

A complex Dadaist collage. At the top left, a winged figure with a human face and dark wings is suspended. Below it, a yellow boat with circular cutouts is positioned. In the center, a typewriter is depicted, with a large, spoked wheel attached to its side. At the bottom, five flamingos are walking on a wooden floor. A black ball is suspended by a string from the wheel. The background consists of various architectural and mechanical elements, all rendered in a collage style.

# DADA

*A Reader*



# DADA

*A Reader*

*This collection was designed and published by Counterflow independently from and without the permission of the (long dead) authors, their estates or past & present publishers. The majority of the pieces found here are the versions found in "The Dada Painters & Poets: An Anthology — 2nd edition," edited by Robert Motherwell, published initially in 1951 and re-published in 1981. For more print publications both original and plagiarized, please visit: [counterflow.noblogs.org](http://counterflow.noblogs.org)*

# Table of Contents

I. Introduction .....	6
II. Hugo Ball .....	8
1. 1916 <i>Dada Manifesto</i> .....	9
2. <i>Dada Fragments, 1916-1917</i> .....	11
III. Tristan Tzara .....	15
1. <i>Manifeste de M. Antipyrine</i> .....	16
2. 1918 <i>Dada Manifesto</i> .....	18
3. <i>Proclamation without Pretension</i> .....	27
4. <i>Manifesto of mr. aa the anti-philosopher</i> .....	29
5. <i>Manifesto on feeble love and bitter love</i> .....	34
IV. André Breton .....	46
1. <i>For Dada</i> .....	47
2. <i>Two Dada Manifestos</i> .....	53
3. <i>After Dada</i> .....	56

# Introduction

Amidst the ruin of the First World War, down the streets of Zurich and nestled between the café walls of the Cabaret Voltaire, Dada was born. Founded by an eclectic mix of artists, writers, actors, and poets fleeing slaughter on the Western Front, Dada asserted itself as a complete negation of bourgeois industrial society and its governing logic of rationality, bureaucracy, and control. Alongside this negation came an affirmation of the irrational, of the illogical, of nonsense itself; it was and is an affirmation of the discordant and chaotic entropy at the very heart of life. In other words, what Dada sought — insofar as it can be said to have “sought” anything — was an intervention into the crisis of modernity that had created the terror of the trenches in favor of the complete abolition of everything. In this, we see a reflection of ourselves and our own projectuality. In the century since the first Dada salon at the Cabaret Voltaire, the crisis that Dada attempted to intervene in has only deepened: our lives have become more regimented and mundane as the world is continuously supplanted by the virtual, the artificial, the manufactured, and the measured. For this hyper-rationalized techno-industrial society, we can only offer *total negation* and, through that, we in turn *affirm life*.

What follows is a small selection of writing from a few of Dada’s major literary actors. We begin first with Hugo Ball and his earliest writings on Dada: first, his 1916 Dada Manifesto written and shared at the first Dada salon and secondly, a collection of fragments regarding Dada. Then, we move to Tristan Tzara, perhaps the most well-known of the Dada poets, whose writing helped set the tone for much of what would emerge from the tendency. Among these writings are his 1918 Dada Manifesto, which attempted to re-articulate the tendency after a falling out with Hugo Ball. Finally, we

end with André Breton, who would go on to formulate Surrealism shortly after breaking with Dada in the early 1920s. Included are three of his pieces on Dada: the first two are affirmations of Dada, and the final is on his break with it.

A full and complete contextualization of Dada and the pieces reproduced herein is beyond the scope of this specific project, so it is our earnest hope that this brief introduction will suffice. For the reader who wishes to go deeper into the history of Dada, Surrealism, and their connections to anarchist thought, we cannot recommend highly enough Ron Sakolsky's *Dreams of Anarchy and the Anarchy of Dreams*. Otherwise, we hope that by sharing this brief collection, we can offer a small artifact for inspiration: something that suggests, even ever so slightly, another way out of the suffocating logic of this world — a deliriant to arouse the senses out from the mundane cycles of non-life and into the chaotic, convulsive beauty of dreams.

— *Counterflow*, 2023

# *Hugo Ball*

*1. 1916 Dada Manifesto*

*2. Dada Fragments (1916-1917)*



1916

**Dada**

**Manifesto**

Dada is a new tendency in art. One can tell this from the fact that until now nobody knew anything about it, and tomorrow everyone in Zurich will be talking about it. Dada comes from the dictionary. It is terribly simple. In French it means "hobby horse." In German it means "good-bye," "Get off my back," "Be seeing you sometime." In Romanian: "Yes, indeed, you are right, that's it. But of course, yes, definitely, right." And so forth.

An international word. Just a word, and the word a movement. Very easy to understand. Quite terribly simple. To make of it an artistic tendency must mean that one is anticipating complications. Dada psychology, dada Germany cum indigestion and fog paroxysm, dada literature, dada bourgeoisie, and yourselves, honoured poets, who are always writing with words but never writing the word itself, who are always writing around the actual point. Dada world war without end, dada revolution without beginning, dada, you friends and also-poets, esteemed sirs, manufacturers, and evangelists. Dada Tzara, dada Huelsenbeck, dada m'dada, dada m'dada dada mhm, dada dera dada, dada Hue, dada Tza.

How does one achieve eternal bliss? By saying dada. How does one become famous? By saying dada. With a noble gesture and delicate propriety. Till one goes crazy. Till one loses consciousness. How can one get rid of everything that smacks of journalism, worms, everything nice and right, blinkered, moralistic, europeanised, enervated? By saying dada. Dada is the world soul, dada is the pawnshop. Dada is the

world's best lily-milk soap. Dada Mr. Rubiner, dada Mr. Korrodi. Dada Mr. Anastasius Lilienstein.

In plain language: the hospitality of the Swiss is something to be profoundly appreciated. And in questions of aesthetics the key is quality.

I shall be reading poems that are meant to dispense with conventional language, no less, and to have done with it. Dada Johann Fuchsgang Goethe. Dada Stendhal. Dada Dalai Lama, Buddha, Bible, and Nietzsche. Dada m'dada. Dada mhm dada da. It's a question of connections, and of loosening them up a bit to start with. I don't want words that other people have invented. All the words are other people's inventions. I want my own stuff, my own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own. If this pulsation is seven yards long, I want words for it that are seven yards long. Mr. Schulz's words are only two and a half centimetres long.

It will serve to show how articulated language comes into being. I let the vowels fool around. I let the vowels quite simply occur, as a cat meows ... Words emerge, shoulders of words, legs, arms, hands of words. Au, oi, uh. One shouldn't let too many words out. A line of poetry is a chance to get rid of all the filth that clings to this accursed language, as if put there by stockbrokers' hands, hands worn smooth by coins. I want the word where it ends and begins. Dada is the heart of words.

Each thing has its word, but the word has become a thing by itself. Why shouldn't I find it? Why can't a tree be called Pluplusch, and Pluplubasch when it has been raining? The word, the word, the word outside your domain, your stuffiness, this laughable impotence, your stupendous smugness, outside all the parrotry of your self-evident limitedness. The word, gentlemen, is a public concern of the first importance.

# Dada Fragments (1916-1917)

*March 3, 1916* — Introduce symmetries and rhythms instead of principles. Contradict the existing world order...

What we are celebrating is at once a buffoonery and a requiem mass...

*June 12, 1916* — What we call Dada is a harlequinade made of nothingness in which all higher questions are involved, a gladiator's gesture, a play with shabby debris, an execution of postured morality and plenitude...

The Dadaist loves the extraordinary, the absurd, even. He knows that life asserts itself in contradictions, and that his age, more than any preceding it, aims at the destruction of all generous impulses. Every kind of mask is therefore welcome to him, every play at hide and seek in which there is an inherent power of deception. The direct and the primitive appear to him in the midst of this huge anti-nature, as being the supernatural itself...

The bankruptcy of ideas having destroyed the concept of humanity to its very innermost strata, the instincts and hereditary backgrounds are now emerging pathologically. Since no art, politics or religious faith seems adequate to dam this torrent, there remain only the *blague* and the bleeding pose...

The Dadaist trusts more in the sincerity of events than in the wit of persons. To him persons may be had cheaply, his own person not excepted. He no longer believes in the comprehension of things from

*one* point of departure, but is nevertheless convinced of the union of all things, of totality, to such an extent that he suffers from dissonances to the point of self-dissolution...

The Dadaist fights against the death-throes and death-drunkenness of his time. Averse to every clever reticence, he cultivates the curiosity of one who experiences delight even in the most questionable forms of insubordination. He knows that this world of systems has gone to pieces, and that the age which demanded cash has organized a bargain sale of godless philosophies. Where bad conscience begins for the market-booth owners, mild laughter and mild kindness begin for the Dadaist...

The image differentiates us. Through the image we comprehend. Whatever it may be — it is night — we hold the print of it in our hands...

The word and the image are one. Painting and composing poetry belong together. Christ is image and word. The word and the image are crucified...

*June 18, 1916* — We have developed the plasticity of the word to a point which can hardly be surpassed. This result was achieved at the price of the logically constructed, rational sentence, and therefore, also, by renouncing the document (which is only possible by means of a time-robbing grouping of sentences in a logically ordered syntax). We were assisted in our efforts by the special circumstances of our age, which does not allow a real talent either to rest or ripen, forcing it to a premature test of its capacities, as well as by the emphatic élan of our group, whose members sought to surpass each other by an even greater intensification and accentuation of their platform. People may smile, if they want to; language will thank us for our zeal, even if there should not be any directly visible results. We have charged the word with forces and energies which made it possible for us to rediscover the evangelical concept of the “word” (logos) as a magical complex of images...

*August 5, 1916* — Childhood as a new world, and everything childlike and phantastic, everything childlike and direct, everything childlike and symbolic in opposition to the senilities of the world of grown-ups.

The child will be the accuser on Judgment Day, the Crucified One will judge, the Resurrected One will pardon. The distrust of children, their shut-in quality, their escape from our recognition — their recognition that they won't be understood anyway...

Childhood is not at all as obvious as is generally assumed. It is a world to which hardly any attention is paid, with its own laws, without whose application there is no art, and without whose religious and philosophic recognition art cannot exist or be apprehended...

The credulous imagination of children, however, is also exposed to corruption and deformation. To surpass oneself in naiveté and childishness — that is still the best antidote...

*November 21, 1916* — Note about a criticism of individualism: The accentuated "I" has constant interests, whether they be greedy, dictatorial, vain or lazy. It always follows appetites, so long as it does not become absorbed in society. Whoever renounces his interests, renounces his "I." The "I" and the interests are identical. Therefore, the individualistic-egoistic ideal of the Renaissance ripened to the general union of the mechanized appetites which we now see before us, bleeding and disintegrating.

*January 9, 1917* — We should burn all libraries and allow to remain only that which every one knows by heart. A beautiful age of the legend would then begin...

The middle ages praised not only foolishness, but even idiocy. The barons sent their children to board with idiotic families so that they might learn humility..

*March 30, 1917* — The new art is sympathetic because in an age of total disruption it has conserved the will-to-the-image; because it is inclined to force the image, even though the means and parts be antagonistic. Convention triumphs in the moralistic evaluation of the parts and details;

art cannot be concerned with this. It drives toward the in-dwelling, all-connecting life nerve; it is indifferent to external resistance. One might also say: morals are withdrawn from convention, and utilized for the sole purpose of sharpening the senses of measure and weight...

*March 7, 1917* — One might also speak of Klee as follows: He always presents himself as quite small and playful. In an age of the colossal he falls in love with a green leaf, a little star, a butterfly wing; and since heaven and infinity are reflected in them, he paints them in. The point of his pencil, his brush, tempt him to minutiae. He always remains quite near first beginnings and the smallest format. The beginning possesses him and will not let him go. When he reaches the end, he does not start a new leaf at once, but begins to paint over the first one. The little formats are filled with intensity, become magic letters and colored palimpsests...

What irony, approaching sarcasm even, must this artist feel for our hollow, empty epoch. Perhaps there is no man today who is master of himself as Klee. He scarcely detaches himself from his inspiration. He knows the shortest path from his inspiration to the page. The wide, distracting, stretching-out of the hand and body which Kandinsky needs to fill the great formats of his canvases, necessarily brings waste and fatigue; it demands an exhaustive exposition, and explanation. Painting, when it seeks to retain unity and soul, becomes a sermon, or music.

*April 18, 1917* — Perhaps the art which we are seeking is the key to every former art: a salomonic key that will open all mysteries.

Dadaism — a mask play, a burst of laughter? And behind it, a synthesis of the romantic, dandyistic and — daemonistic theories of the 19th century.

# Tristan Tzara

1. *Manifeste de M. Antipyrine*
2. *1918 Dada Manifesto*
3. *Proclamation without Pretension*
4. *Manifesto of mr. aa the anti-philosopher*
5. *Manifesto on feeble love and bitter love*

*Supplement: how I became charming delightful and delicious*

*Colonial Syllogism*

# *Manifeste de M. Antipyrine*

Dada is our intensity: it sets up inconsequential bayonets the sumatran head of the german baby; Dada is life without carpet-slippers or parallels; it is for and against unity and definitely against the future; we are wise enough to know that our brains will become downy pillows that our anti-dogmatism is as exclusivist as a bureaucrat that we are not free yet shout freedom -

A harsh necessity without discipline or morality and we spit on humanity. Dada remains within the European frame of weaknesses it's shit after all but from now on we mean to shit in assorted colors and bedeck the artistic zoo with the flags of every consulate

We are circus directors whistling amid the winds of carnivals convents bawdy houses theaters realities sentiments restaurants  
HoHiHoHo Bang

We declare that the auto is a sentiment which has coddled us long enough in its slow abstractions in ocean liners and noises and ideas. Nevertheless we externalize facility we seek the central essence and we are happy when we can hide it; we do not want to count the windows of the marvelous élite for Dada exists for no one and we want everybody to understand this because it is the balcony of Dada, I assure you. From which you can hear the military marches and descend slicing the air like a seraph in a public bath to piss and comprehend the parable

Dada is not madness — or wisdom — or irony take a good look at me kind bourgeois Art was a game of trinkets children collected words with a tinkling on the end then they went and shouted stanzas and they put a little doll's shoes on the stanza and the stanza turned into a queen to die a little and the queen turned into a wolverine and the



children ran till they all turned green

Then came the great Ambassadors of sentiment and exclaimed  
historically in chorus

psychology psychology heehee

Science Science Science

vive la France

we are not naive

we are successive

we are exclusive

we are not simple

and we are all quite able to discuss the intelligence.

But we Dada are not of their opinion for art is not serious I assure  
you and if in exhibiting crime we learnedly say ventilator, it is to give  
you pleasure kind reader I love you so I swear I do adore you

1918

# Dada Manifesto

The magic of a word — Dada — which has brought journalists to the gates of a world unforeseen, is of no importance to us.

To put out a manifesto you must want: ABC

to fulminate against 1, 2, 3,

to fly into a rage and sharpen your wings to conquer and disseminate little abcs and big abcs, to sign, shout, swear, to organize prose into a form of absolute and irrefutable evidence, to prove your non plus ultra and maintain that novelty resembles life just as the latest appearance of some whore proves the essence of God. His existence was previously proved by the accordion, the landscape, the wheedling word. To impose your ABC is a natural thing — hence deplorable. Everybody does it in the form of crystalbluffmadonna, monetary system, pharmaceutical product, or a bare leg advertising the ardent sterile spring. The love of novelty is the cross of sympathy, demonstrates a naive je m'enfoutisme, it is a transitory, positive sign without a cause.

But this need itself is obsolete. In documenting art on the basis of the supreme simplicity: novelty, we are human and true for the sake of amusement, impulsive, vibrant to crucify boredom. At the crossroads of the lights, alert, attentively awaiting the years, in the forest. I write a manifesto and I want nothing, yet I say certain things, and in principle I am against manifestoes, as I am also against principles (half-pints to measure the moral value of every phrase too too convenient; approximation was invented by the impressionists). I write this manifesto to show that people can perform contrary actions together

while taking one fresh gulp of air; I am against action; for continuous contradiction, for affirmation too, I am neither for nor against and I do not explain because I hate common sense.

Dada — there you have a word that leads ideas to the hunt: every bourgeois is a little dramatist, he invents all sorts of speeches instead of putting the characters suitable to the quality of his intelligence, chrysalises, on chairs, seeks causes or aims (according to the psychoanalytic method he practices) to cement his plot, a story that speaks and defines itself. Every spectator is a plotter if he tries to explain a word: (to know!) Safe in the cottony refuge of serpentine complications he manipulates his instincts. Hence the mishaps of conjugal life.

To explain: the amusement of redbellies in the mills of empty skulls.

### DADA MEANS NOTHING

If you find it futile and don't want to waste your time on a word that means nothing... The first thought that comes to these people is bacteriological in character: to find its etymological, or at least its historical or psychological origin. We see by the papers that the Kru Negroes call the tail of a holy a holy cow Dada. The cube and the mother in a certain district of Italy are called: Dada. A hobby horse, a nurse both in Russian and Romanian: Dada. Some learned journalists regard it as an art for babies, other holy jesusescallingthelittlechildren of our day, as a relapse into a dry and noisy, noisy and monotonous primitivism. Sensibility is not constructed on the basis of a word; all constructions converge on perfection which is boring, the stagnant idea of a gilded swamp, a relative human product. A work of art should not be beauty in itself, for beauty is dead; it should be neither gay nor sad, neither light nor dark to rejoice or torture the individual by serving him the cakes of sacred aureoles or the sweets of a vaulted race through the atmospheres. A work of art is never beautiful by decree, objectively and for all. Hence criticism is useless, it exists only subjectively, for each man separately, without the slightest character of universality. Does anyone think he has found a psychic base common to all mankind? The attempt of Jesus and the Bible covers with their broad benevolent

wings: shit, animals, days. How can one expect to put order into the chaos that constitutes that infinite and shapeless variation: man? The principle: “love thy neighbor” is a hypocrisy. “Know thyself” is utopian but more acceptable, for it embraces wickedness. No pity. After the carnage we still retain the hope of a purified mankind. I speak only of myself since I do not wish to convince, I have no right to drag others into my river, I oblige no one to follow me and everybody practices his art in his own way, if he knows the joy that rises like arrows to the astral layers, or that other joy that goes down into the mines of corpse-flowers and fertile spasms. Stalactites: seek them everywhere, in managers magnified by pain, eyes white as the hares of the angels.

And so Dada<sup>I</sup> was born of a need for independence, of a distrust toward unity. Those who are with us preserve their freedom. We recognize no theory. We have enough cubist and futurist academies: laboratories of formal ideas. Is the aim of art to make money and cajole the nice nice bourgeois? Rhymes ring with the assonance of the currencies and the inflexion slips along the line of the belly in profile. All groups of artists have arrived at this trust company after riding their steeds on various comets. While the door remains open to the possibility of wallowing in cushions and good things to eat.

Here we cast anchor in rich ground. Here we have a right to do some proclaiming, for we have known cold shudders and awakenings. Ghosts drunk on energy, we dig the trident into unsuspecting flesh. We are a downpour of maledictions as tropically abundant as vertiginous vegetation, resin and rain are our sweat, we bleed and burn with thirst, our blood is vigor.

Cubism was born out of the simple way of looking at an object: Cézanne painted a cup 20 centimeters below his eyes, the cubists look at it from above, others complicate appearance by making a perpendicular section and arranging it conscientiously on the side. (I do not forget the creative artists and the profound laws of matter which they established once and for all.) The futurist sees the same cup in movement, a succession of objects one beside the other, and maliciously adds a few

<sup>I</sup> in 1916 in the *Cabaret Voltaire, in Zurich*

force lines. This does not prevent the canvas from being a good or bad painting suitable for the investment of intellectual capital.

The new painter creates a world, the elements of which are also its implements, a sober, definite work without argument. The new artist protests: he no longer paints (symbolic and illusionist reproduction) but create — directly in stone, wood, iron tin, boulders — locomotive organisms capable of being turned in all directions by the limpid wind of momentary sensation. All pictorial or plastic work is useless: let it then be a monstrosity that frightens servile minds, and not sweetening to decorate the refectories of animals in human costume, illustrating the sad fable of mankind.—

Painting is the art of making two lines geometrically established as parallel meet on a canvas before our eyes in a reality which transposes other conditions and possibilities into a world. This world is not specified or defined in the work, it belongs in its innumerable variations to the spectator. For its creator it is without cause and without theory. *Order = disorder; ego = non-ego; affirmation = negation;* the supreme radiations of an absolute art. Absolute in the purity of a cosmic, ordered chaos, eternal in the globule of a second without duration, without breath without control. I love an ancient work for its novelty. It is only contrast that connects us with the past. The writers who teach morality and discuss or improve psychological foundations have, aside from a hidden desire to make money, an absurd view of life, which they have classified, cut in sections, channelized: they insist on waving the baton as the categories dance. Their readers snicker and go on: what for?

*There is a literature that does not reach the voracious mass. It is the work of creators, issued from a real necessity in the author, produced for himself. It expresses the knowledge of a supreme egoism, in which laws wither away. Every page must explode, either by profound heavy seriousness, the whirlwind, poetic frenzy, the new, the eternal, the crushing joke, enthusiasm for principles, or by the way in which it is printed. On the one hand a tottering world in flight, betrothed to the glockenspiel of hell, on the other hand: new men. Rough, bouncing, riding on hiccups. Behind them a crippled world and literary quacks with a mania for improvement.*

*I say unto you: there is no beginning and we do not tremble, we are not sentimental. We are a furious wind, tearing the dirty linen of clouds and prayers, preparing the great spectacle of disaster, fire, decomposition.* We will put an end to mourning and replace tears by sirens screeching from one continent to another. Pavilions of intense joy and widowers with the sadness of poison. Dada is the signboard of abstraction; advertising and business are also elements of poetry.

I destroy the drawers of the brain and of social organization: spread demoralization where I go and cast my hand from heaven to hell, my eyes from hell to heaven, restore the fecund wheel of a universal circus to objective forces and the imagination of every individual.

Philosophy is the question: from which side shall we look at life, God, the idea or other phenomena. Everything one looks at is false. I do not consider the relative result more important than the choice between cake and cherries after dinner. The system of quickly looking at the other side of a thing in order to impose your opinion indirectly is called dialectics, in other words, haggling over the spirit of fried potatoes while dancing method around it.

If I cry out:

*Ideal, ideal, ideal,*

*Knowledge, knowledge, knowledge,*

*Boomboom, boomboom, boomboom,*

I have given a pretty faithful version of progress, law, morality and all other fine qualities that various highly intelligent men have discussed in so many books, only to conclude that after all everyone dances to his own personal boomboom, and that the writer is entitled to his boomboom: the satisfaction of pathological curiosity; a private bell for inexplicable needs; a bath; pecuniary difficulties; a stomach with repercussions in life; the authority of the mystic wand formulated as the bouquet of a phantom orchestra made up of silent fiddle bows greased with philtres made of chicken manure. With the blue eyeglasses of an angel they have excavated the inner life for a dime's worth of unanimous gratitude. If all of them are right and if all pills are Pink

Pills, let us try for once not to be right. Some people think they can explain rationally, by thought, what they think. But that is extremely relative. Psychoanalysis is a dangerous disease, it puts to sleep the anti-objective impulses of man and systematizes the bourgeoisie. There is no ultimate Truth. The dialectic is an amusing mechanism which guides us / in a banal kind of way / to the opinions we had in the first place. Does anyone think that, by a minute refinement of logic, he has demonstrated the truth and established the correctness of these opinions? Logic imprisoned by the senses is an organic disease. To this element philosophers always like to add: the power of observation. But actually this magnificent quality of the mind is the proof of its impotence. We observe, we regard from one or more points of view, we choose them among the millions that exist. Experience is also a product of chance and individual faculties. Science disgusts me as soon as it becomes a speculative system, loses its character of utility — that is so useless but is at least individual. I detest greasy objectivity, and harmony, the science that finds everything in order. Carry on, my children, humanity... Science says we are the servants of nature: everything is in order, make love and bash your brains in. Carry on, my children, humanity, kind bourgeois and journalist virgins... I am against systems, the most acceptable system is on principle to have none. To complete oneself, to perfect oneself in one's own littleness, to fill the vessel with one's individuality, to have the courage to fight for and against thought, the mystery of bread, the sudden burst of an infernal propeller into economic lilies:

### *DADAIST SPONTANEITY*

I call *je m'enfoutisme* the kind of like in which everyone retains his own conditions, though respecting other individualisms, except when the need arises to defend oneself, in which the two-step becomes national anthem, curiosity shop, a radio transmitting Bach fugues, electric signs and posters for whorehouses, an organ broadcasting carnations for God, all this together physically replacing photography and the universal catechism.

### *ACTIVE SIMPLICITY*

Inability to distinguish between degrees of clarity: to lick the penumbra and float in the big mouth filled with honey and excrement. Measured by the scale of eternity, all activity is vain — (if we allow thought to engage in an adventure the result of which would be infinitely grotesque and add significantly to our knowledge of human impotence). But supposing life to be a poor farce, without aim or initial parturition, and because we think it our duty to extricate ourselves as fresh and clean as washed chrysanthemums, we have proclaimed as the sole basis for agreement: art. It is not as important as we, mercenaries of the spirit, have been proclaiming for centuries. Art afflicts no one and those who manage to take an interest in it will harvest caresses and a fine opportunity to populate the country with their conversation. Art is a private affair, the artist produces it for himself; an intelligible work is the product of a journalist, and because at this moment it strikes my fancy to combine this monstrosity with oil paints: a paper tube simulating the metal that is automatically pressed and poured hatred cowardice villainy. The artist, the poet rejoice at the venom of the masses condensed into a section chief of this industry, he is happy to be insulted: it is a proof of his immutability. When a writer or artist is praised by the newspapers, it is a proof of the intelligibility of his work: wretched lining of a coat for public use; tatters covering brutality, piss contributing to the warmth of an animal brooding vile instincts. Flabby, insipid flesh reproducing with the help of typographical microbes.

We have thrown out the cry-baby in us. Any infiltration of this kind is candied diarrhea. To encourage this act is to digest it. What we need is works that are strong straight precise and forever beyond understanding. Logic is a complication. Logic is always wrong. IT draws the threads of notions, words, in their formal exterior, toward illusory ends and centers. Its chains kill, it is an enormous centipede stifling independence. Married to logic, art would live in incest, swallowing, engulfing its own tail, still part of its own body, fornicating within itself, and passion would become a nightmare tarred with Protestantism, a monument, a heap of ponderous gray entrails. But the suppleness, enthusiasm, even the joy of injustice, this little truth which we practise innocently and which makes us beautiful: we are subtle and our fingers are malleable and slippery as the branches of that sinuous, almost liquid plant; it defines our soul, say the cynics. That too is a point of



view; but all flowers are not sacred, fortunately, and the divine thing in us is our call to anti-human action. I am speaking of a paper flower for the buttonholes of the gentlemen who frequent the ball of masked life, the kitchen of grace, white cousins lithe or fat. They traffic with whatever we have selected. The contradiction and unity of poles in a single toss can be the truth. If one absolutely insists on uttering this platitude, the appendix of a libidinous, malodorous morality. Morality creates atrophy like every plague produced intelligence. The control of morality and logic has inflicted us with impassivity in the presence of policemen — who are the cause of slavery, putrid rats infecting the bowels of the bourgeoisie, which have infected the only luminous clean corridors of glass that remained open to artists.

Let each man proclaim: there is a great negative work of destruction to be accomplished. We must sweep and clean. Affirm the cleanliness of the individual after the state of madness, aggressive complete madness of a world abandoned to the hands of bandits, who rend one another and destroy the centuries. Without aim or designed, without organization: indomitable madness, decomposition. Those who are strong in words or force will survive, for they are quick in defense, the agility of limbs and sentiments flames on their faceted flanks.

Morality has determined charity and pity, two balls of fat that have grown like elephants, like planets, and are called good. There is nothing good about them. Goodness is lucid, clear and decided, pitiless towards compromise and politics. Morality is an injection of chocolate into the veins of all men. This task is not ordered by a supernatural force but by the trust of idea brokers and grasping academicians. Sentimentality: at the sight of a group of men quarreling and bored, they invented the calendar and the medicament wisdom. With a sticking of labels the battle of the philosophers was set off (mercantilism, scales, meticulous and petty measures) and for the second time it was understood that pity is a sentiment like diarrhea in relation to the disgust that destroys health, a foul attempt by carrion corpses to compromise the sun. I proclaim the opposition of all cosmic faculties to this gonorrhoea of a putrid sun issued from the factories of philosophical thought, I proclaim bitter struggle with all the weapons of

*DADAIST DISGUST*

Every product of disgust capable of becoming a negation of the family is Dada; a protest with the fists of its whole being engaged in destructive action: *Dada; knowledge of all the means rejected up until now by the shamefaced sex of comfortable compromise and good manners: Dada; abolition of logic, which is the dance of those impotent to create: Dada; of every social hierarchy and equation set up for the sake of values by our valets: Dada; every object, all objects, sentiments, obscurities, apparitions and the precise clash of parallel lines are weapons for the fight: Dada; abolition of memory: Dada; abolition of archaeology: Dada; abolition of prophets: Dada; abolition of the future: Dada; absolute and unquestionable faith in every god that is the immediate product of spontaneity: Dada; elegant and unprejudiced leap from a harmony to the other sphere; trajectory of a word tossed like a screeching phonograph record; to respect all individuals in their folly of the moment: whether it be serious, fearful, timid, ardent, vigorous, determined, enthusiastic; to divest one's church of every useless cumbersome accessory; to spit out disagreeable or amorous ideas like a luminous waterfall, or coddle them — with the extreme satisfaction that it doesn't matter in the least — with the same intensity in the thicket of one's soul — pure of insects for blood well-born, and gilded with bodies of archangels. Freedom: Dada Dada Dada, a roaring of tense colors, and interlacing of opposites and of all contradictions, grotesques, inconsistencies:*

*LIFE*

# *Proclamation* *without* *Pretension*

Art is going to sleep for a new world to be born  
“ART” — parrot word — replaced by DADA,  
PLESIOSAURUS, or handkerchief

The talent THAT CAN BE LEARNED makes the  
poet a druggist TODAY the criticism  
of balances no longer challenges with resemblances

Hypertrophic painters hyperaes-  
theticized and hypnotized by the hyacinths  
of the hypocritical-looking muezzins

CONSOLIDATE THE HARVEST OF EX-  
ACT CALCULATIONS

Hypodrome of immortal guarantees: there is  
no such thing as importance there is no transparence  
or appearance

MUSICIANS SMASH YOUR INSTRUMENTS  
BLIND MEN take the stage

THE SYRINGE is only for my understanding. I write because it is  
natural exactly the way I piss the way I'm sick

ART NEEDS AN OPERATION

Art is a PRETENSION warmed by the  
TIMIDITY of the urinary basin, the hysteria born  
in *THE STUDIO*

We are in search of  
the force that is direct pure sober  
UNIQUE we are in search of NOTHING  
We affirm the VITALITY of every IN-  
STANT

the anti-philosophy of *spontaneous* acrobatics

At this moment I hate the man who whispers  
before the intermission — eau de cologne —  
sour theatre. THE JOYOUS WIND

If each man says the opposite it is because he is  
right

Get ready for the action of the geyser of our blood  
— submarine formation of transchromatic aero-  
planes, cellular metals numbered in  
the flight of images

above the rules of the  
and its control

BEAUTIFUL

It is not for the sawed-off imps  
who still worship their navel

# *Manifesto of mr. aa the anti- philosopher*

without searching for I adore you  
who is a french boxer  
or irregular maritime values like the depression of Dada in the  
    blood of the bicephalous  
I slip between death and the vague phosphates  
which scratch a little the common brain of the dadaist poets  
luckily  
for  
gold  
undermines  
prices and the high cost of living have decided me to give up D's  
it is not true that the fake dadas have snatches them away from  
    me for  
repayment will begin on  
that is something to cry about the nothing that calls itself nothing  
and i have swept away sickness in the customs house  
i tortoise shell and umbrella of the brain rented out from noon to 2 p.m.  
superstitious individual releasing the wheels  
of the spermatozoidal ballet that you will encounter in dress  
    rehearsal in the hearts of all suspicious characters  
I'll nibble your fingers a little  
I'll buy you a re-subscription to love made of celluloid that squeaks  
    like metal doors and you are idiots

I shall return some day like your urine reviving you to the joy of  
    living the mid-wife wind  
and i'll set up a boarding school for pimps and poets  
and i'll come back again to begin all over  
and you are all idiots  
and the self-kleptomaniac's key works only with twilight oil  
on every knot of every machine there is the noise of a newborn babe  
and we are all idiots  
and highly suspicious with a new form of intelligence and a new  
    logic of our own which is not Dada at all  
and you are letting yourself be carried away by Aaism  
and you are all idiots  
cataplasms  
made of the alcohol of purified sleep  
bandages  
and idiot  
virgins  
tristan tzara  
Take a good look at me!  
I am an idiot, I am a clown, I am a faker.  
Take a good look at me!  
I am ugly, my face has no expression, I am little.  
I am like all of you!<sup>f</sup>

But ask yourselves, before looking at me, if the iris by which you send out arrows of liquid sentiment, is not fly shit, if the eyes of your belly are not sections of tumors that will some day peer from some part of your body in the form a gonorrhoeal discharge.

You see with your navel — why do you hide from it the absurd spectacle that we present? And farther down, sex organs of women, with teeth, all-swallowing — the poetry of eternity, love, pure love of course — rare steaks and oil painting. All those who look and understand, easily fit in between poetry and love, between the beefsteak and the painting. They will be digested. They will be digested.

<sup>f</sup> *I wanted to give myself a little publicity.*

I was recently accused of stealing from furs. Probably because I was still thought to be among the poets. Among those poets who satisfy their legitimate need for cold onanism with warm furs: *H o b o*, I know other pleasures, equally platonic. Call your family on the telephone and piss in the hole reserved for musical gastronomic and sacred stupidities.

DADA proposes 2 solutions:

NO MORE LOOKS!

NO MORE WORDS!<sup>2</sup>

Stop looking!

Stop talking!

For I, chameleon transformation infiltration with convenient attitudes — multi-colored opinions for every occasion dimension and price — I do the opposite of what I suggest to others.<sup>3</sup>

I've forgotten something:

where? why? how?

in other words:

ventilator of cold examples will serve as a cavalcade to the fragile snake and i never had the pleasure of seeing you my dear rigid the ear will emerge of its own accord from the envelope like all marine confections and the products of the firm of Aa & Co. chewing gum for instance and dogs have blue eyes, I drink camomile tea, they drink wind, Dada introduces new points of view, nowadays people sit at the corners of tables, in attitudes sliding a little to left and right, that's why I'm angry with Dada, wherever you go insist on the abolitions of D's, eat Aa, rub yourself down with Aa toothpaste, buy your clothes from Aa. Aa is a handkerchief and a sex organ wiping its nose, a rapid noiseless — rubber-tired — collapse, needs no manifestoes, or address books, gives a 25% discount buy your clothes from Aa he has blue eyes.

<sup>2</sup> *No more manifestos.*

<sup>3</sup> *Sometimes.*

mr. aa the anti-philosopher sends us this manifesto

Hurrah for the undertakers of combination!

Every act is a cerebral revolver shot — the insignificant gesture the decisive movement are attacks — (I open the fan of knock-outs to distill the air that separates us) — and with words set down on paper I enter, solemnly, into myself.

I plant my sixty fingers in the hair of notions and brutally shake the drapery, the teeth, the bolts of the joints.

I close, I open, I spit. Take care! This is the time to tell you that I lied. If there is a system in the lack of system — that of my proportions — I never apply it.

In other words I lie. I lie when I apply it, I lie when I don't apply it, I lie when I write that I'm lying, for I am not lying for I have seen my father's mirror — chosen among the advantages of vaccara — from city to city — for myself has never been myself — for the saxophone wears the murder of the visceral chauffeur like a rose — it is made of sexual copper and tip sheets. Thus drummed the corn, the fire alarm and the pellagra down where the matches grow.

Extermination. Yes, of course.

But it doesn't exist. Myself: mixture kitchen theatre.

Hurrah for the stretcher bearers armed with ecstatic convocations! The lie is ecstasy — what transcends the duration of a second — there is nothing that transcends it. Idiots brood the century — idiots start some centuries all over again — idiots belong to the same club for ten years — idiots play see-saw on the clockface for the space of a year — I (idiot) leave after five minutes.

The pretension of the blood to pour through my body and my factitiousness the random color of the first woman I touched with my eyes in these tentacular times. The bitterest banditry is to complete a sentence of thought. Gramophone banditry little anti-human mirage that I like in myself because I think it absurd and insulting. But the bankers of language will always get their little percentage on the



discussion. The presence of one boxer (at least) is indispensable for the bout — the members of a gang of dadaist assassins have signed a contract covering self-protection for operations of this order. Their number was very small — since the presence of one singer (for the duet), of one signatory (at least) for the receipt, of one eye (at least) for sight — was absolutely indispensable.

Put the photographic plate of the face into the acid bath.

The disturbances that sensitized it will become visible and will amaze you.

Give yourself a poke in the nose and drop dead.

dada

# Manifesto on feeble love

# S bitter love

I

preamble = sardanapalus

one = valise

woman = women

pants = water

if = mustache

2 = three


cane = perhaps

after = decipher

irritating = emerald

vice = vise

october = periscope

nerve = 

or all this together in any arrangement at all whether savourous soapy brusque or definitive — picked at random — is alive.

So it is that above the vigilant mind of the clergyman set up at every animal vegetable imaginable or organic street corner, everything is equal to everything is without equal. Even if I didn't believe it, it is the truth just because I have set it down on paper —

because it is a lie that I have PINNED DOWN as you pin a butterfly to your hat. The lie moves about greeting Mr. Opportune and Mr. Convenient: I stop it, it becomes truth.

As a result Dada undertakes police duty with pedals and muted morality. Everybody (at some time or other) was complete in mind and body. Repeat this 30 times.

I consider myself very charming

Tristan Tzara

## II

A manifesto is a communication addressed to the whole world, in which there is no other pretension that the discovery of a means of curing instantly political, astronomical, artistic, parliamentary agronomic and literary syphilis. It can be gentle, good-natured, it is always right, it is strong, vigorous and logical.

A propos logic, I consider myself very charming.

Tristan Tzara

Pride is the star that yawns and penetrated by way of the eyes and the mouth, it presses and digs on its breast is written: you will croak. That is its only remedy. Who still believes in doctors? I prefer the poet who is a fart in a steam engine — he is gentle but weep not — he is polite and semi-pederast, and swims. The both of them are no skin off my ass, none at all. It is an accident (which is not necessary) that the first is German, the second Spanish. Far be it from us, positively, to think of discovering the theory of probability of the races and the perfected epistolary of bitterness.

## III

Mistakes have always been made but the greatest mistakes are the poems that have been written. There is but one justification for chatter: rejuvenation and the maintenance of biblical traditions. Chatter is encouraged by the postal administration which, alas! is becoming perfected, encouraged by the tobacco monopoly, the railroad companies, the hospitals, the undertaking establishments, the textile factories. Chatter is encouraged by family culture. Chatter is

encouraged by the pope's pence. Every drop of saliva that escapes from conversation is converted into gold. Since peoples have always needed divinities to maintain the 3 essential laws which are the laws of God: to eat, make love and shit, since the kings are out of town and the laws are too hard, today it is only chatter that counts. The form in which it most frequently turns up is Dada.

There are people (journalists, lawyers, dilettantes, philosophers) who even regard the other forms — business, marriages, visits, wars, various congresses, joint stock companies, politics, accidents, dance halls, economic crises, emotional crises — as variations of dada. Since I am not an imperialist, I do not share their opinion — I prefer to believe that dada is only a divinity of a secondary order, which must simply be placed beside the other forms of the new mechanism for interregnum religions. Is simplicity simple or dada?

I consider myself rather charming.

Tristan Tzara

#### IV

Is poetry necessary? I know that those who write most violently against it unconsciously desire to endow it with a comfortable perfection, and are working on this project right now;— they call this hygienic future. They contemplate the annihilation (always imminent) of art. At this point they desire more artistic art. Hygiene becomes purity oGod oGod.

Must we cease to believe in words? Since when have they expressed the opposite of what the organ emitting them thinks and wants?<sup>1</sup>

Here is the great secret:

*The thought is made in the mouth.*

I still consider myself very charming.

Tristan Tzara

<sup>1</sup> *Thinks wants and desires to think*

A great Canadian philosopher has said: *Le pensée* (thought) and *la passé* (the past) are also very charming.

V

A friend, who is too good a friend of mine not to be very intelligent said to me the other day:

the abrupt start

the chiromancer IS ONLY THE

good morning

WAY IN WHICH ONE SAYS good afternoon WHICH

DEPENDS ON THE FORM ONE HAS GIVEN

TO one's forget-me-nots

one's hair

I answered him:

YOU ARE RIGHT idiot BECAUSE

prince

opposite

I AM CONVINCED OF THE tartar

naturally WE ARE NOT

we hesitate

right. My name is THE OTHER

desirous of understanding

Since diversity is diverting, this game of golf gives the illusion of a "certain" depth. I maintain all the conventions — to do away with them would be to create new ones, which would complicate life in a really disgusting way.

We wouldn't know what was chic any more: to love the children of the first or second marriage. The "pistol of the pistol" has often put us into strange and upsetting situations. Scramble the meanings — scramble the ideas and all the little tropical rains of *demoralization*, *disorganization*, *destruction*, and *ruckus* will be safeguarded against lightning and recognized to be a public utility. One thing is certain: today you will find dadaists nowhere but in the Académie Française.

Even so I consider myself very charming.

Tristan Tzara

## VI

It seems there is such a thing as: more logical, very logical, too logical, less logical, not very logical, really logical, logical enough. Very well, then, draw the consequences.

— Done:

Now recall to your memory the creatures you love best.

— Done?

Tell me the number and I'll tell you the lottery.

## VII

A priori, that is with eyes closed, Dada places before action and above all: *Doubt*. *Dada* doubts all. Dada's an awl. All is Dada. Watch out for Dada.

Anti-Dadaism is a disease: self-kleptomania, the normal state of man is Dada.

But the true dadas are against Dada.

The self-kleptomaniac

The man who steals — without thinking of his interest of his will — elements of his individuality, is a kleptomaniac. He robs himself. He spirits away the characteristics that remove him from the community. The bourgeois resemble one another — they are all alike. They didn't used to be alike. They were taught to steal — theft became a function — the most convenient and least dangerous is to rob oneself. They are all very poor. The poor are against DADA. They are very busy with their brains. They will never get done. They work. They work themselves — they deceive themselves — they rob themselves — they are very poor. So poor. The poor work. The poor are against DADA. Anyone who is against DADA is with me, said a famous man, but he died instantly. He was buried like a real dadaist. Anno domini Dada. Take care. And remember this example.

## VIII

To make a dadaist poem

Take a newspaper.

Take a pair of scissors.

Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.

Cut out the article.

Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.

Shake it gently.

Then take out the scraps one after the other in the order in which they left the bag.

Copy conscientiously.

The poem will be like you.

And here you are a writer, infinitely original and endowed with a sensibility that is charming though beyond the understanding of the vulgar.

### *Example:*

when the dogs cross the air in a diamond like the ideas and the appendix of  
the meninges shows the hour of awakening program (the title is my own)

price they are yesterday afterwards paintings / appreciate  
the dream epoch of the eyes / pompously than recite the gospel mode  
darkens / group the apotheosis imagine he said fatality power of colors /  
cut arches flabbergasted the reality a magic spell / spectator all to efforts  
from the it is no longer 10 to 12 / during digression volt right diminishes  
pressure / render of madmen topsy-turvy flesh on a monstrous crushing  
scene / celebrate but their 160 adepts in not to the put in my mother-  
of-pearl / sumptuous of land bananas upheld illumine / joy ask reunited  
almost / of has the one so much that the invoked visions / of the sing  
this one laughs / destiny situation disappears described this one 25  
dances salvation / dissimulated the whole of it is not was / magnificent  
the ascent to the gang better light of which sumptuousness scene me  
music-hall / reappears following instant shaken to live / business that  
there is not loaned / manner words come these people

## IX

There are people who explain because there are no others who learn.  
Do away with them and nothing but dada will be left.

Dip your pen in a black liquid with manifest intentions — it is only your autobiography you are brooding beneath the belly of the flowering cerebellum.

Biography is the equipage of the famous man. Great or strong. And there you are, a simple man like the others, after dipping your pen in the ink, full of

### PRETENSIONS

manifested in forms as diverse as they are unforeseen, applying themselves to every form of activity, state of mind and mimicry; There you are, full of

### AMBITIONS

to maintain yourself on the dial of life, in the spot which you have reached this very instant, to progress by an illusory and absurd ascent towards an apotheosis that exists only in your neurasthenia;

there you are, full of

### PRIDE

greater, stronger, more profound than any other.

My dear colleagues: a great man, a little strong, weak, profound, superficial man, *that is why you will all croak.*

There are men who have antedated their manifestoes in order to make people think that they had the idea of their own greatness a little ahead of time. My dear colleagues: before after, past future, now yesterday,

*that is why you will all croak.*

There are men who have said: dada is good because it isn't bad, dada is bad, dada is a religion, dada is a type of poetry, dada is a spirit, dada is sceptical, dada is magic, I know dada.

My dear colleagues: good bad, religion poetry, spirit scepticism, definition, definition

*that is why you will all croak.*

and croak you will I swear it.



The great mystery is a secret, but it is known to a few persons. They will never say what dada is. To distract you once more I will tell you something such as:

dada is the dictatorship of the spirit, or  
dada is the dictatorship of language,  
or if you like  
dada is the death of the spirit,  
which will please a good many of my friends.  
friends.

X

It is certain that since Gambetta, the war, Panama and the Steinheil case, intelligence is to be found in the streets. The intelligent man has become a perfectly normal type. What we need, what offers some interest, what is rare because it presents the anomalies of a precious being, the freshness and the freedom of the great anti-men is

#### THE IDIOT

Dada is working with all its might to introduce the idiot everywhere. But consciously. And it is itself tending to become more and more idiotic.

Dada is terrible: it feels no pity for the defeats of the intelligence. Dada is more cowardly than otherwise, but cowardly like a mad dog, it recognizes neither method nor persuasive excesses.

The lack of garters that makes it stoop down systematically reminds us of the famous lack of system which actually never existed. The false rumor was started by a laundress at the bottom of her page, the page was carried to the barbarous country where the hummingbirds are the sandwichmen of soothing nature.

This was told me by a clockmaker holding in his hand a supple syringe which, in characteristic memory of the hot countries, he called phlegmatic and insinuating.

## XI

Dada is a dog — a compass — the abdominal clay — neither new nor a Japanese nude — a gas meter of sentiments rolled into pellets — Dada is brutal and puts out no propaganda — Dada is a quantity of life undergoing a transparent transformation both effortless and giratory

## XII

ladies and gentlemen buy come in and buy and do not read you will see the man who holds in his hands the keys of niagara the man who limps in a blimp with the hemisphere in a suitcase and his nose shut up in a japanese lantern and you will see you will see you will see the stomach dance in the massachusetts saloon the man who drives in a nail and the tire goes flat the silk stockings of miss atlantis the trunk that circumnavigates the globe 6 times to reach the addressee monsieur and his fiancée and his sister-in-law you will find the address of the carpenter the frog-watch the nerve shaped like a papercutter you will learn the address of the minor pin for the feminine sex and the address of the man who furnishes the king of greece with filthy photographs and the address of the *action française*.

## XIII

Dada is a virgin microbe

Dada is against the high cost of living

Dada

a joint stock company for the exploitation of ideas

Dada has 391 different attitudes and colors depending on the sex  
of the chairman

It transforms itself — affirms — simultaneously says the oppsite —  
it doesn't matter — screams — goes fishing

Dada is the chameleon of rapid, interested change

Dada is against the future. Dada is dead.

Dada is idiotic. Hurrah for Dada. Dada is not a literary school roar

Tristan Tzara



roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
roar roar roar roar roar roar roar  
Who still considers himself very charming.

Tristan Tzara

***Supplement:***

How I became  
charming delightful  
and delicious

I sleep very late. I commit suicide 65%. My life is very cheap, for me it is only 30% of life. My life contains 30% of life. It lacks arms strings a few buttons. 5% is consecrated to a state of semi-lucid stupor accompanied by anemic râles. This 5% is called Dada. So you see that life is cheap. Death is a little more expensive. But life is charming and death is charming too.

A few days ago I attended a gathering of imbeciles. There were lots of people. Everybody was charming. Tristan Tzara, a small, idiotic and insignificant individual, delivered a lecture on the art of becoming charming. And incidentally, he was charming. And witty. Isn't that delicious? Incidentally, everybody is delicious. 9 below zero. Isn't that charming? No, it's not charming. God can't make the grade. He isn't even in the phone book. But he's charming just the same.

Ambassadors, poets, counts, princes, musicians, journalists, actors, writers, diplomats, directors, dressmakers, socialists, princesses and baronesses — all charming. All of you are charming, utterly subtle, witty, and delicious.

Tristan Tzara says to you: he would be quite willing to do something else, but he prefers to remain an idiot, a clown and a faker.

Be sincere for an instant: Is what I have just told you charming or idiotic?

There are people (journalists, lawyers, dilettantes, philosophers) who even regard the other forms — business, marriages, visits, wars, various congresses, joint stock companies, politics, accidents, dance halls, economic crises, emotional crises — as variations of dada. Since I am not an imperialist, I do not share in their opinion — I prefer to believe that dada is only a divinity of a secondary order, which must simply be placed beside the other forms of the new mechanism for interregnum religions.

Is simplicity simple or dada?

I consider myself quite charming

Tristan Tzara

Colonial syllogism

No one can escape from destiny

No one can escape from DADA

---

Only DADA can enable you to escape from destiny.

---

You owe me: 943.50 francs.

No more drunkards!

No more aeroplanes!

No more vigor!

No more urinary passages!

No more enigmas!

# André Breton

*1. For Dada*

*2. Two Dada Manifestos*

*3. After Dada*

# For Dada

It is impossible for me to conceive of a joy of the spirit otherwise than as a breath of air. How can it be at its ease within the limits imposed on it by almost all books, almost all events? I doubt if there is a single man who has not been tempted, at least once in his life, to deny the existence of the outward world. Then he perceives that nothing is so important, so definitive. He proceeds to a revision of moral values, which does not prevent him from returning afterward to the common law. Those who have paid with a permanent unrest for this marvelous minute of lucidity continue to be called poets: Lautréamont, Rimbaud, but to tell the truth, literary childishness ended with them.

When will the arbitrary be granted the place it deserves in the formation of works and ideas? What touches us is generally less intentional than we believe. A happy formula, a sensational discovery make their appearance in the most miserable form. Almost nothing attains its goal, although here and there something overshoots it. And the history of these gropings, psychological literature, is not in the least instructive. In spite of its pretensions, a novel has never proved anything. The most famous examples are not even worth looking at. The utmost indifference is in order. Incapable of embracing at one time the whole extent of a painting, or of a misfortune, where do we derive the right to judge?

If youth attacks conventions, we should not ridicule it: who knows whether reflection is a good counselor? Everywhere I hear innocence praised and I observe that it is tolerated only in its passive form. This contradiction would suffice to make me skeptical. To condemn the subversive is to condemn everything that is not absolutely resigned. In this I find no valor. Revolts exhaust themselves; these old liturgical sayings are not needed to dispel the storm.

Such considerations strike me as superfluous. I speak for the pleasure of compromising myself. Appeals to the questionable modes of discourse should be forbidden. The most convinced authoritarian is not the one you think. I still hesitate to speak of what I know best.

*Dimanche — Philippe Soupault*

*L'avion tisse les fils télégraphiques  
et la source chante la même chanson  
Au rendez-vous des cochers l'apéritif est orangé  
mais les mécaniciens des locomotives ont les yeux blancs  
La dame a perdu son sourire dans les bois*

*Sunday — Philippe Soupault*

*The airplane weaves telegraph wires  
and the well sings the same song  
At the coachmen's bar the apéritif is tinged with orange  
but the engine drivers have white eyes  
The lady has lost her smile in the woods*

The sentimentality of the poets of today is a subject on which we should come to an agreement. From the concert of imprecations so pleasurable to them rises from time to time to their delight a voice proclaiming that they have no heart. A young man who at twenty-three had swept the universe with the most beautiful look I know of, has rather mysteriously taken leave of us. It is easy for the critics to claim that he was bored: Jacques Vaché was no the man to leave a testament! I can still see him smile as he uttered these words: last will. We are not pessimists. The man who was painted stretched out in a deck chair, so very fin de siècle lest he disturb the collections of the psychologists, was the least weary, the most subtle of us all. Sometimes I see him; in the streetcar a passenger points out to provincial relatives “boulevard Saint-Michel: the school quarter”; the windowpane winks complicity.

We are reproached for not constantly confessing. Jacques Vaché's good fortune is to have produced nothing. He always kicked aside the work of art, that ball and chain that hold back the soul after death. At the very moment when Tristan Tzara was sending out a decisive



proclamation from Zurich, Jacques Vaché without knowing it, verified its principal articles. "Philosophy is the question: from what side shall we begin to regard life, God, the idea, or other appearances. Everything we look at is false. I don't think the relative result is any more important than the choice between cake and cherries after dinner." Given a spiritual phenomenon, we are in a hurry to see it reproduced in the domain of manners. "Give us gestures," people shout at us. But, as André Gide will agree, "measured by the scale of Eternity, all action is vain,"<sup>1</sup> and we regard the effort required as a puerile sacrifice. I do not place myself only in time. The red waistcoat of an epoch instead of its profound thought, there unfortunately is what everyone understands.

The obscurity of our utterances is constant. The riddle of meaning should remain in the hands of children. To read a book in order to know denotes a certain simplicity. The little that the most reputed works teach us about their author and their reader ought very quickly to decide us against this experiment. It is the thesis and not the expression that disappoints us. I resent passing through these ill-lighted sentences, receiving these confidences without object, suffering at every moment, through the fault of a chatterbox, a sensation of "I knew that before." The poets who have recognized this lost hope and run away from the intelligible, they know that their work can gain nothing by it. One can love a mad woman more than any other.

"The dawn fallen like a showerbath. The corners of the room are distant and solid. White background. Round trip without mixture in the shade. Outside an alley with dirty children and empty sacks that tells the whole story, Paris by Paris, I discover. Money, the road, the journey with red eyes and luminous forehead. The day exists that I may learn to live, time. Forms of error. Big to act will become naked sick honey, badly game already syrup, drowned head, lassitude.

Thought of little happiness, old flower of mourning, without scent, I hold you in my two hands. My head has the shape of a thought."

— Paul Eluard

<sup>1</sup> *Tristan Tzara*

It is a mistake to assimilate Dada to a subjectivism. None of those who accept this label today is aiming at hermeticism. "There is nothing incomprehensible," said Lautréamont. If I accept the opinion of Paul Valéry: "The human spirit seems to me so constituted that it can be incoherent only for itself," I further believe that it cannot be incoherent for others. I do not for this reason believe in the extraordinary encounter of two individuals, nor of one individual with the one he has ceased to be, but only in a series of acceptable misunderstandings in addition to a small number of commonplaces.

There has been talk of a systematic exploration of the unconscious. It is no novelty for poets to abandon themselves to the inclination of their spirit. The word inspiration, fallen I don't know why into disuse, was quite acceptable a short time ago. Almost all images, for example, strike me as spontaneous creations. Guillaume Apollinaire rightly believed that clichés such as "coral lips" whose success may pass for a criterion of value, were the product of this activity which qualified as *surrealist*. Words themselves have doubtless no other origin. He went so far as to make this principle, that one must never abandon a former invention, the prerequisite for scientific development, for "progress," so to speak. The idea of the human leg, lost in the wheel, reappeared only by chance in the connecting rod of the locomotive. Likewise in poetry, the Biblical tone is beginning to reappear. I should be tempted to explain this last phenomenon by the minimum intervention or nonintervention of the personality of choice in the new writing techniques.

What threatens to injure Dada most effectively in the general estimation is the interpretation of it by two or three pseudo-scientists. Up until now, it has been regarded most of all as the application of a system that is enjoying a great vogue in psychiatry, the "psycho-analysis" of Freud, an application planned incidentally by the present author. One very confused and particularly malignant writer even seems to allege that we would profit by the psychoanalytic treatment if we could be subjected to it. It goes without saying that the analogy between cubist or dadaist works and the elucubrations of madmen is entirely superficial, but it is not yet recognized that our supposed "lack of logic" dispenses us with accepting a unique choice, that "clear" language has the disadvantage of being elliptical, finally that only the works in question can reveal the methods of their authors and consequently give criticism the *raison d'être* it has always lacked.

*Au lycée des pensées infinies  
Du monde le plus beau  
Architectures hyménoptères  
J'écrirais des livres d'une tendresse folle  
Si tu étais encore  
Dans ce roman composé  
En haut des marches*

— Francis Picabia

*At the school of infinite thoughts  
Of the most beautiful world  
Hymenopterous buildings  
I should write books full of mad tenderness  
If you were still in that novel  
Composed at the head of the stairs*

— Francis Picabia

Anyway, all this is so relative that for every ten persons who accuse us of lacking logic there is one who reproaches us with the opposite excess. M. J.-H. Rosny, commenting on the declaration of Tristan Tzara: "In the course of campaigns against all dogmatism and out of irony toward the creation of literary schools, Dada became the Dada movement," remarks: "Thus the foundation of Dadaism is represented not as the foundation of a new school but as the repudiation of all schools. There is nothing absurd about such a point of view; quite on the contrary, it is logical, it is even too logical."

No effort has yet been made to give Dada credit for its desire not to pass for a school. Everyone continues to insist on such words as group, squad leader, discipline. They go so far as to claim that under color of exalting the individuality, Dada constitutes a danger to it, without pausing to note that it is most of all our differences that bind us together. Our common exception to the artistic or moral rule gives us only an ephemeral satisfaction. We are well aware that over and above this, an irrepressible personal imagination, more "dada" than the movements, will have free reign. M. J.-E. Blanche made this clear when he wrote: "Dada will survive only by ceasing to be."

*Tirerons-nous au sort le nom de la victime  
L'agression noeud coulant*

*Celui qui parlait trépassé  
Le meurtrier se relève et dit*

*Suicide*

*Fin du monde*

*Enroulement des drapeaux coquillages.*

— *Louis Aragon*

*Shall we draw the victim's name out of a hat  
Aggression slip knot*

*The one who was talking perishes  
The murderer rises and says*

*Suicide*

*End of the world*

*Rolling of shell-fish flags.*

— *Louis Aragon*

The Dadaists have from the start taken care to state that they want nothing. In other words. There's nothing to worry about, the instinct of self-preservation always wins out. When, after the reading of the manifesto: "No more paints, no more writers, no more religions, no more royalists, no more anarchists, no more socialists, no more police, etc.," someone naively asked us if we "allowed the continued existence" of man, we smiled, by no means resolved to do God's work. Are we not the last to forget that there are limits to understanding? If I am so pleased by these words of Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, it is because essentially they constitute an act of extreme humility: "What is 'beautiful'? What is 'ugly'? What are 'big,' 'strong,' 'weak'? What are Carpentier, Renan, Foch? Don't know. What is myself? Don't know. Don't know, don't know, don't know."

# TWO Dada Manifestos

## I.

The historical anecdote is of secondary importance. It is impossible to know where and when DADA was born. This name which one of us was pleased to give it has the advantage of being perfectly equivocal.

Cubism was a school of painting, futurism a political movement: DADA is a state of mind. To oppose one to the other reveals ignorance or bad faith.

Free-thinking in religion has no resemblance to a church. DADA is artistic free-thinking.

As long as the schools go in for prayers in the form of explanation of texts and walks in museums, we shall cry despotism and try to disrupt the ceremony.

DADA gives itself to nothing, neither to love nor to work. It is inadmissible that a man should leave any trace of his passage on earth.

DADA, recognizing only instinct, condemns explanation *a priori*. According to DADA, we must retain no control over ourselves. We must cease to consider these dogmas: morality and taste.

## II.

We read the newspaper like other mortals. Without wishing to make anyone unhappy, we feel entitled to say that the word DADA lends itself readily to puns. To tell the truth, that is in part why we

have adopted it. We are incapable of treating seriously any subject whatsoever, let alone this subject: ourselves. Everything we write about DADA is therefore for our pleasure. There is no petty news item for which we would not give the whole of art criticism. Finally, the wartime press did not prevent us from regarding Marshal Foch as a faker and President Wilson as an idiot.

We ask nothing better than to be judged by appearances. It is rumored everywhere that I wear spectacles. If I told you why, you'd never believe me. It is in remembrance of a grammar example: "Noses were made to hold up spectacles; accordingly, I have spectacles." What's that you say? Ah, yes! That doesn't make us any younger.

Pierre is a man. But there is no DADA truth. One need only utter a statement for the opposite statement to become DADA. I have seen Tristan Tzara without words to ask for a box of cigarettes in a tobacco store. I don't know what was the matter with him. I can still hear Philippe Soupault asking insistently for live bird in paint stores. Perhaps I myself am at this instant dreaming.

A red host is after all as good as a white host. DADA doesn't promise to make you go to heaven. It would be absurd, *a priori*, to expect a DADA masterpiece in the fields of literature and painting. Nor, of course, do we believe in the possibility of any social betterment, even though we hate conservatism above all things and declare ourselves the partisans of any revolution whatsoever. "Peace at any price" is the slogan of DADA in time of war, while in time of peace the slogan of DADA is: "War at any price."

The contradiction is still only an appearance, and doubtless of the most flattering sort. I speak and I have nothing to say. I find not the slightest ambition in myself: and yet it seems to you that I am animated: how is possible that the idea that my right flank is the shadow of my left flank does not make me utterly incapable of moving? In the most general sense of the word we pass for poets because we attack language which is the worst of conventions. One may very well know the word Hello and say Goodbye to the woman one meets after a year's absence.

In conclusion, I wish only to take into account the objections of a pragmatic order. DADA attacks you with your own idea. If we reduce you to maintaining that it is more advantageous to believe than not to believe what is taught by all religions of beauty, love, truth and justice, it is because you are not afraid to put yourself at the mercy of DADA by accepting an encounter with us on the terrain that we have chosen, which is doubt.

# After Dada

My friends Philippe Soupault and Paul Eluard will not contradict me if I say that we have never regarded “Dada” as anything but a rough image of a state of mind that it by no means helped to create. If, like me, they come to reject its label and to note the abuse of which they are the victims, perhaps this initial principle will be saved. Meanwhile they will pardon me if, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, I inform the readers of *Commoedia* that M. Tzara had nothing to do with the invention of the word “Dada,” as is shown by the letters of Schad and Huelsenbeck, his companions in Zurich during the war, which I am prepared to publish, and that he probably had very little to do with the writing of the *Dada Manifesto of 1918* which was the basis of the reception and credit we accorded him.

The paternity of this manifesto is in any case, formally claimed, by Max Serner (sic), doctor of philosophy, who lives in Geneva and whose manifestos written in German before 1918 have not been translated into French. Moreover it is known that the conclusions formulated by Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp, even before the war, plus those formulated by Jacques Vaché in 1917, would have been sufficient to guide us without the manifesto. Up to now, it has seemed distasteful to me to denounce the bad faith of M. Tzara and I have allowed him to go on using with impunity the papers of those whom he robbed. But now that he has decided to exploit this last opportunity to be talked about, by wrongfully attacking one of the most disinterested undertakings ever put under way,<sup>1</sup> I am not reluctant to silence him.

<sup>1</sup> *The Congress of Paris (for the determination of the directives and defense of the modern spirit), April 1922*



Dada, very fortunately, is no longer an issue and its funeral, about May 1921, caused no rioting. The cortège, not very numerous, took the same road as the followers of cubism and futurism, drowned in effigy in the Seine by the students of the Beaux-Arts. Although Dada had, as they say, its hour of fame, it left few regrets: in the long run its omnipotence and its tyranny had made it intolerable.

Nevertheless I noted at that time not without bitterness that several of those who had given to it, of those in general who had given the least, were reduced to misery. The others were not long in rallying to the powerful words of Francis Picabia, inspired, as we know, solely by his love of life and horror of all corruption. I do not mean to say that Picabia was thinking of reconstituting our unity around himself:

“It is hard to imagine  
How stupid and tranquil people are made by success”

and he is more inclined than anyone I can think of to dispense with it. But, although there is no question of again substituting a group for individuals (M. Tzara has such lovely ideas!), Louis Aragon, Pierre de Massot, Jacques Rigaut, Roger Vitrac and myself can no longer remain insensitive to this marvelous detachment from all things, of which Picabia has set us an example and which we are glad to attest here.

For my part, I note that this attitude is not new. If I abstained last year from taking part in the demonstrations organized by Dada at the Galerie Montaigne, it is because already this type of activity had ceased to appeal to me, that I saw in it a means of attaining my twenty-sixth, my thirtieth birthday without striking a blow and therefore decided to shun everything that wears the mask of comfort. In an article of that period, which was not published and is known to few persons, I deplored the stereotyped character our gestures were assuming, and wrote as follows: “After all there is more at stake than our carefree existence and our good humor of the moment. For my part, I never aspire to amuse myself. It seems to me that the sanction of a series of utterly futile ‘dada’ acts is in danger of gravely compromising an attempt at liberation to which I remain strongly attached. Ideas which may be counted among the best, are at the mercy of their too hasty vulgarization.”

Even though our epoch has not achieved a high degree of concentration, shall we always consent to pursue mere whims? “The spirit,” we have been told, “is not so independent as not to be upset by the slightest hubbub that occurs around it.” What future shall we predict for the spirit, if it maintains this hubbub itself?

Far be it from me, even today, to set myself up as a judge. “The essence and the formula” will perhaps always evade me, but, and this cannot be repeated too often, it is the search for them that matters and nothing else. Hence this great void that we are obliged to create within ourselves. Without evincing an extreme taste for the pathetic, I am willing to do without almost everything. I do not wish to slip on the floor of sentimentality. There is, strictly speaking, no such thing as error: at the most one might speak of a bad bet; and those who read me are free to think that the game isn’t worth the candle. For my part, I shall try, once again, to join the fight, as far forward as possible, although I do not, like Francis Picabia: “One must be a nomad, pass through ideas as one passes through countries and cities,” make a rule of hygiene or a duty out of it. Even should all ideas be of a nature to disappoint us, I propose none the less to devote my life to them.





# Counterflow Distro

— — — — —  
2023 — — — — —