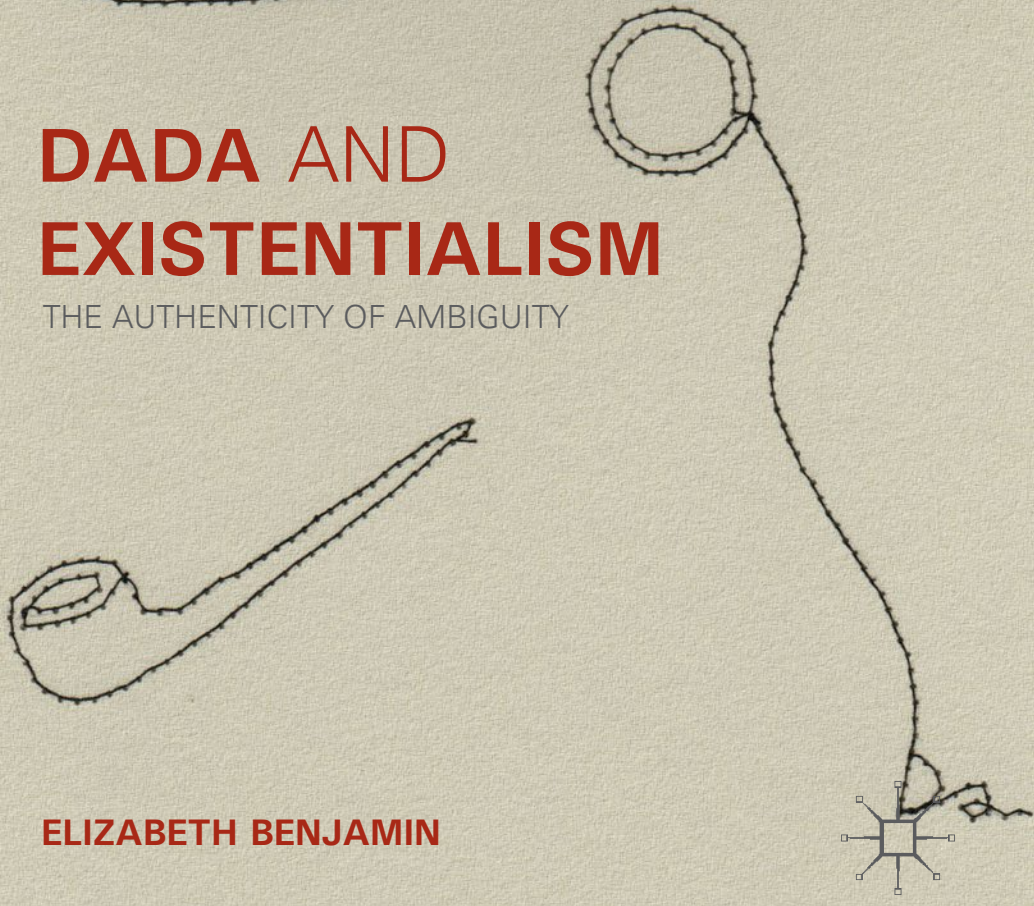
DADA AND EXISTENTIALISM

THE AUTHENTICITY OF AMBIGUITY



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The Authenticity of Ambiguity

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Contents

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); 1965 Thames & Hudson English edition used here.

AB *L'Affaire Barrès* [The Barrès Case], Marguerite Bonnet. 1987 collated text of 1921 Barrès trial; original José Corti French edition used here.

D *Dada*, 1917–1921, Zurich and Paris. References followed by issue number. Digital originals used here.

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*, originally 1969; 1974 Viking Press English edition used.

E *L'Étranger* [The Outsider], Albert Camus. First published 1942; original Gallimard French edition used here.

EH *L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme* [Existentialism is a Humanism], Jean-Paul Sartre. First published 1946; 1996 Gallimard French edition used here.

EN *L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* [Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology], Sartre. First published 1943; original Gallimard French edition used here.

FT *Flight out of Time: A Dada Diary*, Hugo Ball. First published 1927 (German); 1974 Viking Press English edition used here.

HC *Huis Clos* [No Exit], Sartre. First published 1947; original Gallimard French edition used here.

HR *L'Homme révolté* [The Rebel], Camus. First published 1951; original Gallimard French edition used here.

L *Littérature*, 1919-1924, Paris. References followed by issue number. Version used is digital original.

MA *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté* [The Ethics of Ambiguity], Simone de Beauvoir. First published 1947; original Gallimard French edition used here.

MS *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* [The Myth of Sisyphus], Camus. First published 1942; original Gallimard French edition used here.

N *La Nausée* [Nausea], Sartre. First published 1938; original Gallimard French edition used here.

P *La Peste* [The Plague], Camus. First published 1947; original Gallimard French edition used here.

PP *Phénoménologie de la perception* [Phenomenology of Perception], Maurice Merleau-Ponty. First published 1945; original Gallimard French edition used here.

T *Travesties*, Tom Stoppard. First performed 10 June 1974. 1975 Faber and Faber edition used here.

ZC 'Zurich Chronicle', Tristan Tzara, first published in Richard Huelsenbeck, *Dada Almanach* (1920) (French). 1993 Atlas Press English edition used here. 1989 Wittenborn English edition referenced but not cited or abbreviated.

Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

1

Introduction: 'I Rebel, Therefore We Are'

'Dada and Existentialism'

When Huelsenbeck posited Dada as an Existentialist phenomenon in 1957, claiming that the earlier movement 'may be called the existential revolt, for all its elements can be understood through human existence' (*DE*, p. 146), 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 could also be used constructively as both a commentary on, and a positive, productive analysis of, the human condition. Huelsenbeck claimed that 'the fact that the Dadaists said no was less important than the manner in which they said it' (*DE*, p. 144), drawing the Dada protagonist close to Albert Camus's rebel, 'un homme qui dit non' [a man who says no], but 's'il refuse, il ne renonce pas: c'est aussi un homme qui dit oui, dès son premier mouvement' [though he rejects, he does not renounce: he is also a man who says yes, from the outset] (*HR*, p. 27). Through his short essay Huelsenbeck presented Dada as a self-aware movement that, in retrospect, increasingly drew near to French Existentialism. Fundamentally,

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Huelsenbeck chose to foreground 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' [New Dada] as part of a wider claim that Dada pre-empted the Existentialist gesture (in Motherwell 1989, p. 400), a sentiment that he would reiterate in Dada and Existentialism almost a decade later. Why, we might ask, would Huelsenbeck feel the need to twice falsify this link between Dada and Sartre? A desire to make associations with famous figures is frequently found in Dada writing, as exemplified by claims that Charlie Chaplin belonged to the movement, and in the false, prominent quoting of René Descartes on the cover of the third issue of the eponymous journal *Dada* (1918). But beyond Dada's general love of linking itself with famous names, a relationship with Existentialism does confer a certain credibility: the French Existentialists' incorporation of their opinions on Dada in their works opens up the possibility that they identified with Dada ideas, and indeed that Sartre should claim to be 'the New Dada'. Camus refers to Dada in *L'homme révolté* [The Rebel] (1951), relating the oft-cited Dada sentiment that 'les vrais dadas sont contre Dada' [the true Dadas are against Dada] (*HR*, p. 122), and Simone de Beauvoir incorporates Dada into her consideration of the nihilist and negation (*MA*, pp. 69–70).

As these core Existentialist thinkers included Dada as part of their accounts of rebellion, so several Dadas would later express affiliation with Existentialist thought. Thus although Huelsenbeck was the only Dada to enunciate separately and coherently the relationship between Dada and Existentialism, traces of a 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 'art has been "thought through to a conclusion"; in other words eliminated', and in doing so Richter draws these works close to the nothingness that is left, all the while claiming that this notion of nothingness is 'free from cynicism and regret' (*AA*, p. 91). While these statements do not provide

conclusive evidence that Existentialism constitutes a direct descendant of Dada, Richter certainly implies that it represents a desirable outcome. Furthermore, these thoughts express a sentiment similar to that found in Huelsenbeck's particularly Existentialist statement: 'the dada attitude is basically the paradox of forgetting the human in order to reveal it all the more penetratingly' (*DE*, p. 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 preoccupation with Existentialist concerns comparable that of 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 even at the most questionable forms of rebellion (*FT*, p. 65f, 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 Sartre feels that 's'il est impossible de trouver en chaque homme une essence universelle qui serait la nature humaine, il existe pourtant une universalité humaine de *condition*' [if it is impossible to find in every man a universal essence that we might call human nature, there does exist, however, a human universality of *condition*] (*EH*, p. 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' [in creating the individual that we want to be, [we] create at the same time an image of the individual that we think they should be] (*EH*, p. 31f). Furthermore, these theories link with Camus's statement that 'je me révolte, donc nous sommes' [I rebel, therefore we are] (*HR*, p. 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.

A final theoretical cross-over is that of Ball and Heidegger, for their focus on the individual's being in time, and specifically the notion of being 'thrown' into time. In his *Flight out of Time*, Ball expresses a simultaneous need for otherness and authenticity, something that I will be seeking to foreground throughout my text. 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' [I gradually became a stranger to myself] (in Buot 2002, p. 35); Camus explained that the absurd individual describes themselves as 'toujours […] étranger à moi-même' [always […] outside of myself] (*MS*, p. 36); and Sartre claimed that 'l'homme est constamment hors de lui-même' [the individual is always outside of themselves] (*EH*, p. 76). As an expansion of this latter theory, 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' [the flight outside of oneself is a flight towards oneself, and the world appears as pure distance between the self and itself] (*EN*, p. 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?

Dada Through Existentialism

In this book I take up Huelsenbeck's invitation and re-evaluate the development of Dada through and as a form of Existentialist philosophy. In so doing I consider Huelsenbeck's suggestions for aligning the two movements, bearing in mind smaller references from other Dadas, and branching out from his analysis to examine a range of Dada works and Existentialist texts. In order to present Dada as a form of proto-Existential(ist) philosophy I approach the comparison through a broadly chronological arrangement, additionally lending a temporal overlap of Dada and French Existentialism, and thus creating a solid ground for convergence of the two philosophies and their respective legacies.

The book recognises its self-imposed predominant focus on French atheistic Existentialism. The logical extremity of atheistic Existentialism, as well

as its connections with Dada views on religion, is my primary reason for foregrounding it over its religious counterpart. 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 2012a, p. 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, simpler 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 book takes its inspiration.

Thematically, the book's chapters comparatively analyse aspects of both movements through a set of key terms—choice, alienation, responsibility, freedom, and truth—but also moving from in-depth analysis of individual artists and works, through crucial events, to the death and dispersion of Dada into Neo-Dada, postmodernism, and beyond. Martin Gaughan suggests that 'there 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 1996, p. 57). My monograph addresses 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.

The dialogue I initiate between these two movements is designed to reassess Dada through an Existentialist lens. Therefore while the events and lives of Dada and its adherents are considered, this does not extend to the Existentialist equivalent. The inclusion of Existentialist content fluctuates to suit the intensity of analysis of Dada, with the intention of sharpening focus on Dada, rather than comparing the movements in a more reductive manner. The Existentialist content will be taken from a core corpus of works of Sartre, Beauvoir, Camus, and, to a lesser extent, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Chapter 2 opens the artistic-philosophical debate in an analysis of the concept of choice through discussions of individuality, subjectivity, and identity. These notions are approached via an analysis of several works of Sophie Taeuber, a lesser-known but prolific and interdisciplinary Dada artist whose work in masking provides an ideal springboard for a comparison between Dada and Existentialist values of the individual. Manifestations of physical and mental selfhood are scrutinised across Taeuber's *Dada Köpfe* [Dada Heads] (1918–1920), *König Hirsch* [King Stag] puppets (1918), dance and costumes, as well as her 'self-portraits' taken with the *Dada-Köpfe*, alongside a selection of work from other Dadas that responds to a similar exploration of the self through their emphasis on masks and masking, and as expressions of individuality and subjectivity in their own right. The chapter considers whether the deceptive simplicity of the works of Taeuber and her Dada associates hides a greater comment on avant-garde notions of the self, and additionally elucidates the Existentialist value of work that extensively and deliberately transcends the boundaries of artistic media. I begin to assess Dada art alongside Existentialist concepts such as Sartre's 'look', Camus's thoughts on silence and music, and Beauvoirian ambiguity. Using this analysis I 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 3 moves from plastic art to film, assessing the medium in relation to notions of alienation and reality, alongside Sartre's and Merleau-Ponty's theories of perception, as well as briefly incorporating Gilles Deleuze's writings on cinema as an interrogation of movement over time. The chapter investigates 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. Through this I identify the medium of film as a means of perpetually (re)constructing meaning through simultaneous, multifaceted memories or remanence. This second chapter continues to draw upon notions of individuality highlighted in the first chapter, while contributing theories on the use of alienation in Dada work. I suggest that through these films alienation is presented in a positive sense, a way of viewing and constructing the self from an external position, a productive distance from the self within itself.

I have chosen to discuss a selection of French Dada films for their volatile engagement with narrative and the destruction thereof: Man Ray's *Le Retour à la raison* [Return to Reason] (1923), and *Emak Bakia* [Leave Me Alone] (1926), Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy's *Le Ballet mécanique* [Mechanical Ballet] (1924) and René Clair and Francis Picabia's *Entr'acte* [Interval] (1924).

Chapter 4 discusses Dada and Existentialist views on responsibility and justice through examples of trials represented in their respective literatures. The notion of responsibility as defined in Existentialist thought is examined with a view to its broader connections with the concept of the individual's compulsion to choose, to assert and therefore own their own morality. This is carried out through a comparative analysis of Dada's mock trial of Maurice Barrès (1921) and Camus's trial of his protagonist Meursault in *L'Etranger* [The Outsider] (1942a). The analysis of these two trials highlights Dada and Existentialism's engagement with justice both as a physical reality and a philosophical notion, especially the limits of such a concept. This chapter also begins to confront more directly the notion of authenticity, particularly through considering the possibility of degrees or scales of authenticity. Chapter 4 takes a slightly different approach from 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. Moreover the chapter forms a hinge point between the first part of the book, which focuses on individuals and art forms within the Dada and Existentialist movements, and the second part, which takes a wider remit of art works and events while focusing more strongly on philosophical and theoretical content. Chapter 4 additionally marks 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 5 scrutinises 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* [The Plague] (1947). I use this chapter to analyse the notions of the acceptance, normalisation and non-repeatability of the censored and the deviant, through the complex relationship between shock and the new. I 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 opening up of Dada to its posthumous successors. The chapter investigates 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; the creation of rebellion through its own normalisation. Chapter 5 continues the book's appraisal of literary uses of Existentialist theory while simultaneously drawing upon non-fictional philosophy, here through both Sartre and Beauvoir. The chapter evaluates the extent to which creativity flourishes under censorship and therefore the two notions are initially posited as opposites, in order to later reveal their interdependence. In this way, the chapter's guiding principle is the assessment of freedom *through* censorship.

Chapter 6 examines the concept of truth through the ever-expanding repertoire of the stories and histories of Dada, alongside Sartre's *La Nausée* [Nausea] (1938), as well as examples from a postmodern counterpart, Tom Stoppard's *Travesties* (1975). The chapter works back from this postmodern example through a selection of central Dada diaries as 'first-hand' accounts, ending on an analysis of the Dada manifesto as an archive of core Dada(ist) thought. Chapter 6's discussion of truth moves away from a standard assumption of objectivity, in order to redirect towards truth as primarily subjective. The chapter by no means attempts to prove the truthfulness of Dada histories (accounts that seek to document the movement), 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 analyses the effect of this confusion and manipulation on the memory of Dada as a phenomenon, and its continued use and contemporary relevance across art and academia.

Shared Concerns

Although Huelsenbeck introduced the concept of the convergence of Dada and Existentialist ideas, his short essay 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 scholarship has not sought to pick up this dropped thread, and it is this gap that my book addresses. As such the book represents the first extended analysis of Dada and Existentialism alongside one another, and aims to contribute to the surprisingly recent opening up of the Dada canon towards work on the theoretical and philosophical potential of Dada. Such studies thus far include Dada and gender (Hemus 2009; Sawelson-Gorse 1999), cyber theory (Biro 2009), anarchism (Papanikolas 2010), post/modernism (Pegrum 2000; Sheppard 2000) and Stephen Forcer's *Dada as Text, Thought and Theory* (2015), which aligns the movement with a number of theories ranging from psychoanalysis to quantum physics.

The recent capitalisation by Dada scholars on the theoretical relevance of the movement, in its effort to enrich historical accounts with philosophical and cultural theory, is very welcome considering that the Dadas themselves were open to theory, and yet for so long this fact was neglected. Similarly the field of Existentialism has benefitted from a recent resurgence of interest in general, a reassertion of its contemporary relevance beyond its status as a historical moment, as well as increased focus on thematic approaches to the philosophy. Studies that seek new approaches to the interdisciplinary potential of Existentialism are of particular importance in this respect, and include the two volumes of *Existentialism and Contemporary Cinema* (Boulé and McCaffrey 2011; Boulé and Tidd 2012), Bradley Stephens's text on Hugo and Sartre (2011) and Frances Morris's catalogue and essays on art and Existentialism (1993b).

These trends in Dada and Existentialism have been peacefully coexisting, and indeed drawing close, for a number of years. It is perhaps unsurprising that the fields share common ground if we consider that the members of each movement engaged in a number of the same theoretical interests outside of their own philosophies. Sartre and Tristan Tzara were both influenced by the theories of Henri Bergson. Huelsenbeck was an admirer of the work of German Existentialist Paul Tillich, as well as mentioning a selection of theoretical influences that we know to be shared with Sartre: notably Heidegger, Husserl and Nietzsche. Heidegger was also a source of inspiration for Richter, through his notion of the subjectivity of reality, and for Ball, through a shared interest in the individual's being in time. What is surprising, then, is that Dada and Existentialism

have not been combined in a serious way before. In this book I thus provoke the collision of these two fields to 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 book assesses 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.

The Ambiguity of Authenticity

In setting out on an analysis of Dada and French Existentialism alongside each other, an initial concern seems to unite 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? Through the exploration of my five key themes the book assesses the position of the individual in terms of their existing relationship with the world around them. Beyond this interrogation of meaning, the book draws 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—indeed, despite mentioning the term briefly several times, Sartre concludes that 'la description [de l'authenticité] n'a pas [*sic*] place ici' [the description [of authenticity] has no place here] (*EN*, p. 106)—but is undeniably implicitly central to it. Nonetheless we can build an Existentialist definition of authenticity through the word's standard use. *World English Dictionary* defines the term as 'of undisputed origin or authorship: genuine', 'accurate in representation of the facts; trustworthy; reliable', lending the word an air of objectivity that is not as much use here as its element of individuality through its description as 'genuine'. It is instructive, however, that an etymological analysis allows for greater connections with the Existentialist sense, that is, the Latin 'authenticus', [coming from the author], and the Greek 'authentikos', [one who acts independently] (*World English Dictionary*). These definitions give a much stronger sense that that which is authentic is that which relies upon the

individual, the locus from which, existentially speaking, values should also arise. Although authenticity is based in the individual's subjective choices, free from external pressures, Sartre claims that 'l'authenticité et l'individualité se gagnent' [authenticity and individuality are earned], and furthermore 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' [I reveal myself to myself in authenticity and raise others with me towards the authentic] (*EN*, p. 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 meaning 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' [to say that [existence] is ambiguous is to state that meaning is never fixed, that it must constantly be conquered] (*MA*, p. 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 les raisons d'agir' [Let us assume our fundamental ambiguity. It is from the knowledge of the authentic conditions of our life that we must draw the strength to live] (*MA*, p. 14).

From these definitions of authenticity and ambiguity 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 con-

stantly developing assemblage of morals, opinions, and active decisions. Consequently ambiguity is not only inevitable but also desirable, a state of multiple interpretive possibilities.

This book delineates 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 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 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.

2

Choice and Individuality in the Many Masks of Dada

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 French Existentialist thought. This cross-over provides an ideal basis on which to initiate an exploration of the presence of philosophical currents in Dada, and an artistic side to Existentialism. Morris highlights the importance of art to Existentialism, noting that 'creative endeavour was, naturally, of crucial significance to a philosophy which called upon man to seek his own essence, defining himself through his actions', and specifying that Sartre 'drew on the artist as a paradigm for authentic existence' (1993, p. 18). Sartre's own claim that 'personne ne peut dire ce que sera la peinture de demain' [no one can say what painting will be like tomorrow] (*EH*, p. 65) draws this relationship with art specifically close to Dada through a shared desire for artistic and philosophical tabula rasa. Beyond this tabula rasa aim, Sartre's own artistic tastes for 'light and ephemeral materials, hesitant and incomplete images, qualities that evoked notions of becoming rather than the fixity of "being"' (Morris 1993a, p. 19) rely on an additive and interpretive approach to the individual self that is visible across Dada art, especially

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through the use of multiple media and the physicality of Dada events. While not usually associated with lightness or hesitation, Dada's insistence on ephemerality, incompleteness and becoming is certainly suited to Sartre's artistic motivations.

From this initial artistic-philosophical alignment, Dada and Existentialism both reveal an immediate insistence that 'il faut partir de la subjectivité' [we must take subjectivity as a starting point] (*EH*, p. 26). Both movements rail against conformity, including their own labelling as 'Dada' or 'Existentialist', but particularly by foregrounding such a principle in their tenets, as most explicitly expressed through their views on systems. Tristan Tzara notably claimed in his 1918 manifesto that 'je suis contre les systèmes, le plus acceptable des systèmes est celui de n'avoir [*sic*] par principe aucun' [I am against systems, the most acceptable of systems is on principle to have none] (in *D*3, p. 2). Mikel Dufrenne underlines that 'Existentialism represents the perpetual revolt of subjectivity against systems, any system which objectifies and enslaves it' (1965, p. 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' [it is not possible *not* to choose] (*EH*, p. 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 mode of construction underscores the importance of constant redefinition through choice, a developing self that does not allow itself to be concretely defined by external fetters. 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 above 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, birthplace of the movement itself. 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. Ball's own summary, in Dada's first ever publication *Cabaret Voltaire*, claims that the sole purpose of the Cabaret was 'über den Krieg und die Vaterländer hinweg an die wenigen Unabhängigen zu erinnern, die anderen Idealen leben' [to highlight, transcending war and nationalism, the few independent individuals who live for alternative ideals] (*Cabaret Voltaire*, p. 5). Ball's desire to 'transcend war and nationalism' represents a rejection of overt identification with the ideals of the then warring nations, ideals that are externally imposed and therefore not to be 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 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. Indeed Ball wrote that 'the Dadaist […] welcomes any kind of mask. Any game of hide-and-seek, with its inherent power to deceive' (*FT*, p. 65). 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' [because it allows the traditional idea of the portrait based in physical resemblance to be challenged] (in Le Bon ed. 2005, p. 1011). Mimetic portraiture is but one of Dada's list of 'narratives' scheduled for interrogation and destruction, a list considered 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*, p. 55)

I investigate in this chapter 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, I 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 that the assumption of multiple art forms leads to a hybrid product that is more than 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.

The discussion guides an 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 addresses 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. This foregrounding of subjectivity combines authentic choice through Sartre with the freedom of ambiguity through Beauvoir.

Dada primary accounts for the most part reduce Taeuber's role in Dada activities, labelling her 'shy', 'thoughtful', 'unassuming' or 'quiet' (in *AA*, pp. 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 collaborative artistic relationship. Yet her widely interdisciplinary artistic creations are noteworthy even within a movement that is famously interdisciplinary itself. The neglect of Taeuber's contribution by her fellow Dadas has caused a dearth of scholarship on

the artist. 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. Not only did Taeuber foreground a particularly interdisciplinary form of creation but she also actively articulated artistic theories, notably stating that

> 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, p. 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' [exists first…defines themselves later] (*EH*, p. 29).

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*, p. 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, p. 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 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

Our first example of the Dada mask is Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe* (1918–1920), a series of approximately eight coloured wooden sculptures of which we will consider two here: *Dada-Kopf (Portrait of Hans Arp)* (1918), and *Dada-Kopf* (1920).[1] Most of these sculptures, like much Dada work, have now been lost; others are accessible only through photographs of the originals. 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. Despite this the heads have a comically bulbous look, emphasised through their shiny stained surfaces and lack of hair. 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 tragicomic interpretations characteristic of Dada. The identity of these heads is painted and applied to a surface in an abstractly assembled wrapping or mask.

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. Furthermore the notion of the base as a handle forms such a relationship as a hand mirror,

[1] Hereafter referred to as *Portrait of Hans Arp* and *Dada-Kopf* respectively, for ease of differentiation.

their faces taking the place of the reflective surface. We are reminded through this interaction of Schwitters's *Assemblage on a Hand Mirror* (1920/1922), whose surface is covered in a collage of fragments of various coloured materials 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. In this respect these Dada works act as a form of both choice and control over the reflection of the self. 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 vérité de moi-même et comme si autrui ne possédait de moi qu'une image déformée' [between these two aspects of my being [being-for-itself/being-for-others] there is no difference between appearance and being, as if I were to myself the truth of myself and as if the other could only possess a distorted image of me] (*EN*, p. 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 'distorted image' that the other has of the self, particularly through the exaggerated distortions performed by the colours and shapes of the heads. Both Taeuber's and Schwitters's objects perform, through their foregrounding of the active nature of looking at oneself in the mirror, Sartre's notion of the 'look' (*EN*, pp. 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*' [the look of the other reaches me across the world and is not only a transformation of myself, but a total metamorphosis of the *world*] (*EN*, p. 308; original emphasis).

In an extension of this mirroring of the single head, *Portrait of Hans Arp* and *Dada-Kopf* display a certain consistent cross-over of features

(or mirroring) that may lead us to believe that they form a set. Indeed her close working and personal relationship with Arp allows us to designate the unnamed *Dada-Kopf* a loose portrait of Taeuber herself. Hemus supports this through gender stereotyping in reasoning that the wire and bead embellishments make this the 'female' head (2009, p. 57). While Hemus presents this as a plain fact, albeit historically logical, I would instead consider this simple and obvious difference between the two heads an ironic comment through overstatement 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 they bear very little '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'. Yet 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*, p. 80). Thus even these small touches are those of parody or abstraction; 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, including race, gender, and age. The only remaining marker of the heads is 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, p. 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.

In contrast with their shared characteristics, the two Dada heads 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. Again we could read classical gender stereotypes—through Taeuber's ironic lens—into both of these emotions: aggression for the male head and passivity for the female. Nonetheless *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 perspective builds on Sartre's notion of the differing self-image with the 'distorted image' that the other sees, while not necessarily being dependent on negative connotations of this description, particularly when we consider the Dada trend for delight in distortion of imagery.

This ambivalence and engagement with aesthetic freedom can be said to 'point to a liberation from reality which, in addition to humorous stylistic qualities, can be considered a pertinent Dada feature' (Riese Hubert in Sawelson-Gorse ed. 1999, p. 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' [the world appears as pure distance between the self and itself] (*EN*, p. 288). If the world appears as this distance within the self, constant reinterpretation of reality works precisely within this gap from within and without.

An instructive point of comparison in analysing the notion of a Dada head is Raoul Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf (Der Geist unserer Zeit)* [Mechanical Head (Spirit of our Time)] (1919), a wooden representation of a human head, with various mechanical attachments. Although, like Taeuber's heads, this assemblage is wooden, it remains unpainted, but meticulously polished, in an almost caring or affectionate manner. 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), and has the simultaneous function of

allowing contrast with the objects that embellish and disrupt 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, where deviations from expectation 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 either our own or a set of perfect proportions), and its blank stare prevents it from completing the look, in both its regular and Sartrean sense. 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 […] dévoiler l'esprit de notre temps, l'esprit de chacun dans son état rudimentaire' [discovered that people have no character and that their face is just an image made by the hairdresser. I wanted […] to reveal the spirit of our time, the spirit of each person in their rudimentary

state] (2007, n.pag.). 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 assemblage, since to hold it entails working around its various appendages. This plays upon the vulnerability of the self in its 'rudimentary state'. 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 réaliser ni même l'atteindre' [I am outside of myself without ever being able to realise it nor even reach it [the totality of myself]] (*EN*, p. 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 depictions of the wartime injured are adorned with extensive, yet ostensibly useless, mechanical prosthetics.[2] Moreover, in relation to the isolation of the head and face, these sculptures draw upon the notion of the wartime 'gueules cassées' [literally, 'broken faces'], and indeed some of the shapes and colours of Taeuber's staining are reminiscent of early surgical grafts in modern plastic surgery. This notion of crippling or wounding 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. Without hair

[2] For more on war injuries and prosthetics and their relationship with the avant-garde, see Amy Lyford (2007).

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.

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 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*, p. 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 of colours and textures. Extending the idea that these heads provide an artistic representation of wartime trauma and injury, we might see these two opposing forces not as contradictory, but rather as a demonstration of the rapidity at which injury occurs, versus the slow and painful process of healing, whether this be physical (especially in the earlier days of plastic surgery), or psychological. Moreover, both Arp and Taeuber's methods reflect upon the notions of both calm and parody as coping mechanisms.

The notion of confinement foregrounded by these creations is particularly pertinent if we consider the context of Taeuber's work, 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*, pp. 70; 76). The rejection of language(s) is particularly pertinent in Switzerland, with its 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. The cross-wiring effect produced by the redirection of expression is

also similar to that invoked by the central figure of Edvard Munch's *Der Schrei der Natur* [The Scream of Nature] (1893). The character's smooth head is skeletal in both shape and colour, and its vacant gesture mirrors that of our Dada heads. Moreover, the ambiguity of the scream itself, described as 'no longer an aural event, but something synaesthetically felt and recognised in nature' (Heller 1973, p. 87) simultaneously refracts and freezes the directionality of the existential cry. The drawing in and foregrounding of geometric ambiguity in Taeuber's *Dada-Köpfe*, and structural ambiguity in Hausmann's *Mechanischer Kopf*, suggests that the gesture of their own 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.

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; Taeuber broke away from it.

The heads analysed here 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 work, 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', a label that serves no purpose than to introduce semantic ambiguity, abstraction or nonsense. As Lampe describes 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" ' [a piece of measuring tape and a small white piece of card bearing the number 22 are glued to the forehead, because, as Hausmann maintained, "the spirit of our time had only a numeric meaning"] (2007, n.pag.). To again draw these heads back to wartime anxieties, as with those used to label uniforms, the number simultaneously allows exact identification of the individual while relegating them to the statistical mass. This in turn gains an existential element of crisis, whereby the individual has a heightened awareness of their own singular meaninglessness.

This numeric nonsense might be said to act, beyond the aforementioned rejection of mimetic portraiture, as a wider refusal of the representation of the self as defined from without. Both of these rejections can be read as a deliberate refusal of the bad faith of the self that is trying too hard to imitate an externally constructed identity, in the manner of Sartre's example of bad faith through the waiter who plays at *being* a waiter (*EN*, p. 94). Lemonnier writes that Taeuber's heads are situated 'à la frontière entre les arts appliqués, la sculpture et la peinture' [at the boundary between applied arts, sculpture and painting] (in Le Bon ed., 2005, p. 934). In this way, Taeuber's work does not actively try to *be* any one medium, and in just one work, the artist 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

Taeuber's 1918 *König Hirsch* [King Stag] marionettes were designed for an adaptation of Carlo Gozzi's 1762 play *Il Re Cervo* [King Stag]. The Gozzi play revolves around conflicting amorous connections and characters vying for power, expedited by magical means of deception (see Gozzi 1989). Taeuber's puppets are for the most part slim, long humanoids assembled from painted and decorated cones and cylinders. Many of these components are 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 an enchanting fluidity through their multi-jointed movement. Indeed Richter described them as moving 'with a grace not of this earth' (in Motherwell ed. 1989, p. 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 of otherness as transforming the self as well as the world (cf. *EN*, p. 308). This transformation is supported by the puppets' abstract construction as well as a unique interdisciplinarity which brings together the principles of dance, textiles, and Dada.

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, p. 61). We might rather 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 'outside of oneself', 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* to the spidery *Wache* [Sentry], as well as the seg-

mented bodies of most of the puppets (Minges 1996, n.pag.). 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 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 at once 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' [the world returns to us the reflection of a choice which is confirmed across the world that it has fashioned] (*MA*, p. 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 signifies relative social standing. Golden headwear, with its clear regal connotations, ranges from *König* [King] *Deramo*'s slightly unconventional crown, and the golden antlers of *Hirsch* [Stag], to the high intellectual status of *Freud*, *Dr Komplex*, and *Tartaglia*, 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* and *Truffaldino*, 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 bird catcher. 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'. This array of accessories performs a complex role not unlike that seen on Taeuber's and Hausmann's head works: though more semantically obvious, the

significance itself is only given by externally guided typecasting. Taeuber seems to delight in parodying social stereotype by attaching these trinkets to figures that shed many other signs of humanity.

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, p. 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. 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. Again I feel that Taeuber's comment is more playful and also more subtle than the surface gesture would imply. In this way the assumption of a scopophilic gesture is more a comment on the viewer than the art or artist themselves. The works provoke the viewer into questioning their own relationship with adornment and identity, choice and individuality.

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*, replacing magical scheming with contemporary psychological manipulation, given the contemporaneous relevance of developments in psychology and Dada's cynicism thereof. 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 puppetatarm'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' [only catches up with themselves to the extent that they consent to remain at a distance from themselves] (*MA*, p. 19). Notably sustaining this alignment with Beauvoir, the Dada 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' [putting oneself "without" is yet another way of living the unavoidable fact of being within] (*MA*, p. 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' [psychoanalysis is a dangerous disease [that] anaesthetises the anti-real inclinations of man and systematises the bourgeoisie] (in *D*3, p. 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 2005c, p. 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. It is undeniable that feigning madness was a strategic and inherently sensible means of staying alive in a wartime situation: in this respect, madness equals sanity. Additionally, we may wonder whether the parody of narratives, especially the dominant theme of psychoanalysis, puts the puppets into the theatrical role of the 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. Building on this, the brash combination of child's play and emotional ventilation of adult concerns creates a stark realisation of the vulnerability of the human individual. We might wonder if this is a role that Dada chose to play more broadly: society's fool in an atmosphere of the gravely serious madness of early twentieth-century Europe.

This notion of play as both escape and ventilation allows a comparison of Taeuber's puppets with Hannah Höch's *Dada Puppen* [Dada Dolls]

(1916), 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 'her tiny voice would only have been drowned by the roars of her masculine colleagues' (*AA*, p. 132). Indeed female members of the group are often known predominantly or exclusively for their relationships with the male members. 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'—or 'passive plaything'—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. The relationship of female members of Dada with their male counterparts is a complex one, ranging from complete egalitarianism in the case of the Taeuber-Arp pairing (though historically Taeuber would suffer greater obscurity), through lesser roles and 'other halves' in the case of Höch(-Hausmann), to desired lack of attention in the case of Emmy Hennings(-Ball) because of other negative aspects of her life including prostitution, drugs and time in prison.

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 less 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 also present 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 play 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 largely 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 'multi-jointed' 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, and indeed reflects the way in which most of the female Dadas, including both Taeuber and Höch, wore theirs. 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. Hemus describes them as 'clownish and grotesque', explaining that 'their breasts, made out of circular fabric and beads and sewn on the outside, give them an overtly sexual aspect' (2009, p. 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', and thereby introduce 'a radical and non-hierarchical sexual ambiguity' (1990, pp. 67; 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, constructed identity through this external representation. Through their focus on manipulation and play they 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, 'pour obtenir une vérité quelconque sur moi, il faut que je passe par l'autre' [to obtain any truth about myself, I must go through the other] (*EH*, p. 59). The puppets allow for a flexible and positive reciprocity of self and other from this self as other.

Hemus states that 'ideologically, the use of puppets questions agency and authorship, foregrounding questions about the artist's role, as well as about self-determination more broadly' (2009, p. 62). Through this questioning, the puppets exemplify the performance style of early Dada at the Cabaret Voltaire: 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. Taeuber's puppets dissolve the boundary between art and the artist, embracing a carnivalesque play between the reality of the artist and the concept of the character, versus the concept of the artist and the concrete art work. This is embodied in a contradiction between the apparent ultimate freedom of the puppet, which is nevertheless controlled by its strings. More widely, the relationship between artist, art work and audience is something on which Dada maintained pressure throughout its lifespan, and continues to do today.

Sartre's account of the look specifically describes the notion of seeing the other as 'rien d'autre qu'une poupée' [nothing more than a doll] (*EN*, p. 293), a rendering of the other's 'thingness' that enables us to perceive our own existence as object. The puppets and dolls analysed here 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 direct-indirect contact 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.

Fabric Faces and Musical Mimesis: Performing the Mask

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 (including the transfer of the kinetic to the static through photography) or the lack of recording technology at the time of performance. The status of her dances as belonging to a wider performance event further removes us from being able to reproduce or even fully imagine their character. Additionally her work was 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 because of 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. 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.[3]

[3] Indeed, Andrew (2014) rightly points out that Dada photographs are often mis-identified or interpreted in a certain way precisely because they cannot concretely be identified by person/photographer/event.

A further problem encountered in assessing Taeuber's Dada dancing is elucidated by Jill Fell, who remarks that 'the 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, p. 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. 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. Through masked movement and dance Taeuber provided ideal opportunities for freedom of individual and group expression, precisely because of the ambiguity raised not only of identity, but of truth and deception. Indeed Tzara described Taeuber's movement as: 'bizarrerie délirante dans l'araignée de la main vibre rhythme rapidement ascendant vers le paroxysme d'une démence goguenarde capricieuse belle' [delirious peculiarity in the spider of the hand vibrates [in a] rhythm rapidly rising towards the climax of mocking capricious beautiful insanity] (in *D*1, p. 16). Tzara's words map a number of features that we might say are classically Dada, including madness, spontaneity, and playfulness. Moreover his use of the word 'goguenard(e)' [mocking] is of particular pertinence: combining 'goguette' ('propos joyeux, plaisanterie' [joyful/playful comment, joke]) with the suffix '-enard' ('menteux' [lying]) (*CNRTL*), he expresses a sense of enjoyment in deception certainly foregrounded in Dada dance and costume. The fact that this description was published contemporaneously with the events themselves demonstrates that the aim to deceive was playfully open to public knowledge.

In contrast with the historical moment of Tzara's comment, 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, p. 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) patterns 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. Again we can note that the cohabitation of the structured and the structureless, as seen in the heads, suggests a mirroring of reactions to Dada's wartime environment. It is also possible that Janco's own desire to hold back is showing through this comment: coming after Taeuber's premature death in 1943, we can note elements of restraint and even memorialisation through his omission of any words of madness or randomness, and specifically the 'dignified sadness' that he foregrounds.

Taeuber danced not only to music but also alone in 'silence' (in terms of lack of deliberate, organised sound)—as was the style promoted at Rudolf Laban's dance school, which was attended by Taeuber—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*, p. 320)
>
> [The world is never silent; its very muteness eternally repeats the same notes, according to the vibrations that escape us. As for those that we perceive, they deliver to us sounds, rarely a chord, never a melody. However music exists where symphonies end, where the melody gives substance to sounds that, alone, do not have any, where a privileged positioning of notes, finally, draws from natural disorder a unity that is satisfying for the heart and mind.]

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 'draw from natural disorder a unity that is satisfying for the heart and mind', through her careful constructions as well as the evident pleasure 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, p. 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* [The Admiral is looking for a house to rent] (1916, in *Cabaret Voltaire*, pp. 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 prioritising noise and volume over the individual line.

Through *L'Amiral*'s air of incomprehensibility, the poem creates a substitute sonic universe where the combined sound overrides its constituent parts, combining the individual and the group in the same way that Taeuber interacted with Dada. This style is in keeping with both the Taeuberian and Existentialist tenets of promoting the group of individuals over the individual themselves. Because of *L'Amiral*'s dense construction of independent voices, the poem rarely has a striking 'melody', bar occasional moments where only one voice is active, yet the final measure ('l'amiral n'a rien trouvé' [the admiral did not find anything]) again can be said to 'draw from natural disorder a unity that is satisfying…': 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 world for the self through assemblage or hybridity.

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, non-hierarchically 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, p. 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*, p. 102). It is instructive that Taeuber would have been one of the only trained dancers at the Cabaret, bringing an interaction with other influences that likely had a positive effect on the hybrid identity of Dada. Ball 'implies that she made herself into a puppet' (Fell 1999, p. 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. Indeed, because gongs are enharmonic, they produce the whole spectrum of pitches simultaneously. In this respect they offer a 'hundred-jointed' gesture of their own. It is the constant multi-directional flow of influence that gives Taeuber's work such artistic and philosophical weight. It remains difficult to tell which, if any, her primary art form was,

and her interdisciplinarity lends itself to Dada's preference for constantly evolving, hybrid identities, as well as the sense of the perpetual constructedness of identity promoted by Sartre.

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, p. 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. […] there was nothing stiff or rigid about her. But even her almost playfully 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, p. 85)

While we might again wonder whether this description takes into account feelings of loss and nostalgia following the artist's death, it is also possible to assume 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*, p. 64)—and elements of these masks are visible in the rare photographs of Taeuber's dancing.

In one photograph 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. Nell Andrew writes of the contrast between the stiff arms and head with the

softer, pliable material coverings of the body (2014, p. 13). We might again liken this contrast to the vulnerable wartime body, or the awkward juxtaposition of the organic and the mechanical in prostheses. The bodily wrappings give the impression of a collage of rags, and in this photo the legs, in contrast with the stark scraps of costume, are left in the dark, their invisibility lending itself to an impression that the dancer is a floating character, much like Taeuber's own puppets. Though the dancer is posed, she exudes energy. 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. Moreover the ambiguity fostered by this juxtaposition and even contradiction allows for individual subjectivity of both the artist and the viewer.

Ball wrote of Janco's masks that their 'varied individuality inspired us to invent dances' (*FT*, p. 64). The details we have assessed thus far are bolstered by a passage within Ball's diaries that 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*, p. 64)

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. This ambiguity is particularly emphasised by Ball's description above, whose figure is markedly gender neutral (as well as arguably inhuman, by the use of the neutral pronoun 'it'), supporting the idea of a Dada levelling of identities.

Ball furthers this notion of mixed identity when he delves into the psychological effects of the masks, noting that 'what 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*, p. 64f). Ball's description of this quintessential Dada mask event at the Cabaret Voltaire not only channels 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 outside of themselves 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 by the masks fits with Sartre's idea 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 provide a stark contrast with the Janco-Arp costume discussed above. Nevertheless the incorporation of aspects of the Hopi Kachina doll continues to indicate a fascination with the metaphor of the human body and/or identity as doll or puppet pursued thus far. Unlike Janco and Arp's costume, the body section of Taeuber's has survived and what is more, can thus be seen in full colour, providing a modern day 'reality' in the latter that is lost in the former. Differing significantly from the ragged splinters of Janco's mask, Taeuber's own masks recall some of the geometric shapes, colours 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 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 (again recalling our comparison with Camus's 'unity that is satisfying to the heart and mind') 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 indeed inspired by the masks and costumes. The collage of shards would certainly make a noisier dance than the fabric costumes.

Arp's costume to go with Janco's mask appears 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. Since the viewer is inclined to be drawn to the face, this may be a deliberate parody. Indeed we are invited to wonder, 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. And yet with all Dada work, this gesture could be operating on multiple levels or none at all, drawing the viewer into attributing their own meaning.

The masks, costumes and their wearers, examined here, create a series of reflections through symmetry, mutual influence of actors and transmission of ideas between the arts. These reflections 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 reflective surfaces, forcing the inhabitants to see themselves through each other. This creates an atmosphere of existential panic, exemplified through the character Estelle, who 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' [when I can't see myself, try as I may to feel myself, I wonder if I really exist] (*HC*, p. 44). Through the masks, costumes and dances, the artist uses this ambiguity of existence to foster a space in which existence and identity can be safely tested. In contrast with the room in *Huis Clos*, which John K. Simon describes as 'no room at all, but rather the open arena of incriminating exposure and persecution' (1963, p. 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*, p. 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 that interrogates, and yet relieves the tension of, the 'reified traumatic body' (Andrew 2014, p. 13) and disrupted wartime psyche.

Taeuber's need to mask her participation in Dada events, both physically and pseudonomically, gains new freedom from the close relationship with façade created through Dada's own desire to mask itself. Through Dada's fluctuating relationship with masks and the truth, we are reminded that, ordinarily, we see a mask and expect to be deceived. Yet Dada's manipulation of this, especially when we are not able to definitively identify the wearer of the mask, a situation is enforced whereby what you see is what you get, as indeed what you see can often be all you get. This lack provides a reminder that even within the realms of interpretive subjectivity, meaning is never guaranteed. These masks and their relationship with truth and deception are intrinsically linked to the status of the self as tied to its 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' [the structure of the world necessitates that we cannot see without being visible] (*EN*, p. 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' [outside of oneself] 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,

p. 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' [we are what we want to be], and 'tu n'es rien d'autre que ta vie' [you are nothing more than your life] (*HC*, p. 90) Sartre prefigures his own later statement that 'l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait' [the individual is nothing more than what they make of themselves] (*EH*, p. 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*, p. 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. Thus the Dada mask offers a transformation of the look and of bad faith, repositioning the look of the other as an opportunity for adaptation and interpersonal interdisciplinarity.

Conclusion

Through our analysis of the use of masks in the work of Taeuber within its Dada context, varying levels of interaction with the self become apparent: expansion, extension, and externalisation. These demonstrate 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 Taeuber entitled *Self Portrait with Dada Kopf* (1920 and 1926) and two photographs of Kiki of Montparnasse entitled *Noire et Blanche* (Man Ray 1926).

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 shows a smiling Taeuber, frank and unadorned, half-hidden on her left-hand side by the *Dada-Kopf*. The 1926 photo, 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. The *Dada-Kopf* sits at a similar angle and distance from her face, but covers its right-hand side. 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.

Man Ray's *Noire et Blanche* is a set of two photos of Kiki of Montparnasse alongside an African mask, one of which is a negative of the other. Both the use of this mask and the anonymous nature of its own artist or background highlight Dada's somewhat naively condescending or even colonial use of 'primitive' cultures. However, we can interpret this tendency as a search for a lost or former self, 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. Notably Man Ray's photography has become relatively fashionable (indeed I recently saw one of the *Noire et Blanche* prints adorning a New York hotel), thus exploited in a similar way to his use of primitivism: the avant-garde photograph has become a mass-produced proof of possession of cultural capital.

Both Man Ray and Taeuber 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, her eyes closed and facial muscles relaxed. 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.

The photograph is an instructive medium in terms of representation and masking. As Dickerman notes, 'la photo devient le masque des apparences extérieures, et le masque semble révéler des vérités intérieures' [the photo becomes the mask of external appearances, and the mask seems to reveal internal truths] (in Le Bon ed., 2005, p. 1011). 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' [at the limit of coincidence with itself, in fact, the self disappears, giving way to an identical being] (*EN*, p. 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*, p. 307)
>
> [I seize the appearance of the look as the emergence of an ek-static relation of being, of which one of the terms is myself, as a for-itself that is what it is not and is not what it is, and of which the other term is again myself, but out of my reach.]

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. This follows instructively from what we have already seen of the photograph in relation to Dada work in terms of lifespan, in that it is frequently all that remains of these pieces of art.

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. This multidirectional flow between media simultaneously reminds us of, and encourages us to question, notions of mask as self and self-as-mask.

In the work I 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, p. 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' [we must take subjectivity as a starting point] (*EH*, p. 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*' [the Dada revolt implies a positive conception of how the individual and life *should be*] (1977, p. 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' [in creating the individual that we want to be, [we] create at the same time an image of the individual that we think they should be] (*EH*, p. 31f).

Dada and its art works 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' highlight the importance of ambiguity in Dada work and philosophy. The mask forms a central aspect of early Dada, geographically through the Zurich hub, and specifically through Taeuber, but also weaves its way throughout the movement. Through both positive and negative aspects of fragmentation and assemblage Existentialist notions of choice are important in Dada plastic arts and performance, contributing to the movement's conception of selfhood in the artistic world. Choice is subjective and constant, allowing for a developing self not limited by external constraints.

3

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, present 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' [the past is no longer, the future is not yet, and as for the immediate present, it is well known that it is not at all, it is the limit of an infinite division, like a dimensionless point] (*EN*, p. 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, 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.

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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 in a way that we can designate an extension of the Sartrean concept of the 'look' explored in Chapter. 2, foregrounding an externalisation of the Dada self '[en] se projetant et en se perdant hors de lui' [by] projecting itself and losing itself outside of itself] (*EH*, p. 76). This use of vocabulary is particularly instructive as it overlaps with that of film, through the use of '[se] projeter' [to project [oneself]]. The cross-over 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 'constantly outside of himself', lending an additional layer of alterity to this outsiderness through explicit, external projection.

This third chapter investigates 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). I analyse these four films 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.

I scrutinise these films 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. As a set,

then, I will argue that these films are united by their foregrounding of the alienation of the viewer, both from the reality of the film and within and without themselves.

In this chapter I demonstrate that Dada film manipulates time, movement, and materiality to assemble meaning through patterns in, and essentially infinite alterations of, perception and reality, including aphasia, pareidolia, and a synaesthetic cross-wiring of senses. Aphasia is a disorder in which the sufferer experiences disruptions in their ability to produce and interpret language. 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. Synaesthesia is a condition in which an individual experiences unusual sensory connections. A common example is seeing colours on hearing sounds. These disruptions and reinterpretations are readily applicable to the world of Dada film, particularly given that film as a medium was still in its early days, and thus a manipulation thereof would have been all the more disturbing.

The chapter responds to Dada manipulations of film as a medium and as a physical entity (the reel itself) 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? Tzara, Camus and Sartre all considered the fundamental necessity of a viewpoint from a position outside of oneself (cf. Tzara in Buot 2002, p. 35; *MS*, p. 36; *EH*, p. 76). In this chapter I investigate the implications of being outside of oneself alongside the notion of alienation, and starting from an existential question from a popular contemporary film: 'How am I not myself?'. The film from which this quotation arises, *I ♥ Huckabees* (2004), foregrounds an exploration of the nature of authentic identity, and is often cited as an example of existential cinema. Existentialism has become inherently intertwined with cinema, as Boulé and McCaffrey (eds., 2011) and Boulé and Tidd (eds., 2012) demonstrate. Nonetheless an emphasis has been maintained

on contemporary cinema, and I would like to extend this to experimental film to demonstrate the capacity of the medium beyond the limits and expectations of narrative.

Filtering Reality

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' [I invented a system of prisms that I adapted for my glasses: I thus viewed in colour and abstract images the black and white films that bored me] (in Hammond ed. 2001a, p. 133). Man Ray also created these effects with nothing more than his own body, through blinking and using his fingers to varyingly block his vision (Kyrou in Hammond ed. 2001, p. 131). The artist's application of his unique filters to the films of others is something that he clearly transferred to his own work, forming his individual idea of how the world should appear.

Tzara wrote on existence and reality that

> 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. (in Schwarz ed. 1971, p. 104)

By adapting the work of others with physical filters such as his hands, Man Ray fulfils these requirements laid out by Tzara in their focus on designations of space, creating 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 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.

Merleau-Ponty depicts, in his *Phénoménologie de la perception* [Phenomenology of Perception 1945] the way in which perception is learned through imitation and facilitated through experience. Despite the element of predetermination in this theory, 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 such as those of Rorschach and 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, I posit that movement of images paradoxically assists recognition, or improves 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 Dada 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 claimed in his analyses of the filmic process 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, p. 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 in his depiction of the intricacies of freedom:

> 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 complaisance 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*, p. 505)
>
> [Since freedom does not put up with any motive before it, my habitual being in the world is at every moment as fragile, the complexes that I have nurtured over the years remain just as harmless, the gesture of freedom can effortlessly and instantly blow them to pieces.]

This ability of the free act to 'faire voler en éclats' [blow to pieces] 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'. And in an almost tongue-in-cheek Dada gesture, 'Chaplin' receives the comic demise of being 'blown to pieces'.

Le Retour is made up largely of rayographs: images produced by placing objects directly onto the photographic film and exposing them as pictures, very tactile imagery 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. The objects are immortalised in their state of *having been*, but exist no longer. Moreover, despite the absence of these objects from their final image, 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' [we must establish human reality as a being that is what it is not and is not what it is] (*EN*, p. 93).

We may thus posit that Man Ray's rayography 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 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 absent 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.

A number of questions arise from these peculiarly Dada ways of creating a filmic sequence. Firstly, beyond its use as a novel material technique, what is the particular significance of the removal of the camera from the photographic process? Secondly, how is the experience of perception affected by the use of juxtaposed sequences and unrelated, if not unrecognisable, images? 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. The juxtaposition of the non-sequitur and the celebration of the unrecognisable disrupt our notion of reliance on experience. If we learn to interpret the world through experience, perhaps we do not recognise some of these objects because we have no experience of them from this unique perspective: we are no longer able to correlate the image and the object of which it is part and to which it inherently belongs. Through these methods Man Ray succeeds in initiating a breakdown of visual expectations, in terms of standard patterns of association and disassociation.

Since much of Man Ray's film work is based in photography (or more specifically, rayography), the artist presents a constant reflection on

the photographic process. An example of this correlation can be made between rayography and Roland Barthes's discussion of photography:

> in the photograph an illogical conjunction occurs between the *here* and the *then*. Hence, it is on the level of this denoted message or message without a code that we can fully understand the photograph's *real unreality*; its unreality is that of the *here* […]; and its reality is that of *having-been-there* (1991, p. 33)

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 'foreign/a stranger to itself' through its non-coincidence with self, an extension of the photographic non-identicality that we saw in Chapter 2.

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. 1996b, p. 4). Secondly, he claimed that through exaggerated close-up viewing, 'vous 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' [you will see all of these fragments magnified a hundredfold, becoming an everything that is absolute, dramatic, comic, plastic, more moving, more captivating than the character in the theatre next door] (in Robertson 2011b, p. 20). Through such close viewing we are presented with a paradox: the objects become 'an everything that is absolute' by their filling of the screen, and yet the limits of the screen often remove their natural edges. Through this tension the objects become simultaneously less identifiable, and a new whole in terms of their abstract assemblage, rather than a product of their traditionally quantifiable representational expectations. This effect is similar to that produced when removing the attack (beginning) of a recorded sound:

our ability to identify the source of the sound is significantly reduced while freeing up the pure quality of the duration of the sound itself.

Both Léger's and Man Ray's exposures utilise this technique to evade meaning by means of their extremely close focus: the aspect of pure quality of sensory perception becomes more important than any meaningful association. Merleau-Ponty states that 'quand, 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' [when, in a film, the camera zooms in on an object and approaches it to give us a close-up, we can *remember* that it is an ashtray or a character's hand, we effectively do not identify it] (*PP*, p. 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, even if this is detached from the 'truth' of the object. 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' [in looking closely at the snow I break up its apparent "whiteness" that turns into a world of reflections and transparencies] (*PP*, p. 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. This latter incorporation makes us wonder whether a self-conscious self-observation is at play in Dada film: the anxieties of representation and manipulation thereof are compounded by the additional presence of the mirrored self, distorted by the reflective surface as well as by the indirect view of the other. *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' [we stole a pearl necklace worth 5 million], is layered with significance.

This distortion 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, p. 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, particularly given our experience of literature as a (mis)guiding narrative. 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 linguistic construction of the phrase is also indicative of a desire for ambiguity through the use of 'on', using the active voice to represent a passive sense: the sentence can mean 'we stole a necklace' or 'a necklace was stolen', suspending the actor in the latter case and hinging on a simultaneous presence and absence of a known thief. 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' [nothingness introduces a quasi-multiplicity at the heart of being] (*EN*, p. 172), giving multiple levels of nihilation that yet stem from the same source. Not only does the '0' figure often follow the fragment 'on a volé' [we stole], 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 read this succession as a rapid blinking of eyes or gaping mouths in shock (or sardonic enjoyment) at this bold claim. However we interpret this lack,

an element of existential anxiety is foregrounded by this brash comment on nothingness and meaninglessness. The central focus is precisely this non-existence, which is reflected back on the viewer.

This use of both visual and verbal absence and removal gives rise to a feeling of aphasia in the already disconcerted viewer. 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 rythme 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*, p. 237)
>
> [when we are talking about problems of verbal intention, as in literal paraphasia, when letters are omitted, moved or added, and when the rhythm of the word is changed, [it is about] a levelling of the figure and the ground, an inability to structure words and grasp their articulatory physiognomy.]

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]. The combination of uses of words and lack thereof builds on a typically Dada distortion of sense versus nonsense, no-sense and altered sense that alienates the viewer from sureness of their own perception. With the particular example of the 'redacted poem', it is impossible to tell whether sense is hidden, or was never present.

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 the 'everything that is absolute'. The constant tension between presence and absence in these films provides a third option, that is, neither present nor absent, but both. The resulting effect of aphasia relies upon a removal of meaning, yet our films show that sense remains: a creative sense that stems from the viewer.

Emerging Realities: Dreams and (Mis-) Remembering

A further example of the creative manipulation of perception is the presentation of varying levels of consciousness, through memory and dream. Sartre writes that 'le souvenir nous présente l'être que nous étions avec une plénitude d'être qui lui confère une sorte de poésie' [memory presents to us the being that we were with a fullness of being that bestows upon it a sort of poetry] (*EN*, p. 154). Sartre's own poetic words imply that memory is an important part of being in general, but also that it gives a certain pleasure to being, beyond existing in and of itself. Drawing upon dreams and even madness in a similar way, Merleau-Ponty insists upon the notion of levelling and layering:

> 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*, p. 342)
>
> [As long as we allow for dreams, madness or perception, at least as absences of reflection […] we do not have the right to level all experiences into a single world, all modalities of existence into a single consciousness.]

Not only does Merleau-Ponty propose that levelling and layering are important in the construction of perceptive experience, but he also suggests that experiences of different individuals are subjective and unique. This immediately sets out the importance of experience and interpretation in the building of perception.

The content of our Dada films creatively demonstrates these manipulations of perception. 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-levelling' 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 in relation to *Emak Bakia*, 'both 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, p. 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, p. 143). This method is evident in the painting of eyelids: filming and painting were part of the same creative process.

Feelings of dream-like lack of explanation are exaggerated by the film's single intertitle, which reads 'La raison de cette extravagance' [The reason for this 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. Kim Knowles writes that 'conventional film relies heavily on memory for the piecing together of a gradually building narrative' (2009, p. 98), and Bill 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, pp. 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' [the continuous possibilisation of possibles] (*EN*, p. 164). Sartre's slightly nonsensical depiction of the future delightfully captures Dada's relationship with temporality, in its opening up of indefinite subjective interpretations. Dada film represents an invitation into the 'possibles' of perception, particularly through its non-dependence on narrative to guide the viewer into the 'more likely'. We might assume that if Dada film lacked narrative, by Nichols's extension it also lacks morals to impose on the viewer. However, through the films we have analysed so far, as well as through general trends in Dada rejection of externally imposed ideals, 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 perspective. For instance, we can perceive ourselves to be present on the roller coaster, 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*, pp. 292–341), as well as representing an active engagement with the self from within and without (as initiated in Chapter 2). The changing perspective in *Entr'acte* allows the viewer to move smoothly between subject and object, self and other, in a way that yet remains disruptive in its alienation from a consistent sense of selfhood. However, if we are to view this positively as active engagement, we might say that this disruption leads to an increased awareness of the construction of one's own individuality.

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. This 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. The 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*, p. 203f)
>
> [when I absorb myself into my body, my eyes only show me the discernible envelope of things and of other individuals, things themselves take on an unreality, behaviours descend into the absurd, the present itself, as in false recognition, loses its consistency and turns into eternity.]

Entr'acte creates a narrative in which the body folds in on and absorbs itself, foregrounding a sense of 'unreality' that devolves over the course of the accelerating film into a timeless absurdity. This folding and absorption is achieved in a number of ways, both implicit and explicit. Inflating and deflating heads on dolls, a ballet dancer filmed from underneath to flatten our perspective of them, and superimposed facial features perform the implicit aspect of folding. More explicitly, a sequence in which a man pulls himself along the road in a cart by his hands gives a false impression of severance when he is revealed to be quite literally folded up inside the cart. Both methods undermine consistency in a way that disrupts our recognition of the normal.

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 motion. This not only makes us question their directionality and purpose (beyond the fact that traditionally, buildings do not move), 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. The realisation of our mistakenness allows for an ambiguity of Sartre's notion of subject/object relations introduced by the look, in that our objecthood created by the look of the other takes on a fluid and malleable quality. In an additional humorous turn, the eyes seem to be proleptically undermining the filmic gaze by forcing a constant questioning of intention. This pareidolia is strengthened by the film's obsessive rhythm which functions to disrupt our perception of connections between objects in order that we reorganise reality for ourselves.

Through analysing 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 is demonstrably '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. These sequences allow Man Ray to elevate mundane fragments of reality by exposing them close-up, animating the inanimate, and inviting new expressive possibilities. The process of extreme enlargement allows us to see objects in a detail that we would not normally perceive, as well as bestowing upon them qualities of animate objects through their new motions. Throughout this assemblage of experimental techniques 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 truths through ambiguity. Multiple interpretability can be seen across Dada work, especially in the plastic art 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. 2011b, p. 88). This includes the designation of animate/inanimate, a boundary that Dada art opens up, if not destroys. 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. Thus ambiguity of waking reality puts our perception into a state of simultaneous position of presence and absence, 'suspended' like the rayographs.

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, p. 22). An extension of the manipulation of presence and absence, Man Ray's use of light and shadow evokes the aforementioned images of the Gestalt method, and invites 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, in the physical construction of human perception 'aucun 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' [no single object, no group of objects is particularly designed to be organised as ground or as figure: everything depends on the direction of my attention] (*EN*, p. 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 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 Dada fascination for modern life and a more general 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 the torso is reassigned to the role of projector screen, 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, p. 90). This (literally) embodies Levy's description of 'painting with light', and highlights a certain grace not acquired through the use of artificial light. It also continues to project an antagonism between the natural and the artificial, particularly in relation to the human body within and without the wartime context. The subtle grace achieved by gentle shadow-play 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. Contemporary art galleries seem to have taken on this importance of shadows, particularly in relation to the object-based works of Duchamp. Frequently such objects are displayed by being hung from the ceiling, and thus in the bright, stark lighting and paintwork conditions (often plain, white walls) the first we perceive of them is their shadow, their quite literal suspension between presence and absence.

These more relaxed sections of film 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 interact with perception in a way that brings into question the subjectivity of seeing, but in a manner that stems from a desire for play. Drawing these two ideas together, Sartre states that 'le jeu […] enlève au réel sa réalité', and that 'le jeu, en effet […] délivre la subjectivité' [the game […] takes reality away from the real; the game effectively […] liberates subjectivity] (*EN*, p. 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* expands 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 disconcertingly moving in and out of focus. This reduces the object to a two-dimensional construction, foregrounding the formal properties of the image and the effect of this construction 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 pictorial 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, which Knowles describes as allowing for 'the formal details of the object to be absorbed' (2009, p. 80). This notion of absorption of qualities of the object continues our tension between learned and active perception, in that the changing duration for which we are exposed to objects will affect our relationship with them as shapes versus as things.

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 ambiguity of blankness to the nature of viewing through either projection onto a white screen, as would have been the case at the time of Dada, or 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, p. 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 2 through analysis of the photograph). 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' [inside and outside are inseparable. The world is completely inside and I am completely outside of myself] (*PP*, p. 469).

Analysing the limits and contours of 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, pp. 25; 12), hence our inherent desire to see (or 'read') things in formless images, a pareidolic effort to make sense of chaos. 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, p. 262). Man Ray's play with edges reminds us of the idea that the frame relates to a wider whole and is not necessarily simply a whole in its own right. His work plays on a tension between images that have been selected, and images that are simply part of a larger pattern, again manipulating the development of our relationship with objects and their links to both personal and wider meaning or sense.

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, p. 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 source of motion is also cut out when the camera jumps 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. This is a similar effect to that created in *Entr'acte*, where personal perspective was manipulated, in particular through the roller coaster sequences. Although in the case of Man Ray's work with 'real' and rayograph imagery the two types of filming initially seem very different, there remains a certain consistency between the normal and the rayograph 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 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 concept 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' [the alienation of myself as *being-looked-at* entails the alienation of the world that I organise] (*EN*, p. 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.

I noted earlier in this chapter that geometric shapes are used in *Ballet mécanique* as examples of alterable repetition; 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: no object or image is inserted into this space. At another point in the film, further use of frames within frames is explored 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, and we even occasionally see the edges of the frame that the woman holds and moves over her face. These effects are extended when combined with the aforementioned kaleidoscopic vision produced by prisms, which subdivide the frame while multiplying its content. This has the additional effect of multiplying the look by multiplying the 'keyhole', made particularly evident through the use of a human subject. This can be contrasted with an example of frame-within-frame during 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. The tension created between the

corporal human and lack in and of itself invests further in the anxiety and alienation of the conception of non-existence.

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"' [every night in '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).[1] 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 to support it. Aiken writes that 'the motion and the cryptic nature of the worded electric sign also form a bridge between the opening titles and subsequent worded shots' (1983, p. 242). This simultaneously provides a sense of continuity and a false sense of meaning, in a very Dada manipulation of reality. The intertitle is doubly illogical: it makes no sense by itself and it does nothing to explain the illogical sequences that follow. 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, p. 40), imparting upon the film an additional, yet

[1] Though not specifically referencing *Emak Bakia*, Jed Rasula notes a telling alternative meaning to 'magic city', in Picabia's poem of the same name, which was possibly fuelled by excesses of modern life such as opium and whiskey (2015, p. 121). The hallucinatory edge of *Emak Bakia* does little to disprove such a correlation.

implicit, layer of signification. Fragments always imply a temporally displaced whole, either as a thing that once was or a thing that will be. This notion of belonging to a greater whole gives a multifaceted and assembled memory to the construction of the sequences, linking memory and poetry by what we might designate a 'fullness of being' that linked Sartre's thoughts with Dada film's manipulation thereof. 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, p. 29).

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. All of these effects are achieved artificially: although we know that this particular ascent of the washerwoman only occurred once, we feel the pressure implied by this false and strained multiplicity.

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 (as well as self-referential in its self-replication), 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, as we might pass over errors in spelling that do not disrupt the first or final letters of words. 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, like the tack, are flattened and given a two-dimensional quality, highlighting their contours as part of the surface of the 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 a way that resembles a quasi-organised chaos. They are also placed in front of—and from a surface perspective, on top of—a two-dimensional image, creating a tangle of visual imagery and implying a hierarchy of dimensions (in this case, three-dimensional over two-dimensional).

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 2. 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. 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' [if movement is an accident of being, then movement and rest are indis-

cernible from one another] (*EN*, p. 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 roller coaster 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. The 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' [the very existence of death alienates us entirely] (*EN*, p. 588; original emphasis removed). The simple suggestion, then, of the death of the protagonist, propels the surrounding (anti-)narrative into a tailspin of existential alienation. The viewer is forced to simultaneously engage with and detach themselves from the character in a heightened realisation of the subject-and-object-hood of the self.

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' [I see all beings in superimposition] (*EN*, p. 639), and Merleau-Ponty's view that 'l'homme superpose au monde donné le monde selon l'homme' [the individual superimposes onto the world as given the world according to the individual] (*PP*, p. 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. Through this physical and theoretical squashing, *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' [space is neither ground nor figure, but the idealness of ground insofar as it can always break up into forms, it is neither continuity or discontinuity, but the permanent passage from continuity to discontinuity] (*EN*, p. 220). The examples we have seen through Dada film emphasise space's status as 'idealness of ground': the use of mirrors and prisms (quite literally) reflects its ability to 'break up into forms', or indeed 'faire voler en éclats' [blow to pieces] (cf. *PP*, p. 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. This alteration of temporality raises several questions. 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' [everything is present; the present is a perpetual flight in the face of being; being is everywhere and nowhere: wherever you seeks to grasp it, it is there in front of you, it has escaped] (*EN*, pp. 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 'perpetual flight' 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 2, 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, which, as we saw through Sartre, distorts and distends reality through subjectivity. Interest in play is especially strong in

Man Ray's films, such as in *Emak Bakia*'s 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, p. 187), as we too are invited to perceive them under new conditions. Their ludic movements remind us of Duchamp's readymades, especially his *Roue de bicyclette* [Bicycle Wheel] (1913), where objects are altered and suspended as repurposed mobiles, and invite interference. Yet both of these constructions are permanently and provocatively removed from Dada's 'Please touch' policy, the cinematic objects through their role as part of a film sequence, and as such 'belong[ing] to a game largely played ahead of time' (Foster in Peterson ed. 2001, p. 184), and the bicycle wheel 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.

Man Ray's selection of objects enacts a transfer of his filtering of reality to his films. 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*, p. 27)

> [This red mark that I can see on the carpet is only red by dint of a shadow passing over it, its quality only appears in relation to tricks of the light, and thus as an element of spatial configuration. Anyway, the colour is only determinable if it extends over a certain surface, too small a surface would not qualify. Finally, the red would literally not be the same if it were not the 'woolly red' of a carpet.]

Whereas Merleau-Ponty describes the senses working together to perceive this 'woolly red'—through our associations of the visible with qualities such as texture—Man Ray encourages alternative combinations, through his extensive use of modernist effects, and especially in tension with sections of relative filmic normalcy.

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:

> 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, p. 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. 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. Man Ray's exploration of dice throws in an idiosyncratic reference to Stéphane Mallarmé's poem 'un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard' [A Throw of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance] (1897), a famous source of inspiration to the artistic avant-garde. Man Ray plays with slices and distortions in a similar way to Mallarmé in the shaping of his poem, but also implies a play on words through his objects, through the phonetic alignment of 'coup/coupe de dés' [throw/slice of the dice].

Repurposing of objects through cutting 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) legs dancing the Charleston, 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 the aural is disconnected from the visual, external to the filmed matter. 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-diegetic sound—most obviously represents this mutedness, yet another layer of frustration is applied when we cannot 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 a feeling of aphasia through *Ballet mécanique's* insistence on written nothingness: 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*, p. 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 women, and gaping mouths and lidless eyes in the fish.

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, which is then countered by the use of significantly more classical music after the intertitle break. The choice of the genre of jazz is instructive as it is the exception to the general lack of attention paid to music by the Existentialists. William 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 Crowell ed. 2012a, p. 63). We saw in Chapter 2 that Taeuber's dancing was deemed to match the expression of jazz through the pair's shared improvised/structured composite form. Indeed, Jed Rasula notes that 'for many, jazz and Dada seemed interchangeable' (2015, p. 144). It is instructive to discover that though music as

a medium is undervalued in both movements, the subtle way in which each does engage with it is shaped around a shared choice of style.

The use of these two distinct genres plays with notions of dreaming already explored in this chapter, yet Man Ray does not give the viewer any indication of which style 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. The level of intention of authorial control is rendered ambiguous 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 between *Emak Bakia* and *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. The status of *Ballet mécanique*'s soundtrack (written by George Antheil) as entirely percussive fits with the nature of the film's anxiety-inducing flickering, as well as mechanical in the case of several instruments, dehumanising all aspects of the work. This anxiety 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 of the viewer 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: we are inclined to remember the occurrence of the siren because of its intrusive and alarm-associative

presence. 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 association 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' [in the same way we can discover, inside a sound, a 'micro-melody' and the sonic interval that is simply the shaping of a particular tension that is felt first throughout the whole body] (*PP*, p. 255). We can extensively and physically engage with this experience through the construction of sound in relation to our perception of it.

Entr'acte's music (written by Erik Satie), though arguably more 'human' than *Ballet mécanique* through the use of non-automatic instruments (due to the sounds being more natural, as well as implying a human source through the player), also focuses on a neurotically rhythmic approach, which is inherently and inevitably transferred to a certain tactility. This transferral is not only done through rhythm but also through pitch. For example, the sequence on the roller coaster is accompanied by a motif in several different instruments that oscillates around pairs of notes. This musical technique 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 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. To draw upon the film from which this chapter's existential question stems, there is a scene in which the characters deliberately create blankness through hitting themselves on the head with a rubber ball, overloading their senses in a way that annihilates them and creates clarity. This blankness also links with Sartre's depiction of 'little escapes' in *Huis Clos*.

Merleau-Ponty states that 'parce que nous sommes au monde, nous sommes *condamnés au sens*' [because we are in the world, we are *condemned to meaning*] (*PP*, p. 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 claims that the individual is both condemned to be free, and also condemned to choose (cf. *EH*, pp. 39; 63). Thus although the individual is born into a preconditioned context 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.

Conclusion

The films approached 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, p. 90). This 'crisis of Reality' is particularly evident through the use of Existentialist notions of alienation alongside Dada films, and can be summarised by Sartre's statement that 'la réalité-humaine est le dépassement perpétuel vers une coïncidence avec soi qui n'est jamais donnée.' [human reality is the constant overtaking towards a coincidence with the self that is never given] (*EN*, p. 125f). We might reflect on

Ball's comment that 'reality only begins at the point where things peter out' (*FT*, p. 53), and compare this point to our dichotomies. Instead of viewing these pairs as two ends of a spectrum, we may consider the midpoint as a petering out of sorts, as we have seen particularly markedly in Man Ray's work through its tendency to provide a blurred cross-over of complementary opposites (for example, his highlighting of the grey area *between* light and shadow). This blurring 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.

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' [outside of themselves] to externalise their relationship with reality in a heightened awareness of their alienation from it. 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, p. 133) to devise their own interpretation(s) of both cinema and the world as a malleable (re)memory. The constant replacement of ideas implies a reliance on a perpetually present state, or as Sartre claims, 'tout se passe comme si le présent était un perpétuel trou d'être, aussitôt comblé et perpétuellement renaissant' [everything happens as if the present were a perpetual hole in being, no sooner is it filled than it is perpetually being reborn] (*EN*, p. 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.

4

Responsibility and Justice in the Dada Literary Event

The Individual is Fully Responsible

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*, p. 31).
>
> [if existence really precedes essence, the individual is responsible for what they are. Thus, Existentialism's first step is to make every individual in possession of what they are and to put total responsibility on them for their existence. And, when we say that the individual is responsible for

E. Benjamin, *Dada and Existentialism*,
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himself, we do not mean that the individual is responsible for their strict individuality, but that they are responsible for everyone.]

Sartre's comments on responsibility link in with the notions of choice and individuality explored in Chapter 2, that is, for Sartre we choose under the belief that our choices are universally applicable. This theory 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' [it is possible to judge [people] […] because, as I have said, we choose in relation to other people, and we choose ourselves in relation to other people] (*EH*, p. 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 series of theories, therefore, Sartre underlines that in Existentialism, 'nous rappelons à l'homme qu'il n'y a d'autre législateur que lui-même' [we remind the individual that there is no other legislator than themselves] (*EH*, p. 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* [Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen] 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* [The Last Day of a Condemned Man] (1829), which explicitly condemns the death

penalty as hypocritical, reproducing the original crime through its 'eye for an eye' logic. 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* (2000), 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 in the human being, 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 (in *MS*, pp. 169–87), 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. In both cases this is metaphorically represented through environmental conditions: Josef K suffers from his dark surroundings; Meursault from the stifling heat and blinding sun. Through the examples above we are invited to question the possibility of achieving justice through such systematic, regimented means.

As demonstrated by 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' [[s/he who] pits the principle of justice within themselves against the principle of injustice that they see taking place in the world] (*HR*, p. 42). The rebel draws upon their inner, personal sense of justice to counter global injustice, an opposition perhaps to institutional or external, generic justice. This opposition is also expressed in Dada's engagement with the philosophy of justice, through its rejection of oppressive societal constructs, traditions and conformity. We can interpret refusal as an aspiration to obliterate injustice in terms of freedom from oppression, but Dada also opposes the system of justice in its own right, as is particularly clear through its mock trial of Maurice Barrès. This chapter interrogates Dada's 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* [The Outsider].

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. 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. Consequently the following problematics will be raised. 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?

Against Without For the Accused[1]

An instructive starting point in the indictment of these individuals is an analysis of the reasons behind their calling to justice. 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) not to conform, and consequently be pursued and executed by an external source of justice through the law. 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

[1] Hans Richter wrote a 1919 manifesto entitled *Gegen ohne für Dada* [Against Without For Dada], which takes on conformity among its concerns.

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, pp. 186–7), so we might wonder what prompted them to suddenly change their opinion of him in such an extreme fashion. 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,[2] had occurred before the birth of most of the 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. In this case we might still wonder why the movement would choose to highlight this author. Was their objection then to Barrès's lifetime inconsistencies? Did he disappoint the Dadas, because 'his early quest for identity ended in a retreat into the comfortable haven of cultural parochialism' (Soucy 1972, p. 94)?

It is possible that it was Dada's own rampant search for identity that 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.pag.). To some extent, then, we can attribute Dada's attitude to a generational grudge against the masters the avant-garde 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 inculcated 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

[2] The Dreyfus affair was a highly divisive trial in which Alfred Dreyfus was sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly betraying French secrets to the Germans during the late nineteenth century. Dreyfus is considered a scapegoat for anti-Semitism, and his trial is notable because of the manner in which it engaged intellectuals in public debate over his guilt and fate, and moreover in the agendas behind arguments on each side.

and Sartre. While Camus retains an element of respect for Barrès, his text *Maurice Barrès et la querelle des héritiers* [Maurice Barrès and the Dispute of his Heirs] (in Camus 2006b, pp. 874–6) presents the slightly contradictory relationship that intellectuals have with this author. According to Camus, 'ceux 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' [those who align themselves with him are not worthy of his work. And those who are worthy of this work do not align themselves with him] (Camus 2006, p. 874f). In the same piece, Camus labels Barrès nostalgic, having 'plus d'esprit que d'âme' [more mind than soul], and furthermore that 'ce genre d'hommes nous est aujourd'hui inutile' [this type of man is useless to us today [in 1940]] (Camus 2006, pp. 875; 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 Nausea*, 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' [I spanked Maurice Barrès […] we spanked him to the point of bleeding] (*N*, p. 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, Robert Soucy points out that 'in contrast with later Existentialists such as Sartre, Barrès denied that existence preceded essence' (1972, p. 74f). This would be a fundamentally divisive difference due to the status of the phrase as a quintessential Sartrean Existentialist tenet, important for our analysis as a crucial point of tension between Barrès and both the Dadas and the Existentialists.

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 personality? 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 satire in a way that

we have already seen through Chapter 2, that is, the fool as a means to vent social issues without fear of retribution. Here the puppet becomes a real person, but no less manipulated, in a physical way in the puppets and of the personality in Barrès. 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* [great man], and a notably unnotable citizen, with no particular distinguishing characteristics other than ostensible indifference to life. Markedly unalike from an initial impression, we will see how their treatment draws them closer in their judges' criticisms of their character. 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*, p. 24). Described by Dada member Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes as an 'inimitable spectacle of intellectual justice' (in Motherwell 1989, p. 116), the event 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 individual. Indeed, as André Breton would later (in 1952) comment, 'the 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, p. 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 role playing gives it the feel of an avant-garde play. This feel compounds with Marguerite Bonnet's publication of the text in book form, where the layout of the dialogue and the air of scripting draws it closer to the play form than any other literary style. Bonnet also provides background for non-Dada participants, which play the role of character profiles for the non-specialist reader. Furthermore, the fact that much of the event was genuinely scripted contributes to this air of prepared performance rather than spontaneous judgement. However, ultimately responsibility is left with the reader in 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, all the more so because today, all that remains for the Dada scholar is the text-as-event. The text referred to throughout this piece will be Bonnet's 1987 *L'Affaire Barrès* [The Barrès Affair] (*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 Outsider], 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' [he is simply one of those terrible innocents who become the scandal of society because they do not accept the rules of its game] (1947a, p. 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. Both trials bring out

novel and instructive aspects of the other when analysed side-by-side, an assessment that has not been attempted until this point.

Crimes against the Security of the Mind

The transcript of Barrès's trial begins with a lengthy indictment by Breton, who lists eight constituent crimes to the overarching accusation of 'crimes against the security of the mind'. 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, académicien, 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*, p. 25)
>
> [Maurice Barrès, author of the three-volume *The Cult of the Self*, of *The Enemy of Laws*, of *Eight Days with Mr Renan*, decadent writer, propagandist of the *école romane*, author of *The Rootless*, of *Colette Baudoche* and of a *Chronicle of the Great War*, former socialist, deputy, atheist, one of the pillars of Boulangism, one of Paul Déroulède's lieutenants, one of the instigators of the Dreyfus Affair, one of the denouncers of Panama, nationalist, apostle of the cult of the dead, President of the League of Patriots, academic, editor of *L'Echo de Paris*, popular lecturer, author of *The Great Mercy of the Churches of France*, partisan of revenge, man of the statue of Strasbourg, man of the annexation of the left bank of the Rhine, man of Joan of Arc, honorary president of 175 charities […]]

Delving into Dada film revealed a Dada tendency to give fragments of information without any indication of direction or overall sense.

In a similar way, 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. We might say 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'* [Manifesto of the Dada Movement] (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' [no more religion, no more republicans, no more royalists, no more imperialists, no more anarchists, no more socialists, no more Bolshevists, no more politicians […] well, enough of all these stupidities] (in *L*13, p. 2). The exhaustiveness of Aragon's list, which seems to contradict itself in its own exasperation, indicts ideologies—primarily through political alignments—in a similar way to Breton's words of introduction, demonstrating from the outset an underlying structure of targeted characteristics.

All of the attributes that Breton highlights are implied to contribute to Barrès's self-definition as 'un homme de génie' [genius], 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' [protected from any deeper investigation, from any inspection, from any sanctions] (*AB*, p. 25f). 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: the right and the desire to constantly question opinions and ethics is seen as ideal in the construction of morality. A particularly strong point of contention across the trial is Barrès's role as 'president of the League of Patriots', 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 Philippe 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…' [what did it matter…] (*E*, p. 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, perhaps revealing more of a preoccupation with (anti-)nationalism than the movement intended. 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, a moment that highlights the Existentialist theory that life is meaningless, but that instead of being an entirely negative conclusion, one can use this opportunity instead to create one's own meaning. 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' [I opened up for the first time to the tender indifference of the world. Finding it so similar to me, that is, so fraternal, I felt that I had been happy, and that I was happy still] (*E*, p. 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' [truly illegible], and as such the writer 'a donc usurpé la réputation de penseur' [thus wrongfully used the role of thinker] (*AB*, p. 26). This charge from a movement that 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' [an opulent man] he merely succeeded in becoming a 'démenti formel' [formal denial] (*AB*, p. 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 (a notion that Camus sets up with the title *L'Etranger*, presumably meant to designate Meursault, and which can mean 'foreigner', 'stranger', or 'outsider', all of which contain potential for deferral of blame). 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, p. 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, sont DADA' (in *L*13, p. 16; original formatting).
>
> [Dada is American, Dada is Russian, Dada is Spanish, Dada is Swiss, Dada is German, Dada is French, Belgian, Norwegian, Swedish, Monacan. All those who live without method, for whom the only point of interest in a museum is its floor, are Dada.]

Arensburg's listing renders the idea of nationality simultaneously all-encompassing and meaningless, in a way that perhaps undermines the traditional meaning assigned to nationality in order to open it up to new definition, or lack thereof.

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 (cf *EH*, p. 67). The Dada judges decided that Barrès held 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 without borders* approach. Barrès's cultural narrowing is presented by Breton in his reference to the 'Image of 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, which displayed an idealised and traditional, if not naïve conception of French values.

The sixth charge accuses Barrès of having fallen into a nineteenth-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' [nihilism can in no way be contemplative] (*AB*, p. 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 from Dada, especially considering the consequent demise of the movement. Equally, and perhaps more importantly, we may consider that tension 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, p. 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 seen through to its end.

The seventh charge is threefold, attacking Barrès not only on the grounds of never having 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 it should not be required of the intellectual 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' [ideas have no value in themselves; they are only worth anything by what is at stake through them; and Barrès's ideas were never accompanied by any stakes] (*AB*, p. 32). This reinforces Camus's later accusations: we may determine that both Dada and the French Existentialists reject Barrès on his lack of willingness to act. Furthermore, he seemed later to 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, pp. 89; 105). These final accusations run fundamentally counter to Dada activities: events and works of the movement 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 'crimes against the security of the mind', the Paris Dada group tried Barrès on the grounds of what is, for all intents and purposes, a fictional crime, 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 declared to be impossible to 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' [it is no more in the power of Maurice Barrès than of anyone else to attack the security of the mind] (*AB*, p. 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?' [after having led the youth towards total individualism, he took a U-turn, burned all that he had worshipped, and worshipped the most tyrannical idols that can be, earth, motherland, race, and what else?] (1958, p. 139). In short, the fundamental character trait under judgement is the heinous crime of conformism, an engagement with inauthenticity that 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 approached through choice.

In a linguistic turn that cannot be entirely coincidental, an 'attentat contre la sûreté de *l'Etat*' [crimes against the security of the *State*] (my emphasis) is a real and punishable crime. What, then, can we consider an 'attentat contre la sûreté de l'esprit' to entail? The phrase is reminiscent 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.

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' [buried his mother with a criminal heart] (*E*, p. 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 imposed 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, though later learns, still vaguely, that he is accused of being '"coupable de meurtre" … "premeditation" … "circonstances atténuantes"' '"[guilty of murder … premeditation … attenuating circum-

stances]"' (*E*, p. 105; original formatting). This set of indictments does not provide any more meaningful an accusation than the 'crimes against the security of the mind' 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 even able to attempt 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 positions within an Existentialist viewpoint. Murder is condemned, both explicitly in Camus's writings through his discussion of the Surrealists (in which he dismisses their attitude of 'exalting' the act) (*HR*, p. 123), and implicitly through the notion that the soundest ethics are 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 aspects of 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' a sentence of twenty years of hard labour, whereas Meursault is sentenced to death. Instructively, Breton apparently expected capital punishment for Barrès (Sanouillet 2009, p. 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.[3] This matching discrepancy leads us to wonder which sentence is more severe or

[3]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.

out of the ordinary, considering Barrès's absence from his trial and the fact that he did not break 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*, p. 100): as such, he represents a threat to mass (herd) mentality. Because of this ironic relationship with intellectual precedent, both trials escalate to Kafkaesque dimensions through the piling on of unfounded accusations, giving us 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. Alternatively, the ludic yet threatening nature of the Dada trial allows further comparison with the absurdity of the court in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's adventures in wonderland* (1865), complete with nonsense, characters arguing in support of and undermining both sides, and of course regular outbursts of 'Off with his/her head!'.

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 'method' of selection we might suggest that the witnesses in Barrès's case are biased toward those who have a particular reason to parody the writer, or 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.

Michel Sanouillet describes that the witnesses in the Barrès trial, chosen by Breton, were 'recruited here and there for rather obscure reasons', 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 (2009, pp. 188–9). This latter reason 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 give the movement purpose through the seriousness and organisation of the event, fighting the general silliness usually aimed for in Dada antics. Additionally, while using witnesses to 'flesh out the cast of characters' might simply add to the farce of the Barrès trial, as well as adding to our notion of the trial as an avant-garde play, the use of prestigious individuals ended up contributing to an increased reception of the event. 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. Here the notion of the intellectual commenting on a farcical situation both lends the event weight and undermines the very idea of the value of intellectual commentary.

Through the revealing nature of the choice of witnesses we may consider that the questions asked of the witnesses are 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[4]; 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

[4] 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.

Tzara, whose knowledge of Barrès apparently only extended to his name (Sanouillet 2009, p. 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 (Sanouillet 2009, p. 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' [Our Dadaists want to rediscover the fresh, the new, the primitive […] It is the equivalent of a return to folklore, to the naïve, to the spontaneous] (Barrès 1950, p. 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 in affectionately referring to 'our Dadaists'.

Barrès's first witness, Serge Romoff,[5] 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' [exerted a harmful influence on the community] (*AB*, p. 35). This opinion notably reinforces the notion I suggested earlier of Barrès as going against the Existentialist tenet of making choices that are applicable (beneficial) to the collective (*EH*, p. 31). Romoff accuses Barrès of 'quite vulgar bourgeois anarchism' (*AB*, p. 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 (*AB*, p. 37).

How reliable is this testimony, when we consider that some witnesses, including Romoff, apparently had their answers scripted for them by Breton (Sanouillet 2009, p. 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

[5] Serge Romoff (1883–1939) was a Ukranian menshevik and part of the Russian art and literary scene.

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' [respond briefly to the questions asked of me, not to take the initiative and to rely on him for the rest] (*E*, p. 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[6] 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 this, giving no more reasoning than that every life is essentially a non-predestined role. Furthermore, Ungaretti states that 'le mot volonté a plutôt un sens ironique dans la vie' [the word 'will' has a rather ironic meaning in life] (*AB*, p. 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 this, he states that 'la vie d'un homme ne peut être considérée que par les rapports qu'elle crée' [the life of an individual can only be considered by means of the relationships it creates] (*AB*, p. 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, as well as his theory that 'l'homme n'est rien d'autre que ce qu'il se fait' [the individual is nothing more than what they make of themselves] (*EH*, p. 30). Ungaretti's preference for total indifference is not unlike Meursault's relationship with the world, yet contains an attitude of negativity that is not part of Meursault's rather more neutral 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*, p. 53). Nevertheless Rigaut highlights an ambiguity that might be said to foreground our aforemen-

[6] Giuseppe Ungaretti (1883–1970) was an Italian poet, linked to the avant-garde.

tioned 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—a question that was irrelevant to the Barrès case—and invoking issues that were not only applicable to Rigaut, who would later commit suicide himself, but also to the audience, who were immersed in the fragile reality of a postwar environment. 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 answers that were dictated by Breton, Mme Rachilde's[7] 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 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 (Sanouillet 2009, p. 189). However, Sanouillet notes that the newspapers' depiction of the event described her actions as an attempted rescue of Dada from its abusive audience (2009, p. 190). We might conclude from this interaction that Rachilde intended to be in control of the level and nature of her engagement with the trial, particularly given the personally probing nature of Breton's questions and their lack of relation to the case. We can compare this style of questioning 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

[7] Madame Rachilde (1860–1953) was a non-conformist writer and anti-Dada, who was interested by the notion of bringing Barrès to trial.

> 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*, p. 51).
>
> [Throw beans or peas in the audience's faces once, and they will object if you settle for giving them a more or less intelligent conference on an individual or a work. Then they themselves will throw beans and peas at the new face that you show them.]

It is notable that the Dadas (minus Breton) would have revelled in such a reaction from the audience, 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. 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, 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 have this very same change of heart in his ideologies). 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' [If the judgement that you bear on an individual depends on those who judge them and the manner in which they judge, this is a purely aristocratic attitude] (*AB*, p. 60). Breton's comment is notably hypocritical for one who chose the witnesses himself, and particularly for his 'obscure reasons' (cf. Sanouillet 2009, p. 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 'depends on those who judge them and the manner in which they judge'.

Though Tzara's testimony comes second among the witnesses, it is worth bringing it out to conclude this 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. This rather bizarre witness claims at first to know nothing about Barrès, but later declares three times to have met him, across the Dada leader'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: 'je n'ai aucune confiance dans la justice, même si cette justice est faite par Dada' [I have no confidence in justice, even if this justice is carried out by Dada] (*AB*, p. 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. This non-correspondence with Dada ideals would come out again later when members had moved on from the movement, with Breton, in line with his dismissal of his earlier Dada alignments, commenting on the Barrès trial that 'the 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, p. 53). While Breton's first point is valid, especially due to individual Dadas' interests in ethics and theory, 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' (1993, p. 53), something that we might argue not to be 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 of her witness account? Tzara's belligerent refusal to comply with Breton's questioning invited accusations that Tzara harboured a desire to commit 'crimes against the security of the mind' himself. In hindsight we might

interpret this defensiveness 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 than in revealing the flaws of the accused. Indeed it played upon the personal worries of the Dadas themselves, including the varyingly nervous disposition of Tzara. This fragile mental state shows itself in Tzara's claim that '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' [I like to pass myself off as a perfect imbecile, but I do not try to escape the asylum in which I spend my life] (*AB*, p. 42). Meursault's case and the Barrès trial bring out the inauthenticity of both the in-world society and the external social environment, by proving that both are just systems which can be rendered meaningless and absurd.

Like the Barrès testimonies, the witnesses in the Meursault trial are sped through, in that neither trial's testimonies physically take up much space on the page, nor does the court glean 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*, p. 90). The manager does not consider that Meursault's indifference could have been any combination of symptoms of grief, including shock 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 occurred 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.

A pertinent example of sensationalism is given in the case of Benjamin Péret's performance or demonstration as the Unknown Soldier, whose sole purpose seemed to be to cause outrage. It succeeded, including scathing review in the press (*AB*, pp. 91–92). For example *Comœdia* reported that 'ce 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' [it was a demonstration that was pitiful, grotesque, even odious through the introduction in this joyless masquerade of the symbol that the Unknown Soldier represents to the vast majority of French people] (in *AB*, p. 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, p. 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.' [You know, we raised the profile of your trial a little. Summer is the low season for newspapers.] (*E*, p. 85).

The case against Meursault is built upon his 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 condemnation 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 see a loved one after their death, and consider that Meursault instead found it preferable to preserve a living memory.

This attitude 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 tension in motivation is particularly revealing 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. The management of convention 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 thereof. 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' [My lawyer shrugged his shoulders and wiped the sweat from his forehead. But even he seemed shaken and I understood that things were not going well for me] (*E*, p. 97). We can compare these actions 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, p. 107). Is this contradictory request 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!"' [There you have the image of this trial. Everything is true and nothing is true!] (*E*, p. 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 reaction to testimonies 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's 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' [always refers to his mother with the tender and childish word "mum/my" and does not miss an occasion to understand her and identify with her] (1947a, p. 108). Meursault's inhabitual method of grieving is thus displaced by an underlying affectionate connection that the members of the court (choose to) ignore.

The court's rejection of Raymond's personal assessment of Meursault's character compounds our sense that 'every 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, p. 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, since it raises questions as to why his own character is not to be attacked. Is it because Raymond's lifestyle is quite open in its immorality (he is mocked but not persecuted for this character trait), and thus he is deemed not to be 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 these designations it would be considered possible to 'correct' Raymond; Meursault is beyond correction, necessitating his further removal.

This attitude is particularly strongly demonstrated 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*, p. 100f).
>
> [He said that he had studied [my soul] and had found nothing, gentlemen of the jury. He said that in truth, I didn't have one, a soul, and nothing human, and that not a single moral principle of the human heart was accessible to me. "Doubtless", he added, "we cannot reproach him for it. That which he cannot acquire, we cannot complain that he lacks. But when it comes to this court, the negative virtue of tolerance must change into the less easy, but more elevated, idea of justice. Above all when the emptiness of a heart such as we see in this man becomes an abyss to which society can succumb."]

The prosecutor not only crosses into religious terminology, pre-empting the chaplain's visit to attempt to influence Meursault, but he also introduces a paradox in the judicial system. Meursault is pitied for not having a soul, even rendered blameless ('we cannot reproach him for it'), yet is deemed unsaveable and prosecuted on this very basis. This contradiction 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, individuals and their cases will never be fully gauged on their own attributes. This is certainly true of British law, and other countries practising common law. 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.

Meursault's trial is based on proleptic precedent: he is blamed for the crime that is next on the agenda, as if it is proof of his guilt. Meursault's failure to react to the charges against him makes the system nervous in its failed attempts to provoke him, 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, the movement 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 'the presentation of the trial as a parody of justice contains at least an implicit indictment of the judges' (1964, p. 519). This indictment is quite explicit in Dada's trial of Barrès, which 'applying 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 and LaCoss 2003, p. 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. The comparative absence-levels of these two individuals make us wonder whether justice is 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, p. 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' [Dada thinks not. Dada thinks nothing. It does however know what it does not think: that is, everything] (*AB*, p. 66). Tzara had already testified that 'je 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' [I do not judge. I judge nothing. I judge myself all the time and I find myself to be a small and disgusting individual […] All this is relative] (*AB*, p. 45). Soupault further rejects Dada judgement in his 'plea', and additionally implies that the crime of which Barrès is accused is an impossible feat, stating that '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.' [An act, a thought, contrary acts or thoughts cannot compromise the mind of someone committing or conceiving of them,

nor the mind in general, nor those of individuals susceptible to succumbing to its influence] (*AB*, p. 82). We can compare this rejection of concern to Meursault's court, which was threatened not by his acts but by his mentality. The worry then seems to lie in the potential for disruption of normalcy rather than the reality of crime itself.

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 'senile and delirious', Drieu la Rochelle a 'half-wit', and Rachilde 'crazy' (*AB*, p. 83), essentially carrying through Tzara's earlier mockeries, which included calling himself and all of his co-Dadas (among others) 'pigs' and 'bastards' (*AB*, pp. 38–41). In a similar alignment with Dada's prosecution closing speech and plea for Barrès, Meursault comments that he feels that the statements of the judge and of his lawyer are not so different after all (*E*, p. 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, 'ce simulacre de justice, accompli sérieusement, se situait hors de Dada' [this mockery of justice, accomplished seriously, placed itself outside of Dada] (1958, p. 139).[8] Perhaps this is the foremost reason for it causing the rift between the opposing sides formed by Breton and Tzara and their respective allies: 'the débâcle surrounding the 'trial' of Maurice Barrès […] confirms the status of judgement as intrinsic to *surrealist* attempts at self-definition' (Baker 2007, p. 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, at least to the extent that it eventually did. Initially the murder charges would not have entailed any great punishment because of a colonial, racial indifference, but the trial caused a highlighting of

[8] 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, p. 90).

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.

The tensions raised through the changing attitudes of judgements and indeed the verdicts in each case make us wonder how the cases comment 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, in which Barrès played a key part, is said to have (figuratively) taken place in the accused's 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' [we were fighting for or against the Republic] (in Royer et al. 1995,

p. 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 that 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 also 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 allowed Dada to regain a level of authenticity from its slide into judgement, 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 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. 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. He is rather a philosophical example, and is limited to this paradigm. Both the Meursault and the Barrès 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 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 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.

The analysis of these two literary examples of Dada and Existentialist expressions of justice and responsibility can be used to 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 state-

ment that 'nous rappelons à l'homme qu'il n'y a d'autre législateur que lui-même' [we remind the individual that there is no other legislator than themselves] (*EH*, p. 76), an emphasis on the necessity for an individual ethics that nonetheless is universally applicable. Through these Dada and Existentialist attacks on objectivity, it becomes evident that a case-by-case approach is required, as advocated by Beauvoir in her theories of ambiguity and through subjectivity, rather than a dependence on universalising morals and judicial precedent.

5

Censorship and Freedom in Dada and Beyond

When Dada exploded into the world in 1916, it was met with disapproval by the good people of Zurich. Almost 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. 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 art works 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?

This chapter scrutinises manifestations of Dada provocation, as well as examples from their Neo-Dada and postmodern counterparts, in order

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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? Richter introduces the term 'zero point' as a title for a section on Dada and Neo-Dada in his *Art and Anti-Art* (*AA*, pp. 208–09), referring to the way that Roger Shattuck describes art works such as Duchamp's bicycle wheel on second viewing: 'the (anti-)artistic value they used to possess has gone back to zero' (*AA*, p. 208). Richter does not explicitly define his term and it is for this reason that I will be investigating its potential for application here, specifically to posit the possibility of a 'zero point' in *shock* value in the artistic world. This assessment 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) are 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 is 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* [The Plague] (1947): the rats; the early cases of plague; quarantine; responses to the plague. The rats are 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 are interpreted with reference to Dada events which involved the intervention of the authorities. Finally, the return of the rats and recuperation from the plague are 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, p. 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

An important concept to Existentialist writers and theory in general, freedom is a particularly central aspect for Sartre in *L'Être et le néant*. (Being and Nothingness). What is specifically useful to this chapter is his close linking of freedom with a lack thereof, that is, limits or restraints, or for our purposes censorship. Because of Beauvoir 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*) (The Ethics of Ambiguity) will also be used to draw conclusions from our analysis. This usage will particularly be in relation to her statement that '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' [freedom is the source from which all meaning and values spring; it is the original condition of every justification of existence] (*MA*, p. 31f). Beauvoir's rendering of this term so fundamental to human existence provides a core point of ethical synthesis for our two notions.

We have already seen that, existentially speaking, to be free is to be 'condemned to be free' but, despite this paradox, 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*, p. 576; original emphasis).
>
> [Freedom is total and infinite, which does not mean that it *does not have* limits but that it never *encounters them*. The only limits that freedom bumps up against constantly are self-imposed.]

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' [to be free is not to choose the historical world in which one emerges—which would be pointless—but to choose oneself in the world, whichever that may be] (*EN*, p. 566). This attitude is not only useful as a life value, but as an artistic one: the artist should reflect upon and creatively incorporate, but not define their art by, influence of their context. Through these interactions of values of freedom, an individual must be able to differentiate between political and social freedoms, and psychological freedom. It is furthermore 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*' [we will never be able to explain things by referring to a given and fixed human nature; in other words, there is no determinism, *the individual is free, the individual is freedom*] (*EH*, p. 39; my emphasis). The notion of the individual embodying freedom is something that comes out very strongly in Dada's fight against human conformity, and in its efforts to release art from its confines of tradition.

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 members of Dada were present in Switzerland at this time because of pressures of nationalism and conscription in their belligerent home nations. Camus's description of those trapped in Oran during the plague provides quite an apt description of the situation of these artists: 'Ils éprouvaient ainsi la souffrance de tous les prisonniers et de tous les exiles, qui est de vivre avec une mémoire qui ne sert à rien' [They experienced the suffering of all prisoners and exiles, which is to live with a memory that serves no purpose] (*P*, p. 81). Though this memory may have formed the basis on which Dada's anti-nationalist motives stood, the way in which the members sought to cut themselves off from national identity would have left them in a certain void in this neutral foreign nation.

Even Dada methods to avoid fighting stem from a sense of self-censorship, with artists 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, p. 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' [the auriferous unknown was already overwhelming the incandescence of an empty-headed dream] (in Buot 2002, p. 31). Tzara's statement furthers the notion of mental escape, ironically replacing a mind-numbing provincial life with a self-censoring 'empty-headed dream' (the French 'écervelé' giving more of a sense of removal (of the brain) here), to be further replaced with the unknown. This constant desire for 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 present book.

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*, p. 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, p. 185)

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' [lacking the knowledge of what I really express for the other, I make up my language as an incomplete phenomenon of flight outside of myself] (*EN*, p. 413f). How does this linguistic tension 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, as well as a flight out of self towards a more complete linguistic being. It is notable that Neo-Dada had a significant Anglophone dominance, especially since Dada was ostensibly multilingual. We might posit this monolingualisation as a further diluting of Dada's deviance, as Neo-Dada became Dada's more easily digestible next course.

Sartre writes that 'la liberté […] confère [à des choses] une signification qui les fait choses; 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*' [freedom […] confers upon [things] meaning that makes them things, but it is through assuming the given itself that it will be meaningful, that is to say in assuming its exile in order to overtake it in the midst of an indifferent in-itself] (*EN*, p. 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, through its wish not to fall on one side or another and the latter acquires a negative tone, through its lack of concern with the issues affecting a verdict. However, both have a pointed ideologically grounded concern.

It is useful 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' [freedom thus implies the existence of surroundings to change: obstacles to overcome, tools to use. Of course, it

is freedom that reveals the obstacles as such, but by its free choice it can only interpret the *meaning* of their being] (*EN*, p. 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. […] son projet même, en général, est projet de *faire* dans un monde résistant, par victoire sur ses résistances (*EN*, p. 552; original emphasis).
>
> [the very project of freedom in general is a choice which implies the expectation and acceptance of resistance of some kind. […] its very project is generally that of *doing* in a resistant world, through victory over its resistances.]

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 for the concept of freedom.

(Always al) Readymades and Objets (re) found objects

The readymade is a clear example of censorship, in the negative reception of its attempted engagement with artistic authority, as well as through its rejection of meaning. Indeed, Richter noted that 'the ready-made was the logical consequence of Duchamp's rejection of art and his suspicion that life was without a meaning' (*AA*, p. 88). Duchamp famously submitted *Fountain* (1917) to the Salon des Indépendants only to have it rejected, despite the Salon'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 indicative of a stronger engagement than one might initially assume? 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, p. 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 their resulting dependence on ambiguity. This is an ambiguity that would significantly impact upon Dada's legacy in the art world and beyond.

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 connected to the sanitation system, and the rats, although once connected to the sewers, are now 'out of place' (see *P*, 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. The language of infection is something that is expressed in the spreading of Dada from Zurich to Paris by Richter, who states that 'by the second issue, *Littérature* had been infected with Dada by way of Zurich' (*AA*, p. 167). This notion of infection is also pertinent to Dada's relationship with individuals outside of its membership as many intellectuals were wary of being involved or associated with the movement, usually 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* precisely because it was 'a journal that, however good its character, ha[d] Germans among its contributors, however Allied-friendly they may be' (in Dickerman and Witkowsky 2005, p. 293n). We have seen that Taeuber's involvement with Dada was externally frowned upon, though she did not let this prevent her participation. A further example is Satie, whose involvement with *Relâche* was labelled 'artistic suicide' (see Orledge 1990, p. 178). Nevertheless Satie saw his interaction with Dada as a viable and important part of his career.

A productive focal point for analysis of the rats and the readymades is the opening paragraph of the novel proper (after a note from the unidentified narrator):

> 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*, p. 16)
>
> [On the morning of April 16, Dr Bernard Rieux left his office and stumbled upon a dead rat, in the middle of the landing. At the time, he pushed the animal aside without thinking anything of it and went downstairs. But when he got to the street, the thought occurred to him that the rat was out of place and he went back to tell the concierge. Seeing the reaction of old Mr Michel, he better saw what was unusual about his discovery. The presence of this dead rat had only seemed strange to him, whereas to the concierge it was a scandal. The concierge's position was categorical: there were no rats in the building. Try as the doctor might to convince him that there was one—probably a dead one—on the first floor landing, Mr Michel remained entirely convinced of his view. There were no rats in the building,

thus someone must have brought it in from outside. In short, it must have been a joke.]

Davis highlights three defences given for the presence of dead rats, which he classes a 'raisonnement de chaudron',[1] 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' [The presence of this rat…was a scandal—there were no rats in the building/establishment/society—it must have been a joke]. This set of phrases can directly be compared to the rejection of Duchamp's urinal in that its submission to and thus presence in the Salon des Indépendants 'was a scandal', precisely because 'there were no [objects like this] in the establishment', and that in the eyes of the Salon des Indépendants, the act of submission '[might] have been a joke'. In any case it can be argued that conceptually speaking it was a joke, if the Salon 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, 'without thinking anything of it' (that is, worrying about its implications). The urinal would come back—metaphorically and physically, in multiple editions—to haunt the same world that ignored it, just like the plague in Oran.

As Davis remarks, 'the 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, p. 1013). This shirking of responsibility is active in the Salon's rejection of an object which would later be acknowledged by the very same art world. Furthermore, there is a 'persistent implication in [*La Peste*] that some sort of elemental or even moral significance lies behind their appearance' (Davis 2007, p. 1014). To continue this analogy we might wonder, 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. The art

[1] The term translates as 'kettle logic', and was coined by Sigmund Freud and used as an example of informal fallacy in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1900) and *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905).

object remains a central part of the wider art world today, and indeed the sprawling encroachment of the work from the wall to the broader gallery space, as well as ambiguity of the start and end point of the art in its own right, demonstrates this all-pervasiveness.

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. Like the rats, 'perhaps, if the mess is removed too quickly, something is lost which might have been worth preserving' (Davis 2007, p. 1009). Another linguistic comparison can be made through Richter's comment on the readymades and their legacy that 'after the *Fountain* and Duchamp's break with the New York *Salon des Indépendants*, there appeared a whole series of *puzzling* objects' (*AA*, p. 90; my emphasis). The sentiment of this comment is mirrored by *La Peste*'s narrator, who relates that, 'partout où nos concitoyens rassemblaient, les rats attendaient en tas […] nos concitoyens *stupéfaits* les découvraient aux endroits plus fréquentés de la ville' [wherever our fellow citizens gathered, the rats were there waiting for them in heaps […] our *puzzled* citizens discovered them in the most frequented parts of town] (*P*, p. 23f; my emphasis). Both comments indicate a state of confusion rather than horror, a subtlety in the possible range of, and aging process of, reactions to shock.

After this initial flurry of occurrence of the unwanted in both cases, the proliferation loses its effect (in the case of the rats, they disappear almost entirely). However, 'if 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' (Davis 2007, p. 1014). The readymades, as both an early stage in, and as particularly symbolic of, the Dada revolt, are rather limited to their initial effect, and very quickly are no longer quite as necessary. The metaphorical aesthetic floodgate had been opened, and the idea of the readymade was all-pervasive. Perhaps this rapid barrage of reaction 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*, p. 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.

This depiction of a 'return to purpose' is rather straightforward with regard to the simple, unaltered readymades. How then does the reassignment compare with the altered/assisted readymades? 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) was initially a simple flat-iron and, if presented as such, could have been 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 Schwarz's definition of the readymade as 'the three-dimensional projection of a pun' (in Mundy 2008, p. 127). In its use of the object over time, the act of vandalism adds a fourth dimension: the readymade as live event.

Referring back to *La Peste*'s rats, Man Ray's iron is not only 'out of place' as a work for exhibition, just 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, p. 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 unsettled meaning 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 renown 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, which amounts to the instruction: 'use a Rembrandt as an ironing board' (in Sanouillet and Peterson 1973, p. 32).[2] Does *Cadeau*—alterations and all—invite the spectator to reuse it in its original function? In which case, it would seem appropriate that this particular iron require a special ironing board, as well as quite apt that this should be a painting that stems from the very realist tradition that Dada sought to overturn. Furthermore, we might ask if this use of the Rembrandt painting represents the total destruction of the work of art, or whether it instead offers the capacity for creating a new one (through 'ironing out' the flaws that Dada saw in realism). A work that responds to both of these inquiries is *Indestructible Object (or Object to be Destroyed)* (Man Ray 1923), 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 attribute to the work an extra layer of declamation of censorship (as in, 'object, [if you are seeking] to be destroyed').

[2] *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.

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*, p. 89)

Perhaps this incorporation and dispersion of shock occurred 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 through Merleau-Ponty's theories used in Chapter 3 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 perceiving them 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 2008, p. 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 their 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, p. 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 might also say that the readymades are always-already-made. Firstly because Duchamp, aware of the problematic relationship between the mass-made object and the artist, designated four 'rules' for creating, or *choosing*, a readymade, beyond the simple signing of an object: 'decontextualisation, 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' (summarised by Schwarz in Mundy 2008, p. 127). So although the readymade appears to spring from a desire to reject aesthetic intentionality, Duchamp's rules imply that there is more to the process itself, as well as its desired legacy. Indeed as Nesbit claims, 'the mass-produced repetition is not, bang-bang, mechanical: it contains longings for individual greatness, dreams of national prosperity, and fears of loss' (1986, p. 53f).

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, p. 79). For example, in his *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), Duchamp's own face is apparently superimposed over his moustachioed Mona Lisa, lending an additional personal quality through the lingering, if subtle, visual presence of the artist (Peterson 2000, p. 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. (Peterson 2000, p. 10)

We might designate Duchamp's relationship with temporality an extension of the subjectivity of identity initiated through discussions of choice in Dada and Existentialism: 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*, p. 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 a shared 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, Schwitters's work also *clears up* this rubbish, and/or reduces its environmental impact, thus removing its negative aspect. This element of preoccupation with the sanitary is also evident in *Fountain*, which was nonetheless a *clean* (unused, at time of creation) urinal.

Schwitters's work, particularly that of his *Merz* series, collates and presents scraps and objects that are often the unwanted, as well as incorporating 'residue and semantic excess' through his use of items associated with consumer goods, such as tickets and food packaging, including fragments of words and phrases. 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'. We may be inclined to call Merz art an assisted readymade: if objects such as train tickets are already readymades, the collaged nature of Schwitters's work represents a compounding of this principle. 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 2013, p. 60)—does this repurposing of the ticket 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 1971b, p. 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 translates well into Existentialist terms as the desire to act based upon no pre-ordained system. Additionally, like Sartre, Schwitters denies the conclusion that this desire for freedom would lead to anarchic tendencies, instead claiming it as a 'product of strict artistic discipline'. This synthesis fulfils the Existentialist notion that choice should be a conscious, active process in the individual, as well as insisting that freedom not be 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 1A The Psychiatrist] features a multi-coloured head with a variety of metallic wooden and metal items glued on top. We saw a comparable desire to build over things in Chapter 3 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 2. These artists foreground a need to cover over human aspects of their works, leading us to wonder if this concealment 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 (several of which are shaped like cogs) 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, in the sense of invasion of an individual's most personal space.

This strong externalisation of the personal and internal is expository but can also be considered a mark of honesty. Does Schwitters's work

(and its message) attain greater authenticity through its transparency (an expression of Dada's frequent expression that 'what you see is what you get')? 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 suggested through *Fountain*. Where *Fountain* does this by emphasising the moment, however, the *Merzbild* works achieve a similar effect by constantly building upon the same space: instead of expanding the edges of the canvas, the locus perhaps of the work's temporal limitations, 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 the 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 de Duve and Rosalind Krauss claim, referring to the fact that the only remaining form of the 'original' *Fountain* is its photograph in the Dada magazine *The Blind Man*,

> *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, p. 89)

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, both are initially removed in a logically normal fashion; 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 evidenced 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.pag.), 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 interaction of the artist highlights the 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 it has recently been reported that 'the problem of legitimacy remains relevant as unauthorised urinals have been discovered circulating in Italy' (*The Economist*, 2010, n.pag.). This varying and disputed dispersion of *Fountain* plays with the notion of the 'truth' and 'history' of Dada. The 'false' urinals also distort the idea of Dada deviance beyond the authorised multiple reproduction to the extent that censorship from the art world turns back on itself. Furthermore, the way in which the legitimacy of the urinals is conveyed continues to hinge on an ambiguity between seriousness and humour: in the art world, the unauthorised is quite a serious issue in terms of both intellectual property and financial attribution; the language in which this is reported (combining the solemnity of the word 'unauthorised' with the straightforward and literal toilet humour of 'urinals'), however, seems one that would appeal to Duchamp's sense of ludic manipulation of history.

In contrast with Duchamp's varying, if not flippant, attitude towards preservation of his work, Schwitters's Merz building works were 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). There is a marked tension between 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. Moreover it inspires us to ask, how does this tension relate to the re-commissioning of works, compared with the careful reconstruction by the artist themselves? This conflict draws upon a fundamental issue in artistic reproduction: re-commissioning can simultaneously be considered a deliberate distancing between the artist and the work, and an inauthentic reproduction (a process and attitude that could arguably also have been 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-identicality. This relationship creates a hierarchy of identicality in contrasting these works with the photography discussed in Chapter 2. Both types of work are not identical to their originals, but the photograph is demonstrably 'more identical' than the reproduction.

(Anti-)altercations with Authority

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', 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' (*AA*, p. 122). This aggression led to a problematic postwar atmosphere, in that there was a sudden void or vacuum created by the removal of wartime constraints. These reactions are readily comparable to the varying responses to the plague, from medical resistance to the illness to escape attempts, as well as authorities' reactions to these reactions to the plague, from quarantine to the imposition of prison sentences.

Responses to Dada events from both the public and the authorities proved wildly varying, just as Dada itself was the same in no two cities. 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*, p. 39). This unusual response may have been caused precisely by the setting: Dada events provoked interaction and live response; the gallery setting gave an opportunity for quiet contemplation, a most un-Dada sentiment. This different atmosphere did not prevent the works being labelled 'frightful' (*AA*, p. 39), 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 scenes of disruption did occur, something that Richter puts down to 'envy' and 'vanity' (*AA*, p. 40). 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 reaction was in no small part due to frequent misleading advertising on the part of the Dadas themselves, who often advertised rather more serious events that were by no means an accurate representation of the actual programme ahead. This deception had the effect not only of drawing a different, specific type of audience, but also lent 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.

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 'les journaux publièrent des décrets qui renouvelaient l'interdiction de sortir et menaçaient de peines de prison les contrevenants' [the newspapers published decrees that renewed the ban on going out and threatened those who broke it with prison sentences] (*P*, p. 119). As we have seen, in neither case did these interventions stop the proliferation of that which it sought to contain. It would in fact seem 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,

perhaps through loss of business, perhaps through fear of persecution once the quarantine was lifted.

A particularly strong Dada 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, p. 93)

Herzfelde and Doherty go on to explain that the organisers were subject to fines of 900 Marks, accused of slandering the German military through their inclusion of the work *Gott mit uns* [God [is] with us] in this public exhibition. 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. This notion of unacceptability hinges on a delicate balance of ethics: as we saw through the trials of Meursault (particularly in contrast with the faults of the immoral Sintès) and Barrès (particularly through the contradictory accusations of the Dadas), placement on an ethical scale can have a conflicting relationship with logical extremities.

The example of Dada's explicit reference to divine authority can be compared with the two key 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 until the point of the plague have 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' [they were more willing to wear protective medallions […] than they were to go to mass], 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' [this type of spectacle no longer held the lure of novelty for our fellow citizens] (*P*, p. 224). Instructively it is at this point that Paneloux 'ne disait plus "vous", mais "nous"' [no longer said "you", but rather "us"] (*P*, p. 225), an ironic sense of complicity that we saw in *Gott mit uns*. The changing religious attitudes of the citizens of Oran are 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 the fact that they were met with rejection, and both simultaneously broke down and maintained 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, p. 197)

Though Goldsmith refers only to the readymades, his statement can be used to link these two manifestations. Both the Dada Fair and the ready-

mades 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, p. 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 to incorporate changing context. 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.

The Dada Fair was also widely reviewed, on national and international levels. Herzfelde and Doherty write that 'most of those reviews were hostile, a good number venomously so' (2003, p. 94). However, we know that Dada thrived on hostility from its audience, and the press thus spread the word of Dada without necessarily meaning to promote it. This inadvertent promotion was also a phenomenon that occurred in Paris Dada, particularly in relation 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*, p. 182)

This relationship with the press can be compared to *Le Courrier de l'Épidémie*, a newspaper in *La Peste* 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["]' [with the task of 'informing our fellow citizens, with scrupulous objectivity its concern, about the spread or decline of the disease; to provide authorised testimonies

of the future of the epidemic [']] (*P*, p. 125). While the press in general maintains 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' [very quickly limited itself to advertising new products that were infallible for preventing the plague] (*P*, p. 126), Dada used its own little press to (falsely) advertise products that neither worked nor existed, such as the perfume *Belle Haleine* [Beautiful Breath] (a 1921 readymade by Duchamp and Man Ray) or the hair product *Haarstärkendes Kopfwasser* [Hair-strengthening Head Water]. 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. This is particularly visible through the high level of ambiguity maintained between content and advertising.

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*" […] An appropriate accompaniment to the poems, manifestoes and sketches of Paul Dermée, Éluard, Tzara, Ribemont-Dessaignes and Breton!' (*AA*, p. 181f; 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. This flattery is reflected in the vocabulary of the statement, through the celebratory tone of 'appropriate accompaniment'. 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, p. 125). Furthermore, a large number 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' (Sanouillet 2009, p. 126). This latter statement highlights the delicate relationship between rejection of the unwanted and delight in the disapproved-of, a sense of not wanting to look while wanting to see.

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 they had 'attended the funeral of Dada' (in Sanouillet 2009, p. 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, through its use of the press Dada always ran the risk of being absorbed or integrated by it: as we saw in the readymades, once zero-point shock has been reached, aestheticisation and acceptance are not far behind. In addition to censorship by external sources, these events show examples of Dada's own self-censorship. At the Festival Dada, one of the Dadas allegedly called the police to help out with a troublesome attendee, who may well have been a Dada themselves. Whether or not this reporting to the police is true, 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 a motivation that we might compare with Sartre's statement that 'le seul plan sur lequel on peut situer le refus du sujet, c'est celui de la censure' [the only level on which we can situate the refusal of the subject is the censor] (*EN*, p. 87), that is, the 'refusal of the subject' as the 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. These examples of censorship demonstrate 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, p. 30). Bad press may represent a form of censorship, but in Dada's case it allowed a continuation of its own anti-self. These

Chinese whispers would prove varyingly successful in the construction of Dada's posthumous legacy.

What's New About Neo-Dada?

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 (in Kuenzli 2006b, p. 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. But how does the Neo-Dada resurgence, which involved none of the original Dadas, reconcile itself with the original movement? Burton Wasserman tells us that 'as 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, p. 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. Reactions to and criticism of Neo-Dada by the Dadas themselves can be analysed to draw out the positive aspects of this re-birth of the movement, investigating the reciprocity of Dada and Neo-Dada art. This link also has an important relationship with Dada's state or status today, as illustrated by continued exhibitions dedicated to the movement, its members and its legacy.

Since our analysis of Neo-Dada is to focus on the return of the rats and the recuperation of the population, let us briefly revisit the readymades. Goldsmith claims that 'rather 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, p. 200). It is useful to 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*, p. 266f)
>
> [That's it!, he said, they are coming out again. | Who? | Well, the rats! | Since April, not a single dead rat had been found. | Is it going to start again?, said Tarrou to Rieux. The old man rubbed his hands together. | You have to see them run! It's a pleasure. | He had seen two live rats come into his house through the gate to the street. Neighbours had told him that the animals had reappeared in their houses, too. In certain buildings, we could again hear the commotion that had been forgotten for months. Rieux waited for the publication of general statistics that took place at the beginning of each week. They revealed a decline of the disease.]

The similarities that Neo-Dada has with original Dada are evident not only through materials and style in their art works, but also through a 'Dada-like sense of paradox and ambiguity' (MoCA 2010, n.pag.). 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 as alive and going about their daily business was celebrated. This symmetry can be posited in relation to Neo-Dada, which in its commercialised, museum-friendly form, represented this 'decline of the disease' of Dada.

Among Neo-Dada's primary material characteristics was a penchant for found objects and performance, which mimics some of Dada's favoured art forms. Beyond this, the movements shared a number of 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. Justin Wolf 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 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 (including through the re-commissioning of lost art works), but also 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 'the 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*, p. 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 'uncompromising revolt has been replaced by unconditional adjustment' (*AA*, p. 205). 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 'with 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, p. 222). This goes against Dada's fundamentally unserious initial gesture, and integrates the movement into a new respectability that is a form of censorship in its own right. Yet from an academic standpoint, the move represents a productive instigation of the consideration of the deeper meaning of the ostensibly meaningless. Despite not being involved in Neo-Dada itself, 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*, p. 203). Two examples of Neo-Dada art are particularly useful to analyse 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: Robert Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953), and Roy Lichtenstein's *I Can See the Whole Room…and There's Nobody in It!* (1961).

Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* is a piece that was a deliberate provocation and interrogation of the nature of the work of art.[3] 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.pag.). Despite its seeming originality, however, we can propose a direct precedent in Dada happenings.

[3] 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).

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 chalk on a blackboard and erased on the stage; that is to say, the picture was only valid for two hours. (in Young 1981, p. 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 (probably unknowing) rip-off of the Picabia, 'imitat[ing] the fall, but not the raindrop'? If the 'fall' were 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—diverge in a number of ways. 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 work destroys its own notion of erasure, since it is carefully preserved. However, we might wonder if this instead represents 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, in a very candid assessment of the failings of its own investigation:

> 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, patri-

> cide, destruction, or, as Rauschenberg once suggested, celebration? *Erased de Kooning Drawing* eludes easy answers and stands as a landmark of post-war art. (SFMoMA 2013, n.pag.)

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 post-war 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 ultimately the most successful in the act of removal.

The persistent inclusion of Rauschenberg's *Erased de Kooning Drawing* in the art world brings to mind Schwitters's statement that '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' (cf. Schwitters in Lippard 1971, p. 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 designated 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' [freedom […] is the project of doing in a resistant world, through victory over its resistances] (*EN*, p. 552; emphasis removed). The art world rails against the invisible drawing, and even when revealed, the drawing resists closure. Picabia's drawing furthers this tension, through resisting being seen in a more permanent way.

The second example that can be compared to a Dada's 'original' is Lichtenstein's 1961 *I Can See the Whole Room…and There's Nobody in It!*. 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* [Givens] (1946–1966), 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 explored in Chapter 3, particularly through the notion of the keyhole or vignette that draws attention to the viewer as viewed, as subject and object. 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, p. 170).

Lichtenstein's work interacts with the gaze in a similar way to this depiction of *Olympia*'s provocation, 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 subjected to the character's gaze and speech bubble comment, and negated by his claim that there is 'nobody there'. This furthermore plays with the notion of the (ir)relevance of the viewer, and of their precarious relationship with the permanence of the work of art. It is notable that Lichtenstein's is a flattened version of this viewing scene, which not only emphasises monocular vision—and thus implicit flattened perspective—but it also has nothing 'behind' it, besides 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.

Peterson's claim that Duchamp plays a game of 'hide and seek with posterity' (cf. Peterson 2000, p. 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, through *Roue de bicyclette* in its forcibly static status: *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. Duchamp manipulates and foregrounds this tension through constructing the 'floor' of

the installation as a chess board. It is as if the artist 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, and indeed for the very purpose of dedicating himself to the art of playing chess.

On first glance the examples of art works just analysed highlight 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. However, we might posit a less divisive stance through a shared characteristic of expansion of artistic boundaries in both Dada and Neo-Dada, as well as an expansion *through* destruction highlighted throughout this book. An additional counter to the division of these movements is the fact that Duchamp's secret work *Étant donnés* unknowingly crosses the temporal divide between movements, while not claiming to belong to either. Duchamp expands upon 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 continually undermines 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).

We might furthermore draw these comparisons in 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 we can 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 'the 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 dignity to death' (1948, p. 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

These examples of Dada interaction with censorship, as well as its continued legacy within the art world, demonstrate 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 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*, p. 36f)
>
> [Thus a creative liberty develops happily, without ever freezing in unjustified facticity. The creator leans on past creations to create the possibility of new creations; their present project embraces the past and brings to liberty a confidence that is never denied. At each moment, the creator reveals being for a final unveiling; at each moment their freedom is confirmed across the whole of creation.]

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. Dada shows us that sometimes we seek such experience for precisely this reason. We saw that Richter suggested 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*, p. 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.

Neo-Dada sought not only to resuscitate Dada but also to redefine its principles for its own purposes. Peter 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, p. 132). While we might argue that Neo-Dada presented a fully institutionalised—perhaps 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' (Bürger 1984, p. 57). Bürger explains that this is because 'the neo-avant-garde institutionalizes the *avant-garde as art* and thus negates genuinely avant-gardiste intentions' (1984, p. 58; original emphasis). Yet it seems that Bürger is simply 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 pre-

fabricated object (as with *Fountain*), but from an established tradition of disruption. As Breton noted, 'a work of art has value only in so far as it quivers with reflections of the future' (cited in Benjamin 2008, p. 48n). Perhaps Neo-Dada is evidence, then, of Dada's success: a collection of reflections of this original quivering. Based on these quiverings, we can posit 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*, p. 38f)
>
> [In truth, in order that my freedom not risk dying because of the obstacle that its very engagement provoked, in order that it be able, through failure, to pursue its motion, it is necessary that my freedom should aim across a singular content that it gives to itself at an end that is no single thing, but precisely the free movement of existence.]

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, 'which is no single thing', can then be suggested as 'precisely the free movement of existence'.

Through drawing again upon the themes of choice and subjectivity, as well as the creative interpretation of reality, we can posit the notion of alterity as a creative state of being. Dada and Existentialism both interrogated and worked within the margin of acceptability, challenging and manipulating attempts at normalisation of deviation from standard behavioural patterns. Freedom is often found precisely through censorship, and indeed the censored and the shocking are only temporarily so. On problematising Dada's (retrospective) relationship with Neo-Dada, one might expect 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 acceptance, we might argue that shock has become not non-shock, but anti-shock. Indeed, through the all-pervasive invasion and integration of these two art forms through both the art world and culture at large, and in a final analogy with our disease-ridden narratives of *La Peste*, 'tout le monde, aujourd'hui, se trouve un peu pestiféré' [everyone, today, finds themselves to be a little plague-stricken] (*P*, p. 255).

6

Truth and Travesties in the Telling and Retelling of Dada (Hi)Stories

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 Dadas 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 'Dada ne signifie rien' [Dada means nothing] (in *D3*, p. 1).[1] Pegrum explains that 'the word Dada itself has

[1] 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

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an undermining, destabilising function', and that Picabia thought that its unique importance sprang from the way in which it 'rest[e] le même dans toutes les langues, ne précisant rien, ne limitant rien' [remains the same in all languages, clarifying nothing, limiting nothing] (in Pegrum 2000, p. 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 revelled 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 'my proposal to call it Dada is accepted' (*FT*, p. 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 'the 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*, p. 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*, p. 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 *AA*, p. 32). Tzara's statement reflects the performative nature of his 'characteristic' immodesty,[2] and is in part denied by Arp's claim that 'I hereby declare that Tzara 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 wear-

nothing. I use the word 'most' based on a sample of seventy languages, fifty-one of which present coherent meaning for 'da' or 'dada'.

[2] 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 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' [thrown into a deep depression, Tzara had trouble leaving his room] (2002, p. 60). This reveals a dependence on both activity and the presence of others which somewhat undermines the notion of his indefatigable confidence.

ing a brioche in my left nostril' (in *AA*, p. 32). 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 Rex Last claims, 'in a real sense, there are as many 'Dadas' as there are Dadaists' (in Sheppard 2000, p. 172), what meaningful conclusions 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? Should we accept that of Huelsenbeck, who wrote notoriously bitter accounts—including accusing Tzara of having 'permitted himself to live all his life off a fame for an arrogated founding of dada' (1974, p. 103)—and vied for leadership with other members of the movement? Should we believe 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 should we depend on Tzara, who is 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 examines 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 explores the importance of writing as not only a documenting of, but also a (de)construction of, the self. As Chapter 5 traced freedom through censorship, so Chapter 6 evaluates 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 I consider the memoirs of Richter (*Dada: Art and Anti-art*, 1965) and Huelsenbeck (*Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, 1974). These are 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 splash of 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 I 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 are compared with Sartre's *La Nausée* (Nausea), 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 are 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,* n.d., n. pag.).

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 are 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. Discussion of 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 regard to the process of editing. These texts are deliberately analysed in approximately reverse chronological order, so as to begin from the idea of the most distant memory of Dada (as defined by inevitable loss through temporal distance), and progress toward the most concentrated and 'in the moment' idea of Dada values.

Truth and Lies, Faith and Disguise

Before analysing our key texts, it 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* (n.d.)). 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*[3] states (on *Tzara*) that 'he is obviously trying to pass himself off as a spy' (*T*, p. 12), and later, that 'to *masquerade* as a decadent nihilist—or at any rate to ruminate in different colours and display the results in the Bahnhofstrasse—would be hypocritical' (*T*, p. 47; original emphasis). The pertinent underlying similarities and differences between the two terms 'truth' and 'travesty' 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, our analysis must take into account the specifically 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: this attitude has a delicate relationship with 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 'la 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*' [knowledge brings us face to face with the absolute and there is a truth of knowledge. But this truth, even if it gives us no more or less than the absolute, *remains strictly human*] (*EN*, p. 255; my emphasis). Merleau-Ponty's theories provide a continuation of 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 l'existence de ce monde-ci' [all of my truths *are after all only obvious to me* and for a way of thinking such as my own, they are united in my

[3] 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.

psychophysiological constitution and the existence of this world] (*PP*, p. 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' [to obtain their truth the individual must not try to dispel the ambiguity of their being, but rather to accept and embody it] (*MA*, p. 19). These Existentialist approaches to truth find their match in Dada writing, most notably through Ball, who claimed that the psychologist 'knows a hundred different truths, and one is as true to him as another' (*FT*, p. 7).

Truth is productively connected to its opposite, the lie, or untruth, through Beauvoir, who posits 'les vérités *nécessairement partielles* que dévoile tout engagement humain' [truths that are *necessarily partial* that reveal all human engagement] (*MA*, p. 87; my emphasis). The homonymically dual function of the English word 'partial' is instructive in relation to subjectivity of truth because truth is individual and based in choice. 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*' [the word 'lie' has meaning through opposition with 'truth' established by people themselves, but Humanity cannot mystify itself entirely because *it is precisely humanity that creates the criteria for truth and falsehood*] (*MA*, p. 195; my emphasis). We can extend this subjectivity while relating back to Chapter 3 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' [the truth or falsehood of an experience should not consist of its relationship to an external reality] (*PP*, p. 393).

Fitting with the 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' [the essence of the lie implies, in fact, that the liar is completely aware of the truth that they are covering up] (*EN*, p. 82), and furthermore that 'il 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 inté-

grantes de la vérité, à titre de conduites mensongères' [there is a *truth* in the behaviour of the deceiver: if the deceived were able to connect this behaviour to the situation of the deceiver and their lie, it would become an integral part of the truth, by way of lying behaviour] (*EN*, p. 84f; 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*, pp. 191–92). To select points that are key to the current argument, he instructively notes that 'le doute paraît sur le fond d'une compréhension préontologique du *connaître* et d'exigences concernant le vrai' [doubt appears against a background of a preontological understanding of *knowledge* and of requirements concerning the truth] (*EN*, p. 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*, p. 191f).
>
> [To discover oneself doubting is already to be ahead of oneself in the future which contains the goal, ending and meaning of this doubt, behind oneself in the past which contains the constitutive motivations of doubt and its phases, outside of oneself in the world as a presence to the subject of one's doubt.]

Sartre's discussion of the importance of doubt is reminiscent of a frequently occurring (sarcastic) line in *Travesties*: 'Intellectual curiosity is not so common that one can afford to discourage it' (*T*, p. 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 point of view of Dada's desire not only to *épater la bourgeoisie* (shock the 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' [Dada doubts everything], and warned 'méfiez-vous de Dada' [beware of Dada] (1996, p. 227). Perhaps this is part of a wider incitement for the reader to question traditions and narratives. Furthermore, in weaving falsities into the recording of history, Dada activities promote and celebrate Sartre's notion of 'discovering oneself doubting', as well as being 'ahead of oneself in the future', 'behind oneself in the past', and 'outside of oneself in the world as a presence to the subject of one's doubt'. 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. Our exploration of Dada film demonstrated Dada's desire to evoke this ambiguity through states of dreaming. Here we can link it to the truth through Tzara, who theorised that 'le sommeil est un jardin entouré de doutes. On ne distingue pas la vérité du mensonge' [Sleep is a garden surrounded by doubts. It is not possible to distinguish the truth from the lie] (cited in Buot 2002, p. 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 nécessaire vers les vérités ou les valeurs plus complètes que j'ai renconnues dans la suite. Mes vérités ont été construites avec ces erreurs et les entraînent dans leur éternité (*PP*, p. 454).
>
> [there is not one of my actions, not one of my even incorrect thoughts, from the moment that I have adhered to it, that is not directed towards a value or a truth and that does not consequently keep its relevance in my ongoing life not only as an indelible fact, but also as a necessary step towards the most complete truths and values that I have consequently known. My truths have been constructed with these errors and take them with them in their eternity.]

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' [without failure, there can be no morals] (*MA*, p. 15). 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' [everything is truth in one's consciousness] (*PP*, p. 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's *Travesties* (1975) is a fictional account of the fictional meeting of Henry Carr with Tristan Tzara, James Joyce, and Lenin in wartime Zurich, all loosely based around the plot of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). The play puts forward a collection of retellings by a rather senile *Carr*, giving a similar effect to that created by Dada's various reports and diaries. *Travesties* integrates a number of postmodern techniques that are shared with its Dada counterpart, including playfulness, intertextuality, and of course fabulation. 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 cross-over.

Stoppard based his historical references on Richter's account, as well as Motherwell's *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1989).[4] Yet *Travesties* is a self-aware, self-confessedly less-than-accurate account: is this attitude 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

[4] Huelsenbeck details that even during the production of Motherwell's anthology a dispute broke out between Tzara and himself, allegedly over content (Huelsenbeck 1974, pp. 80–81), proving that perceptions of the movement and its historicisation differed, and that adherents never stopped vying for leadership.

that these figures might have met and what they could have said', and furthermore that 'truth is not only imaginative but irregular' (2008, p. 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; 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. Richter supports the claim (in *AA*, p. 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, p. 50f).
>
> [I can say that I personally knew Lenin in Zurich, with whom I played chess. But to my great shame, I must admit that at that point, I didn't know that Lenin was Lenin. I learned that much later.]

Whether this is true or part of a long-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'.

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*, p. 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, p. 483).

As a text that has little or no known connection to Dada or its adherents, and certainly no claim to a link by its author, *Travesties* not only demonstrates 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 named a Dada text in its own right, making us wonder whether Stoppard him-

self could be dubbed the (or a) 'New Dada' (cf. Huelsenbeck on Sartre). 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*, p. 10).

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. Richter's description of Dada as fragments of a mirror also reiterates our findings in Chapter 2 on the subjectivity of selfhood, the possibility of constructing and reconstructing, interpreting and reinterpreting, one's own identity.

The content of Richter's *Art and Anti-Art* has taken a central role throughout this book, but here I would like to 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 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*, p. 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. *Carr* gets around this by claiming

that 'No apologies required, constant digression being the saving grace of senile reminiscence' (*T*, p. 6). Here the construction of memory asserts its priority over the truthfulness of the account.

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*, p. 9).

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 own 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*, p. 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? It is precisely this ambiguity that makes his work a key player in the history of Dada, gently reminding us that though the text is one of the most comprehensive pieces of documentation of Dada, it is also written by a Dada member.

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 that this text is a collage of fond memories of a movement that refused definition, faithfully preserved in its ambiguity and productively incorporative of 'errors' (cf. Beauvoir (*MA*, pp. 38–39); Merleau-Ponty (*PP*, p. 454)). Richter's text highlights an often overlooked cross-over 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 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. This is particularly visible in the historicised 'character' of Tzara. I would argue that this began through the creation of the name: on taking on a multifaceted moniker—with meanings in French, German and Romanian—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 coincidence: often German(ic) members changed their names to distance themselves from national or political association.

Nadel's suggestion that *Travesties* is a 'merging or collapsing of identities' is an effect that comes across in Richter's account, which as we have seen displays an occasional lack of differentiation between 'characters'. However, through the constant need to reinvent oneself 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 move beyond a merging of identities and posit 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 'on 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' [we do not love the past in its living truth if we stubbornly maintain fixed and mummified forms. The past is a call, a call towards the future which sometimes can only save the past by destroying it] (*MA*, p. 118). Dada accounts demonstrate a need to both consider the truth a living (and thus malleable) present entity, but also a desire to change any potential future(s), and moreover that Dada embodied fundamentally more than the simple negation of the past that the movement is often considered to be.

Brigitte Pichon states that 'the writing of history is the writing—the construction—of stories' (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996, p. 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, 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 newspapers in Switzerland and beyond:

> 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*, p. 34).

This report introduces falsehood in varyingly obvious levels, backed up with varying levels of authority. The publication in the press of this account endows upon it a certain degree of reality, but the depiction of events does not seem particularly likely (especially to contemporaneous readers familiar with the young Dada movement). Nevertheless the final words referring to the authority of the public prosecutor's office add an element of doubt to the parody, especially because Dada had regular interaction with this particular authority.

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*, p. 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.[5] Huelsenbeck notes that the report was 'a COMPLETE FABRICATION from someone wishing us ill' (in *ZC*, p. 34). 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 (*ZC*, p. 34). 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.

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'

[5] 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*, p. 58). Is Heer's denied presence another Dada-style prank on the part of the poet?

(2000, p. 181). One may be naturally more inclined to believe or respect the printed word, especially that of a newspaper, despite the fact that evidently neither being published, nor simply claiming something as fact, makes it true. The press is a longstanding example of the construction of daily events and thus cultural history. But what are the consequences and effects on the reader of discovering that such an established authority is vulnerable to undermining? And how does this relationship with authority affect the creators of the fiction? The creator is allowed the possibility of freely presenting or inventing truth and fiction, and the reader is obliged to interpret what they see, rather than blindly accepting it.

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*, pp. 66f; 67). This collection of statements 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, it seems appropriate to suggest that, beyond this aim, Dada was asserting its own authority, by levelling notions of reliability, that is, by rendering equal the notions of reliability and unreliability; authority and lack thereof/anti-authority. As a self-reflexive product of this manipulated authority, Dada's effort represents an attempt to undermine authority, level authority, *and* undermine itself as authority: a compound and perpetually replicating process that we began to explore through the concepts of authority and deviance.

The oral invention of the word Dada may have been openly ambiguous, but Richter writes that 'the word Dada first appeared *in print* at the Cabaret Voltaire on 15th June 1916; this is a fact' (*AA*, p. 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 (the term has been around in some form since the seventeenth century), 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 towards 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 (1974) is a collection of essays by Huelsenbeck, written after the Dada period. Huelsenbeck's account is an aggressive attempt to reassert his role in Dada, despite his denial of any association when he moved to the United States. This cross-continental migration combined with denial 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, seemingly to embrace his new life in Zurich, Huelsenbeck changed his name, to Charles R. Hulbeck, on leaving Europe, 'motivated by a desire to relinquish Dada completely' (Kleinschmidt in Huelsenbeck 1974, p. xxiii). However, he was one of the only Dadas to claim that Dada never died, claiming that 'it has never grown old and even today, after fifty years, it shows no symptoms of old age or senility' (Huelsenbeck 1974, p. 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 different 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, alludes to Duchamp not only through the play's title, but also through his characters Martello and Beauchamp, whose phonetic similarity cannot be accidental.[6] 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 begins in 1972, moves through 1922 and 1920 to a centre of 1914, and then systematically reverses back to 1972. This structuring gives the feel of a deliberate manipulation of memory as 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 5. 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

Moving on from Richter's and Huelsenbeck's texts as Dada 'memoirs', Ball's *Flight out of Time: a Dada Diary* (1974) is a subtly different medium for the documenting of the self. Although all three texts (Ball's, Richter's

[6] 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.

and Huelsenbeck's) were adapted for publication, only Ball's was written at the time of Dada, in the form of a journal. 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. We saw that Richter's first 'rule' for the validity of accounts not only stressed the high status of published documents of the movement, but also included the diary as an important means of recording the period as it happened. In this respect it is worthwhile considering the role of fiction that is written in this way. Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938) is particularly instructive to analyse because the novel highlights the importance of diaries or accounts in a diary style, 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). *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* (1943). Being and Nothingness.

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. […] Secondly, the journal-form allows for the interpenetration of past and present, of action and comment, such as we see in Proust (1948, p. 63).

To take this further than Rimbaud and Proust, we might compare Sartre's flow of fragments to the Dada simultaneous poems, as we saw in Chapter 2, 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. Throughout *La Nausée* 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 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, p. 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. 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' [at least, not the *whole* truth] (*N*, p. 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 'je viens d'apprendre, brusquement, sans raison apparente, que je me suis menti pendant dix ans' [I have just learned, suddenly, for no apparent reason, that I have been lying to myself for ten years] (*N*, p. 61).

This statement from Roquentin has a strange relationship with the diary process. Indeed the character had earlier noted that '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 verité' [I think that is the danger of keeping a diary: you exaggerate everything, you are on the look-out, you constantly force the truth] (*N*, p. 13). How can we reconcile the ability to (accidentally or deliberately) lie to oneself with the need to 'constantly force the truth'? We do not necessarily need to consider Roquentin's worry about his self-deception as a time-span to be written off: rather, we can explicate it as a sudden 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*, p. 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. Roquentin's 'realisation' that he had been lying to himself may then be itself an exaggeration: at the time of writing, he believed he was recording the truth, and thus it is a form of truth in its own right. It only becomes falsehood on the changing nature of truth(s) over time. Yet remembering, forgetting, and documentation all 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' [I was not a grandfather, nor a father, nor even a husband. I did not vote, I barely paid any taxes] (*N*, p. 127). Perhaps it is his lack of influence on others that compels him to record himself for posterity: furthermore, this need to record would inevitably affect the self-awareness of his writing style.

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*, pp. 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, p. 705).

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*, p. 66). Ball's

comment manages to simultaneously remind the reader of the daily horror of wartime mass slaughter and the existentially troubling notion of the unusually heightened awareness of one's own mortality. It is also a reminder of the inevitable alienation of the self from the idea of one's death: we simply cannot completely conceive of our own non-existence, and thus this thought produces an anxious tension of thinking about the self as object, while not being able to detach from the self as subject. 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*, p. 13; original emphasis).

Richter's interpretation of Ball's world view presents an individual confronting the absurd, yet maintaining an optimistic outlook despite professed scepticism.

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:

> 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, p. 706).

This relationship is additionally highlighted by the Autodidact, who asks Roquentin at one point, 'N'écrit-on pas toujours pour être lu?' [Don't we always write with a view to being read?] (*N*, p. 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. Notably, although Ball edited his work for publication, it still reads as an incredibly personal, intimate account. This makes the reader wonder whether Ball deliberately exposed his life in this way in order to highlight the vulnerability of the self in general, but also specifically in the wartime context that provided the backdrop for his text.

Tzara's 'Zurich Chronicle' is significantly shorter and less detailed than Ball's. It 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 has become 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 it relates.

This varying detail is a characteristic of *La Nausée*, and is particularly noticeable when Roquentin begins his entry with 'rien de nouveau' [nothing new] (for example *N*, p. 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 'nothing new' 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*, p. 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*, p. 15). This must have given a particularly ominous feel in the Niederdorf quarter—location of the Cabaret Voltaire—with its narrow medieval streets lined with tall buildings.

Tzara's entry dated June 1916 contains a passage summarising the activities and development of Cabaret Voltaire:

> 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*, p. 18; original formatting).

The ferocious energy with which this is described implies that this entry is significant in relation to the development of events as well as the diary more widely, 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*, pp. 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, whose work would have revolved around manipulation of colours and forms. Tzara states in his May 1919 entry: 'Inaugurate different colours for the joy of transchromatic disequilibrium and the portable circus velodrome of camouflaged sensations' (*ZC*, p. 34). Unlike Tzara, however, who revels in this disruption of chromatic normalcy, Roquentin's sensitivity to colour is disquieting to him when he does not yet understand his nausea. He reports an episode of discomfort that focuses 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*, p. 37f).
>
> [The braces barely show up against the blue shirt, they are all faded, buried in the blue, but it is with false modesty: in fact, they do not let themselves be forgotten, they bother me with their pig-headed stubbornness, as if, starting out with the aim to become purple, they had stopped mid-way without abandoning their aim.]

The nature of these episodes creates an ambiguity and alienation that, while initially disquieting, promotes an increased realisation of the subjectivity of perception. This tension is highlighted particularly strongly by Roquentin's choice of vocabulary: the use of adjectives such as 'effacé' [faded] and 'enfoui' [buried] contrast with verbs such as 'agacer' [to bother] and nouns such as 'entêtement' [stubbornness] in such a way as to create a gentle yet abrasive description that is at once passive and active, harmless and nauseating.

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 longer and more detailed, documenting the early days of the Cabaret Voltaire, but then a shorter series escalate through 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 'the 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*, p. 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. This is

further emphasised by the use of upper case, exaggerating the highlighted words in a way that is the visual equivalent of shouting. We have seen that repetition interrogates the notions of identicality and, through it, authenticity. It is therefore logical that repetition of Dada events should be undesirable. We might even wonder if this is the reason why 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 (in the form of 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 (1979, p. 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 useful to the scholar of Dada because it documents the earliest days of the movement 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. Ball reported the purpose of the movement and its review as *rejecting* nationalism and labels, but which aspects did the Dadas *promote*? Identifying these values will give an idea of how this heterogeneous movement wanted to be represented, as such allowing a nascent Dada philosophy to come to the fore.

Manifestos, Morals and Mindsets

Through an assessment of Dada accounts and diaries, as well as interaction with the written word in previous chapters, it is evident that Dada's relationship with published material included 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. Stoppard illustrates Dada's opinions on the fickle nature of words in a debate between *Carr* and *Tzara*:

> 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*, p. 21)

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. And as Huelsenbeck claimed, 'Dada is the desire for a new morality' (1974, p. 141). Perhaps the most direct proclamation of morals and values is in the manifestos, an active declaration of the Dada self. Let us take two examples of these manifestos to investigate Dada morality: Tzara's infamous 'Manifeste Dada 1918' (published in the eponymous review *Dada* (*D*3)) and Picabia's 1920 'Dada Philosophe' (published 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' [A work of art is never beautiful, by decree, objectively, for everyone.

Criticism is thus useless, it exists only subjectively, for each individual, and with no element of universality] (*D3*, p. 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' [I do not have the right to drag others into my river, I do not force anyone to follow me and everyone makes their art in their own way] (*D3*, p. 1). We have seen that Sartre believes that we choose in a way 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 'ceux qui appartiennent à nous gardent leur liberté' [those who belong to us retain their freedom] (*D3*, p. 1). Through this idea Tzara directly confronts philosophy, defying critics who claim that Dada did not engage with it. Indeed although his discussion of it is characteristically humorous, Tzara raises philosophical issues that have real value:

> 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 (*D3*, p. 2).
>
> [Philosophy is the question: which angle from which to start to look at life, God, ideas, or other spectres. Everything we look at is false. I do not consider more important the relative result than the choice between cake and cherries after dinner]

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, 'il n'y a pas de dernière Vérité' [there is no final truth] (*D3*, p. 2). 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 that 'everything is truth in one's consciousness' (*PP*, p. 437).

Existentialism is often (falsely) accused of indifference. Indeed Sartre noted early on that 'on lui a d'abord reproché d'inviter les gens à demeurer dans un quiétisme du désespoir' [it has been reproached for inviting

people to live in a state of desperate quietism] (*EH*, p. 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' [I call Idon'tgiveadamnism [*sic*] the state of existence where each individual keeps their own conditions, knowing all the while how to respect other individualities, other than defending oneself] (*D3*, p. 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 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 (*D3*, p. 3).
>
> [Morality has determined charity and pity, two dumplings that have grown up like elephants, planets, and that we call good. They have nothing good about them. Goodness is lucid, clear and decided, ruthless towards compromise and politics. Morality is the infusion of chocolate in the veins of all individuals. This task is not organised by a supernatural force, but by the trust of traders of ideas and academic monopolisers]

By rejecting bygone morals created by another, Dada takes responsibility for its own ethical position, as evidenced in Chapter 4 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*, p. 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 'only contrast links us to the past' (in Jakobson 1987, p. 39). Additionally, both of these quotations can be linked to Beauvoir's statement that 'we do not love the past in its living truth if we stubbornly maintain fixed and mummified forms' (*MA*, p. 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*, p. 49).
>
> [In the service of their narrow and unchanging little ideas he put his authority and immense scholarship drawn from the in-folios crushed in his heavy hand. The women in black felt relieved, they could quietly tend to their household duties, walk their dogs: the virtuous ideas, the good ideas that they held onto from their fathers, they no longer had the responsibility of defending these ideas; a bronze man made himself their caretaker.]

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 cited at the beginning of the chapter, that of the supranational aims of Dada and the Cabaret Voltaire (both the place and the 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 2. 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' [DADA has a porcelain ass, with a French look] (*L*13, p. 5). We may wonder whether this reference to porcelain represents a fragile purity as well as a 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.* ['elle a chaud au cul', roughly 'she has a hot ass'], where we could replace the implicit 'chaud' with a phonetically identical whitewashing metaphor to create 'elle [la France?] a [de la] chaux au cul' [she [France?] has a whitewashed arse]. This would create yet another stinging Dada invective that accuses national interests of hiding undesirable qualities. 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' [changeable and nervous, DADA is a hammock that rocks and swings gently] (*L*13, p. 5). Not only does this changeability depend upon a balance of contradiction supported by Beauvoirian ambiguity, but also Picabia then goes on to claim that 'nous ignorons le chemin qu'il faut choisir' [we do not know which path we should take] (*L*13, p. 5): we have seen that in Sartrean thought, refraining from 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. Maurice 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*' [the most profound existential truths […] only express themselves through contradiction, which shows revolt itself with its emphasis on the *yes and the no*] (in Guérin, ed., p. 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' [the point at which the yes and the no and all contradictions meet] (in *Merz* 7, p. 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' [I am writing this manifesto to show that it is possible to perform opposing actions together, in a single fresh breath] (in *D3*, p. 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' [I write in order to clarify certain circumstances […] It is necessary to write off the cuff; without searching for words] and that 'J'ai besoin de me nettoyer avec des pensées abstraites, transparentes comme de l'eau' [I need to cleanse myself with abstract thoughts that are transparent like water] (*N*, p. 87). While contradiction and clarity may initially be unhappily combined, we can instead consider both types of writing active desires to interrogate thought and versions of the truth, especially through spontaneity ('without searching for words'). We have seen that Huelsenbeck explains the embracing of rejection by claiming that 'the fact that the Dadaists said no was less important than the manner in which they said it' (cf. *DE*, p. 144). This cements our notion that it is the telling that is key, rather than the certainty of the content portrayed.

Conclusion

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, p. 159). However, as Ades elucidates, 'whether 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' (ed. 2006, p. 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*, p. 80; my emphases).

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. 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, p. 195).

We can link notions of truth to the 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, p. 228). To add to this, in *Artist Descending*, *Sophie* is blind. We have seen through the exploration of reality in Chapter 3 that reality has no inherent structure, but is instead shaped by our own, personal experience of it: thus, it inevitably contains or represents chaos from time to time. 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*, p. 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 pressures. As Ball claimed, 'perfect skepticism makes perfect freedom possible' (*FT*, p. 59), and Tzara that 'comment veut-on ordonner le chaos qui constitue cette infinie informe variation: l'homme?' [how can we order the chaos that makes up this infinitely shapeless variation: man?] (in *D*3, p. 1).

The balance of chaos and order within reality has a strong link to the imaginary, which we have already assessed in terms of chaos in film and its links with the effect of pareidolia. Imagination allows us to plug gaps in the truth, as is indeed perfectly necessary in works such as *Travesties,* with its frequent slips and cuts. Applied to an account, imagination 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*, p. 64; original emphasis).
>
> [in order that the most banal event become an adventure, it is necessary and sufficient to start to tell it. That is what tricks people: a person is always a storyteller, they live surrounded by their stories and those of others, they see everything that happens to them through these stories, and they try to live their life as if they were telling it.]

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. For the Existentialists, the truth of something takes a backseat to a person's attitude towards it. This is notably illustrated 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' [the value of an act is not in its *conformity* to an external model, but in its internal truth] (*MA*, p. 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. This view of history and (hi)stories aligns with Sartre's views on temporality, particularly his theory of the non-existence of the past, present and future.

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' [it is because the individual's condition is ambiguous that through failure and scandal they try to save their existence], and furthermore that

'l'art, la science ne se constituent pas malgré l'échec, mais *à travers* lui' [art and science do not establish themselves despite failure, but *through* it] (*MA*, pp. 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 humour was a central part of Dada, with members constantly egging others on and ironically allowing a sense of centredness in the chaos in which they lived and worked. 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*, p. 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*, p. 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's structure as 'not a dogma or a school, but rather a constellation of individuals and free facets' (Tzara in Ades ed. 2006, p. 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 bizarre but instructive 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 élément: 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, p. 2; original formatting).
>
> [We believe that we can explain rationally, through thought, that which we write. But it is very relative. Thought is a beautiful thing for philosophy

> but it is relative. […] Dialectics is an amusing machine that drives us to have/in a banal manner/the opinions that we would have had anyway. Do we believe, by painstaking refinement of logic, that we have revealed the truth and established the accuracy of these opinions? Logic that is hemmed in by the senses is an organic disease. Philosophers like adding to this element: the power of observation. But really this wonderful quality of mind is proof of its powerlessness. We observe, we look at things from one or many points of view, we choose them from the millions that exist. Experience is also a result of chance and individual faculties.]

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.

The exploration of storytelling and history demonstrates the ethical, epistemic importance of the subjectivity of truth from a perspective of Dada. But the challenging of truth and reality initiated in part by Dada also had long-lasting effects on the way we continue to perceive our environment. The Dada accounts manipulate both reality and history, and the movement more widely has led to a new way of thinking that was rebellious at the time, but has now been incorporated into the normalcy of the contemporary world. The assimilation of the revolutionary into the routine has impermeably changed the way the movement is remembered, as well as the way in which we approach history and even historiography: the Dada spirit has become omnipresent.

7

Conclusion: 'Let Us Try to Assume Our Fundamental Ambiguity'

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. It can be argued, however, that this state 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, this book has drawn upon the term's dependence on another—equally loaded—term, that of 'ambiguity'.

In initiating this dialogue between two discrete movements through a discussion of terms, I hope to have highlighted not only philosophical commonality between Dada and Existentialism, but also their combined intersection with contemporary art and theory. This cross-over is particularly evident in the continued influence 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

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works. A prominent example of this continued presence 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* (2009–13), 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.pag.). On meandering through this slightly ominous crowd I was also struck by the affinity it held not only with my own findings on masks in Dada, but particularly with the work of Taeuber, 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*, p. 204), no doubt exacerbated by the omnipresence and rapid disposability of social media in the contemporary age of information. On reviewing the literature of Existentialism, a recent renewed enthusiasm was demonstrated for this complex movement that 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, the book has

illustrated repeatedly that Dada and Existentialism intersect in various philosophical, epistemic, ethical and aesthetic ways.

Alongside artistic and philosophical influences explored throughout the book we can also plot a certain physical 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* [The Eternal Review], which was edited by Sartre. Other Dada-affiliated contributors to this journal included Paul Éluard, Aragon, and Picasso. Both Tzara and Beauvoir were involved in protesting against the then Prime Minister Michel Debré's decision to reject Algerian independence. Despite both movements often being labelled as nihilistic, Existentialis as quietist, and Dada as (pejoratively) meaningless, something that draws them together is the desire of individual members of each movement to support intellectuals in trials and political affairs. Tzara and Camus joined the French Communist Party within a short time of each other (over the period of 1934–5), and were both involved in Resistance work. 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*. It is natural to assume that members of the two movements would continue to hold some, if not all, of the views of their former ideologies, so the fact that the two overlap in such a way is telling.

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 many would argue, especially if we bear in mind Surrealism's incompatibility with Existentialism. Camus rejected Surrealism because of its apparent obsession with suicide (and rhetorical inclination towards murder), and 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 desire 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 the Surrealists do). 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.

Dada and Existentialism: A Match Made in Heaven?

In writing this book I set out to explore and define the relationship between Dada and Existentialism, both through theory and through practice. The six chapters 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 the book, 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 of art and society that allows not only for authentic living, but that also has mutually beneficial implications between individuals. This might be best highlighted by Sartre, who notes that 'on choisit en face des autres, et on *se* choisit en face des autres' [we choose in relation to other people, and we choose *ourselves* in relation to other people] (*EH*, p. 67; my emphasis).

Secondly, given the total revolutionary approach of 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 to a conclusion 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 'despite 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, p. 190). This analysis furthermore corresponds with the Existentialist notion of belief in individual choice that is yet universally applicable. The use of Existentialist tenets alongside Dada encourages 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, and Sartre's vision of rebellion through creativity and invention in philosophy and art.

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.

The six chapters of this book 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.[1] These methods 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* [No Exit], and Camus raises issues of the discovery of the unwanted other in *La Peste* [The Plague]. 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 Outsider], the individual subjected to the judgement of others, and Sartre foregrounds, in *La Nausée* [Nausea], 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

[1] 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.

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 it may be pointed out that, chronologically, Dada had already attempted to change the world, 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 Chapaper 3 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 cross-over of the expression of the dominant tenets of each movement.

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 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, 'in 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*, p. 147). This centrality is highlighted constantly by Sartre, who claims not only that 'il faut que l'homme se trouve lui-même' [the individual must find themselves] (*EH*, p. 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' [before you live, life is nothing; it is up to you to give it meaning] (*EH*, p. 74). Through these statements 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. Rather, the individual is inspired to make substantial moral commitments through their conviction that their values are well-placed and universally applicable.

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, p. 212).
>
> [Creation and destruction will always remain indivisible, because life is made that way, Dada maintained. In favouring creation, society secretes its own ruin. In destroying, Dada causes immense creative momentum. It will always be essential to destroy to prevent creation from stagnating, from cutting itself off from life, from bringing about death. Dada, it would seem, has great days ahead of it.]

This co-presence of opposites is one that has been foregrounded throughout my book, 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, p. 102).

We have seen throughout the chapters of this book an aim for the 'creation of a superior reality', through distortion, nonsense, and a provocation to find individual meaning in the ostensibly meaningless. Underlining Dada's fundamentally positive outlook, Richter claimed that 'nobody 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*, p. 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 Chapter 2 ('personne ne peut dire ce que sera la peinture de demain' [no one can say what painting will be like tomorrow] (*EH*, p. 65)), but also expresses the fundamental cross-over 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 decision making in turn foregrounds an insistence on the present that is related to, but not dependent on, the past and the future. Thus 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.

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