reassert his role in Dada, despite his denial of any affiliation when he moved to the United States. This latter was not necessarily through any malice on his part; rather, affiliation with Dada was varyingly persecutable, from threats against livelihood to threats against life. Unlike Tzara, who changed his name shortly before Dada and seemingly to embrace his new life in Zurich, Huelsenbeck changed his name, to Charles R. Hulbeck, on leaving Europe, '[m]otivated by a desire to relinquish Dada completely' (Kleinschmidt in Huelsenbeck 1974: xxiii). However, he was one of the only Dadas to claim that Dada never died ('it has never grown old and even today, after fifty years, it shows no symptoms of old age or senility' (Huelsenbeck 1974: 136)). It is (perhaps deliberately) difficult to know what Huelsenbeck means by this, and we may conclude that he simply implies that the *spirit* of Dada never died, and never will.

Huelsenbeck's account differs from Richter's in that although Richter's is *told* from a single viewpoint (Richter being the sole author), Huelsenbeck's account rarely

acknowledges the presence of other opinions. In this sense his account is a personal memoir, an autobiography, rather than a memoir or biography of Dada. *Memoirs* crosses several types of text through this style: like Richter, Huelsenbeck comments on the movement from outside of it (temporally speaking) but, like Ball, his is an account of personal experience of the events. A third element, present in differing levels across these three accounts, is the (arguably failed) effort towards a distanced analysis, as evident in Huelsenbeck's essay 'The Case of Dada' and the presence of several accounts on Dada adherents including Tzara and Richter.

The difference in ways in which Richter and Huelsenbeck tell the stories of Dada can be compared again to a Stoppard play: *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972). The play describes the demise of an artist from the point of view of his various peers, and at whose hands he possibly came to his unfortunate end. *Artist Descending*, while not directly incorporating Dada or its adherents,[109] alludes to Duchamp not only through the play's title, but also through his characters Martello and Beauchamp, whose phonetic similarity cannot be accidental.[110] Not only have Stoppard's characters changed their names over time, but they also adapt their memory of events for their personal gain. *Artist Descending* is divided into eleven scenes, structured around dates and events to form a precise symmetry. The chronology

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[109] It might additionally be argued that *Artist Descending* hints at Neo-Dada through experimental (tape) music: over the course of the play, Beauchamp records, overwrites and interprets the sounds of the apartment, creating a creative multiple exposure in the style of both experimental music and Dada's relationship with History. The product is distorted and multiple, simultaneously linear and circular, but all versions are still present.

[110] A perhaps unintended Dada parallel is also present as the plot centres around the death of Donner, who meets his demise falling down the stairs in an attempt to catch a fly. We saw in Chapter One that an important episode at the Cabaret Voltaire involved a dance named 'Fliegenfangen' [Flycatching].

begins in 1972, moves through 1922 and 1920 to a centre of 1914, and then systematically reverses back to 1972. This structuring gives a feel of a deliberate manipulation of memory: as such, none of the four separate time periods is told with any greater clarity than others. The older times are not told as memories, either, but *in situ*. Though not as symmetrical, Huelsenbeck's collection flits between times in a similar way as *Artist Descending*. Both texts present their 'story' (taking Huelsenbeck's collection as a whole) *in medias res*, a method that we saw earlier as forming a fundamental part of Dada's means of parodying history. Additionally these means of storytelling question the authenticity of reproduction in a similar way to that of Neo-Dada explored in Chapter Four. Both stories depend upon their originals in a way that suggests inauthentic reproduction, yet both produce something new and as such authentic as a product in its own right.

Diaries and Journals: Documenting the Self

> *Je pense que c'est le danger si l'on tient un journal: on s'exagère tout, on est aux aguets, on force continuellement la vérité.*
> (*N*: 13)

Moving on from Richter's and Huelsenbeck's texts as Dada 'memoirs', we might consider Ball's *Flight out of Time: a Dada Diary* as a subtly different medium for the documenting of the self. Although all three texts (Ball's, Richter's and Huelsenbeck's) were adapted for publication, only Ball's was written at the time of Dada,[111] in the form of a journal. We saw that Richter's first 'rule' for the validity of accounts not only stressed the high status of published documents of the movement,

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[111] Ball completed the editing of his diary for publication shortly before his death in 1927 (the diary itself finishes in 1921). The work was first published in German in 1927, an edition was published in 1947, and the English language edition was published in 1974.

but also included the diary as an important means of recording the period as it happened. In this respect it is worthwhile to consider the role of fiction that is written in this way. Sartre's *La Nausée* is particularly instructive to analyse because the novel highlights the importance of diaries or accounts in a diary style,[112] as well as the compound factor of the protagonist's project of documenting a historical figure (something he gives up when his nausea reaches its peak).

> Cohn comments that *La Nausée*'s journal form is doubly significant:

> first, by eliminating connectives or "verbal" flow, Sartre obtains for his fragments a total simultaneity much like that of poetry since, say, Rimbaud.[113] The flow, being displaced from "architectural verbs," now occurs through key images linked in a series which begins with the half-muddy, half-dry shingle and continues through the viscous oak tree and the seashore city's "gummy" Museum. Secondly, the journal-form allows for the interpenetration of past and present, of action and comment, such as we see in Proust. (1948: 63)

Throughout the novel the protagonist, Antoine Roquentin, develops an increased awareness of himself through the flow of images created by the diary. The flow is neither linear nor truth-based, yet enables Roquentin to construct his world in fragments and through active interpretation. By constantly narrating the present he is able to decipher his nausea and come to terms with his experiences, in a way that we saw in Sartre's ideas on temporality and the importance of doubt. This is similar to the way in which Ball wrote in order to make sense of his environment; doubt is found throughout the diary in his constant questioning of his activities (and

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[112] *La Nausée* is also useful in terms of philosophical content in a work of fiction: as such it provides a readily accessible summary of many of Sartre's themes and concepts expressed considerably more verbosely in *L'Être et le néant*.

[113] To take this further than Rimbaud, we might compare Sartre's flow of fragments to the Dada simultaneous poems, as we saw in Chapter One, whose lines intermingle to the extent that no single line takes precedence over others and we are forced to hear the mélange in its incomprehensible entirety.

including the fact that he 'left' and returned to Dada several times). It is clear that the diary form is valued in Dada as well as in Existentialism: Arp wrote of Ball's diary that 'in this book stand the most significant words that have thus far been written about Dada' ([1949] in Motherwell ed. 1989: 293).

The way in which both Ball and Roquentin narrate the events of Dada and the novel respectively (and fundamentally, their own lives) occasionally falls into the cyclical patterns presented by *Carr*'s narration in *Travesties*. This latter text becomes like a diary with the repetition of 'Yes, sir. I have put the newspapers and telegrams on the sideboard, sir', which becomes a common precursor to temporal slips and recaps.[114] Though *Carr*'s stories are subject to his failing memory, they maintain their likeness with Roquentin's through their aspect of correction through re-telling. On occasion Roquentin admits to having not told the truth – 'du moins pas *toute* la vérité' (*N*: 24; my emphasis). He appears fascinated by his 'lie' (omission) and wonders why he would deceive himself in this way. This self-deception is something that he revisits later, stating that '[j]e viens d'apprendre, brusquement, sans raison apparente, que je me suis menti pendant dix ans' (*N*: 61).

How can we interpret this in relation to the need to 'force[r] continuellement la vérité'? We do not necessarily need to consider Roquentin's worry about his self-deception a time-span to be written off: rather, we can explicate it as a sudden

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[114] Ribemont-Dessaignes comments that '[s]i vous vous entêtez à simuler le voyage à l'envers comme si l'irréversibilité du temps n'était pas un principe inexorable, c'est-à-dire s'il vous plaît de faire votre œuvre d'historien, vous ne pouvez espérer obtenir qu'une suite de coupes de temps, semblables à des coupes histologiques pour examen microscopique' (1958: 85). We saw a similar use of 'coupes de temps' in Chapter Two.

awareness of the *perception* of self and the authenticity of an engaged means of thought. As Ball writes, 'I read Rimbaud differently today from a year ago' (*FT*: 94): it is not surprising that our relation of self to world would be fluid and variable, not to mention subject to development. The diary form notably encourages this constant rethinking of the truth and its meaning, and the way it may change over time. How do remembering, forgetting, and documentation relate to our definitions of truth? Roquentin expresses the concern that he does not even exist, and this is because he has little relation to public record, and thus little impact on society. He writes, 'Je n'étais pas un grand-père, ni un père, ni même un mari. Je ne votais pas, c'était à peine si je payais quelques impôts' (*N*: 127). Perhaps it is his lack of influence on others that compels him to record himself for posterity.

The way that Roquentin considers himself outside of time through his familial detachment can be compared and contrasted with Cohn's comments on the 'interpenetration of past and present', as well as Sartre's thoughts on our relationship with the position of the self in time that we saw earlier in the chapter (cf. *EN*: 191-92). Roquentin sees himself as disconnected because of his lack of impact on his environment, but his severance also allows him to see more clearly his isolated self-development. Valerie Raoul links the diary to a way in which to monitor and/or change the way time passes, in that

> the diary provides […] a trace, something that continues into the future. The role of the narrator-actor as potential reader is dependent on the survival of the written record. It is Roquentin's critical comments on rereading his entries […] that convey the sense of a changing

and unseizable existence, as much as his reflections on the difference between "then" and "now"'. (1983: 705)[115]

A particularly poignant moment in relation to the inevitable passing of time is in Ball's diary when he notes: 'I scribble and look down at the carpenter who is busy making coffins in the yard' (*FT*: 66). Ball's comment manages to simultaneously remind the reader of the daily horror of mass slaughter and the existentially troubling notion of the unusually heightened awareness of one's own mortality.

Richter described Ball in terms of his philosophical position in a way that furthers this implication of an underlying Existentialist way of thinking:

> There can be no doubt of Ball's unswerving search for a *meaning* which he could set up against the absurd meaninglessness of the age in which he lived. He was an idealist and a sceptic, whose belief in life had not been destroyed by the deep scepticism with which he regarded the world around him. (*AA*: 13; original emphasis)

Richter's elucidation of Ball's world view presents an individual confronting the Absurd, yet maintaining an optimistic outlook despite professed scepticism. This is an attitude that Camus promotes through his rebel, recommending 'le maintien de cette confrontation désespérée entre l'interrogation humaine et le silence du monde' (*HR*: 18).

The editing process of diaries, particularly in its additive form, performs a constant redefinition of truth, leading us to definitions of identity and role of the diary as something to be (re)read. Raoul considers this in relation to temporality, as well as the developing relationship between writer, journal and reader:

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[115] This ambiguous relationship with time and space is supported by Metz's theory of the 'here and then' that we saw in Chapter Two.

> The process that aims at defining the self as it recedes into the past paradoxically contributes to the emergence of a new present self-as-writer and posits the future role of the self-as-reader. The journal, meanwhile, acquires an autonomous existence as a written text. (1983: 706)

This relationship is additionally highlighted by the Autodidact, who asks Roquentin at one point, 'N'écrit-on pas toujours pour être lu?' (*N*: 169). This question, along with Raoul's discussion, moves the authority and ownership of words from the writer to the reader. We may wonder if the Autodidact's question is still applicable if this reader is only the author, as the notion of re-reading will change the course of personal narrative. Elderfield writes that Ball edited his work and yet it still reads as a highly personal account: 'Strangely, it does not read like a public document at all, despite Ball's considerable revisions to make it so; it is more like a private confession intended to give meaning to his earlier periods of aesthetic and political rebellion' (in *FT*: xiv).

Tzara's 'Zurich Chronicle' is much shorter and less detailed than Ball's, was originally published in Huelsenbeck's *Dada Almanach* and only later as an independent text, and seems to simply document events as they happened. This is demonstrated particularly strongly by Motherwell's edition of the text, which cuts out almost all typographic and visual interest, showing not only the highly varying representation of Dada texts but also a normalisation of deviance as Dada becomes increasingly academicised. However, the version that appears in Huelsenbeck's *Dada Almanach* conveys a sense of excitement through typography that is then complemented every so often by Tzara's personal reactions to these happenings, and it is instructive to analyse both the content and the events to which they relate.

This varying detail is a characteristic of *La Nausée*, and is particularly noticeable when Roquentin begins his entry with 'rien de nouveau' (for example *N*: 20), yet goes on to describe his day in several pages' worth of detail. While Tzara tends not to elaborate on the entries that imply such 'rien de nouveau' dates, certain small linguistic fragments are repeated in a relatively insistent manner: for instance, he maintains a striking obsession with red lamps across the chronicle. This suggests a sensitivity to and awareness of their effects and meaning. Richter describes the location of the Cabaret Voltaire (the Niederdorf district) as a 'slightly disreputable quarter of the highly reputable town of Zurich' (*AA*: 13). Niederdorf is a former Zurich red light district, something of which the Dadas would likely have been keenly aware, particularly with a heavy wartime police presence. An example of Tzara's preoccupation is noted in the entry dated February 1916: 'In the darkest of streets in the shadow of architectural ribs, where you will find discreet detectives amid red street lamps' (*ZC*: 15). This must have given a particularly ominous feel in the Niederdorf quarter's (location of the Cabaret Voltaire) narrow medieval streets lined with tall buildings.

Tzara's entry dated June 1916 contains a passage summarising the Cabaret:

> The Cabaret lasted 6 months, every night we thrust the triton of the grotesque of the god of the beautiful into each and every spectator, and the wind was not gentle – the consciousness of so many was shaken – tumult and solar avalanche – vitality and the silent corner close to wisdom or folly – who can define its frontiers? – the young girls slowly departed and bitterness laid its nest in the belly of the family-man. A word was born no one knows how **DADADADA** we **took an oath of friendship** on the new transmutation that signifies nothing, and was the most formidable protest, the most intense armed affirmation of salvation liberty blasphemy mass combat speed prayer tranquillity private guerrilla negation and chocolate of the desperate. (*ZC*: 18; original formatting)

The ferocious energy with which this is described implies that this entry is

significant, and aspects of its vocabulary can be found across the rest of the chronicle.

There is a particularly strong focus on references to explosions and harsh weather,

for example 'the subtle invention of the explosive wind' and 'the explosions of

elective imbecility' (*ZC*: 24; 25). The June 1916 entry and its ripples across the diary

are reminiscent of Roquentin's bouts of nausea, and its effects on his daily existence.

Roquentin experiences the waves of nausea as explosions of his senses, often

combined with the humidity of Bouville and an unusual sensitivity to the weather. A

heightened sensitivity to colour is integral to both accounts, perhaps unsurprising for

the artist, who states in his May 1919 entry: 'Inaugurate different colours for the joy

of transchromatic disequilibrium and the portable circus velodrome of camouflaged

sensations' (*ZC*: 34). Unlike Tzara, however, who revels in this disruption of

chromatic normalcy, Roquentin's sensitivity to colour is disquieting when he does

not yet understand his nausea. He reports an episode of discomfort that centres on

the changing colour of a pair of purple braces:

> Les bretelles se voient à peine sur la chemise bleue, elles sont tout effacées, enfouies dans le
> bleu, mais c'est dans la fausse humilité: en fait, elles ne se laissent pas oublier, elles m'agacent
> par leur entêtement de moutons, comme si, parties pour devenir violettes, elles s'étaient
> arrêtées en route sans abandonner leurs prétentions. (*N*: 37-38)

The nature of these episodes creates an ambiguity and alienation that, while initially

disquieting, promotes an increased realisation of the subjectivity of perception.

Just as Roquentin's episodes of nausea get more frequent and all-pervading due

to his increasing self-awareness, Tzara's diary entries get more clustered and intense

as the diary goes on, centring around important events. The entries of early 1916 are

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longer and detailed, documenting the early days of the Cabaret Voltaire, but then a shorter series pile up from September and especially in the early months of 1917, when Dada was expanding throughout Zurich. The entries then mirror the earlier ones in size, expanding but getting less frequent through 1918 and 1919. As the diary progresses Tzara also begins to reference repetition and newness (or lack thereof), a concern that would plague Dada as its audience began to enjoy and not heckle their events. He notes that '[t]he public appetite for the mixture of instinctive recreation and ferocious bamboula which we succeeded in presenting forced us to give on | May 19 [1917] | REPETITION OF THE OLD ART AND NEW ART EVENING' (ZC: 26; original formatting). In essence this occurrence represents a doubled repetition, in that the night itself is already centred around 'the old and new' and the fact of repeating the night as a whole. We have seen that repetition interrogates the notions of identicality and, through it, authenticity. It is therefore logical that repetition of such events should be undesirable. We might even wonder if this is the reason for which Tzara brought an end to Dada: a movement that had been born out of a desire for individual freedom and choice had stagnated into a recipe. In short, it was losing its authenticity.

Drawing together our analysis of the diary form, through Ball, Tzara and Sartre (Roquentin), we can posit that texts in this style create and maintain a unique and flexible relationship with time and truth. Joseph Halpern notes that

> Sartre's novels - *Nausea*, in particular - are more than illustrated syllogisms; their metonymic unity opens onto the realm of similarity and repetition, metaphor and synchrony. The strength of Sartre's novels lies in the way they convey lived experience, but lived experience resists intelligibility. (Halpern 1979: 71)

This emphasis on similarity and repetition is certainly evident in Tzara's chronicle. Ball's text often draws upon descriptive metaphor for his synthesis of his environment and events. And all three accounts show a resistance to intelligibility that highlights the flawed or subjective nature of the process of historicisation. Ball's diary is particularly instructive to consider because it documents the earliest days of Dada from a first-hand point of view. Additionally as the co-founder (with Emmy Hennings) of the Cabaret Voltaire, his account dates exactly to Dada's beginnings (if we are to agree on Zurich as its birthplace and starting point). Tzara's account, though shorter, is informative in highlighting moments of particular importance, and an idea of Dada (or at least Tzara's) values starts to come through. We have seen that Ball reported the purpose of the movement and its review as *rejecting* nationalism and labels: we will now identify which aspects the Dadas *promoted* as representing such a heterogeneous movement, or a nascent Dada philosophy.

Manifestos, Morals and Mindsets

Don't you see my dear Tristan you are simply asking me to accept that the word Art means whatever you wish it to mean; but I do not accept it.
- Carr
Why not? You do exactly the same thing with words like patriotism, duty, love, freedom, king and country…
- Tzara
(in *T*: 21)

Dada is the desire for a new morality.
(Huelsenbeck 1974: 141)

Through an assessment of Dada accounts and diaries, as well as interaction with the written word in previous chapters, we have shown that Dada's relationship with published material shows a desire to be taken at its word, even if that word is

deliberately fabricated. Despite evidence of such fabrication, however, examples of (anti-)morality come through such bold statements, especially in the movement's own journals. Dada's own little press essentially represents the movement's public diary, or journal: an indelible and pseudo-live commentary on the movement's activities and thoughts. As demonstrated by the Stoppard quotations above, Dada considered words manipulable, and by extension that meaning can be manipulated in a similar way. As such, the construction of tenets and morals is just as subjective as anything else. Perhaps the most direct proclamation of morals and values is in the manifestos, an active declaration of the Dada self. We will look at two of these manifestos: Tzara's infamous 'Manifeste Dada 1918' and Picabia's 1920 'Dada Philosophe'. Tzara's manifesto was published in the eponymous Dada review *Dada* (*D*3), and Picabia's in *Littérature* (*L*13).

Early in his manifesto, Tzara engages in a critique of objectivity in the realm of aesthetics: 'Une œuvre d'art n'est jamais belle, par decret [*sic*], objectivement, pour tous. La critique est donc inutile, elle n'existe que subjectivement, pour chacun, et sans le moindre caractère de généralité' (*D*3: 1). This is furthermore expressed in his desire not to tell others how to act: 'je n'ai pas le droit d'entraîner d'autres dans mon fleuve, je n'oblige personne à me suivre et tout le monde fait son art à sa façon' (ibid.). We have seen that Sartre believes that we choose in a way in which we believe would be universally applicable, but it would still remain inauthentic to *impose* our own way of thinking on others. This is a sentiment that is foregrounded in Tzara's statement that '[c]eux qui appartiennent à nous gardent leur liberté' (ibid). Through

this Tzara directly confronts the idea of philosophy, defying critics who claim that

Dada did not engage with it:

> La philosophie est la question: de quel côté commencer à regarder la vie, dieu, l'idée, ou les autres apparitions. Tout ce qu'on regarde est faux. Je ne crois pas plus important le résultat relatif, que le choix entre gâteaux et cerises après dîner. (ibid.: 2)

Tzara's thoughts show immediate alignment with Existentialist notions of the

authenticity of personal choice: whether one chooses cake or cherries is not as

important as the act of choosing for oneself. As he states, '[i]l n'y a pas de dernière

Vérité' (ibid.). Through his theorising both that everything is false, and that there is

no real truth, Tzara pre-empts Merleau-Ponty's statement that we saw at the

beginning of this chapter 'tout serait vérité dans la conscience' (*PP*: 437).

We have seen that Existentialism is often (falsely) accused of indifference ('On

lui a d'abord reproché d'inviter les gens à demeurer dans un quiétisme du désespoir'

(*EH*: 21)): Tzara offers a novel alternative to indifference, and in doing so manages to

refute a resulting denial of the choices of others: 'Je nomme jem'enfoutisme [*sic*] l'état

d'une vie où chacun garde ses propres conditions, en sachant toutefois respecter les

autres individualités, sinon se défendre' (*D3*: 2). He later extends choice to the

creation and subjectivity of morality:

> La morale a determiné la charité et la pitié, deux boules de suif[116] qui ont poussé comme des éléphants, des planètes et qu'on nomme bonnes. Elles n'ont rien de la bonté. La bonté est lucide, claire et décidé, impitoyable envers le compromis et la politique. La moralité est l'infusion du chocolat dans les veines de tous les hommes. Cette tâche n'est pas ordonnée par une force surnaturelle, mais par le trust des marchands d'idées et accapareurs universitaires. (ibid: 3)

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[116] Reference can be made here to Maupassant's 1880 *Boule de Suif*, in which strength and flexibility of morals are interrogated under external pressure, as well as the manipulation of others for the perceived 'greater good'.

By rejecting bygone morals created by another ('Nous ne reconnaissons aucune théorie. Nous avons assez des académies cubistes et futuristes: laboratoires d'idées formelles' (*D3*: 1)), Dada takes responsibility for its own ethical position, as evidenced in Chapter Three's analysis of the rejection of common judgement values. Notably, Stoppard's *Tzara* rejects the use of former ideas by claiming that 'causality is no longer fashionable owing to the war' (in *T*: 19). If ideas are not linked by causality, choice is foregrounded, in that it does not matter what choice is made, only that it is on one's own grounds. We are reminded here of (the real) Tzara's claim that '[o]nly contrast links us to the past' (in Jakobson 1987: 39). Additionally, both of these quotations can be linked to Beauvoir's statement that '[o]n n'aime pas le passé dans sa vérité vivante si on s'obstine à en maintenir les formes figées et momifiées' (*MA*: 118).

Sartre's Roquentin depicts a similar rejection of common values through a group of women looking at a statue that represents a generic forefather. He states derisively that:

> Au service de leurs petites idées étroites et solides il a mis son autorité et l'immense érudition puisée dans les in-folio que sa lourde main écrase. Les dames en noir se sentent soulagées, elles peuvent vaquer tranquillement aux soins du ménage, promener leur chien: les saintes idées, les bonnes idées qu'elles tiennent de leurs pères, elles n'ont plus la responsabilité de les défendre; un homme de bronze s'en fait le gardien. (*N*: 49)

These women are not only exempt from creating their own ideals, but they also do not have to even think about or take responsibility for them, as they are defended by a form of authority that precedes them. Additionally the non-identity of the statue means that these individuals do not care what form authority takes as long as they

have faith in it as an ideal. This goes against both Dada and Existentialist ethics whereby everything, particularly systems, is questioned in order to believe in (yet not be defined by) ideals that stem from personal, specific choice.

Picabia's 'Dada Philosophe' engages with what we might call a Dada*ism* or Dada theory through its title. Its opening section reflects Ball's statement that we cited at the beginning of the chapter, that of the supranational aims of Dada and the Cabaret Voltaire (both place and review). The manifesto performs a levelling of characteristics, as well as taking on a plethora itself, claiming that Dada simultaneously has aspects of multiple nationalities, and leading to a hybrid identity that we saw through fragmentation and assemblage in Chapter One. By claiming to be so many nationalities, Picabia foregrounds the theory that the idea of nationality is simply a construct, especially since the aspects he identifies with particular nations are often based in ridicule.

For example, he claims that 'DADA a le cul en porcelaine, à l'aspect français' (*L*13: 5). We may wonder whether this reference to porcelain represents a fragile purity as well as standard of quality. However, this pure cleanliness, especially when related to toilet humour, may rather be incorporated into a Duchampian pun through his porcelain *Fountain*, parodying the covering up of less desirable qualities. I refer here to the infamous *L.H.O.O.Q.*, where we could replace the implicit 'chaud' with a whitewashing metaphor to create 'elle [la France?] a [de la] chaux au cul'. Listing a wide variety of cultural references of which Dada 'dreams', the manifesto introduces an inherent ambiguity created by this multifaceted identity: 'Changeant et

nerveux, DADA est un hamac qui berce un doux balancement' (*L*13: 5). Not only does this changeability depend upon a balance of contradiction supported by Beauvoirian ambiguity, but Picabia then goes on to claim that 'nous ignorons le chemin qu'il faut choisir' (ibid.): we have seen that in Sartrean thought, refraining from (here denying knowledge of?) being influenced by that which one *should* do is preferred as a means to forming personal choices uninfluenced by external pressures.

These two manifestos foreground a constant balance of rejection of narratives and acceptance of egalitarian principles, leading to a general philosophy of choice and subjectivity, authenticity through ambiguity. Weyembergh shows us that the tension between acceptance and refusal through revolt leads to truth(s), in that 'les vérités existentielles les plus profondes […] ne s'éprouvent que dans la contradiction, ce que montre la révolte elle-même avec son accent sur le *oui et le non*' (in Guérin ed.: 918; my emphasis). This definition reminds us of Tzara's characterisation of Dada as 'le point où le **oui** et le **non** et tous les contraires se rencontrent' (in *Merz* 7: 70; original emphasis/formatting), and the statement in his 'Manifeste Dada 1918' that '[j]'écris ce manifeste pour montrer qu'on peut faire les actions opposées ensemble, dans une seule fraîche respiration' (in *D*3: 1).

Tzara's desire for freshness through creativity is also expressed by Roquentin, who states that 'J'écris pour tirer au clair certaines circonstances. […] Il faut écrire au courant de la plume; sans chercher les mots' and that 'J'ai besoin de me nettoyer avec des pensées abstraites, transparentes comme de l'eau' (*N*: 87). While contradiction and clarity may initially be unhappily combined, we can instead consider both types

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of writing active desires to interrogate thought and versions of the truth, especially through spontaneity ('sans chercher les mots'). We have seen that Huelsenbeck explains the embracing of rejection by claiming that '[t]he fact that the Dadaists said no was less important than the manner in which they said it' (cf. *DE*: 144). This cements our notion that it is the telling that is key, rather than the certainty of the content portrayed.

Conclusion

> *Unrelieved truthfulness can give a young girl a reputation for insincerity.*
> (*Carr* in *T*: 25)

> *To do it is nothing, to be said to have done it is everything.*
> (*Wilde* in Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*, cited in Nadel 2008: 481)

When Tzara was asked for permission to use the name Dada on the avant-garde periodical *New York Dada*, he was compelled to respond that the very idea of the request was absurd: 'You ask permission to name your periodical Dada. But Dada belongs to everybody' (in Ades ed. 2006: 159). However, as Ades elucidates, '[w]hether they were seriously interested in forming an alliance with Tzara's movement or were operating an ironic game of testing the very idea of ownership that the notion of "authorisation" introduces is impossible to say' (in ibid.: 146). This rejection of both authorisation and authority is also present in Dada's response to the reactions of others. For example, Richter related his thoughts on Dada scholarship:

> If I am to believe the accounts which appear in certain books about this period, we founded an association of revolutionary artists, or something similar. *I have no recollection of this at all*, although Janco has confirmed that we signed manifestos and pamphlets, and Georges Hugnet (who admittedly gets his information at second hand) says that Tzara received one of these

> manifestos from me, scored through it with red pencil, and refused to publish it in *Der Zeltweg. I regard this as doubtful*. Tzara was no red-pencil dictator. (*AA*: 80; my emphases)[117]

The constant replacement or addition (or removal, in Richter's case above) of truths to accounts creates an impression of chaos, one which loops back on itself in its perpetual redefinition. As Huelsenbeck describes, 'Dada is the chaos out of which a thousand orders arise which in turn entangle to form the chaos of Dada' (in Sheppard 2000: 195).[118]

We can link notions of truth to subjectivity of the perception and interpretation of reality, and as C. D. Innes states on *Travesties*, 'representing reality […] depends on the artist's capacity to see what reality is. And Stoppard underlines that Joyce is almost blind, needing heavy spectacles for his astigmatism, that Tzara sports a monocle, and that Carr's memory is particularly unreliable' (2006: 228).[119] Furthermore, Sheppard argues that 'not only does reality have no inherent structure, there are also no a priori categories of the understanding to shape our experience of that (disordered) reality in a predetermined manner' (2000: 108). Ball writes that 'perhaps it is necessary to have resolutely, forcibly produced chaos and thus a complete withdrawal of faith before an entirely new edifice can be built up on a changed basis of belief' (*FT*: 60). We can therefore consider that the embracing of chaos in general, and contradiction in particular, is mutually dependent on an assertion of absolute freedom through personal choice unfettered by external

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[117] It is instructive that Tzara is not denied having refused something, just that he refused to red-pencil it. This underlines the difference between rejection of the undesirable, and imposition of external morals.
[118] Although this text comes from the *Dada Almanach*, I have cited from Sheppard out of preference for his translation of this particular Huelsenbeck quotation.
[119] Additionally, in *Artist Descending*, *Sophie* is blind.

pressures. As Ball claimed, '[p]erfect skepticism makes perfect freedom possible' (*FT*: 59), and Tzara that '[c]omment veut-on ordonner le chaos qui constitue cette infinie informe variation: l'homme?' (in *D*3: 1).

The balance of chaos and order within reality has a strong link to the imaginary, as we saw in Chapter Two's films and the effects of pareidolia. Nadel states that '[i]magination's link to the truth makes acceptable the fissures and disruptions found in Travesties' (2008: 481). Imagination, applied to an account, renders the banal memorable and, in extension,

> pour que l'événement le plus banal devienne une aventure, il faut et il suffit qu'on se mette à le *raconter*. C'est ce qui dupe les gens: un homme, c'est toujours un conteur d'histoires, il vit entouré de ses histoires et des histoires d'autrui, il voit tout ce que lui arrive à travers elles; et il cherche à vivre sa vie comme s'il la racontait. (*N*: 64; original emphasis)

The various Dada accounts of the movement certainly demonstrate that the telling (and re-telling) of stories is important to its history as a series of improvised, spontaneous adventures. The emphasis on imagination reminds us of the need to question accounts, to maintain intellectual curiosity at all times. Carole Haynes-Curtis states that 'for Sartre whether something is true or not is secondary to the attitude we take towards it' (1988: 270). This is supported by Beauvoir's ideas on 'internal truth', in that 'la valeur d'un acte n'est pas dans sa *conformité* à un modèle extérieur, mais dans sa vérité intérieure' (*MA*: 171; original emphasis). Additionally Roquentin's views can be used to describe Dada's own self-historicising nature, as well as its view of 'History' as contingent, arbitrary, and partial. We can link this view of history/ies with Sartre's views on temporality as seen in Chapter Two,

especially his statement on the non-existence of the past, present and future (*EN*: 142).

Beauvoir writes that 'c'est parce que la condition de l'homme est ambiguë qu'à travers l'échec et le scandale il cherche à sauver son existence', and furthermore that '[l]'art, la science ne se constituent pas malgré l'échec, mais *à travers* lui' (*MA*: 160; 161; my emphasis). Dada's artistic output is predominantly defined by an ethos of improvisation and spontaneity. Thus inevitable failure allowed for the development of expression, a constant redefinition of the movement's sense of self, along with the fact that 'most of the Dadaists were buoyed up by a robust, exuberant, and ironic sense of humor that we have learned to call carnivalesque and that enabled them […] to keep some sort of balance in a wildly fluctuating universe' (Sheppard 2000: 87). Ball explained that 'the special circumstances of these times […] do not allow real talent either to rest or mature and so put its capabilities to the test' (*FT*: 67). The uncertainty consequently raised with the contemporary reader is not only part of Dada's constant desire not to be fixed in a certain cultural memory, but also appears to embrace Beauvoir's conclusions on ambiguity (cf. *MA*: 14). We might conclude, therefore, that Dada's fluctuating relationship with reality, truth, deception and façade lends itself richly to explorations of authenticity through ambiguity. Dada, 'not a dogma or a school, but rather a constellation of individuals and free facets' (Tzara in Ades ed. 2006: 44) allows the individual to strive for authenticity through spontaneity, ambiguity, and the embracing of multiple or hybrid identities.

Alternatively, to re-conclude with Tzara's thoughts on the ambiguity of truth,

On croit pouvoir expliquer rationnellement, par la pensée, ce qu'on écrit. Mais c'est très relatif. La pensée est une belle chose pour la philosophie mais elle est relative. […] La dialectique est une machine amusante qui nous conduit /d'une maniere [*sic*] banale/ aux opinions que nous aurions eu en tout cas. Croit-on, par le raffinement minutieux de la logique, avoir démontré la vérité et établi l'exactitude de ces opinions? Logique serrée par les sens est une maladie organique. Les philosophes aiment ajouter à cet element: Le pouvoir d'observer. Mais justement cette magnifique qualité de l'esprit est la preuve de son impuissance. On observe, on regarde d'un ou de plusieurs points de vue, on les choisit parmi les millions qui existent. L'expérience est aussi un résultat de l'hazard [*sic*] et des facultés individuelles. (in *D*3: 2; original formatting)

Tzara foregrounds several fundamental elements of truth and rationality, which also strengthens our links with Existentialism. He shows that writing and thought are both subjective and situational, as well as holding the potential for dangerous manipulation. He repeatedly highlights the desire for final or singular truth as a 'disease', primarily because it seeks to eradicate the individual, and the chance for personal choice or chance itself.

This chapter has brought out the ethical, epistemic importance of the subjectivity of truth from a perspective of Dada. But as Innes demonstrates, the challenging of truth and reality initiated in part by Dada had long-lasting effects on the way we continue to perceive our environment:

Artists operate on reality just as historians do on recorded fact; and in his plays about art, Stoppard deals specifically with the modernists: writers and painters who consciously set out to challenge accepted conventions of realism and whose take on representations of life was openly ideological – hence the "isms": Cubism, surrealism, Dadaism. Revolutionary at the beginning of the last century, by now they have become part of the way we interpret our contemporary world. (2006: 230)

Innes's statement on Dada complements Chapter Four's theory of the assimilation of the revolutionary into the routine. Through this and through our analysis of Dada's stories we might say that, although many of Dada's characteristics have been incorporated into our worldview, Dada operated on *history*, and even historiography,

through the scattering of its stories and the varying way in which the movement continues to be remembered. This chapter has begun to bring together thematics from the preceding four chapters, demonstrating elements of choice, alienation, responsibility and censorship in order to assess our final notion of truth from a wider perspective of the historical memory of Dada. The conclusion to this thesis will now perform a final synthesis of the way in which these key themes draw Dada and Existentialism philosophically close.

- CONCLUSION -
'ESSAYONS D'ASSUMER NOTRE FONDAMENTALE AMBIGUÏTE'

[J]e ne me connais que dans mon inhérance au temps et au monde, c'est-à-dire dans l'ambiguïté
(*PP*: 402)

If Everything was Nothing and Nothing the beginning of Everything, Dada intended an artistic-philosophical creation of an endlessly relational abundance and emptiness, instrumentalized ambivalently […] both into negative and positive spheres
(Bergius 2003: 21)

The term 'authenticity' is multifaceted, from its common definition right through to its complex Existentialist meaning. What is clear, through this plurality of sense, is that authenticity in any of its critical forms implies an affirmative individuality or genuineness.[120] It can be argued, however, that this can only actually be achieved through an Existentialist definition of the term, whereby the authentic is not true or real by an external, generic reasoning, but stemming from the individual's sense of value choice. Through its analysis of the concept across Dada and Existentialist art and philosophy, the thesis has drawn upon the term's dependence on another - equally loaded - term, that of 'ambiguity'.

In initiating this dialogue between two discrete movements through our discussion of terms, we have highlighted not only philosophical commonality between Dada and Existentialism, but also their combined intersection with contemporary art and theory. This is particularly evident in the continued influence

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[120] Definitions of authenticity become problematic when we consider their application through corporate branding such as Coca Cola. There is a certain irony in the implication that only by consuming the most authentic brand can one be an authentic individual (thereby attaining authenticity through conformity). This is particularly demonstrated by the 'individualisation' of bottles by printing a selection of given names on them, allowing the individual to seek out their 'personal' version of this generic product, and even then only if they are in possession of one of the available (most common) names.

of Dada art, as well as in the presentation of retrospectives of solo Dada artists, combinations of Dada artists, the co-presence of Dada and 'non-Dada' artists, and the conscious referencing of Dada as an artistic influence in contemporary works. A prominent example of this is illustrated by Duchamp, who continues to have retrospectives dedicated both to him as a solo artist and alongside others, as we have already seen in the Barbican's 2013 retrospective, *Dancing around the Bride*, linking his art and thought to Cage, Rauschenberg, Cunningham and Johns.

A relevant satellite to this exhibition was Geoffrey Farmer's *The Surgeon and the Photographer* (2009-2013, Fig. 28), a set of 365 puppets constructed with fabric torsos and paper faces, limbs and accessories cut from books and magazines. While the work was not part of the main exhibition space, it claims as its inspiration 'the collage and assemblage traditions of Hannah Höch and Robert Rauschenberg, the element of chance employed by John Cage and Merce Cunningham, and an animist perspective from Pacific Northwest Coast cultures' (Barbican Online: n.p.). Additionally the work presented demonstrates an affinity with Chapter One's exploration of the mask in general and the work of Taeuber in particular, despite her not being cited as an influence. Like Taeuber's costumes, the 365 puppets embody an individuality that invites a constant sense of choice, an emphasis on becoming. It can be no accident that these puppets number 365: the artist implies quirkily that one can take on a new puppet, that is, a new combination of characteristics, for each day of the year, should one choose. And though a century separates Taeuber's and Farmer's works, the likeness is undeniable.

Both Dada and Existentialism are often reductively deemed products of their time, results of their wartime context and, as such, irrelevant to contemporary society. Evidently Dada's continued artistic influence refutes this, as demonstrable through its sustained strong presence in the art world. In a less visible (or visual) manner, Existentialism also continues to make itself heard, perhaps, as Richter explained, because we all live in an 'existential vacuum' (*AA*: 204), no doubt exacerbated by the omnipresence and rapid disposability of social media in the contemporary age of information. As we saw in the review of the literature of Existentialism, a renewed enthusiasm for this complex movement has led to a plethora of new texts on the subject, proving its constant relevance both within and outside of academia. Beyond their continuing influence as independent strands of thought, we have seen repeatedly through this thesis that Dada and Existentialism intersect in various philosophical, epistemic, ethical and aesthetic ways.

Alongside artistic and philosophical influences explored throughout the thesis we also find a certain coexistence of Dada and Existentialist thinkers through a number of common causes. Tzara in particular crossed paths with Existentialist thinkers, including his post-Liberation contributions to *L'Eternelle Revue*, which was edited by Sartre. Other Dada-affiliated contributors to this journal included Paul Éluard, Aragon, and Picasso. Additionally, both Tzara and Beauvoir were involved in protesting against the then Prime Minister Michel Debré's decision to refuse Algerian independence (Adler 2001: 233-34). Despite both movements often being labelled nihilistic, Existentialism quietist, and Dada (pejoratively) meaningless,

something that draws them together is the desire of individual members of each movement to support intellectuals in trials and political affairs.[121] Tzara and Camus joined the French Communist Party within a short time of each other (over the period of 1934-1935), and were both involved in Resistance work. We can logically infer that the members of the two movements would continue to represent the ideologies of each, and it is instructive that these would overlap in such a way.

The example of Breton, who broke away from Dada, and his later argument with Camus, is an indication that Surrealism, widely considered to be Dada's logical continuation, was perhaps not as much of a straightforward continuation as initially thought, especially if we bear in mind its incompatibility with Existentialism. We have seen that Camus rejected Surrealism on the level of its obsession with suicide (and rhetorical inclination towards murder), and that Sartre rejected the movement on account of its work in the unconscious and dream states, disapproving of its detachment from the individual. This rejection is additionally justified in relation to Dada, if we consider its will to destroy narratives, including a reliance on logic (and even dreams have a certain logical structure, especially if we are to accept the ideas of Freud, as per the Surrealists). Surrealism's attachment to the unconscious, especially in relation to psychoanalysis, replaced these destroyed narratives with others, each as 'inauthentic' as the next through their prescriptive nature.

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[121] Even the farcical nature of the Barrès trial is indicative of strong opinions on the conduct of others, particularly those who are lauded as society's *grands hommes*.

Dada and Existentialism: a Compatible Comparison?

It has been the aim in this thesis to explore and define the relationship between Dada and Existentialism, both through theory and through practice. The five chapter themes have elucidated a complex interaction between the movements, common themes, and the overriding notions of authenticity and ambiguity. A number of questions were raised at the beginning of this research, which underline the humanistic dilemma at stake for the artist-as-rebel, as well as providing a tripartite, overarching interrogation of the compatibility of the analytical joining together of Dada and Existentialism.

Firstly, how can we use Dada and Existentialist ideas to not only critique but also to improve the human condition? We have seen, through explorations of various facets of identity, that Dada and Existentialist ideas direct us to a thoroughly individualist view on art and society that allows not only for authentic living, but that also has mutually beneficial implications between individuals. As best highlighted by Sartre, 'on choisit en face des autres, et on *se* choisit en face des autres' (*EH*: 67; my emphasis).

Secondly, given the total revolutionary approach performed by the two movements, are they rebelling for rebellion's sake, or do they genuinely believe they have the potential to instigate change? While a surface-level assessment of Dada may lead one to conclude that it was a movement without any real aims beyond ludic and puerile trouble-making, this deeper analysis has drawn upon a fundamental need to alter and ameliorate an imperfect world, not just at the level of 'civilisation' or

'society' but in respect of individual choices, acts and living. Pegrum notes that '[d]espite the fact that the Dadaists attack universal philosophies and theories, in the final analysis they are looking for solutions or at least propositions for the whole of humanity' (2000: 190). This furthermore corresponds with the Existentialist notion of belief in individual choice that is yet universally applicable. The use of Existentialist tenets alongside Dada has encouraged a more involved understanding of Dada's furious destruction of traditional artistic and cultural values, as demonstrated particularly strongly in Camus's account of rebellion through its dual cores of nihilism and affirmation ('s'il [l'homme révolté] refuse il ne renonce pas' (*HR*: 27)), and Sartre's vision of rebellion through creativity and invention in philosophy and art ('[c]e qu'il y a de commun entre l'art et la morale, c'est que, dans les deux cas, nous avons création et invention' (*EH*: 66)).

Thirdly, how do the ideals and aims of the nature of revolt in these two movements compare to the outcomes? It is in combining these two movements that we might posit the outcomes of their revolt as moving out of and expanding upon their aims, since we can trace the results of such revolt across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. We saw through Tzara's and Picabia's manifestos a desire to combine contradictions and revel in the outcome. This is an attitude that, rather than being nihilistic and aimless, can be confirmed through Existentialism's desire for the virtues afforded by ambiguity, as well as a need to incorporate one's failures into one's (definition of) success.

Chapter One's analysis of masks, the 'look' and choice in the work of Taeuber and a series of related works showed the importance of ambiguity in working towards an authentic self through fragmentation and assemblage. This was demonstrated through an emphasis on expansion, extension and externalisation of the self (something which can be seen in a different form in Chapter Four's analysis of the unwanted other), and expanded upon in relation to Sartre's notion of the look in terms of the subjecthood of the other and the objecthood of the self. This is reflected in terms of Dada's rebellion as 'other' in art, as well as Taeuber's own simultaneously central and peripheral role in the movement. The works assessed in this chapter additionally exemplify Dada's foregrounding of the tension between destruction and creation, and the possibility of the coexistence of these two concepts. Taeuber's emphatic fragmentation performs a constant rejection of mimetic and artistic 'normalcy', destroying traditional notions of identification, yet works with the remains of these concepts to create anew. This contradiction is not only embraced by Dada (cf. 'le point où le oui et le non et toutes les contradictions se rencontrent') but also in Camus's depiction of the rebel, who rejects but does not renounce (*HR*: 27). Beyond the foregrounding of binaries, however, the works discussed moreover introduce, through this antagonistic coexistence of contradictions, the notion of a constant state of becoming or developing of the rebellion within the self.

Chapter One drew upon Taeuber and her role in Dada in a way that has not previously been explored. The chapter sought to assess the artist beyond her traditional academic pigeonholing as 'female Dada'. While it may have been

necessary to address the neglect of female members of the movement, as seen in the works of Hemus (2009) and Sawelson-Gorse (ed. 1999), the continued focus based solely on biological gender means she has been 'celebrated and *trivialized* as a heroine of women artists' work' (Afuhs and Reble eds 2007: 35; my emphasis), as well as segregated from the rest of the movement. In comparing her works with other identity-based Dada art we can begin to underline her philosophical value as a prolific, interdisciplinary artist.

Chapter Two's assessment of alienation and reality in the films of Man Ray and a selection of other Dada films took this sense of alterity into the notion of distance from and a questioning of traditional notions of perception. These films, like the works studied in Chapter One, highlight and put pressure on boundaries and contradictions, emphasising a need for personal interpretation and value choice. Moving on from Chapter One's stress on the simultaneous conflict and coexistence of the 'yes' and the 'no', Chapter Two assessed the interaction of a number of additional abstract opposites in Dada film, in order to evaluate the tendency to accept the inherence of patterns of perception. While Chapter One focused on the fragmentation of terms, Chapter Two began to bring out a presence of ambiguity, in both its regular and Existentialist senses, a focus on the process of (human) reality as 'dépassement perpétuel vers une coïncidence avec soi qui n'est jamais donnée' (*EN*: 125-26). This highlighted a constant presence in both movements of a necessary 'hors de soi' state for the individual, primarily through externalisation of the self both from reality and from itself, as well as building upon Chapter One's notion of becoming through the

realisation of a constant relationship with the 'perpetually present' nature of time, and the nature of the present as a constantly filled and self-renewing 'hole' in being (cf. *EN*: 182). This in turn began to bring out the relationship between choice and individuality, alienation and reality, and their consequences for authenticity and ambiguity. Consequently Chapters One and Two initiated the highlighting of Dada and Existentialism's focus on rebellion and alterity.

Chapter Two engaged in a new reading of Dada films, particularly in respect to the layering of interpretive perception and its relation to the philosophy of the self. In this way the chapter modifies the existing field by aligning films by multiple artists with Existentialist analogies of alienation and reality. This builds upon existing work in film and philosophy in a way that comes out of two strands of study. Firstly, it draws from the notion of the presence of theory in Dada film, as particularly extensively explored by Knowles in her work on Man Ray. While Knowles considers the films of Man Ray as part of his œuvre, I have selected two of his films most closely chronologically, and, I would argue, thematically, linked to Dada, in order to analyse them alongside other Dada-related works.[122] Knowles tends to relate Man Ray's film to existing avant-garde theory, including Bürger (*Theory of the Avant-Garde*) and Abel (*French Film Theory and Criticism, 1907-1939*). Chapter Two has largely avoided avant-garde film theory in favour of a comparison with an independent philosophical movement. The second strand from which this chapter emerges is the analysis of film more broadly against an Existentialist methodology,

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[122] Knowles does not fail to mention the influence of films such as *Entr'acte* and *Ballet mécanique* on Man Ray's work, but this remains a passing reference within a work on Man Ray himself.

as exemplified by Boulé et al. in *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema*, through the exploration of contemporary cinema alongside Sartrean and Beauvoirian theory. In this way these two texts compare and contrast thematics in terms of narrative function, an aspect which is demonstrably absent in Dada film. The chapter takes Existentialist thematics and applies them to abstract notion in an analysis of the fundamental perception of the cinematic image. My work on selected Dada films using a methodology based in the theory of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty therefore takes the application of theory to Dada film and the use of Existentialism in the analysis of narrative film to provide new work on abstract film through an Existentialist lens.

Chapter Three expanded the notions of the coexistence of contradictions, and the necessity of both alterity and ambiguity, into a deeper interrogation of authenticity through an analysis of the use of justice to enforce the idea of a common morality. This was done through an assessment of the absurdity of the trials of Meursault in Camus's *L'Étranger* and Maurice Barrès in Dada's mock trial of the author. This chapter highlighted two explicit indictments of society through these Dada and Existentialist critiques of human behaviour. As Chapter Two challenged the inherence of perception, so Chapter Three questioned the validity of the 'natural' authenticity of tradition, narrative, and moral justice. This led to a rejection of institutional justice as compatible with Existentialist authenticity, limiting it to standard definitions which seek to address the universal over the individual. Camus's presentation of an amoral individual showed us an example, while not condoning his behaviour, of an individual who has consistently proven himself to be

outside of society. Dada, through its mock trial of Barrès, and particularly through the consequent breakdown of the movement, performed a position outside of society. Both texts ridicule the notion of 'fitting in' as an inauthentic, herd mentality.

The questions that this interrogation of justice raised complement the issue of objectivity that was explored in Chapters One and Five, through their respective explorations of individual and universal truth, and the subjective and situational nature of the concept of truth. Additionally, Chapter Three's investigation of two literary texts (and events as texts), through its questioning of the validity or existence of truth began an inquiry into the limits and boundaries of our notions of fiction that would be furthered in Chapter Five. As Stephens notes in his study of Sartre and Victor Hugo, '[t]he novelist may write the text, but he does not own its meaning, and should not feign any absolute truth' (2011: 112). Furthermore Stephens explicates that '[t]he writer acts as a kind of teacher who asks questions and gives answers, but who declines to provide any definitive and therefore illusory response to the issues he tackles' (ibid.: 113). The combined analysis of these two trials has enabled a more direct comparison of Dada and Existentialist ethics through a comparable literary form, as well as representing an extended appraisal of the Barrès trial as a key event in the development of the Dada movement and its philosophy.

Chapter Three built upon Sanouillet's short, descriptive historical account of the Barrès trial, going into more analytical detail on the moral and philosophical substance of the individual sections. Additionally, the comparative analysis alongside an Existentialist text is unique not only through the comparison of Dada

with Existentialism, but more fundamentally through analysis of the Barrès trial in relation to non-Dada literary representations of trials and forays into justice. Through this the chapter drew out the philosophical implications of this important yet underestimated (and under-examined) Dada event, as well as its wider consequences in the history and theory of Dada.

Chapter Four's discussion of censorship and freedom revealed that limitations can serve as a challenge to the individual to rebel, and that they are condemned to be free regardless of their constraints. Through a comparison of a range of Dada artefacts with Camus's *La Peste*, we were able to explore the notion of the self as unwanted other, and the consequent impact on the individual as well as the impetus to react. Furthermore this chapter examined the inevitable normalisation of deviance, showing not only the need for the existence of rebellion but also the continuing importance of its novelty. We discovered that our relationship with the aesthetic of shock is ephemeral, or as Arensberg so aptly stated, '[l]es vraies œuvres Dada ne doivent vivre que six heures' (in *L*13: 15).

The chapter investigated Dada's need to break with the past, linking this trait with Beauvoir's thoughts on ambiguity, to demonstrate not only that Dada does not entirely succeed in relinquishing all ties with the past, but also that this should not necessarily be considered a negative aspect. An exploration of this relationship with temporality allows for a formation of the becoming self, as well as an incorporation of error into one's sense of place in the world. As Beauvoir points out, leaning on the past enables the creation of the new (cf. *MA*: 36), as well as leaving traces on the new

creation. We can consider this a positive effect on the development of the new precisely because it responds to Camus's notion of the rebel as an individual who simultaneously says 'Yes' and 'No'. The work of art can reject the past while drawing upon its desirable aspects to create a hybrid work that remains new. Additionally, these traces are usefully continued into Neo-Dada, which we saw as a version of Dada that fully integrated itself into the art world that Dada once opposed (and was opposed by) so strongly. This normalisation of the deviant represents a successful realisation of Dada's aim for rebellious freedom. This chapter moved on from current analyses of Dada and Neo-Dada relationships with deviance to assess their productive relationship with censorship, particularly through Existentialist notions of freedom.

Chapter Five took our discussion of post-(Neo-)Dada into the realm of postmodernity, in its exploration of Stoppard's *Travesties*. Alongside Sartre's *La Nausée*, the analysis drew out the importance of accounts and stories of Dada, particularly when viewed as a diary, a 'private' confession to the self that was nevertheless at some point designed to be read. These accounts highlighted both Dada's and Existentialism's refusal of the authority of objective truth, as seen through the deliberate manipulation of the concepts of truth on both sides. This destruction of the objectivity of truth draws upon ideas explored earlier in the thesis, those of the perception of reality, aesthetic normalcy and beauty, and the creation of moral values. All of these lean on the Sartrean notion that 'l'existence précède l'essence, ou, si vous voulez, qu'il faut partir de la subjectivité' (*EH*: 26). Across the

thesis this has functioned as a springboard for the rejection of pre-made values, as seen through the proferring by Beauvoir of an ethics of ambiguity. As she writes, '[l]a morale, pas plus que la science et l'art, ne fournissent des recettes. On peut proposer seulement des méthodes' (*MA*: 166). Beauvoir's promotion of a 'recipe-free' morality can be given a parallel in a humourous Dada example (which is further satirised in *Travesties*): that of the 'recipe' to make a Dada poem. The way in which this recipe is presented embodies a parodic representation of an anti-recipe that is yet a method, allowing for the creation of unique Dada poems while implicitly critiquing the notion of 'rules' of the writing of poetry.

Chapter Five showed probably Dada's strongest link with theory and philosophy through the movement's relationship with subjectivity, particularly in relation to truth. It is notable that this should be brought out through linking the earliest Dada accounts with the most contemporary, which showed that the movement continues to manipulate its own interpretation, perhaps the ultimate proof of subjectivity. As we have seen Tzara state, '[o]n observe, on regarde d'un ou de plusieurs points de vue, on les choisit parmi les millions qui existent. L'expérience est aussi un résultat de l'hazard [*sic*] et des facultés individuelles' (*D3*: 2). This chapter developed current notions of the historical account by moving beyond the content of memoirs and diaries to investigate the ways in which structure and style can say more about a movement than the details of events recorded. Additionally, the chapter interrogated Stoppard's relationship with Dada through two of his texts in order to push the boundaries of the 'Dada' account.

The five chapters of this thesis have brought out different ways in which Dada can be read with Existentialism, as well as highlighting areas in which they do not converge. Dada and Existentialism notably differ methodologically in that Existentialism posits the crisis in a philosophical sense, even through its literature, whereas Dada stages, or traverses, the problem through its creative action.[123] These can be considered two facets of the same confrontation of alterity in radical thought. We can demonstrate this particularly through comparing Dada works with Existentialist literature. Sartre posits the trauma of otherness in *Huis Clos*, and Camus raises issues of the discovery of the unwanted other in *La Peste*. By contrast, the Dada masks creatively engage with staging otherness wrapped around the self, and Duchamp's readymades actively insert the unwanted other into everyday life, highlighting its eventual normalisation. Camus presents, in *L'Étranger*, the individual subjected to the judgement of others, and Sartre foregrounds, in *La Nausée*, the individual subjected to the alienating reality of daily existence. However, the Dadas literally stage the trial of Barrès and in so doing reveal the absurdity of accusations of inauthenticity, and Tzara, through his 'Zurich Chronicle', actively and creatively re-writes the world around him.

Throughout these works, while the Existentialists are presenting a constant re-writing of the self, Dada projects this onto a re-writing of the world. While we may point out that, chronologically, Dada had already attempted to change the world,

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[123] Importantly, though, this exemplifies Beauvoir's desire to provide a method, and not a recipe. Indeed, the strongest relation between the two movements is the foregrounding of both ambiguity and individuality, something that would be weakened were the two movements argued to be methodologically identical.

Sartre and Camus later saw the need to first change the self in order to experience the world differently. We might argue that Dada's widely conceived 'empty' nature was produced because Existentialism was needed to give it a means for interpretation, and furthermore that Existentialism is considered meaningless without the practical application provided by Dada.

In addition to the productive combination of Existentialist literature and Dada art, the non-literary works of Existentialism have been used in comparison with Dada film and events. This has provided an unpacking of theoretical content in Dada work and happenings that are often written off as meaningless or nihilistically ludic. This continued to strengthen the productive methodological difference between the two movements. We saw in Chapter Two that Merleau-Ponty's theoretical depictions of perception and distortion thereof can be applied to Dada films. This additionally contributes to the overarching relevance of the non-literary Existentialist texts of Sartre and Beauvoir, particularly *L'Être et le néant* and *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*. These central theoretical texts are particularly useful in unpicking Dada accounts and manifestos, as such providing a crossover of the expression of the dominant tenets of each movement.

Contribution to the Field and Areas for Further Research

Recent trends in Dada research have sought to place the movement in its theoretical context, contesting the opinion of many that Dada has, and wanted, no link(s) to theory or philosophy. We have seen that recent literature has begun to consider these implications, principally through theoretically and contextually

placing the movement as occupying a position ambiguously situated between the Modern and the Postmodern. However, while Huelsenbeck explicitly suggested a connection between Dada and Existentialism in his short essay of the same name, the invitation for comparison of the two movements has largely been ignored, limited to Sheppard's fleeting references in his account of Dada's relationship with Modernism and Postmodernism (2000: 77; 85; 183; 193). It should be noted that these references refer to indexed occurrence of terms: following these references leads to very little concrete comparison. The most in depth of these, and the lengthiest (in that it is the only complete sentence linking the two), is Sheppard's claim that '[t]he former type of Dada [that is, the view that Nature is 'inherently patternless'] is like a zany version of Sartrean existentialism and proclaims the Dada state of mind *against* a background of absurdity and chaos' (2000: 193; orginal emphasis). Sheppard's flippant description reduces his referencing the two movements to a tangential remark.[124]

This thesis therefore represents the first full, book-length study of the movements alongside each other. Exploring Dada and Existentialism's key tenets with a heavy focus on their art and literature respectively has led to a thesis that prioritises the active expression of theoretical notions, while interrogating such themes in and of themselves. The comparison through literature of philosophical thinkers is not new, as we have seen through Stephens' drawing together of Sartrean thought with that of Victor Hugo. Equally, Existentialist thought, in a less deeply

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[124] Sheppard does, however, engage in a detailed account of Huelsenbeck's general interest in Existentialism, in his earlier text 'Richard Huelsenbeck (1892-1974): Dada and Psychoanalysis' (in Kunisch, Bercham and Link eds 1985: 271-305), although without conducting an analysis of the two movements.

theoretical respect, has been compared to the art of its time, as shown by Morris's (predominantly historical and aesthetic) account of Existentialism and Post-WWII art. What is new, then, about the methodology of this thesis is the analysis of art, literature and philosophy in these two movements as temporally separated phenomena that nonetheless provide a rich point of comparison.

The reassessment of the movement alongside theoretical or philosophical concepts is a relatively new, yet fundamentally important, development in the field of Dada. As we have explored here, Existentialism has proven to have a productively wide basis for comparison with Dada, yet because of the confines of this thesis scope remains for further work. This thesis has focused on French Existentialism for its body of accompanying literature, and has maintained a general focus on Francophone Dada. The international nature of Dada gives ample potential for combination with other national brands of Existentialism, particularly German, and especially in relation to Berlin and Hanover Dada. While German and German-language Dada have been touched upon in this thesis, my interest both in the movement of Dada from Zurich and New York to Paris, as well as its convergence there with the Existentialism of Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus and Merleau-Ponty, has (productively) limited the present work's attention to French, or Paris-based, Existentialism. In addition to exploration of German-language Dada and Existentialism, there remains room for further work on Dada alongside the thinkers discussed in this thesis. While it has been essential to perform a thesis-length analysis of Dada's relationship with Existentialism more broadly in order to detail their initial

fundamental connections, necessitating attention to several thinkers in a conceptual assessment, it will now be necessary to look at each of the four philosophers individually, so as to perform a deeper analysis of their separate connections with Dada.

As there is potential for development of work on the crossover of Dada with varying versions of Existentialism, so there is space for its association with other lines of thought. We saw in reviewing the literature in the field of Dada that the movement has been extensively and successfully assessed alongside both Modernism and Postmodernism. It would be hugely rewarding to consider Dada alongside other ideologies (or 'isms'), whether these are explicitly philosophical or theoretical, or simply other art movements. Furthermore these in turn could be assessed alongside a multitude of philosophies and theoretical schools, continuing to prove that art and philosophy can (and should be) intrinsically linked.

For example, Dada is often compared with its historical neighbours, and as such those that the movement either actively opposed, or with which it had natural affinities or crossovers. Dada is foregrounded as a reaction to a modern(ist) world, and as a natural predecessor of Surrealism. It would perhaps be more fruitful to compare it with more disparate movements, such as those to which Dada texts make passing reference, in obvious yet underexplored influence. We have seen this in the 'quoting' of Descartes in *Dada*, as well as claims to association with Charlie Chaplin. We might ask, what affinity does Dada have with actual Cartesian thought? How

does Dada's persistent referencing of Charlie Chaplin relate to the movement's approach to humour?

Equally Dada could be compared to other 'outsider' movements and philosophies. Thematically speaking, we may ask, if Dada is a form of rebellion, what similarities and differences does it show with other forms of rebellion, and how does this notion of rebellion relate to ideas of revolution? Instructive artistic comparisons would include Les Nabis, a pre-Dada movement whose work influenced the development of abstract art, and Hyperrealism, a twenty-first century form of work that distorts perception to parody notions of reality in a way that could be linked to Dada film or photomontage.[125] Another twentieth/twenty-first-century example that could productively be compared to Dada, especially if also including Neo-Dada, would be that of Stuckism, whose claims to be 'anti-anti-art' and desire to return to modernism invite evaluation, especially considering such declarations as 'Stuckism is the quest for authenticity' and '[w]hat was once a searching and provocative process (as Dadaism) has given way to trite cleverness for commercial exploitation' (Childish 1999: n.p.). The frequency with which the term 'authenticity' occurs in relation to cultural products raises an additional point of inquiry for further study: that of society's obsession with the notion of authenticity itself.

The Authenticity of Ambiguity

The most important product of my comparison of Dada and Existentialism has been the way in which both movements show not only a perpetual striving toward

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[125] Artistically and etymologically speaking, it would also be instructive to perform a comparison between Sur-realism and Hyper-realism.

individual authenticity, but also that this authenticity is precisely achieved through ambiguity, a constant realisation of the self as becoming, as fluid and non-fixed, but expressed through a conviction of the individual's own values, unpressured by social tradition or narratives. These two movements continue to be remembered for their challenge to the individual to question, doubt and actively choose their own way of living. Choice is individual, reality and truth are subjective, justice is internal, and deviance is actively encouraged. Through the desire to realise this state of subjective, individual and active choice, an ethic is created in which responsibility for moral structures lies with the individual. As Huelsenbeck wrote, '[i]n other words, man is no longer the product of some conventional morality. […] He is what he is because he has become aware of his own value' (*DE*: 147). This centrality is highlighted constantly by Sartre, who claims not only that 'il faut que l'homme se trouve lui-même' (*EH*: 77), but also that 'avant que vous ne viviez, la vie, elle n'est rien, mais c'est à vous de lui donner un sens' (*EH*: 74). Through this he links responsibility to a meaningful relationship with the self and the resulting outlook on life. The individual is fundamentally the source of all their values, whether these are values in terms of morality, worth, or sense. Moreover, this authenticity does not lead to quietism, as critics might expect: as Todd Lavin writes, 'authentic existence does not end in isolated individualism lacking all moral guidance but leads to social engagement, with deep moral commitments' (in Daigle ed. 2006: 53-54).

Henri Béhar and Michel Carassou wrote on the future of Dada, through its simultaneous emphasis on creation and destruction:

> Création et destruction demeureront toujours indissociables, parce que la vie est ainsi faite, constatait Dada. En privilégiant la création, la société sécrète sa ruine. En démolissant, Dada soulève un immense élan créateur. Il sera toujours indispensable de détruire pour empêcher la création de se figer, de se couper de la vie, d'engendrer la mort. Dada a, semble-t-il, de beaux jours devant lui. (2005: 212)

This co-presence of opposites is one that has been foregrounded throughout the thesis, and is, according to Béhar, precisely that which guarantees Dada its future. Notably Béhar's comments have precedent in Ribemont-Dessaignes's thoughts on the creation and destruction in Dada's core:

> Man is unable to destroy without constructing something other than what he is destroying. Consequently, though Dada had the will and the need to destroy every form of art subject to dogma, it felt a parallel need of expressing itself. It was necessary to replace submission to reality by the creation of a superior reality. (in Motherwell ed. 1989: 102)

We have seen throughout the chapters of this thesis an aim for the 'creation of a superior reality', through distortion, nonsense, and a provocation to find individual meaning in the ostensively meaningless. Underlining Dada's fundamentally positive outlook, Richter claimed that '[n]obody knows what direction art will take, in its present chaotically disoriented state. But one thing is sure: a new generation has taken up Duchamp's experiments, with optimism, with conviction, and in the spirit of a new artistic humanism' (*AA*: 96).

Richter's insight into Dada's afterlife not only re-words (and theoretically pre-empts) Sartre's thoughts on painting that we saw in the Introduction to the thesis ('personne ne peut dire ce que sera la peinture de demain' (*EH*: 65)), but also expresses the fundamental crossover that we have seen between Dada and Existentialism, that is, the choices that we make are secondary to the conviction with

which we make them. This in turn foregrounds an insistence on the present that is

related to, but not dependent on, the past and the future or, as Lavin suggests,

> A life of existential moments is one in which each present moment poses itself as one of self-choice to shape and thus bear responsibility for the situation of our existence, a life that ties both past and future together in the present moment. (in Daigle ed. 2006: 61)

From this we may conclude that Dada and Existentialism (individually, but

especially in combination) continue to encourage us to interrogate such fundamental

notions as history (and History), truth and reality, not as an empty highlighting of

the futility and meaninglessness of the world, but as a reinforcement of the need to

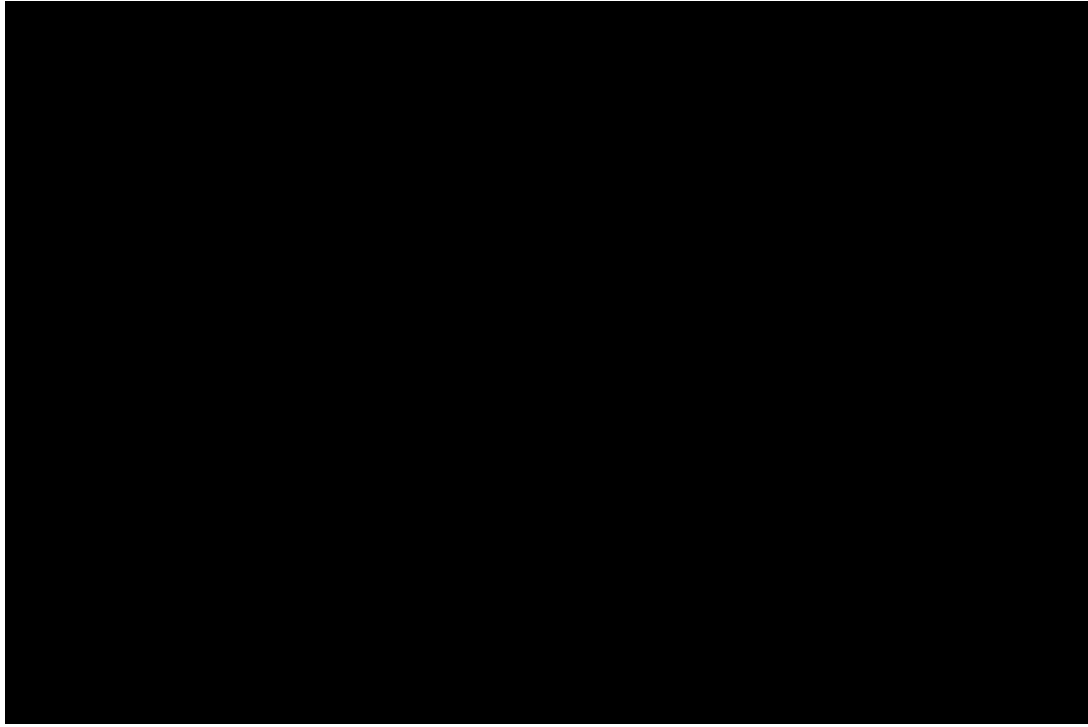create our own meaning, in realisation of our most authentic self.

Fig. 28:
The Surgeon and the Photographer
Geoffrey Farmer, 2009-2013

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