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# DADA'S WOMEN



*Helezel*

ERÖFFNUNG DER  
KÜNSTLER KNEIPE  
*Tagli* VOLTAIRE 8-12  
SAMSTAG DEN 5. FEBR. 1916  
IM SAALE DER MEIEREI SPIEGELG.  
EINLADUNG FÜR *Kran M. Hildebrand*

# DADA'S WOMEN

RUTH HEMUS



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Frontispiece: Invitation to the opening of the Künstler-Kneipe Voltaire, Saturday 5 February 1916, illustrated by Karl Schlegel. Kunsthaus Zürich.



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# INTRODUCTION

## ‘Why have there been no great women Dadaists?’

In an unpublished letter dated 24 October 1924, a woman poet writes the following reproach to the Dadaist Tristan Tzara: ‘My dear friend, I am very surprised that in your history of the Dada Movement – where you show yourself to be fairly generous even towards your current enemies – you forget my efforts both in lyricism and in action.’<sup>1</sup> This letter, from the Paris-based poet Céline Arnaud, can be seen as paradigmatic for the fortunes of a number of women Dadaists, whose names have been omitted from accounts of the movement, not least from the memoirs of their male Dada colleagues, and whose stories remain partially or even wholly unwritten.

The letter is the first exhibit in an exploration of the question ‘Why have there been no great women Dadaists?’ It is a question that echoes the classic enquiry ‘Why have there been no great women artists?’ set out by the art historian Linda Nochlin more than thirty-five years ago in a 1971 essay of the same name that became a core text for feminist scholars.<sup>2</sup> During the decades since, researchers have taken up the challenge to uncover, discover and bring to light forgotten, neglected and unrecognised women artists across a huge scope of periods and geographical contexts. The legacy of this research is a body of valuable individual biographies and bibliographies as well as wide-ranging surveys that have sought radically to alter perceptions of women’s roles in the arts.<sup>3</sup>

Feminist scholars, acting on an impetus to reinstate women within the histories of the arts, have drawn out the vital issues underlying Nochlin’s question. They have examined the ways in which the work of creative women has been excluded from cultural institutions or even discouraged altogether, and provided insights into the financial, political, social and cultural obstacles women have faced. Equally, they have investigated the ways in which some of those women who succeeded in producing accomplished and innovative work have been ignored or relegated to obscurity in ensuing historical and critical accounts, throwing into relief how ‘greatness’ is perceived and bestowed by the institutions of the arts. These approaches have exposed ideological subtexts at work in cultural institutions that operate through patriarchal traditions.

Since then, feminist theory has developed and diversified, so that the twenty-first century has begun with a wealth of theoretical discourses and tools. Theorists and

researchers have confronted core ideological questions regarding the status of creative women and their relationship to the institutions of the arts: the categorisation and reduction of women's art in cultural histories as well as the stereotypes attached to both women and women's work. They explore fundamental issues about identity, subjectivity and gender and their relationship to the production and reception of artworks.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the ideological bases and genealogies of the discourse of art history itself have been re-evaluated and its usefulness as a framework for women artists continues to be questioned.

It may seem strange, then, to echo a question from 1971 that in one sense has been answered by reinstating women into art histories, especially when both feminism and post-modernism have sought to deconstruct notions of history, the canon and greatness. Yet Nochlin's motivating question has not diminished in potency or relevance. Its effectiveness lies in the fact that it evokes a sense of genuine curiosity about missing women artists and at the same time mercilessly interrogates all bystanders, including curators, art historians and scholars. Despite claims that the rediscovery of women artists has been exhausted, there is still much to be researched, written and learnt about individual women or groups of women. These gaps raise the same difficult questions about the workings of culture that underlie Nochlin's question and any response must take into account both the cultural and socio-political context within which the individual artist was working and the direct and indirect responses to the question of women in art that inform the current climate.

Céline Arnauld was disappointed in Tzara but was none the less optimistic not only that others would examine her work but also that they would grant her a place in Dada history. In her letter to him she continues: 'Yet other people have studied the lyrical evolution of recent years, without bias, and will not hesitate to grant me my place. Because one can juggle with names and individuals, according to the occasion, but not with works, which are weighty and cannot be manoeuvred like balls.'<sup>5</sup> Arnauld's optimism was misguided. She has been almost universally ignored, as have many other women contributors to Dada. Mention of women in Dada as a topic frequently prompts the retort: 'Were there any women Dadaists?' This response reveals a slight but significant shift in the focus of my original question, 'why have there been no great women Dadaists?' It confirms a common impression of Dada as not only dominated and distinguished by men but entirely devoid of women. The thorny question of 'greatness' does not even come into play in this scenario.

Yet women did participate in Dada and the names of these women add up. Since their names often appear only in lists, for example in 'cast' lists within programmes for soirées, and later in documentary descriptions and footnotes, I am hesitant, in part, to repeat that practice. Such a list, however, gives at the very least an indication of the presence and participation of women in Dada circles. Across European centres names include Céline Arnauld, Alice Bailly, Marguerite Buffet, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, Nelly van Doesburg, Suzanne Duchamp, Renée Dunan, Germaine Everling, Emmy Hennings, Hannah Höch, Angelika Hoerle, Maja Kruscek, Adon Lacroix, Adrienne Monnier, Suzanne Perrottet, Adya van Rees-Dutilh, Käthe Steinitz, Sophie Taeuber, Maria Van-

selow, Mary Wigman and Käthe Wulff. These names encompass hubs of activity including Zurich, Paris, Berlin, Cologne and Hanover; the women's nationalities are as diverse as French, Swiss, German, Dutch, Belgian and Romanian. Women in New York, meanwhile, include Margaret Anderson, Louise Stevens Arensberg, Djuna Barnes, Katherine S. Dreier, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Jane Heap, Mina Loy, Agnes Ernst Meyer, Katharine Nash Rhoades, Juliette Roche, Clara Tice, Louise Norton Varèse, Beatrice Wood, and Carrie, Ettie and Florine Stettheimer.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there may have been women participants in Dada constellations in Belgium, the Netherlands, central and eastern Europe, Spain and Japan. The women I list here were involved to varying degrees in Dada but it provides a useful starting point from which to investigate the phenomenon of Dada women.

Women do not fare well in most Dada histories. Often, where their names appear, they are accompanied by nothing more than a few scant details. Frequently, these are biographical points of interest, with little or even no information provided about the nature and reach of the work. Many women, including each of the five discussed in this study, were involved in personal relationships with men in the group and they are generally referred to in relation to their more famous male counterparts. One often reads about an individual as the wife of, the girlfriend of, the lover of, the mistress of or the sister of a better-known protagonist. To give one acute example, the Paris-based artist Suzanne Duchamp was not only the wife of another artist, Jean Crotti, but also the sister of three brothers, all artists: Marcel Duchamp, Raymond Duchamp-Villon and Jacques Villon. She is frequently referred to in these terms and yet none of the four men is generally referred to as the husband or brother of Suzanne Duchamp.

How does one account for this lack of recognition? While detailed conclusions will be sought on a case-by-case basis, there are some initial observations to be made. Firstly, many of the best-known accounts of Dada were, and remain, those written by the male Dadaists themselves. As the chroniclers of the movement, these individuals are open to reproach for having neglected to include details about their female colleagues. Their omissions also invite questions about their attitudes to Dada women at the time and about the groups' inclusiveness. The long-term consequence, furthermore, has been that art-historical and literary anthologies and accounts, following on from the primary versions, have perpetuated this paucity of accounts of female participants, resulting in a tradition of exclusion. This is at best lazy and at worst an indication of patriarchal ideologies at play in art and literary histories.

Secondly, and unfortunately for researchers, many women Dadaists left few accounts of their own interventions. The reasons for this might include a desire to establish distance retrospectively; modesty; or a lack of self-belief. Nevertheless, as already seen, these factors did not apply to Arnauld, who is insistent on the strength of her own work. Were the women, in general, simply less adept at self-promotion? Dadaists like Hugo Ball, Raoul Hausmann, Richard Huelsenbeck, Hans Richter and Tristan Tzara each left memoirs which, predictably, emphasise the author's key role in the movement. Of the five women in this study, the Zurich-based poet and performer

Emmy Hennings left the most extensive written accounts of her life in avant-garde circles but when it came to accounts of Dada she mainly focused on her husband's contributions. Hannah Höch, meanwhile, left behind a wealth of materials, now in an archive at the Berlinische Galerie. None of the five women, however, wrote a monograph on Dada, to set out her side of the story, but then neither did any woman proclaim herself to be an Oberdada, Weltdada, Dadasoph or Monteurdada as Johannes Baader, Huelsenbeck, Hausmann and Heartfield did in Berlin, albeit with a strong sense of irony. Notwithstanding the great disadvantages of having few memoirs, one at least also avoids their potential pitfalls: their exaggerations, ideological subtexts and egotistical revisions.

Women in Dada are not the only set of women to have been neglected in art-historical accounts of the early twentieth-century avant-garde; feminist critics, especially since the late 1980s, have steadily sought to challenge entrenched viewpoints. Two influential books by Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1991, first published 1985) and *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism and Self-Representation* (1998), and a volume of essays edited by Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli and Gwen Raaberg, *Surrealism and Women* (1991), have convincingly highlighted the role of women in Surrealism, especially in fine art. The anthology *Surrealist Women* (1998), edited by Penelope Rosemont, extends to written work, too, and includes a wide range of participants. As for the German context, Shulamith Behr published a comprehensive study, *Women Expressionists*, in 1988. Women participants in the Russian avant-garde have also been the object of attention, including a publication in 2000 by John E. Bowlt and Matthew Drutt, which accompanied an exhibition *Amazons of the Avant-Garde* bringing together work by six different women. These successful publications throw into relief the gap in research on women in Dada. Marjorie Perloff, for example, commenting on work by women in the Russian avant-garde, has written, 'women artists . . . made a much greater contribution to Futurist painting, collage, and book illustration than did . . . women artists to Dada. Why this was the case remains to be investigated.'<sup>7</sup>

While Perloff rightly notes the need for investigation, it may yet turn out that the issue lies not in a lack of contribution but in a lack of visibility and acknowledgement. Research into women's contributions to other avant-garde movements has fundamentally altered perceptions of women's roles within them. Where Surrealism, especially, was once considered the domain of men only, now names such as Claude Cahun, Dora Maar, Lee Miller and Dorothea Tanning, in the European context, have become better known, even if much later than their male counterparts. In addition, the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo's work has been given far greater attention and her profile has steadily increased in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States.<sup>8</sup> Knowledge of their work has, in turn, stimulated research into connections between contemporary artists and their female predecessors.<sup>9</sup> The successes of these ventures underscore the need to make Dada the object of a similar re-examination and to challenge the assumption that women simply did not contribute in any substantial or noteworthy way.

To date, two recent collections of essays have taken up the challenge to reverse this misconstruction, opening the way for further research. *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender and Identity* (2001), edited by Nadia Sawelson-Gorse, addresses crucial questions about how women are represented in Dada works, their interventions as artists, writers, performers and publishers, and about the place of gender and identity in production and group dynamics. However, it is principally concerned with those artists who worked in New York, with only three out of the nineteen essays focusing on artists based in Europe. In this aspect, the volume underscores the lack of research into those women working in other cities, including the major hubs of Zurich, Berlin and Paris.<sup>10</sup> A German-language set of essays, *Etwas Wasser in der Seife* (1999), edited by Britta Jürgs, also declares its opposition to a purely masculinist conception of the movement: ‘Dada was not just a man’s thing!’ or even ‘Dada is feminine.’<sup>11</sup> It deals more extensively with women in Europe, as well as those based in New York, but its short mainly biographical overviews invite further, more detailed research.

In addition to these collections, which represent vital work in bringing together research into the activities of numerous Dada women, several noteworthy publications have focused on individual women artists. Maud Lavin’s 1993 *Cut with the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch* is a notable exception to the lacuna on Dada women in Europe. It concerns itself extensively with gender in the cultural and socio-political landscape of Weimar Germany and in Höch’s work. Two more recent publications discuss the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, a German-born Dada artist, poet and performance artist based latterly in New York. Irene Gammel’s 2002 biography, *Baroness Elsa. Gender, Dada and Modernity: A Cultural Biography*, both documents the Baroness’s life and seeks to restore her to the avant-garde scene. Amelia Jones’s 2004 *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* uses the Baroness to examine the issue of gender within Dada and as a pivotal factor in art-historical discourses. These publications illustrate the potential inherent in recovering neglected individuals, not only inserting that individual between the lines of a notional, rigid and acceptable Dada narrative but also stimulating wider reappraisals of Dada and the avant-garde. That searching feminist spotlight on New York Dada could usefully be turned on European Dada centres.

Jones, meanwhile, proposes not only radical reframings of Dada but new approaches to art history. She explains:

I am interested in . . . challenging the very rationalism of art history itself by using the Baroness’s disruptive, irrational example as a way of looking at the canonical works from a different, resolutely feminist point of view. In so doing, I hope to begin to question . . . the very ways in which art histories of this movement and the avant-gardes in general have been written.<sup>12</sup>

She reflects explicitly on the limits of art-historical narrative, openly discussing her own close identification with her object of study and the limits of objectivity. Her work is exemplary of contemporary feminist discourse in that it does not seek only to insert an individual into a ready-made canon but rather questions the canon itself. My

approach is stylistically and methodologically less radical but nonetheless takes inspiration from such profound questionings. Its aim, above all, is to highlight, read and reappraise the work of five women, to bring out the impact of gender on their participation and interventions, and to challenge and stretch perceptions of Dada.

The discovery, or recovery, of significant bodies of avant-garde work by women has intensified appreciation of their roles within some of those radical movements that characterised the invigorating art scene early in the twentieth century. Moreover, it has profoundly affected and even revolutionised perceptions and accepted notions of the constituencies and legacies of those movements. If women were active in Expressionism, Russian Cubo-Futurism, and in Surrealism, then were they not active in Dada? An analysis of the work of European women Dadaists must build on studies of New York women to address the following, fundamental questions: what was the position of women artists in Dada, and what contributions did they make to aesthetic innovations? Additionally, it invites a review of Dada as a whole. If Surrealism, as a concept, has come to accommodate women artists alongside its male luminaries, in current perceptions, can Dada do the same?

## Dada as new deal or Dada as men-only club?

For researchers interested in women's roles in the arts, the period of the historical avant-garde offers a fascinating socio-political as well as aesthetic context. The first two decades of the twentieth century in Europe were a period of exceptionally rapid change. Developments in industry and technology were transforming all aspects of everyday life, including work, travel and communications, and the First World War was to have a profound impact on beliefs in civilisation and progress. Concurrently, political changes were taking place all across Europe that called into question women's roles, including in the areas of suffrage, working status and birth control. It was a time of transitions and oppositions: of optimism and utopian conviction on the one hand and of despair and disillusionment provoked by the devastation of war on the other.

In this volatile context, avant-garde art movements launched their assaults on traditions and conventions that they perceived as belonging to the past. Dada operated outside standard modes of communication, using instead a variety of strategies from assemblage to action, and pamphlets to performances, its contributors frequently working outside notional areas of expertise and across disciplines. Dada defied academic and cultural rules governing artistic production and distribution. The organisation of its own publications, performances and exhibitions sidestepped deals with major publishers or gallery owners: Dada created its own showcases and publicity machines. It advocated freedom rather than dogmatism on all levels. All these factors potentially offered unprecedented opportunities for women artists, both in pragmatic terms (spaces in which to create, publish, exhibit and perform) and in aesthetic terms (the loosening of notions of what constituted appropriate subject matter, the acceptance of



a greater variety of techniques and forms, and the admittance of multiple, inner viewpoints, as opposed to a rigid external realism).

Additionally, collaboration between artists on exhibitions and performances, with a shift in emphasis away from single authorship, was characteristic of Dada activity. David Sylvester wrote that the work of various artists and groups was intentionally mixed, 'in order to emphasise the unusually sustained interchange of ideas between the artists in the movements together with the degree of their readiness – remarkable in an age of artistic individualism – to perceive themselves as contributors to a common enterprise'.<sup>13</sup> It was collaborative performances and exhibitions such as those at the Cabaret Voltaire and its successor the Galerie Dada in Zurich that formed the beginnings of the artistic enterprise that was exported to different cities. Here were potential opportunities for women to participate and to collaborate, to test the limits of the tools, materials and techniques at the artist's or writer's disposal. These shared experiments aimed not only to push back the boundaries of the arts but also to challenge the sign systems, norms and conventions governing the cultural and socio-political consensus. The appeal of those gatherings and ideas to women writers, artists and performers seeking opportunities to create, discuss and innovate is self-evident.

Dada was a cross-national movement from its beginnings in neutral Zurich during the First World War. Its founding protagonists included emigrants and exiles from a number of different countries, including Germany and Romania, who subsequently took Dada to other European cities over the following years, including Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, Barcelona and Paris. Through its aims to transgress linguistic and cultural boundaries, it challenged accepted notions of national identity, tradition and culture at a time when nationalist sentiment was pervasive. The German Dadaist Hans Richter (writing in 1964) perceived its diversity, in fact, as an essential strength and motivation: 'It seemed that the very incompatibility of character, origins and attitudes which existed among the Dadaists created the tension which gave, to this fortuitous conjunction of people from all points of the compass, its unified dynamic force.'<sup>14</sup> Questions about diversity remain, however. Did its openness in terms of nationality and background extend to gender? Were women also embraced as part of this open, dynamic force? Were they in a position to participate?

The opportunities available to women in the arts had undoubtedly improved by the early decades of the twentieth century, through changes in education, training and public policy, but there were still manifold obstructions to their successful occupation and, crucially, acknowledgement as painters, poets, photographers and performers. Restrictions, though reduced, persisted, and the all too familiar pronouncement that great talent should simply 'rise to the top' failed to take into account complex limitations to women's success. In addition to pragmatic issues such as suitable workspace and financial viability, there was still great pressure on women to lead a socially respectable life and to meet the demands of family. Meanwhile, women's work on the one hand suffered from too little serious critical attention and on the other was subjected to more intense censorious scrutiny. Women were becoming more visible in social, professional and political spheres but still faced resistance and rebuff. Gaining

recognition in the artistic domain posed another challenge and the stakes must necessarily have been higher in the case of avant-garde movements, where men, let alone women, risked or even defiantly courted derision and social exclusion.

Avant-garde groups represented exciting alternatives for women but neither the individuals who joined them nor the groups as entities could entirely escape their cultural and socio-political contexts. Feminist scholars have exposed these groups' masculinist aspects and gone on to illustrate how women nevertheless made substantial contributions within them. The portrayal of women in Expressionist men's art, for example, has been the object of feminist research, as has the work of Expressionist women artists including Käthe Kollwitz, Paula Modersohn-Becker and Gabriele Münter.<sup>15</sup> As for Surrealism, Whitney Chadwick, in both books cited, has examined fetishistic and stereotypical attitudes towards women in male artists' work and in addition highlighted the alternative approaches of numerous individual women.

Dada's reputation, meanwhile, is complicated. On the one hand, it has been perceived, like Expressionism and Surrealism, as a men's movement and, on the other, it is celebrated as a highly radical group in social and political terms. In his 2004 monograph, *Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction*, David Hopkins includes a useful summary discussion of the issue of gender in both movements. He highlights the successful participation of Taeuber and Höch in Dada, for example, and suggests that 'Dada often provided more breathing space for female creativity' but also notes that 'Beyond this, male Dada tended to be as masculinist as Surrealism.' Hopkins acknowledges the cultural, social and political realities of the historical period within which Dada and Surrealism operated and seeks to draw out nuanced attitudes towards sexuality and gender. His approach highlights the tension between avant-garde movements' claims to radicalism and their 'ideological blindspots'.<sup>16</sup> This tension is implicit in a statement by Richter: 'Dada not only had *no* programme, it was against all programmes. Dada's only programme was to have no programme . . . and, at that moment in history, it was just this that gave the movement its explosive power to unfold *in all directions*, free of aesthetic or social constraints.'<sup>17</sup> Richter at once celebrated Dada's anti-programmatic approach and its potential as an aesthetic and cultural force. Yet, might Dada's rejection of any programmes ultimately prevent it from engaging with, and confronting, issues such as patriarchy? Did it practise this alleged freedom from social constraints by being expansive enough to accommodate women artists?

In her introduction to *Women in Dada*, Sawelson-Gorse confronts the question of Dada's gendered conditions and emphasises the movement's limitations as a forum for women. She cements the notion of Dada as a men's club and decries the attitudes of the male Dadaists as misogynist. Her introduction begins by tackling the name Dada itself: 'In the historicizing and mythologizing trajectory of the Dada logos, several "origins of the word" implicate female gendering in which the signification of the female is ultimately a "wet-nurse" whose primary biological and aesthetic functions are as the male artists' muse.' After quoting Richter's account of the various meanings of the name, she continues, 'Missing from this list are the connotations of its obvious meaning: the reference of Dada to the male parent, the father, the patriarch.'<sup>18</sup>

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1 Newspaper advertisement for Dada cosmetic product, Parfümerie Bergmann, Zürich, c. 1917. Kunsthaus Zürich.

Sawelson-Gorse emphasises one reading of the word Dada but Dada protagonists have claimed various and unfixed meanings for the term. Tzara wrote: '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.'<sup>19</sup> Hugo Ball, writing in his diary in 1916, claimed: 'My proposal to call it [the periodical] "Dada" is accepted. *Dada* is "yes, yes" in Rumanian, "rocking horse", and "hobbyhorse" in French. For Germans it is a sign of foolish naïveté, joy in procreation, and preoccupation with the baby carriage.'<sup>20</sup> Richard Huelsenbeck has stated: 'It is a children's word meaning hobby-horse . . . The child's first sound expresses the primitiveness, the beginning at zero, the new in our art.' Jean Arp explained: 'The Larousse dictionary was consulted for an international word free from any political or partisan colour, and even from any exact meaning.'<sup>21</sup> Dada was also the brand name for cosmetic products manufactured in Zurich (fig. 1), probably familiar to the group, even if subconsciously. That connection is one more reminder that the word had numerous connotations even before it came to operate as an effective brand name for the group.

All the Dadaists' statements express a common intention: to find a name for the group that is free from preconceived semantic associations. Sawelson-Gorse's deconstructive approach on the other hand seeks to expose entrenched, gendered subconscious meanings, for which she selects and emphasises certain meanings. The problematic nature of her discussion of the word 'dada', which privileges her own reading of it as 'father' above the numerous other meanings recorded by the Dadaists, is compounded by the fact that she takes an English-language approach to a word that was chosen by speakers of other languages. With this in mind, the equation of Dada to father is far from obvious and, given its Anglocentric emphasis, even unstable. This reservation aside, Sawelson-Gorse's publication facilitates detailed consideration of the workings of gender on men's and women's work within Dada, first underlining then undermining Dada as men's club.

The question of whether Dada was a men's club or whether it offered 'the beginning at zero, the new in our art' to men and women, is one which will be discussed through the following five chapters. Establishing whether Dada was a men's club in reality or only in reputation is made difficult by a reliance on accounts and memoirs which are themselves discourses with particular, time-bound, ideological approaches. The task of drawing conclusions is further complicated by the fact that one examines historical statements and evidence from a contemporary standpoint, arguably with heightened consciousness and expectations where gender relations are concerned. It is, nevertheless, an important process in understanding the contexts within which women operated and, more interestingly, the impact of those contexts on the production of their work. One only has to look at the following statement by Huelsenbeck to recall how women's status was far from equal, both in the broad socio-political context and in one-to-one relationships. He admitted later:

My relations with women were meager enough, although Zurich in 1916 was full of interesting female creatures. The sexual revolution, also known as the liberation of women, had not yet started or at least it was still invisible. Nor did we really feel it in our heads. I, for one, didn't. My attitude towards women was as primitive as could be. I wanted a mistress, and I wanted sexual pleasure. I took it for granted that any woman would have to adjust to my way of living. I knew nothing of a woman's desires or a woman's interests. Both Switzerland and Germany had a patriarchal system, and a male lived mainly in the illusion of his own superiority.<sup>22</sup>

Huelsenbeck's later self-awareness allows him to reflect on and acknowledge the historical context of Dada and the patriarchal attitudes of the time.

Some Dadaists confronted socio-political questions, including women's roles, more explicitly. Raoul Hausmann, for example, took a particular interest in gender relations and the status of women. In a 1919 essay 'Zur Weltrevolution' (Towards World Revolution) he discussed the failures of patriarchal values and made such feminist statements as: 'The liberation of women must begin right away' and "'Real" men today stand for the removal of a man's ownership rights over a woman.'<sup>23</sup> He was the exception rather than the rule, however, and his actions failed to live up to his proclama-

tions. His volatile seven-year relationship with Hannah Höch, during which he remained married with a child, appears not to have been as liberating for her as for him, either personally or professionally. In contrast, Sophie Taeuber, in Zurich, seemingly enjoyed a largely fruitful long-term, collaborative working relationship with her husband Jean Arp. Evidently it is not possible to make a single, simplistic claim about Dada's men and too much speculation about interpersonal relationships tends to shift the emphasis away from the artists' work. Nonetheless, these relationships can cast light on the nature of women's participation in Dada, not least since they go some way to answering the questions of when, how and under what circumstances a given artist became associated with Dada.

Questions around the extent of accessibility, openness and inclusiveness that Dada offered to women artists and writers are perennially interesting, even as answers remain equivocal. They will form an undercurrent in this study, which will seek not simply to expose exclusion but also to highlight successful intervention. Dada consisted mainly of men. Dada functioned in a socio-political and cultural context where men were dominant. However, instead of making patriarchal behaviours and male perspectives its main focus, this study will look at the ways in which women operated within Dada, including how they managed their interventions, how they situated themselves and their work within the group and how their work represented specific challenges to Dada as a men-only club.

## Dada's female side: strategies of intervention

This book turns the spotlight on five women who have received varying degrees of critical attention over recent decades on an individual level but who have not been treated together in a comparative study that establishes them within the Dada context, and which looks specifically at gender as a factor in their participation, production and reception. The first chapter deals with Emmy Hennings, a performer and poet, involved from the very beginnings of Dada in Zurich. Interest in her has at last increased over recent years, though largely confined to German-language publications. The second chapter focuses on Sophie Taeuber. Also Zurich-based, she is recognised for her innovations in painting, reliefs and designs and for her collaborative work with Arp, though mainly in a post-Dada context, while her work in textiles, dance and puppet-making has been given less attention. Hannah Höch, the Berlin photomontage artist discussed in the third chapter, has been the object of numerous monographs and individual exhibitions and has become the best-known female Dadaist by far. The participants in Paris are much less well known: there is still scant scholarship on the painter Suzanne Duchamp, who is examined in chapter four.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the life and work of the poet Céline Arnould, considered in the last chapter, has been scarcely documented, let alone analysed.

The five artists I have chosen are diverse in a number of ways. In geographic terms, they offer examples of women's participation in the three major European centres of

the movement: Hennings and Taeuber within the Zurich group, Höch in Berlin, and Duchamp and Arnauld in Paris. I have chosen to focus on European women Dadaists, as opposed to those working in New York, in order to breach the greater gap in research in this area. My selection of women is, for pragmatic reasons, restricted and leaves the way open for research into numerous other artists who participated in Dada, especially beyond these three European hubs, in other geographic outposts of the movement.

As well as being based in different geographic, linguistic and cultural contexts, the five women represent a number of different art forms. Between them, they pioneered work in prose, poetry, editing, dance, singing, recital, puppetry, doll-making, tapestry, sculpture, painting, collage, assemblage and photomontage. None of the five restricted herself to a single art form. This interdisciplinary approach was characteristic of Dada, in which fine art, literature and performance co-existed and cross-fertilised. In the fine arts, the Dadaists experimented with new materials, developing techniques such as assemblage and photomontage. In literature Dada was equally radical, its poets producing sound poetry and simultaneous poetry in a quest to challenge and problematise linguistic sign systems. Finally, it is crucial not to overlook the performance aspect of Dada, which, though by its nature difficult to recreate, was of the utmost importance to the way in which work was delivered and communicated. It was through performances, in which the Dadaists sought interactions from each other and the audience, that they produced new techniques such as sound poetry and mounted a general challenge to relationships of the artist, the artefact and the audience.

It has been a weakness in some approaches to Dada and the avant-garde more generally that certain art forms have been granted less recognition than others. Even Peter Bürger, who in his influential *Theorie der Avantgarde* (1974), translated and published as *Theory of the Avant-Garde* in 1984, set an enduring precedent for interdisciplinary study, has been criticised for excluding those art forms that do not fit his theory of the avant-garde such as film and performance.<sup>25</sup> The latter is an area in which women made significant contributions, including as singers, reciters and dancers, and was crucial to Dada's beginnings. Other activities that have received fewer acknowledgements, and which will be considered in this study, include doll-making, embroidery and tapestry. It is highly likely that these Dada manifestations have been overlooked in part because they do not concur with more 'high art', or customarily male, practices. Such transgressions, however, are precisely what make them of interest as Dada endeavours, since Dada sought above all to break down aesthetic and cultural boundaries. They also highlight questions about the relationship between gender and chosen modes of artistic expression.

This introduction has posed two major questions, which are really two aspects of the same issue. The second of these questions, 'Was Dada a men-only club?', involves critical readings of predominantly male texts and contexts, the ways in which women are represented and positioned and an ideological critique of the patriarchal forces at play. It comes under what Elaine Showalter has called 'the feminist critique'.<sup>26</sup> The first question, 'Why have there been no great women Dadaists?', addresses these issues too but

also leads to what Showalter terms 'gynocriticism', a consideration of the particular identity of work produced by women. Both questions involve complex issues and tensions that continue to tax feminist art historians.

In her book, *A World of Our Own: Women Artists* (2000), Frances Borzello looks at women in fine art across the centuries:

Until the eighteenth century, women artists tended to fall into one of two categories: working woman or prodigy. In the eighteenth century, they were able to benefit from a culture that valued the charming and accomplished woman. In the nineteenth century they were fuelled by self-belief. In the twentieth century they tried to be artists not women. And with feminism, they set out to change the art world.<sup>27</sup>

Borzello provides a useful historical overview and at the same time would admit that the junctions between these contexts are not strictly time-bound but are instead continuous and unresolved. As late as the nineteenth century, certain techniques, such as pastels and miniatures, were seen as more appropriate for the delicate female hand and women were expected to deal with limited subject matter, such as portraiture. These limits were justified by some critics as natural or biological, concealing the ideological discourses involved in propagating them. Women's work was often judged according to the artist's gender and, where women chose to diversify their choices of subject matter, forms and techniques, they risked unfavourable reception. Where a display of femininity could not be construed, the fallback position was sometimes the conclusion 'she paints like a man'.<sup>28</sup>

Dada women sought to break from such limitations, so that any notion of 'feminine' subject matter and forms initially appears absurd in their cases. The Dadaists sought to overturn the very idea of narrative representation and to challenge restrictions on materials and techniques. It is appropriate, however, to ask nuanced questions about the impact of gender on women's participation and production. The following questions will all be pertinent: how does each woman's work 'fit' what is known of Dada? How is her work distinguished? How does it challenge or extend concepts of Dada? How might her work be distinguished by experience that is specifically female? How did she find ways of creating her own work that did not merely imitate the men either formally or in terms of imagery based on male subject positions? Does the work in any way reveal different preoccupations, for example with the cultural context in which she was operating? Does the notion of resistance to, and subversions of, norms take on particular resonance when related to the gender of the artist and expectations of her? In addition, does the work reveal any specific resistances to gender stereotypes and categorisations?

The corpus of work by Dada women offers a relatively unexploited body of material through which to consider how gender issues affect cultural production, distribution and reception. Theories relating to language and gender, from Dale Spender and Cora Kaplan, to Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, have informed ongoing discussions of the ways in which women use language and women's creative writing.<sup>29</sup> Theories around the body, including Judith Butler's, reflect on the two-way relationship between

artistic representation, including performance and body images in fine art, and the social construction and ‘performativity’ of gender.<sup>30</sup> These discourses recognise the effect of gender on production and reception and help one to explore subjectivity, representation and identity. Looking at issues of women and Dada immediately invites questions about men and Dada too, about masculine perspectives, social contexts and, in turn, specifically male representations and projections.<sup>31</sup>

In 2005–6, Dada took centre stage in major exhibitions at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York.<sup>32</sup> While previous exhibitions in the United States dealt with Dada and Surrealism together, notably ‘Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism’ (MOMA, 1936, curated by Alfred Barr) and ‘Dada, Surrealism and their Heritage’ (MOMA, 1968, curated by William S. Rubin), this exhibition was the first major museum undertaking to explore Dada alone and in depth. It was also the first exhibition on Dada to be held in France since a show at the Musée National d’Art Moderne in 1966 and was described on the Pompidou’s English-version website as ‘the first nothing-but-Dada-by-Dada-exhibition.’<sup>33</sup> In the French-speaking world, and in the United Kingdom too, Dada has long been overshadowed by Surrealism, viewed as its unformed, nihilist and anti-aesthetic precursor. A character in Tom Stoppard’s *Travesties* (1975), a play that rejoices in Dada, enunciates this tendency satirically: ‘You remember Dada! – historical halfway house between Futurism and Surrealism.’<sup>34</sup> An unimpressed reviewer from the *Daily Telegraph* summed up the Paris exhibition in the following title, meanwhile, on 13 December 2006, ‘The Nihilists of Dada: Nothing to Write Home About’, and went on to applaud Surrealism instead. Nevertheless, Dada has steadily and increasingly been granted recognition for its innovations, radicalism and eclecticism.

An extraordinary number of objects were on display in Paris, as many as 1,200, while in the American locations the total number was between 400 and 500. These substantial exhibitions put Dada in the spotlight again, both in academic and popular discourse. The exhibition was widely reported in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States, resulting in increased media, scholarly and popular attention. It attracted a total of almost 875,000 visitors across its three venues, drawing in some 350,000 visitors to its three-month run in Paris, the same number in New York and close to 175,000 in Washington. The potential for immediate and far-reaching impact was enormous, as was the opportunity to refigure and reformulate the Dada landscape, fissures and all. It also offered an optimum moment to address the participation of women in the movement, to question the relationships of modernity, modernism and gender, in a particularly volatile socio-political and cultural moment. This opportunity, I would argue, was scarcely seized and leaves an increasingly insistent question mark over Dada’s gender.<sup>35</sup>

One of the posters displayed at the infamous 1920 International Dada Fair (Dada-Messe) in Berlin declared ‘Dada kann JEDER’, which translates as ‘ANYONE can be Dada’. That translation conceals the fact that where any doubt exists about the gender of the subject, in this case ‘anyone’, German uses the masculine ‘jeder’ as opposed to the fem-



inine 'jede'. This point of grammar brings to mind the fundamental impetus behind this study, which is to find out whether Dada – apparently the most radical, iconoclastic and inclusive movement of the historical avant-garde – had a female aspect, as well as a male aspect. The question might be posed as follows: does the proclamation 'Dada kann JEDER' manage to contain within it, also, 'Dada kann JEDE'? Could anyone be Dada, male or female?



## EMMY HENNINGS

### The 'mother' of the Cabaret Voltaire

Birth is frequently used as a metaphor for the appearance of art movements and Dada is no exception. The Cabaret Voltaire, at no. 1 Spiegelgasse in Zurich, is renowned as its legendary birthplace; its date of birth is recorded as the first performance on 5 February 1916; and Hugo Ball is exalted as its visionary father. The birth metaphor has its shortcomings, however, not least since it implies a single dramatic moment of entry into the world, rather than an accumulation of instances, exchanges and events over time. Dada emerged from a loose grouping of artists and writers gathered together by a call from Ball, who two days earlier had had this notice published in the press:

Cabaret Voltaire. Under this name a group of young artists and writers has formed in the hall of the 'Meierei' at Spiegelgasse 1 with the object of becoming a centre for artistic entertainment and intellectual exchange. The Cabaret Voltaire will be run on the principle of daily meetings where visiting artists will perform their music and poetry. The young artists of Zurich, whatever their orientation, are invited to bring along their ideas and contributions.<sup>1</sup>

Only two days later, those artists who had responded staged their first *soirée*. Initially known simply as the *Künstler-Gesellschaft Voltaire* (Voltaire Artists' Society), it was several weeks before the term Dada was introduced. In ensuing accounts and memoirs some of the earliest arrivals and participants came to claim for themselves a crucial role in naming the new venture, offering conflicting accounts as to who was the true originator or 'father' at this ritual moment. Given this contention around the engendering of the term, and because of the retrospective mythologising of the group's origins, the fluidity of Dada's beginnings – its emergence from a shifting, open group of participants, and the deliberate avoidance of doctrine and style – is sometimes overshadowed.

Another outcome of these paternity disputes has been the sidelining of several participants. This includes Emmy Hennings, a woman who was involved from the outset with Ball in cultivating a plan for an artists' cabaret in Zurich and hiring the venue to make that idea a reality. At the time of the founding of the Cabaret Voltaire Hennings and Ball were a couple (fig. 2). Both exiles with insecure status – Ball was fleeing the

<sup>2</sup> (facing page)  
Emmy Hennings  
and Hugo Ball,  
Munich, 1915.  
Nachlass Hugo Ball  
und Emmy  
Hennings / Robert  
Walser-Stiftung  
Zürich.

war draft in Germany – they subsisted in enormous domestic and financial insecurity, taking casual jobs together in cabarets, while harbouring aspirations to start their own theatrical venture. Ball wrote of these ambitions to his sister: ‘To have our own ensemble, to write for it ourselves, to work on it until a proper theatre comes out of it is our ultimate ambition.’<sup>2</sup> Ball’s use of ‘our’ as opposed to ‘my’ clearly includes Hennings. Shortly before the start-up of the Cabaret Voltaire, in January 1916, the couple had started an ensemble together, named Arabella, which toured to Arbon and Baden. That same month they began talks with Jan Ephraim, owner of the Holländische Meierei in which the Cabaret Voltaire would open at the beginning of February.

While the birth metaphor is something of a cliché, it is precisely that mix of wornness and endurance that offers an opportunity to revisit Dada’s origins and to widen the focus to include Dada’s women. One of the participants in the debate about the conception and genealogy of the name, Richard Huelsenbeck, humorously called it the ‘battle of the Dada greybeards.’<sup>3</sup> Hennings never took part in the retrospective, somewhat individualistic game of name-claiming that went on among the men and she fits the profile of neither father nor greybeard. She nevertheless played a crucial part in Dada’s origins in setting up and opening the Cabaret Voltaire. If Ball is lauded as its founding father for this act, then Hennings, the only other individual present and active in this moment of its conception, should be celebrated as its founding mother.

Like Dada itself, the image of Emmy Hennings has undergone multiple transformations. Perceptions of her in the diaries and memoirs of her contemporaries, in later art-historical accounts and in recent biographies combine to produce the fascinating story not only of her experiences but also of how those experiences have been delivered, reconstructed and interpreted, alongside the trajectory of Dada. A steady resurgence of interest in her since the mid-1990s has begun to redress her relative obscurity. In 1996 Hubert van den Berg published an essay ‘The Star of the Cabaret Voltaire: The Other Life of Emmy Hennings’, in which he pointed to Hennings’s importance as cabaret artiste, writer and networker.<sup>4</sup> Two long-overdue (German-language) biographies, by René Gass and Bärbel Reetz, appeared in 1998 and 2001 respectively. An exhibition of Hennings’s life and work in Zurich in 1999 also revived interest. Conceived by Bernhard Echte, it was accompanied by a comprehensive and eclectic catalogue of rarely published documents and images, which he likens to collage and which includes many texts by Hennings herself.<sup>5</sup> When that exhibition was staged in Flensburg, the town in which Hennings was born, Reetz recalls a headline from a local newspaper: ‘Emmymania in Flenstown.’<sup>6</sup> While that mania may have been short-lived, and while it may not have travelled far from this seaside town on the German–Danish border, the underlying research and documentation by Echte and others is a valuable resource.

One aspect has remained reasonably constant in treatments of Hennings, from her first appearances on stage in 1905, through Dadaists’ memoirs, to more recent accounts: that is the enormous interest in her life, often to the neglect of her work as a performer and poet, which has still been granted relatively little attention. Hennings summed this up in a diary entry eight months before her death in August 1948: ‘They don’t want any work from me. It’s just me who wishes that of myself, but people only want me the

person.<sup>7</sup> This complaint is appropriate to the narrative of a life in which great demands were made on her materially, physically, emotionally and sexually, and of which recollections of her as a muse, lover and wife dominate. Even where she is recalled as a singer or actress it is her body image and presence that prevail.

The fascination with Hennings's life story is unsurprising, given its dramatic and unorthodox content. Her first marriage to Joseph Paul Hennings, which produced a son in 1905, failed and the child, whose care she had left to her mother, the child's grandmother, died when just over a year old. Hennings had a second child, a daughter Annemarie, also given over to its grandmother for care. Although Hennings maintained publicly that her husband was Annemarie's father, rumours that it was Wilhelm Vio, a member of a touring group with whom Hennings worked, are borne out by the account she gives in the semi-autobiographical *Das flüchtige Spiel: Wege und Umwege einer Frau* (The Fugitive Game: One Woman's Roads and Detours; 1940). There the lover is named Ravelli but the daughter bears the name Annemarie. Only when Hennings's mother died, did the nine-year-old Annemarie leave Germany to join her mother and Ball in Zurich.

Hennings had travelled almost incessantly from 1905, taking jobs in theatres, cabarets and variety clubs. She also worked intermittently as a prostitute, was arrested and imprisoned on charges of stealing from clients on more than one occasion and was imprisoned for forging papers to help the writer Franz Jung avoid the war draft.<sup>8</sup> She was a drug-user, taking morphine, enduring periods of addiction to ether and suffering from regular bouts of ill health. In Germany, she was involved with the Expressionists, prior to Dada, and had sexual relationships with a number of that circle's writers, including Johannes R. Becher, Georg Heym, Erich Mühsam, Ferdinand Hardekopf and Jakob van Hoddis, as well as with the painters Ernst Moritz Engert and Reinhold Rudolf Junghanns. Hennings posed as artist's model for the last, resulting in a series of sketches, some of which were published in a small print-run as *Variationen über ein weibliches Thema* (Variations on a Female Theme) by Kurt Wolff in 1913. The drawings Junghanns made of her are by turn erotic and by turn disturbing in their depictions of ill health and exhaustion. In the sketch reproduced here, for example, Hennings is pictured holding a syringe, apparently injecting her arm (fig. 3).<sup>9</sup>

In memoirs by Zurich Dada protagonists, there was already a tendency to focus on Hennings's biographical details and to neglect her artistic output. Many references to her are frustratingly brief. From Richter's memoirs of Dada, a description of Hennings's personality overshadows indications of her role or contributions. He wrote:

Her child-like manner, the deadly earnest in which she said the most wildly improbable things, were a mystery to me. She was alien to me, as a woman and as a human being. Only Ball, in his loving humanity, fully understood her. Without overlooking her affectedness, he saw through it to a simple girl whose often-abused trustfulness appealed to his masculinity without making excessive claims on it.<sup>10</sup>

Richter's choice of language here is troublesome from a gender perspective and highlights the precariousness of Hennings's roles and reception as a woman in a male-



3 Reinhold  
Rudolf Junghanns,  
Emmy Hennings  
seated, facing right,  
with syringe, 1914.  
Kunsthau Zürich.

dominated circle. His perception of her as ‘other’ is underlined not only by the term ‘alien’, but also by the distinction that she was alien ‘as a woman and as a human being’, as if the two were unrelated. He not only glosses over an ‘often-abused trustfulness’ but sees it as a mark of female submissiveness and as such an explanatory factor in her appeal.

The term child, as well as other gendered stereotypes such as diva, muse and madonna, persist with reference to Hennings. They are especially prevalent in Richard Huelsenbeck’s recollections: ‘Hugo wasn’t looking for a housewife in Emmy; he was seeking childlike innocence, childhood, the unconscious, the fairytale world’, and ‘she was his mistress. His mother, his angel, and his high priest. . . . She wasn’t merely a child, she knew how to play the child.’<sup>11</sup> These descriptions veer between opposing suggestions of Hennings as child and Hennings as mother, as on the one hand simple and innocent and on the other shrewd and conniving, alternately submissive and dominant.

Often reductive, these descriptions nevertheless unwittingly reveal the strategies Hennings apparently employed, either consciously or unconsciously, in order to locate herself within a complex network of romantic, sexual and professional relationships. Judith Butler’s theory of gender as performative, as a social or cultural construction, is illuminating in this respect: ‘the acts by which gender is constituted bear similarities to performative acts within theatrical contexts.’<sup>12</sup> This assumption of roles can be seen in



4 Emmy Hennings in Frankfurt, June 1909. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

Hennings's actual adoption of professional, on-stage personas but no less acutely in her off-stage roles, as well as in contrasts or overlaps between them. In a portrait photograph from 1909, for example, her pose recalls the childlike, or angelic innocence (fig. 4). In reality, Hennings was twenty-four years old, married and separated, had given birth to two children and was working both as variety performer and prostitute.

A diary entry of 1910 written by Erich Mühsam, one of Hennings's lovers during the pre-Dada years, also points to the complex character of her physical, sexual and emotional existence in that early period or at least his impression of it: 'I like so much the naïve whorishness in her which only knows about loving and being loved.' This disturbing statement reflects a fascination with her sexuality that was shared by many of her male bohemian peers. A further entry of 1911 from Mühsam points to the real, pragmatic effects of her sexual availability: 'The poor girl gets too little sleep. Everybody wants to sleep with her, and since she is so accommodating, she never gets any rest. Until 3 a.m. she has to be at Kathi's place [Kathi Kobus ran the Café Simplicissimus in Munich], where she is taken horrible advantage of, and by 9 a.m. she is already at art class.'<sup>13</sup> These accounts point to an unglamorous, often desperate, promiscuous life, beset by disease and financial need.

Hennings arrived in Zurich with not only a vivid personal history but also a vibrant record of avant-garde literary and performance-based activity and a willingness (and

need) to build on it. Most of the early Dada participants acknowledged her place at the start of the ventures in Zurich by at least including her in the statistics of Dada's original group members. Huelsenbeck named her alongside Ball in several passages discussing the start of the Cabaret Voltaire. Accounts by both Arp and Richter, meanwhile, noted the same 'six-piece band', comprising Arp, Ball, Huelsenbeck, Janco, Tzara and Hennings. Finally, it was Ball who, remarkably, failed to count Hennings in his tally of original participants. The phrase 'wir sind fünf Freunde' (we are five friends) effectively excludes his wife.<sup>14</sup> This phrase appears in his memoirs *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (*Flight Out of Time*) for which no trail of manuscripts survives. It is known, however, not only that Ball heavily edited the text before he died in 1927 (when it was first published) but that Hennings also revised it before it was reissued in 1946. The complexity of the Ball–Hennings story appears at its most acute, in fact, in their memoirs. Even in her own accounts of the period Hennings, too, sometimes distanced herself from Dada, which will be discussed more fully in the final section of this chapter.

Meanwhile, visual, primary sources provide evidence of Hennings's participation in Dada. In the anthology *Cabaret Voltaire*, the first publication from the group, and where the name 'Dada' appeared in print for the first time, Ball's introduction is flanked by two drawings by Marcel Janco, one of himself and one of Hennings (fig. 5). The same sketches were reproduced on a poster for the Galerie Dada, the successor to the Cabaret Voltaire, for a soirée on 28 April 1917, the third at that venue, and towards the end of Dada's life in Zurich. These early documents provide an indication of Hennings's presence, prominence and persistence in a venture whose impact had yet to be realised and whose history had yet to be written.

She also appeared in a painting, *Cabaret Voltaire*, produced by Marcel Janco in 1916. Unfortunately the painting has been lost but the image endures in reproductions. There are two women on stage. One of them, Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, describes the painting thus: 'In an overcrowded room, teeming with color, several fantastic personages are seated on a platform; they are supposed to represent Tzara, Janco, Ball, Mrs. Hennings and your humble servant. We are in the midst of an enormous tumult. The people about us are shouting, laughing, gesticulating. We reply with sighs of love, salvos of hiccups, poetry, Wa Was, and the miaowings of mediaeval Bruitists. Janco plays an invisible violin and bows down to the ground. Mrs. Hennings, with the face of a madonna, tries to do the split [sic].'<sup>15</sup> These early images and descriptions offer glimpses of Hennings's visibility on the Zurich Dada scene.

Beyond Hennings's presence at Dada's so-called conception, there is the question of her role and her contributions in the development of the Cabaret Voltaire. While this study will emphasise her work over her life, it remains difficult to separate the two, not least because her status as woman, as physical and sexual presence, dominates perceptions of her stage work and is in danger of occluding her writing. Recent biographies have revealed much more about Hennings's extraordinary life. More importantly, they also afford insights into her ambitions to perform and to write, the challenges she faced and her strategies for survival as a social outsider. A more detailed consideration of Hennings's contributions as performer and as poet – both of which have been



Lorsque je fondis le Cabaret Voltaire, j'étais convaincu qu'il y aurait en Suisse quelques jeunes hommes qui voudraient comme moi, non seulement jouir de leur indépendance, mais aussi la prouver.

Je me rendis chez Mr Ephraïm, le propriétaire de la „Meierei“ et lui dis: „Je vous prie, Mr Ephraïm, de me donner la salle. Je voudrais fonder un Cabaret artistique.“ Nous nous entendîmes et Mr Ephraïm me donna la salle. „Donnez moi, je vous prie un tab- J'aimerais associer une petite exposition à cueillante de Zurich, je dis: „Aidez-moi. national; nous ferons de belles choses.“ publia les entrefilets. Alors nous eûmes le nings et Mme Leconte chantèrent en français lut de ses poésies roumaines. Un orchestre populaires et des

Je trouvai beaucoup d'appui et grava l'affiche du Cabaret et chez Mr Arp œuvres originales, quelques eaux-fortes de amis O. van Rees et Artur Segall. Beaucoup d'appui encore chez Mrs Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janko et Max Oppenheimer qui parurent maintes fois sur la scène. Nous organisâmes une soirée russe, puis une française (on y lut des œuvres d'Apollinaire, Max Jacob, André Salmon, Jarry, Laforgue et Rimbaud). Le 26 février arriva Richard Huelsenbeck de Berlin et le 30 mars nous jouâmes



J'allais chez quelques connais- leau, un dessin, une gravure. mon cabaret.“ A la presse ac- Je veux faire un Cabaret inter- On me donna des tableaux, on 5 février un cabaret. Mme Hen- et en danois. Mr Tristan Tzara de balalaïka joua des chansons danses russes.

de sympathie chez Mr Slodki qui qui mit à ma disposition des Picasso, des tableaux de ses

deux admirables chants nègres (toujours avec la grosse caisse: bonn bonn bonn bonn drabatja mo gere, drabatja mo bonnoooooooooooooooooo;) Mon- sieur Laban y assistait et fût émerveillé. Et sur l'initiative de Mr Tristan Tzara: Mrs Huelsenbeck, Janko et Tzara interprétèrent (pour la première fois à Zurich et dans le monde entier) les vers simultanés de Mrs Henri Barzun et Fernand Divoire, et un poème simultané composé par eux-mêmes qui est imprimé sur les pages 6—7 du present cahier. Aujourd'hui et avec l'aide de nos amis de France, d'Italie et de Russie nous publions ce petit cahier. Il doit préciser l'activité de ce Cabaret dont le but est de rappeler qu'il y a, au delà de la guerre et des patries, des hommes indépendants qui vivent d'autres idéals.

L'intention des artistes assemblés ici est de publier une revue in- ternationale. La revue paraîtra à Zurich et portera le nom „DADA“ Dada



Dada Dada Dada.

Zurich, le 15 mai 1916.

HUGO BALL

undervalued – is necessary in order to highlight the momentous role she played in the unfolding of Dada.

## Hennings as Dada body: presence and performance

Ball's background makes him the obvious 'genius' behind the foundation of the Cabaret Voltaire. Well educated in literature and philosophy, with experience of theatre direction gained in Munich, his published diaries detail the aesthetic and philosophical thinking behind his experimental work in Dada. For Ball, a career as a writer had always beckoned. As he wrote to his sister on his arrival in Zurich: 'If anyone should ask after me, I'm a writer, abroad, and I'm fighting for recognition.'<sup>16</sup> Hennings, in contrast, was not educated beyond the age of fourteen, her first ambitions were to become a famous actress and the bulk of her experience was as a variety artiste. She was a poet, too, however, arriving in Zurich with a publication record dating back to 1911. This aspect of her work is often forgotten. Her standing was largely defined in terms of her work either as a performer or as a muse, together with the connotations of lesser status and reputation these entailed, even within avant-garde circles.

Nevertheless, it is exactly Hennings's vast experience as a performer that constitutes her greatest contribution to Dada. By the time of her arrival in Zurich in 1915, she had a ten-year history of engagements as actress, singer and dancer, principally in Germany. She had travelled extensively, working in Hanover, Cologne, Berlin, Munich and Budapest. After starting in small shows as an actress she had turned increasingly to popular cabaret and from there to artistic circles. In Berlin she performed regularly at the Café des Westens, a nexus for literary and artistic activity. In Munich, she took part in the literary cabarets organised by the innovative Kathi Kobus at the Café Simplicissimus. Mühsam recalled how Hennings, hired by Kobus on a long-term basis, would sing popular, racy songs, having – to start with – no idea of 'her own calling as a poet'.<sup>17</sup> The avant-garde artists and writers of these venues tested the possibilities of literary cabaret, mixing poetry, drama, dance and song. These collaborations in entertainment and experiment fed and sustained new writing, including by Hennings herself.

When the First World War began, a number of writers sought exile from Germany in neutral Zurich, taking with them the literary cabaret trend, including Hennings and Ball, who arrived in May 1915. As van den Berg has pointed out, some (future) Dadaists such as Franz Jung and Huelsenbeck had encountered difficulties gaining access to the Simplicissimus back in Munich: 'If the later Dadas were thus more or less marginal figures or newcomers in the firmly established prewar bohemia, Hennings, on the other hand, was in close contact with many prominent figures of the subculture.'<sup>18</sup> She not only had a background of popular performance and first-hand experience of the literary cabaret but also had links with key figures in avant-garde circles.

In her account of her first meeting with Ball, Hennings pointed to theatre as their common area of interest. At first she had assumed him to be a philosopher: 'But then he said he was a dramaturge at the Kammerspielen and so the uncommunicativeness

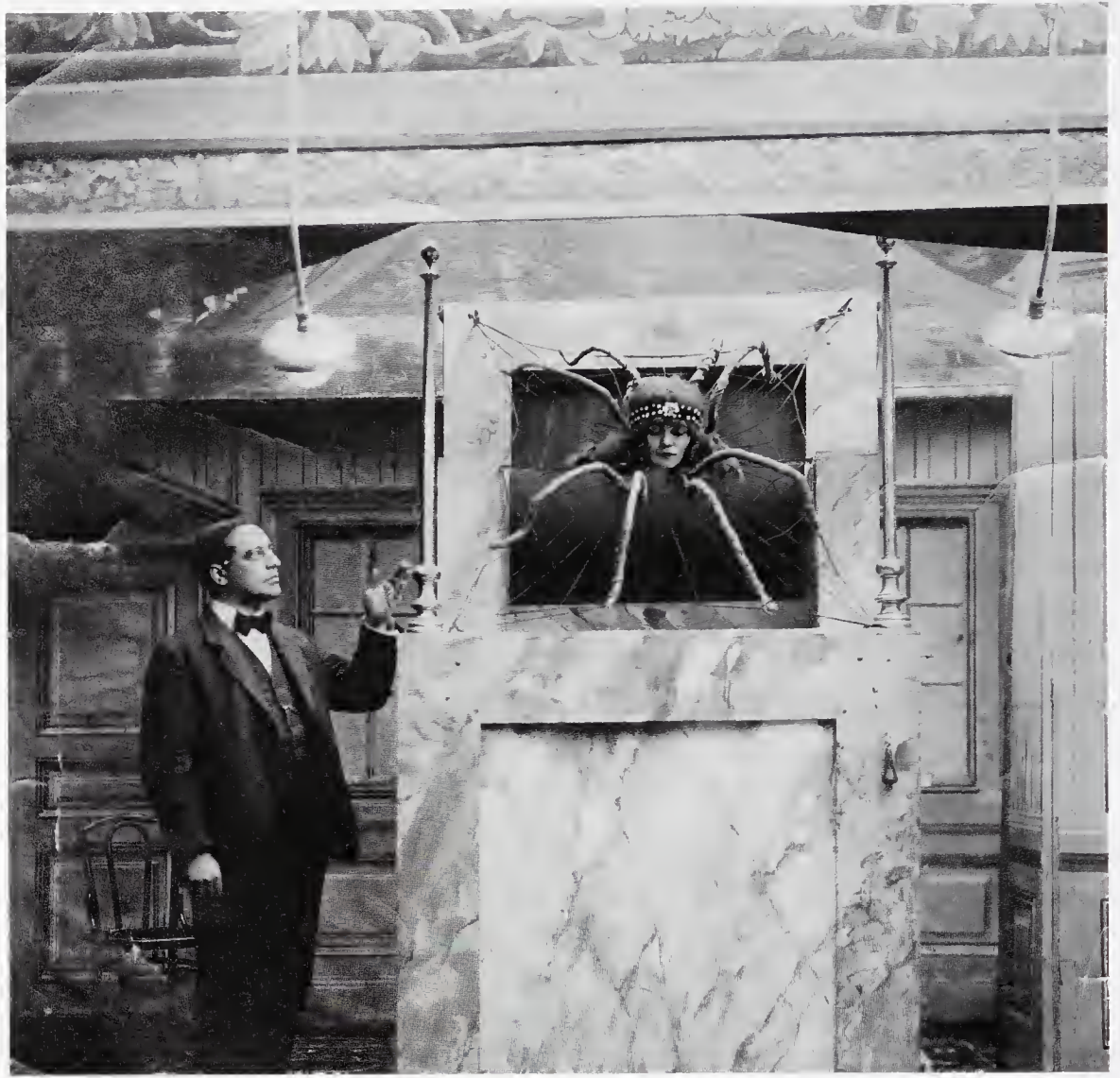
between the two of us quickly stopped. We started talking about theatre, about Wedekind, Sternheim and Claudel.<sup>19</sup> Extracts from letters and memoirs reveal how each of them was reflecting on the limitations as well as possibilities of performance as an art form. Ball's memoirs detail in particular his attraction to the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art).<sup>20</sup> His proposal for eclectic events, combining a variety of art forms, was eventually realised in Dada soirées that presented music, dance, poetry, costume and paintings together as aspects of a single show. However, there was to be no artifice of coherence, no narrative wholeness, but instead an onslaught of unexpected contrasting images, actions and sounds.

Meanwhile, a diary extract from Hennings displays frustration with the illusionism and escape offered by popular drama. On arrival in Zurich, she had continued to work on stage whenever she could make the money necessary for her own and Ball's survival, at one point finding them both work with the Maxim vaudeville troupe.<sup>21</sup> Hennings described in her diary a stint as the Greek mythological figure Arachne (Spider), who was to offer to members of the audience 'Eternal Truth, only 20 centimes[fig. 6]'. She mocked this gimmick:

Eternal Truth comes from me of course and I find it comical. And that it should come so cheap. As if what we demand were not worth much. A theatre death, a real variety death would be the right thing for me. One would really like to be the truth, not only appear to be it, and if I were to be found entangled in my net I would be the truth. Masked to the very last.

Hennings lamented the grandiose claims of theatre more broadly: 'We believe in the proven truth of illusion.'<sup>22</sup> The shock techniques and disturbing tactics that Dada developed offered an alternative to this kind of superficiality. Belief in characters or narratives was replaced by a reduction of the distance between performer and writer, the audience deliberately provoked to re-examine the powerful uses, and abuses, of language.

Even more revealing than points of convergence are the differences between Ball and Hennings in their approaches to, and experiences of, theatre and performance. This comes through in Hennings's memories of their first encounter: 'He said that the theatre meant freedom for him, untouchable freedom, whilst I assumed that this was rather to be found in real life. . . . That was shortly before the outbreak of war, in 1913, when there was belief in a visionary advent of art. Already there was this concept of grasping life in art without any detour via the intellect.'<sup>23</sup> Hennings's disenchantment with illusory popular theatre, as well as her actual experiences as a performer, probably stopped her from sharing Ball's utopian views of theatre as a means of liberation. The second part of her statement, however, reveals a shared vision of a new art: one that would be connected to life experience, received through direct impact and mediation, rather than via intellectual theorising. In this aspect, Hennings's views clearly connect with core Dada beliefs. Lucy Lippard described this characteristic mode of Dada, which proved influential on later concepts about art within Dada and beyond: 'art-as-action or art-as-idea rather than art as *objet d'art* and commodity'.<sup>24</sup> This art-as-action was unfixed, unmediated; it experimented with untheorised, unprogrammatic approaches. Work took shape through com-



6 Emmy Hennings on stage as 'truth-speaking' spider, 1915. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

munication between performers, and between performers and spectators. It left behind no art object to be bought, traded or displayed, only the effects of its provocations.

While Ball undoubtedly introduced to Hennings new strains of theoretical and philosophical thought, she initiated him into a different sphere – the tricks of popular performance and its intersections with literary experiment. In the mythologising of Dada, its status as an outsider on the fringes of the institutions of art as well as its lack of commercialisation are frequently cited as measures of its authenticity. Notwithstanding the iconoclasm and fearlessness of the group, however, Dada required audiences in order to make any sort of impact. The Dadaists sought ultimately to make use of the cabaret forum as a means of exploring experimental literature, art and performance but they achieved this by combining untried and iconoclastic work with accessible entertainment. Hennings was a crowd-puller, incorporating popular songs, ballads and entertainment alongside readings of classic and experimental literary texts. An aside by Huelsenbeck is telling: 'Emmy, on whose success or failure as a singer the existence of the cabaret hinged.'<sup>25</sup>



7 Emmy Hennings in nun's costume, c. 1912. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

A newspaper report from that time in Zurich also offers an insight into Hennings's crucial presence and the impact that it had on the audience. The following review appeared in the *Zürcher Post* on 23 May 1916: 'The star of the cabaret is Emmy Hennings, star of many nights of cabarets and poems. Years ago, she stood by the rustling yellow curtain of a Berlin cabaret, hands on hips, as exuberant as a flowering shrub; today too she presents the same bold front and performs the same songs with a body that has since then been only slightly ravaged by grief.'<sup>26</sup> The account given here reveals how Hennings was already well known as a performer; she was a 'star' or attraction in her own right. Moreover, it emphasises the physicality of her performance and of her visual presence as body on the stage.

The powerful effect Hennings asserted through performance was well rehearsed. In an article in *Die Aktion* from 1912, Ferdinand Hardekopf eulogises Hennings, describing her extraordinary abilities to provoke the audience, speculating on her power to shake up fuddy-duddy moral expectations and calling her 'this girl who possessed the hysteria, edginess and skull-breaking intensity of the literati'.<sup>27</sup> Photographs show her practising gestures, poses and expressions, including in costumes she improvised for maximum impact on and off stage. The long black robe and white ruffle she wore, for example, is reminiscent of a nun's habit and entirely at odds with her confident, overtly sexual posturing (fig. 7).

Richter, describing her singing at a Dada soirée, echoed accounts of the extreme effects of her interpretations: 'As the only woman in this cabaret manned by poets and painters, Emmy supplied a very necessary note to the proceedings, although (or even because) her performances were not artistic in the traditional sense, either vocally or as interpretations. Their unaccustomed shrillness was an affront to the audience, and perturbed it quite as much as did the provocations of her male colleagues.'<sup>28</sup> Hennings accompanied her singing with bizarre gestures and body movements, the combination of aural and visual effects heightening the audience's uneasiness. It may be that her approach was not only as perturbing as that of her male colleagues but even more so, given her status as an admired, female performer who subverted expectations of popular accomplished performance.

This later comment by Richter is also revealing in that it makes a distinction between Hennings on the one hand and the poets and painters who 'man' the cabaret on the other. He was right to highlight her crucial experience as a performer. After all, many of the male poets and painters had until then worked with words on the page or with static visual images, not via performance.<sup>29</sup> However, Hennings was not only and exclusively a performer but a poet too. It is her combination of both roles that makes her participation exceptional. Finally, even if the group was dominated by men, women singers, dancers and musicians participated in soirées too, adding their own 'necessary notes'. Motherwell's 1981 anthology *The Dada Painters and Poets* is an excellent publication but its title underpins the privileging of fine art and literature over performance. To return to Lippard's terms, it implies objet d'art over 'art-as-action' rather than the other way round. A title of 'The Dada Painters, Poets and Performers' would better describe the contributors to the movement. Also, if the invitation by Karl Schlegel is to be credited (see frontispiece), the cabaret was not to be an all-male affair: images of women were used to advertise it, at the very least, and women certainly performed there.

If Hennings's presence as a performer was significant, so was her sexual presence. Elements of the cabaret that are now lost include the audience and the atmosphere. Huelsenbeck recalled the former as 'too wild, too smoky, too way out' and a phrase by Tzara evokes the latter: 'The cosmopolitan mixture of god and brothel.'<sup>30</sup> If Ball's sound poetry produced uncanny religious and spiritual moments in the cabaret, for example the infamous incident when he read 'Karawane' and had to be carried off stage, Hennings's physical and sexual appeal created a highly charged sexual atmosphere in a cabaret filled mainly with men. Reetz has emphasised in her biography of Hennings that 'the boundaries between hosting and prostitution were often fluid'. She has painted a vivid picture of the precarious status of an actress or singer in the first decades of the century.<sup>31</sup> Untrained, these young women were frequently perceived as not only decorative on stage but sexually available off stage. Women performers, attracted by myths of liberation, often found themselves struggling financially, paying for their own costumes from meagre salaries, and expected to satisfy the expectations of mainly male employers and audiences. Many, Hennings included, supplemented their income by entertaining clients or prostituting themselves after performances. Before the Cabaret Voltaire, several of Hennings's Expressionist acquaintances had already shown them-



## Künstlerkneipe Voltaire

Allabendlich (mit Ausnahme von Freitag)

Musik-Vorträge und Rezitationen

Eröffnung Samstag den 5. Februar

im Saale der „Meierei“ Spiegelgasse 1

Garderobegebühr 50 Cts.

8 Marcel Slodki,  
poster for the  
opening of the  
Cabaret Voltaire,  
1916. Kunsthaus  
Zürich

selves, through their actions and writings, to be intrigued by street life, prostitutes and sexual openness. There have even been suggestions that some of these acquaintances and lovers prostituted Hennings for their own financial needs.<sup>32</sup> Hennings's body and sexual appeal provided her with access to predominantly male literary circles but also, as Mühsam's comments indicate, led to physical, and doubtless emotional, hardships.

Hennings was undoubtedly an asset to the Cabaret Voltaire and to Dada, because of her presence and because of her past. Recalling earlier cabarets at the Café Simplicissimus, Max Halbe wrote (in 1976): 'Anyone who experienced this period can have no doubt that the real drastic change initially came less from above, from high literature, than from below, from the cabaret, from the boards, from the shows.'<sup>33</sup> As an experienced variety performer, Hennings undoubtedly had enormous input into organising and staging soirées that offered a means of escape from the stifling norms and conventions of publishers, galleries and theatre owners. Ball praises Hennings in a letter to his sister: 'She has stood by me so faithfully and we have got the cabaret going.'<sup>34</sup> Her vast experience must have informed the day-to-day running of this radical new venture and her presence on stage provided energy and impetus to painters and poets as first-time performers. In his 1971 history *L'Aventure Dada*, Georges Hugnet gave a short summary of Hennings's pivotal role: 'She participates actively in the successful running of the Cabaret Voltaire . . . a singer, she is the cabaret's hostess [fig. 8].'<sup>35</sup> Such a short

reference may seem insignificant, and is easily lost in the pages of history books, but is a reminder that Hennings's presence in the Dada cabaret was crucial not only as body and hostess but also as voice.

## Hennings as Dada voice: the word between page and stage

Melding different effects was crucial to the Dada cabaret. Visually, these combinations and juxtapositions were achieved through dance, gesture, backdrops, costumes and masks. Sound played a major role, the soirées incorporating music, songs, poetry and manifestos. The front of the publication *Cabaret Voltaire* records Hennings's participation in the very first performance at the venue, in 1916: 'On 5 February we had a cabaret. Mrs. Hennings and Mrs. Leconte sang French and Danish songs. Mr. Tristan Tzara recited Rumanian verses. A balalaika band played delightful Russian folk-songs and dances' (see fig. 5).<sup>36</sup> Hennings, from the German–Danish border, had already made use of Danish folk songs, passed on by oral tradition and which she translated into German, in eclectic multilingual cabarets in Germany and Budapest. Popular song formed a major part of the cabaret, as Ball indicated in a letter to his sister about the new venture on 1 March 1916: 'Without Emmy and the little French girl, who sings charming little French songs, there would be no cabaret.'<sup>37</sup>

The employment of various forms, styles and languages underpinned the disturbing and unexpected effects of the cabaret on the audience. Richter attempted to convey something of their force: 'Imagine the combination of Ball's piano improvisations, Emmy Hennings' thin, unrefined, youthful voice (which was heard alternately in folk-songs and brothel songs) and the abstract Negro masks of Janco . . . and you will have some idea of the vitality and enthusiasm by which the group is inspired.'<sup>38</sup> This second reference to brothels indicates the mix of intellectual experimentation and a more sexual aspect that has already been highlighted. The group used well-known religious songs, appropriating them for the cabaret venue, alongside folk, popular and political songs that roused the audience. Stimuli came from the oral tradition and the effects on an audience were immediate, especially compared with the medium of print. Huelsenbeck recalled:

These songs, known only in central Europe, poke fun at politics, literature and human behavior, or anything else that people will understand. The songs are impudent but never insulting. There is no intention of hurting anyone, only the desire to express an opinion. Sometimes they are erotic, treating old farce themes such as the cuckold or the ignorance of the bride on her wedding night. The intellectual level is low but not unpleasantly so. Usually, they subsist on refrains and popular music, but Ball made up a melody for every song he wrote.<sup>39</sup>

To present and incorporate popular songs alongside canonical texts and radical new songs and poems was highly irreverent. Ball wrote: 'The ideals of culture and art as a program for a variety show – that is our kind of *Candide* against the times.'<sup>40</sup> The



naming of the cabaret was a tribute to Voltaire's opposition to and satire of contemporary society. Dada railed against its particular temporal context with expressions against the war and nationalism. Huelsenbeck provided a specific example: 'When Emmy Hennings sang "They kill one another with steam and with knives" in Switzerland, which was encircled by fighting armies, she was voicing our collective hatred of the inhumanity of war.'<sup>41</sup>

Hennings sang 'Totentanz' (Dance of Death), an anti-war poem written by Ball, at numerous performances, including the first at the Cabaret Voltaire on 4 February 1916. It had been published in *Der Revoluzzer* in 1915 and was apparently later also printed on cards and dropped over the trenches. Hennings sang it to the tune of a well-known jingoistic song 'So leben wir' (This is how we live):

So sterben wir, so sterben wir.  
Wir sterben alle Tage,  
Weil es so gemütlich sich sterben lässt.<sup>42</sup>  
(This is how we die, this is how we die.  
We die every day  
Because they make it so comfortable to die.)

This unexpected juxtaposition of the words and the music with its associations of patriotism represented a startling anti-war statement. Ball noted the effect its performance had on him: 'Oh, how your voice moves me to write! I did not think much of my "Totentanz", but when you sung it to me for the first time in the grey Schoffelgasse in Zürich, oh, Emmy, I will never forget it.'<sup>43</sup> A newspaper review noted: 'She sings it in a simple, almost cheerful melody. The sarcasm and hate, the desperation of men forced into war resonates in every phrase.'<sup>44</sup>

In theatre, Brecht's 'separation of the elements' later employed similar deliberate disconnections between aural and visual stimuli with the aim of unsettling the audience in their comfortable expectations.<sup>45</sup> Ball, like Brecht, was interested in the techniques used in Chinese theatre as an alternative approach to classic Western drama. An entry in Ball's diaries discussed Chinese theatre's recognition of the impact of song within dramatic performance: 'When the dramatist wants to move or shock his audience, he switches over to song. . . . The words of the song do not matter; the laws of rhythm are more important.'<sup>46</sup> Hennings provided the effective singing voice (fig. 9). In a letter to his sister Ball noted: 'People are quite shaken when Emmy sings the song.'<sup>47</sup>

Reciting, too, could be a revolutionary act, with performers employing unusual vocal effects, gestures and costumes. Ball's early contemplation on the musical and rhythmic qualities of words, as opposed to their semantics, manifested itself in his and other Zurich Dadaists' radical experiments with sound poems and simultaneous poems. In its use of words in non-syntactic ways, selected for their sound value instead of their meaning, and its stringing together of sounds to invent new words, sound poetry was inextricably linked with performance. Richter wrote: 'Sounds are relatively easy to put together, rhythmically and melodically, in chance combinations; words are more difficult. Words bear a burden of meaning designed for practical use, and do not readily



9 Emmy Hennings, Munich, c. 1921. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

submit to a process of random arrangement.<sup>48</sup> Avant-garde poets examined words as material in the way that painters examined the limitations and associations of paint by experimenting with new materials and collage. Poetry was explored not only on the page but also aloud and spontaneously. Sentences were broken down into words and combined in strange ways and words themselves were broken down into sounds. As Ball recorded: 'In eliminating vulnerable syntax or association one preserves the sum of the things that constitute the style and the pride of a writer – taste, cadence, rhythm, and melody.'<sup>49</sup> In another diary entry he noted: 'Nowhere are the weaknesses of a poem revealed as much as in a public reading. . . . Reciting aloud has become the touchstone of the quality of a poem for me, and I have learned (from the stage) to what extent today's literature is worked out as a problem at the desk and is made for the spectacles of the collector instead of for the ears of living human beings.'<sup>50</sup>

Ball was hinting at an esoteric side to published poetry, in which books were perceived as relics to be collected and little discernible impact was made on the readership. The switch to the stage was in part an attempt to close the gap between writer and reader. Through reciting poems in the cabaret venue, the Dadaists had an immediate means of experimenting with the effects of their work, and the artistic process became more a collaborative venture than an individual one and more public than private. Spontaneous interference from the audience was welcomed and fed into the radical new

techniques and styles of sound poetry. In a simultaneous poem, for example, such as the celebrated 'L'Amiral cherche une maison à louer' (The Admiral in Search of a House to Rent) by Huelsenbeck, Tzara and Janco, three voices recite and sing different texts alongside each other, using German, French, English and invented words, as well as whistles and pure sounds. Ball recorded: 'In such a simultaneous poem, the willful quality of an organic work is given powerful expression, and so is its limitation by the accompaniment.'<sup>51</sup> Each reading, and reception, of the poem was different, shaking up its status as a static entity conceived and concretised by the author. The meanings of the words were of little importance: not only were the languages different, and not necessarily all comprehensible to the audience, but they also overlapped in ever changing combinations of layers of sound. This mix of languages recalls the description of the first performance, where Danish and French were sung, surely a stimulus for this radical innovation.

Emmy Hennings's experience as a professional performer was important in the effective transferral of literature from the page to the stage. The critic and scholar Bernhard Merkelbach has claimed of her contribution: 'However, unlike Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings never fully went along with the avant-garde thrust of Dadaism that was developing in this Cabaret. As a stage artist, she remained tied up with the delivery of text and the accompanying facial expressions, gestures and musical accompaniment.'<sup>52</sup> Merkelbach's suggestion that Hennings was left behind because her focus was on the actual delivery of performances, as opposed to the ideology behind them, fails to acknowledge the significance of the performance aspect. The 'delivery of texts, facial expressions, gestures and musical accompaniments' all fed into the working out of the Dadaists' new literature. Richter's summary of Dada as literary phenomenon is pertinent in this respect: 'The creative energies of the group were devoted to the composition, performance and publication of poems, stories and songs. For each of these poems, songs and stories there was an appropriate style of delivery.'<sup>53</sup> The delivery of texts within the performance venue – in fact, each single delivery – is emphasised in this statement, as much as their initial production.

As a professional performer of long standing Hennings stands out (fig. 10). There should be no misconception that performance activity was limited to those who had experience, however. Many of the Dadaists took to the stage, their renditions of sound and simultaneous poetry providing some of the most famous moments in Dada history. Performers read both their own and others' work, with ownership and individual production assuming lesser importance than is the case with written literary work. Ball perceived his role in the group as a catalyst. He wrote: '*Producere* means "to produce", "to bring into existence". It does not have to be books. One can produce artists too.'<sup>54</sup> As Thomas F. Rugh has noted of Hennings: 'She and the other Dadaists worked together not to produce a timeless art work but a "gesture".'<sup>55</sup> This gesture involved the combination of numerous art forms, explored through interactive and collaborative performances. RoseLee Goldberg has written of performance that 'no other artistic form of expression has such a boundless manifesto, since each performer makes his or her own definition in the very process and manner of execution.'<sup>56</sup> Hennings's participation, in



10 Emmy Hennings  
c. 1912/1913.  
Nachlass Hugo Ball  
und Emmy Hennings / Robert  
Walser-Stiftung  
Zürich.

this respect, provided a distinctive contribution, one that constituted a vital bridge between the experimental artistic forum and the more popular cabaret forum, between writer and audience.

Her name may be scattered through memoirs and accounts of Dada but Hennings's part in its evolution has rarely been emphasised either by the Dadaists or by Dada historians. Early sources, though, paint a different picture. Just a few weeks after the first performances at the Cabaret Voltaire and at the height of its activity, Ball wrote to his sister: 'Emmy has the greatest success. They translate her verses for Bucharest. She has a whole colony of friends there. The French are kissing her hand. They love her beyond words. She reads from the poems 'Aetherstrophen' [Etherstanzas] and 'Krankenhaus' [Hospital] as well as new things. Then she sings her tender little songs.'<sup>57</sup> This short testament reveals Hennings's talents as diseuse, singer, collaborator and networker, roles that were essential in the unfolding of Dada in Zurich and yet are largely undervalued. Finally, Ball's letter names two poems in reference to Hennings's recitals, poems that belong to her own body of work. Hennings's role as performer has been underrated in accounts of Dada but that fate is surpassed by an almost complete disregard for her writing. This neglect of another aspect to her creative output, which stretches from pre-Dada years to post-Ball years, also demands attention.

## Poetry: from Expressionism to Dada

Emmy Hennings's status as poet is almost universally ignored in Dadaists' memoirs. In 1948 Richter commented on what became of her after Ball's death: 'Emmy Hennings who had met and inspired some of the best German poets during her lifetime – who had always, as long as I can remember (1912), lived among artists and writers – had become a writer herself. Books about Hugo Ball, short stories and sensitive, intelligent poems appeared in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the *Basler National Zeitung* and in magazines.'<sup>58</sup> This account, though doubtless intended to be complimentary, points to a muse whose own writing career began only in later years. The Expressionist poet Johannes Becher, writing in 1950, called her: 'my first poetic risk, my passionate adventure, which spun me into the middle of literature and brought me together with Leonhard Frank, van Hoddiss and Hardekopf.'<sup>59</sup> This statement also casts her as muse, but at least invites one to understand muse in an active as well as a passive sense, with Henning as networker and enabler. As for her own adventures in literature, Hennings had begun writing and publishing poetry years before the Cabaret Voltaire. Her poems had appeared in avant-garde publications including *Pan*, *Die Neue Kunst*, *Die Aktion*, *Der Revoluzzer* and *Die Ähre* from as early as 1911 through to 1915.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, her first volume of poetry, *Die letzte Freude* (The Last Joy), was published in Leipzig in 1913, as part of the series *Der jüngste Tag*, produced by the Kurt Wolff publishing house. The list of her contributions to journals and newspapers throughout her life, as well as the bibliography of her own book publications, is extensive.<sup>61</sup>

The newspaper review in which Hennings is described as 'the star of the cabaret', quoted in the last section, has been reproduced in several histories of Dada but the rest of the review, which is rarely quoted, reads: 'When the newest generation of Prague poets, who were just a little rich with sentiment, arrived in Berlin, she too was discovered as a poet, and the grace of her verses was mistakenly exploited for this new trend.'<sup>62</sup> This 1916 newspaper review identifies Hennings as a poet; her work had been published in German-language avant-garde journals; a volume had appeared in her name; she was known in Expressionist circles; she read her own work at the Cabaret Voltaire; and three of her poems were included in its eponymous first publication. Why, then, is her status as poet rarely acknowledged in her Dada colleagues' memoirs?

For some, it seems, her prominence as a performer occluded her production as a poet. Richter's ignorance of Hennings's poetry can be seen to have been symptomatic of attitudes towards women performers and indeed towards women in the broader context: her bodily presence outweighed her literary creativity. This corporeal identity was arguably reinforced by perceptions of her as a predominantly sexual, rather than intellectual, presence off stage too – firstly, as the promiscuous cohort to a number of Expressionist poets and then as Ball's partner and later wife. Anna Rheinsberg, in her imaginative rewriting of Hennings's life published in 1989, has suggested that her role was circumscribed by expectations of her as a woman: 'Bohemia is masculine. A woman doesn't have any vote. She steps up to, but never into (the circle). She's Song, (Painter's) Model or Typewriter.'<sup>63</sup>

Another reason for the relative neglect of Hennings's poetry is the trajectory of Dada inventions and innovations. Zurich Dada has become known, appropriately, for its radical formal experiments such as sound poetry and simultaneous poetry. Georges Hugnet described the characteristics of Zurich Dada poetry as follows: 'catastrophic images, strange juxtapositions, recourse to chance (words pulled out of a hat), invented language whose sound patterns recall African songs, simultaneism . . . its adventure was a revolt of the spirit, a moral and poetic revolt'.<sup>64</sup> These characteristics, as the last phrase implies, arose out of a new philosophical approach to literature. Language, the material of literature, was seen as being bound up with propaganda and war. Dada experimental poetry sought to question the value of words as meaningful signs, to reappropriate them, to make them malleable and scrutinise language anew. These objectives resulted in the creation of sound poetry and simultaneous poetry, radical new forms in which semantics and narrative were forsaken in favour of the total breakdown of language components.

Hennings's work is considerably less radical in formal terms in comparison with these developments. Unlike the evolving, highly experimental poems of some of the Dadaists, her poetry is mainly based on regular rhyme and rhythm patterns. Nevertheless, this kind of work was not totally isolated, either in performances or publications. The Dadaists in the early stages in Zurich made use of an eclectic range of literature in their search for new forms, including broadly Expressionist poems by Jakob van Hoddis, Erich Mühsam and Else Lasker-Schüler – with all of whom Hennings had established close contacts in Germany. Since Expressionism, the dominant avant-garde precursor to Dada in German-speaking artistic circles, was later rejected in Dada manifestos as having been absorbed and neutralised into dominant bourgeois culture, an enduring opposition has been set up between them. This opposition must be seen in context as the rejection of the status quo by the new avant-garde; it is continued in histories that neatly compartmentalise movements but, in practice, periods of crossover are apparent.

Coming from Expressionism to the early stages of Dada, Hennings illuminates such a crossover point. Of those few critics who have looked into her work in detail, some embrace her fully as an Expressionist poet, owing to the formal style and thematic content of her poems, as well as her activities in Expressionist circles. Others, particularly those with a focus on Dada, refute that categorisation altogether.<sup>65</sup> Since many of Hennings's poems, including those examples that are known to have been read at Dada performances, were completed and published before Dada experiments with simultaneous and sound poetry began, comparisons with Expressionist poetry are the more appropriate. It was through her contacts in Berlin and Munich, after all, that Hennings found her first inspirations, began writing and found opportunities to publish. In a letter to Ball in 1917, that is, even after her involvement with Dada, Hennings refers to the importance of Jakob van Hoddis, and in particular his poem 'Weltende' (End of the World), considered by many critics to be the quintessential Expressionist poem,<sup>66</sup> and his poetry was recited in Dada performances, including at the Cabaret Voltaire on 7 February 1916 and the second Dada Sturm soirée in April 1917, when it was read by Hennings.

# G E S A N G   Z U R D Ä M M E R U N G

für Hugo Ball

Oktaven taumeln Echo nach durch graue Jahre.  
Hochaufgetürmte Tage stürzen ein.  
Dein will ich sein —  
Im Grabe wachsen meine gelben Haare  
Und in Hollunderbäumen leben fremde Völker  
Ein blasser Vorhang raunt von einem Mord  
Zwei Augen irren ruhelos durchs Zimmer  
Gespenster gehen um beim Küchenbord.  
Und kleine Tannen sind verstorbene Kinder  
Uralte Eichen sind die Seelen müder Greise  
Die flüstern die Geschichte des verfehlten Lebens.  
Der Klintekongensee singt eine alte Weise.  
Ich war nicht vor dem bösen Blick gefeit  
Da krochen Neger aus der Wasserkanne,  
Das bunte Bild im Märchenbuch, die rote Hanne  
Hat einst verzaubert mich für alle Ewigkeit.

11 Emmy Hennings, 'Gesang zur Dämmerung' (Twilight Song), *Cabaret Voltaire*, 1916. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

In the early stages, the programme of Dada soirées was inclusive and eclectic and crossed boundaries between movements. This is reflected in the publication *Cabaret Voltaire*, which featured Cubist, Expressionist and Futurist visual and literary work alongside new work from the Zurich group. Hennings contributed three texts: 'Gesang zur Dämmerung' (Twilight Song), 'Morfin' (Morphine) and 'Die vielleicht letzte Flucht' (Perhaps the Last Flight).<sup>67</sup> Given the circumstances of this first publication, the insistence on Dada (or Expressionist) credentials is not fruitful. Instead, the work that Hennings published as part of this first Dada publication will be taken as concrete evidence of her contributions to the group's output and examined by drawing on models of Expressionist and Dada techniques as appropriate.

The first, 'Gesang zur Dämmerung', has a dreamlike quality (fig. 11). It evokes the thoughts, visions and fears of a wandering or even hallucinatory mind, in the twilight of the title. These visions are of death and despair: 'Gespenster gehen um beim Küchenbord/Und kleine Tannen sind verstorbene Kinder/Uralte Eichen sind die Seelen müder Greise' (Ghosts haunt the edge of the kitchen/And little fir trees are dead children/Ancient oaks are the souls of tired old men). There is a lack of spatial coherence as the poem moves between interior and exterior, between the domestic space of curtains and kitchens, and the garden beyond, all of which are permeated and transformed by imaginary influences. The *Reihungsstil* (or serial style), whereby phrases follow on from one another without an insistence on grammatical or logical coherence, is typical of Expressionist poetry. It is meant to reflect the fragmented state of subjective reality, rather than impose a coherent, realist view.

# M O R F I N

Wir warten auf ein letztes Abeuteuer  
Was kümmert uns der Sonnenschein?  
Hochaufgetürmte Tage stürzen ein  
Unruhige Nächte — Gebet im Fegefeuer.

Wir lesen auch nicht mehr die Tagespost  
Nur manchmal lächeln wir still in die Kissen,<sup>68</sup>  
Weil wir alles wissen, und gerissen  
Fliegen wir hin und her im Fieberfrost.

Mögen Menschen eilen und streben  
Heut fällt der Regen noch trüber  
Wir treiben haltlos durchs Leben  
Und schlafen, verwirrt, hinüber . . .

E M M Y H E N N I N G S

12 Emmy Hennings, 'Morfin' (Morphine), *Cabaret Voltaire*, 1916. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

Death, the passing of time and fear are dominant themes. There are also references to the unfamiliar exotic or 'Other': 'in Hollunderbäumen [*sic*] leben fremde Völker' (A strange race lives in lilac trees) and 'Da krochen Neger aus der Wasserkanne' (Negroes crawled from the water pitcher).<sup>68</sup> Connections with Else Lasker-Schüler's work, some of which was also included in the Dada cabarets, are apparent. Both her 'Heimweh' (Homesickness) and 'Weltflucht' (Flight from the World) have much in common with Hennings's poetry.<sup>69</sup> Each uses nature in imaginative, sometimes exotic ways to recreate flight, escape, homesickness, fear, isolation and despair. As she became disillusioned with theatre, Hennings had written: 'It would be interesting to depict that which is scarcely graspable any more. The unknown illogical side of life.'<sup>70</sup> In her poetry, she apparently strove for this kind of depiction.

As well as visions, sound features strongly: 'Oktaven taumeln Echo nach' (Octaves stumble like echos); 'Ein blasser Vorhang raunt von einem Mord' (A pale curtain whispers about a murder); 'Uralte Eichen . . . /flüstern die Geschichte des verfehlten Lebens' (Ancient oaks . . . /whisper the story of unsuccessful lives) and 'Der Klintekongensee singt eine alte Weise' (The Lake of the Cliff King sings an old tune).<sup>71</sup> The poem is reminiscent of a ghost tale, lending itself to an atmospheric reading aloud. Indeed, Hennings chose to call it a *Gesang* or song. It also explicitly refers to other tales, to the legendary figure the 'Rote Hanne' (Red Hannah) and to the Lake of the Cliff King, a Danish mythological figure.

The title of the second poem 'Morfin' is readily understood by the English-speaking reader as 'Morphine' (fig. 12). In fact, the German equivalent of the English morphine



has the same spelling but Hennings uses the Danish spelling Morfin. The poem may well have been informed by her own experiences of drug use, which is made evident in correspondence and diaries. One example comes from a desperate letter to Junghanns, written in August 1912: 'I have been addicted to ether for some time and really going to the dogs. I am in a state of eternal agitation, spiritually of course (not sexually, which perhaps would be better). I am suffering from hallucinations and must spend a few days alone in the countryside.'<sup>72</sup> Personal experience or readings aside, the title makes drugs a central theme: morphine offers an escape or flight from an insupportable reality, albeit an agonising alternative.

The hopelessness described in the first poem, 'Gesang zur Dämmerung', is reiterated with the same line: 'Hochaufgetürmte Tage stürzen ein' (High-towered days crumble into ruins). 'Morfin' has wide resonance, beyond the theme of drugs, in its depiction of despair, frustration and hopelessness. It describes a withdrawal from daily life, from sunshine itself – 'Was kümmert uns der Sonnenschein?' (What do we care about sunshine?) – and from the terrible reality of politics – 'Wir lesen auch nicht mehr die Tagespost' (We no longer read the daily post). Night brings its own mix of bitter pleasure and terror: 'Nur manchmal lächeln wir still in die Kissen/Weil wir alles wissen, und gerissen/Fliegen wir hin und her im Fieberfrost' (Only sometimes do we smile quietly in the pillows/Since we know everything, and fly/To and fro slyly in attacks of shivering). Those who glimpse the horrible reality of the times, be it of the war, the failure of politics or personal hardship, are left with hallucinations or night terrors. The sense of hopelessness is encapsulated in the phrase 'Gebet im Fegefeuer' (Prayer in purgatory), which surely represents a bleak and desperate chance of redemption. The poem ends on the same note of inaction and impotence: 'Wir treiben haltlos durchs Leben/Und schlafen, verwirrt, hinüber . . .' (We push unsteadily through life/And sleep, confused and exhausted . . .).

Hennings's third inclusion in *Cabaret Voltaire*, 'Die vielleicht letzte Flucht' (Perhaps the Last Flight) is strikingly different from the other two. It is a short dramatic script for the stage, a dialogue between two characters, which might well have been intended for or acted out in soirées. It begins by setting a scene: 'Tiefe Nacht. Still. In einer fremden Stadt ein stilles Zimmer. Eckig./Mattes Kerzenlicht flackert./Dämonisch öffnet sich eine Tür' (Deep night. Silence. In a foreign city a steep room. Cornered/Feeble candle light flickers./Demonically, a door opens). Two characters appear: 'Zwei Wesen sitzen einander gegenüber. Ein Mensch und die Frau.' This line has been translated as 'Two beings sit opposite one another. A man and a woman.' However, this fails to get across a contrast between the two individuals inherent in Hennings's specific choice of language. 'A man' is 'Ein Mensch' (a human being). The article 'ein' denotes a specific individual and the choice of 'Mensch' (as opposed to 'Mann') makes clear that he is a distinct person or human being. In contrast, the woman is introduced as 'die Frau' (the woman), as opposed to 'eine Frau' (a woman), suggesting a generic category of woman.<sup>73</sup> Neither character is identified by name, so that each is more a representation of his or her gender, the woman apparently existing principally in relation to the man.

The dialogue between the two characters is difficult, stilted, hesitant and ultimately unsuccessful. Frequently their words trail off. The man rejects the woman's repeated attempts to express herself. They fail to connect or conclude through their language, only coming together through a physical sexual encounter that is finally tragic, at least for the woman who submits, in spite of the man's coldness and threatening air. The last line is especially poignant. It relates back to Hennings's experience as performer and her consciousness of the performativity of her gender role. She wrote: 'Und sie starb, da sie sich beobachtet fühlte' (And she died, because she felt watched). Being observed, existing under the male gaze, is the woman's fate. In a prose text 'Vor der Premiere' (Before the Premiere) Hennings described a similar sentiment, as the cabaret actress prepares for the opening night: 'Da bemerkte sie, da man sie beobachtete. Ihre Schultern sanken herab, das Gesicht wurde schlaff und fiel zusammen. . . . Jetzt zweifelte sie an ihrer Schönheit' (Then she noticed that she was being watched. Her shoulders sank, her face became slack and fell. . . . Now she doubted her beauty).<sup>74</sup>

Alongside the dialogue in 'Die vielleicht letzte Flucht' Hennings included notes in brackets, like stage directions. This line gives instructions for the voice: 'Die Frau: (langsam und gedehnt)' (The woman: [slowly and drawn out]). At other points the notes are more poetic than instructive, such as 'Der Mann (sich in zwei graue Seen versenkend, die auch unruhig waren) spricht' (The man [sinking into two grey restless seas] speaks), or 'Sie lächelte leise (ein Lächeln, das umso süsser wirkte, weil es selten war)' (She smiled quietly [a smile that was all the sweeter for its rarity]). Hennings added visual notes too: 'Seine Augen blickten kühl. Um die Lippen, boshaft schmal irrt ein graues Lächeln. Das Lächeln des Mörders. Sie sah entgeistert auf seinen offenen Mund. Seine Augen kniffen sich zynisch zusammen' (His eyes glanced coolly. Around the lips, maliciously small, a grey smile wandered. The smile of the murderer./She looked dumbfounded at his open mouth. His eyes creased cynically).

Michael Howard has written of this text: 'it is deeply Expressionistic in tone and effect and creates an intense psychological picture of a tragic sexual encounter of the type so familiar in the poems, plays, prints and paintings of the period.'<sup>75</sup> Certainly it has much in common with a dialogue, 'Abend', written by the poet Ferdinand Hardekopf, one of Hennings's lovers in Munich and Berlin, which was published as part of the series *Der jüngste Tag* in 1913. 'Abend' deals with an encounter between a man and a woman, Ostap and Germaine, in a hotel room: he is a client and she a prostitute, this character apparently inspired by Hennings.<sup>76</sup> Just as in Hennings's dialogue, both characters are left frustrated by the encounter. Where Hardekopf plays with conventions and pastiches the ways in which dramatic dialogue is used to fill in the background for the audience, Hennings's tragic text is less ironic. Riddled with gaps and hesitations, the dialogue shows an insurmountable disconnection between two characters whose language fails them.

The Dadaists' use of simultaneous and sound poetry in the Cabaret Voltaire – a decidedly more radical approach to language – was derided by many as pure nonsense but this abandonment of semantic and grammatical conventions had its roots in dismay – at the carnage of the First World War, the futile loss of life, the politicians' betrayals

and the falsehoods of national propaganda. Progress, civilisation, education and communication, the so-called tenets of Western civilisation, had been tested and found defective. The Dadaists had lost faith not only in politics but in the very material of political discussion, that is, language itself. Their own manifestos were not responses in kind but a blend of humour, aggression and satire and their rejection of poetic form was likewise a radical attack on the inviolability of language.

Hennings did not go so far as to break words apart nor to entirely reject narrative. In this dialogue, and in many of her poems, she focused especially on spoken language and the oral tradition. Many of her poems, reproduced in journals and individual volumes, are intense emotional laments, love poems, short dramatic tales or songs, lending themselves to recitation and performance. They are frequently intense first-person appeals, their tone passionate and histrionic, informed by her work as a performer. Formally more akin to Expressionist poetry, they share in a despondency about the disfunctionality of a failing European civilisation, evoked by fleeting images, desolate moments and hopeless endings.

Even after Hennings's first volume *Die letzte Freude* was published in 1913, seemingly after Junghanns showed some of her poems to the German publishers Wolff, Hennings continued to write out or type her poems herself, bind them into volumes and offer them for sale during performance intervals. It was common for women cabaret artists to sell pictures of themselves to the audience following performances and Hennings described how she would circulate with these in the *Simplicissimus* (fig. 13). This, she explained, is how she first met Ball in 1913.<sup>77</sup> Hennings subsequently took a step further by selling her own work as well as her image, another example of her particular, sometimes uneasy oscillation between body/mind and performer/writer, as she sought to support herself financially.

The Kunsthau Zürich owns a surviving example of one such volume from 1916. It is stamped with the address 'Künstlerkneipe Voltaire (Meierei), Spiegelgasse 1, Zürich'.<sup>78</sup> Hand-bound, typed and signed in ink, the volume contains six poems. Hennings described her booklets as follows: 'The little books of poems were feather light, but no two were alike, since they were each one illustrated differently, even produced variously, stuck with reeds or painted with tiny watercolour pictures.' Each copy of Hennings's books was slightly different, and she took pleasure, she wrote, in continuing to be 'my own publisher'.<sup>79</sup> These pamphlets are interesting aesthetically and for the link that they represent between text and performance. Nevertheless, Hennings's decision to sell them in this way was doubtless driven above all by financial need.

Writing was a vocation that Hennings had to fit around performing, entertaining clients and posing as artist's model, and these experiences fed her writing. In the semi-autobiographical *Das flüchtige Spiel*, Hennings described her character posing as an artist's model for Junghanns. Ironically, it was during these sessions that she found the time and opportunity to write, composing poems, which she says she wrote for him and immediately forgot, but which she left slipped into his portfolio of drawings to render the event less 'bleak and sober'.<sup>80</sup> This anecdote calls into question the artist/muse relationship. Hennings's vacillating roles of on the one hand passive artist's



13 Postcard from Simplicissimus café, featuring Emmy Hennings, c. 1911. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

model and on the other creative poet – with Junghanns as *her* muse – are played out vividly here. Although she is more often seen as ‘Song, (Painter’s) Model or Typewriter’, to recall Rheinberg’s words, Hennings created spaces to be writer (fig. 14).

An early review of Hennings’s *Die letzte Freude* noted that the poems ‘really express the last joy of an impoverished bohemia- and Variety-based life, without shame, but also without finally divulging the “I”’.<sup>81</sup> The review pointed out how Hennings’s poems offered powerful glimpses of life for an outsider in a particular socio-historical context. It also reminds readers now to exercise caution in reading her work as only autobiographical or personal, since the ‘I’ is still concealed, still shifting and still open. The poem ‘Mädchen am Kai’ (Girl on the Quay) depicts the life of a prostitute: ‘Ich, Passagier im Zwischendeck des Lebens’ (I, passenger between the decks of life). In ‘Tänzerin’ (Dancer), the on-stage vitality of the performer stands in stark contrast to her angst and hesitation in dealing with the realities of life. The topic of the *Aether* poems is drug addiction. Each has obvious connections to Hennings’s life story but each resonates beyond it, as evocations of vulnerability and uncertain identity on the one hand and determined self-expression and liberation on the other.

Hennings contributed as poet, as well as performer, to two avant-garde movements, Expressionism and Dada. Her involvement in both is a reminder of the ways in which approaches, styles and innovations cross over in time periods, geographies, people and poems. Her poetry and prose also provide a useful and intense evocation of the expe-



14 Emmy Hennings in Ascona, 1918. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

periences of outsiders in a rapidly changing urban context, at once exciting and alienating. At the end of *Cabaret Voltaire* is a list of contributors to the issue. Next to Hennings's name, and in place of nationality, the term *sans patrie* has been chosen. For Hennings, this notion of homelessness is of great significance both to her life and her work, extending far beyond a detachment from national roots to include a complex sense of being at large and adrift that relates to issues including her gender, personal and social circumstances and her professional and cultural position. This sentiment is neatly expressed in one of her poems 'Gefängnis' (Prison): 'Ich lebe im – Vielleicht/Ich bin die grosse Frage' (I live in the Perhaps/I am the great question).

## Post Dada: conversions and chronicles

In the thirty years following her departure from Dada and until her death, that is throughout the years 1918 to 1948, Hennings continued to write and to publish prolifically, including two volumes of poetry, *Helle Nacht* (Bright Night; 1922) and *Die Kranz* (The Garland Cycle; 1932), and a dozen books of prose. Nevertheless, this period of her life is frequently distilled into two broad lines of thought in commentaries. The first common observation is of a devoted wife, who spent the remainder of her life writing memoirs about her husband. The second tends towards criticism of that work:

it laments the damaging and limiting influences of Catholicism on her accounts of Ball's life. While both these facts contain some truth, they fail to take account of the difficult and less linear processes and circumstances in her post-Dada life, both before and after Ball's death in 1927.

Hennings's relationship with religion, and her conversion to Catholicism, is an integral and long-standing element of her life story. What Reetz makes clear in her biography is that Hennings's dialogue with religion began long before Dada: this was no post-Dada, post-bohemian reaction, as some accounts would have one believe. She also evaluates the ways in which Hennings herself reported on her religious experiences in her own prose work, making clear that the truth is open to question here too. What riles critics, perhaps, is the intrusion of religion *per se*. Hennings's account of Ball's history is particularly unsettling for Dada devotees, who adhere strictly to the notion that religion was among the enemies of the nihilist Dadaists, even though Hennings was far from alone in seeking spiritual as well as aesthetic alternatives. The fact that in her case the choice fell on organised religion and the fact that Ball also converted to his wife's religion post-Dada has made her something of a scapegoat for Ball enthusiasts.

The actual texts by Hennings merit more detailed focus. She wrote three volumes on Ball, the anthology *Hugo Ball: Sein Leben in Briefen und Gedichten* (Hugo Ball: His Life in Letters and Poems; 1930) and two biographies, *Hugo Balls Weg zu Gott* (Hugo Ball's Path to God; 1931) and *Ruf und Echo: Mein Leben mit Hugo Ball* (Call and Echo: My Life with Hugo Ball; 1953). John Elderfield has written of these: 'The Hennings works are unfortunately all uncritical hindsight interpretations of Ball as a devout believer whose youthful excesses never really hindered his path to ultimate righteousness.'<sup>82</sup> In *Ruf und Echo*, for example, Hennings's accounts were highly romantic, depicting Ball as a visionary, emphasising the special emotional bonds between the two of them and insisting on his life's work as a progressive search for meaning and truth. In an earlier text, too, she had written that while she could not clarify Ball's 'Entwicklung' (development), his life story was essentially that of 'ein konvertierender Mensch' (a person in the process of converting).<sup>83</sup> The title alone reveals a great deal about her approach to Ball's biography and about Hennings. Not only does it allude to the story, as she told it, of her husband's religious or spiritual calling but it could also be read in terms of her relationship to him. She described him metaphorically as the call that she had been listening for since childhood and to which she responded as an echo.<sup>84</sup> The imagery has obvious religious overtones but also implies a passive-responsive role for Hennings in relation to Ball. Certainly, in these memoirs she attached enormous importance to her husband's work, neglecting in large part her role in the story (fig. 15).

John Erickson concluded (in 1984) that Hennings's accounts were 'distorted by her touching desire to depict Ball in the best light'.<sup>85</sup> There are other factors to consider, too, in assessing Hennings's output during the years after Ball's death. On a pragmatic level, she still had severe financial difficulties and the Benziger Verlag, a Catholic publisher, may have made certain demands on her to shape her accounts.<sup>86</sup> Her consistent strug-



15 Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball in Obino, 1926. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

gle with guilt and redemption doubtless also played a part, as well as her determination to preserve and further her husband's reputation. Hennings's accounts of Ball are indeed flawed on grounds of pure accuracy, as documentary records, but they should not be dismissed as having no interest. They offer fascinating insights into the political climate of the time, the circumstances of artists and writers during that period and one woman's extraordinary relationships, not only with Ball and Dada but also with writing itself.<sup>87</sup>

It is seldom mentioned that Hennings also wrote a substantial collection of memoirs about her own experiences and that she began this project long before chronicling her husband's life. Her semi-autobiographical novel *Gefängnis* (Prison) was published in 1919 and *Das Brandmal* (Stigma) in 1920. Much later, she published *Blume und Flamme: Geschichte einer Jugend* (Flower and Flame: The History of My Youth; 1938), followed by *Das flüchtige Spiel: Wege und Umwege einer Frau* (The Fugitive Game: One Woman's Roads and Detours; 1940) (fig. 16). In *Brandmal* she named the main character Jessy, in spite of the fact that the subtitle is 'A Diary by Emmy Hennings'; the girl in *Blume und Flamme* who grows up to be a cabaret performer is called Helga and *Das flüchtige Spiel* features Helga and Finny. Each book has a strong autobiographical undercurrent and obvious resonances with Hennings's own life.<sup>88</sup> The blurring of boundaries between fact and fiction

EMMY BALL-HENNINGS

*Das flüchtige Spiel*



WEGE UND UMWEGE EINER FRAU

16 Emmy Hennings, *Das flüchtige Spiel*, 1940. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

in memoirs is common or even inevitable. What distinguishes Hennings is that her work actively reflected on the boundaries between art and life. She was aware of her own multiple roles and identity constructs, thematising them in her fiction and poetry. In a memoir about her performance as Arachne, she stated, for example: 'I have never spoken the truth however, not even as a truth-speaking spider.'<sup>89</sup> Yet her tendency to use life experience in her poetry and prose is a strong feature of her writing, as is her tendency to use fictions to make sense of her life. She was a storyteller. She knew that even the most extraordinary of lives must be arranged into a narrative structure, not only for an audience or reader but also for oneself. If she hid behind personas on occasion, this also allowed her to write candidly about difficult personal experiences.

Aside from their interest as semi-autobiographical texts, these narratives provide historical and socio-political insights. *Gefängnis* is a powerful account of imprisonment, written around 1915, that deals with personal experience but which, as a review at the time conceded, 'has no pathos and no sentimentality'.<sup>90</sup> In one extract, its narrator, imprisoned for prostitution, contemplates the injustice of punishing young women for selling sex: 'If it is forbidden to accept payment for love by the hour, then it should be forbidden to pay for love by the hour.'<sup>91</sup> She denounces the ease with which a courtroom of men can, with little trouble, punish the 'weaker sex', allowing men to keep secret their own inclinations. As well as offering a well written narrative of a woman's





17 Emmy Hennings in front of Ball's death mask and Hesse photo in her house at Agnuzzo, 1932. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

experience early in the twentieth century, this text deals with experiences of women that continue to resonate today.

The much later *Ruf und Echo*, too, is not only a book about Ball. In one episode, for example, the narrator, a cabaret artiste, recalls the sales of postcards of the Kaiser in bars and in the streets: 'The man did much better business than I did', and 'He had himself photographed much more often than I did.' The nationalism of the times resulted in unwelcome competition for her: 'At the end of the day I was the people's little sweetheart too.'<sup>92</sup> In this vivid and humorous episode, the narrator blends the personal and political with verve, illuminating the individual and the national situation.

Hennings's chronicles of Ball cannot be reduced to elegies only, nor did they completely occlude other writing projects. The 1930s were a renewed, productive period in her writing life: her books were critically well received at the time and it marked a different stage in her artistic career, which was fully off stage. She wrote literary and travel-related pieces for numerous magazines and newspapers and left behind countless letters, among them a large amount of correspondence with Hermann Hesse, to whom she and Ball became very close (fig. 17). In her work, as in her life, Ball was a significant character but it cannot be maintained that she simply privileged his interests over her own. Their partnership was not ideal, despite the rosy picture that is often presented in Dada

accounts, not least since she was determined to continue her travels and her love affairs. Her character in *Das flüchtige Spiel* voices a dissatisfaction with the norms of marriage: 'I didn't want to be a man's private property and give myself totally to one person, as many women desire to do – I felt it more and more – that was not my thing.' She likens marriage to prison, as the grave of youth and beauty, to which she feared herself ever tied.<sup>93</sup> This account recalls Hennings's first marriage. Born Emma Maria Cordsen, she had taken her first husband's surname, performing and writing under it after their separation and after her marriage to Ball in 1920, right up to Ball's death. Only then did she use either Ball-Hennings or Ball – another example of her use of various identities and names, in life and in fiction. Given the complexity of Hennings's experiences and expressions, then, to perceive her as having devoted herself personally and professionally to Ball is to be won over by the fictions of her own accounts. The works about Ball have received considerably more attention than any of her others principally because of the interest in Ball. Meanwhile, the rest of her output as a writer is still largely ignored.<sup>94</sup>

No less complicated was Hennings's relationship with Dada. In *Ruf und Echo* Hennings failed to detail her role in Dada and begins the chapter 'Dadaismus' with a statement of her reluctance to discuss the period. Where other protagonists sought to underline their roles as motivating forces in Dada, she practically obliterated her participation. This may be because of a more pressing determination to preserve Ball's legacy, following his death. It may also be because she became increasingly critical of Dada as an enterprise.

Finally, it may simply have been that the memories of her bohemian life were too much for Hennings to process or accept. Her religious beliefs and her ongoing intellectual dialogue with the dialectics of sin and forgiveness, morality and immorality, and life and art undoubtedly influenced her writings. As van den Berg writes of the Catholic turn in her writings on Ball and her own incomplete autobiography, 'It was probably the result of a repugnance of a lifestyle . . . seen from the perspective of a pious catholic woman of conservative values.'<sup>95</sup> In this respect, a note recalling the period just before the Cabaret Voltaire acts as a warning: 'About this time I occasionally made notes, which I soon destroyed for the most part. I wanted to forget, to bury what had been.'<sup>96</sup> This destruction of her notes appears to be symptomatic of a desire to obliterate a difficult period of her life. Her experience offers one example of the challenges inherent, for women especially, in being involved in a socially and culturally marginal grouping. What happens to an individual after that period of affiliation ends? Does she reintegrate or is she isolated? Hennings, having been rootless and unsettled for a long time, evidently chose a more orthodox niche for herself.

It becomes clear, on reading biographies about Hennings as well as work by her, that life and work, fiction and memoirs, poetry and confession, performance and persona overlapped. At times, it is difficult to separate her personality from her performance, her real-life experiences from her fiction. Hennings played many roles in her life and in her work. As she wrote in *Gefängnis*, 'Do you know that one can act like one would like to live? How can I put it? I always acted what I longed for. Acted out my ideal . . . acted for so long, and everything became the truth to me.'<sup>97</sup> She was pulled between



18 Emmy Hennings, *Puppen* (Dolls), *Cabaret Voltaire*, June 1916. Nachlass Hugo Ball und Emmy Hennings / Robert Walser-Stiftung Zürich.

pursuing experimental paths of freedom and being consumed by guilt about these same unorthodox paths. Nevertheless, she had no illusions that art was superior to, or removed from, life. She wrote of a fellow performer: ‘He was so naïve and easily taken in, that he thought he could exchange theatre with reality, with life.’<sup>98</sup> For Hennings, art was a part of life, not its replacement.

Hennings’s rebellions were not confined to theory but were lived, before, during and after Dada. One role that highlights the conflicts in Hennings’s life is that of mother. This chapter began by considering a notion of her as the missing mother in the birth metaphor frequently used in relation to Dada. This figurative notion of Hennings as mother inevitably draws attention to her actual status as a mother. Here, in privileging her own desires and needs over those of her child, she broke one of the greatest social taboos. Her character in *Das flüchtige Spiel* confessed: ‘Possessed by a greed for acting, by a desire for travel and melodies, even my child was not capable of holding me back. The uncertainty that pulled me towards it was stronger even than the love for my child.’<sup>99</sup> It is a startling admission and highlights the radical choices Hennings made in life. Her unconventional background and experiences, as well as her status as exile, had already made her a social outsider by the time of Dada’s conception. She was no stranger to controversy or to existing on the fringes of socio-cultural norms. If Dada advocated liberating and democratising artistic activity, Hennings was a living Dada example. She



challenged convention and rejected the expectations of normative patriarchal society in ways about which others only talked or wrote.

As well as the three texts ascribed to Hennings in *Cabaret Voltaire*, there is one further contribution in her name, a representation of dolls (fig. 18). In Munich, Hennings was acquainted with Lotte Pritzel, a contemporary of the circle that included Mühsam and Hardekopf, and who became well known as a doll-maker, exhibiting firstly in department stores and then galleries in Germany. Made out of wax, her figurines were neither idealised nor sentimental but instead often erotic or sexualised characters, male, female or sometimes androgynous, and frequently posed in scenarios that demonstrated relationships between the sexes. Pritzel's themes included dancers, madonnas and angels. She once said of them: 'they are creations of myself'.<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the picture of the dolls in *Cabaret Voltaire*, ascribed to Hennings, a photograph survives from 1917 in which she is pictured with a hand-puppet (fig. 19). One more reference is provided by Hugo Ball. An entry in *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, describing the soirée to celebrate the opening of the Galerie Dada in March 1917, notes that an acquaintance from the audience (a writer) used the dolls to improvise a performance offstage: 'Schickele und Grumbach came later; the latter improvised a political puppet show with Emmy's "Czar" and "Czarina" in the doorway between two pillars'.<sup>101</sup> Finally, Hennings made a number of references to dolls in her written texts. Recalling her time as a cabaret artiste, for example, she wrote: 'When man lives, acts, he is an automaton, a doll, yet how sensitive he is as a doll. We were puppets and God was like a child who held us by the strings, making us play according to his whims. It was difficult, not being allowed to disappear from the scene'.<sup>102</sup>

*Brandmal* provides a further example of the doll as metaphor, in which Hennings's character wrote: 'I sit there in front of my mirror and I can observe this doll. I know that I can double myself'.<sup>103</sup> Nothing could be more appropriate than the doll as a metaphor for Hennings's experience as performer, and as female body, on stage and off. Once again, for Hennings, performance and life fed into one another, stimulating questions about individual agency and control, presence and absence, mind and body. If the doll offers a potent metaphor for man's experience, in times of social crisis and personal upheaval, it offers an even more powerful metaphor for woman's experience. Two more women Dadaists – Sophie Taeuber and Hannah Höch – fabricated and were photographed with dolls or puppets. It is surely no coincidence, and constitutes a thread of enquiry about how women saw themselves and their particular roles in art and in life that will be picked up again in the following chapters.



## SOPHIE TAEUBER

### 'Quietly' multi-tasking: towards the total work of art

While Hennings's name has often been associated with her body, voice and sexuality in accounts by her fellow Dadaists, Sophie Taeuber's has been linked to a gentle, calm unassuming quietness. Jean Arp's accounts of Taeuber emphasise her grace, reverie, cheerfulness and her smile, adding, 'She was serene, luminous, veracious, precise, clear, incorruptible.'<sup>1</sup> These melodious descriptions are appropriate and expected, given their context as tributes from a husband to a wife after her death. Hans Richter's 1964 memoirs, too, recall Taeuber with affection. He described how she talked little: 'She usually obviated the necessity of speech with one of her shy and thoughtful smiles.' He evidently preferred this quality of quietness to the forthright and candid personality he saw in Hennings. Taeuber's role within the social set-up and mechanics of the group was potentially more palatable. Richter stated: 'Sophie was as quiet as we were garrulous, boastful, rowdy and provocative.'<sup>2</sup> This disparity leaves many questions open, not least whether Taeuber's quietness was not prompted or exacerbated by the rowdy machismo of some members of the group and how this might have had an impact on her interventions.

There is a danger, as was seen in the case of Hennings, that character assessments, repeated time and again, become not only worn and clichéd but dominant. The more alarming tendency is that Taeuber the character is discussed more than Taeuber the artist and that adjectives used to describe her character traits seep too readily into analyses of her work. In the introduction to an exhibition catalogue on Taeuber from 1977, for example, the author wrote: 'Skilfully making use of her mischievous nature (confirmed by all those who knew her), Sophie carried out the most hard-hitting attacks on the architectural and decorative ugliness of her time with a smile.'<sup>3</sup> Even while the author acknowledged the radical nature of her work, he rendered this unfeminine assertiveness more acceptable by emphasising the artist's cheerful approach as well as, elsewhere in the passage, her discretion. A second example illustrates the ludicrousness of maintaining such a simplistic characterisation as a thread through both her life and work: 'Even her death, accidental and premature (she was only 54 years old), was most discreet.'<sup>4</sup> Taeuber died of asphyxiation, caused by a faulty boiler at the artist Max Bill's house, in 1943. It is difficult to accept an alliance of her personal traits, aesthetic

20 (facing page)  
Sophie Taeuber  
with *Dada Head*,  
1920. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

approach and accidental death as coherently 'discreet'. A narrative of Taeuber's life published by Roswitha Mair in 1998, which mixes biography and fiction, continues this same motif of quietness, as is evident in its title, *Von ihren Träumen sprach sie nie* (She Never Spoke about her Dreams).

The smile and the discretion that recur in these descriptions can be glimpsed in a portrait from 1920, in which Taeuber is photographed with one of the eight sculpted wooden Dada heads she made between 1918 and 1920 (fig. 20). This double-headed photograph offers a useful introduction to the question of Taeuber's participation in Dada. On the one hand, it can be read as vindication of her reputation as shy, quiet and discreet, in the sense that she is half-hidden behind her artwork. The object-head dominates the foreground, with Taeuber peeking out from behind it. Almost half her face, including her left eye, is concealed, with the eye on the head, a geometric pattern, standing in for hers. On the other hand, Taeuber looks directly at the camera with her right eye, challenging the viewer to confront and read this composition. The artwork is an integral part of the representation of Taeuber. She is more than just a smiling face, neither putting herself at the fore nor allowing herself to be completely obscured. Rather, she places herself as artist in an inquiring relationship with the art object. The object itself is distinctive to her: produced in wood, in the simplest of forms, its decoration is reduced to bold geometric pattern and it rejects the figuration of a sculpted portrait. Finally, with the letters DADA painted just above the eye line, it explicitly claims a place both for itself and for its creator as Dadaist.

The extracts quoted so far from memoirs and secondary sources have pointed to the head concealed in the shadows of this photograph, to Taeuber's quiet personality. Dada memoirs and later accounts of Dada nevertheless include references to Taeuber's work, to the Dada head in the foreground, so to speak. It has just been noted that Taeuber fares markedly better than Hennings in Richter's memoirs, for example, in terms of personal judgements. More importantly, her work is better acknowledged. By noting that she was a pupil at the Rudolf Laban dance school, designed costumes, taught at the Applied Arts and Crafts School in Zurich, was a painter and also created puppets, Richter succeeded in conveying something of the variety of Taeuber's artistic activity within Dada. He also reproduced a number of pieces of her work, including a 1917 tapestry *Formes élémentaires (Elementary Forms)*, a 1920 watercolour *Komposition (Composition)* and a 1920 *Dada Head*. While these inclusions are welcome, it is noticeable nonetheless that Taeuber's works often appear in Dada volumes as illustrations but still with relatively little detailed comment on the contributions they represent.

Richard Huelsenbeck's recollections of 1957 were equally double-edged:

Sophie Taeuber's talent and energy were amazing. I saw very little of her, she sometimes showed up in the cabaret but never took part in our wild doings. She taught school and lived with Arp, who now lovingly attends to his deceased wife's fame. Thus she is the only woman who really made a name for herself in the development of new art.<sup>5</sup>

It is a fine testament to Taeuber as a prolific, productive and innovative artist. However, Huelsenbeck's suggestion that Taeuber took a passive, almost non-existent part in the



cabaret, simply 'showing up', demonstrates a blindness to her involvement as a choreographer and dancer and, it follows, to the dance element in Dada's 'wild' activities. The final phrase, which states that Taeuber was the only woman to have 'made a name for herself in the development of new art' reads slightly differently in the original German, which rather suggests that she is the only woman to have got or come by a great reputation, and this thanks to Arp's efforts. That small point of language contains within it issues at the heart of this study: the extent to which women participated and innovated in avant-garde practices but are nevertheless only rarely afforded renown or visibility.

The relationship between Arp and Taeuber has to be taken into account, in that it was pivotal to her interventions and reputation within Dada and beyond. Whereas Taeuber is often referred to as the wife of Arp, Arp is scarcely reduced in accounts to the husband of Taeuber. Nevertheless, the partnership between Arp and Taeuber was in many ways exemplary of the fertile possibilities of partnerships and collaboration. It is customary to think of Arp as a generous contributor in this respect – as for example in Huelsenbeck's acknowledgement of Arp's nurturing of his wife's legacy – but Taeuber's reciprocal generosity, though less celebrated, is equally noteworthy. In pragmatic terms, her job as a teacher over thirteen years, from 1916 to 1929, provided financial support for them as a couple, echoing the balance of monetary affairs between Hennings and Ball: in each case the woman was the provider, overturning norms. Taeuber and Arp collaborated on numerous works and she also did the more painstaking work of making many of his designs into tapestries. Furthermore, Arp readily and frequently acknowledged the aesthetic impact of her ideas on his own, not least her work in textiles and design.

Ball, too, included a number of references to Taeuber in *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* (*Flight out of Time*). His comments predominantly deal with her work as a dancer in Dada soirées and are particularly valuable, given the relative scarcity of information on this aspect of her contributions. His accounts of Dada soirées provide vital access to her contributions to Dada in Zurich and his reflections on literature, performance, and cabaret include indications of the significance of Taeuber's role as dancer, in relation to his own experiments. Perhaps in part a response to the perceived fragmentation, uncertainties and disintegrations of the times, Ball sought to bring together different modes of expression, in this rekindling of the notion of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, in which different art forms would be deployed together. What emerges above all from Ball's accounts of Taeuber, is that she was a versatile artist and performer, making her an excellent contributor to Zurich Dada's eclectic soirées.

There are two photographs in which Taeuber poses with a Dada head. In the second example, (fig. 21), the same object, turned to the camera in exactly the same position, obscures a greater proportion of her face, this time the right-hand side. She wears a hat which covers her hair and a lace veil wrapped across her face, leaving her much less visible. Again, she looks directly into the camera but in this case the effect is more unsettling since she is not smiling. It is less easy to make out her features and considerably less easy to focus attention on the pleasant, cheerful, uncomplicated character for which



she is recalled. The viewer's eye is drawn more readily to the Dada head and only subsequently to the obscured face behind it. Viewed together, these two doubling portraits set up yet another double. They are a reminder not to take either at face value, as snapshots of a personality, but instead to interrogate the relationships between artist and artwork, vision and representation, signified and signifier.

Taeuber's relative renown as a woman artist owes as much to her continued activity and innovation alongside Arp and in later experimental fine art groups as it does to her part in the Dada years. She is less often written about specifically in relation to her participation in Zurich during the Dada period and generally still appears as a peripheral figure in that context. The extent and range of Taeuber's contributions within the Dada forum have not been fully emphasised. Moreover, although her painting and sculpture are relatively widely acknowledged, there is less recognition of her work using textiles and even scarcer exploration of her contributions to performance both via dance and via her puppet-making.<sup>6</sup> Taeuber was, clearly, productive and prolific. Questions arise: did she simply work away quietly, in the background? Was she integrated within the Dada group or did she remain unseen? In what ways did her work have an impact within the group? Taeuber apparently contributed extensively to Dada but without self-promotion. If her quietness meant that she was not always audible to her colleagues, it is still hard to imagine what blindness meant that she and her work were not always visible.

## Agency and authorship: Taeuber's puppets

Taeuber's heads, one of which can be seen in the two photographs just discussed, are an outstanding feature of her Dada oeuvre (fig. 22). These stylised, smooth geometric shapes with painted features recall primitive masks and, where the features are arranged non-symmetrically, the techniques of Cubist paintings. Taeuber presents one head as a portrait of Arp. Far from a figurative representation, it offers a contrast to the realist style, in which a bust is painstakingly carved to represent a portrait sitter's features. The other example here, referred to simply as a Dada head, uses wire and beads as accessories, a sign of femininity on an otherwise androgynous face and head. One might speculate that in this example Taeuber evokes Dada's female face.

These objects are linked to another distinctive aspect of Taeuber's activity in Zurich, her puppet-making. Two short accounts offer a foreword to that work. The first is an extract from a review published in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* in February 1919: 'Next comes Sophie Täuber (Zurich), who – with an eye for colour – knows how to design superb marionette figures, giving them lively character traits, and excelling in necklaces and pearl bags.'<sup>7</sup> The review is related to an exhibition by *Das Neue Leben*, a group in which Taeuber also participated, but it highlights her sustained interest in puppet-making. It also points to her use of accessories, which are at once minimal and evocative. Necklaces and handbags are of course powerfully redolent of femininity and Taeuber makes use of these signs to indicate gender.



22 Sophie  
Taeuber, *Dada  
Head (Portrait  
Hans Arp)* (1918);  
*Dada Head* (1920).  
Archive Stiftung  
Hans Arp und  
Sophie Taeuber-  
Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

Closer to Dada, Richter recalled Taeuber's puppets in a soirée at the Kaufleuten Hall on 9 April 1919:

I know . . . that the puppets . . . were the first abstract puppets ever used at puppet shows. They consisted mostly of thread spools joined together, decorated with feathers (to make a prince) or with pearls (to make a princess) or rags (to make the villain). They moved with a grace not of this earth and would have out-circused even Calder's circus in their purity. (They were lost later on).<sup>8</sup>

This account, though relatively short, mentions two major areas: the first is the construction of the puppets, that is the materials selected and the basic forms given to the



23 (above left)  
Sophie Taeuber and  
Hans Arp in front  
of her marionettes,  
Zurich, 1918.  
Archive Stiftung  
Hans Arp und  
Sophie Taeuber-  
Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

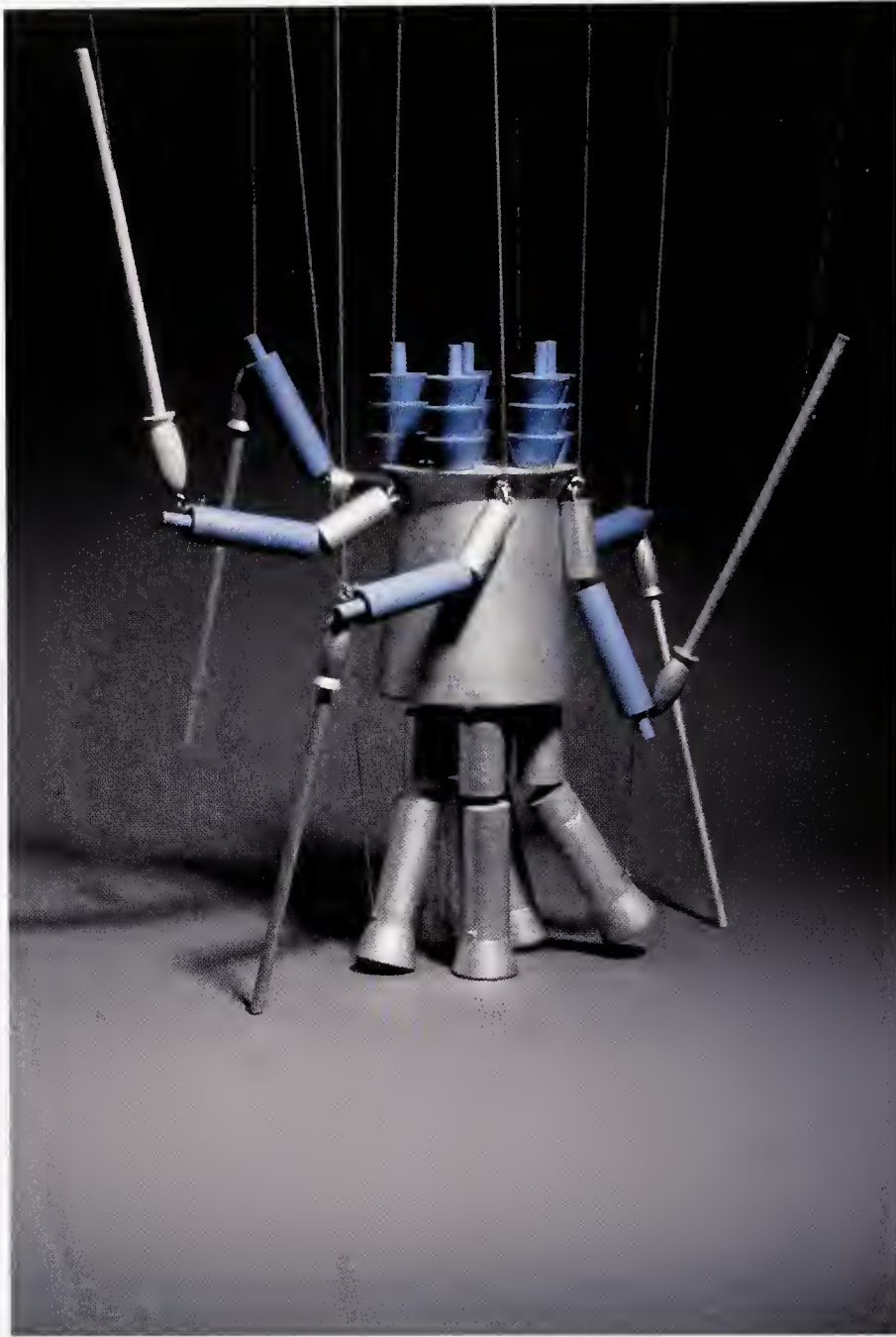


24 (above right)  
Sophie Taeuber,  
marionette from  
*König Hirsch (King  
Stag)*, 1918, featured  
in *Zeltweg*, 1919.  
Archive Stiftung  
Hans Arp und  
Sophie Taeuber-  
Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

figures. The second is how they were conceived of as performers, that is the actions, movements or roles ascribed to them. Together, they raise questions about authorship, agency, representation and the body that will be explored shortly.

In constructing her puppets, Taeuber used a range of materials, including wood, metal, feathers, textiles and pearls. She chose occasional, interchangeable decorations, like the pearls and feathers that Richter noted, to represent the puppet's character, gender or status (fig. 23). The last Dada journal to be produced in Zurich, *Der Zeltweg*, published 8 October 1919 and edited by Otto Flake, Walter Serner and Tristan Tzara, included a photograph of one of her marionettes, a jointed wooden figure (fig. 24). The puppet's arms are disproportionately long, the legs shorter and immobile. Rather than being modelled like a human figure, to scale, it is composed of basic geometric shapes such as cylinders, pins and balls. In this case, the puppet is not decorated at all, leaving the functioning and mechanics of the joints visible. As with trends in other art forms, the construction of the puppets as stylised forms of human figures represents a move away from figuration and illusionism.

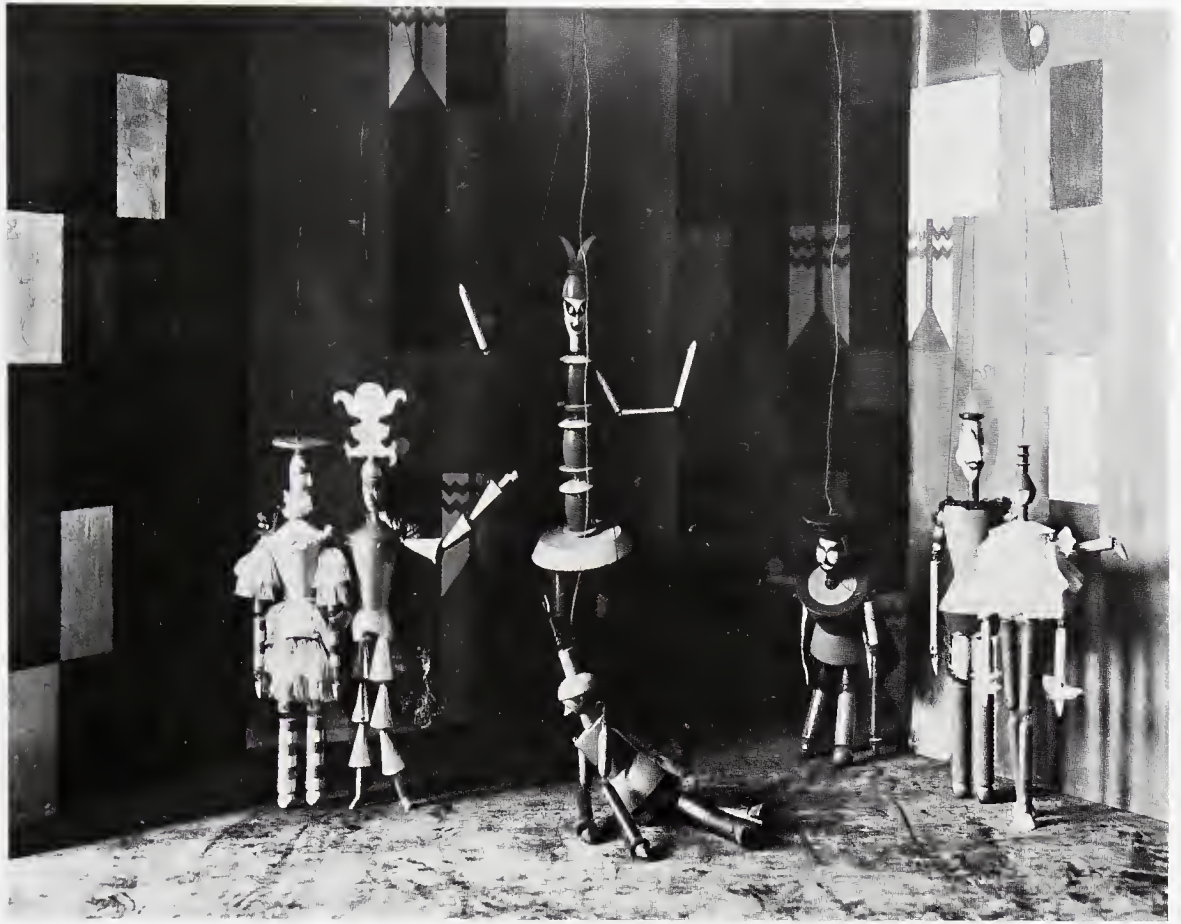
Another, *Wache (Military Guards; fig. 25)*, offers a different example. Although made out of wood, it is painted mainly silver to resemble metal, calling to mind the machine. Made up of one cylindrical torso and five legs, its multi-jointed arms extend above the body brandishing long swords. It has no head, but instead five stacked blue-painted conical towers with protruding spikes. Renouncing individual human identity, it likens the guards to a mindless collective automaton, an early imagining of a robot. This par-



25 Sophie Taeuber, *Wache (Military Guards)*, 1918. Marionette from *König Hirsch (King Stag)* by Carlo Gozzi, produced by René Morax and Werner Wolff. Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, Kunstgewerbesammlung.

ticular example is reminiscent of the Futurists, whose performances took technology as a focus: their robot plays used puppets as performers and, conversely, human performers to represent the components of machines. It also anticipates the workshops and performances of the Bauhaus group in the 1920s, into which Oskar Schlemmer introduced puppets as a means of exploring the relationships between man and machine.<sup>9</sup>

It turns out to be typical of Taeuber that she did not confine herself to one group but participated in numerous projects. Both these puppets belong to a group of seventeen polychrome wooden marionettes that Taeuber created in 1918 for a production of Carlo Gozzi's *King Stag* at the Théâtre Zurichois de Marionnettes.<sup>10</sup> This event rep-



26 Final scene of the marionette play, *König Hirsch* (*King Stag*), 1918. Archive Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp e.V., Rolandswerth.

resented the peak of her experiments with puppets not only as objects but as alternatives to human actors or dancers on stage (fig. 26). The philosophical and aesthetic debate about ‘man or marionette’ foregrounds the capabilities or limitations of the performer, the effect on the audience and, beyond the stage, the agency of the individual. All these themes were encapsulated in an essay by Heinrich von Kleist, ‘Über das Marionettentheater’ (The Puppet Theatre), which is central to any discussion of puppetry.<sup>11</sup> Written in 1811, it relates a conversation between the narrator and a Herr C. The latter convinces the narrator of the value of what he had otherwise relegated to ‘this popularised version of a noble art’.<sup>12</sup>

Kleist’s essay pointed out how the puppet has an advantage over the performer in that it works as an operated mechanism. In purely pragmatic terms, it is not restricted by gravity. As Herr C. notes: ‘Also, . . . these puppets have the advantage of being resistant to gravity. Of the heaviness of matter, the factor that most works against the dancer, they are entirely ignorant: because the force lifting them into the air is greater than the one attaching them to the earth.’<sup>13</sup> Here the human is replaced by an inanimate object, which can be controlled. Since each movement has its centre of gravity, the ‘Machinist’ (operator) of the puppets simply needs to control that centre. The limbs are just pendulums and follow in a mechanical way, according to the laws of gravity. Using puppets allows the artist to investigate the total removal of the human subject or body, replacing it with a manipulatable object.

There is still the question of the intervention of the human hand, not only in the fabrication of the puppet but also in its operation. The essay's discussion as to whether the person operating the puppet requires any sensitivity and experience as a dancer raises key questions. Kleist's narrator views the removal of the human individual as a negative and challenges his opponent: 'I said that . . . he would still never persuade me that there was more grace in a mechanical marionette than in the form and build of the human body.' Herr C replies that a human being could not even equal a marionette and, furthermore, 'Only a god was a match for matter.'<sup>14</sup> This privileging of materials and mechanics is at the heart of avant-garde concerns. Through employing marionettes, Taeuber removes the body from the field of view altogether. The actor or dancer's individual intervention, or *Zierei* (affectation) as Kleist calls it, is – as much as possible – taken out of the frame.

This retreat from individual psychology was a key issue for dramatists in the early decades of the twentieth century. Evidently, puppets are not endowed with the character and emotions of the performer, there is no intrusion of personality or empathy and they can be readily handled. A reflection on puppet theatre informs techniques in live theatre too. In his diaries, Ball wrote of Chinese theatre, 'The drama . . . leads to a world of magic, which often takes on a marionette-like character and keeps on interrupting the unity of consciousness, as dreams do.'<sup>15</sup> Bertolt Brecht later explored these issues extensively in his theory of epic theatre, using various techniques to alter, or essentially distance, the actor's relationship with his or her role and with the audience.<sup>16</sup> He sought to avoid audience empathy, proposing that it prevented a reasoned reaction.

Within the Dada circle of artists, it was Taeuber who was most prolific in making puppets but there are other instances of Dadaists using mannequins or dolls. Georges Hugnet described some of the more unexpected events in a series of performances: 'Serger instead of reciting his poems placed a bunch of flowers at the feet of a dress-maker's mannequin. Some marionettes and some masks of Sophie Täuber-Arp, curious objects in painted cardboard, recited the poems of Arp.'<sup>17</sup> The audience, expecting to see the poet reciting, is confounded by seeing the performer concealed behind a mask, reciting off stage with a puppet on stage, or even replaced totally by a silent mannequin. These unexpected experiments raise far-ranging questions: where is human agency in the production of the performance? How much decision-making is involved in the aesthetic effects? How might mechanical processes take over some of the functions of the human hand or figure – even of the artist? The (in)visibility of the artist is thematised, her or his subjective presence diminished. These questions all relate to wider Dada experiments with chance, ready-mades and technology. The relationships between the artist and his or her work, and between the artist and the audience, are thrown into relief. Ideologically, the use of puppets questions agency and authorship, foregrounding questions about the artist's role, as well as about self-determination more broadly.

As discussed in the last chapter, Hennings, too, produced dolls during the Dada period. Beside featuring in *Cabaret Voltaire*, they were animated on at least one occasion. Taeuber's programmatic transference of the puppet from the popular puppet theatre to the experimental artistic forum echoes Hennings's ready incorporation of



music-hall techniques in Dada soirées. Hennings's bodily presence, too, both on and off stage, has already been discussed in the last chapter. Taeuber's interest in performance made itself known not only in terms of constructing puppets for shows: she also appeared on stage in Dada soirées as a dancer. From puppets to dance, she explored the full range of the '(wo)man or marionette' debate.

## Taeuber as Dada body: the subversion of dance

According to Huelsenbeck, 'Sophie . . . shied away from the noisy cabaret, filled with drunken students and intellectuals not unwilling to express their antagonism in a fist fight.'<sup>18</sup> It is known, however, that she participated in Zurich Dada soirées both as a choreographer and as a dancer. Dance has been given less weight than it merits in accounts of Dada soirées. There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, it is difficult to reconstruct performances in any detail. Performance is ephemeral and, in Dada's case especially, soirées were characterised by improvisation and chance occurrences. Reconstruction must draw principally on memoirs and on the few photographs that were taken and retained. In a tribute to Taeuber, Hennings described the difficulty of recreating performance and of conveying its impact in words: 'Just as one cannot quite describe music and must hear it oneself, so it is with Sophie Taeuber's dancing too, which I would so much like to put into words.'<sup>19</sup> Hennings was not only referring to the fact that transient performances had been lost but also to the fact that dance, Taeuber's particular contribution, could neither readily nor effectively be transposed into words.

A second possible factor in the neglect of dance is its status as a predominantly female occupation, one in which women have held the expertise. An undercurrent of this is the association of the corporeal with woman and the intellectual with man. The dancers that became involved with Dada from outside the group were all women, with the exception of one man – who did not actually perform – the Hungarian-born experimental choreographer Rudolf Laban. Ball noted in his diary that Laban first visited the Cabaret Voltaire on 2 April 1916, having moved to Zurich from Munich that year. As a teacher of expressive dance, based on organic movement as opposed to classical traditions, and the developer of a new system of notation, he is well known as an avant-garde innovator.<sup>20</sup> The names of the numerous female dancers involved with Laban and Dada – including Mary Wigman, Maria Vanselow, Suzanne Perrottet, Maja Kruscek and Käthe Wulff – are rarely cited in accounts of Dada. They crop up on posters and programmes but otherwise have become footnotes.

Thirdly, the dance element in Dada soirées is considered by some critics to be not fully Dada. David Hopkins, for example, has written with reference to Laban that: 'these innovatory dances, which bespeak an attempt to rid the body of constricting habits of expression . . . were not, in the strictest sense, motivated by Dada concerns.'<sup>21</sup> There are less strict senses in which to read Dada, however. In the early days of the Cabaret Voltaire especially, Dada was an open project, which included poems and images from Expres-

sionism, Cubism and Futurism and which did not limit itself to certain styles, forms or media. In addition, I argue in this section that there were important areas of convergence between the experimental dances of the Dada soirées and nascent Dada ideology, even ‘in the strictest sense’, not least around expression and representation of the body. Hopkins goes on to claim that the dances ‘sit a little oddly next to the edgier, more anarchic aspects of Dada performance, including the “negro dances” of the male Dadaists.’<sup>22</sup> This opposition, I argue, is informed by gender positioning and is not at all distinct. Dance as practised by women in soirées was certainly edgy and anarchic too and likewise drew on the stimuli of primitivism.

It appears from memoirs that the Laban school dancers were something of a novelty to most of the male Dadaists, viewed chiefly as potential, or actual, sexual conquests. As Richter later wrote:

If the Odéon was our terrestrial base, Laban’s ballet school was our celestial headquarters. There we met the young dancers of our generation: Mary Wigman, Maria Vanselow, Sophie Taeuber, Susanne Perrottet, Maja Kruscek, Käthe Wulff and others. Only at certain fixed times were we allowed into this nunnery, with which we all had more or less emotional ties, whether fleeting or permanent.<sup>23</sup>

Richter’s fondness for stereotype is evident once again, in his references to the heavens and to a nunnery. He wrote about love affairs between the dancers and male Dadaists (Maja Kruscek and Tzara; Maria Vanselow and Georges Janco; Maria Vanselow and himself), declaring finally: ‘Serener, on the other hand, fickle as he was, did not like to pitch the tents of Laban (or anything else) in these lovely pastures for too long at a time. Into this rich field of perils we hurled ourselves as enthusiastically as we hurled ourselves into Dada. The two things went together!’<sup>24</sup> Here, using a decidedly macho metaphor, Richter suggested that sexual conquest and Dada action were inextricably bound.

The question arises of what role the ‘quiet’, female Sophie Taeuber might have played in such an adventure. In fact, she was a crucial bridging point between Dada and the Laban school. She had seen performances by Laban’s dancers in Munich as early as 1911.<sup>25</sup> A few months after the start of Dada, in summer 1916, she had visited his school in Monte Verità with Käthe Wulff and signed up as a pupil in Zurich. Dance became a component of Dada soirées in the spring and summer of 1916.<sup>26</sup> It is highly likely that Taeuber’s involvement in Dada and the Laban school provided the linchpin for collaboration and for intensifying dance activity in the cabaret. Both Perrottet and Wulff, for example, later pointed to Taeuber as a connection. Perrottet assumed that Taeuber secured contact between the two groups.<sup>27</sup> Wulff, in response to the question ‘And the first contact with the Dadaists?’, replied: ‘I knew Arp and his wife Sophie Taeuber already, before the Dada performances. Sophie Taeuber was actually a pupil of ours and a good friend of Mary Wigman.’ She went on to say that Laban’s parties and social events increased early contacts.<sup>28</sup> In September 1916, Taeuber too held a *fête littéraire* (literary party) for the Dadaists and Laban dancers. The links were formed not only through Laban and the Cabaret Voltaire but also via Taeuber and the dancers. By the time of the establishment of the Galerie Dada, Laban dancers, too, were taking part in Dada soirées.

Taeuber was not a dancer by profession but in line with Dada principles strove to cross her borders of expertise. Hennings wrote that she and her contemporaries had seen other dancers, including the renowned Mary Wigman, perform at Dada soirées but ‘None, though, had left us with such a strong impression as Sophie Taeuber.’<sup>29</sup> Of course, her praise must be seen in its context. The text in which it appeared is a tribute to Taeuber following her death and, where Hennings attempted to convey the unique nature of Taeuber’s dancing, her descriptions tend towards the romantic. In one passage she used the metaphor of a bird, in another that of a flower and in a further extract she wrote: ‘At that time, when I came to know her, she was in the bloom of her youth, yet already inwardly conscious of life, and reaching towards her destiny as an artist. She was of medium, slight, build, her posture and movement were also lovely, with natural poise and grace. There was nothing stiff, nothing unrelaxed about her.’<sup>30</sup> This comment indicates grace and charm, qualities associated with the conventions of ballet. While Taeuber may well have possessed these capabilities as a dancer, she cast them aside for dance interpretations at the Dada soirées, which made little use of such unadventurous aesthetic effects. Perrottet stated of the impetus for her own involvement: ‘I wanted to get away from harmony, from a consistent style . . . It just didn’t work for me any more. I wanted to screech, to fight more.’<sup>31</sup> Her choice of terms is far removed from the vocabulary of grace, poise and charm.

A description by Ball, from 1917, conveys an impression of the more radical nature of Taeuber’s dance too:

Instead of tradition, sunlight and wonder operate through her. She is full of invention, caprice, bizarreness . . . Every gesture consists of a hundred, is sharp, bright, pointed. The narrative of the perspectives, of the lighting, of the atmosphere brings the over-sensitive nervous system to real drollness, to an ironic gloss. Her dance patterns are full of romantic desire, grotesque and enraptured.<sup>32</sup>

Ball’s account emphasises the disturbing elements of these renditions that, as he stated, were far from expected. The dances, ‘grotesque and enraptured’, would surely have been something new for audiences. It is a sign of Dada’s iconoclasm that the arts and crafts school at which Taeuber taught so disapproved of her involvement in such radical manifestations that apparently she was compelled to adopt a pseudonym and mask when she appeared as a dancer.<sup>33</sup> However, both strategies may have had their roots not only in concealing her identity from her place of work but also, more significantly, in concealing herself – her name, face and individuality – from the audience, as will shortly be explored.

The specifics of performances, such as timings and the nature of the dances, cannot be fully recovered but several memoirs provide vivid accounts. At the end of the first issue of the journal *Dada*, a note acknowledging the Laban dancers reads: ‘Miss Sophie Taeuber: delirious bizarreness in the spider of the hand vibrates rhythm rapidly ascending to the paroxysm of a beautiful capricious mocking dementia.’<sup>34</sup> It is an appropriately Dada description. Richter described the ballet *Die Kaufleute* (The Merchants), as having taken place against an abstract backdrop of cucumber plantations designed by

himself and Arp, with masks by Janco, and performed according to choreography by Wulff and Taeuber.<sup>35</sup> Tzara recalled the dance that formed part of the last major Dada soirée in the Kaufleuten Hall: 'NOIR CACADOU, Dance (5 persons) with Miss Wulff, the pipes dance the renovation of the headless pythecantropes[,] stifles the public rage.'<sup>36</sup> Richter also remembered that same night and described how the dance followed anarchist readings from Walter Serner that had moved the audience from contempt to a state of self-awareness.<sup>37</sup> The dancing continued this success, though Richter was surprised that the programme survived the third section without violent incident: 'This was all the more remarkable since the ballet *Noir Kakadu*, with Janco's savage Negro masks to hide the pretty faces of our Labanese girls, and abstract costumes to cover their slender bodies, was something quite new, unexpected and anti-conventional.'<sup>38</sup> He rightly drew attention to the fact that any emphasis on beauty was abandoned but was unlikely to have been aware just how strong a statement this makes in terms of gender roles and expectations. In contrast to their normal performative roles, both on stage and in life, here the dancers' femininity, beauty and sexuality were deliberately concealed. The unconventionality of this approach is underlined, though doubtless unconsciously, by Richter's earlier description in which he characterised the Laban girls as an alluring, sexual presence. The dancers at once provided the expected feminine presence and subverted that spectacle.

In another piece, Richter observed: 'I don't know whether this was the first abstract dance performance ever done, but it was sensational anyhow.'<sup>39</sup> Dada sought to restore original, ritual qualities to performances, influenced by their perceptions of primitive, non-Western art. Dance, like poetry and painting, had been severely limited and restrained by expectations and tradition. Not only adept dancers but many Dadaists, including Hennings, Ball, Huelsenbeck and Tzara, were involved in performing. Dance became a democratised activity within Dada, its particular subversions requiring no formal training. One of its appealing characteristics, in terms of Dada principles, would have been its potential as a direct, unmediated form, a means for the artist to communicate directly, physically with the audience. The contrast with the disciplined, learned techniques of dance – especially the canonical and time-honoured traditions of ballet – was emphatic.

The more professional Laban group of dancers were nonetheless, like Hennings, an attraction and steady force in the soirées and their involvement took experimentation to a more intense level. The two-way influence between Dada and the Laban school constituted a productive dialogue within the Zurich avant-garde scene. Wulff recalled the nature of her involvement in a Dada soirée: 'If someone wanted to do a dance, for example Sophie Taeuber, I would have her show me the dance and discuss it with her.' In a clear indication of a mutual dialogue, she continued: 'A new addition was the masks: that belonged to the group, to us and to the time.'<sup>40</sup> Masks, and costumes, were evidently integral to the impact of performances, as a photograph of Taeuber dancing at the opening night of the Galerie Dada in March 1917 illustrates (fig. 27). She wears a large rectangular mask made by Marcel Janco. Painted with ox blood, it is reminiscent of primitive tribal design. Her costume, designed by Arp, is made up of cardboard tubes



27 Sophie  
Taeuber at the  
opening of the  
Galerie Dada,  
March 1917. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

for arms, which end with claws instead of fingers. The masks and costumes are discomfiting, the whole effect contrasting starkly with the usual graceful, attractive spectacle of dance. The Dadaists explored African imagery and music in various art forms, including Ball's sound poems, Janco's masks and Taeuber's dancing, challenging the notion that European culture was the only acceptable aesthetic.

Laban was particularly interested in the expressive qualities of the body, the ways in which the physical represents the internal feeling, idea, mood or even soul. This approach initially seems to have been in conflict with Dada, which berated individual expression and went on to attack Expressionism as inward looking. However, as a choreographer and theorist, working in a rapidly changing environment, Laban reflected on



28 Sophie  
Taeuber and Erika  
Schlegel in Hopi  
costumes designed  
by Taeuber,  
1921–22. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

the body in a sustained, nuanced and complex way. He highlighted the impact of technology and industrialisation on the body, for example: ‘the whirring and clanking of thousands of wheels and chains is infectious: soon man himself will become a whirring of wheels and chains; soon he will see in life, in the whole of nature, and in himself nothing but the machine, and the soul will be forgotten.’<sup>41</sup> While Laban’s and Dada’s aesthetic approaches and priorities were far from convergent, at the very least one can perceive a shared emphasis on material. The body is the material, or tool, of the dancer, akin to paint in fine art or words in poetry, and equally vulnerable to differing and potentially revolutionary techniques.

In some dances in the Dada forum, costumes and masks were designed to limit the performer’s physical movement, conceal the body, and prevent individual psychological expression. Perrottet, for instance, remembered being *eingengt* (restricted or cramped), with the result that the performers could hardly move.<sup>42</sup> The body is rid of its individuality, the dancer of her authorship and the body is no longer an uncomplicated representation of the self. The effect of costumes, masks and gestures combined elements of the human, the animal and the machine, juxtaposing the primitive with the modern (fig. 28). Ball wrote at the time: ‘What fascinates us all about the masks is that they represent not human characters and passions, but passions and characters that are larger than life.’<sup>43</sup> The dressing-up and stylisation of the body constituted a rejec-

tion of representation or mimesis, reminiscent of the abstraction of the body in Cubist painting. It drove a wedge between the spectator and the performer and incited surprise from the audience instead of empathy and identification. In addition, it sought to reach something outside reality and existence as conceived in the everyday, so-called civilised world.

A text by the contemporary experimental musician Germaine Albert-Birot sheds light on the thinking about dance at that time. In 'Réflexions sur la Danse' (Reflections on Dance), published in *SIC* in January 1918, she wrote:

It [dance] can and should be accompanied by songs and cries suggested by the rhythm itself. Dance, par excellence, is children jumping and laughing, making circles and singing; it's the peasants banging their clogs in rhythm to some bourré or other; it's the savages, above all the savages, shouting, yelling, gesticulating, stamping their feet, frenetically expressing rhythmic emotion with ALL their being.<sup>44</sup>

This attitude towards non-Western expression was widespread in avant-garde circles. It aimed to celebrate it, even though, especially from a current perspective, it was at times patronising, simplistic and naïve.

The other vital component to these performances, alongside the visual aspect, and which Albert-Birot highlights, was sound. Music was often basic and frequently improvised; African drums were used and rhythm emphasised. Referring to the opening soirée of the Galerie Dada in March 1917 Ball wrote in his diary: 'A gong beat is enough to stimulate the dancer's body to make the most fantastic movements. The dance has become an end in itself.'<sup>45</sup> Instead of following a dance score that was strictly conceived around a piece of music, as in traditional dance, the Dada dancer reacted freely and spontaneously to sound and the transient, ever changing act of dancing assumed importance as an unrepeatable event. The music, equally, might react to the dance: the two were interrelated. Such interreaction is linked to the Dadaists' celebration of chance over intellect and spontaneity over fixity, as evident in manifestations in poetry, fine art and performance.

Alternatively, and more radically, the performer would dance to poetry. In a diary entry from as early as May 1916 Ball noted that his sound poem 'Gadji Beri Bimba' was spoken aloud as Taeuber danced.<sup>46</sup> At the opening night of the Galerie Dada, Taeuber danced to his poem 'Gesang der Flugfische und Seepferdchen' (Seahorses and Flying Fish): 'Here, in this special case, a poetic sequence of sounds was enough to make each of the individual word particles produce the strangest visible effect on the hundred-jointed body of the dancer.'<sup>47</sup> The qualities of the sounds were reflected in, and reflected, the physical movements of the dancer. Words were broken into sounds, transferred into the space occupied by the performers and contributed to the creation of new performance experiences not dulled by visual, linguistic and aesthetic sets of conventions.

Dance, in some form, was introduced quite early as part of Dada experimentation. For example, Tzara recalled that at the Saal zur Waag soirée on 14 July 1916, 'Cubist dance, costumes by Janco, each man his own big drum on his head, noise, Negro

music/trabatgea bonoooooooo oo ooooo.<sup>48</sup> However, following the move to the Galerie Dada, there was a new concentration on the dance element in Dada performances, which must be credited in large part to Sophie Taeuber. As a Laban pupil, apprentice choreographer and experimental dancer, she played a vital role in the incorporation of dance as an art on the Dada stage, acting with comparative autonomy, possibly because it was not an art form in which the men were either skilled or especially interested.

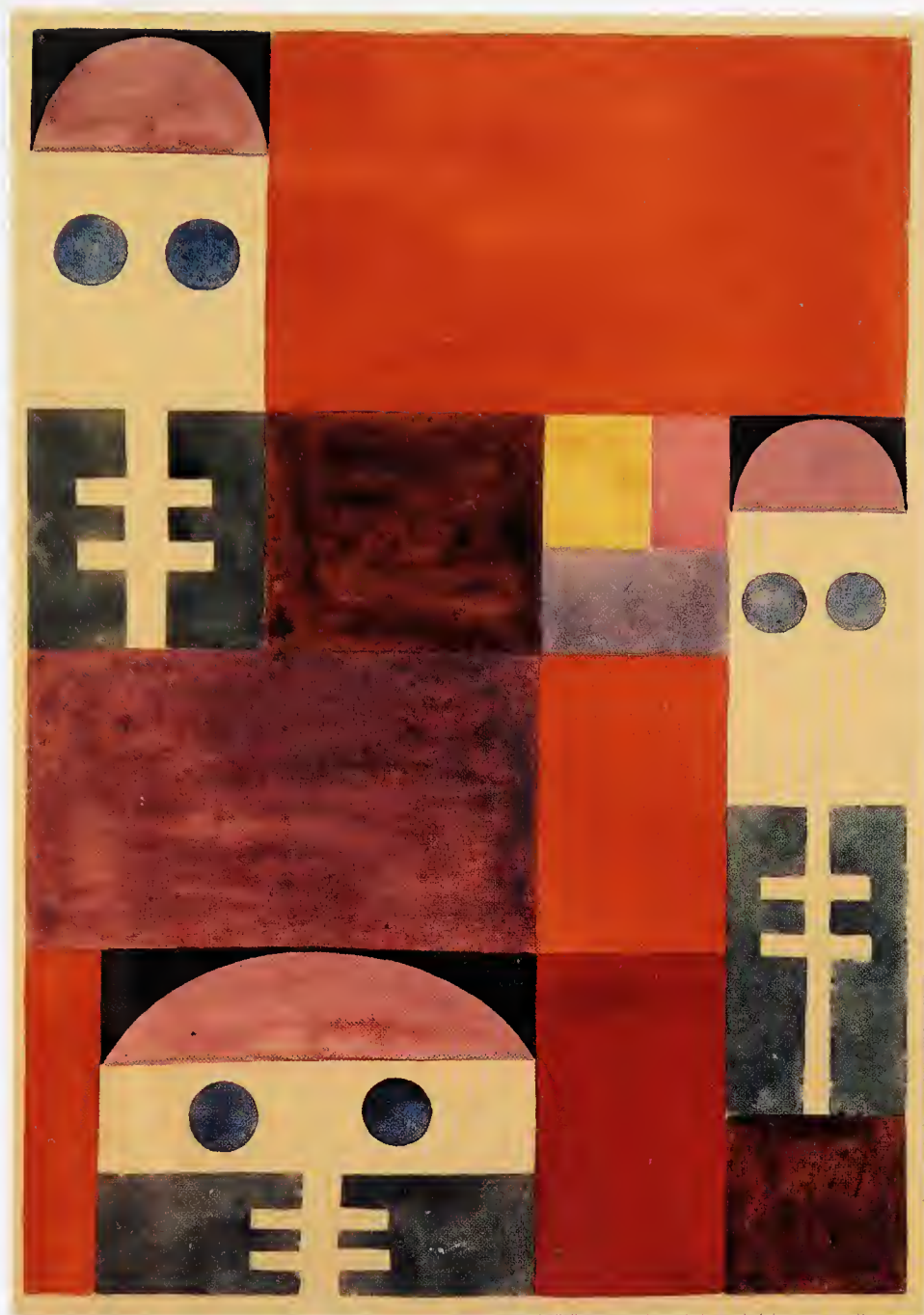
Dance in Dada soirées offered exemplary contributions to the search for a total work of art in that they each combined physical movement, colour, shape, texture and sounds. Moreover, dance was not simply added as a new, separate element but incorporated into the ongoing experimental aspects of the Dada cabaret, intensifying the visual and physical elements of the shows as a whole. Taeuber created dances that responded to the impromptu music practised in the soirées as well as to the rhythms of words and language in sound poems. In particular the collaboration between Ball as poet and Taeuber as dancer was highly productive to both parties, allowing for the conjunction, exploration and extension of both poetry and dance, and contributing to the release of the latter art form from its restrictive traditions, in line with the revolutions taking place in approaches to literature and painting.

A 1917 painting by Taeuber, *Abstraktes Motiv (Masken)* (*Abstract Motif [Masks]*); fig. 29) illustrates the ways in which Taeuber's vocations as dancer, designer, puppet-maker and painter overlap and interconnect. As evident in its title, it takes masks as a theme, recalling costume and performance. Three motifs could be perceived as the representation of three masked human figures on stage, and the grid-like composition shares common ground with Taeuber's stage set for the marionettes (see fig. 26). The simple, pared-down faces, with rounded skulls, on top of vertical columns, also find echoes in Taeuber's sculpted Dada heads. In this example and others there is a recognisable, semi-figurative element. However, the painting is also notable for its reduction of form to basic shapes, for the flatness of perspective and for its geometric grid structure. Once again, Taeuber's work of the Dada years pushed at the boundaries of figuration, representation and abstraction, this time in another area of activity, painting.

## Explorations in colour, line and surface: paintings

The rejection of the imitation and figuration demanded by convention was a common catalyst for avant-garde painters, as expressed by Arp: 'We no longer want to imitate nature, we do not want to reproduce, we want to produce.'<sup>49</sup> Partly in response to the advent of photography, Cubism and Expressionism had begun to challenge the role of painting as purely referential or representational, based on the one-point perspective omnipresent in painting since the Renaissance. They variously employed new formal techniques using colour, framing, texture, composition and materials to revolutionise the relationship of painting to the external world and to demand more active readings from the viewer. In the later years of Dada, in Berlin, the move to multiple perspectives and to the generation of multiple meanings, was manifested in photomontage, which





29 Sophie  
Taeuber, *Abstraktes  
Motiv (Masken)*,  
(*Abstract Motif  
[Masks]*), 1917.  
Gouache. 34 ×  
24 cm. Private  
collection. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

Dietrich Scheunemann has called ‘the avant-garde’s fully developed alternative concept to the traditional central-perspectival organisation of works.’<sup>50</sup>

In part, artists were responding to the ubiquity of photography, not least in mass media, which arguably could reproduce reality more faithfully, rapidly and effectively than painting, and as such was usurping the usefulness of painting as mimetic. In addition, the rejection of figuration had an ideological basis, as expressed by Ball:

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. The next step is for poetry to decide to

do away with language for similar reasons. These are things that have probably never happened before.<sup>51</sup>

Ball's words not only express a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the state of the world but also wonder at the capacity of sign systems, both in language and images, to render that world, which for him and others had become uncertain and incoherent. His statement also points to a vibrant cross-fertilisation between painting and literature. While the Zurich group is renowned above all for its experimental poetry, its participants took inspiration from, and employed, numerous art forms. Paintings and tapestries formed backdrops to performances and costumes, masks, sculptures and puppets were all part of Dada's eclectic soirées. The relationship between external reality and aesthetic representations was put to the test.

By the time Taeuber joined the Dada group, she had already begun a search for renewed means of expression and her meeting with Arp came at a key point for them both. The following eulogy in 'Dada Was Not a Farce' from 1949 is evidence of Arp's high regard for his wife: 'Like the leaves of a tree in a fairytale, her luminous works descended on my existence. Only a few days after our first meeting, we executed embroideries and collages together. Together we planned large montages.'<sup>52</sup> Parts of this tribute are highly lyrical but these first lines explicitly show the early productivity of this artistic partnership, which straight away focused on non-mimetic expression. Arp commented:

[In 1915] Sophie Taeuber and I, we made the first works that drew on the simplest of forms in painting, in embroidery and in papier collé. These were probably the very first manifestations of the type. These works were realities in themselves, with neither meaning nor cerebral intention. We rejected everything that was a copy or description, in order to allow the elemental and the spontaneous to react in full liberty.<sup>53</sup>

Taeuber's work abandoned spatial illusionism and mimesis, instead working consciously with the materials, surface and frame of an artwork, using not only paint but also embroidery and papier collé, as described by Arp. Anticipating concrete art, she and Arp perceived the artwork as having its own inherent reality, rather than being primarily a representation of or abstraction from life. Freed from such limitations, the artist's tools – texture, colour and line – could be explored as autonomous elements within the frame.

Richter's praise of Taeuber's work is striking in the acknowledgement of its impact on his own considerations of visual art: 'I was engaged at that time in a search for the elements of a language of sign and image, and Sophie's work was always a stimulation to me. She had lectured at the Zurich museum of arts and crafts for years, and had by necessity acquired the skill of reducing the world of lines, surfaces, forms and colours to its simplest and most exact form, and formulating ideas in the simplest way.'<sup>54</sup> That Taeuber continued to teach, even as she took part in Dada, entailed a transfer of new ideas from one sphere to the other. Like Hennings, as discussed in the last chapter, and Höch, as will be seen in the next chapter, she moved between different work-life arenas, drawing various inspirations from each. These interactions had an impact not only on her work but also that of her husband.

Just as the Dada poets broke down language into its basic components of words and then sounds, so Taeuber reduced visual images to their most basic components. In ideological terms, these experiments not only attempted to reclaim art forms that seemed incompatible with expectations that art should faithfully imitate external reality, but also sought to avoid connotations of the artist as privileged seer of inner visions. Ball noted Arp's ideas on form, which the latter had presented at a Dada soirée:

He wants to purify the imagination and to concentrate on opening up not so much its store of images but what those images are made of. He assumes here that the images of the imagination are already composites. The artist who works from his freewheeling imagination is deluding himself about originality. He is using a material that is already formed and so is undertaking only to elaborate on it.<sup>55</sup>

Avant-garde artists and writers were exploring ideas that were being formulated by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who developed the concept of semiology in his *Cours de linguistique générale* (*Course in General Linguistics*), delivered in 1907–11 and published in 1916. Semiology understands linguistic and non-linguistic signs to be part of systems that depend on learned knowledge and shared cultural codes in order for meaning to be communicated. From the 1950s onwards, cultural theorists including Roland Barthes elaborated on Saussure's theories to illustrate how, rather than replicate reality, all textual and visual images refer to preconceived images and codes and as such are copies of copies.<sup>56</sup>

What distinguishes Taeuber's work as an artist from that of her contemporaries in Dada at that 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. Some of her earliest compositions use blocks of colour (squares, rectangles and sometimes triangles) as their material, placed horizontally and vertically beside one another. Arp later described the characteristics of this work: 'As early as the watercolours from 1916 Sophie Taeuber was putting square and rectangular fields diagonally and horizontally next to each other. The composition filled out the way a wall is built. The colours shone and went from the darkest grey to the deepest red and blue.'<sup>57</sup> These compositions, which Arp likens to wall-building, are not centred on a one-point perspective or single focal point, underpinned by spatial illusionism. Instead, the viewer's attention is drawn to the surface, to its colours, height, width, lines and blocks.

A watercolour painting from 1916, *Vertikal-Horizontale Komposition* (*Vertical-Horizontal Composition*; fig. 30), is exemplary of this geometric composition. Composed purely of rectangles and squares, there is no central focal point to this painting or illusionist perspective; instead, it explores the vertical and horizontal planes of the canvas itself. Lesley Baier observed (in 1984) of Taeuber's paintings and textiles of the early period: 'In their rejection of superfluous detail . . . strictly vertical and horizontal in their orientation of line and colour, they define and submit to the limitations of the two-dimensional plane.'<sup>58</sup> Taeuber's approach was methodical and ordered and rejected esoteric concepts of inspiration and painterly genius. Wassily Kandinsky acknowledged her strong awareness of form and considered approach:



30 Sophie  
Taeuber, *Vertikal-  
Horizontale  
Komposition*  
(*Vertical-Horizontal  
Composition*), 1916.  
Gouche, pencil.  
21 × 21 cm. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

In order to possess mastery of ‘silent’ form, one has to be gifted with a refined sense of measurement, to know how to choose the forms themselves, according to the rapport of their three dimensions, according to their proportions, their height, their depth, their combinations, their ways of working with the whole, – in a word one has to have a sense of composition.<sup>59</sup>

Where Expressionist artists had sought through an unrestrained approach to colour and form to express inner emotion and some Dadaists played with chance, Taeuber’s work is distinct in its controlled geometric approach. Marcel Duchamp emphasised this divergent approach in a 1950 commentary, ‘Sophie Taeuber was among the first artists to have felt the danger of indulging in “automatic painting”. She set it her task to execute a drawing as “planned” beforehand.’<sup>60</sup> Carolyn Lanchner, too, has highlighted her precociousness in comparison with many of her contemporaries: ‘For Sophie Taeuber-Arp pictorial abstraction stood not at the end but at the beginning of her artistic enterprise.’<sup>61</sup> Taeuber’s work shares formal concerns with the approach of Piet Mondrian,



31 Sophie Taeuber, *Freie Vertikal-Horizontale Rhythmen*, (*Free Vertical-Horizontal Rhythms*), 1919. Watercolour mounted on white background. 30.3 × 21.8 cm. Archive Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp e.V., Rolandswerth.

the proponent of the De Stijl movement founded in 1917 in the Netherlands. It is most likely, because of the First World War, that Taeuber was unaware of these similar developments by other artists; her investigations into geometric form were taking place simultaneously and independently. Arp recalled seeing news of Mondrian and van Doesburg in international newspapers only after the end of the war.<sup>62</sup> Huelsenbeck, meanwhile, wrote that, 'We were fairly unaware of Piet Mondrian . . . therefore it is all the more astounding that Sophie Taeuber's works contained the seed of everything that the future would realize.'<sup>63</sup> Moreover, her focus on pure form and the autonomy of the artwork anticipates the principles and practices of Concrete art, including in the work of her future colleague and friend Max Bill.

The cross-influence within Taeuber's portfolio of interests can be seen in much of her work. Like many other avant-garde artists, she was interested in both the limits and possibilities of the two-dimensional space of painting. This core concern was evident in the Cubist technique of depicting the planes of three-dimensional objects and the Futurists' evocation of movement, speed and sound in their paintings and poetry. Taeuber's interest in performance, especially, fed her fine art. There are paintings, for example, in which she recreates the impression of movement. In *Freie Vertikal-Horizontale Rhythmen* (*Free Vertical-Horizontal Rhythms* of 1919; fig. 31), she made use

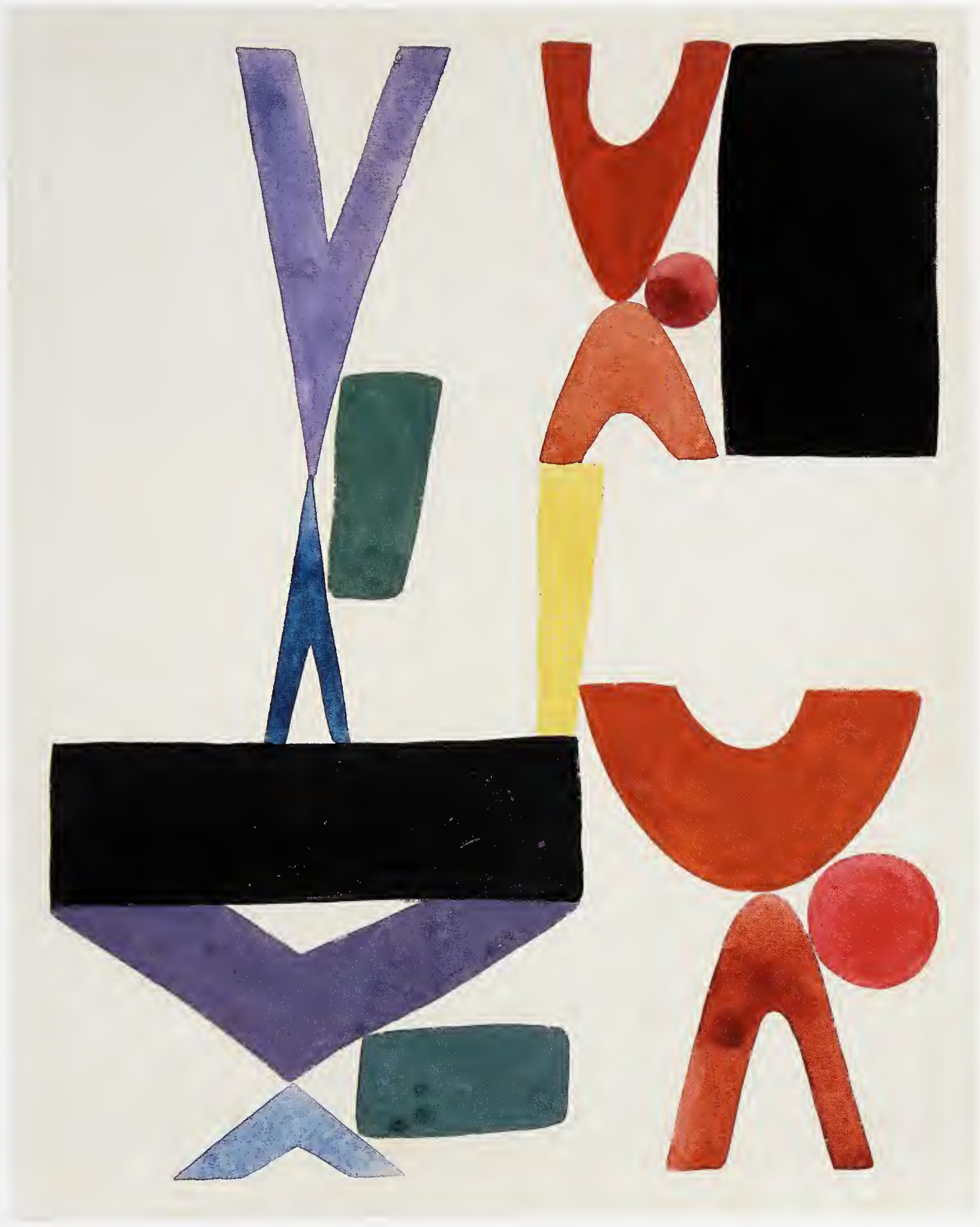
32 (facing page)  
Sophie Taeuber,  
*Spannungselemente*  
(*Tension Elements*),  
1917. Gouache. 28.9  
× 23.1 cm. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

of a structured composition of blocks of bold colour but shaped and curved the edges of the blocks. The whole work was then cut out and mounted on a white background. The resulting impression is that the whole image is in motion. Taeuber's interest in representing and recreating movement suggests a transfer of experiences in dance and music to painting. As Renée Riese Hubert has written: 'Pure and applied arts, permeated by her vital interest in dance, cross-fertilized each other. Rhythmic qualities invariably underlie her geometric patterns.'<sup>64</sup>

Lanchner, too, wrote that 'the transference of the rhythmic pattern of dance onto a two-dimensional surface seemed to her totally natural, especially since the written sign system for dance can be seen as similar to the pattern of abstract painting'.<sup>65</sup> Karla Bilang, equally, has pointed to Laban's abstract system of notation as having an impact on Taeuber's visual art.<sup>66</sup> The painting *Spannungselemente* (*Tension Elements*; fig. 32) from 1917 offers a compelling case. The shapes in combination recall the body movements, contortions and poses of dancers or acrobats. At the same time they are far from mimetic. The arrangement of three shapes in the bottom right-hand corner can be read as a head (the circle), legs and arms (the two more or less semi-circular shapes joined at their tip) and yet there is no coherent body. Flatness of surface is emphasised, in shapes that are abstracted to two-dimensional forms. The similar construction above might be a dancer balancing on a block. Next to it is a dark, solid shape, possibly a piece of stage or a curtain. On the upper left is a more angular composition that might equally be read as a human figure, the head a square instead of a circle. The structure below, repeating that pattern, could be a human figure, or a stage. More fruitful, perhaps, is to cast aside figurative interpretations and to note that this is a painting not just about dance but about painting itself. The tension refers not only to balance and movement in the external, physical world but also to the links and contrasts of the forms, shapes, spaces and colours, within the confines of the frame.

Tension is also present in Taeuber's painting *Elementarformen in Vertikal-Horizontaler Komposition* (*Elementary Forms in Vertical-Horizontal Composition*; fig. 33) from 1917. As in many of Taeuber's paintings, the canvas is divided into squares or rectangles but within the squares and rectangles are contained more biomorphic shapes. Circular forms draw the eye into their centre, while undulating shapes appear to be stretched to the four corners of their rectangles, reminiscent of billowing, pinned-out pieces of fabric. The colours are vibrant, contrasting and freed from any representational function. Above all else, what is evident in this and many other of Taeuber's paintings is a preoccupation with space, line and colour – with the reduction of visual signs to their purest forms and with abstraction over representation. It is distinctly modern painting.

If this work draws, in part, on Taeuber's unique position as both dancer and painter, for which space is a crucial consideration, it also draws on her experience of design, not least in textiles. As well as working in paint, Taeuber had long been making tapestries and embroideries. Indeed, Agnieszka Lulinska has suggested that Taeuber's early geometric compositions in paint may have been patterns for textile and embroidery works, but that she was increasingly drawn to the square as a model for pure, non-figurative







33 (facing page)  
Sophie Taeuber,  
*Elementarformen in  
Vertikal-Horizontaler  
Komposition*  
(*Elementary Forms  
in Vertical-Horizontal  
Composition*), 1917.  
Gouache. 29 × 23  
cm. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

painting.<sup>67</sup> This leads one to a further significant aspect of her oeuvre, her readiness to work with a diversity of materials. This readiness, and her particular professional skills, meant that – like Hennings, though in different areas – she crossed boundaries between high art and low art. There is a freedom in Taeuber's oeuvre, in that she restricted herself neither by art form nor to one group or programme. Richter wrote that in his work he aimed towards 'a kind of controlled freedom or emancipated discipline'.<sup>68</sup> This description applies fittingly to Taeuber's work. Although always associating with other artists and contributing to movements throughout her life, Taeuber did not adopt a programmatic approach but allowed herself the freedom to pursue her own diverse interests. Thomas Janzen has attributed her flexibility and varied explorations to her strong focus on her materials: 'For Sophie Taeuber-Arp abstraction was no dogma, but represented to her rather the possibility of being directly involved with the basic relationships of a painter's material.'<sup>69</sup> In effect, she was interested in being directly involved with the materials of the artist in the broadest sense, and her interest in framing, surface, colour, shape and texture led her to work not only with paint but also with thread.

## Art or craft? Tapestries and embroideries

Employing a variety of materials in visual art was a characteristic of avant-garde movements, heralded by the Cubists' introduction of papier collé and collage. The Dadaists' expansion of new materials reached its peak in Berlin, with the introduction of photomontage, and in Hanover with Kurt Schwitters's collages and assemblages. Huelsenbeck theorised these changes in his 1918 'Dadaistisches Manifest' (Dadaist manifesto), in which he declared: 'Dada wants to see the use of new materials in painting.'<sup>70</sup> In Zurich, Taeuber and her contemporaries had begun exploring new materials as early as 1915, paving the way for ensuing expansions of the principles of new materials. This new approach sprang partly from a rejection of oil painting, which was perceived as atavistic, bound up with the traditions of the past, the academies, bourgeois homes, and the aims of realistic reproduction. Arp explained why he and Taeuber increasingly turned to paper and textiles: 'Oil painting seemed to us to belong to an exaggerated, assumed world.'<sup>71</sup> Such approaches highlight questions about the nature and appropriateness of materials, processes and artistic intervention in a rapidly evolving aesthetic, cultural and modern industrial environment.

As well as working with watercolours as an alternative to oils, Taeuber used textiles extensively. She had trained in textiles at the Applied Arts and Crafts School in St Gallen, undertaking, in addition, periods of study in progressive schools in Germany.<sup>72</sup> In November 1915 she met Arp at the Galerie Tanner where, together with Otto van Rees and Adya van Rees-Dutilh, he was showing work in a pre-Dada exhibition, which included tapestries and embroideries alongside paintings and drawings. Taeuber, too, was already making use of different tools. Arp recalled: 'In the works that Sophie Taeuber showed me soon after our first meeting, wool, silk, fabric and paper were all

34 (facing page)  
Sophie Taeuber,  
*Ovale Komposition  
mit abstrakten  
Motiven (Oval  
Composition with  
Abstract Motifs)*,  
1921. Tapestry.  
Archive Stiftung  
Hans Arp und  
Sophie Taeuber-  
Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

used as materials.<sup>73</sup> Subsequent collaborations between Arp and Taeuber marked innovation in fine art in Zurich.

*Ovale Komposition mit abstrakten Motiven (Oval Composition with Abstract Motifs;* fig. 34) from 1921 is unusual for its oval shape, an alternative to the rectangular frame, which renders it more an object in its own right than a 'window on the world'. Its composition is based on a grid but contrasted with the rectangles of the background are curved oval and circular shapes. These shapes bear traces of the figurative. The orange, yellow and red semi-circles in the upper part of the tapestry might be read as a sun; the motif just right of centre could signify a tree, or a woman with her hands on her hips. Taeuber's initials 'sht' appear at the top right, recalling the Cubists' and Dadaists' incorporation of letters into artwork, as well as drawing attention to the artist's intervention. However, its focus above all is not on narrative but on form, nuances of colour, shape and texture, in a painstakingly executed composition.

Evidently, Taeuber was a capable and skilled craftsperson. Emmy Hennings recalled: 'She understood how to execute applied handicrafts, embroidery and tapestry with astounding exactitude. At that time I saw beadwork by her, as well as tapestries with colourful arabesques, that had such a pictorial effect that one could hardly again describe them as applied arts. They were far more than this.'<sup>74</sup> Taeuber, however, was less interested in whether her craft should be elevated to the status of art and more interested in the fluid intersections between art and craft, skilled execution and experiment, and process and aesthetic effect. She challenged arbitrary lines between the artist and craftsperson and thus the very repertoires of both arts and crafts.

These explorations Taeuber was able to effect by moving between aesthetic and professional arenas that had generally remained separate. From 1916 until 1929, she maintained a position as a teacher at the Applied Arts and Crafts School in Zurich, where she taught textiles, embroidery and weaving. The marriage between this position and her intervention in Dada was undoubtedly an unusual but fertile one. Arp recalled, for example:

It took great courage to teach at Zurich's Arts and Crafts School in 1915, if one intended to take up the fight against the floral wreath. The wreath was a monster, and Sophie Taeuber wrestled with it the way St George the knight did with the dragon. Throngs of young girls hurried to Zurich from every region of Switzerland, with the burning desire to endlessly embroider wreaths.<sup>75</sup>

Taeuber, with her more experimental approach and Dada experiences, challenged this conservatism. Likewise, she brought and adapted elements from crafts into her Dada contributions. This focus on the connections among craft, arts and experiment is reflected in her membership of the group *Das Neue Leben* formed in 1918, whose focal point was the integration of crafts with art, design and production.<sup>76</sup> She was also a member of the *Schweizerischer Werkbund* from 1915 to 1932, which sought to prepare artists and artisans for industry, while maintaining popular traditional forms, and to bring an aesthetic aspect to functional products. Alongside colleagues such as Otto Morach and Fritz Baumann, she moved among the school, the *Werkbund* and Dada,



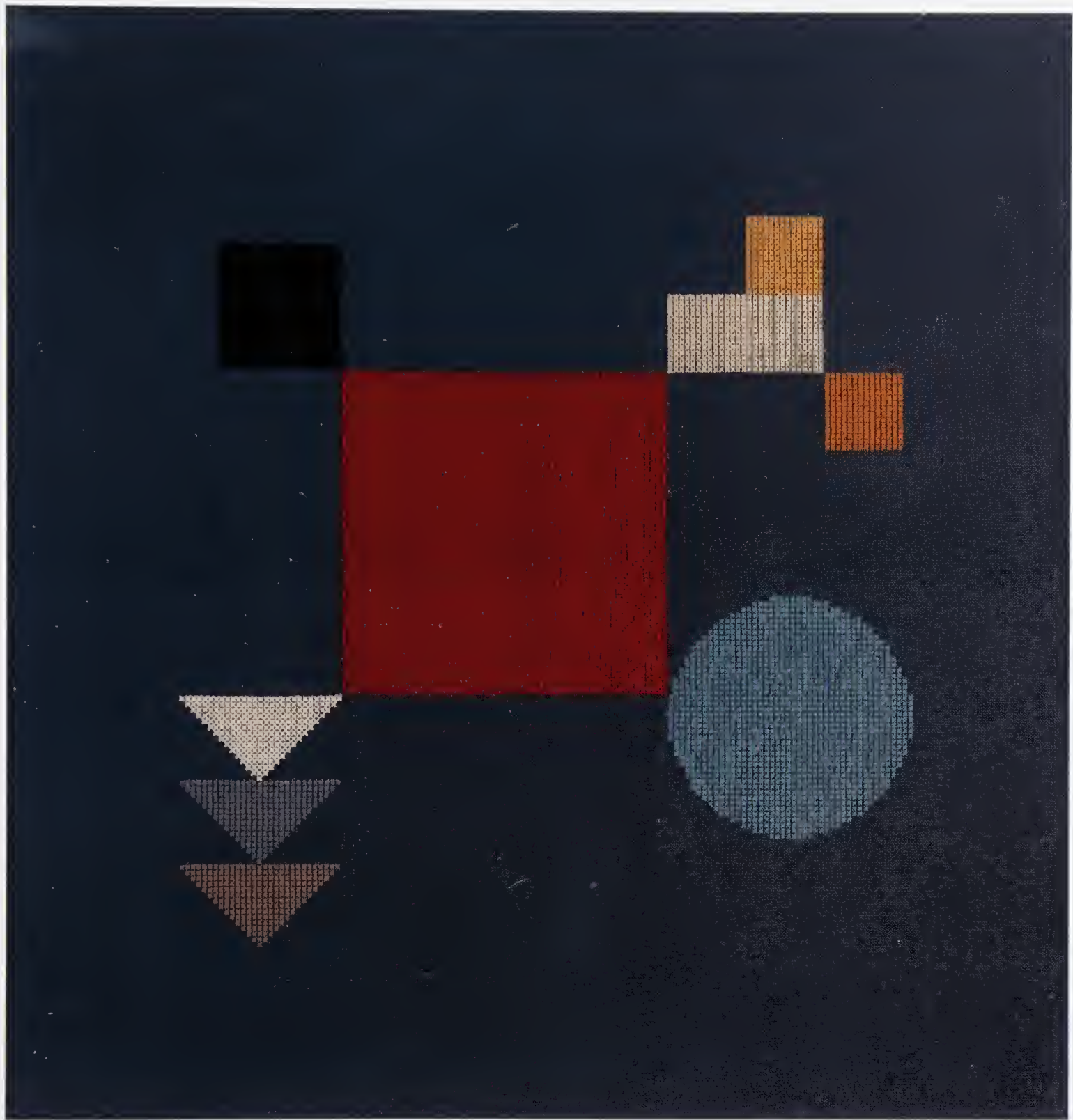
35 (facing page)  
Sophie Taeuber,  
*Komposition mit  
Quadraten,  
Rechtecken,  
Dreiecken und  
einem Kreis*  
(*Composition with  
Squares, Circle,  
Rectangles,  
Triangles*), 1918.  
Embroidery. 61 ×  
62.5 cm. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

bringing with her new questions about the role and nature of aesthetic production. This statement quoted in a 1977 catalogue on Taeuber refers to the uneasy relationship between handicrafts and function: 'Max Bill recalls that "she tried to give her students an idea of the problems of the time so that the young girls taking her course would not lose their way in a craft industry lacking in direction but would instead become useful members of society."<sup>77</sup>

Both this statement and the comment above it by Arp mention young girls and draw attention to the fact that textile and embroidery work was (is) mainly considered a female vocation. If Dada was ultimately concerned with transgressing boundaries between art and the everyday, between aesthetic objects, common objects, high and low culture, it is here that Taeuber's prerogatives not only tied in with Dada but also extended it. By bringing craft into fine art, Taeuber crossed aesthetic categories and bypassed limitations. Moreover, her choices of objects, processes and materials brought a different aspect, in that they tended to be associated with women's creativity, as evident in each of these quotations. The insistence on activities perceived as minor, with lesser (female) status, can be seen, then, as a challenge to the conventions of high culture. Taeuber's oeuvre included a broad spectrum of aesthetic, functional, decorative and domestic objects, from murals to cushions, costumes to lampstands, and jewellery to tablecloths.

Another of Taeuber's tapestry pieces further shows up the inapplicability of reductive terms such as 'delicate' and 'feminine' to many of her works. *Komposition mit Quadraten, Rechtecken, Dreiecken und einem Kreis (Composition with Squares, Circle, Rectangles, Triangles)* (fig. 35) contrasts with the first example (see fig. 34) in that it dispenses completely with figurative elements. It includes only squares, oblongs, triangles and a circle – basic geometric forms. The colours are muted, not least the dark blue background, which is far from stereotypically feminine. At the centre of the composition is a bold red square, which forces the viewer to focus only on colour and form. The stitching is precise. It is as though the thread has been substituted for paint in an apparently faultless exchange. The ghost of the artist's hand behind the work is inevitable, in stitches just as in brushstrokes. However, the blocks of colour are as precise as possible, as they are in Taeuber's geometric paintings. No narrative title is added, no meaning beyond the forms in the frame. Any expectation of tapestry as a narrative or feminine genre is thwarted. It is rather a means to focus on forms and colours.

In 1927 Taeuber published a booklet, *Anleitung zum Unterricht im Zeichnen für Textile Berufe* (Manual for Instruction in Drawing for Textile Professions), in which she discussed topics including industrial application, functionalism and the presence or absence of décor. Her statement, 'It was only with the knowledge of the reality of materials that the understanding of the function of the objects came about', not only roots her firmly in Dada, where materials were taken as a major focus, but also links to future movements such as the Bauhaus, which orientated itself towards design.<sup>78</sup> That school's tapestry work, especially, which included work by women artists such as Gunta Stölzl and Benita Otte-Koch in the early 1920s, displays great similarities with Taeuber's early work. It is in this respect, and others – she also developed interests in areas as

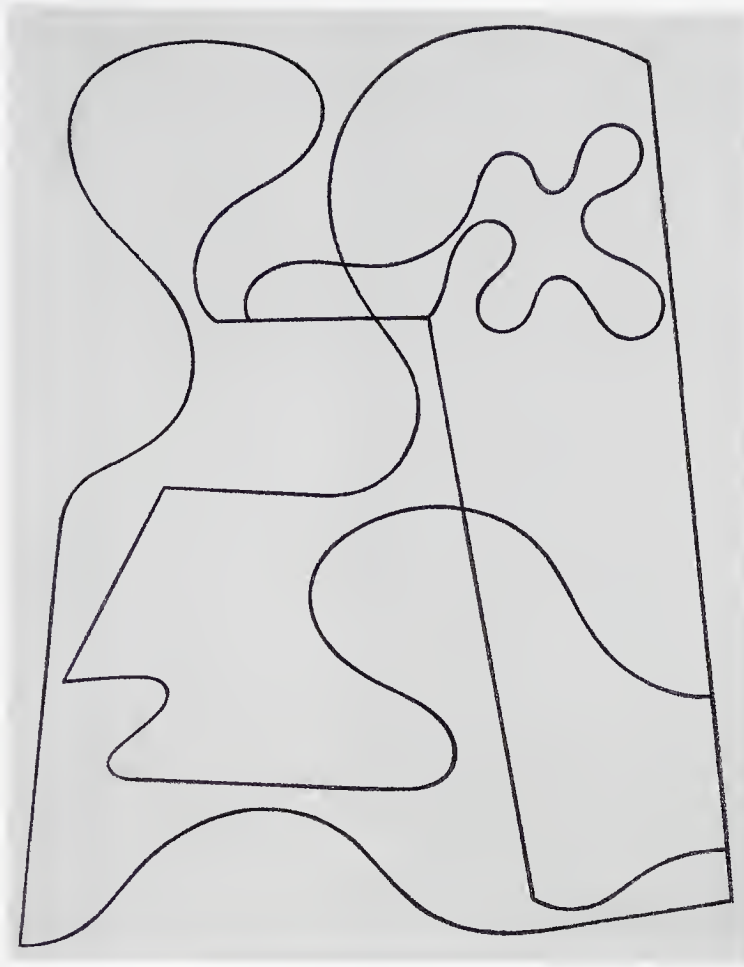


diverse as furniture and architectural plans – that Taeuber shares common ground with Oskar Schlemmer, who worked, and encouraged his pupils to work, across disciplines as diverse as painting, sculpting, dance and puppetry.

Taeuber's activities crossed the boundaries between art and craft, ornamentation and aestheticism, decoration and function and even art and life. It is easy to dismiss the craft focus of her work, especially when Dada strove to reject the traditional training of the artist or craftsman and reacted to changes in the industrial and cultural environment. However, Taeuber was also interested in the relationships between handicrafts and industrial production. In her booklet she wrote of developments in applied art schools: 'through handicrafts people came to value machine work'. She also referred to architecture, to Adolf Loos in Vienna and Frank Lloyd Wright in America, and to how artists recognised advantages in technology too: 'The machine achieves what the human hand cannot achieve.'<sup>79</sup> Her own experiments with and subversions of decorative art undoubtedly inspired and advanced new possibilities for art. Arp noted: 'Sometimes her work has been described as applied arts. This happened partly out of stupidity, partly out of bad will. Art can be created out of wool, paper, ivory, ceramics, glass, just as well as out of oils, stone, wood or clay.'<sup>80</sup> His words illustrate how Taeuber's use of materials was closely aligned with the Dada principle that all materials should be available to the artist. Taeuber extended this principle to embrace materials and techniques normally associated with handicrafts and this work, in turn, had an impact on painting and collage. The planning, painstaking effort and time involved in establishing patterns and executing tapestries was replicated in her carefully composed geometric paintings as well as in the geometric collages that she and Arp produced. Her search for the purest forms possible is an acknowledgement that the artist is never fully outside the conventions, the sign systems, that determine and make sense of the world. She or he can, however, strip back conventional meanings as far as possible, to focus instead on the materials – the paint, the thread, the lines, the space within the frame, the colours and the shapes.

## Life after Dada: no end to innovation

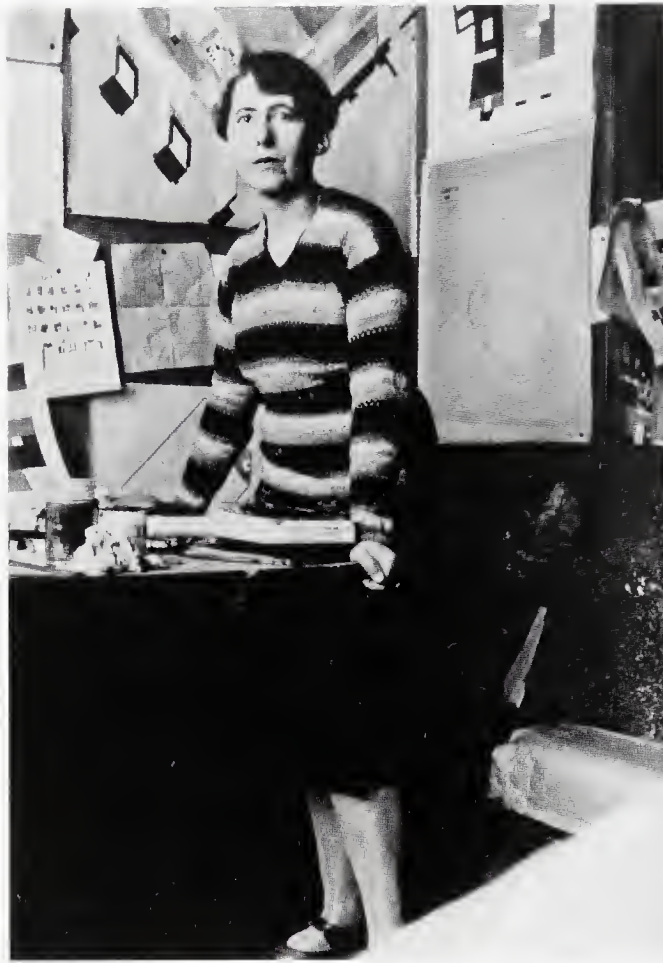
The ongoing collaboration between Arp and Taeuber during and beyond Dada stands out as a successful professional man–woman partnership within Dada.<sup>81</sup> Rejecting an egotistical individual style, they worked together on countless projects, including a series of 'duo-drawings' in 1939 (fig. 36). Numerous works were signed by both artists and some cannot be definitely attributed to one or the other. Indeed, Taeuber did not regularly sign or date any of her work until the last two years of her life – a rejection not only of the cult of the individual artist but also of the artwork as relic. Marcel Duchamp wrote in this regard in 1950: 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp, in her attitude of detachment about herself as an artist, reminds one of the anonymous artisan in the Middle Ages.'<sup>82</sup> Arp, too, emphasised the importance of collaborative working in later avant-garde art, recalling the employment of that principle as far back as pre-Dada: 'The work



36 Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp and  
Hans Arp, *Duo-  
Zeichnung (Duo-  
Drawing)*, 1939.  
26.8 × 21 cm.  
Archive Stiftung  
Hans Arp und  
Sophie Taeuber-  
Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

of concrete art should not bear the signature of its author. . . . Artists should work in a community like the artists of the Middle Ages. As early as 1915 O. van Rees, C. van Rees, Freundlich, Sophie Taeuber and I were trying to do this.<sup>83</sup> Remarkably, Arp continued the principle of collaboration even after Taeuber's death, tearing up some of their duo-collages and reassembling them, tracing in ink on paper her geometric wood reliefs, and commissioning woven work based on her patterns.

Renée Riese Hubert has emphasised the collaborative nature of the Taeuber–Arp partnership but, probably fearing that Taeuber's work might be subsumed, is keen to avoid an amalgamation of the two artists: 'The partners overlapped in the practice of some art forms, but not in others, no doubt because each had already established his or her own goal at the time of their first encounter.'<sup>84</sup> The diversity of Taeuber's endeavours clearly refutes any notion that she was simply a follower – a common accusation levelled at women, especially those in close partnerships – and not an innovator. It also reveals different characteristics and foci. Where Arp experimented with chance, Taeuber was more motivated by precision. Where Arp's work developed biomorphic forms, Taeuber's took geometric ordering. In fact, these differing emphases offer a reversal of male–female stereotypes, Arp's compositions making use of organic, rounded feminine forms and Taeuber's constructions built from straight lines, order and structure.



37 Sophie  
Taeuber in the  
office of the  
Aubette. Archive  
Stiftung Hans Arp  
und Sophie  
Taeuber-Arp e.V.,  
Rolandswerth.

If this relationship was mutually beneficial, in creative terms, it was far from exclusive. Taeuber also drew on her experiences as a teacher, craftsperson and collaborator in various artists' groups. Her artistic activity was not entirely dependent on the dynamics of Dada and did not end with that movement but continued to unfold in new directions. During the 1920s she completed a mural painting in Strasbourg for the architect Paul Horn and designed the bar of the Hannong Hotel there. In 1926 she was commissioned with Arp and Theo van Doesburg to design the interior of the Restaurant Aubette in Strasbourg, a *Gesamtkunstwerk* of murals, furniture, signage and stained glass, which opened in 1928 (fig. 37). When she and Arp moved to Meudon-Val-Fleury that same year, she produced the designs for their house and studio. Throughout the 1930s, she collaborated in progressive groups including Cercle et Carré and Abstraction-Création. Her major areas of work include a series of *Reliefs*, sculptures of geometric shapes mounted on rectangular bases, between 1931 and 1939, and the later *Lignes* series of pictures (1938–42), which used motifs of shells, parasols and leaves. She worked with both Constructivist and Concrete artists and her work had an impact on the development of Minimalism and Serial art. She also founded and edited her own journal, *Plastique*, which ran to five issues between 1937 and 1939, before it was forced out of existence by the Second World War. It featured paintings, sculptures and critical texts from European and American artists, as well as experi-



mental literature.<sup>85</sup> Dada, then, can be seen in Taeuber's case as one grouping, or collaboration, in a line of many. She not only survived it, but also continued to expand her fields of innovation, acting as a link between Dada and subsequent developments in visual art.

As Richter wrote, 'In a history of art driven by a chase for "who was first", Sophie Taeuber's contribution to the discipline and problematising of modern figuration should not be left uncovered.'<sup>86</sup> Acknowledging the extent of her innovation, it reminds us too of the question of whether her contributions might be left uncovered, unstated, because of the quietness and modesty for which she was renowned. Yve-Alain Bois has considered this issue in an essay 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp against Greatness' (1996). He rejects what he calls 'the ready-made answer – that Sophie Taeuber-Arp had to live her too-short life in the shadow of a much more famous husband . . . and was thus a typical victim of patriarchy'. His grounds are that she cannot simply be dismissed as quiet ('by all accounts Taeuber-Arp was "modest" in character, but she is also known to have been quite forthcoming'), that she produced innovative work independently and that Arp was always helpful in promoting her work.<sup>87</sup> Bois's complaint against a 'ready-made answer' unfortunately sounds like a tirade against a general, imagined feminist approach. His points are each valid but they do not cancel out the effects of patriarchy on Taeuber's reception and reputation both during her life and since.

For Bois, the fault lies with critical approaches that have suffered from 'piety', either praise for Taeuber in poignant terms following her early death or attempting to reconcile the many different aspects of her work without sufficient distinction ('no value judgement seems ever to have been allowed'). This would suggest she has been overpraised rather than underrated. However, he maintains, "Glory" and "major" are words that do not quite fit when dealing with Sophie Taeuber-Arp's achievement, and this may be what is lying at the core of most writers' embarrassment about it. What if she had found "glory" and "majority" repulsive? What if she had seen heroism, in its phallogocentric bravado, as that which her art should try to undercut? Bois proposes the term 'programmatic minority' to describe this kind of approach, exemplified for him by Taeuber, as opposed to 'involuntary minority' ('a failed attempt at greatness').<sup>88</sup>

Bois's proposal that Taeuber is 'programmatically minor' rests on an assessment of her intentions, on the view that she rejected the cult of personality and did not seek glory. Yet this was an approach that many avant-garde artists shared and there has been no hesitation in calling them 'major'. Meanwhile, in consigning her handicrafts and textiles to the 'involuntary minor' category, he dismisses some of the priorities that she expressed most explicitly. He admits that she tried to break down and confuse barriers between applied and fine art and devoted herself equally to both. However, he insists that critics must make distinctions and cites Arp in support (he apparently on one occasion was keen to omit Taeuber's handicrafts from a catalogue so that her fine art would not be seen only as an extension into design). Here, Bois drowns out Taeuber's voice, with his own and with her husband's.

Bois's struggle with binary terms like 'major' and 'minor' highlights the problem of trying to incorporate women's work into a framework that does not always prove

appropriate. He fails to challenge the categorisations themselves ('There is little glory in designing an all-over motif for a tapestry, for example, but the same gesture is of major historical significance if it concerns a picture') and maintains the same equations (fine art = major; applied art = minor). Instead of interrogating those critics that have failed to pay tribute to Taeuber, he comes back to this: 'the acknowledged "modesty" of Sophie Taeuber-Arp blinded her friends and admirers to the originality of her best work.'<sup>89</sup> The artist herself, and her admirers, are to be blamed for the neglect of her work, rather than the rigid categories of cultural discourse that demand artists and works be ranked within a hierarchy.

It is useful that Bois emphasises a number of innovative ('major') aspects in Taeuber's work but he still appears reluctant himself to break out of the modesty trap, concluding: 'As a matter of principle, it seems to me that the major works of an artist have to be understood first, especially if they invent a way of forcefully being "minor".'<sup>90</sup> The diametrical oppositions 'major' and 'minor' offer only ensnarement or compromise. Although Bois dismisses the gender aspect of Taeuber's neglect, questions of modesty versus self-promotion, the canon versus the marginal and fine art versus handicrafts are bound up with gender. I prefer to point out that Taeuber's work is exemplary of collaboration, authorial rejection, refusal of longevity, multi-disciplinarity, diversity, and above all innovation. It encompasses dance, puppetry, textiles, sculpture, painting and interior design, activities which fed into one another, enhanced her experiments and oeuvre, enriched Dada and extended the scope of movements that came afterwards.

Like Hans Richter before him, Bois has pointed out the important role that Arp played in maintaining Taeuber's legacy. Arp started planning a foundation several years before his death in 1966, to be based in Clamart (France) and to include the Meudon house and workshop that Taeuber designed for them. The Fondation Jean Arp there was realised by his second wife, Marguerite Hagenbach, in 1979. Another Arp museum was opened with her collaboration in Rolandseck in Germany in 1995, drawing on the Stiftung Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp founded in 1977, and was hugely expanded and re-launched in 2007. Both these museums preserve, exhibit and promote Taeuber's work too but both are named after Arp, rather than after Arp and Taeuber.<sup>91</sup> Despite Bois's vehement denial that Taeuber lived in the shadow of her husband, her work remains to some extent an adjunct to his.

Taeuber is an artist for whom appreciation has grown gradually and to whom a number of exhibitions have been devoted, mainly in Europe and more rarely in the United Kingdom and the United States from the 1980s.<sup>92</sup> There has nevertheless been a tendency to downplay her role in Dada and to emphasise the gentle, harmonious, pure, simple, delicate qualities of her character and work, as if she and the work were removed from the tumultuous context of the early twentieth century. The space granted to Taeuber's work in the 2006 Dada exhibition in New York was particularly welcome, then, in that it afforded it a place within that broad forum of experiment and made it known to a larger audience. Many visitors attracted to the Dada 'blockbuster show' would have come across Taeuber for the first time. Her work was situated at the start of the exhibition, abundant, prominent and unavoidable.

Outside the museum space, the current fifty-franc Swiss National Bank note has been given over to Taeuber. On its two sides it features a portrait of her, a photograph of her in her workshop, a Dada head from 1919, a composition from the Aubette from 1927, *Relief rectangulaire* from 1936 and *Lignes ouvertes* from 1939. The banknote is representative of Taeuber's work in that it includes a reference to Dada, alongside several images of her work from the 1930s. Taeuber took part in Dada and made valuable and eclectic contributions to it, without limiting herself within it: she succeeded in pursuing an artistic life outside and beyond it. She contributed to Dada without being consumed by it and is an important, even 'major', figure in the history of women in art and history of art more generally. As the Swiss National Bank's website reports: 'For the first time . . . a woman, a historical personality who actually lived, and not a symbolic figure – is shown on a Swiss banknote.'<sup>93</sup> That it took until 1995 to produce such a cultural tribute – to Taeuber and to women who 'actually lived' rather than 'symbolic figure[s]' – illustrates her achievements in reconfiguring modes of representation all the more poignantly.



## HANNAH HÖCH

### The 'good girl' and the Dada club

Hannah Höch's work within Berlin Dada has received more recognition than any other woman artist's in Dada. The list of exhibitions which included her work, or which were entirely devoted to it, from 1919 until her death in 1978 and up to the current day is substantial.<sup>1</sup> Research on Höch, too, has grown – albeit later than that on her male colleagues – especially after her death and the subsequent release of her collected material to form an archive held at the Berlinische Galerie. This material comprises thousands of books, letters, catalogues, posters, manifestos, periodicals, diaries, poems and artworks, including work produced not only by her but by artists including Hausmann, Arp and Schwitters. During the Second World War Höch concealed it behind a chimneystack and buried it in chests in the garden of her retreat in Heiligensee, on the outskirts of Berlin. The surviving archive offers vivid insights not only into her personal and professional relationships but also into discussions, stimuli and new concepts that contributed to Dada's development in Berlin. The collection, in all its variety, provides much valuable documentation that might otherwise have been lost and in its unedited eclecticism it is an ample substitute for memoirs.<sup>2</sup>

As in the cases of both Emmy Hennings and Sophie Taeuber, Höch's initial links with Dada were forged in the context of a personal relationship: she was involved with Raoul Hausmann, self-nominated Dadasoph, from 1915 to 1922. Access to Höch's personal papers, including a large volume of correspondence from Hausmann, has facilitated biographical analyses. There is even a publication, by Karoline Hille (published in 2000), devoted entirely to the story of the Höch–Hausmann relationship.<sup>3</sup> Letters reveal the volatility of the relationship, not least because Hausmann was married with a child when he became involved with Höch. Although he would not leave his wife, he was also reluctant to break with Höch. Most decisive for this study, however, is the fact that Höch's involvement with Hausmann clearly informed her relationship with Dada to a significant degree. She remembered, for example, 'Through my close relationship with Hausmann, it lasted almost seven years, I was entwined with DADA from the start.' Elsewhere, in 1968, she also noted that, with the exception of a close friendship with Baader, 'My personal relationships with the Berlin Dadaists were determined by the authority of Hausmann's boundaries.'<sup>4</sup> A self-portrait, double-exposure photograph from 1919 (fig. 38), in

38 (facing page)  
Hannah Höch, *Self-portrait with Raoul Hausmann*, c. 1919. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.

which Hausmann looms largely over Höch's shoulder, is emblematic of her entanglement with him.

If judgements about Hausmann's role as a personal and professional partner to Höch in art-historical accounts have mainly been unfavourable, so too have been conclusions about attitudes of other Berlin Dadaists towards the only female artist to have intervened in the group. Höch herself recalled in an interview in 1959: 'Thirty years ago it was not easy for a woman to make it as a modern artist in Germany. Most of the male colleagues considered us for a long time as charming, gifted amateurs, without ever wanting to afford us professional status.'<sup>5</sup> George Grosz and Heartfield were apparently against showing Höch's work in the 1920 Erste Internationale Dada-Messe (First International Dada Fair) and only conceded after Hausmann championed her case. Later, Hausmann exercised his own exclusion of her in his memoirs, insisting that 'She was never a member of the Club.'<sup>6</sup> The almost complete absence of her work in Dada periodicals may also indicate reluctance on the part of contemporaries to include Höch in their circle. A reproduction of a woodcut in the second number of *Der Dada*, from 1919, is the only example of her work in any publication and this is attributed, unfortunately, to 'M. Höch'. On the copy Höch retained, now in her archives, she has crossed out 'M. Höch' and written: 'H. wieder mal verstümmelt' (Höch mutilated again). Her choice of words calls to mind the cut-up words and fragmented bodies in her photomontages.

Richter, once again, provided a somewhat troubling account of one of his female colleagues:

At the first Dada shows in Berlin she only contributed collages. Her tiny voice would only have been drowned out by the roars of her masculine colleagues. But when she came to preside over gatherings in Hausmann's studio she quickly made herself indispensable, both for the sharp contrast between her slightly nun-like grace and the heavyweight challenge presented by her mentor, and for the sandwiches, beer and coffee she somehow managed to conjure up despite the shortage of money. On such evenings she was able to make her small, precise voice heard. When Hausmann proclaimed the doctrine of anti-art, she spoke up for art and for Hannah Höch. A good girl.<sup>7</sup>

When asked in 1975 about Richter's anecdote that she 'conjured up' coffee and sandwiches, Höch expressed surprise, and said: 'That's a fairytale. . . . Höch, who looked after the Dadaists so beautifully at their get-togethers.'<sup>8</sup> Richter's version of events tapped into common conceptions of women performing nurturing, domestic and supporting roles, and he emphasised her quietness and grace using stereotypical images such as a nun and a child. Nevertheless, he at least displayed some sympathy, as he had for Taeuber, with the difficulties each might have had in making her voice heard in an all-male group. Participation evidently required persistence: 'At exhibitions and readings she would turn up and the earnestness of her nature would lend weight to her tiny voice.'<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, a description of Höch as 'ein tüchtiges Mädchen' (a good girl) prevailed for far too long, encouraging neat, stereotypical presentations of her as a feminine touch or tempering influence. Critical writings have subsequently taken up the

label as an illustration of the misogyny of the Berlin Dada group and as a starting point to redress a one-sided image of her.<sup>10</sup>

Some critics have chosen to focus on Höch's creative output outside and beyond the Dada years. In 1996 Maria Makela, for example, wrote: 'I want to disentangle Höch from the Dada knot.' Peter Boswell, too, has warned against overplaying her associations with Dada and trying to make her work fit a mould.<sup>11</sup> Höch herself expressed frustration in later years that all people wanted to know about was her connection with Dada.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, unlike Hennings, Höch did not distance herself from the Dada group retrospectively. She gave a short review of her time in Dada in the essay 'Lebensüberblick' (A Life Overview) written in 1958, for example, in which she acknowledged the ways in which Hausmann and Dada represented important stages in her life in terms of aesthetic ideas.<sup>13</sup> In further reminiscences from 1966, 'Erinnerung an Dada: Ein Vortrag' (Memories of Dada: A Lecture), she remembered and celebrated the Dadaist project and her colleagues, including Hausmann.<sup>14</sup> Höch, indeed, continued and intensified collaborations with certain artists even as Dada in Berlin was disintegrating. She worked with Arp and especially Schwitters, contributing, for example, to the latter's famous Merzbau, an extraordinary construction built over a period of thirteen years (1923–36) that spread to eight rooms of his Hanover house.

As with most artists involved in the relatively short life of the Dada movement, Höch's work certainly was not confined to those few years, nor can the whole of her artistic output be simply appended to Dada. This fact should not obscure the significance of her work within the Dada timeframe, however. What is evident in the critical approaches mentioned earlier is their implicit frustration with art-historical reductions of Dada to a fixed homogeneous category, into which Höch's work must somehow be inserted. It is only through insisting on the inclusion of her contributions, however, that accounts and perceptions of the movement are properly extended to embrace a fuller range of contributors. Maud Lavin's excellent 1993 monograph has been crucial in this respect. It insists on the importance of Höch's photomontage work in the Dada and broader socio-historical context and engages in detailed analyses of her work, with a particular focus on gender.

Höch's place in Dada history was undoubtedly dealt a blow by the fact that Hausmann gave little space to her in his memoirs.<sup>15</sup> His sidelining of her is tied up with the notion of the Dada Club, a specifically Berlin phenomenon, with Höch herself testifying that she was not a part of it.<sup>16</sup> It was an elite band – Huelsenbeck also refused Schwitters entry into it. In Hausmann's memoirs, it justifies a relative exclusion of Höch ('She was never a member of the Club') and this attitude has been continued by critics. John D. Erickson in 1984 wrote, for example, 'Club Dada, launched by Huelsenbeck in 1918, attracted a variety of personalities even more diverse than those in Zurich Dada.' This diversity, though, was apparently limited. Erickson listed six key members before consigning a large number to a secondary group, beginning: 'several personalities composed a fringe group: Hannah Höch (Hausmann's girlfriend), the poet-adventurer Franz Jung, the writer Carl Einstein'.<sup>17</sup> Apart from the unfortunate fact that Erickson ascribes each of the men in his list an artistic occupation whereas Höch is referred to

only as a girlfriend, there are strong arguments against the relegation of Höch to the fringes. She is most readily aligned with Hausmann, Richter and Baader, as compared with the more communist-oriented grouping of Heartfield, Herzfelde and Grosz.

Rigid adherence to categorisation reveals a subtext: that Dada was an exclusive club, effectively made up of men, whose members had to be vetted by some kind of authority and whose members continue to be vetted by art historians. That attitude directly contradicts the principles of openness to style, approach and, above all, people that Ball instigated at the start of Dada. It also contradicts the 1918 Berlin 'Dadaistisches Manifest' (Dadaist Manifesto): 'Dada is a CLUB, founded in Berlin, which you can join without commitments. In this club every man is president and every man can have his say in artistic matters. Dada is not a pretext for the ambition of a few literary men (as our enemies would have you believe).'<sup>18</sup> However, in some senses it turned out to be an elite club and a men's club at that.

Immediately before his statement that Höch was never a member of the club, Hausmann proclaimed: 'Hannah Höch took part in only two exhibitions.'<sup>19</sup> The two exhibitions in which Höch participated were, firstly, a show of visual work at J. B. Neumann's Graphisches Kabinett in May 1919, which was effectively the first exhibition of Dada art in Berlin and, secondly, the now infamous Dada-Messe at Dr Otto Burchard's Berlin Gallery in 1920. These two exhibitions were the only two major exhibitions of Dada visual art in Berlin. They therefore shaped public and critical perceptions of Dada at the time and are vital to understanding Dada activity in Berlin. Höch participated in both.

The first event was a three-day exhibition of architectural sketches and Dada work. It opened with a soirée on 30 April 1919, which culminated in a Bruitist musical piece *Anti Symphonie, 3 Teile* (*Anti Symphony, 3 Parts*) by Jefim Golyscheff. A handwritten note on the programme which Höch kept indicates how she participated in the performance, in fact playing a tin drum ('I took part').<sup>20</sup> She also contributed watercolours and drawings, which Adolf Behne described enthusiastically in a review: '*Hannah Höch* and especially *Jefim Golyscheff* conjure up fabulous ornaments.'<sup>21</sup> These non-mimetic, sometimes geometric, experiments in aesthetic form would make way at the next exhibition for newer, differently innovative work. The Dada-Messe was the most important single event in Berlin Dada and an epochal stage in the history of avant-garde art. Alongside the Berlin protagonists – Hausmann, Baader, Grosz, Heartfield, and Höch – it brought together many other artists including Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Francis Picabia and Rudolf Schlichter to stage a huge show of visual art, attracting the attention of the public and press with its provocative approach and radical innovations.

According to the programme, the only women to exhibit were Höch and Maud E. Grosz. Höch exhibited seven pieces, three of which have been lost. *Ali-Baba-Diele* (a typographical collage) and *Diktatur der Dadaisten* (*Dictatorship of the Dadaists*, a collage sculpture) can be made out in the background of a photograph of Höch and Hausmann at the fair (fig. 39). A photograph also survives of a sculpture assemblage that was not included in the catalogue but which Höch added to her copy of the catalogue list. In addition, she displayed an assemblage montage, *Mechanisches Brautpaar*





39 Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch, first room of the Dada Fair, 1920. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.

(*Mechanical Wedding Couple*), two hand-sewn dolls and, for the first time, two photomontage works – *Dada-Rundschau* (*Dada Panorama*, not in the catalogue) and the large-scale *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* (*Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*).<sup>22</sup>

It is clear from Höch's comments and correspondence between her and Hausmann that her status within Dada was filtered in part through her relationship with him. However, a focus on her work must take precedence over speculations about relationships, membership and power struggles. Instead of approaching Dada in Berlin as a 'knot', a 'mould' or an exclusive club, one might perceive it as a complex, dynamic context, within which Höch undoubtedly played a significant role as an artist. Examination of her substantial contributions to the Dada-Messe in particular emphasises how, through its innovative techniques, her work was of vital importance both to her history and to that of Dada. Again, Richter's words unwittingly offer an invitation to review a Dada woman's existence. How does the 'good girl' label apply to a woman who, in her personal life, had a long-term relationship with Hausmann, a married man, went on to a three-year lesbian relationship with a Dutch poet, Til Brugman, and finally married and divorced a younger man, the pianist and businessman Kurt Matthies, before living alone? More importantly, how does it apply to a woman who joined an

avant-garde group in 1920s Berlin, took up a radical new art form, was labelled a degenerate artist by the Nazis in Germany in the 1930s and continued to test the art of photomontage, to interrogate culture, politics and aesthetics throughout her long career? Höch's personal and professional lives, her participation in Dada and her career beyond it reveal her to be much more, or other, than 'a good girl'.

## Photomontage: pioneering and engineering

It is for her work in photomontage, the distinctive art form developed by the Berlin Dadaists, that Höch is best known. The technique of photomontage was a revolutionary new idea, an exciting innovation at the heart of Dada endeavours that proved to have a lasting impact on modern art. In a step further than collage, as employed by the Cubists, photomontage not only introduced new elements alongside paint but actually replaced paint altogether, making use exclusively of ready-made photographic images as its material. The technique, which was unveiled most dramatically at the Dada-Messe, challenged accepted notions about the artwork, the artist and the reception of art. It represented a willingness by the artist to engage with the modern world, specifically with new technology, manifesting this new approach through both content and technique. Photomontage is undoubtedly one of the most important legacies of Dada, indeed of the historical avant-garde more broadly, and Höch was at the centre of these endeavours.

Not surprisingly, claims differ as to the origin of the technique. In various accounts, Heartfield claimed invention with Grosz, Grosz with Heartfield, and Hausmann claimed it for himself. The debate is reminiscent of Richter's expression 'wer war erst' (who was first), which he used in relation to Taeuber's achievements. Höch attributed its introduction into Dada to Hausmann: 'The idea came from him in any case.'<sup>23</sup> In a 1934 essay she described the stimulus for the establishment of the technique, citing a popular contemporary practice whereby photographs of individuals' heads were pasted onto ready-made scenes, either painted or photographed. The particular examples she gave include pasting the faces of soldiers into groups of Prussian regiments and adding family members into country landscapes.<sup>24</sup> She provided more examples in an interview in 1975: 'Already as a child I knew this technique. There were, e.g., jokey postcards, contrived by sticking together photo-bits of comical situations. Or wedding couples, who were confronted with the future joys and sorrows of marriage. And suchlike.'<sup>25</sup> These examples use the juxtaposition of different photographic elements with painted or drawn urban and landscape scenes to various effect, from romantic to celebratory to comic. They became increasingly popular from the turn of the century. The unique contribution of Höch and her fellow Dadaists consisted of taking inspiration from these popular practices to develop a new artistic technique.

While Hausmann failed to mention in his accounts of photomontage that Höch was with him on holiday at the Ostsee when he alleged he discovered the technique, he was impelled to note her participation in its development. Given his reluctance to acknowledge her otherwise, this is evidence that she played a pivotal role. Firstly, he ascribed to

her a part in naming it: 'In my enthusiasm for innovation I also needed a name for this technique. Together – George Grosz, John Heartfield, Johannes Baader, Hannah Höch and I – we decided to name the results *Photomontage*.' Secondly, he acknowledged her part in developing it: 'It was above all myself, Johannes Baader and Hannah Höch, who developed and exploited this new technique.'<sup>26</sup> More interesting than pinpointing a single moment of conception or ownership (recalling earlier discussions of Dada's Zurich 'birth') is an appreciation of its applications and unfolding. What is beyond speculation is that Höch was instrumental, with Hausmann and others, in taking up and foregrounding the technique in the Dada context.

A stirring claim about the best-known of Höch's photomontages, the 1919–20 *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands* (*Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the last Weimar Beer Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*; fig. 40) has been made by Maria Makela: 'Cut with the Kitchen Knife telescoped the methods and meanings of the Dada-Messe into a single, iconic image.'<sup>27</sup> This huge montage is entirely composed of images taken from a variety of magazines and newspapers, juxtaposed in size, colour and position. Phrases, words and letters, in varied typography and scale, are interspersed with images, given new and numerous meanings by their removal from context. Höch incorporated diverse subjects: photographs of politicians, machinery, buildings and crowds, alongside images of women including dancers and sportswomen. She included individuals as various as Albert Einstein, General von Hindenburg, Lenin, the film actress Asta Nielsen and the poet Else Lasker-Schüler. The images and text extracts refer out of the frame to the big issues of the day and to everyday life: to posters, advertisements, newspapers and illustrated magazines aimed primarily at women.

Instead of offering a single-point perspective, a coherent image arranged according to a horizontal or vertical plane, the dispersed elements draw the eye to numerous points, as though seeking to engage with and portray multiple simultaneous experiences. Its 'staccato audacities', to borrow a phrase from Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, offer almost infinite juxtapositions, contrasts and connections.<sup>28</sup> Lavin has examined the images in this work in great detail and in many cases traced their sources. Through a focus on specific aspects – images and text and the relationships between them – she has brought out multiple readings of areas as diverse as female pleasure, the female body, emancipation, utopianism, class, technology, identity and politics. In so doing, she makes a compelling case for the multiple impressions that Höch conveys through this work, including attitudes that are celebratory, fearful, critical and ironic.<sup>29</sup>

Here and in other works, Höch used fragments of photographs and text cut from mass-circulation media, from travel articles, health features and advertising, calling it 'photomatter'.<sup>30</sup> These cuttings would have been considered by many commentators and critics to be superficial and inappropriate as artistic material, at a time when photography itself was not considered an art form. The title explicitly refers to the tool of the photomontage artist and the process of cutting out – in this case, moreover, with a domestic tool, a kitchen knife. Höch compared her photomatter with other basic mate-



Legen Sie Ihr Geld in dada an!

dada

Kommt

Die anti...

dada istische

Bewegung

He, he, Sie junger Mann  
Dada ist keine Kunstrichtung

W

dada regt!

Die große  
Weyl  
dada

Trottel dada bei.

WADA i  
Sten

HH

40 (facing page)  
Hannah Höch,  
*Schnitt mit dem  
Küchenmesser Dada  
durch die letzte  
Weimarer  
Bierbauchkultur-  
poche Deutschlands*  
(*Cut with the  
Kitchen Knife Dada  
through the last  
Weimar Beer Belly  
Cultural Epoch of  
Germany*), 1919–20,  
collage,  
114 × 90 cm. bpk/  
Nationalgalerie,  
Staatliche Museen  
zu Berlin.

rials employed by artists and rightly declared its significance: 'I use it [the photo] like colour, or how the poet uses the word. As far as I'm concerned, it's Dada's most intensively used form ever.'<sup>31</sup> Photomontage took the experimentation of avant-garde artists with new materials to a new level, replacing paint altogether and substituting it with its new 'rival', the photograph.

Höch's comments are unequivocal about the place of photography in the emergence of Dada's innovative new technique: 'Photomontage is based on photography and has developed from photography.' She attributed the re-emergence of experiments with photography and their introduction into Dada art to these three factors: 'This rebirth was due, in the first place, to the high level of quality photography has achieved; second, to film; and third, to reportage photography, which has proliferated immensely.'<sup>32</sup> She thus recognised, and highlighted, the impact of new popular and commercial media, and technical advances within those media, on the traditional arts. Developments in photography and film were posing a threat to the traditional role of art around the turn of the century, especially in view of their potential to render mimesis in painting obsolete. Where some artists avoided confrontation with these new questions, avant-garde movements including Cubism, Expressionism, Futurism and Dada had in common an impetus to find new means of expression. Höch and her colleagues reacted to the possibilities of new technology in an exceptional way, uniquely appropriating photographic material into their artwork and establishing an explicit relationship between new media and the traditional arts.

The process itself, of cutting out, collecting and assembling chosen fragments, is apparent in the resulting composition. In its use of mass-produced ready-made images and text, the photomontage manifests a new attitude by, and towards, the artist. The artwork is not seen as the vehicle for an individual's expression of her unique insight, creativity and skill. It is in the selection and assembling of material that the artist produces a piece of work. Höch's description of the photomontage process reveals pragmatism over intuition: 'Somewhere I find something trivial, the more trivial the better – something that doesn't say anything, but which suddenly stimulates my imagination and forces me to make a statement. This is then systematically worked through. From that point on, that is, chance can hardly intervene: not in the building of form, and not in the content (in so far as any is sought). It also means that progressing the work further is an often tiring search that never ceases.'<sup>33</sup> Her description is of a measured construction, a production process, a piece of labour. It bypasses any reference to intuition or genius, instead referring to conscious composition. Hausmann was explicit about this philosophical aspect of Dada: 'DADA did without any magical or mystical procedure.'<sup>34</sup>

This challenge to the elevation and separation of the artistic process, this rejection of the creative personality of traditional art and this shift in focus from inner necessity to a technical process was fundamental to the Berlin Dadaists' approach. The photomontage artist was a *monteur*, cutting and pasting ready-made materials. As Höch stated with reference to the conception of the term photomontage: 'We called this technique Photomontage, because it contained our aversion at playing the artist. We con-

sidered ourselves to be engineers, we professed to construct, to “assemble” our work (like a fitter).<sup>35</sup> Höch maintained a three-day working week over a period of ten years, from 1916 to 1926, as an illustrator, calligrapher and designer for the Ullstein publishing house, producing designs for wallpaper and fabric, dress and embroidery patterns, magazine covers and advertising layouts. In addition, then, to practising the philosophy of the Dada ‘engineer’ through her part in photomontage, she embodied it as a commercial worker too.

Finally, a description by Höch of the thinking behind the Dada *Klebebild* (collage), a precursor to photomontage, elucidates how the fusion of technology and art was at the core of the Dada approach:

Yes, our whole aim consisted of seizing things from the world of machinery and from industry, and into art. And our typographical *Klebebilder* or collages intended something similar, as they lent an object, which could only have been made by hand, the absolute appearance of a machine product. In a made-up composition we united, in an arrangement, which no machine could manage, elements taken from books, newspapers or advertising flyers.<sup>36</sup>

This describes how the Dada artwork consciously mimics the appearance of a manufactured object but can nevertheless only be made by an individual. Höch’s statement reflects on commercial or mass production and the challenge that it posed to the artist. At the Dada-Messe the poster bearing the slogan ‘Die Kunst ist tot. Es lebe die neue Maschinenkunst Tatlins’ (Art is dead. Long live Tatlin’s new machine art), hanging alongside the work of Höch and Hausmann, embodied most radically this Dada materialist approach, its rejection of esoteric spirituality and its essential reference to the new possibilities of mechanical reproduction (see fig. 39).<sup>37</sup>

Exemplified by photomontage, Berlin Dada established a new approach that acknowledged the implication of the artist in a world where production methods were changing rapidly and where mechanical reproduction had become possible. As Dietrich Scheunemann has pointed out: ‘The dadaist photomontage marks the point where technological reproduction becomes a recognised integral part of artistic production.’<sup>38</sup> Hannah Höch was an excellent representative of the new Dada artist-engineer and her photomontage work illuminates this crucial technical aspect of the movement just as much as the work of colleagues such as Hausmann or Heartfield. As well as technical innovation on a par with her male colleagues, she shared with them certain ideological concerns, as will be discussed in the next section and, finally, used the technique in more gender-related ways, as will become clear in further discussion.

## The politics of photomontage

The innovative approaches of Berlin Dada have sometimes been overshadowed by misconceptions that Dada was only provocative and nihilistic, more concerned with anti-art than art. That the Berlin Dadaists made use of the photomontage technique to offer

far-ranging political critique tends to dominate in some commentaries and is erroneously proposed as evidence that the Dadaists' concerns were only political and not aesthetic. Discussion of Höch's work so far has already emphasised the innovations that are inherent in photomontage, including its use of new material, its reappraisal of the artist's role and its introduction of a new technical process that engaged with new technology. Berlin Dada should not be distilled down to its politics, then, nor should photomontage be perceived only as a political tool. Still, political critique was an important motivation for the Berlin Dadaists and, according to Hausmann's memoirs, the initial stimulus behind the conception of photomontage.<sup>39</sup> An interesting question is what the only woman in Berlin Dada had to say about politics.

Politics, especially pacifism, was already an important element in Zurich Dada. By the time of Huelsenbeck's arrival in Berlin in 1918, the war was over but Germany was suffering enormous social, political and economic problems. Huelsenbeck pointed out the different conditions in the two cities, comparing the relative insouciance in the neutral Zurich with the realities and hardships of the German capital and insisting on political urgency in art. In an explicit rejection of Expressionism in his April 1918 manifesto, he derided those artists whom he saw as maintaining a hierarchical distance from everyday concerns: 'Hatred of the press, hatred of advertising, hatred of sensations, are typical of people who prefer their armchair to the noise of the street.' He demanded that the Berlin Dadaists be involved in all aspects of contemporary life. A further statement exemplifies this less distanced, less hierarchical attitude: 'To be a Dadaist can mean, under different circumstances, to be more a salesman, more a party man than an artist – to be an artist only by chance.'<sup>40</sup>

John Heartfield became a prolific producer of anti-fascist pieces in the 1920s and 30s, employing photomontage to convey overt political messages. Standing beside the definite political messages one receives from Heartfield's well-known work, Höch's work has been perceived as non-political and many critical accounts have sought to distance her entirely from any political engagement. In an introduction to an exhibition catalogue from 1982, for example, while the author stated that Höch was 'anything but apolitical', this is a partial concession, a prelude to denoting her 'the least engaged' and her photomontages as 'poetic not propagandist, more personal than public' and displaying qualities of 'whimsy and beauty'.<sup>41</sup> Such differentiation may have been intended to single out Höch's uniqueness and independence but it used simplistic distinctions. The oppositions set up conform to stereotypical separations between aesthetics and politics, male and female, and personal and political. Richter's words encompassed these attitudes – he called her a 'little girl' and 'lyrical' (the two are linked for him) – but he at least granted her work some political substance: 'Her collages were sometimes political (everyone was in the line of battle), sometimes documentary (she put all the Berlin Dadaists and their friends, in significant attitudes, into an immense collage . . .), sometimes lyrical (little girl that she was).'<sup>42</sup>

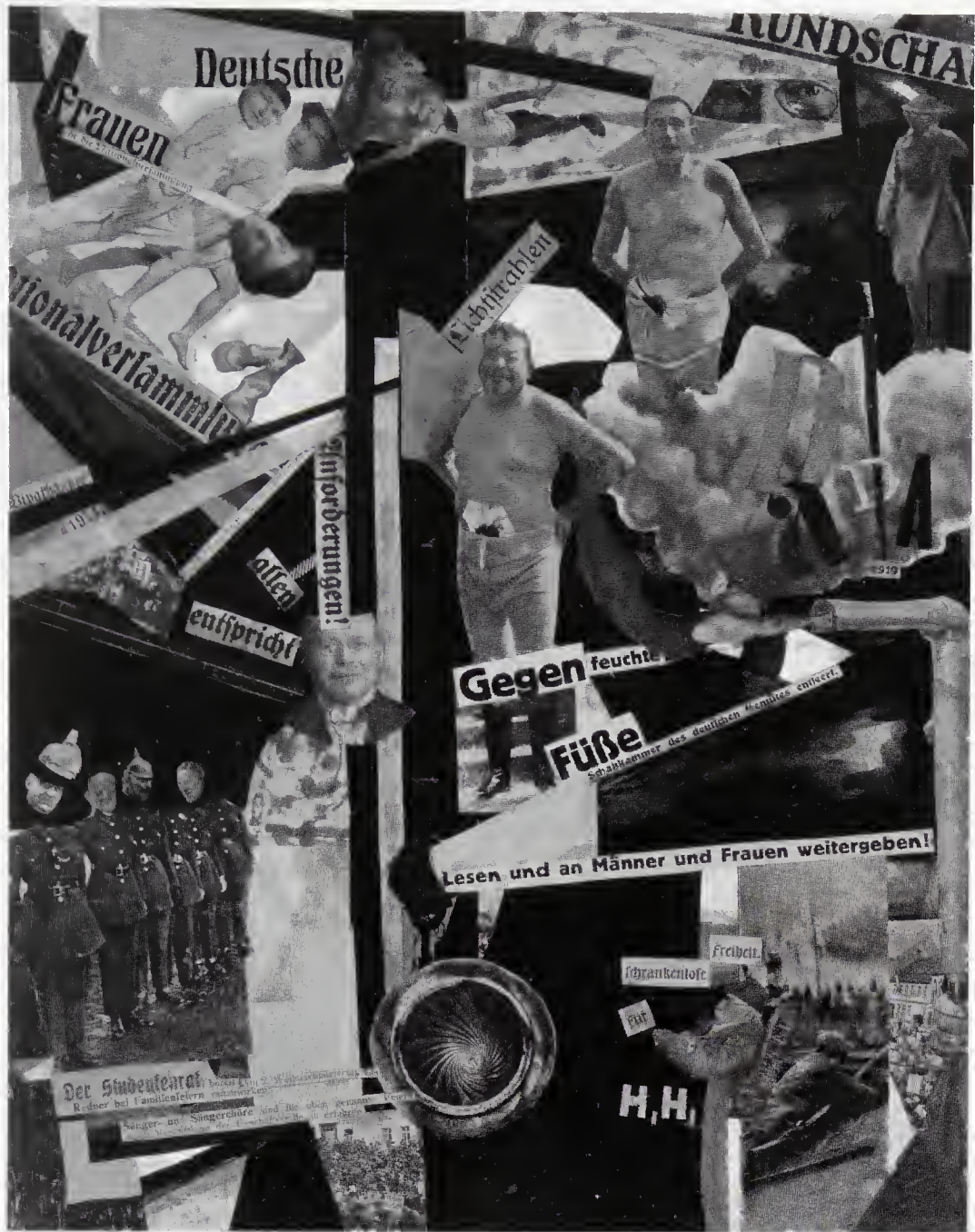
The political aspects of Höch's work were, however, substantial. Biographical material refutes suggestions that she was less engaged politically. Heinz Ohff, for example, has quoted Höch stating at the outbreak of the First World War: 'From this moment

on I too lived in a politically conscious way.<sup>43</sup> In conversation with Roditi in 1959, she also talked of her own commitments, and those of her contemporaries including Herzfelde and Grosz, to politics, indicating shared pacifist, anti-nationalist and anti-militarist tendencies during and following the First World War.<sup>44</sup> The large collection of magazines and periodicals she left behind indicates broad interest in various political, social and aesthetic issues. She participated in numerous exhibitions of the November Group but also maintained a critical stance, signing the open letter to the group published in *Der Gegner* in 1920.<sup>45</sup> This letter appealed for more revolutionary aims: for commitment to radical aesthetic and social changes and closer alignment of the artist with the average worker. It effectively criticised the group's stance as having become too commercial and too concessionary to bourgeois norms.

Speculation on her political stance and activities notwithstanding, it is the combination of the content of images and the techniques used in their presentation that generate socio-political meanings in Höch's work. As she commented on the circumstances of the time, 'I . . . saw it as my task to try to capture these turbulent times pictorially. *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser* and similar works came about.'<sup>46</sup> Several political figures appear in this photomontage, including Wilhelm II and Hindenburg in the top right-hand corner. The former is made ridiculous by elements of his portrait – his moustache is made up of wrestlers – and the latter's body is replaced by that of a female dancer. Their images, once serious newspaper portraits, usually symbolic of military power, are rendered comic. The composition establishes unexpected hierarchies and correspondences between disparate elements. The words 'Die anti dadaistische Bewegung' (the anti-dadaist movement) set up another opposition and a shift in power, with the authorities aligned against Dada rather than vice versa. Their presentation and positioning with the images suggests anti-militarism and criticism of the government. Finally, the long dramatic title itself makes a statement. Combined with the cut-out, fragmented images of the photomontage, it proposes a dissection, or even destruction, of the prevailing male-dominated 'beer belly' culture by a kitchen knife. The huge size and range of this photomontage, together with its long, insistent, satirical title, make it a powerful statement. It is itself an intervention by a woman artist armed with paper and scissors and alludes to the desirability of female insurgency in a male-dominated culture.

The other of the two photomontages displayed at the Dada-Messe, *Dada-Rundschau* (*Dada Panorama*; fig. 41), also has an unmistakable political aspect. It is like a scrap-book of newspaper images, dispersed to four corners, with headlines of text arranged horizontally, vertically and diagonally. Two men in swimming trunks are prominent in the composition and were prominent in public life at the time, the President of the Weimar Republic, Friedrich Ebert, and Gustav Noske, the Army Minister. Their images were cut by Höch from the cover of the magazine *BIZ* of 24 August 1919. The photograph of the men in their bathing suits had already been the object of public mockery and provides a good example of the weight of meaning such images carried, even before subversion and re-contextualisation by Höch. In a feminising gesture, she added a flower to the costume of each and immersed Noske's feet in a cloud bearing cut-out letters that make up the word Dada. An assembled headline 'Gegen feuchte Füße'





41 Hannah Höch, *Dada-Rundschau* (*Dada Panorama*), 1919. Photomontage and collage with gouache and watercolour on board. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.

(against damp feet) completes the ridicule. Given that in the spring of that year the government had violently suppressed a left-wing uprising, Höch's mockery of these politicians was an incontrovertibly critical and political gesture.

Furthermore, Höch calls attention specifically to the issue of women's participation in political life. In the top left-hand corner the words 'Deutsche Frauen in der Nationalversammlung' (German Women in the National Parliament) overlay several figures made up of dancing torsos and women's heads. They point to the election of women to office for the first time in 1919, following the granting of the suffrage to women in 1918, massive events in Germany's political and social history. The morphed figure of an athlete's body with the head of Woodrow Wilson, the American president at the time,

reaches towards them, as if in salute, celebrating this suffrage as a positive development. In January 1918 Wilson had announced his support for the nineteenth amendment, which was to grant women the vote in all states in the America. Officially proposed in June 1919, it was ratified in August 1920. These references were timely, up to date, political and feminist. Finally, instead of a signature inscribed by hand, the artist's inscription is also made up of words and letters cut out from newspapers. Situated towards the lower right-hand corner, it declares 'Schrankenlose Freiheit für H.H.' (Unlimited freedom for H.H.). Here is a concise and poignant declaration, a demand for social, political, cultural or artistic liberty.

The photomontage technique offered great possibilities for making political comment through its choice of images and texts and specifically through the combinations of heterogeneous fragments. However, its potential to offer new perspectives is more complex than the delivery of didactic political messages. In a close study of *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser*, Gertrud Jula Dech (in 1978) rightly emphasised the political potency of the use of photomontage itself, outlining three elements she saw as generic to the technique.<sup>47</sup> The first is that the cut-out material is selected from contemporary sources; the second is the emphasis on the technical as opposed to irrationality and spirituality; and the third is the accessibility of the technique to laypeople. These arguments illustrate that the designation of political goes beyond pinpointing the artist's stance, or even the work's didactic message, to a perception that the choices involved in the conception and delivery of the work itself reflect political, philosophical and aesthetic explorations. In photomontage, the artist cuts through existing, everyday material and reassembles the pieces to create a new, de-centred disorder.

To the contemporary viewer, many of the images used in Höch's photomontages would have been familiar, seen already in newspapers or magazines, and here presenting a challenge to look again. Indeed, it was the familiarity, the 'already seen' aspect of the newspaper and magazine images that provided their impact when subverted. Language is similarly subverted, with headlines broken up and re-formulated. The re-assembling of this material in the new art form confronts the viewer with questions about the visual representations of reality she or he consumes through commercial media and about the appropriate content and context of art. Open to multiple readings, it highlights political and social complexities by questioning appearances and the presentation of reality.

An account by Höch, which makes clear the contrast between the popular photomontage technique in military photographs and Dada's reinvention of it, illuminates the potency of its use in Dada: 'But the aesthetic purpose, if any, of this very primitive kind of photomontage was to idealize reality, whereas the Dada photomonteur set out to give something entirely unreal to all the appearance of something real that had actually been photographed.'<sup>48</sup> Her statement points to how the early photomontage techniques were used to refer to the real world, to produce through illusion an idealised reality in a manipulated image. Dada, by contrast, combined real photographic or textual fragments in unusual contexts. These combinations in photomontages produced images that at first appeared trustworthy because of their photographic sources. Each consumption or viewing, however, subverted expectations and raised questions about accepted realities

and impressions. The realisation that they had been manipulated was then all the more powerful. By re-contextualising familiar images or objects, photomontage successfully disrupted the viewer's understanding or acceptance of what was real or factual. In an essay on Heartfield's photomontages John Berger expressed this clearly:

The peculiar advantage of photomontage lies in the fact that everything that has been cut out keeps its familiar photographic appearance. We are still looking at *things* and only afterwards at symbols. But because these things have been shifted . . . we are made conscious of the arbitrariness of their continuous normal message. . . . Appearances themselves are suddenly showing us how they deceive us.<sup>49</sup>

The Berlin Dadaists responded to the challenge of photography and mass media by incorporating its material. Photomontage uniquely develops the possibilities of the photograph and, as Dawn Ades has aptly put it, 'the fascinating paradox of being able to distort reality with the medium which is its truest mirror'.<sup>50</sup> This statement is at the heart of the power of the technique and the invitations it offers to reappraise information. In some cases, as in its prolific use by Heartfield, it is used to great effect to deliver overt political messages, rendered starkly and unequivocally. In Höch's case, and in earlier works by Heartfield and Hausmann among others, the possibilities are left open for multiple readings by the viewer and nuance is maintained. What is consequential about the technique as a whole is its potential to look again at the surrounding, saturating visual culture of the modern period, and its implicit challenges to aesthetic, social and political norms.

Höch was clear about the intersections between politics and art. She stated, in 1976: 'I would like to add that, for me, art has always been a means for making statements, including criticisms.'<sup>51</sup> I have argued that Höch was immersed in these concerns along with her male contemporaries and have sought to emphasise that she should be separated neither from the focus on technical and material innovation nor from a broad engagement with public politics. Both are typically perceived as male domains but both were tackled by Höch. In the next section, I shall highlight the ways in which her photomontages bring to the fore questions of politics that challenge the distinctions between public and private, political and personal and masculine and feminine. This aspect of her work anticipates the feminist claim which became popular in the 1960s, that 'the personal is political'. As Judith Butler has written, 'At its best, feminist theory involves a dialectical expansion of both these categories.'<sup>52</sup> At their best, Höch's photomontage works likewise engage in an expansion of both categories that is powerful and potent.

## Women as subject, women as object: fragmented figures

Höch's many representations of women using photomatter have brought her to the attention of critics, especially feminist critics, since the 1980s. It is an outstanding feature of her work, one which is present both throughout and beyond Dada. Höch recognised

that women's experiences were a crucial aspect of the rapidly changing socio-political landscape of the time and that any challenge to aesthetic norms should take on questions about the representation of women in fine art. This exceptional characteristic should not act to partition Höch from the broader Dada context but instead draw critical attention to her particular contribution to Dada. As already discussed, *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser* includes many references to women. Other examples of early photomontages in which images of women are prominent and thematised by gender include *Da-Dandy* (1919), *Das Schöne Mädchen* (*The Beautiful Girl*; 1919–20), *Dada-Ernst* (1920–21) and *Dada-Tanz* (*Dada-Dance*; 1922). Three are unarguably associated with Dada by their very titles. Höch's works should be seen as examples of interventions in, and extensions of, the Berlin Dada group. Welcome or not, this lone female artist has made its legacy more pertinent, significant and heterogeneous.

Images of women are scarce in the work of other Dada visual artists. Hausmann, interestingly, provided a small number of notable exceptions, including the photomontage *Fiat Modes* from 1920. In its centre are the cut-out face and one breast of a model, a sportswoman celebrating at the finishing line, a smiling woman in a swimming cap and a woman doing the high jump. There is a tailor's dummy in the background. Dominating the composition are six pairs of legs, cut from photographs of sportswomen and fashion models and structured to form an almost circular shape reminiscent of a clock or a wheel, giving the impression of dynamic movement. *Fiat Modes* mixes fashion and sport, passivity and power, femininity and androgyny and finally encapsulates an idea of modernity.<sup>53</sup> Such examples notwithstanding, it is Höch who gave images of women a substantial presence. She selected the fragments that make up her women from a wide spectrum of mass-media publications, drawing on the proliferation of images of women in magazines and advertising in the 1920s and reflecting on women's status as both subject and object of advertising, alternately revered and exploited.

In her *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* (1993), Lavin links a close reading of Höch's photomontages with a thorough socio-historical study, stating that her object is 'to explore the connection between the production of avant-garde photomontage and the fractured experience of everyday life in Weimar Germany'. In particular, she uses Höch's work through the 1920s and 30s to illuminate the progress of the 'New Woman' construct in publishing and advertising. Although some of Höch's early work pre-dates the concept of the new woman, Lavin acknowledges and emphasises the fluidity of the term and its applications: 'For my purposes, the New Woman is best considered as a cumulative perception of female stereotypes, collected over time by women newly self-conscious of their modern status – and by their observers.' Lavin is careful to clarify the particular focus of her work at the outset and her study is illuminating in proposing socio-political and psychoanalytical readings of Höch's work.<sup>54</sup>

The book avoids ascribing conscious intentions and motivations to Höch and fixed meanings to her works. After all, attempts to 'read' the content of the photomontage, to try to make fixed sense of its elements, can obscure some of its most important innovations. The technique was a deliberate attempt to free the artist from depicting a coher-

ent subject or scene. It abandoned the traditional use of perspective that makes for an illusionist scene and instead revelled in the visual material itself and in the extraordinary possibilities for combining that material. Where Lavin's study is most interesting, then, is where it emphasises the complexity of Höch's work, its contradictions and multiplicity of meanings: 'On multiple levels Höch both criticized and reproduced the media's representation of women in her day.' In all Höch's works the images are intricately linked at many levels to the overall structural composition. As Lavin emphasises: 'these photographic fragments of women should not be regarded separately, with each having a discrete, fixed meaning. Rather, the meaning of each fragment is contingent and incomplete, open to a variety of supplementary readings in juxtaposition with other fragments.'<sup>55</sup>

In *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser* (fig. 40), Höch's inclusion of a map depicting those countries in which women had won the vote is the most explicit reference to the political and social roles of women and recalls that same theme of women's suffrage in *Dada-Rundschau* (fig. 41). The photographs of women chosen are predominantly of dancers and skaters, which Lavin discusses as allegories of physical freedom, female liberation, anarchism and utopianism, contrasting with the hierarchical militaristic images of the Weimar men in power. It succeeds in creating an impression of a modern urban world, in which post-war politics and industry were revolutionising everyday life and in which messages and images were being transmitted incessantly. Höch's combination of subject matters that are normally treated in different domains is especially noticeable. The dichotomies of public and private and male and female come together and the lines between them are blurred. This is demonstrated in the title itself, as briefly discussed: in contrasting the kitchen knife with the beer belly, it makes signifiers collide that are associated separately with stereotypical male and female domains or with public and domestic spheres.

Like *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser*, *Dada-Ernst* (fig. 42), completed over 1920–21, displays an eclectic collection of material, in which images of women and visual references to women are abundant. Its composition, too, is almost centrifugal, with cut-outs, including colourful flashes to which the eye is drawn, placed in the corners and to the edges of the frame. Four female faces can be made out. In the bottom right-hand corner is the snipped-out head and upper torso of a woman. It is a black-and-white photograph, imported into the frame on a red, patterned background. Centre right is the full-body profile of a woman, over which have been laid a dense black leg, in stocking and heeled shoe, and a cone hat. The top of the first head is cropped, the top of the second, including the eyes, obscured. In the left-hand corner a bob-haired woman crouches, performing a gymnastic exercise, a sign of modernity. That allusion contrasts with the image above, a classical romantic watercolour of a cherubic woman playing a musical instrument.

As well as the human figures, various objects evoke modernity, referring to work, sport, building, finance and fashion. On the right-hand side a skyscraper overlays a bunch of flowers, offering a contrast between nature and modern construction, the latter nearly obliterating the former. A large bow-like piece of machinery, with gold



Hannah Höch

42 (facing page)  
Hannah Höch,  
*Dada-Ernst*, 1920–21.  
Collage on paper.  
18.6 × 16.6 cm.  
The Israel Museum,  
Jerusalem. The Vera  
and Arturo  
Schwarz Collection  
of Dada and  
Surrealist Art.

coins at its upper end, cuts diagonally across the surface. In the top left-hand corner there is an overtly masculine image: a newspaper cutting of boxers in action, a favourite Dada theme. The title 'Dada-Ernst' explicitly names Dada, while Ernst is probably a reference to the Cologne-based Dada colleague Max Ernst, who used collage and photomontage techniques alongside painting and poetry. 'Ernst' also translates as serious. The combination of 'Dada' and 'serious' in the title, together with the juxtapositions of objects in this image, invite multiple readings both of the image and of Dada. On the one hand, there are flashes of humour, such as that provided by the woman with the cone hat, who looks as if she is trying to balance it on her head and keep a feminine posture. On the other hand, the eye is drawn left from that comical image to a heavy dark cross, like a graveyard cross, planted in the centre of the frame, a symbol of death.

One further object merits particular discussion in the context of gender. Above the cross and the woman with a cone hat, there is a pair of free-floating woman's legs, larger in scale than all the other human figures or fragments. Severed from the rest of the body, they at first resemble mannequin's legs. The legs are apart, forming a triangle, the right leg aligned with the bow-like piece of machinery. It is clear that they are a woman's legs, with stocking tops. They could be read as fetishistic, as a stand-in for the whole woman, who is absent from the frame. That the legs are spread reinforces the possibilities of erotic readings. In this case, other objects take on new possible significations, as phallic objects pointing upwards between the legs, including the cone hat, cross, skyscraper and machine part. The two gold coins at the top of the legs also resonate differently, linking sexuality and money, suggesting the woman's body as commodity. Just as the image threatens to simply perpetuate and share a point of view of woman as object, however, it complicates it. A remarkable addition, that could almost be overlooked, is that of a cut-out eye, turned ninety degrees and placed between the legs, where the genitals would be. The viewer's searching gaze is thus subverted and reversed and he or she becomes the object of that gaze. That eye, together with the eyes of the modern gymnast, returns the spectator's gaze.

*Das Schöne Mädchen* (1919–20; fig. 43) is an exemplary subversion of the female portrait. While the title hints at a conventional image of a beautiful young woman, the image contradicts those expectations. The principal vertically composed figure is made up of cut-out parts. At top centre is the largest-scale element, the head, but the face is cut out, replaced by a fragment of magazine advertising, leaving just a head of hair, bobbed and bouffant. The body below is a woman in a swimsuit, a parasol held jauntily over one shoulder and feet crossed at the ankles. Her head has been replaced by the image of a lightbulb, overlaying the magazine fragment, with hair above. The main figure lacks a face, lacks the identifying features of an individual portrait. There is, however, a female face in the composition, in the top right-hand corner, one eye half obscured and the other replaced by a different cut-out eye. The beautiful girl of the title can best be taken as the entire, complex composition. She is made up of disparate body parts: hair, face, body and one hand stretched out holding a pocket-watch.

References to modernity in this photomontage are powerful. The lightbulb-faced woman sits on an industrial bench, a huge tyre to her right and a machine handle to





her left. A boxer, signalling a masculine or Dada aspect, punches through the tyre, and – most striking of all – the BMW logo has been repeated almost everywhere. The allusions to time, industry, transport, mass reproduction, advertising and leisure conspire in a snapshot of modernity. It is on the one hand fragmented, demonstrating the sometimes conflicting and alarming elements at play for the modern subject, bombarded by sights, sounds and speed. On the other hand, it gives an impression of plenitude and possibility. The choppiness of different elements belies aesthetic composition. A circular motif is prevalent: in the tyre, the cogs, the (rotating) handle, the shape of the hair, the face, the parasol, the clock and the logos, uniting the industrial and the human and giving an impression of growth, reproduction and expansion. *Das Schöne Mädchen* succeeds in encompassing the contrary impulses that made up the identity of the modern woman, hinting both at critique and celebration.

In the photomontage *Da-Dandy* (fig. 44), Höch's work engages more explicitly with the performativity not only of femininity but of masculinity. Again, there is a dominant figure, its face in the top centre and feet bottom left, once again constructed from different fragments. Four female faces and a man's face make up its upper part, with eyes closed, obscured or replaced with cut-outs. Two torsos, both in black dresses and pearl necklaces, one side-on and one face-on, overlap in the body, leading to two bare left arms, sporting bangles, a crescent shape, and finally the lower calves of a pair of woman's legs, in high heels. The title comes from the fragments 'Da' 'n' 'd' 'y' and large capital 'D' pasted on the lower right-hand side. 'Dada' also features in the top left-hand corner, the word pasted vertically.

The figures display the most apparent fashion accessories of femininity – pearl necklaces, lipstick, bangles, heeled shoes, a hat and a handbag – drawing attention to the social construction or performance of gender through clothing and dress. Höch's concern in this image is also with masculinity, however. The use of the term dandy, and the one male face included among the four women's faces, refers to the tastes and preferences of men who like to dress up, to take on a smart and refined or even effeminate appearance. In bringing together dandy and Dada explicitly, Höch could have been referring to the group's eccentricity, its non-conformism and refusal of social norms, or – as Brigid Doherty has suggested – to the male Dada, specifically Hausmann, as dandy: 'it is a witty image of his [Hausmann's] identification with fashionable ladies, an image that at the same time takes its own ironic distance from the dandy's fantasy'.<sup>56</sup> It mocks feminine and masculine stereotypes, tropes and ideals.

In *Dada-Tanz* (*Dada Dance*; fig. 45), from 1922, a black male head and chest is dressed in a long evening gown and given dainty feet in heeled shoes. Another figure – the face androgynous – holds out a lace gown in both hands, underneath which is a pair of woman's legs in heeled shoes with rosettes. That these legs and shoes are the very ones used in *Da-Dandy* only serves to reinforce their status as an enduring sign of femininity, repeated here by Höch three years later. The figure wears a feather hat and appears to dance on top of a floor of metal girders. Again, the individual is portrayed as a *mélange* of male and female, black and white, the lines of identity blurred. The play with gender, in terms of the assumption of femininity by a man, became most promi-





44 (facing page)  
Hannah Höch,  
*Da-Dandy*, 1919,  
collage. Private  
collection

45 (above)  
Hannah Höch,  
*Dada-Tanz (Dada  
Dance)*, 1922.  
Photomontage with  
collage on paper.  
32.2 × 23.1 cm. The  
Israel Museum,  
Jerusalem. The Vera  
and Arturo  
Schwarz Collection  
of Dada and  
Surrealist Art.

nent in Dada through Marcel Duchamp's alter ego Rose Sélavy and is considered in detail by David Hopkins in his 2008 book *Dada's Boys*. Finally, as well as the thematisation of the male Dadaists' playing with femininity, I see in these images light-hearted references to the presence of a feminising influence or at least to the pervasiveness of a certain notion of femininity, albeit a trope, within the male-dominated Dada group. I also see them both as plays on masculinity, as expressions of what it means to be male, and as question marks round what it is to be female or feminine; as suggestions of gender as a continuum, experienced and displayed in fractured configurations.

Höch's interest in gender and identity extend to the relationships between the sexes. As early as 1919 she had produced the photomontage *Bürgerliches Brautpaar (Streit)* (*Bourgeois Bridal Couple [Quarrel]*; fig. 46). The man is made up of cuttings of the legs and torso of two different images of sportsmen. Meanwhile, the woman is made up of the knees and lower legs taken from one image, the torso of another – dressed in a swimsuit – and the face of a third. The man's legs run in one direction, away from the woman, while the torso, possibly that of a swimmer, stretches towards her, emphasising a conflicted approach to his wife. He is also laden with an oversized hat, this trapping – of respectability or masculinity – apparently a burden. The most striking fact about the woman is that her face is that of a child, which could be either female or male, and which faces away from the man. Together with the posture and spindly legs,





46 (facing page)  
Hannah Höch,  
*Bürgerliches  
Brautpaar (Streit)*  
(*Bourgeois Bridal  
Couple [Quarrel]*),  
1919. Photomontage  
and collage. 38 ×  
30.6 cm. Private  
collection.

47 (above)  
Hannah Höch, *Die  
Braut (oder:  
Pandora)* (*The  
Bride [or: Pandora]*),  
1924–1927.  
Berlinische Galerie,  
Landesmuseum für  
moderne Kunst,  
Photographie und  
Architektur.

she resembles a child having a tantrum. Pasted cut-out drawings of machinery and gadgets in the background, with handles for grinding and cutting and crushing, evoke destructive and repetitive action. Combined with the large-scale letters ‘O’ and ‘P’, they also evoke noise, the shouts and cries of a quarrel. The combination of image and title leaves little doubt as to Höch’s critique in this piece of the fractured, difficult conflicts of the middle-class marriage, in which the two partners struggle with their identities and roles.

The theme of marriage is continued in Höch’s later work, not least in a 1924–7 painting entitled *Die Braut (oder: Pandora)* (*The Bride [or: Pandora]*; fig. 47). This painting is particularly interesting in terms of technique, as it is one of several examples which take photomontage as inspiration. Although created from paint rather than photomatter, its semi-realist style, thwarted by juxtapositions of scale, recalls and recasts the effects of photomontage. The groom is a rigid, statue-like black-and-white figure, his arm held stiffly across his front. The bride’s body is draped classically in white, recalling the Pandora of Greek mythology (the painting’s subtitle). Her head is oversized and, like the face in *Bürgerliches Brautpaar*, resembles that of a toddler or a doll. In the background a collection of symbols appears to circulate, held within circular forms and each with wings. They include a weeping eye, serpent and fruit, a baby, a thorny plant, a

dragonfly and a wheel. According to myth, Pandora was a 'beautiful evil', the first woman moulded from the earth, on Zeus's orders. Her jar (Pandora's Box) is opened to reveal the evils of the world. Only hope remains inside, variously perceived by those who have interpreted the myth as a comfort to men or a concealment or withholding of hope. The myth has been reworked and re-read over time, and is a potent symbol of woman represented as either provider or problem, source of evil or hope. Höch presents Pandora as a bride, dominating in stature her passive, fixed groom and yet child-like, the unwitting scapegoat of the world's ills. The bridal couple are placed on a pedestal, a feature that will be discussed in the final section of this chapter and here suggesting the elevation of the bride and marriage as an ideal, but within which institution both bride and groom are confined and static.<sup>57</sup>

Höch's photomontage works make women visible in art in ways that challenge conventional representation and upset the traditional gaze. The Berlin Dadaists' April 1918 Manifesto declared: 'The highest art will be that which in its conscious content presents the thousandfold problems of the day, the art which has been visibly shattered by the explosions of the last week, which is forever trying to collect its limbs after yesterday's crash.'<sup>58</sup> Given this interest in reacting to the 'thousandfold' new developments in everyday life, Höch's broadening of subject matter and material to include images of women was entirely fitting and made prominent many contemporary issues. Asked about feminist interpretations of her work in a 1976 interview, Höch agreed that irony is a vital component in her work, targeted at marriage, the family and the modern woman, but clarified that she was not fully against any of these. Of the last she stated: 'The glorification of the modern woman was never something I looked for in my work. I have, in contrast, more often been motivated by women's sufferings. When I want to show a vision of the times, I naturally do not forget to portray the interesting contributions made by women.' She went on to say that she was totally in favour of women's rights ('Ich bejahe die Rechte der Frau natürlich voll und ganz').<sup>59</sup>

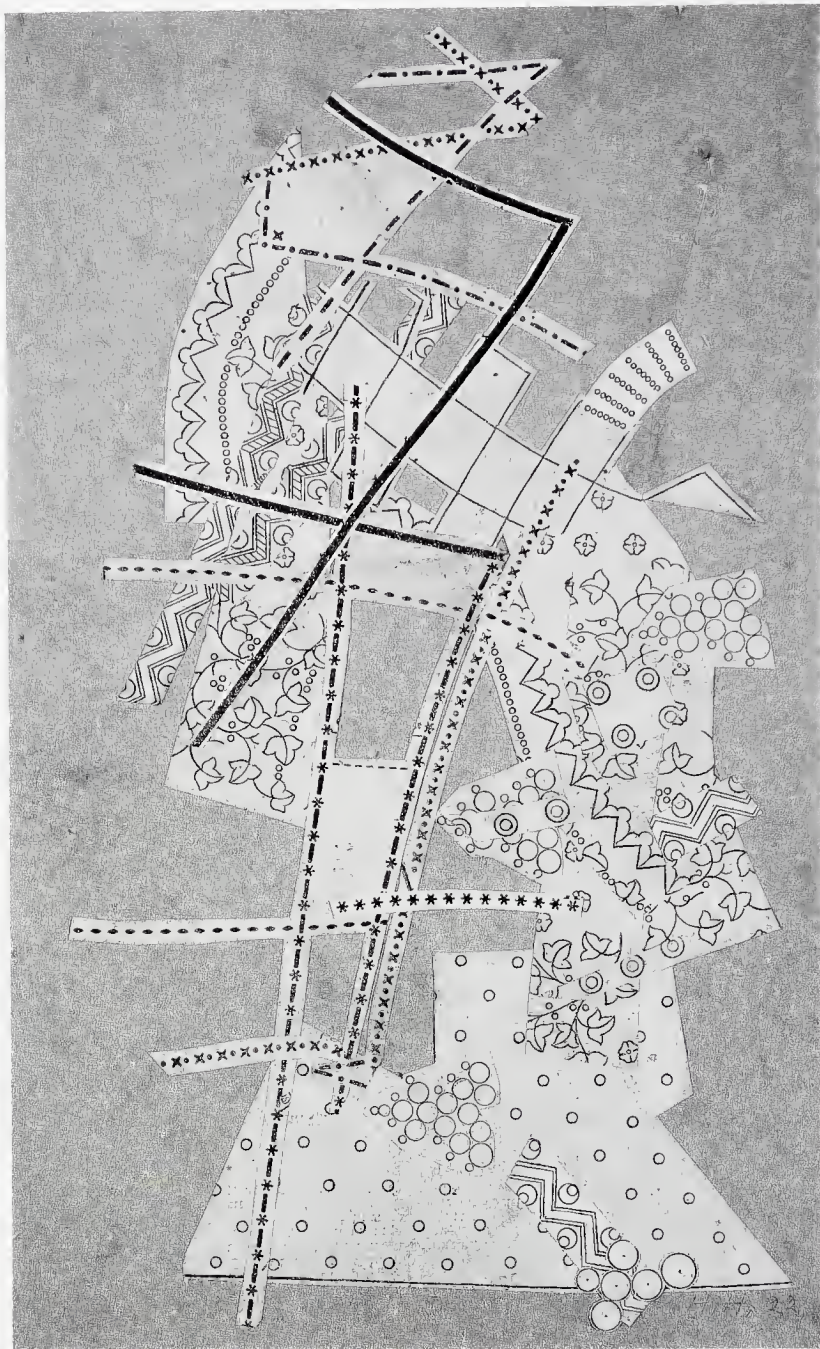
Höch's photomontages deal with the excitement and stimulation proffered by visual images, propagated by mass media and especially aimed at women. They demand reflection, the deconstruction of illusions and leave the way open for the construction of new meanings. This interrogation of visual signs and their subversion is what Höch ultimately has in common with Hausmann, Grosz, Baader and even a more explicitly political artist like Heartfield. Each used the photomontage technique to examine the artist's modes of interaction and expression in rapidly changing times and to challenge habitual strategies of production and reception. Höch's inclusion of representations of women in the mass media offered a more heterogeneous vision of the era, one which more appropriately represented the proliferation of advertising and journalism that reflected a rapidly changing context of gender relations. Later examples also demonstrate how these questions of representation and mass media persisted, above all in relation to the construction and performance of gender. At a time when gender roles were undergoing great change across Europe, and both men and women were re-assessing their status, positions and identity, Höch unflinchingly turned her attention to that culture, to its shifts, fears and possibilities.

## Paper, scissors, stitches: the subversion of handicrafts

Höch has been rightly recognised for her contributions to the core Dada technique of photomontage. Her depictions of fragmented female bodies, cuts and crops from popular magazine photographs and drawings, contrast starkly with coherent, idealised representations of the female figure in the history of art and make her work of particular interest to feminist scholars. A less examined aspect of her techniques is her incorporation of materials associated with handicrafts into a number of collage and photomontage works. Her interests in this area provide a parallel, though not a convergence, with Sophie Taeuber's. Like Taeuber, Höch had studied at an arts and crafts college. Many of Taeuber's and some of Höch's works focus on the principles of pattern and design inherent in applied arts and the relationships between those principles and the making of artworks. Taeuber's work reflects on the boundaries between arts and crafts by making use of thread to create textile artworks. Höch, meanwhile, made use not of the actual threads and fabrics so much as the paper patterns that are used for embroidery and fabric designs. The references are rich: on the one hand to the handmade, to female or domestic creativity, and on the other to repeatable models, patterns and principles that are endlessly and potentially mechanically reproducible.

In *Schneiderblume (Tailor's Daisy)*, from 1920, for example, Höch used cut-out pieces of sewing patterns as collage elements. Paper pieces are sliced into wedges and strips. Angular shapes feature lines, in dots and dashes, which are used in sewing patterns to indicate seams and cuts. These fragments were combined into compositions that privilege the aesthetic qualities of the material. The paper pattern, cut apart and glued into a new formation, creates a new design. As Harris and Nochlin have noted, Höch also included collage elements, 'snaps, hasps, needles, and a zipper that runs the length and breadth of the image, holding and framing the still unsewn garment'.<sup>60</sup> At the centre, Höch added a single cut-out flower. This natural, pretty sign, the stuff of more traditional artworks, stands out against the dots, dashes and lines of the pattern and the grid of uncut fabric behind it. In this example the artist took everyday, somewhat mundane tools and materials out of their context and reshaped them. She drew attention to the process of making, rather than the end product.

The process of manufacturing an object is equally thematised in *Entwurf für das Denkmal eines bedeutenden Spitzenhemdes (Sketch for Memorial to an Important Lace Shirt)* from 1922 (fig. 48). Höch refers to handicrafts in this and the previous example but does not adopt handicraft skills or processes. Rather than thread or fabric, she used the blueprint for a pattern. She cut this printed matter into pieces, pasted the pieces into a new design and turned it into a piece of art. *Denkmal* is made up of printed matter, after all. There is no drawing or painting and the resulting work gives the impression of graphic or machine design. Its humorous, ironic title venerates the practical – and underrated – task of producing a blouse, even as the cutting and pasting fragments it. The contrast between the old-fashioned associations of the materials and the printed pattern sits at the juncture between domesticity and industry and between handicrafts and the possibilities of mechanical reproduction. In response to a question



48 Hannah Höch, *Entwurf für das Denkmal eines bedeutenden Spitzenhemdes* (Sketch for Memorial to an Important Lace Shirt), 1922, collage, 27.6 × 16.8 cm. bpk / Hamburger Kunsthalle.

about her choice of handicrafts materials, Höch herself alluded to some of these ideas: ‘The delicateness of the lace, but even more than that its peculiarity, in that it has developed out of a specific technique, was stimulating to me. Likewise the pattern’s markings, which always have to be interrupted, and always in different ways.’<sup>61</sup>

These two pieces of work, produced in 1920 and 1922 respectively, provoke the following fundamental question: why, at a time when Höch was making extensive use of photomatter from magazines, including images of modern women, leisure, consumerism and industry, should she have chosen handicraft patterns as her material? Firstly, her employment of materials other than paint ties in with the Dada principle of the extension of materials available to the artist, to include everyday and found mate-



rials. Höch's diverse choices, in this context, compare with Schwitters's use of all sorts of found detritus from everyday life. The interpretation of everyday materials varied according to experience, of course, and Höch's selections frequently include and allude to the domestic, personal and female spheres.

Secondly, this choice to use handicrafts patterns reflects on Höch's work-life experience. Part of her role at the Ullstein publishing house consisted of designing patterns for fabric, lace, embroidery and clothing. Some of these patterns were sold in department stores and also photographed and featured in the most popular Ullstein magazines *Die Dame* (The Lady) and *Die praktische Berlinerin* (The Practical Berlin Woman). The material refers both to commercial labour and production, then, and to popular leisure pursuits, specifically women's experiences of professional and domestic domains. Höch's choices addressed a female audience, in particular, to whom this material would probably have been familiar, as opposed to a culturally dominant male audience. The choice of materials also refers to methods of production: the patterns are at once indicators of individual creativity, of handicrafts carried out in the home, and of mass production. They are themselves reproduced in mass print-runs and finally they are blueprints, designed to be followed and repeated, copied again and again.

Another composition, *Staatshäupter* (*Heads of State*, 1918–20; fig. 49), combines photographs from the press, typical of Höch's photomontage selection, with references to handicrafts. It features the same image of President Ebert and Army Minister Noske that Höch had used in the 1919 photomontage *Dada-Rundschau*, discussed earlier. This time she set them against the background of an embroidery pattern, featuring a butterfly, flower and a mermaid holding a parasol. The selection of the backdrop effectively ridicules the politicians. It places them in a mock paradise, hinting at their ignorance of, or removal from, the political reality in Weimar Germany. In addition, the stereotypically feminine material and images undermines the men's status and masculinity. Moreover, they introduces the female or domestic domain into the male or public sphere. It is both an aesthetic strategy and political comment. Pictures of patterns, lace and fabrics, as well as actual collage elements, recur in Höch's works right through into the 1960s. Her concerns were with aesthetic experimentation, firmly rooted in the context and possibilities of industrialisation and advancing technology but also drawing on and referring to traditionally female creative processes, materials and experiences.

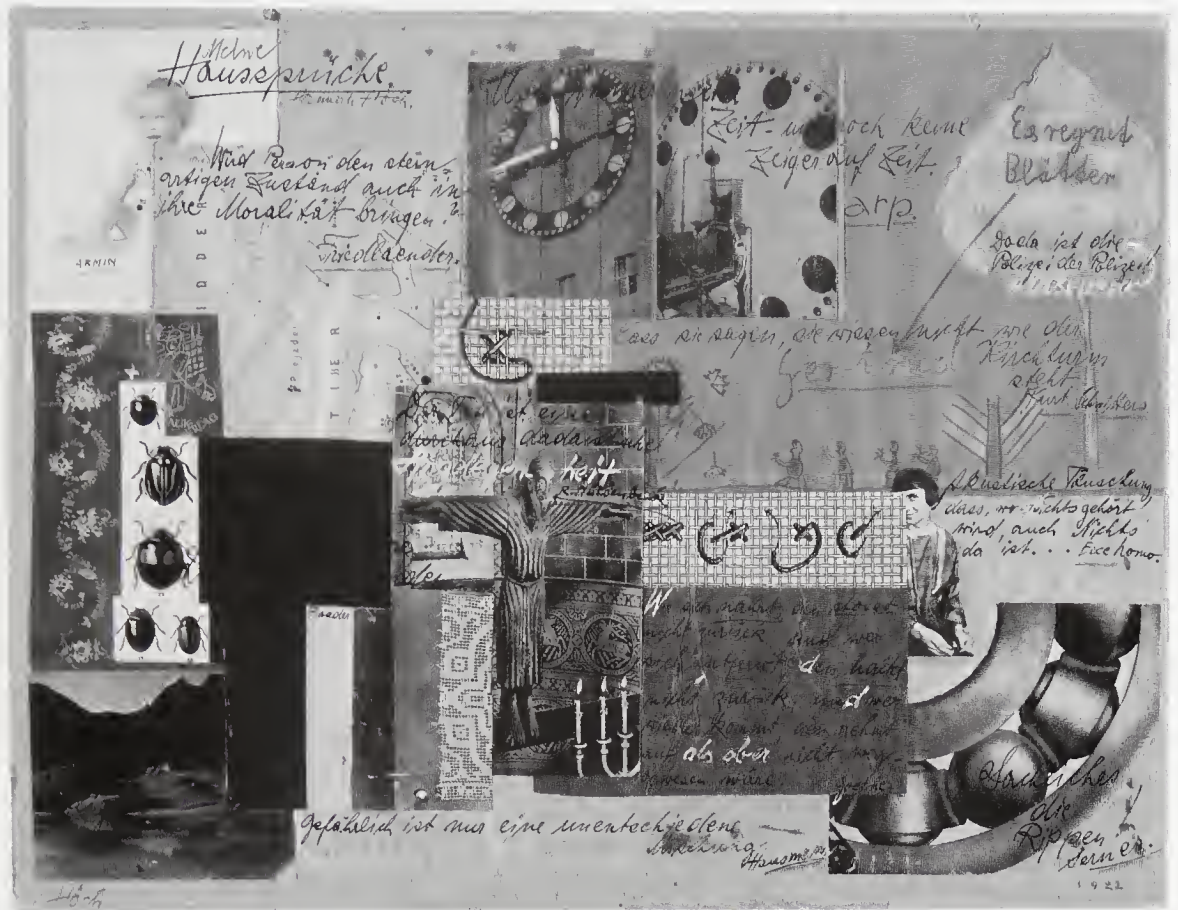
Another collage, *Meine Haussprüche* (*My Household Proverbs*; fig. 50), from 1922, brings together many of the aspects of Höch's work discussed so far, not least the variety of materials she used, both linguistic and visual. It includes magazine and newspaper cuttings, photographs, a child's drawing, embroidery patterns and handwritten slogans and aphorisms. The images include a clock, machinery, natural landscape, insects and religious iconography, taking in a gamut of experience from the natural world to modernity. As well as including quotations from Goethe and Nietzsche, Höch cites the names of many of her Dada colleagues, including Arp, Baader, Friedlander, Hausmann, Huelsenbeck, Schwitters and Serner. She also includes a photograph of herself, the face half-hidden, recalling the fragmented images in her photomontage works. As Janina



49 Hannah Höch, *Staatshäupter (Heads of State)*, 1918–20. Collage, 16.2 × 23.3 cm. Kunstbestand: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V., Stuttgart.

Nentwig has pointed out, Höch produced *Meine Haussprüche* in the year that both Dada and her relationship with Hausmann broke apart. In that sense, it can be read as a retrospective summary of her Dada experience.<sup>62</sup>

The composition is reminiscent of a scrapbook, a kitchen noticeboard or – given the jotted comments and signatures – a guest book. However, it was Höch whose image peeps mischievously out of the frame, who selected and wrote out the aphorisms and names. The images of stitches, lace and a flowery embroidery pattern, the child's drawing and the photograph of a baby recall traditions in handicrafts and home-making, distinctly female occupations, which were later recalled and celebrated on a sustained basis by women's art in the 1970s. It is, at the same time, carefully and geometrically structured, this apparently simplistic version of an artwork nevertheless belying a wealth of references and connections – to time, religion, creativity and death. *Meine Haussprüche* is a witty, female take on Dada and on art. It plunders a variety of sources, appropriates her colleagues' words and names and elevates this snapshot collection of icons and wisdom to an artwork, while never losing an edge of humour and never proclaiming one answer.



50 (above) Hannah Höch, *Meine Haussprüche* (*My Household Proverbs*), 1922. Photomontage and collage with ink, zinc white, graphite, crayon, and coloured pencil on board, 32 × 41.3 cm. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.

A final but far different example of engagement with the domestic space and with handicrafts is offered by Höch's dolls (fig. 51). The dolls were one of the exhibits in the Dada-Messe and can be seen in photographs of the event. Propped on a podium near the entrance and afforded the status of artworks, they no doubt had the effect of surprise on visitors expecting to see paintings and sculptures. The two haphazardly sewn dolls illustrate a more direct use of fabrics and sewing and have connotations not only with women's production but also with representations of the body. They dispense with conventional skill or mimesis and also with the feminine, ideal beauty usually recreated in dolls. With mismatched eyes and straggly hair, they appear clownish and grotesque. Their breasts, made out of circular fabric and beads and sewn on the outside, give them an overtly sexual aspect. They caricature the doll, with its representations and stereotypes of feminine norms.

51 (following page) Hannah Höch, *Puppen* (*Dolls*), 1916. Berlinische Galerie, Landesmuseum für moderne Kunst, Photographie und Architektur.

The dolls reappeared on a cover of the periodical *Schall und Rauch* (in April 1920), four years after the Dada-Messe, and Höch, like Hennings and Taeuber, was also photographed with her dolls. In one photograph she sits with one doll on her knee, her face turned towards the other (fig. 52), and in another she dances in a stage costume with one of the two dolls (fig. 53). In both instances she looks to the side instead of facing the camera, so that the viewer's gaze is directed at both her and the dolls. The photographs not only draw attention to the social construction of femininity but also to the woman as artist, her role and status. After Dada, Höch used images of dolls in





52 (above left)  
Hannah Höch with  
dolls, 1920.  
Berlinische Galerie,  
Landesmuseum für  
moderne Kunst,  
Photographie und  
Architektur.

53 (above right)  
Hannah Höch  
dancing with doll,  
1921. Berlinische  
Galerie,  
Landesmuseum für  
moderne Kunst,  
Photographie und  
Architektur.

numerous photomontages. Fragments of dolls' faces and body parts, as well as those of tribal artefacts and figures, are interspersed with those of women in works including *Zerbrochen* (*Broken*; 1925), *Der Meister* (*The Master*; 1926), *Liebe* (*Love*; 1926) and *Zweigesichtig* (*With Two Faces*; 1927–30).<sup>63</sup>

Once again, here are instances where the doll was employed by a woman Dadaist. This coincidence of doll- or puppet-making by three women protagonists – Emmy Hennings, Sophie Taeuber and Hannah Höch – in two different centres – Zurich and Berlin – points compellingly to gender as a significant motivating factor. Mimetic, figurative representations all but disappeared in Dada art with, in the main, a shift away from the objectification of the female body. This was more than likely liberating for women artists. Their use of dolls, however, constituted an ongoing engagement with and exploration of representations of the female body, the doll being deeply entrenched as a cultural signifier for the female body. A staple of a woman's childhood experience, it is used to encourage maternal and familial feelings and to evoke ideals of femininity. As such, it raises questions about everyday objects as visual signs, loaded with social and cultural significance. In making use of the doll, the artist reflected on issues including agency, identity and gender and, most importantly, selected a form that had particular resonance for women viewers, at once nostalgic and discomfiting.

## Gender, sexuality, race: the diversified Dada product

Höch's use of photomontage was highly sophisticated. From early examples in the Dada context, throughout the 1920s and right through to the 1970s, she engaged with the experiences and identities of women, with fashion, femininity and domesticity. Not only femininity but masculinity was thematised, represented as elements in conflict, often as co-existing aspects within the individual. The subject in *Dompteuse (The Tamer)*, from 1930, can be read as a 'new woman' figure. Dressed in a smart skirt, with a tunic top reminiscent of the circus, she has an angular, sculpted, woman's mask for a face, contrasting starkly with hairy, muscular, man's arms – a hybrid, powerful, male-female icon. In the photomontage *Die starken Männer (The Strong Men)*, of 1931, the profile of a boxer with raised fist dominates the background, while a central face is made up of half a man's face and half a woman's face. Here the two are neatly slotted together into an almost coherent whole, suggesting the inevitable, necessary or desirable existence of a feminine side to balance masculinity. Höch also continued to observe relationships between the sexes, scrutinising love, marriage and sexuality. In *Equilibre* from 1925, two figures, one apparently male and one female, but both characteristically made up of different male and female body parts, maintain an uneasy but successful balancing act on a tilting plank.<sup>64</sup>

Another unique application of the technique of photomontage from the 1920s onwards was the exploration of race. Höch pursued this most fully in her extensive series of some twenty works, *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum (From an Ethnographic Museum)*, of 1929.<sup>65</sup> In *Negerplastik (Negro Sculpture)*; fig. 54), to take one example, the statue is made up of a child's naked body, a partial African mask for a face and an overlaid eye. This eye is wide and feminine, probably sourced from a Western fashion or beauty magazine. By contrast, the body confounds expectations by being that of a child, rather than of a woman, as would accord with the conventions of the classical nude. Meanwhile, the face is rigid – a stylised African mask. In this and other works, Höch combined fragments from fashion magazines, featuring idealised Western women's figures, with doll, mannequin and statuette parts, and photograph fragments from travel and scientific magazines of mainly African women. These combinations and juxtapositions call attention to the understanding of beauty and to perceptions of the 'Other'.

This exposure of aesthetic conventions is further emphasised by the titles of the works, which draw attention to the status of the images as representations, as museum objects. Equally, they draw attention to the ways in which the subjects themselves, particularly women and people of different ethnic origins, are treated in mass media and art, scrutinised as exhibits and perceived as the Other. The use of pedestals in many examples, touched on briefly with reference to *Die Braut*, emphasises this critique, making clear the distance between the viewer and the object. The figure is knowingly held up to view, the viewer asked to consider his or her ways of seeing. In *Negerplastik*, for example, the figure is supported by a small block and a clawed foot, in turn apparently mounted on a block, represented by a strip of paper. The artwork is shown to be



54 Hannah Höch, *Negerplastik (Negro Sculpture)*, from the series *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum (From an Ethnographic Museum)*, 1929. Photomontage, 26 × 17.5 cm. Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art.

just that: an artwork, a coded representation and, at times, a means of objectification. Pedestals, titles (some are called *Denkmal* or ‘monument’), strange combinations and contrasts, grotesque and comical, all ask questions about the conventions of both society and aesthetic perceptions. At a time when other Dadaists and Surrealists were discovering and appropriating so-called primitive art, Höch’s configurations were remarkably sophisticated. Where the approach of many artists displayed an ideological blindness and tended towards the reductive and patronising, Höch’s images laid bare the Western fascination with the primitive and exotic that was prevalent not only in art but in science and mass culture, evident in countless documentary features in popular illustrated magazines.

Höch continued to work with photomontage long after Dada and in 1941 produced her first photomontages from colour photographs. These have an interesting effect on the modern viewer in that they appear more closely related to the gloss and high-colour of current print media, as compared with the works in black and white that now have a different aesthetic impact. These colour examples give a closer impression of how the early photomontages might have appeared to viewers, with their appropriations and subversions of popular and mass culture of the time. Höch saw the introduction of colour as an enriching possibility, an indication of her continued commitment to accepting new technical advances: ‘Today, with photomaterial so ubiquitous and with

the colour photograph so exceedingly charming and available, there is really a perpetual temptation to produce new, very imaginative creations with it.<sup>66</sup>

Berlin Dada has been accused, by some, of failing to move beyond political critique into more aesthetic and philosophical debates. Its writings and artworks are, however, extremely varied. While political comment is a significant element in many of the Berlin Dadaists' photomontage works, including Höch's, the term political should neither dominate nor be too narrowly interpreted. Alongside the most politically explicit works by Heartfield and Grosz, there are numerous examples of less didactic works. Schwitters, Hausmann and Baader all used photomontage to varying effect, ranging from the political to the satirical to the playful. Manifestos and declarations insist on ever evolving eclecticism. As Hausmann declared: 'DADA sought nothing other than to bring about the PRESENT MOMENT. DADA was the conflict with EVERYTHING.'<sup>67</sup>

Höch's photomontages recast familiar images in order to foreground a wide range of social, political, personal and aesthetic issues. Engaging fully and immediately with modern experiences, she combined critique with celebration and nurtured Dada ambiguity. She broke down and reassembled headlines, images, symbols and signs in new contexts, the process expressing fragmentation and multiplicity. Her images of women add a dimension to Dada that would otherwise have been missing. Her work extended the notion of what is political by including not only public affairs but fashion, sport, celebrity and the domestic arena. Hausmann explained the Dada spirit: 'The epoch in which DADA appeared was directed against the supremacy of eternal and fixed ideals, came from much deeper public complexes than merely a superficial overcompensation of scandal.'<sup>68</sup> Höch's work foregrounds social norms in patriarchy and the representations of women in art and popular media in ways that do not simply scandalise but raise subtle and complex questions about ways of seeing. Thematically, this was Höch's unique contribution to Dada endeavours.

Handicrafts also informed Höch's work, adding a twist that was unique to her within Berlin Dada. She brought fragments of sewing and fabric patterns into the frame, alongside photomatter from newspapers and magazines, to variously playful and political effects. These are everyday – not grandiose – materials. Like the kitchen knife slicing into the beer belly of the Weimar Republic evoked in the title of *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser*, the fragments undermine grand patriarchal narratives. This use of the materials of handicrafts within Berlin Dada belongs wholly to Höch and represents a specifically female aesthetic within that group. Her selection of materials, her diversity of images and references and her complex compositions render not a female point of view but multiple female points of view.

Through a fundamental ideology of contemporary engagement, challenge to norms and finally renewal, Dada Berlin had found an innovative technique that made a lasting impact not only on visual art but also on literature and film. Heinz Ohff summarised the group's trajectory: 'Dada Berlin burst open and broke out, destructive, obstructive – and constructive, as it would then, much later turn out.'<sup>69</sup> Höch's contribution to this legacy was considerable. In the ways that she addressed changes in gender roles, technology, production and advertising, her work has retained its resonance. It might have





55 Hannah Höch,  
double exposure  
portrait. Berlinische  
Galerie,  
Landesmuseum für  
moderne Kunst,  
Photographie und  
Architektur.

been even more substantial in different circumstances. In 1959 she was asked: 'Who were, in your opinion, the most imaginative or creative among the artists of the Berlin Dada group?' She replied: 'I would say that the most active and productive artists in our group were Grosz, Baader, Heartfield, Hausmann, and myself.' This might be taken up as an alternative designation of the Dada Club which, in contrast to Hausmann's version, includes her name. Looking back on her time with Hausmann, she also revealed: 'Poor Raoul was always a restless spirit. He needed constant encouragement to be able to carry out his ideas and achieve anything at all lasting. If I hadn't devoted much of my time to looking after him and encouraging him, I might have achieved more myself.'<sup>70</sup> In spite of the pressure of the nurturing 'good girl' role assigned to her by her gender, circumstances and peers and in spite of her difficult relationships within, or on the margins of, the Dada Club, Höch's contributions and achievements were both substantial and distinct. If the double-exposure portrait of Höch and Hausmann at the beginning of this chapter symbolises the shadow of that relationship, the photograph here symbolises the creative, multiple innovations and viewpoints that sustained Höch over a long career (fig. 55).



## SUZANNE DUCHAMP

### The family name and the Dada connection

For the final two women in this study the backdrop shifts to Paris. While the configurations of Dada in Zurich, Berlin and Paris differed in their specific make-up and preoccupations, they also had much in common. Likewise, while the work produced by Dada women varies enormously from centre to centre and individual to individual and while their backgrounds and circumstances are diverse, the record of their experiences reveals some shared characteristics. Just like the three women discussed so far, each of the next two – Suzanne Duchamp here and Céline Arnould in the next chapter – was involved in a personal relationship with an artist or writer associated with Dada. Both, too, have suffered neglect in art-historical accounts, in excess of that of their female counterparts in Zurich and Berlin. Their work, in painting and in poetry respectively, turns out to be of significant interest to the landscape of Dada in Paris and to the interventions of women in Dada.

Suzanne Duchamp is pictured here in a photograph taken by Man Ray (fig. 56). A painter and collagist, she has scarcely been perceived as an artist in her own right. Her family name instantly connects her with her famous brothers, so that most often she is left stranded in references as ‘the sister of Marcel’ or, failing that, as the sister of two more artists, the sculptor Raymond Duchamp-Villon and the painter and print-maker Jacques Villon.<sup>1</sup> In 1919 she married an artist, the Swiss painter Jean Crotti, who had shared a studio with Marcel in New York and whom she had met when he came to Paris three years earlier. In so doing, she acquired the additional status ‘the wife of’. Partly as a result of these family circumstances, Suzanne Duchamp’s own standing as an artist has been obscured, her participation in the Paris artistic scene barely acknowledged and her work rarely included, let alone treated in any detail, in accounts of Dada.<sup>2</sup> The only art historian to treat her work in any detail is William A. Camfield. His 1983 exhibition catalogue *Tabu Dada: Jean Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp, 1915–1922*, co-edited with Jean Hubert-Martin, united many of her works, as well as biographical details and critiques, and he has contributed an essay on her work to Sawelson-Gorse’s *Women in Dada* 2001 essay collection.<sup>3</sup> The scarcity of treatments of her work and career beyond these exceptions belies her contributions to innovations in avant-garde art in Paris over the course of a number of critical years.

56 (facing page)  
Portrait of Suzanne  
Duchamp by Man  
Ray, c. 1924. Gelatin  
silver photograph.  
28.4 × 22.7 cm. The  
Museum of Fine  
Arts, Houston. Gift  
of William and  
Virginia Camfield.

Where Suzanne Duchamp's name appears in academic and popular discourse, it is overwhelmingly with reference to two persistent sagas, both relating to her brother Marcel Duchamp. The first is the speculation that Marcel had incestuous desires for her. This notion was initiated by Arturo Schwarz's 1969 catalogue raisonné *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*.<sup>4</sup> In this influential publication, as well as in later accounts, Schwarz pursued psychoanalytical readings of a number of Marcel's works, affirming that they revealed sublimated incestuous desires. Schwarz discusses it again at length in 'Prolegomena to the "Large Glass"', an essay published in 1989, and the concept reappeared in the 1996 edition of the catalogue raisonné.<sup>5</sup> He has clarified the notion as 'an allegory for the reconnection of the masculine and feminine components of one's divided self' rather than a meaning in 'the vulgar sense'.<sup>6</sup> In spite of this and in spite of little support from other scholars and critics for the hypothesis, it has left its imprint.

The second perennial Suzanne–Marcel legend is the claim that Suzanne threw away what was to have become the first of her brother's ready-made sculptures, the bottle-dryer that he intended to re-contextualise from an everyday object into an art object, when carrying out his request to clear out his apartment in Paris in 1915. This story has created an impression of her as destructive or foolish – as a woman who failed to connect to her brother's highly original conceptual processes. Later developments show the impression to be misguided. Correspondence from Marcel to Suzanne, dating from the time when she was still in Rouen, and continuing when Marcel moved to New York and Suzanne to Paris, testifies to a fruitful relationship between them. Moreover, aspects of Suzanne Duchamp's work reveal some shared aesthetic and conceptual concerns with that of her brother.

As for the *Bottle-Drying Rack*, it is evident that Suzanne threw it away before Marcel had communicated to her his intentions for it. Following the enormous critical reaction provoked by the showing of *Nude descending a Staircase* at the Armory Show in New York in 1913, Marcel had begun to exhibit his ready-mades from 1915 onwards, the impact of which resonated in Paris and beyond. It was in January 1916, as a now famous letter testifies, that he asked Suzanne to go to his studio and to inscribe the *Bottle-Drying Rack* for him: 'Take this bottle rack for yourself. I'm making it a "Ready-made", remotely. You are to inscribe it at the bottom and on the inside of the bottom circle, in small letters painted with a brush in oil, silver white color, with an inscription which I will give you herewith, and then sign it, in the same handwriting, as follows: [after] Marcel Duchamp.'<sup>7</sup>

The letter to Suzanne is an important document for Dada scholars, since Marcel not only outlined his thinking about ready-mades for the first time but also introduced the concept of a ready-made created at a distance. His ready-mades confront the role of the artist and the nature of his or her creative materials, processes and interventions. By selecting and assembling everyday objects as art objects, he shifted the emphasis from skilled craftwork and technical ability to the conceptual. In 1917 he famously took a urinal, signed it R. Mutt and called it *Fountain*. Back in 1916, he played with the concept of the artist's signature for the *Bottle-Drying Rack*. Usually evidence of the artist's agency or intervention, the signature was to be subverted, the artwork signed by

someone else on his behalf and not even in his presence. His action drew attention to the relationships of artist, materials, processes and the final art object.

In asking Suzanne to collaborate with him, Marcel must have had, at the very least, belief in her openness to and comprehension of his radical ideas about art production. He created a second version of *Bottle-Drying Rack* for her in 1921 and in 1936 produced a third. This saga constitutes a revealing anecdote about the story of Marcel's ready-mades. After all, the power of the ready-made lies in the uneasy status of the everyday prefabricated commodity converted into an art object and in contemplation of the reverence that the newly created aesthetic object is then afforded.

A second collaboration between Suzanne and Marcel resulted in the *Unhappy Ready-made*. When Suzanne married Crotti in 1919, Marcel sent them a geometry textbook as a wedding present, with instructions that it should be hung outdoors, suspended from their balcony with string. In a 1966 interview with Pierre Cabanne, Marcel said of this experiment: 'The wind had to go through the book, choose its own problems, turn and tear the pages. Suzanne made a little picture of it: *Marcel's unhappy ready-made*. That's all that's left because the wind destroyed it. It amused me to introduce the idea of happy and unhappy into ready-mades.'<sup>8</sup> The geometry textbook, a symbol of rationalism and scientific truth, was removed from its normal function and desecrated. The 'unhappy' of the title has been interpreted as alluding to Marcel's feelings about his sister's marriage. However, his response to Cabanne's next comment 'in any case it's very symbolic for a marriage' was 'I didn't even think about that.'<sup>9</sup> On a less simplistic level, it anticipated and privileged the emotional response that the viewer has to an artwork, as well as alluding to the object's uncertain fortune and vulnerability to chance. It is exposed to the elements, its longevity, permanence and aura threatened. Left outside in all weathers, it is vulnerable to unpredictable changes effected by another creator. This production or decay of the work over time anticipated concepts about art that privilege concept over content, process over subject matter and responses to the artwork over any objective view of it.

Suzanne photographed the ready-made and sent it to her brother, who replied: 'I really liked the photo of the Ready Made getting bored on the balcony. If it's completely torn to shreds, you can replace it.'<sup>10</sup> This object-turned-artwork was transient, then, and could be replaced by another, just as the original bottle-rack was substituted by a similar one, and more than once. She further recorded the experiment by making an oil painting of the textbook in 1920, *Le Ready-made malheureux de Marcel* (*Marcel's Unhappy Ready-made*; fig. 57). The entire series of actions between Marcel and Suzanne constitutes an interesting narrative. Firstly, Marcel created an artwork at a distance via instructions to Suzanne. Subsequently, by photographing it, she produced a new artwork in the form of an assisted mechanical reproduction and finally she made yet another, painted, copy of it. These steps further throw into relief the questions of originality and repetition that her brother's ready-mades explore.

There are two photographs of the ready-made, which reveal that Suzanne Duchamp's painting of it is in fact an inverted or upside-down representation. This deliberate decision to turn the image upside down provides an interesting re-take on the original: the



57 Suzanne Duchamp, *Le Ready-made malheureux de Marcel* (*Marcel's Unhappy Ready-made*), 1920.

third artwork is not quite a literal copy but one more, altered version. Her gesture ties into other experiments with perspective in her work. An early, Cubist-style painting, *Jeune fille et chien* (*Young Girl and Dog*) from 1912, was painted with the girl face-on but with the images of dogs on the left- and right-hand sides at ninety degree angles.<sup>11</sup> Another painting, *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* (*Broken and Restored Multiplication*) from 1918–19 (fig. 61) also looks as though it may have been turned upside down, one of its dominant images an inverted Eiffel Tower. In both these paintings and in *Le Ready-made malheureux de Marcel*, Suzanne privileged experiments with perspective over faithful imitation of the subject matter, challenging the recipient and thematising methods of representation.

Marcel also took an ongoing interest in Suzanne's work, offering her his assistance, opinions and encouragement. Interviewing Marcel, Cabanne drew attention to the favourable creative atmosphere in the Duchamp childhood home, including his mother's artistic skills, and asked, 'The person closest to you was your sister Suzanne?' Marcel replied, 'Yes, she too was a little "in its grip" since she painted all her life, a little less, but with as much perseverance and much more enthusiasm than me.'<sup>12</sup> Suzanne had undertaken formal training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Rouen from the age of sixteen, later moving to Paris to join the artistic community in Montparnasse. Following an exhibit in the Salon des Artistes normands Rouen in 1910, she submitted three pieces to the Salon des Indépendants and two to the Section d'Or in Paris in 1912, at the age of twenty-two. A letter from Marcel reveals that she sent her paintings to him, inviting his comments and advice.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, after the outbreak of the war, she served as a nurse's aid in Paris, during which period either she produced almost no work or little survived. It was over the next six years, from 1916, that she created a number of works using innovative techniques that place her firmly at the heart of avant-garde preoccupations.

Through journals, personal contacts and various correspondence, most notably instigated by both Tzara and Picabia, avant-garde writers and artists in Paris had become increasingly aware of Dada. Picabia moved there in March 1919 and Tzara in January 1920, and it was in 1920 – largely through Tzara's marketing efforts – that it really made its mark. The unfolding of Dada in Paris is documented more according to its literary activities than its visual art and a group of fine artists akin to those in Zurich and Berlin never quite cohered. Nevertheless, artists including Arp, Ernst, Picabia, Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray gathered in Paris after the war, between them bringing ideas and news from other European centres as well as New York. Notwithstanding the emphasis on literature over painting, this was a period of enormous mutual influence and crossovers between innovations in fine art and literature. The so-called 'Dada Season' in Paris included six performances, two exhibitions and a proliferation of journals, concentrated into a period of five months.<sup>14</sup>

From 28 January to 29 February 1920 an exhibition was organised by the Salon des Indépendants, newly reopened after the war. Even though the Salon had its own history and exhibited a variety of artists, it has been perceived as a key event in the unfolding of Dada because it included work by a number of artists who were associated, or who became associated, with Dada. Suzanne Duchamp exhibited there, alongside Picabia, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes and Crotti, their work making evident ideas that were flourishing under Dada in other centres as well as developments in New York. A Dada matinée was organised for 5 February 1920, at which thirty-eight individuals were billed to read 'Les Vingt-trois Manifestes Dada' (Twenty-three Dada Manifestos) and a periodical by Tzara, *Bulletin Dada*, was distributed to exhibition-goers. Both Suzanne Duchamp and Crotti appear as Dada presidents in Tzara's eclectic, inclusive list in that publication. The 1920 Salon des Indépendants exhibition effectively constituted an explosive and comprehensive introduction to Dada, and in effect set an image in the minds of visitors, critics and the public of what Dada visual art was. Suzanne Duchamp

showed three works at this event: *Un et une menacés* (*A Male and Female Threatened*; 1916), *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* (*Broken and Restored Multiplication*; 1918–19) and a watercolour portrait. The first two works are not only exemplary of new approaches to visual art in the Dada context but reveal Suzanne Duchamp to have been a bold and experimental innovator at the time of Dada's Parisian début, as will be discussed and demonstrated in the next section.

## Machinery and the body

The first work, *Un et une menacés* (fig. 58), was completed in 1916. Suzanne Duchamp's use of mechanical forms in this work is remarkable, not only in that it is an early work in her career but also because it represents an early example of the employment of machine imagery. In Italy, the Futurists had taken the machine as a focus for the modern age, glorifying it and celebrating its power. In Zurich and Berlin, it became a theme for the Dadaists, though their attitudes towards it were more ambivalent. In all cases, artists were responding to the rapid changes in the modern world, to mechanisation, pace and noise and to the possibilities of industrial production that were affecting the artistic domain too. Whether perceived and portrayed as a boon or a threat, the importance of the machine to avant-garde artists lay in its references to and evocations of modernity.

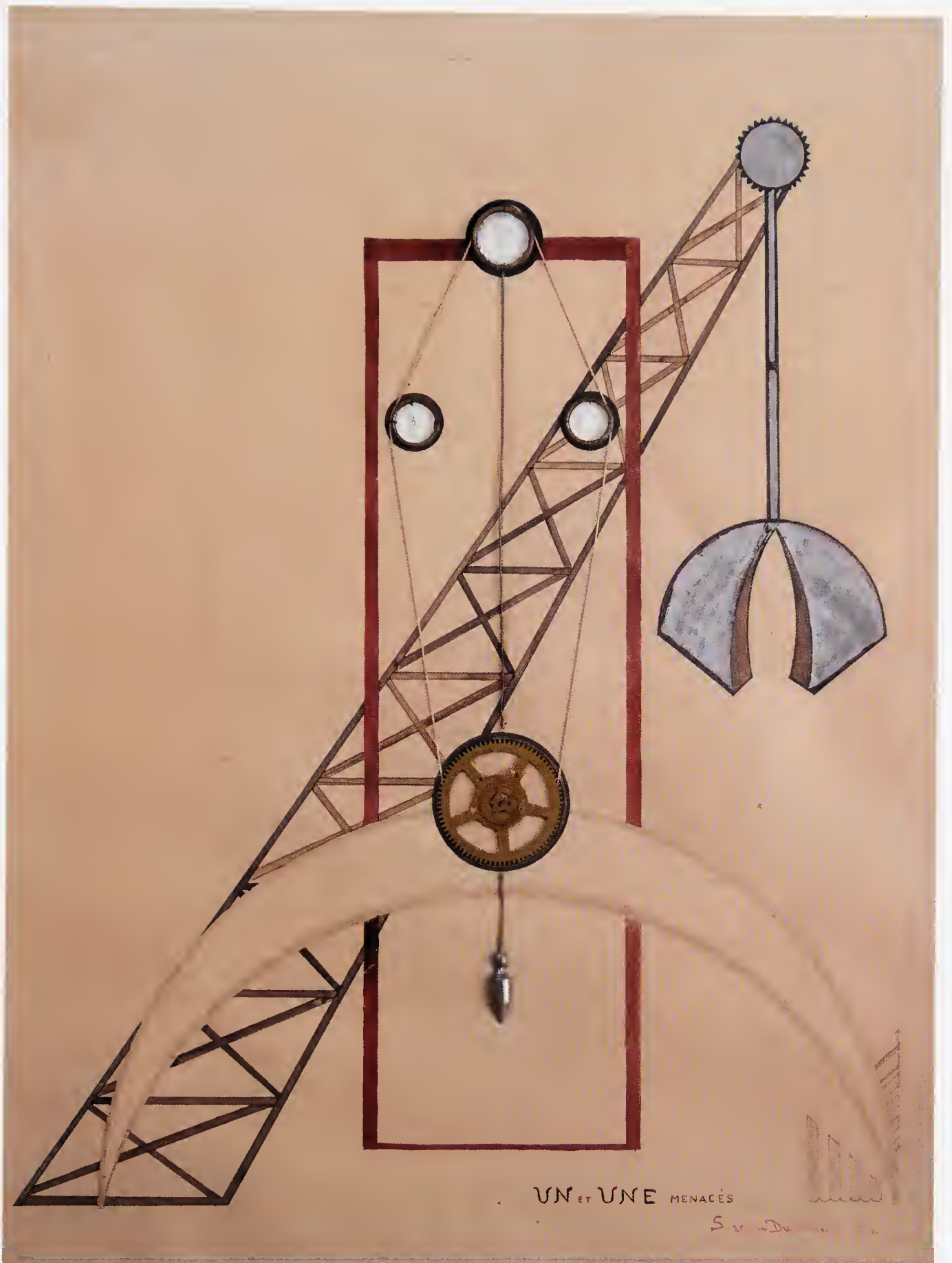
Here, Suzanne Duchamp combined machinist images with a title that evokes the human. Forsaking figurative portrayals of the human body, along with conventions of beauty and taste, she drew on symbols and structures from the industrial world, in an attempt to give expression to ideas about the human condition. The stimulus for this innovation was the search for alternatives to outdated symbols and aesthetic signs, perceived by avant-garde artists as worn out. Her use of machine imagery at this time in Paris was highly innovative. The other artists producing mechanomorphic images at this point were Marcel Duchamp, Picabia, Crotti, Man Ray, de Zayas and Morton Schamberg, all based in New York.<sup>15</sup> Picabia first showed work incorporating machine imagery in 1915 and was quoted as saying that same year, in a now famous *New York Tribune* article:

The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of life. It is really a part of human life – perhaps the very soul. In seeking forms through which to interpret ideas or by which to expose human characteristics I have come at length upon the form which appears most brilliantly plastic and fraught with symbolism. I have enlisted the machinery of the modern world, and introduced it into my studio. . . . I mean to simply work on and on until I attain the pinnacle of mechanical symbolism.<sup>16</sup>

Suzanne Duchamp's *Un et une menacés* uses machine imagery, geometric lines and actual objects as collage elements to depict two 'people', the male and female of the title. The enigmatic title is typical of her work at the time. Handwritten in the bottom right corner above the artist's name, the 'UN' and 'UNE' stand out in larger, upper-case letters and immediately provoke questions as to the identity of these anonymous pronouns.

58 (facing page)  
Suzanne Duchamp,  
*Un et une menacés*  
(*A Male and*  
*Female*  
*Threatened*), 1916.  
Private  
collection.





UN ET UNE MENACÉS

*S. de Du*

The pronouns might refer to a particular man and woman or, more likely, to men and women generically. Although Camfield notes that many readings are possible and that the identity of the 'UN' and 'UNE' can never be fully established, he speculates that it deals with the unusual network of personal relationships between Suzanne Duchamp, Jean Crotti, Yvonne Chastel and Marcel Duchamp. Yvonne Chastel, Crotti's first wife, went on to have a relationship with Marcel. While these connections are not impossible, these biographical readings tend to occlude broader resonances.

The unconventional image challenges the viewer to distinguish the male and the female of the title. Some of the visual symbolism is relatively apparent. The erect, right-angled crane can be read as the male. Meanwhile the female is represented by the triangle of circles and clock gear, set within the central rectangle, and with crescent 'legs' that overlap the entire (double) structure. There are ambiguities, however, which allow more than one reading. Camfield designates the pincers as female and, given their shape, this is the most immediate interpretation.<sup>17</sup> Yet, if the crane is taken to be the male, the position of the pincers would indicate that they are part of the male too. Camfield's description of them as the female's 'grasping pincers' is problematic, in that his choice of 'grasping' to describe a physical facility also has negative connotations, of stereotypes of women as acquisitive.

It is at this point that the notion of threat, coming from the *menacés* of the title, must be considered. The translation, *A Male and Female Threatened*, is faithful to the grammar in the French, the plural *menacés* indicating that both 'UN' and 'UNE' are menaced. This title alerts one to the ambiguous nature of the contact between the two genders, as well as the agency of each. Questions arise, such as: are they threatened, endangered, by some external force, the predominance of technology perhaps? Does this representation signal human alienation in the face of mechanisation? Or do the male and female pose a threat to one another, fragilely interdependent as they are?

The detail of the mechanical structures offers possibilities, again, for different readings. The (likely) female structure, with its triangle of circles, is balanced and symmetrical, emphasised by its enclosure in the geometric rectangle, and poised on the crescent legs that stretch across the lower half of the picture. Its three circles are connected to the clock gear with string, the whole formation appearing perfectly vertical thanks to the plumb bob. In his first study of this work, Camfield wrote, 'The central frame and pulley structure indicate a simpler up-and-down punching movement', but in theory any movement would constitute a rotation of the string round the circles, in a continuous and functioning movement. At first glance, the male structure appears powerful and sturdy, with the reinforced crane and metal gear and claw. Camfield noted: 'the crane suggests a more dynamic ability to grasp and to swing as well as to move up and down'.<sup>18</sup> However, the line that connects the claw to the round gear at the top of the crane appears solid, which would prevent it from working. The connection would have to be string or chain (as it was in an earlier study for the picture), rather than a solid piece, to allow the claw to move up and down. If it were to be set in motion, it would only swing from left to right, or rotate round and round on its arm in circles, from the top of the crane, ultimately failing to grab or make contact.

Much of the interpretation relies on a reading of the clock gear and the plumb bob, actual objects glued to the canvas. If the clock gear represents the female and the plumb bob the male, as Camfield suggests, they are thus connected in a common groin area, and one could interpret a sexual intertwining or connection. Yet it may be that the plumb bob is part of the female, a centring and balancing device. Using this interpretation, the male and female actually fail to connect at all. Instead they are stuck, machinery at rest, apparently moveable but not by their own volition. They indicate the potential of motion yet are finally powerless and suspended, deprived of any real energy source. The female structure is more or less enclosed within the rectangle, operating internally, and the male behind it, an external operation. Only the legs stretch across the two. At the same time, overlapping as they do, they are not wholly independent. Each is part of a tenuous system but ultimately isolated. There is no real contact between him and her or any real agency.

A 1915 text from 291 by Paul B. Haviland is pivotal to any discussion about machine imagery, especially in relation to gender:

We are living in the age of the machine. Man made the machine in his own image. She has limbs which act; lungs which breathe; a heart which beats; a nervous system through which runs electricity. The phonograph is the image of his voice; the camera the image of his eye. The machine is his 'daughter born without a mother'. That is why he loves her. He has made the machine superior to himself . . . Having made her superior to himself he endows the superior beings which he conceives in his poetry and in his plastique with the qualities of machines. After making the machine in his own image, he has made his human ideal machinomorphic.<sup>19</sup>

Where God made man in his image, man makes the machine in his image. In both cases, the female is 'daughter born without a mother' – Eve in the Bible and the machine in Haviland's statement. Rapid industrialisation and the preponderance of the machine were evoking both excitement and fear, exercising a radical impact on everyday life and perceptions of human agency. Haviland echoed biblical rhetoric, but placed man – instead of God – at the centre of control. In Haviland's description, furthermore, the male creates the female, recouping the power of fertility from the mother. Man makes this (female) machine and then worships it as an ideal. Picabia's painting *Fille née sans mère* (*Girl born without a Mother*), from 1916–18, based on drawings dating from 1915, also works on this theme. Sharing in biblical allusions, it suggests an absence of consummation.

Haviland continued: 'But the machine is yet at a dependent stage. Man gave her every qualification except thought. She submits to his will but he must direct her activities. Without him she remains a wonderful being, but without aim or anatomy. Through their mating they complete one another. She brings forth according to his conceptions.'<sup>20</sup> It would be easy, from these statements, to assume an extreme masculinist edge to mechanomorphic imagery. This is certainly one aspect. However, the full range of work reveals more subtle explorations of gender and sexuality. Picabia developed the style most consistently, using realistic and invented machine forms to represent, or

replace, the human figure. One of his best-known drawings is *Portrait d'une jeune fille américaine dans l'état de nudité* (*Portrait of a Young American Girl in the State of Nudity*; 1915), which features the young woman as a spark-plug. It overturns any conventions for aesthetic representation, replacing the female nude with an industrial-style drawing, and is one of many examples in which he represents women with machine imagery.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Picabia produced machine portraits of his male colleagues, some of which featured in issues 5 to 6 of *291* (July–August 1915), as well as occasional, more universal representations of the male, such as *Le Fiancé* (of about 1916). Cathy Bernheim has described these examples in which the male is isolated: 'Useless mechanisms turn in a void, celibate machines wind back on themselves.'<sup>22</sup> Finally, but more rarely, there are images in which machines apparently depict both man and woman, including *Prostitution universelle* (*Universal Prostitution*; of about 1916–17) and *Parade Amoureuse* (*Amorous Parade*; 1917). That the female structure in the former features the phrase 'sexe féminin idéologique' (ideological feminine sex) illustrates that Picabia's depictions of human as machine explore the construction and acting out of sexuality and gender in nuanced ways.

Suzanne Duchamp's *Un et une menacés* has much in common with Picabia's mechanomorphic images, especially the later examples. Her work shares common ground, too, with Marcel's *La Mariée mise à nue par ses célibataires, même* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*), known as *The Large Glass*, of 1915–23. Avant-garde artists had begun to perceive humanist notions of romantic love as absurd in the mechanised world and views of man's agency or supremacy as utopian. Machine imagery was employed to indicate the mechanical or functional aspect of relations between men and women, as constructed by automatised social conventions rather than individual determinacy. *The Large Glass* thematises the workings of sexual attraction, distance between the sexes and the failure of consummation. *Un et une menacés* depicts the two sexes overlapping and connected but at a standstill, gridlocked and paralysed. In Marcel's *The Large Glass*, and in several of Picabia's works, the woman emits signals to attract the male. She is the object, sometimes unattainable, of his desire. In *Un et une menacés* there is a marked ambiguity about male–female sexual attraction, consummation and power structures: they appear equally trapped and impotent, mutually threatening and threatened.

The materials used in *Un et une menacés* are also exceptional. Not only was Suzanne Duchamp the only artist to produce a mechanomorphic work like this in Paris as early as 1916 but she also produced a unique work by combining mechanical drawing and real parts and tools – a clock gear, plumb bob and metal rings – as collage elements alongside paint. Camfield discusses *Très rare tableau sur la terre* (*Very Rare Picture on the Earth*) as Picabia's first known collage work.<sup>23</sup> Produced in 1915, it uses two wooden half-cylinders painted in metallic gold. Otherwise, however, his work during 1915–16 used metallic paint as an innovative material, just as Suzanne Duchamp used silver paper in a number of her works, but no three-dimensional objects. Her introduction of industrial objects onto the canvas in *Un et une menacés* was a radical innovation, then. She took up the collage practice of the Cubists but, instead of using pasted papers,

selected actual found mass-produced objects in a gesture that is reminiscent of Marcel's use of objects as ready-made sculptures.<sup>24</sup> Like Marcel and Picabia, Suzanne appropriated images and materials from the modern world that allude to industry and technology and that transgress the boundaries between science and art, handcrafted artwork and mass production.

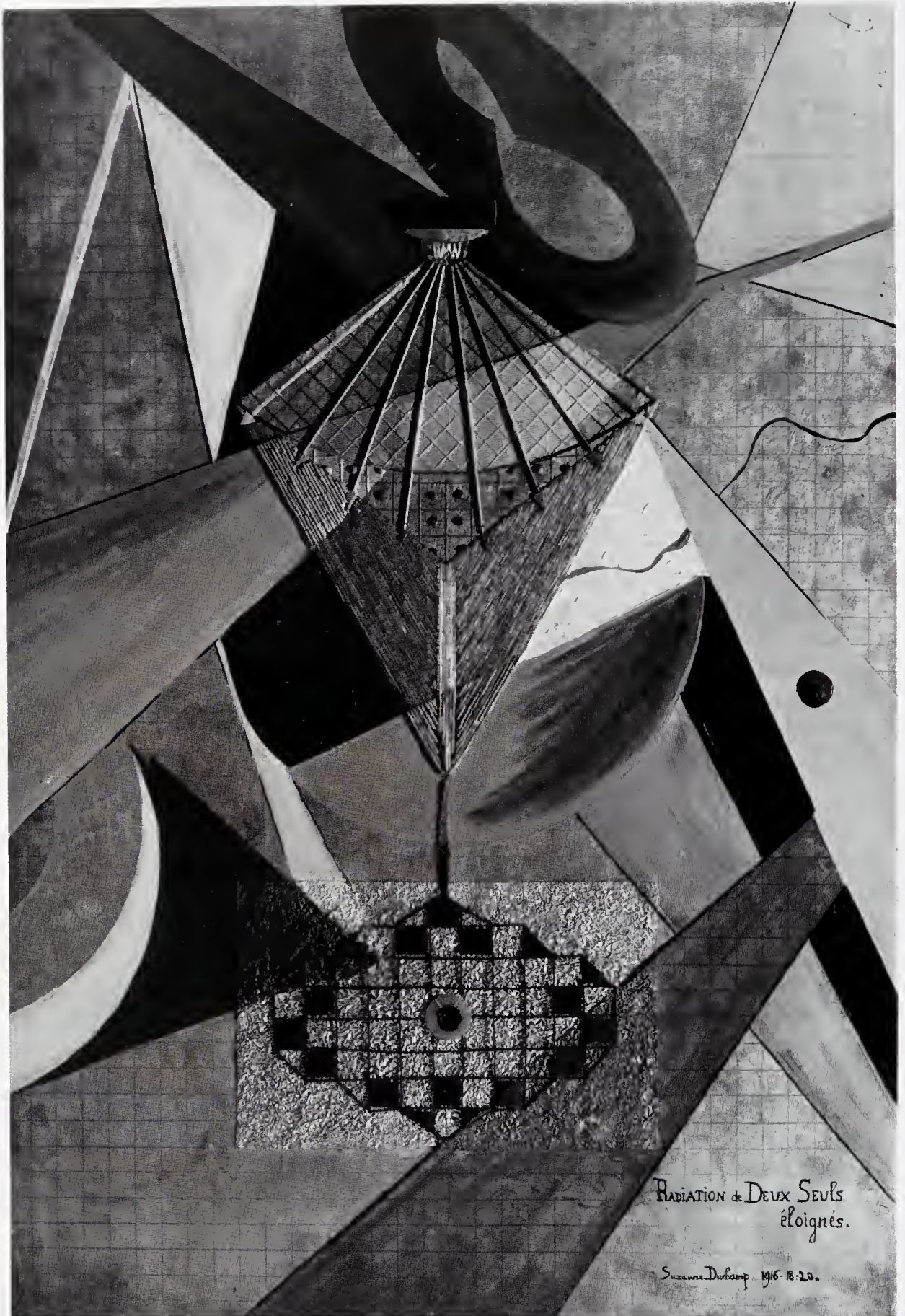
Camfield rightly emphasises of *Un et une menacés* that: 'It was a radical departure for Duchamp and a work unmatched anywhere in Europe during 1916.'<sup>25</sup> It is exemplary of her employment of unorthodox materials, mechanical symbolism and cryptic titles in a search for a new visual language that might adequately convey modern human experience and relationships and that implicitly rejects orthodox sign systems. Not only in Suzanne Duchamp's oeuvre but also in terms of Dada work more broadly, it was a highly important work and demonstrates a vital and vibrant link between artistic activity in New York and Paris.

## Science, sexuality and radio waves

Another example of Suzanne Duchamp's engagement with modern technology is *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés* (*The Radiation of Two Solitary Beings Apart*;<sup>26</sup> fig. 59). This scarcely known collage was completed over a long period, as the inscription '1916–1918–1920' makes evident.<sup>27</sup> It was a protracted gestation period and she evidently returned to the work repeatedly, as the existence of studies also proves. Her choice to indicate these stages of composition, as opposed to only a completion date, alludes to its processual nature, in which she used various found materials, including string, wire, glass beads, pearls, straw and crumpled foil. However, the drawn images are reminiscent of technical or scientific design, reinforced by the presentation of the whole composition on a grid background.

Like *Un et une menacés*, this collage deals with *deux seuls*, whom we might assume to be two separated lovers. Once again, the images are far from conventional representations of human figures. They are reduced to basic forms and drives, stripped of the larger narrative or aesthetic context. Linda Dalrymple Henderson's detailed studies, published in 1998, of Marcel's *Large Glass* have inspired her to look at Suzanne's *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés* and her short treatment of the work benefits from research into the concerns and motivations behind Marcel's oeuvre. She has identified the first and most dominant form, in the upper part of the composition, as some sort of cage-like antenna.<sup>28</sup> The rectangular shape in the lower half, meanwhile, is read as a sort of receiving grid, at the centre of which is a large dot. The two forms are connected by a vertical line, which is actually made up of two lines that meet in the middle. In the background, semi-circular and angular shapes protrude and radiate, at various angles across the paper, both behind and in front of the dominant image.

The term *seuls* in the title indicates that each being is alone, while *éloignés* makes clear the distance between them. Camfield proposed a biographical aspect again, as during the years Suzanne Duchamp produced the work she and Crotti were frequently



RADIATION de DEUX SEULS  
éloignés.

Suzanne Duchamp 1916-18-20.

separated.<sup>29</sup> Henderson, too, has written: ‘Suzanne suggests the communication of two lovers at a distance – probably in response to her own periods of geographic separation from . . . Jean Crotti.’<sup>30</sup> She has also pointed out a connection with Marcel’s use of the term *éloignement* in the notes in *Box of 1914*, by which he denoted spatial remoteness.<sup>31</sup>

Most interesting is the collage’s attempt to represent communication, as evident in the title, which does not refer to two figures but the radiation between them. The term suggests invisible lines of communication, unseen energies or forces. It is associated with the transmission of feelings and with the transmission of light, energy or sound. Suzanne Duchamp’s image either suggests the emission of some sort of magnetic or telepathic force between the lovers, a metaphor for sexual or romantic attraction, or the possibilities of communication via new technology. Although the former notion, of telepathic connections, might seem clichéd now, the discoveries of new technologies at the turn of the century, such as the proof of electromagnetic waves, had reignited debates about the nature of communication between human beings and the possibilities of telepathy or thought transfers.

Again, there are affinities with Marcel Duchamp’s *Large Glass*. The antenna-like object might be seen as the equivalent of the Bride, emitting erotic signals. Unlike Marcel’s *Large Glass*, however, whose theme is the failure of consummation between the bride and the bachelors, Suzanne’s visualisation is not as pessimistic. The two lovers may be at a distance but there is a successful connection between them, which allows for optimism or at least ambiguity about the nature of their sexual relationship. Nevertheless, whether a physical, sexual or psychological attachment, the bond between the two souls is not represented sentimentally or romantically. The unusual visual vocabulary disallows cliché.

As Henderson has written:

Although Duchamp’s *Large Glass* has often been treated as a solitary masterpiece, it was, in fact, squarely at the center of the modernist response to a radically changed paradigm of reality, now redefined in terms of electro-magnetic waves. . . . Duchamp’s response was distinguished from that of other modernists by his use of science and technology for humorous and iconoclastic ends and, specifically, as a commentary on sexuality, religion, philosophy, and art making itself. In this regard, his closest colleagues in spirit were Apollinaire and Picabia and, subsequently, his sister Suzanne, and Jean Crotti.<sup>32</sup>

It is a welcome recognition of the presence of other fine artists operating in similar areas to Marcel Duchamp, Suzanne included, and of their explorations of the impact of technology on human relationships and communications using visual images.

One other piece of work that is relevant to this section is *Séduction* (1920; fig. 60). On the left of the canvas is a dark vertical structure; on the right a double semi-circular structure apparently emanating, in rays, towards the column. These structures are relatively straightforward to interpret as symbols for the male and female respectively. The title, meanwhile, makes the most clear and explicit reference to the theme



60 Suzanne  
Duchamp,  
*Sédution*  
(*Seduction*), 1920.

of sexual relationships. Painted in bold upper-case letters, it is split into two angled parts, 'SEDUC' and 'TION'. These word fragments are laid over a three-word phrase, which the reader must decipher: 'FORCE et Grace'. The word 'force' is in upper case, underneath the phallic structure, and the word 'grace' is painted in a more florid style, underneath the semi-circular structure. Here, the artist sets up a more apparent contrast between the sexes, between masculine and feminine, force and grace. Less ambiguous than the two examples considered so far, it nevertheless equally serves to thematise the precarious interdependence of the sexes. It also uses words as an integral part of the composition, bringing verbal and pictorial sign systems together, to evoke both the physical (dis)connections and fragile (mis)communications at work (or play) between the sexes.

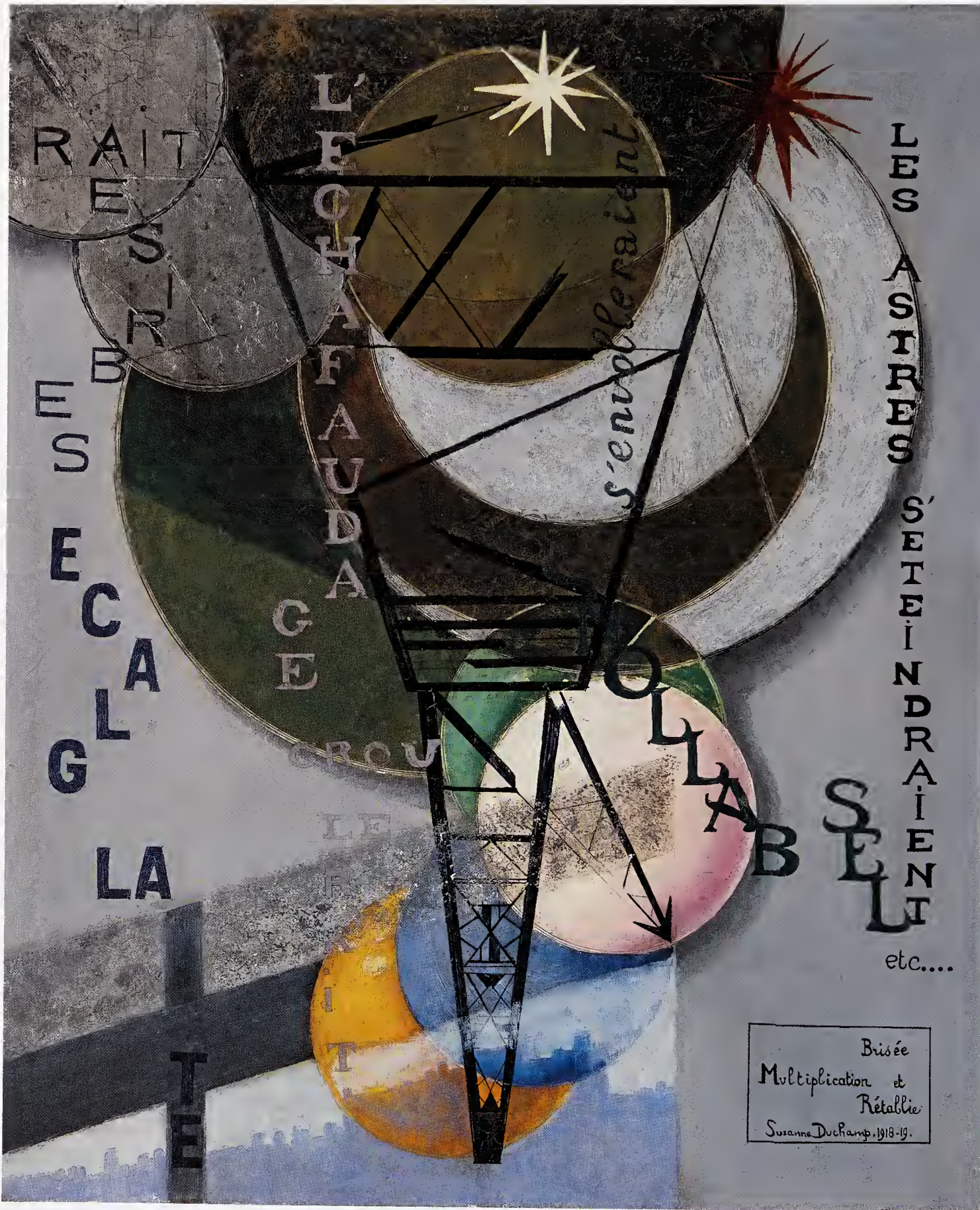


Suzanne Duchamp's use of imagery relating to science, technology and industry reflects on the rapid changes that were taking place during these early decades of the century and seeks new imagery adequate to portray human relationships and experiences in the modern age. For both avant-garde artists and writers, technology was a challenge to aesthetic practice and an enormous stimulus to react to the pace of change. The relatively new possibilities of communication, in particular, were a topic of great interest, the first radio signals having been transmitted around the turn of the century.<sup>33</sup> The Italian Futurist leader Marinetti pronounced his fascination with new technology, stating unequivocally: 'Futurism is grounded in the complete renewal of human sensibility brought about by the great discoveries of science.' He speculated about the speed and economy new technologies might allow and their potential to revolutionise language, enabling 'imagination without strings' and 'words-in-freedom'.<sup>34</sup> He and other poets explored the impact of telegraphy on linguistic and grammatical structures and conventions. In the next section, I will discuss a piece of work by Suzanne Duchamp that uses both visual imagery and language, exemplifying cross-fertilisation between genres and the avant-garde artist's willingness to interrogate sign systems.

## Word–image intersections: from cryptic title to poetry painting

The collage painting *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* (*Broken and Restored Multiplication*, 1918–19; fig. 61) encompasses many of the themes discussed so far, including relationships between nature and industry, people and technology, men and women, the visual and the verbal. Its very title sets up a dichotomy and, most strikingly of all, it uses language more extensively than any other of Suzanne Duchamp's works. In his letter to Suzanne about ready-mades, quoted in the first section of this chapter, Marcel took great care in describing the creation of the writing for his *Bottle-Drying Rack*. The assisted signature and the inscription were to be the crucial elements in making the functional object into an art object. As he wrote to her, language was the key to this process: 'I sign them [the ready-mades] and I think of an inscription for them in English.'<sup>35</sup> For many avant-garde artists and writers working during the first decades of the twentieth century, language was a vital area for exploration. From Guillaume Apollinaire, who created pictorial poems, or *calligrammes*, through the Cubists and Futurists, who incorporated words as material into their paintings, right up to the word–image experiments of Dadaists such as Marcel Duchamp, Picabia and Marius de Zayas working out of New York, the relationship between writing and painting, word and image, became a core concern. The intersections between literature and painting represented a key characteristic of the avant-garde arts, including Dada. As Ball declared in his diary at the height of Cabaret Voltaire: 'The word and the image are one. Painter and poet belong together.'<sup>36</sup>

In Paris, Suzanne Duchamp was one of only a few painters to innovate substantially using language as early as 1915. In each of her paintings and drawings, she placed par-



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Multiplication et  
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Suzanne Duchamp, 1918-19.

61 (facing page)  
Suzanne Duchamp,  
*Multiplication  
brisée et rétablie*  
(*Broken and  
Restored  
Multiplication*),  
1918–19. Oil and  
silver paper on  
canvas, 61 × 50 cm.  
Gift of Mary P.  
Hines in memory  
of her mother,  
Frances W. Pick;  
through prior  
acquisitions of Mr.  
and Mrs. Martin A.  
Ryerson, H. J.  
Willing, and  
Charles H. and  
Mary E. S. Worcester,  
1994.552. The Art  
Institute of  
Chicago.

ticular emphasis on the written word. Firstly, almost all her works – including the three discussed in the last section – feature cryptic titles, usually inscribed prominently on the canvas, and evidently a composite part of their conception. In several works, words form an integral part of the composition of the overall image. Two works, the *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* and *Give me the right Right to Life* (1919), combine words and images in yet more substantial and inventive ways, illustrating most vividly the prominence of language in her work.

Language is used so extensively in *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* that it could be considered a poem within the painting. At the centre of the composition is a fabricated structure, probably an inverted Eiffel Tower, its base splintered. A series of circular discs in oils and silver paper collage (reminiscent of balloons, mirrors or planets) overlap, giving the impression of a mass of shapes pushed upwards and towards the viewer, as opposed to an illusion of depth. The circles towards the bottom are painted in bright, optimistic colours (yellow, blue, pink, green), contrasting with the darker greens, grey and silver (including the collaged silver paper) of the more dominant shapes above. Perspectives are confused and the limitations of the flat canvas exposed. Two stars, painted in red and white, are exaggeratedly artificial renderings of glints of light and there are non-mimetic shadows round the right-hand side of the balloons. In the bottom left corner there is a pale city skyline, dominated by a heavy, skewed black cross, above which is a strip of metallic silver paint, recalling metal and the modern fabric of the city. There is a stark contrast between the circles and the tower structure, the former reminiscent of organic or natural phenomena like the sun or moon, the latter of engineered, fabricated objects. Together they seem to be without foundations, disappearing upwards, floating or crumbling, and giving the impression that the whole picture is upside down.

The Eiffel Tower, a potent symbol of progress and optimism, has been turned upside down. One of the great symbols of modernity and engineering, built for the 1899 Universal Exhibition, the tower served as a telegraphy station and was an icon of modern communications technology. From 1909 Robert Delaunay produced a series of images of the Eiffel Tower, informed by Cubist fragmentation and Futurist light and motion. Among writers, meanwhile, Apollinaire was interested in telegraphy. In his poem ‘Lettre-océan’ he uses iconic lines and lines of type to signify the sea and the radio waves emanating from the Eiffel Tower. In ‘2e Cannonier Conducteur’ (2nd Gunnery Driver), which is reminiscent of a soldier’s fast, fragmented communication from the front, he also incorporates the tower as a visual motif.<sup>37</sup> The wartime context is a backdrop to Suzanne Duchamp’s work too. Its upside-down, splintered tower can be interpreted as a comment on the fact that better communications and technology, cited as wonders of human progress, had fallen short as a panacea and war in Europe had not been prevented.

In this context, the circular shapes in *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* might be renditions of sound waves emanating from the tower. At the same time, they act as symbols for female fertility, with the tower as a phallic emblem. In addition, the arrow that the artist has added, which points away from the main structures at forty-five degrees, is

reminiscent of the symbol for the male gender made up of a circle and arrow. This in turn contrasts with the cross in the bottom left-hand corner, which, together with a circle, would combine to make up the female symbol. These symbols, referred to obliquely, date back to ancient Rome, where they began as signs for the gods and planets Mars and Venus respectively; with their astrological origins, they tie in with the circular shapes and stars that dominate the painting. Once again, Suzanne Duchamp explored new vocabularies outside aesthetic clichés to portray gender, sexuality and relationships. There is a volatile, unfathomable, potentially destructive, aspect to the clash of factors portrayed in this work, which, on the one hand, can be read as an expression of socio-political fears and on the other as a depiction of flawed or fragile communications on the personal level.

There are strong parallels between this collage painting and Crotti's work, including his painting on glass, *Les forces mécaniques de l'amour en mouvement* (*Mechanical Forces of Love in Movement*), dating from 1916. Like Suzanne's work, it contrasts smooth, basic, organic forms with fabricated objects and machinery. Crotti was interested in the symbolism and associative properties of forms and colours and made frequent use of circular forms especially, to denote light and sound waves. Another useful reference point for situating this work is Orphism. Named by Apollinaire in 1913 and inspired by late Symbolism and Cubism, the group included Robert Delaunay and Frantisek Kupka, who explored theories of colour and motion in their work. Suzanne Duchamp's use of the circular form in *Multiplication* is also evocative of Marcel Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs*, a series of revolving discs dating from 1920 that are both visual object and machine and through which he explored the possibilities of introducing movement into the otherwise static artwork.

Suzanne Duchamp's use of language is especially prominent in *Multiplication*. One of the two major works she displayed at the Dada-dominated Salon des Indépendants, it uses words in combination with images more extensively than any other of her works. The letters, words and phrases confuse orientation and reinforce awareness that this is a two-dimensional artwork. It is not immediately apparent which way the words should be read or how they fit together, since Suzanne varied font styles, sizes, colours, upper and lower cases and directions. Habitual reading leads the viewer to start in the bottom left corner, from which point one reconstructs the phrases 'la glace se briserait' (the mirror would shatter), 'l'échafaudage croulerait' (the scaffolding would crumble), 'les ballons s'envolleraient' (the balloons would fly away) and 'les astres s'éteindraient' (the stars would go out).<sup>38</sup> As the viewer reads, she or he must change reading directions several times (bottom to top, top to bottom, right to left and up, top to bottom). Varied typefaces are also disorientating and words are only assembled little by little. For example, 'la glace se brisea' (the mirror shattered) ends as 'briserait' (the mirror would shatter) when all the letters are included. Camfield has translated this, and the other three phrases, as past tense but in fact they are all conjugated in the conditional.<sup>39</sup> This choice is significant, the use of the conditional making the phrase apparently a forewarning or vision rather than a description. Viewers, naturally seeking to understand the context, are confused by the past tense of the title.<sup>40</sup> The temporal slippage between

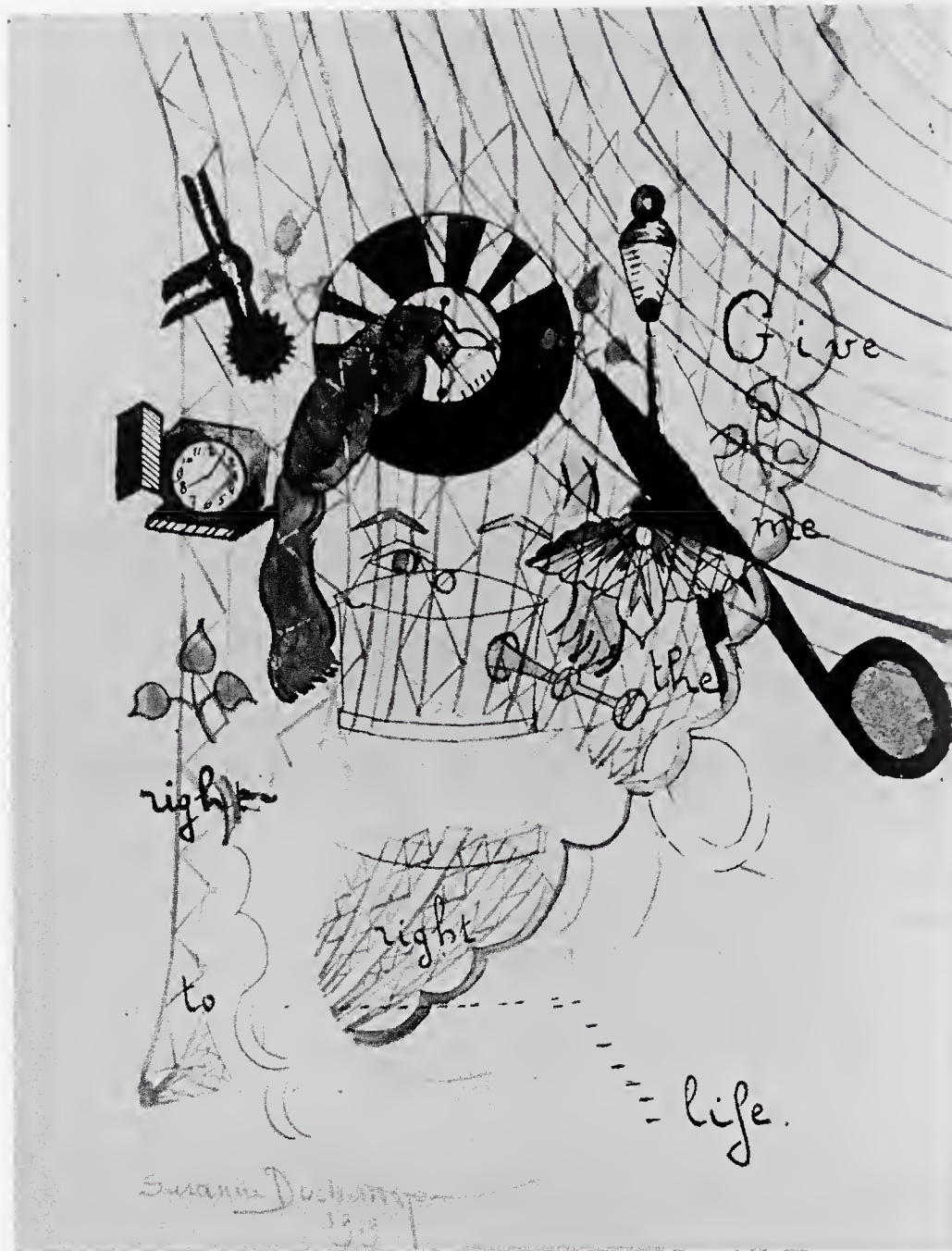
title and poem offers a puzzle: has what viewers are seeing already happened? Or is this a vision, an exteriorisation of thoughts and fears, ideas and mental pictures about what might happen?

The title is also cryptic, adding a further element to the enigma made up of the words, images and materials. Multiplication suggests both reproduction and fragmentation. The overlapping circles could be seen to be reproducing, as a hopeful, natural phenomenon (the brighter circles) but the upper half of the canvas, where the dark circles appear to be obliterating space and light, is more pessimistic. It might allude to industrialisation, wartime destruction and turmoil or to a loss of wholeness, connection and permanence in the face of modernity. Fragmentation, meanwhile, is acted out in the breaking up of the words and the shattering of the mirror. Yet if the words on the canvas are pessimistic, the title offers a more ambiguous message about a state of affairs at once 'broken' and 'restored'. The layout of the title, with 'broken' and 'restored' lined up vertically instead of horizontally, maintains ambiguity. Perhaps multiplication refers to fertility and fragmentation refers to a state of affairs that requires to be recognised, aspects of life that the war and its attendant destruction has interrupted. Multiplication and fragmentation are also implicit in the work: they are employed as aesthetic techniques, replacing the rational one-point perspective with an onslaught of impressions.

There are several examples of wordplay that merit comment. 'Les', for example, reads as 'sel' (salt) at first glance. The letters that make up 'ballons' (balloons) must be put together by reading from bottom to top and from right to left: the letters then perform, the word appearing to drift upwards, iconically reflecting its meaning. 'Glace', on the left, means both mirror and ice in French. As this phrase begins its path in a geometric metallic strip and ends in the silver paper discs, the most apparent connection is with glass. However, on reading from the 'G' in two directions, 'Gla Gla' also emerges, an onomatopoeic phrase for 'cold' or 'icy' that introduces an element of humour.<sup>41</sup> The phrase 'l'échafaudage croulerait' begins with an upright vertical form that echoes the structure of the signified object but the words themselves then crumble in line with the meaning of the phrase.

Two small words, which might almost be missed, generate questions and inspire reflection on language. In the right-hand corner a small 'etc', followed by four dots, ends the four phrases, frustrating and mocking a search for closure, as well as adding a touch of levity to this bleak outlook. In the very bottom left-hand corner, two letters 'T' and 'E' are barely discernible. Firstly, they read as 'te' (the pronoun 'you' or 'yourself' in French), and appear to address the viewer. When they are reversed, and read as 'et', the viewer is made to question the strategy of reading the painting from left to right, since a first word 'and' implies that something has come before. This implication is destabilising. These two small signifiers mean that any beginning, the stimulus or causal explanation for this scenario, is missing, as is any outcome or ending.

The 1919 work on paper *Give me the right Right to Life* (fig. 62) depicts a clutter of objects in ink and watercolour, comprising both the natural and the fabricated, not all of which are easy to decipher. They include plant sprigs (each with three leaves and appearing four times), a clock, a machine part or tool (some kind of serrated cog), a



62 Suzanne  
Duchamp, *Give me  
the right Right to  
Life*, 1919.

butterfly or fan, a scarf, a large ring-shaped object (potentially a life-saving ring), a cylindrical object (possibly a horn) and a plumb bob (or lamp). A dark ring towards the top centre is echoed in the larger, unshaded, pencil-drawn ring below. The collection of objects is entangled against a backdrop of lines, which recall netting from a hot-air balloon, and the top right corner is filled with semi-circular radiating lines. A large open pair of scissors dominates the right-hand side, as if poised to cut through the netting lines. The materials (pencil, blank areas of paper, half-filled areas) and some of the objects (the clock, scissors, leaves, netting, butterfly) combine to give the impression of something unanchored, ephemeral and non-permanent to which the scissors clearly represent a threat.



63 *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*, 1919.

At the centre of the composition is a sketched, stylised eye underneath an eyebrow with a second (right) eyebrow next to it, but no eye. The composition in its entirety appears to be a portrait and, given the inscription, probably a self-portrait. It recalls another self-portrait from 1919, *Portrait de l'artiste (Portrait of the Artist)*; fig. 63), which is a more conventional watercolour portrait but also features only one eye. The other half of the face is blank. In their positional relations to the eye, some objects appear to be representations of outward physical aspects, such as the scarf as hair and the horn as mouth. The latter is interesting, since it does not clearly function as an instrument, that is, as a metaphorical mouthpiece; instead, it turns in on itself, suggesting a silenced or ineffective voice. Other objects, such as the machine part and the clock, hovering around the top of the head, can be perceived as representing thought processes, preoccupations, concepts or values. In this sense, these floating, symbolic objects surrounding the female subject have something in common with Höch's later composition *Die Braut*, which exteriorises ideas associated with or generated by the bride (1924–7; see fig. 47). Each image has potential associative meanings amplified by unusual combinations and connections, this juxtaposition of disparate objects anticipating the Surrealists' interest in *objets trouvés*.

The phrase 'Give me the right right to life', inscribed through the images, compounds the sense of threat to the subject set up by the scissors. These words are a vital com-

ponent of the whole composition, both to the conception of the work and to the ways in which the viewer interprets it. All the words are entangled with the images, their existence as visual material or signs highlighted. The first word (it is capitalised) is written towards the top right-hand corner. From there the eye is drawn word by word down a curve, the relatively comfortable sweep of 'Give me the right' broken by a second 'right' positioned higher up to the left, before dropping back to 'to', a series of dashes, a pause and finally a drop to the last word 'life'. It reads as a plea, the repetition of the word 'right' implying hesitation or emphasis, and simultaneously posing the question of what the 'right', as in 'correct', right to life might be, playing on two different meanings of the word. 'Life' is given prominence via the pause and its position on the canvas. The whole phrase imitates a thought or speech pattern, encompassing repetition and hesitancy. Unusually, Suzanne has chosen English here, less familiar than her native French, and recalling Marcel's use of English phrases in his work.<sup>42</sup>

William A. Camfield has examined this work in his essay on Suzanne Duchamp in Sawelson-Gorse's *Women in Dada*. At the outset of his readings he states: 'Inasmuch as she provided no programs, interpretation becomes an exercise in judgement and analysis regarding forms and inscriptions within the art object and the relationship of those forms and inscriptions to the conditions of her life in both its intimate, personal dimension, and in the larger social context.'<sup>43</sup> Camfield's emphasis on 'forms and inscriptions within the art object' is essential, since it recognises that any interpretations about the work's meanings rest on her aesthetic and technical choices. It is, however, crucial not to place too much emphasis on speculative autobiographical readings. Terms such as 'intimate' and 'personal' immediately ring alarm bells, since they are too readily used in relation to women's work, even when that work is far from straightforward in any narrative sense.

Camfield's acknowledgement of a 'larger social context' is welcome, then, and he specifically examines *Give me the right* as a comment on the issue of abortion. France at this time was suffering from a declining birth rate, coupled with the huge loss of life in the First World War, and had adopted aggressive pro-life policies, including the banning of abortion and contraception. Camfield interprets the sketch as an expression of the woman's right to choose whether to have a child or not. It is a good interpretation of a powerful composition, benefiting from the addition of the word 'political' to 'personal and social', since the issue of abortion was, and remains, political. The context of procreation and abortion is undoubtedly relevant but a reading of Suzanne Duchamp's sketch as a pro-choice statement is only one of several possibilities.

Also taken into consideration by Camfield is a work by Crotti, *Solution de continuité* (*Continuity Solution*; c. 1916), which he interprets as anti-abortion, but appropriately does not assume that Suzanne shared her husband's views.<sup>44</sup> Although it is tempting to agree with his interpretation that *Give me the right* is a pro-choice work, its combination of images and words nevertheless allows room for doubt. For example, the leaf shoots and circular forms suggest fertility, growth, new life, reproduction and continuity. The clock might represent the biological clock. Meanwhile, the serrated machine part floating over the subject's head and the scissors are overwhelmingly hostile images.



My interpretation converges with Camfield's readings of fertility and threat but I perceive more ambivalence in the image. To whom is the threat posed? Is it justified or unjustified?

Suzanne Duchamp's choice of words is crucial for Camfield's interpretation but that choice is problematic. The interpretation of the phrase 'Give me the right right to life' as the woman's pro-choice statement is convincing firstly if one identifies the 'me' with the 'me' that is the woman's eye and secondly if one interprets pregnancy as a threat to that life. (It should not be assumed that the 'me' is purely autobiographical.) However, the use of the phrase as a plea from an unborn child must not be discounted, in which case the message would be the opposite: that is, anti-abortion. Moreover, even accepting the plea as that of the woman, it is conceivable that this is the expression of a demand, or desire, for the opportunity to give or produce life.

The formulation is unusual, 'the right to life' recalling a legal or human rights term.<sup>45</sup> Suzanne's doubling of the word 'right' plays with the ambiguity inherent in the English term: what or whose is the 'right' right to life? What does a 'right' mean in any case? French does not have the same double term, so it seems that Suzanne chose to use the English intentionally to explore ambiguities. The 'right to life' is at once a dearly held moral principle and at the same time the site of controversies when it comes to interpretation. Employed with reference to debates including capital punishment, euthanasia and abortion, it is a loaded cultural construct, dependent on social mores and having various impacts in differing historical contexts. In this case, in a post-war context, when huge loss of life had occurred, the 'right to life' was especially pertinent and the connection with fertility and the abortion issue a strong one. If it is pro-choice, it at the very least contains within it the traces of a difficult argument. It is the visualisation of a dilemma, as compared with a more certain moral message.

There are also conflicts and ambiguities in the choice of images. What appears to be netting might offer either safety or entanglement, security or restriction. The reproduced sprigs or saplings might be threatening to take over or – given their numbers – offer the assurance of future alternatives. What Camfield sees as a lamp (top right), a sort of life-representing light whose cord is being cut, might be a plumb bob. This would recall Suzanne Duchamp's use of that actual object as a collage element in *Un et une menacés* (1916; see fig. 58). It is a conical metal weight, suspended from a line, directed exactly towards the earth's centre of gravity and used as an instrument to determine verticality or depth. In this instance, though, its line is absent and it is turned upside down. Grounding, attachment and certainty are put into question. Another possibility is that it is a wireless antenna, similar to the one Suzanne used in *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés* (see fig. 59). In this case, the cutting would represent a break in communication.

Beyond this particular reading on the theme of fertility, the sketch has resonances as an examination of identity and subjectivity. Confusion, tensions, uncertainty and risk are expressed in the sketch. The subject is fragile, buffeted by fears, threats and the passing of time. Here the body is not only fragmented but almost absent. Instead, the portrait attempts to depict the interior, a state of mind or consciousness, made up of complex and diverse influences. It is not an overt statement but the visualisation of a

struggle to make sense of conflicts that inevitably persist for the modern subject, in this case with a particular resonance for women. Fernand Drijckoning (in 1989) wrote about the following tendency behind Picabia's work: 'A language game at the basis of the fabrication of a work.'<sup>46</sup> His phrase applies equally to this work by Suzanne Duchamp and reiterates how, rather than a mimetic representation of external reality, this work is a visual conception of a conceptual idea.

In these works, Suzanne Duchamp rejects coherent semantic and narrative content, exploring instead connections and slippages within and between sign systems. The word-image synthesis between title and painting was extensively explored in New York from 1915 onwards by artists such as Crotti, Picabia, de Zayas, Stieglitz and Marcel Duchamp, representing a significant development in avant-garde visual art. A title as a description of, or explanatory label for, the content of the painting was rejected. Instead, the title became an integral part of the production of the painting or drawing, as well – crucially – as its reception. Not only did the image no longer stand alone but also the expectation of the title as elucidation was and is thwarted, that approach rejected in favour of offering cryptic clues.

Crotti's approach offers a case in point of how a painting's title became a primary concern. Early in his career, while associated with Orphism, he had maintained that a painting should stand alone, the forms and colours being the expressive crux, without the need for a title.<sup>47</sup> He chose titles that were playful, religious or cryptic. By the time of an exhibition in April 1916 at the Montross Gallery with Marcel Duchamp, Gleizes and Metzinger, Crotti's titles had become so provocative that Gleizes, fearing too great a controversy, tried to persuade him to get rid of them.<sup>48</sup> Picabia too placed great emphasis on the question of the title. An extract from 291 in 1916 illustrates how important the title had become to his conception of the artistic process: 'In my work the subjective expression is the title, the painting the object. But the object is nevertheless somewhat subjective because it is the pantomime – the appearance of the title.'<sup>49</sup> His statement indicates heightened awareness of the artwork as a material object, a manifestation of ideas first conceived in linguistic terms. Moreover, it suggests a gap between concept and form, between what can be thought and what can be shown in words and images. Suzanne Duchamp, too, selected cryptic titles for all her works, a characteristic of her oeuvre that not only established connections between her work and that of Picabia and Marcel Duchamp but which is also recognised as constituting a core aspect of both Dada and Surrealism.

The possibilities of language were exploited by Suzanne Duchamp through her titles and incorporated into the body of a number of her works. This fluent application of familiar words in unfamiliar patterns and contexts is typical of Dada's challenges to linguistic certainty. In New York in 1916, de Zayas coined the term psychotype, illuminated in an article in *Camera Work* as 'an art which consists in making the typographical characters participate in the expression of the thoughts and in the painting of the states of the soul, no more as conventional symbols but as having significance in themselves.'<sup>50</sup> This statement refers to experiments with typography – typesetting and design – at the heart of various avant-garde journals, experiments that intrinsically challenged the sign

system of language. In Suzanne Duchamp's *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* the viewer is made to work, to assume different perspectives, approach familiar words in new contexts, even to physically move her or his position. She or he is asked to see the words as images and read the images as signs.

In both works discussed in this section, Suzanne Duchamp pushed the boundaries of painting. She experimented with perspective, materials, colours and symbols. However, painting has its limitations: 'the tyranny of the rectangle, the relative absence of time, movement, thought in the materials of composition'.<sup>51</sup> By adding language, like the Cubists before her, she stretched the possibilities of what can be represented in the frame. The painted letters and words themselves form part of the visual material. They are explored as physical objects in themselves, evoking sound and movement, as well as symbols loaded with associative meanings. In employing both word and image, the works highlight the connections or harmonies between verbal and visual vocabularies. The images rely on the words and the words on the images: one cannot exist without the other. Equally, they highlight the tensions within and between different sign systems, their elusive qualities, their resistance to legibility and their slippages. Any assumption that the image will narrate or represent is thwarted, as is the expectation that written language will be explanatory or reliable.

The programmatic transgression of established genre boundaries was one of the chief preoccupations of Dada. To quote Georges Hugnet: 'But, more than advocating the use of media outside their speciality, Dada tends to confuse genres and that, it seems to me, is one of its essential characteristics (painting-manifestos or poem-drawings by Picabia, photomontages by Heartfield, simultaneous poems with phonetic orchestration, etc)'.<sup>52</sup> These two examples of Suzanne Duchamp's work, *Give me the right Right to Life* and *Multiplication brisée et rétablie*, disrupt signifying systems, violate boundaries of artistic categories and merge poetic language with painting. The first might best be described as a painting poem, a new aesthetic form.

Both works bring to mind a phrase taken up by Marshall Berman as the title for his 1983 study of modernity, 'all that is solid melts into air'. Berman emphasised 'floating existences', vaporousness, gaseousness and fluidity as characteristic of modernist painting.<sup>53</sup> In Suzanne Duchamp's *Multiplication*, the environment is unstable, disintegrating and fugitive. In *Give me the right*, uneasiness is enacted through a disembodied, unfixed, floating female subject. Thematically as well as formally, both images enact fragmentation, instability and disruption, reflecting on the fractured state of social, political and cultural order, specifically in a wartime, or post-war context (both were produced in 1918). In these and other works, tension emerges strongly as a theme. There is the human/machine; harmony/threat; organic/industrial; destruction/restoration; real/imagined – and then in the material itself the tensions between word/image; symbol/material; real/metaphorical; conception/visualisation; signifier/signified; writing/painting; and reading/seeing. In the next section I will discuss further dimensions to Suzanne Duchamp's work, adding music to writing/painting and hearing to reading/seeing.



CHEF-D'ŒUVRE ACCORDÉON

Suzanne Duchamp, 1921.

## Materials, motion and music

Two of Suzanne Duchamp's slightly later pieces, *Chef d'oeuvre: accordéon* (*Accordion Masterpiece*; 1921) and *Ariette d'oubli de la chapelle étourdie* (*Arietta about the Forgetfulness of the Absent-Minded Chapel*; 1920), embody many of the experimental aspects of her work discussed so far. They include an innovative use of language, the investigation of unconventional sources of imagery and the employment of various materials as collage elements alongside paint. A further theme, which has been an undercurrent in the discussion of Suzanne Duchamp's works so far, and which is an important element in the next two painting collages, is the exploration of movement. In both *Give me the right Right to life* and *Multiplication brisée et rétablie* she depicts floating, ephemeral, almost airborne scenes. In *Un et une menacés* and *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés* she configured the mechanics (physical and psychological) of human relationships. The next two works build on investigations of motion within two-dimensional space. They also reflect on sound. This has been touched on already, in the form of sound waves. The next two examples of her work refer, additionally, to music.

Dated 1921, and exhibited at the Salon d'Automne that year, *Chef d'oeuvre: accordéon* (fig. 64) employs the sort of disorienting perspective, circular forms and mix of materials (including oils, gouache and silver leaf) used in *Multiplication*. A large oval-shaped object dominates the canvas, filling the lower space as if barely contained within the frame. Through its centre is a dark vertical spindle, stretching from the centre to the top of the canvas. The oval is split down the front, emphasised by two red and pink half-circles that do not quite meet the darker semi-circle on the other side of the diagonal axis. Curved strokes, some of them not solid but painted in dashes, add to the impression of movement conveyed by the mismatching parts. The dominant shape overlaps another black circular shape, which gives the suggestion of a dark circle or shadow, across which the silver structure appears to move.

The most obvious reading of this composition, drawing on the *accordéon* of the title, is that it depicts a musical instrument. In this case, the oval shape could be interpreted as the two sections of the accordion, moving apart and coming together. In a short study of 1984 for a Société Anonyme catalogue raisonné, Lesley Baier described how the geometric shapes are in no way random but have been carefully arranged to give the impression of motion. Not only does the image suggest the movement of the instrument but also, I would argue, the intangible movement of the sounds or music it produces. The suggestion of sound is also contained within the term *accordéon* in that it can mean 'harmony'. As with the crane structure in *Un et une menacés*, Suzanne Duchamp produced an uncanny object, a structure in two dimensions that hints at the possibility of movement, function and even sound. This sense was captured by Baier, who saw in it another possibility, reading it as 'a pendulum momentarily arrested in its course'.<sup>54</sup>

Whether a strange musical instrument or a pendulum – both are strong interpretations – it is the symbolic aspect of the image that is most compelling. Recalling the theme of relationships and sexuality in Suzanne Duchamp's other works, *Un et une menacés*, *Radiation de deux seuls éloignés* and *Séduction*, the image can be read as a

depiction of the male and female, with the oval as ovoid or female, and the spindle as phallic or male. Like Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*, this image evokes the connections and disconnections between the sexes. Baier emphasised this interpretation of the image, noting that *les accordés* is a colloquialism for bride and groom, a further subtle yet significant aspect to the title. She also drew attention to the meticulous structure of the image and maintained: 'Despite apparent randomness, the shapes are in harmony, or "accordéon"'<sup>55</sup> The composition has undoubtedly been carefully planned. However, I argue that the harmony suggested in the title remains uneasy. That uneasiness is rendered by slight mismatches in symmetry between the two halves of the oval, made evident in the disjunction in the patterns where they come together. It is the spindle, moreover, spearing through the centre of the oval shape, which disrupts its harmony. On the one hand it appears to suspend and support the oval shape; on the other it pierces and penetrates it. Meanwhile the material, the silver foil, is wrinkled and imperfect. As in *Un et une menacés*, the shapes are interdependent, interlinked and integral to one another, but there is a suggestion of fragility in the union. The functioning of the whole remains ambiguous. While the *accordéon* of the title evokes a harmonious, melodious meeting of these disparate parts, the formal contrast between spindle and oval, the slight but present asymmetries and even the idea of the musical instrument badly operated, leave open the possibility of malfunctions and clashing sounds. Finally, the first half of the title, *chef d'oeuvre* (masterpiece), proposes success, a pinnacle of achievement. In this context it could be read as the accomplishment of the union of the sexes, in contrast to Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*, in which the bachelors never reach the bride. At the same time it contains within it the difficulty in arriving at such success. That union, when it happens, is a masterpiece of achievement, to be desired and revered, but sometimes elusive.

This non-figurative image is heavy with subtle possibilities and sensual symbolism. Its signifying images and the words of the title demand active readings from the viewer. It is also self-referential. Baier pointed out a further possibility associated with *accordéon*, noting that it featured in the manifesto 'Dada Soulève Tout' as well as in the June 1921 invitation to the Salon Dada, where it was used pejoratively, the Dadaists claiming no interest in (bourgeois) accordions, most likely a scornful attack on the Bruitist music of the Futurists. More explicitly, the term *chef d'oeuvre* acts to draw attention to the painting as an art object. It mocks the veneration of artworks and claims for this provocative work its place in the world.<sup>56</sup> The thematisation of reverence for art was a key concern in Marcel Duchamp's work, particularly his ready-mades and in *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919), his iconoclastic refiguring of the *Mona Lisa* with moustache, beard and suggestive slogan. More directly comparable with Suzanne Duchamp's choice of title here are two works by Picabia of 1915, which he named *Révérance* and *Très rare tableau sur la terre* (*Very Rare Picture on the Earth*). In each case, the artist made clear the status of the artwork as an object and exposed it to scrutiny. Images function as complex questions, rather than as figurative or mimetic representations. Finally, it is worth remembering the intertextuality across disciplines that characterised Dada. Picabia had published a prose text entitled *Chef d'oeuvre* in *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou* on 10



65 Suzanne Duchamp, *Ariette d'oubli de la chapelle étourdie* (*Arietta about the Forgetfulness of the Absent-Minded Chapel*), 1920.

July 1920, in which he playfully mocks the artist, questions of art and anti-art and the pinpointing of aesthetic trends.

In *Chef d'oeuvre: accordéon* Suzanne Duchamp introduces impressions of movement and allusions to sound (and thus time) into the static, silent, surface of the canvas. Like her use of language and three-dimensional objects, these elements investigate and stretch the limits of what can be portrayed within two-dimensional art. The 1920 collage painting *Ariette d'oubli de la chapelle étourdie* (fig. 65) also uses music as a theme. Its title refers to a song instead of an image: an *ariette* or *arietta* is a musical term for a short aria, or accompanied solo vocal piece. Here, a painting attempts to visualise a piece of music. Once again, words are a critical element. 'Ariette', standing on its own in the top left corner of the canvas, and in combination with the poised bow and arrow, alludes to music and calls to mind the command *Arrête* (stop). It is made up of letters of mixed height, placed in a curve, thus evoking movement in intonation and empha-

sis, or even melody. Additionally, three larger letters can be extracted to make the word ART, another self-conscious gesture to the artwork itself.

Camfield has identified the bearded man's head as Crotti's. Although this is only one possibility, one that the artist herself does not specify in the cryptic title, it is a strong interpretation. The head is actually a piece of painted wood stuck on the canvas, the object causing a slight shadow, and the eye is a piece of glass. The single eye had already appeared in the self-portrait *Give me the right Right to Life* from 1919. It is also a leit-motif in Crotti's work, from his Dada contributions through to *Tabu*, where he and Suzanne Duchamp used an eye as the symbol for this new movement (the same year as *Ariette* was completed), to the glass eyes he used in an early assemblage bust of Marcel Duchamp and in *Clown*.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, he made numerous mentions of them in reference to himself, in poems between 1916 and 1921, and especially in *Courants d'air sur le chemin de ma vie* (Currents of Air on my Life's Path).<sup>58</sup>

The eye has rich symbolic value. It stands for sight, vision, ways of seeing and perspective and has obvious, particular associations with the artist and the primacy of visualisation. Its powerful symbolic value goes back to Aristotle's declaration that the soul never thinks without a mental image'. Early in the twentieth century the potential of the camera eye became especially prominent, as in Dziga Vertov's practice and theories, and it also assumed symbolic importance in Surrealism, not least in Luis Buñuel's famous scene of the cutting of the eye in the film *Chien Andalou* and in Georges Bataille's novel *Histoire d'oeil* (*Story of the Eye*).<sup>59</sup> In Suzanne Duchamp's work, it might allude to the combinations of conceptual process and visual representation in the artist's ways of seeing. She is not interested in mimetic reproduction but questions the objective truth of vision and engages in depictions of subjective experiences and visions.

As in *Give me the right Right to Life*, Suzanne Duchamp combines various disparate elements, including actual objects, machine imagery and natural elements, to illustrate the human subject. A target at top centre, to the right of the head, draws the viewer's eye. There is a number in each band (428, 56, 73 and 33) from the outer band to the inner. To the right is a box linked with a straight line to the target; the target is also linked to a cog, or gauge, via a pulley, containing the number 1003. There is no apparent logic to the choice of numbers, contrary to any expectations of a rational mathematical structure, in which the number of points would increase towards the centre of the target. In fact, a study for this painting shows that originally the numbers were presented in this more predictable way, their inversion later therefore evidently conscious. Suzanne Duchamp introduced numbers, like letters, into this painting but undermined their logic by omitting any rational or mathematical relationships between them. They too are merely painted signs.

The two heavy bows placed horizontally across the centre, with an arrow poised facing towards the target, create tension. One bow is static. A disembodied hand draws back the string of the other, as if ready to release it. Camfield has described it as a woman's hand, possibly Suzanne's, but it could equally be Crotti's and if so, it works in combination with the eye as the artist's other tool. The arrow is mid-trajectory, as if released already, on its way to a target, an image that appears repeatedly in Picabia's



work. Here the target might represent the artist's intellect, with its attendant processes depicted by the cog and numbers. Below the hand, in a blue sphere, is what appears to be a spider's web, a symbol that appears in some works by Crotti and Marcel Duchamp. It carries associations of industry, entrapment or punishment (Arachne).<sup>60</sup> In this case, it radiates scores of crosses or stars, as well as a crescent moon shape, calling to mind an astrological chart.

A further reading brings in once again the theme of wireless telegraphy. The crosses might represent signals moving towards the artist's head. In her discussion of the cultural context in which Marcel Duchamp and others were operating, Henderson has described 'the emergence of a conception of the artist or poet as a sensitive "registering apparatus", and of artistic communication as a process of emitting and receiving signals'.<sup>61</sup> She cites Ezra Pound's 1913 essay 'The Approach to Paris', in which he discussed 'wave-lengths' and 'verbal receiving stations', as well as Frantisek Kupka's theories about the artist emitting 'telepathic' transmissions to the viewer. Suzanne Duchamp's painting takes its place in this intellectual context, one in which artists and writers were speculating on how new technologies might be applied to understanding the 'mysteries' of aesthetic processes. Both Suzanne Duchamp's and Crotti's works show them to be at the heart of such debates, where esoteric attitudes towards art were in the process of responding to new technical developments.

In a footnote to his comment on this painting, Camfield suggested an alternative reworking of the full phrase. By taking out 'ART' and combining the remaining letters, he produced *Art d'oubliette de la*.<sup>62</sup> It is an imaginative interpretation, using free associations, but finally too far removed from the words themselves. *Chapelle* refers most obviously to religion and music and can, in addition, signify a clique or select group. The word *étourdi*, meaning absent-minded or scatterbrained (or 'without thinking', when used with the verb 'to act'), suggests fallibility – of religion, of a clique, even of art, perhaps. Alternatively, it may propose art as a replacement for religion. Certainly, Crotti was interested in spirituality and in finding a new art that would supplant worn-out grand narratives. Suzanne Duchamp's playful experiments here with typography alert one to the visual materiality and sounds of the words and their unstable existence as signs: legibility is deliberately muddled.

This collage painting brings together the innovations of Suzanne Duchamp's work: new materials, science, industry, movement, sound and wordplay. It explores mathematics, language, machinery, intellect, religion, reason and astronomy, each providing fragments in the subject's psyche. Those conflicts that are so strong in her work are all in evidence here: motion and rest, harmony and tension, word and image, signifier and signified, visualisation and representation, science and spirituality. Furthermore, it is an appropriate depiction of Crotti, rejecting the conventions of portraiture as a way of showing the subject's outward appearance, in favour of showing what he is about, which in itself is a collection of diverse aspects and influences, as opposed to an immutable core identity. In the text 'Un homme pas comme un autre', Crotti wrote:

In the vast spaces of the Infinite, he seems to touch lightly the waves which make it vibrate and which he retransmits in his paintings by signs, forms and colours. He

seems to be an instrument of God charged with transmitting messages to men . . . Art must be therefore a kind of magic bringing signs and messages to man and not the reproduction of nature, deformed or not.<sup>63</sup>

No single quotation could as adequately relate to Suzanne Duchamp's representation of Crotti. Equally, no single quotation could as succinctly reveal both the convergent and divergent points between Crotti's breakaway movement Tabu and Dada, which will be touched on in the next section. While the rejection of the 'reproduction of nature' lay at the heart of avant-garde concerns, and of Suzanne Duchamp's and Crotti's oeuvre, the magic, religion and spirituality with which Crotti was preoccupied were undoubtedly a point of variance.

## Factions and flux: the demise of Dada in Paris and Tabu

By 1924 Suzanne Duchamp's approach had evidently changed dramatically, so much so that paintings from that year can be more appropriately described as naïve than Dada. A 1957 *Cahiers d'art* issue devoted to her described the change as follows: '1924–7. Suzanne Duchamp, escaping from the Dada movement, retreats, as far back as possible.'<sup>64</sup> The author of this statement betrays a particular stance. She described Suzanne Duchamp's break with Dada, which by then was itself collapsing in any case, as an escape. She also used the emphatic expression *aussi loin que possible* (as far back as possible) to laud her aesthetic separation. The author was right in assessing the artist's work as a retreat into past styles but where she sought to present this change in a positive light, her expression *en arrière* (backwards) is evidence of atavism. The Dada period was precisely an attempt to evade retreating into the past. This text was written shortly before the major appraisal of Dada that began in the 1960s and it apparently viewed Dada as a failed endeavour. The well-meaning attempt to distance Suzanne Duchamp's work from Dada only contributed to the lack of acknowledgement of her work in that context.

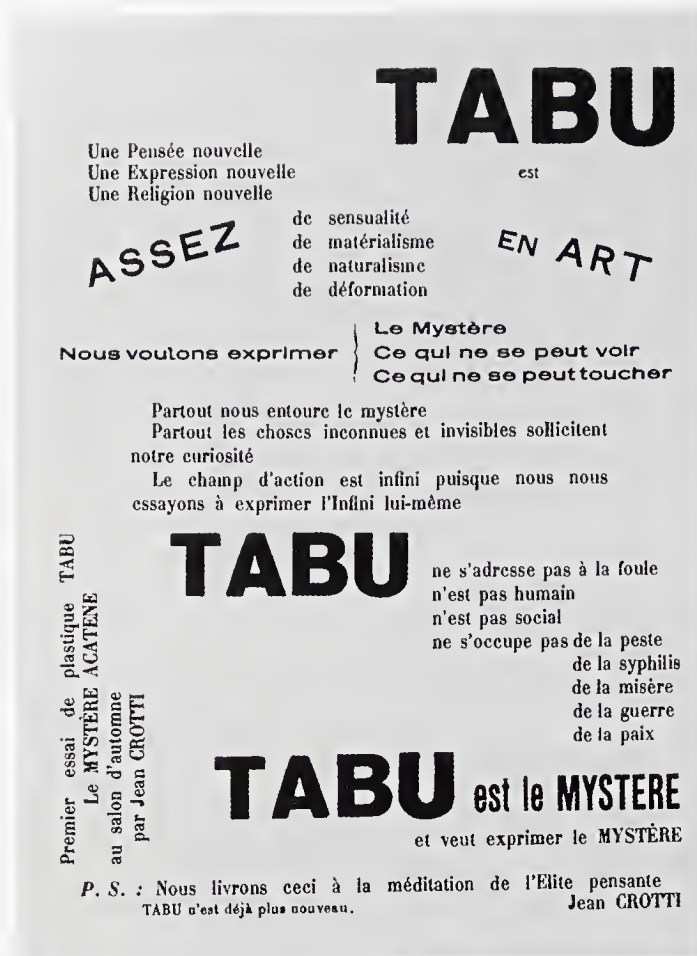
Suzanne Duchamp continued to paint and to exhibit until shortly before her death in 1963 but the period of her work that coincided with Dada was the most exciting and innovative. Her position in relation to Dada in Paris was complex. There was a gap in her (and Crotti's) associations with Paris Dada between the Salon des Indépendants exhibition in January 1920 and further participation in 1921, when they exhibited with others associated with Dada at the Salon d'Automne. During the summer, Crotti took part in a number of Dada group activities but neither he nor Suzanne exhibited at the second major Dada exhibition in Paris, the Salon Dada in June. However, they had held a joint exhibition at the Galerie Montaigne in Paris only in April (fig. 66) and Crotti did contact Marcel Duchamp, on Tzara's request, asking him to participate. In January 1921, they both signed the manifesto 'Dada Soulève Tout' (Dada Stirs Up Everything) at one of the most intense points in Paris Dada's history.<sup>65</sup> Most of the Paris group signed this tract, an attempt to distinguish Dada from other movements, but the show of unity preceded by only a few weeks Picabia's split, who in May criticised Dada and



66 Poster for Suzanne Duchamp and Jean Crotti exhibition at the Galerie Montaigne, 1921. Collection Merrill C. Berman.

began to distance himself from it and its supporters. By March 1922 Suzanne Duchamp and Crotti had aligned themselves clearly with Picabia, collaborating with him on *La Pomme de pins* (Pine Cone), the publication that prompted Tzara's counter-attack *Coeur à barbe* (Bearded Heart). Around the same time Crotti produced the tract *Plus de cubisme* (No More Cubism), signed by Suzanne Duchamp as well as Picabia, which did not succeed in halting the escalating splits between Dadaists.<sup>66</sup>

The clearest manifestation of a break with Dada by Suzanne Duchamp and Crotti came with their conception of a new 'movement', Tabu. They had first introduced the term at their joint exhibition in April 1921 and it also appeared in Picabia's *Le Pillhaou-Thibaou* in July. In October, they went on to publish a Tabu manifesto, to be distributed at the Salon d'Automne opening on 1 November (fig. 67). This short-lived project used typographical and semantic experiments with language in its manifesto, in ways that echo Dada experiments. Appearing at the point of Dada's disintegration, it emerged



67 Tabu manifesto, October 1921.

as an attempt to maintain a dynamic of aesthetic experimentation but from a new perspective. Essentially, it shared in a search to discover new means of expression, in the face of disillusionment with the status quo and despair at institutional ‘truths’ but it was dominated by Crotti’s yearning for truth and spiritual essence.

Why the couple dissociated themselves from Dada and formed Tabu is a matter for speculation. Camfield conjectured that their distancing ‘probably reflected both their reservations about the rowdier nature of Dada and the discomfort of two gentler, less intellectual souls among the likes of André Breton, Tzara, Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault, and Ribemont-Dessaignes.’<sup>67</sup> The editors of *Documents Dada* assume Picabia to be the likely motivating force or even instigator.<sup>68</sup> Neither gives Crotti and Suzanne Duchamp much credit for their own ideas, as manifest in their work over the Dada years, and Camfield’s suggestion that the two were ‘less intellectual’ is speculative. Both hypotheses underscore the circumstances of Dada in Paris during the latter part of 1920, when protagonists were struggling to take control of its direction. The history of Dada is filled with factions, splits, sub-groups, disagreements and various alignments and different directions. Schwitters’s Merz practices, for example, ran alongside Berlin Dada. Tabu, likewise, though more temporary and less successful, was a breakaway attempt to continue aesthetic experiments outside the dominant group which, by that time in Paris, was near to breaking up.

What remains, from Suzanne Duchamp's oeuvre, is work that has clear associations with Dada and which evidently both took from and contributed to its unfolding in Paris, as well as to avant-garde developments more broadly. Spanning 1916 to 1922, it reveals much about the myriad changes and innovations in visual art during that period, roughly equating to Dada's materialisation in Paris. The years before the war had seen a proliferation of ideas and debates about art, with the unfolding of ideas originating in Cubism and the profound insights into both fine art and literature of Apollinaire still feeding into avant-garde experiments. Suzanne Duchamp's work from 1916 onwards not only took inspiration from developments in Paris, up to and including Dada, but also responded to artists including de Zayas, Duchamp and Picabia, who had made an impact in New York.

The work of Suzanne Duchamp displays a complexity, in terms of intellectual and aesthetic concerns, to match her male colleagues'. It innovated with its mechanomorphic inventions, its employment of new materials including objects pasted on the canvas and its applications of technology. It challenged the limitations of the painter's two-dimensional canvas by bringing in references to music, movement and language. The poetic, mysterious characteristics of her titles, in particular, anticipated the language focus – not only in poetry but also in painting – that became characteristic of Surrealism. In addition, she provided visions of identity, agency, sexuality and male–female relationships from a woman's viewpoint, in the midst of a largely male-dominated spread of visual art.

When interpretation becomes challenging, the work of women artists is too often reduced to private symbolism, suggesting a smaller scale of engagement and, subsequently, interest and value. Women's work is frequently viewed in terms of biographical, personal or narrative readings, with terms such as 'intimate', 'personal' and 'private' brought into play. I hope rather to have demonstrated the ways in which Suzanne Duchamp's work examines themes, form and techniques that give her work life beyond the entanglements that have left her stranded as a footnote and her work absent. Her preoccupations were neither explicable solely through her relationship with her brother nor through that with her husband, but rather through the impetus to stretch and expose the limits of visual and verbal sign systems, to extend the materials available to the artist and to investigate new ways of depicting identity and sexuality. Her work displays conceptual complexity and technical innovation, alongside that of Crotti, her husband, and Marcel Duchamp, her brother, and invites reconsideration of Dada as rather double-gendered.



## CÉLINE ARNAULD

### The literary scene in Paris and the 'Gospel of Céline Arnould'

Of the five women chosen for this study, Céline Arnould is undoubtedly the least known. Her work is long out of print and there have been no studies of her life or work. Examples of Arnould's poetry within anthologies are scarce. Willard Bohn, in his 1993 collection *The Dada Market: An Anthology of Poetry*, includes three of her poems in French and in translation: 'Entre Voleurs' ('Among Thieves'), 'Les Ronge-bois' ('The Wood-Gnawers') and 'Avertisseur' ('Alarm').<sup>1</sup> More recently, Dawn Ades's 2006 book *The Dada Reader* also selected three texts in English translation, 'Dada Parasol', 'Luna Park' and 'Particulars'.<sup>2</sup>

In his 1971 history, *L'Aventure Dada*, Hugnet included Arnould's poem 'Mes trois péchés Dada' (My three Dada sins) as well as her name in his alphabetical listings of key protagonists. However, in place of the short biographical entry that appeared under every other name, he wrote: 'CÉLINE ARNAULD (see PAUL DERMÉE)'.<sup>3</sup> This phenomenon, whereby a woman Dadaist featured primarily in relation to a male relative (in this case her husband) is familiar by now. Perhaps Hugnet could not bring himself to give Arnould her own entry as only the third person to feature in his alphabetical compilation, after Pierre Albert-Birot and Louis Aragon. Nevertheless, Arnould fared relatively well, albeit under Dermée, in terms of word-count, both in relation to her husband and to other 'minor' characters in this volume. Hugnet's entry reads:

His [Dermée's] wife, the poetess Céline Arnould, also edited an ephemeral publication *Projecteur*, in which texts by the principal Dadaists are to be found. Céline Arnould and Paul Dermée collaborated, amongst other things, on *Dadaphone*, which reproduced their photographs with those of Aragon, Breton, Tzara . . . and they feature in the summary of no. 13 of *Littérature* amongst the signatories of the 23 manifestos of the dada movement (1920).<sup>4</sup>

Michel Sanouillet's comprehensive and detailed history, *Dada à Paris* (1993; reissued 2005) also includes a few notes on Arnould, principally naming her where she made contributions to journals or events. The longest passage on her discusses her journal *Projecteur* (Projector), published shortly after Dermée's review *Z*. It reads: 'In May, Dermée's

68 (facing page)  
Members of the  
Paris Dada group.  
Unknown  
photographer, 1921.  
The Prodan  
Romanian Cultural  
Foundation and  
the Montparnasse  
Cultural  
Foundation.

wife, Céline Arnould, author of a novel *Tournevire*, and of *Poèmes à claires-voies*, an active dadaist, whose name appears in all the reviews for which her husband wrote, took up the flame abandoned by him. She launched *Projecteur*.<sup>5</sup> Sanouillet goes on to provide some further, welcome detail about the journal but his statement is disappointing in that, like Hugnet's, it relates Arnould and her work to her husband and his work.

This neglect is surprising, given that Arnould produced a long line of individual publications – eleven volumes of poetry, one novel and an anthology – between the years 1914 and 1948. Her output was especially concentrated in the 1920s, during the height of Dada activity in Paris, and she made an impressive list of contributions to prominent avant-garde journals and pamphlets, including *391*, *Action*, *Ça ira*, *Cannibale*, *Contemporain*, *Dadaphone*, *L'Esprit nouveau*, *Littérature*, *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, *Le Phare de Neuilly*, *Proverbe* and *Z*. Even more remarkably, as both Hugnet and Sanouillet noted, Arnould started up and edited her own journal, *Projecteur*, which appeared as a single issue in May 1920. Since there is no bibliography of her work, I have compiled a list of her publications via notes at the front of her own volumes, as well as via searches through a wide range of avant-garde journals.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to her contributions in print, Arnould participated in two major performance events. The programme of the Manifestation Dada de la Maison d'Oeuvre, which took place on 27 March 1920, credits her as 'la femme enceinte' (the pregnant woman) in the first Parisian performance of Tzara's 'La Première Aventure Céleste de M. Antipyrine' (The First Heavenly Adventure of Mr Antipyrine). She also participated in the Festival Dada at the Salle Gaveau on 26 May 1920. In this instance, she was both a performer and also the author of one of the pieces featured in the line-up, a dialogue entitled 'Jeu d'échecs' (Chessboard). In spite of these interventions, her name and face remain largely forgotten.

A 1921 photograph of the Paris Dada group (fig. 68) is especially useful, then, since it provides a vivid visual record of its contributors. It unites most of the key players: in the back row Louis Aragon, Théodore Fraenkel, Paul Eluard, Clément Pansaers and Emmanuel Fay; in the middle row Benjamin Péret, Paul Dermée, Philippe Soupault and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes; and in the front row Tzara, Arnould, Picabia and Breton. Apart from the fact that it depicts many of the period's avant-garde literati together, the other striking element in this photograph is that, taking her place among this group of twelve men is one woman, Céline Arnould, seated between Tzara and Picabia. The photograph raises the question of who this woman was and what role she played within Dada.

Searches for the name Céline Arnould on the internet most commonly bring up the following phrase: 'The Gospel of Celine [sic] Arnould'. In fact this phrase has little to do with Arnould. It is the title of a pamphlet of poems written by the American poet Clayton Eshelman and printed in 1977.<sup>7</sup> In 'A Note on the Text' Eshelman describes how he was asked to translate some poems by Arnould, 'who published a dozen or so books of poetry in the 20's and 30's and lived in Paris'. Eshelman was disappointed with the work: 'It was run-of-the-mill French poetry, worn-out language, superficial emotion, nothing new in short.' In spite of this damning assessment, he found himself inspired to write his own versions, which he did, he stated, in a kind of trance. He also rewrote a narrative for her



with two characters. The first is Latumba, 'a dream figure who was also a bohemian magician who was transmitting an obscure doctrine of sexual magic to her, whom she feared but who was teaching her something important', and Carmen, 'who immediately was Celine's lover and also involved with Latumba'. Eshelman explains: 'I found myself discovering the "gospel" of the gradual release of Celine Arnould from the bourgeois Catholic mind of her era.' He said that his final image, of a cross sinking, 'signaled Celine's release from the forces the original Celine was under the sway of'.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, Eshelman, a poet, had total liberty to pursue his creative experiment. However, it is included here because his text demonstrates misunderstandings, assumptions and prejudices about Arnould. Eshelman apparently failed to comprehend the conditions under which Arnould was writing, was ignorant of the rebellion inherent in her participation in Dada and did not perceive any aspects of innovation in her body of work. Furthermore, he effectively took inspiration from Arnould's work, albeit to rework it, without assigning it any value. Finally, the fictional rewriting based on Eshelman's own imagination, with its fantasies about the rescue of this woman by a male figure, is much closer to worn-out cliché than Arnould's work. His text provides a microcosmic example of what happens to undervalued women writers in histories, biographies or narratives. *The Gospel of Celine Arnould* made no headway into her gospel but instead usurped it with a more 'knowing' reinterpretation that was foisted on her name.

The challenge now is to reconstruct Arnould's own context, position and achievements. In her letter to Tzara, which I quoted in this book's introduction, Arnould articulated her contributions concisely: 'my efforts in lyricism as much as in action'.<sup>9</sup> She left behind a large body of work but I shall focus on examples of her poetry, prose and short dramatic pieces that featured in Dada journals. Literary Dada flourished in Paris. Journals, pamphlets and tracts thrived in the early 1920s and the names of many of their innovative editors and contributors are familiar, from Picabia and Tzara to future Surrealists including Aragon, Breton and Eluard. Arnould's status as a woman writer and editor within these circles makes her case of particular interest, not least given some misconceptions – reinforced by, or symptomatic of, gaps in research – that women, apart from the great and often cited exception of Gertrude Stein, did not feature among the most experimental writers of the avant-garde. Susan Rubin Suleiman proposed in 1990: 'The avant-garde woman writer is doubly intolerable, seen from the center, because her writing escapes not one but two sets of expectations/categorizations; it corresponds neither to the "usual revolutionary point of view" nor to the "woman's point of view"'.<sup>10</sup> While great inroads have been made into perceptions, or misconceptions, of the avant-garde visual arts as purely male, the status of women avant-garde writers often remains uneasy.

## Transporting language: Arnould's poetry

Arnould's poetic output was prolific. It appears that she published a first volume of poetry, *La Lanterne magique* (The Magic Lantern), as early as 1914, though no surviving copy has been traced. She followed it with *Poèmes à claires-voies* (Openwork Poems)



69 Portrait of Céline Arnauld by Halicka, *Point de mire*, 1921.

in 1920, *Point de mire* (Focal Point) in 1921 (fig. 69) and *Guépier de diamants* (Diamond Trap) in 1923. The last three volumes, which appeared during Dada's manifestation in Paris, would doubtless be considered part of the wider Dada and avant-garde oeuvre if she were a more established figure in literary histories. After the end of Dada as a coherent movement in Paris, Arnauld continued to publish volumes with reasonable regularity right up to 1948, from *La Nuit rêve tout haut, poème à deux voix & Le Clavier Secret, poèmes (1925 à 1934)* (The Night Dreams High and Loud, Poem for Two Voices & The Secret Piano, Poems from 1925 to 1934), to *Rien qu'une étoile; suivi de plain-chants sauvages* (Nothing but a Star; Followed by Wild Plain-Songs) in 1948. These books are rare and even the Bibliothèque Nationale de France does not hold a full set. Most importantly, they continue Arnauld's experimental approach after Dada. Arnauld prefaces *La Nuit rêve tout haut*, for example, with instructions that it should be recited aloud by two voices, accompanied by a secret or imaginary piano setting.

Like Emmy Hennings, Arnauld published both poetry and prose but the larger part of her oeuvre, especially her own single-authored publications, was poetry. In later life, Hennings had turned increasingly to prose, writing contributions for newspapers and journals, as well as books on Ball, not least to finance herself. Arnauld managed to be consistently published as a poet in her lifetime, with recognition from many of her contemporaries, but always in small print-runs with the avant-garde publishers of the time.

# DADAPHONE

Écrire à :  
TRISTAN TZARA  
12, Avenue Charles Floquet

Administration : AU SANS PAREIL, 37, Avenue Kléber

N° 7

PRIX :  
1 FR. 50  
PARIS  
MARS 1920

DAME !



Céline ARNAULD

70 (above left)  
Cover of  
*DADAPHONE*, March  
1920. Collection of  
the International  
Dada Archive,  
Special Collections,  
The University of  
Iowa Libraries.

71 (above right)  
Portrait of Céline  
Arnauld,  
*DADAPHONE*, March  
1920. Collection of  
the International  
Dada Archive,  
Special Collections,  
The University of  
Iowa Libraries.

Where Hennings figured on the cusp of Expressionism and the beginnings of Dada in the German-language context, Arnauld came into view in the heart of Dada Paris, as Surrealism too was being forged. She had links with both established Dadaists such as Tzara and Picabia and future Surrealists including Aragon, Breton, Eluard and Soupault and her work features not only Dada characteristics but some aspects that came to be seen as typical of Surrealist writing.

This section will discuss three of Arnauld's poems published in Dada journals, that is in *DADAPHONE*, *Cannibale* and *Z* edited by Tzara, Picabia and Dermée respectively. These three poems share themes and motifs, including a fascination with transport, both in the sense of modern modes of travel and also of movement and flight in a more metaphysical sense. They also display preoccupations and innovations with language as material, which characterise Arnauld's entire experimental oeuvre, both poetry and prose. While this small selection cannot possibly fully represent her extensive poetic output, it serves to give an idea of her work within the Dada context.

It is fitting to start with a publication by Tzara, who played a large part in importing Dada from Zurich to Paris. He quickly followed up a first Paris-produced journal *Bulletin Dada* (*Dada 6*), published in February 1920, with *DADAPHONE*, in March 1920 (fig. 70). The two publications marked his, and Dada's, arrival in the fast-moving world of avant-garde Paris journals. *DADAPHONE* was effectively the seventh and final publication of the original *Dada* journal started in Zurich. Illustrated with drawings by Picabia and photographs by Christian Schad, it includes portraits of the eight contributors, one of whom is Arnauld (fig. 71). Hugnet's description of the portraits points out their

# ÉNIGME-PERSONNAGES

Pas assez mystérieux au volant de ta voiture  
Tu ne trouveras jamais la clé de  
D à l'envers énigme en autobus M  
Raccrochée par une étoile l'échelle renversée  
Bicyclette en divagation lunettes noblement remontées  
Assurément pas assez Dada ça viendra  
Assis au bord des routes feu follet  
Sur le rire du délire enfantin  
Et le chemin de fer railleur  
montre ses dents neuves  
au dernier train

Céline ARNAULD.

**391 N° 12 2 FR.**

contient le manifeste DADA  
de Francis Picabia

**La section dorée**, de Georges  
Ribemont-Dessaignes

**Monsieur Aa**, de Tristan Tzara,  
**La Joconde**

L. H. O. O. Q.  
de Marcel Duchamp

**La Sainte-Vierge**, dessinée par  
Francis Picabia

**des poèmes**, de André Breton,  
Louis Aragon, Philippe Soupault,  
Tristan Tzara, G. Ribemont-Dessaignes  
Céline Arnauld, Marguerite Buffet,  
Paul Dermée, etc., etc.

Au Sans Pareil, 37, Av. Kléber

**L'INSIGNE DADA COUTE 5 FR.**

Ecrivez à G. Ribemont-Dessaignes  
18, Rue Fourcroy, Paris (17<sup>e</sup>)

Viennent de paraître :

" D<sup>D</sup> H<sup>2</sup> O<sup>4</sup> "

" Z "

" PROVERBE "

" LITTÉRATURE "

" M'AMENEZ'Y "

**Revue DADA**

72 Céline Arnauld, 'Enigme-Personnages', *DADaphone*, March 1920. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.

humorous effect: 'Soupault, bowler hat and monocle; Tzara, forelock, pince-nez and cravat; Dermée, behind a tennis racquet; Eluard, high forehead; Ribemont-Dessaignes, higher forehead; Céline Arnauld, bare-headed; Breton, glasses and pocket handkerchief; Aragon, *noble-hearted lover of Dadaism*, as Picabia puts it; and he, the latter, a cannibal in summer clothes.'<sup>11</sup> Arnauld, appearing simply 'bare-headed', stands out, just as she does in the photograph reproduced in the first section of this chapter, as the only woman among this group of men.

Her contribution to *DADaphone* is the poem 'Enigme-Personnages' (Enigma-figures; fig. 72), whose title fits these photographic portraits nicely. It reveals distinctly Dada characteristics, abandoning narrative coherence in favour of a series of enigmatic images. An informal 'tu' is addressed, imagined at the wheel of a car. The action moves from a car, to a bus, to a rambling bicycle, to the side of the road and finally to the railway. These fragments of daily transport are like flashes in time or momentary sights glimpsed by the traveller or commuter. The concise nature of the language reflects the speed at which an image might be captured, such as 'Bicyclette en divagation lunettes

noblement remontées' (Bicycle rambling spectacles nobly put back on), which leaves out any main verb altogether but which produces an effective, comical visual impression in which the circular forms of the bicycle wheels and spectacles offer a mutual visual echo. Other imagery is equally vivid, such as 'le chemin de fer railleur/montre ses dents neuves' (the mocking railway/shows its new teeth). Both phrases use graphic metaphors: in the first, the glasses, made up of two circles and a metal frame, remind us of the shape of the bicycle and vice versa. In the second, the tracks of the railway are likened to teeth, opening in a grin before the moving train. The word 'railleur' (mocking) has lexical associations, too, with 'rail' as in railway.

The journey in the poem evokes, on the one hand, a physical displacement and, on the other, a mental voyage, the mind stimulated by sights and the associations they activate. Arnauld seems to be challenging the reader to extend his or her thoughts beyond the evidence of physical reality. At the very start she makes the accusation 'Pas assez mystérieux au volant de ta voiture' (Not mysterious enough at the wheel of your car) and later accuses the reader of being 'pas assez Dada' (not Dada enough). Her object of critique is apparently the failure to perceive anything beyond logic and external appearance. Then, repeating the *énigme* of the title she declares: 'Tu ne trouveras jamais la clé de/D à l'envers énigme en autobus M' (You'll never find the key to/D back-to-front enigma on bus M). 'La clé de D' might have arisen simply from the rhyme or from its visual shape. Alternatively, the D might stand for Dada, or the M and D, if reversed as the poem suggests, to Marcel Duchamp. This use of D and M as signifiers is an example of language broken down into its smallest component, the letter, the arbitrary sign. Any reader seeking to discover semantic coherence is told they will not crack the enigma. Instead, the poem celebrates the *feu follet* (will-o'-the-wisp) and *rire du délire enfantin* (laugh of childish delight) that come with fantasy and mystery rather than rationality.

Arnauld's poem revels in free-flowing thought, the collision of images and language play. Some images are fantastical, such as 'Raccrochée par une étoile l'échelle renversée' (The overturned ladder, hung up by a star). The alliterative 'envers', 'énigme', 'étoile' and 'échelle' in the third and fourth lines of the poem play as much with the visual and sound quality of the words as with their semantic aspect. Grammar is partially abandoned, with the subject of a phrase often unspecified or unclear. The 'Enigme-Personnages' of the title haunt the poem and evade identification. As a result, an actual physical journey is fused with the sights it produces, the visions, chance encounters and mental meanderings that pervade the mind if it is freed to wander. The poem advocates the liberation of imagination and of language and identifies Dada as an agent.

In 'Avertisseur' (Alarm) (fig. 73), published in Dermée's *Z* in the same month that 'Enigme-Personnages' appeared in *DADaphone* (March 1920), Arnauld again uses transport as a motif in a poem that appears to depict a daily commute, from the moment of waking up, to getting out of bed, to the sight of an aeroplane above to taking the train. From the glimpse of an aeroplane's wings, to the railway tracks, mechanics, Pullman coaches, station stop and stationmaster, it evokes the sights, sounds, interactions, encounters and displacements of an everyday city journey. The mind races and

## AVERTISSEUR

Les sentiments  
descentes de lit dans la maison  
de l'antiquaire  
Matin  
Les ailes de l'aéroplane  
balancent le réveil des amours  
en chemin de fer  
Les rails en pleurs  
l'intelligence déraile  
et sans souci les mécaniciens se disputent  
les chansons des wagons-lits  
Mes amis mes amis  
ne vous fiez pas à l'étincelle  
le feu prend partout  
même dans vos cervelles  
Arrêt première station  
le chef de gare sans raison  
— est-ce l'étalage du soleil  
sur les fenêtres du wagon  
ou l'inspiration anti-alcool  
du matin en papillotes —  
divague en jonglant avec les colis  
sévèrement remplis de café réveil-matin  
La puissance des catapultes  
brise les ailes trop fragiles de l'aéroplane  
                  balançoire de vieilles tendresses  
Ohé mes très chers amis  
sur les sentiments en descente de lit  
le temps passe  
la pluie tombe méfiante et mesquine  
Vos paroles sont des schrapnells  
sur les roues tournesol  
Les cimetières s'allongent jusqu'à l'herbe  
  morte...  
Prenez garde aux tombes ouvertes

CÉLINE ARNAULD

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### RÉPONSES

*La plus basse littérature, c'est la littérature de vengeance.*

*A ceux qui ne sont pas mes amis : « Suivez la foule, troupeau d'imbéciles. »*

CÉLINE ARNAULD

travels too, from the very first lines 'les sentiments descentes de lit' (sentiments getting out of bed). Inner and outer worlds overlap and the tone and feelings change in lines such as 'les ailes de l'aéroplane balancent le réveil des amours' (The airplane's wings balance the reawakenings of love), 'les rails en pleurs' (the rails in tears) and 'l'intelligence déraile' (intelligence derails).<sup>12</sup>

Fleeting impressions build rapidly: 'est-ce l'étalage du soleil/sur les fenêtres du wagon/ou l'inspiration anti-alcool/du matin en papillotes' (is it the display of sunlight/on the coach windows/or the anti-alcohol inspiration/of the morning in paper curls). A description of the stationmaster is rich and sensuous: 'le chef de gare . . . divague en jonglant avec les colis/sévèrement remplis du café réveil-matin' (the stationmaster . . . rambles on while juggling the packages/full to the brim with alarm-clock coffee). The words tumble and crash together, reflecting the speed and exhilaration of early morning urban activity. Arnould flashes up visual signs, unmitigated by syntax and conventions and reminiscent of the Expressionist serial style. With its fragments of rapid, visual experiences, in a succession of short lines, the poem also brings to mind the Berlin Dadaists' city photomontages, such as Grosz and Heartfield's *Leben und trieben im Universal-City, 12 Uhr 5 Mittags* (*Life and Work in Universal City, 12:05 Noon*; 1919) and Paul Citroen's *Metropolis* (1923). In Arnould's poem, myriad aspects appear and disappear in the mind's eye just as briefly. Like developments in fine art, her literary experiments reflect the increasing importance of the visual sign in the culture of the early decades of the twentieth century, propagated through mass print media, advertising and film. Ivan Goll's early Manifesto of Surrealism published in the first number of *Surréalisme* in October 1924, made this explicit. It discussed how poetry had been 'ruled' by the ear and continued: 'For some twenty years now, the eye has been taking its revenge. It's the century of the film. We increasingly communicate via visual signs. And it is rapidity that makes for quality today.'<sup>13</sup>

On one level, 'Avertisseur' celebrates modernity and urbanity. It recalls Marinetti's evocation of the city and the exciting potential of transport to cross space in minimal time: 'An ordinary man in a day's time can travel by train from a little dead town of empty squares, where the sun, the dust, and the wind amuse themselves in silence, to a great capital city bursting with lights, gestures and street cries.'<sup>14</sup> On another level, 'Avertisseur' issues cautions and warnings, as though the poet were not entirely convinced of the desirability of modern technology and modes of living. Again, Arnould uses direct address: 'Mes amis mes amis/ne vous fiez pas à l'étincelle/le feu prend partout/même dans vos cervelles' (My friends my friends/don't trust in sparks/fire erupts everywhere/even in your brains). Thus, the alarm of the title might allude not only to a morning alarm call but also to a metaphorical wake-up call, or warning, to the commuter, shuttled along, or to the reader. The poem is at its most ominous at the very end: 'la pluie tombe méfiante et mesquine/Vos paroles sont des schrapnells/sur les roues tournesol/Les cimetières s'allongent jusqu'à l'herbe morte . . . /Prenez garde aux tombes ouvertes' (the rain falls suspicious and petty/Your words are shrapnel/on the sunflower wheels/The cemeteries extend to the dead grass . . . /Watch out for the open graves). These more pessimistic images arise from a particular historical context – the

# MES TROIS PÉCHÉS DADA

En remontant la colline  
la roue cassée, prunelle amère  
sifflait l'hymne des mantes enfants de chœur  
Les yeux des perroquets sont des billes  
billevesées

Vous n'êtes ni Dieu, ni mantille  
ni ombrelle, ni mécanisme de réveil  
Vous êtes l'amphitryon d'Amphion sans lyre  
Sire se mirant sans lyre  
La marelle accouche d'un tournesol  
le tournesol de ma prière  
et mes yeux d'une roue cassée  
que j'envoyais au Sire Abbé Merlin  
Pour me punir j'irai m'immoler dans le cellier  
C'est la faute du fanal qui se mourrait

\*  
\* \*

L'affreuse chance  
Boire du whisky dans un lys  
discussion spirituelle de ma trahison envers  
moi-même

puis dormir, dormir jusqu'à ce qu'une  
aumône  
tombée des yeux glisse dans mes veines  
Mais ce que j'ai donné au perroquet  
n'est pas pour vous  
L'amitié ne s'écrit pas en sténographie

\*  
\* \*

Et c'était toujours cette roue cassée  
qui me tourmentait  
Pour la raccommode  
je pris Sire Abbé Merlin comme témoin  
l'échelle comme image  
le verre comme microscope  
et mes yeux comme beau langage  
Enfin, puisque tout est fini  
nous irons démolir l'édifice bâti sur une  
roue et un clou  
dans le sellier aux discussions spirituelles  
de mon calvaire en whisky

Céline ARNAULD

74 Céline Arnauld, 'Mes trois péchés Dada', *Cannibale*, no. 2, 25 May 1920. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.

devastating First World War had ended only two years before – and from mixed feelings about new technology, the thrills and possibilities associated with it and conversely the potential for its terrible abuse. 'Avertisseur' could be read as a warning against complacency and apathy, and an exhortation to be alert.

The next poem, 'Mes trois péchés Dada' (My three Dada sins; fig. 74), was included in Picabia's second issue of *Cannibale*, which came out on 25 May 1920. The poem is organised into three sections, loosely linked by recurring words and motifs. The references and images through the poem as a whole are extraordinarily eclectic, from religion to Greek mythology, to ordinary objects rendered extraordinary, including the alarm clock, ladder and wheel used in 'Enigme-personnages'. Some of the more unusual combinations are typically Surrealist in their use of juxtapositions, such as: 'La marelle



accouche d'un tournesol' (The hopscotch gives birth to a sunflower). Words are brought together to create visual, fantastical conundrums and also for their pure linguistic assonances or discord, such as in 'les yeux de perroquets sont des billes billevesées' (parrots' eyes are nonsense marbles).

Once again, Arnauld directs the poem to 'you', this time using the polite or plural 'vous', to address her opponent, observer or reader. She claims, 'Vous n'êtes ni Dieu, ni mantille/ni ombrelle, ni mécanisme de réveil' (You are neither God, nor mantilla/nor parasol, nor alarm clock). The construction recalls an anarchist slogan of the period 'ni Dieu ni maître'. This list initially appears nonsensical and random. Each object, however, has the potential to exercise some power or effect: God, as moral and spiritual authority, the mantilla (a traditional scarf worn by women, which covers the head), the umbrella as shelter and the alarm clock as rousing. Arnauld declares that her addressee is none of these and so pronounces them ineffectual. Instead, 'Vous êtes l'amphitryon d'Amphion sans lyre/Sire se mirant sans lyre' (You are the host of Amphion without a lyre/Sire gazing at himself without a lyre). Language play is evident in the combinations of 'amphitryon' and 'Amphion' as well as the rhyming of 'Sire', 'se mirant' and 'lyre'. In Greek mythology, Amphion was the son of Zeus who, with his twin Zethus, built a wall around Thebes by charming the stones with his magical lyre. Without his lyre, as he is imagined here, he would be powerless: hence, this can be read both as an insult to the mythological figure and a provocation to the reader, who is compared to him. Since the lyre is also associated with Orpheus, the musician and poet of Greek myth, this might also be a provocation to the poet.

Although not immediately clear from the initial lines, there is also a first-person subject who, in the three sections of the poem, articulates a conflict, which presumably centres on the three Dada sins of the title. The scene begins with a pitiful struggle: 'En remontant la colline/la roue cassée, prunelle amère' (Climbing up the hill/broken wheel, bitter eye).<sup>15</sup> The subject goes on to confront adversaries and seek to deny them power. Yet at the end of this first section, she or he is apparently still suffering and declares: 'Pour me punir j'irai m'immoler dans le cellier' (To punish myself I'll banish myself to the storeroom). The second section represents a transition, as the subject falls asleep, still tormented by 'ma trahison envers moi-même' (My betrayal of myself). In the third section she or he rails against this apparent state of suffering, possibly the consequence of judgements made by herself and others.

Throughout the poem there is a circular motif – references to eyes and wheels, as well as sunflowers and headlights. The broken wheel, or broken circle, which appears in the second line, and again in the eleventh line – in both cases linked to the eye and to vision – suggests discord. Then the third section returns to the broken wheel: 'Et c'était toujours cette roue cassée/qui me tourmentait' (And it was still this broken wheel/that was tormenting me). She takes steps to repair it and the result, 'mes yeux comme beau langage' (my eyes like beautiful language), contrasts with the former description of 'mes yeux d'une roue cassée' (my broken-wheel eyes). Vision is portrayed as a vital, positive force. Finally, the subject demolishes 'l'édifice bâti sur une roue et un clou' (the building built on a wheel and a nail). The physical, logical edifice is destroyed

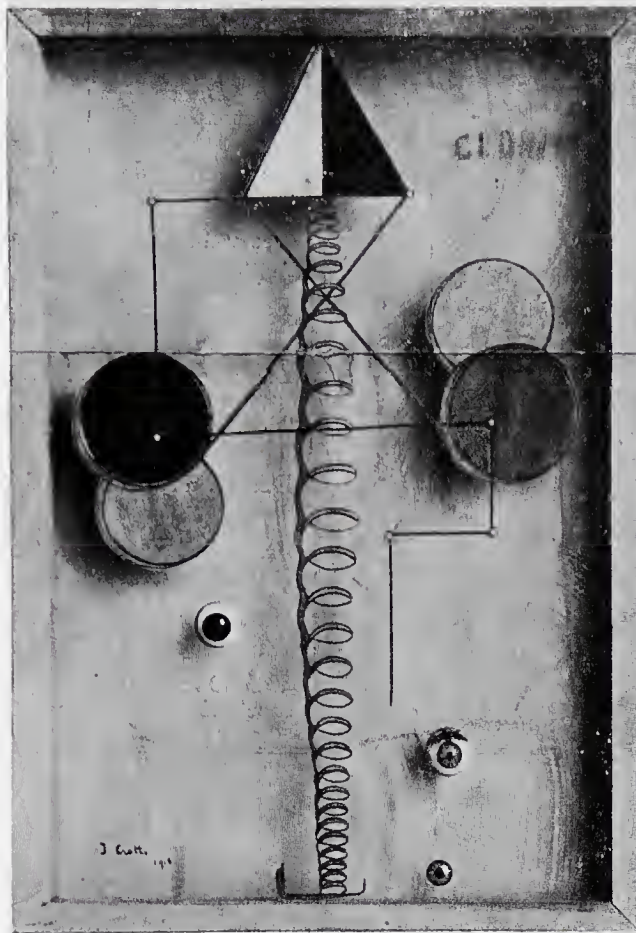
in favour of explorations of, and escapes into, language, imagery and vision. Dada sins, it turns out, are principally considered sins by opponents. 'Mes trois péchés' could be read as an articulation of the conflicts inherent in self-expression. The subject is torn between freedom and convention, and personal liberty and social expectation. This equation of transgressions with sin recalls some of Hennings's writings, in which she worked through questions of guilt and choice.

Arnauld's poems are characterised by the free and playful use of images common to many Dada texts. Above all, they can be appreciated for their fantastical qualities and for their privileging and highlighting of the language material. As Paul Eluard wrote in *Proverbe* (1920), 'Les poètes badins sont aussi des poètes' (Playful poets are poets too). Each of the three poems discussed here presents a conviction of the power of visual perception. Arnauld's free use of language sets itself against semantic logic and her imagery aims to enlarge the scope of what can be thought and experienced. Additionally, each poem has a more ominous, critical side, which emerges as a distinctive aspect of Arnauld's work. 'Avertisseur', especially, ends on a tangible warning note about death and destruction, while 'Mes trois péchés' seems to enact a battle between guilt and liberation, restriction and freedom, authority and self-determination. 'Enigme-Personnages', meanwhile, is more playful but wilfully rejects authority, logic and the imposition of answers. A statement by Dermée in *Z* can be fittingly applied to the spontaneity and freedom in Arnauld's work: 'Dada's shattering of the authority of constraints tended to liberate the natural playfulness in our activities. Dada led, then, to amorality and to the most spontaneous – and consequently least logical – lyricism. This lyricism expresses itself in a thousand ways in life.'<sup>16</sup>

## Experiments in prose: from fairy-tale to dramatic dialogue

The objective of liberating language in poetry had potential consequences beyond literature. Bohn noted: 'In the best [Dada] poems, one encounters a critique of language itself and an attempt to deconstruct the cultural sign system.'<sup>17</sup> Arnauld's prose work was equally interested in liberating language from 'reality' and in the bringing together (and tearing apart) of thought and language. If she criticised and feared her environment and communicated doubts about modern life, technology and above all people, she also celebrated perception and expression, and it was through a renewed use of language that she glimpsed alternative possibilities of extension and escape.

Arnauld's testing of prose had begun as early as 1919, with the publication of the experimental novel *Tournevire*.<sup>18</sup> It is a highly ambitious work, not least since experimental novels were much less common than poetry or short prose pieces, which could be published in journals. Its title, *Tournevire*, is a dated, specialist term that refers to an old marine navigation tool.<sup>19</sup> The novel reads like a macabre fairy tale, and features a number of fantastical characters, including Luciole (Firefly), Mirador (Watchtower) an ogre, white bear and angel, who interact at a forest fair. It intersperses description with large sections of dialogue and ends with songs by some of the protagonists, so that it



## Périscopes

La rapière s'est plantée dans le limon tatoué  
de la taupinée maison faite à tâtons avec l'aide  
du violon après le solstice la mort des chan-  
teurs des buissons et des javelles cathédrales  
séchées par des chansons

J'ai vu et j'ai compris l'erreur de toute une  
doctrine le message lyrique du mime et la nuit  
se prolongea gaie et éternelle dans les yeux  
des oiseaux voyageurs

Quand les boissons des cabarets peints pas-  
saient avec leurs lanternes par la forêt les  
oiseaux volaient des morceaux de lumière et  
les cachaient dans leurs nids

Indigestion d'étoiles intoxication lunaire et la  
fête commença sous le clocher que traverse  
l'éclair en sourdine Tous les nids s'étaient allu-  
més et dans les yeux se mourait le dernier  
rayon de la spontanéité

Affolés les criquets pèlerins se posèrent à trois  
au bord du croissant de la lune descendue par  
sympathie sur les seins d'Argine

Ah le mime a parlé la rapière plantée dans les  
mots du solstice en rire qui vient de naître —  
Le basilic tomba foudroyé par son propre  
regard

CÉLINE ARNAULD

75 Céline  
Arnauld,  
'Périscopes', 391, no.  
14, November 1920.  
Collection of the  
International Dada  
Archive, Special  
Collections, The  
University of Iowa  
Libraries.

is reminiscent of popular or musical theatre. Perhaps it is an attempt to rework and debunk fairy-tale and myth. It certainly infuses fantasy and romanticism with a sense of absurdity, menace and threat. Yet it also hints at elements in her later, Dada work, such as a love of the absurd, unbounded imagination, lack of realism, rejection of narrative coherence, free mixing of symbols and pure indulgence in the possibilities of language as a pursuit in itself.

It appears that Arnauld planned, and may have drafted, more novels following *Tournevire* but none was actually published.<sup>20</sup> Her book publications afterwards were all volumes of poetry. However, she contributed a number of prose texts in late 1920 and in 1921 to Dada publications, in which inventiveness with language is apparent, as well as the attempt to access experience that lies beyond the established boundaries of language. Her short prose pieces combine deconstruction and iconoclasm with lyricism and invention.

In 'Périscopes' (fig. 75), published in the fourteenth issue of *Picabia's* 391 in November 1920, Arnauld's inventive use of language is at its most apparent. Here, in some 170 words, she more or less bypasses punctuation. The text is divided into just six sentences and features no commas, so that phrases run on from one another. Words are brought together for the pure pleasure of the sound and sight of them, as the first sentence illus-

trates: ‘La rapière s’est plantée dans le limon tatoué de la taupinée maison faite à tâtons avec l’aide du violon après le solstice la mort des chanteurs des buissons et des javelles cathédrales séchées par des chansons’ (The rapier sank into the lemon tattooed with the molehill house made gropingly with the violin’s help after the solstice the death of the singers the bushes and the cathedrals swathes dried up by songs). Arnould chose uncommon words, such as ‘rapière’ (rapier), ‘javelles’ (swathes) and ‘taupinée’ (molehill), which are unusual both for what they signify and for their sound quality. In combination, they have even more extraordinary effects, such as the fantastical ‘Affolés les criquets pélerins se posèrent à trois au bord du croissant de la lune descendue par sympathie sur les seins d’Argine’ (Panic-stricken the pilgrim crickets lined up in threes at the side of the crescent moon come down out of sympathy on the Queen of Club’s bosom).

Arnould’s approach fits into the broader context of the historical avant-garde. In 1913 Marinetti had succinctly theorised his approach to language with the term ‘imagination without strings’. He explained: ‘By the imagination without strings I mean the absolute freedom of images or analogies, expressed with unhampered words and with no connecting strings of syntax and with no punctuation.’<sup>21</sup> The Zurich Dadaists, meanwhile, expressed their love of chance, random juxtapositions and liberated linguistic signs in sound poems. Arp, straddling Dada and Surrealism, liberated syntax in poems including ‘La couille d’hirondelle’ (The Swallow’s Testicle), an extract of which appeared on the same page of the 391 edition as Arnould’s ‘Périscopé’.<sup>22</sup> Finally, Breton and Soupault developed the concept of automatism as a central tenet of Surrealism. Like Freud’s free association method, it indulged in an outpouring of words unhindered by preconceived ideas. In each case, avant-garde poets focused on the material quality of the words, to privilege that over semantic arrangements and to reinvigorate language that had become worn and customary. As Eluard declared in the first issue of *Proverbe*, ‘Words wear themselves out through being used, and once they have succeeded they have nothing more to give (as happens with men).’<sup>23</sup> A reinvigoration of language was linked to a reinvigoration of thought and action. In a text like Arnould’s, words became unfamiliar once again and had a different, unexpected impact.

‘Périscopé’ also exalts nature as an alternative to modern civilisation. As in many of Arnould’s pieces, birds feature as symbols of freedom and flight. It also makes numerous references to lanterns, morsels of light, stars, the solstice, lightning and the moon, to suggest, again, the primacy of vision. While the Dadaists tended to focus on modernity and everyday, urban experience, the poets among them were also attracted to so-called primitive cultures and to the impact of language outside (or prior to) linguistic systems familiar to them. The Zurich poets’ invention of sound poetry, in which language is broken down into the smallest units of sound, provides the clearest example of a free flow of language, to break open patterns of thinking and seeing. Arnould’s lyrical flights of imagination indulge in the visual and sound quality of the words. Meanwhile, her flow of words and interest in fantasy anticipated the Surrealists’ love of the unconscious, the dreamlike and childlike, and can be seen as a forerunner of automatic poetry.

76 (facing page top) Cover of *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, 10 July 1921. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.

77 (facing page below) Céline Arnould, ‘Envoi du Japon’, *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, 10 July 1921. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.



## ENVOI DU JAPON

« Le D<sup>r</sup> Li-ti-pi m'avait invitée à assister à une autopsie. Cela se passait à la morgue de Tchiou-Chang. Sur la table on avait étendu un énorme papillon. On trouva caché derrière ses ailes : une locomotive, quatre martyrs, un sucre d'orge, un curé, un flacon d'aspirine, une étoile, un mouton et un serpent, un empereur, un homme, un parapluie, une lune et huit soleils, enfin toute une cour, à qui il portait ombrage !

« Alors le papillon soulagé se mit à voler, à la grande joie et au grand chagrin de ceux qui le croyaient mort ».

CÉLINE ARNAULD

A short prose piece, 'Envoi du Japon' (Consignment from Japan), appeared in Picabia's review *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou* on 10 July 1921 (figs 76 and 77). It tells the story of an autopsy performed on a butterfly, which reveals a collection of objects hidden beneath its wings. Once these have been removed, the butterfly is able to fly away, to the 'great joy and great chagrin' of the people, who thought it dead. The text is extremely condensed, reminiscent of a parable, which it simultaneously reveres and plays with. It could be read in a semi-serious way: the butterfly is laden with the cares and responsibilities of the civilised world, with parasites and invented burdens. These parasites include a parish priest, an emperor, four martyrs and a man, who can be seen to represent civilisation and authority, or 'an entire court', as Arnaud puts it. The piece could also be read as a purely fanciful, humorous and unrestricted juxtaposition of objects,

in the way that the Surrealists celebrated *objets trouvés*. As well as the human figures, the unlikely collection includes a locomotive, a barley sugar, a bottle of aspirin, a star, a sheep, a snake, an umbrella, a moon and eight suns. This edge of humour begins with the rhyming name 'D'Li-ti-pi', Arnould's invention of a Japanese name.

The 'lyrical dialogue' 'Jeu d'échecs' (Chessboard) offers one more example of Arnould's experiments with prose. It was performed at the Salle Gaveau on 26 May 1920, the second major event staged in Paris, which also featured sketches by Aragon, Breton, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Soupault and Tzara, among others. Dadaist performances in Paris frequently included short dialogues and dramas, some of which were reproduced in journals, but they are often neglected in analyses of Dada work. This interest in drama may be seen as a disaffection for poetry, perceived as esoteric and paper-bound, in favour of more immediate communication in the form of performance, as practised prolifically by Zurich Dada.

Céline Arnould's dialogue constitutes a sort of verbal game of chess between two players. In a number of drawings and paintings, from as early as 1912, Marcel Duchamp had used chess images to depict human relationships, especially sexual relations, exploring the metaphor for themes including the notion of predetermined moves.<sup>24</sup> For 'Jeu d'échecs', Arnould chose two chesspieces: 'Le Roi' (the king) and 'le Fou' (the fool), equivalent to the bishop in English. The fluidity and apparent irrationality of their conversation stands in contrast to the concentration and logic demanded by a game of chess. Their responses to each other do not follow a rational pattern: each appears to pursue and unload subconscious thoughts, to produce language and ideas that have somehow been triggered by the other's words or actions. As Antonin Artaud wrote in a review of Arnould's work: 'One image calls up another image according to laws that are the very same as those of thought.'<sup>25</sup>

There is an element of absurdity about the characters' situation, who appear trapped in a social system or game, signified by the chessboard. As in Samuel Beckett's much later *Waiting for Godot*, their steps are prescribed and free will limited. Arnould's king is confined by his position and expectations – 'moi le seul gardien des hallucinations' (I, the sole guardian of hallucinations). In his last speech he declares: 'Enfin que me voulez-vous? Je suis le roi, la route épineuse des assassins est la mienne – je vous nargue tous – vos paroles sonnent faux – faux – faux – on ne prend pas mon coeur aux échecs' (In the end, what is it you want of me? I am the king, mine is the thorny route of assassins – I scoff at you all – your words sound false – false – false – they will not take my heart at chess). Significantly, the king is not shown to be any wiser than the less powerful chesspiece/character. The latter is given the last word, with a song. He is insightful and prophetic in contrast to the failing king. *Le Fou* could be compared to the Dada project: less fettered by social convention and expectations, he follows his thoughts and expression: 'Enfin, je suis l'unique affront' (In the end I am the only affront).

There is a third character in this dialogue, the *curé* (pastor), who does not appear but is referred to by the other characters. He is a ridiculous figure, not even granted a voice and he certainly fares less well than the fool. The text demonstrates a total irreverence with regard to religion. This is most apparent in the shortest turn of dialogue

in the whole drama, when the king pronounces – and Arnauld gives the direction ‘*prophétique*’ – ‘Le Christ n’a jamais aimé personne’ ([prophetically] – Christ has never loved anyone). Language, once again, is paramount and, although its arbitrariness and failings as a stable communication tool are exposed, it is also shown to offer potential. This is made most explicit by *le fou* who, just before his song, ends with a declaration of the ‘fecund buisson universel des mots’ (universal fecund bush of words).

Arnauld sought to apply the same level of liberation to the dialogue in ‘Jeu d’échecs’ as she allowed in her poetry. In this way, she shared preoccupations with other Dada writers, including Tzara, who also wrote drama. Bohn noted: ‘Jacques Baron has argued that the subject of Tzara’s plays is really the birth of language via the destruction and reconstruction of the word. Thus, the Dada poets wished to stimulate thought and to achieve new states of consciousness by manipulating their (verbal) medium.’<sup>26</sup> Arnauld was drawn to the codes of fairy-tales, fables and games, perhaps because of their power to shape thought and uphold moral and social systems. The king’s first phrase in ‘Jeu d’échecs’ reflects explicitly on this issue: ‘La clé des histoires enfantines est une cravate étroite qui serres les paroles’ (The key to children’s stories is a tight tie that squashes speech). By reformulating familiar genres, Arnauld pondered the ways in which language imposes itself through narratives, beginning with childhood. Her work envisaged a pre-logical existence, when language was less fettered, narrative more fantastical, and when the imagination may be less constricted.

## Manifestos: on ‘Aart’ and ‘Poetry’

As one of the Dada group of writers, Arnauld contributed numerous short pieces to journals that, as seen, encompassed poetry, prose fiction and drama. The freedom to experiment with categories was a feature of Dada work. In Dermée’s *Z*, from March 1920, to which Arnauld contributed the poem ‘Avertisseur’, she is also credited with a number of one- or two-line phrases. The first, under the title ‘Phrase’ reads ‘Le cafard est cubiste’ (The cockroach is Cubist). It is a neatly absurd and derogatory slogan, issuing an insult to the Cubists. The rejection of Cubism, derided as outdated, bourgeois and associated with formal innovation, became a thread of Dada attitudes. In the third issue of *Proverbe*, published a month later in April 1920, several insults to the Cubists appeared, written by Picabia, Ribemont-Dessaignes and Cocteau. *Cannibale* no. 2, published in May, also attacked the Cubists, not least via the spoof column ‘Cabinet du Docteur Aïsen’. In ‘Dada Soulève Tout’, launched on 15 January 1921, the Dadaists made a clear effort to distinguish themselves from other movements in the eyes of the public: ‘Le cubisme construit une cathédrale en pâté de foie artistique’ (Cubism is constructing a cathedral out of artistic liver pâté).<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Picabia announced two years later in *La Pomme de pins* (February 1922): ‘Le Cubisme est une cathédrale de merde’ (Cubism is a cathedral of shit), and produced a tract, *Plus de cubisme*, to coincide with it.<sup>28</sup>

Arnauld’s phrase ties in with the trajectory of these attacks on ‘old’ art. It also displays a typically Dada absurd twist. Instead of calling the Cubist a cockroach, she calls

the cockroach a Cubist. Ultimately, the juxtaposition of the artist with the lowliest parasitical insect is insulting. Nonetheless, given this playful slogan-like aspect, it cannot be taken too seriously but is an excellent instance of the sort of irreverent provocation that is half affront and half pure humour. Meanwhile, *cafard* was one of those words that reappeared as motifs in Dada texts. One month later, *Cannibale*, for example, included a poem, 'Cafard', by Ribemont-Dessaignes in which he wrote of the cockroach: 'Il sait plus que je ne sais il n'en est pas à une dimension' (He knows more than me and he's not one-dimensional about it).<sup>29</sup>

The next two contributions by Arnauld in *Z* come under the title 'Réponse/s' (Reply/Replies). These short phrases mimic those sections of journals that are devoted to readers' comments and feedback. In this case, however, they are not genuine but the ironic, mocking inventions of the Dada author herself, who cares little, or at least declares that she cares little, about responses to her work. The first of the two phrases reads 'à P. R. – Le mépris, voilà ma réponse' (to P. R. – Scorn, that's my reply) and the second 'La plus basse littérature, c'est la littérature de vengeance. A ceux qui ne sont pas mes amis: "Suivez la foule, troupeau d'imbéciles"' (The lowest form of literature is revenge literature. To those who are not my friends: 'Follow the crowd, you bunch of imbeciles') (see fig. 73). These phrases are typically Dada – provocative, humorous, witty and self-reflexive. Both heap scorn on their audience. The first addresses a particular detractor and although the identity of P. R. is not made explicit, it is undoubtedly Pierre Reverdy, the poet and editor of the journal *Nord-Sud*, with whom Arnauld's husband Dermée had an acrimonious split. The second phrase, in contrast, apparently expresses a rejection of the use of literature to get back at enemies. Given that the author's first phrase does just that, the second phrase immediately contradicts the first and vice versa. It effectively throws doubt on its own integrity and credibility and refuses to be taken at face value.

These phrases, both in their mockery of the reader and self-reflexive irony, echo Dermée's attitude in the opening text of *Z*, 'Qu'est-ce que Dada?' (What is Dada?): 'Les dadaïstes connaissent leurs dadas et s'en moquent. C'est la grande supériorité qu'ils ont sur vous' (The dadaists know their dadas and make fun of them. It's the great superiority they have over you). Arnauld's interventions demonstrate how she shared the ideological concerns of the Paris Dadaists and participated in their literary attacks on convention. Her repeated use of the term Dada, in 'Mes trois péchés Dada', 'Enigme-Personnages' and 'Ombrelle Dada', makes clear her close alignment with the group.

In April 1920 a short text, 'Dangereux' (Dangerous), appeared in Picabia's *Cannibale*:

Pour mettre fin à la stupide comédie de ceux qui se croient les défenseurs d'une nation qu'ils empoisonnent avec leur art fait de commérages, j'ai inventé une chanson filmée, une chanson qui tue, une chanson qui étrangle et qui désinfecte les regards en épluchures d'oignon; c'est le dernier film-fusée insecticide, visible au *Cinéma Céline Arnauld*, à Montmartre.

(To put an end to the stupid comedy of those who believe themselves to be the defenders of a nation that they poison with their art, made up of gossip, I've invented a filmed song, a song that kills, a song that strangles and that disinfects gazes into



onion peelings; it's the last rocket-film insecticide, screening at the *Céline Arnauld Cinema* in Montmartre.)

It is a violent rejection of tradition and of those who uphold it. It is also an acknowledgement of the power of the culture industry and establishment, whom she views as the defenders not only of a flawed art but also, via that poisonous art, as the defenders of the nation. There is anger behind this piece, as well as playfulness and, although it voices no political agenda, it is political in tone. Arnauld's alternative to stagnation is extraordinarily imaginative. She envisages a filmed song, one that will be destructive, will strangle and kill the present situation. The concept of the prevailing culture as poison is reinforced by her desire to use, metaphorically, disinfectant and insecticide to destroy it. She does not propose modification but total destruction. However, there is still the proposal of a future alternative, in the form of a 'rocket-film', to be screened at the imaginary Céline Arnauld cinema. It is a distinctive, modern, solid vision, in which new art will sweep away the old.

The journal *Littérature* provided a vehicle for Dada in Paris when it printed the 'Vingt-trois manifestes du mouvement Dada' (Twenty-Three Manifestos of the Dada Movement) in May 1920. These texts were first read on 5 February at the Salon des Indépendants, the second significant event staged by the Dadaists in Paris, as well as to audiences at the Club du Faubourg and the Université Populaire du Faubourg Saint-Antoine.<sup>30</sup> Hugnet wrote of these *Littérature* manifestos as a whole: 'We are already familiar with Tzara's manifestos. These others, just like them, vie for insolence or absurdity, lyricism, gratuity or humour.'<sup>31</sup> One of the twenty-three manifestos was written by Arnauld, who probably participated in the infamous readings.

Hugnet related that the order of publication of the manifestos in *Littérature* was appropriately democratic, determined by random selection.<sup>32</sup> *Littérature* was one of the most renowned and long-running avant-garde journals in Paris, founded by Aragon, Breton and Soupault in March 1919. During that time, it had featured a range of avant-garde writers, charting the journey through pre-Dada to Dada, and finally it heralded Surrealism. The thirteenth issue, appearing after a two-month pause, came at a turning point in avant-garde literary activity: it was the issue in which the editors fully embraced Dada and orientated themselves and their publication towards it. There Arnauld takes her place alongside eleven other contributors: Picabia, Aragon, Breton, Tzara, Arp, Eluard, Soupault, Serner, Dermée, Ribemont-Dessaignes and W. C. Arensberg.

On the cover, Arnauld's name, inserted among those of her male peers, is reminiscent of the photograph in which she is also the only woman. Unfortunately, her name is misspelt, as Arnault, recalling the fate that befell Hannah Höch in a similar case, when her name was 'mutilated', to use her word, to 'M. Höch'. Arnauld's manifesto is there, however, to speak for itself. Entitled 'Ombrelle Dada' (Dada parasol; fig. 78), it is a Dada manifesto par excellence. Evidently written with the rhetoric of a spoken manifesto, it begins by addressing its audience provocatively, anticipating hostility: 'Vous n'aimez pas mon manifeste? Vous êtes venus ici pleins d'hostilité et vous allez me siffler avant même de m'entendre?' (You don't like my manifesto? You've come here full of hostility and you're going to whistle before you've even heard me?) It directly addresses its audience

## Ombrelle Dada

Vous n'aimez pas mon manifeste ?

Vous êtes venus ici pleins d'hostilité et vous allez me siffler avant même de m'entendre ?

C'est parfait !! Continuez donc, la roue tourne, tourne depuis eu Adam, rien n'est changé, sauf que nous n'avons plus que deux pattes au lieu de quatre.

Mais vous me faites trop rire et je veux vous récompenser de votre bon accueil, en vous parlant d'Àaart, de Poésie et d'etc. d'etc. ipécacuanha.

Avez-vous déjà vu au bord des routes entre les orties et les pneus crevés, un poteau télégraphique pousser péniblement ?

Mais dès qu'il a dépassé ses voisins, il monte si vite que vous ne pourriez plus l'arrêter... jamais !

Il s'ouvre alors en plein ciel, s'illumine, se gonfle, c'est une ombrelle, un taxi, une encyclopédie ou un cure-dent.

Êtes-vous contents maintenant ? Eh bien, c'est tout ce que j'avais à vous dire. C'est ça la Poésie, croyez-moi.

— Poésie = cure-dent, encyclopédie, taxi ou abri-ombrelle, et si vous n'êtes pas contents...

A LA TOUR DE NESLE

CÉLINE ARNAULD.

78 Céline Arnauld, 'Ombrelle Dada', *Littérature* no. 13, May 1920. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.

throughout, anticipates responses and creates a 'dialogue' by throwing out provocative rhetorical questions such as 'Êtes-vous contents maintenant?' (Are you happy now?). The manifesto is an especially dramatic text that maintains its provocative power on the page and was undoubtedly effective as a performance piece.

Arnauld's manifesto displays the absurd and playful characteristics beloved of the Dadaists. Its very title juxtaposes the group's name with the parasol, an everyday, banal object, which creates in turn a fantastical concept. About halfway through, the author asks the audience:

Avez-vous déjà vu au bord des routes entre les orties et les pneus crevés, un poteau télégraphique pousser péniblement? Mais dès qu'il a dépassé ses voisins, il monte si vite que vous ne pourriez plus l'arrêter . . . jamais! (Have you ever seen, at the side of the road, between the nettles and the burst tyres, a telegraph pole that seems to

be growing? But as soon as it has overtaken its neighbours, it shoots up so quickly that you can't stop it any more . . . ever!).

This scene might be read as a metaphor for Dada's impact – a new, unexpected and unstoppable force outgrowing its neighbours or peers. The next lines strengthen the concept, with the telegraph pole opening out, lighting up and swelling. Again, the parasol is mentioned: 'c'est une ombrelle, un taxi, une encyclopédie ou un cure-dent' (it's a parasol, a taxi, an encyclopaedia or a toothpick). These words reappear just a few lines later, this time in relation to poetry: 'Poésie – cure-dent, encyclopédie, taxi ou abri-ombrelle.' The strange collection of juxtaposed objects is evidently playful on one level but also delivers a message: that poetry should not be treated too reverently but should, like Dada, encompass life's banalities and multiplicities.

In this manifesto Arnould's criticisms of art and poetry, which are implicit throughout her work, are at their most explicit and accessible. She decries stagnation and lack of change in general: 'C'est parfait!! Continuez donc, la roue tourne, tourne depuis eu Adam, rien n'est changé, sauf que nous n'avons plus que deux pattes au lieu de quatre' (That's perfect!! Carry on like that, the wheel turns, has been turning since Adam, nothing's changed, except that we've only got two legs instead of four). Her deliberately exaggerated sphere of reference renounces with one sweep all of Western Christian civilisation. She then goes on to condemn the arts more specifically: 'Mais vous me faites trop rire et je veux vous récompenser de votre bon accueil, en vous parlant d'Aart, de Poésie et d'etc. d'etc. ipécacuanha' (But you've made me laugh too much and I want to pay you back for your lovely welcome, by talking to you about Aart, and about Poetry and about etc. etc. ipecacuanha). Towards the end she sums up: 'c'est tout ce que j'avais à vous dire. C'est la Poésie, croyez-moi' (Well then, that's all I have to say to you. It's Poetry, believe me). By playing with the vowel sounds in 'Aart' and 'Poésie', Arnould ridicules the pretensions and self-importance of art and literature. It is reminiscent of a statement by Dermée in *Z*: 'Dada est irrité de ceux qui écrivent "l'Art", "la Beauté", "la Vérité" avec des majuscules' (Dada is irritated by people who write "Art", "Beauty" and "Truth" with capital letters). Dada, rather, advocates relativism over any totalising system.

At the very end Arnould throws in this confrontational and initially mystifying statement: 'Et si vous n'êtes pas contents . . . A LA TOUR DE NESLE' (And if you're not happy . . . TO THE TOWER OF NESLE). According to one legend, during the last year of his reign, in April 1314, Philip IV accused his daughters-in-law of having adulterous affairs with two knights. The two men were executed, while the daughters Marguerite and Blanche were confined to the Nesle Tower, part of the old city wall in Paris. In the nineteenth century, Alexandre Dumas and Frédéric Gaillardet took up this event and another fifteenth-century legend, which made the tower home to a queen's scandalous orgies, and wrote *La Tour de Nesle*. In the last line of her manifesto, Arnould banishes her detractors, metaphorically, to the tower. Although it is the adulterers who are condemned in the earlier legend, it is rather the self-righteous, conservative and sanctimonious who are sent in Arnould's version to this infamous place of debauchery. Reference to the tower reflects her fascination with myths and histories. Her interest in the immorality beneath the surface of civilisation, with unconscious or uncontrolled urges breaking

# EXTRAIT DE SATURNE

Un mot, cela court plus vite qu'un champion de course, on s'en empare et l'on en fait ou une histoire personnelle ou même une œuvre. Méfiez-vous des voleurs de bribes d'intrigues.

\*  
\*\*

Une fête foraine c'est comme une assemblée ou un groupement. Tout le monde crie à la fois. Le voleur crie au voleur, l'homme loyal se débat contre la foule. Le riche est mis pauvrement, le pauvre est couvert de paillettes. Le marchand se drape dans ses tapis et ses couvertures et devient le roi. C'est étonnant comme l'esprit-valet se trouve partout, même dans une fête insouciant et gaie.

\*  
\*\*

La poésie ne pense pas au lendemain; elle n'aime pas les gros habits de bourgeois; elle est en maillot, elle est transparente. C'est plutôt un papillon — Mais il y a des amateurs qui lui piquent une épingle dans le corps. Ne croyez pas que le vol est alors plus douloureux: il est plus mouvementé — c'est une ivresse qui ne finit jamais, mais l'épingle devient **HÉLICE**

\*  
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Vous prenez la poésie pour un match de boxe... c'est plutôt une course de chevaux, une course cycliste et même une course à pied.

\*  
\*\*

Ce silence de bourreau sur vos figures nous fait honte. Quelle accumulation de haine, de rancune et de méchanceté derrière ce calme! Croyez-moi, vomissez tout cela en paroles mauvaises, écrivez-le, criez-le devant tout le monde et vous serez soulagés. On a besoin de purger son esprit comme son corps. On peut tout dire dans la colère et garder le cœur pur.

« Connais-toi toi-même » c'est-à-dire :  
« Savonne-toi toi-même avant de savonner les autres ».

CÉLINE ARNAULD

79 Céline  
Arnauld, 'Extrait de  
Saturne', *Le  
Pilhaou-Thibaou*, 10  
July 1921.  
Collection of the  
International Dada  
Archive, Special  
Collections, The  
University of Iowa  
Libraries.

out from order, also became a favourite theme of the Surrealists in later years.<sup>33</sup> The protagonists, in the case of the Nesle Tower, are women, mythologised because of their sexually liberated behaviour and refusal to submit to rules. Arnauld would send her audience there to 'enlighten' them it seems.

In Picabia's *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, issued on 10 July 1921, to which she contributed 'Envoi du Japon', Arnauld also published 'Extrait de Saturne' (Extract from Saturn; fig. 79). This text falls somewhere between poetic prose and manifesto. It is less aggressive than 'Ombrelle Dada' and requires greater reflection but once again it comments on the arts. It also philosophises about the power of language. The text begins:

Un mot, cela court plus vite qu'un champion de course, on s'en empare et l'on en fait ou une histoire personnelle ou même une oeuvre. Méfiez-vous des voleurs de bribes d'intrigues (One word runs more quickly than a running champion, you grab hold of it and make it into a personal story or even a whole piece of work. Watch out for thieves of intrigue bribes).

This first short section at once suggests the positive potential of language and warns against its misuse.

The second section describes a forest fair. Its characters include a thief, loyal man, rich man, poor man and merchant, whose fate is described as follows: 'Le marchand se

drape dans ses tapis et ses couvertures et devient le roi' (The merchant drapes himself in his carpets and becomes the king). It implies that, even at a 'careless and gay' funfair, social restrictions are in force and individuals must act out certain roles. In the third section, Arnauld outlines how poetry, in contrast, might engender freedom:

La poésie ne pense pas au lendemain; elle n'aime pas les gros habits de bourgeois; elle est en maillot, elle est transparente. C'est plutôt un papillon – Mais il y a des amateurs qui lui piquent une épingle dans le corps (Poetry doesn't think about tomorrow; it doesn't like gross bourgeois habits; it's in a bathing costume, it's transparent. It's more like a butterfly – but there are amateurs who stick a pin in its body).

She continues by using a metaphor for poetry that evokes speed and movement once again: 'Vous prenez la poésie pour un match de boxe . . . c'est plutôt une course de chevaux, une course cycliste et même une course à pied' (You take poetry for a boxing match . . . it's more a horse race, a cycle race and even a running race).

Finally, Arnauld launches the sort of attack seen in 'Ombrelle Dada'. If bad (or conventional) poets are anathema to Dada and liberated language, then silence and passive acceptance is even worse: 'Ce silence de bourreau sur vos figures nous fait honte. Quelle accumulation de haine, de rancune et de méchanceté derrière ce calme!' (This executioner's silence on your faces shames us. What an accumulation of hatred, of rancour and of evil behind that calm!). Arnauld would prefer to see free expression at all events:

Croyez-moi, vomissez tout cela en paroles mauvaises, écrivez-le, criez-le devant tout le monde et vous serez soulagés. On a besoin de purger son esprit comme son corps. On peut tout dire dans la colère et garder le coeur pur (Believe me, vomit all that up in bad words, write it, shout it in front of everybody and you'll be relieved. One needs to purge one's mind like one's body. One can say anything in anger and keep the heart pure).

Throughout the manifesto, there is a sense of opposition between freedom and constraint, integrity and contrivance. Finally she warns those who criticise: "Connais-toi toi-même" c'est-à-dire: "Savonne-toi toi-même avant de savonner les autres" ('Know yourself' in other words: 'Soap yourself before soaping others'). These statements represent remarkable criticisms of complacency, as well as a resistance to bowing to others' opinions.

These texts, considered more or less chronologically here, display a trend towards manifesto-style texts. This might reflect the general direction taken by Dada as, firstly, it established itself in Paris and, subsequently, broke into factions, resulting in a series of opposing and often incendiary publications. It might also be a sign of Arnauld's growing confidence or even influence.

## Arnauld as editor: project *Projecteur*

Arnauld's contributions to journals were prolific and passionate. Conceived of as collective endeavours, these valuable remnants of avant-garde history encompass a variety

of content, styles and presentation by a diversity of authors. Every one of the five women considered in this study contributed in some way to at least one Dada journal, with images, texts or signatures. Every one was a collaborator in Dada's published output. Yet did any of the women actually have the opportunity, or even the desire, to lead or edit these journals? Hennings played a major part in the Cabaret Voltaire performances and undoubtedly had input into the first publication, though one cannot be sure how much. Taeuber went on, after Dada, to edit her own journal *Plastique*. Höch was a steady participant but apparently struggled to penetrate the Berlin Dada club. Suzanne Duchamp formed an offshoot of Dada in *Tabu*. It seems that none of them lacked ambition and Arnauld was no exception.

Dada journal activity reached its peak in Paris, the proliferation of journals culminating in a series of rival publications issued by Tzara and Picabia. Prior to this segmentation, Arnauld took the opportunity to publish and edit her own Dada journal. On 21 May 1920 *Projecteur* appeared. She evidently intended future editions, since the front page advertises subscription to twelve editions for ten francs, but only one issue was ever published. Such ephemeral publications were not untypical among avant-garde writers. Two months before *Projecteur*, for example, Dermée's *Z* ran for only one issue, and even Picabia's celebrated *Cannibale* ran for only two, in April and May.<sup>34</sup>

The journal *Projecteur* was not the only title that Arnauld had planned but it was the only one to reach print. During the first few months of 1920, Tzara had printed a letterhead. With 'Mouvement Dada' across the top and the cities Berlin, Geneva, Madrid, New York, Zurich and Paris, it offered 'consultations' for ten francs. Eight to ten thousand copies were printed and Tzara distributed them to friends and colleagues for their use. Seven journals and their editors are listed on the left-hand side. Included alongside titles such as *Dada*, *Proverbe*, *Littérature* and 391 is 'M'AMENEZ'Y. Directeur: Céline Arnauld'. The title is also listed on a flyer for *Littérature*, distributed just a few weeks after Tzara and Breton began collaborating (in about January 1920), and was advertised as part of a list of forthcoming reviews in *DADaphone*, from March 1920. The latter instance can be seen next to Arnauld's poem 'Enigme-Personnages' (see fig. 72).

'M'amenez'y' is a typically Dada phrase. Firstly, it plays with language and esoteric meaning. The nearest grammatically correct phrase would be 'Amenez-m'y' (take me there) but it is refigured. The sound of the phrase calls to mind 'amnésie' (amnesia) and the 'M' also sounds like 'aime/s' (like/s). Secondly, it is used and re-used by several Dadaists. Picabia used the phrase in an oil painting on cardboard, *M'Amenez'y* (*Take me There*; 1919–20), as a slogan in *Le Double Monde* (*The Double World*), a painting first displayed at the Dada matinee of 23 January 1920, and in the 1920 poem 'Le rat circulaire' (*The Circular Rat*).<sup>35</sup> It also features in a text by Marcel Duchamp, writing as Rose Sélavy.<sup>36</sup> Arnauld's planned adoption of this 'verbal ready-made' put her right at the heart of Dada interplay.<sup>37</sup>

Dermée discussed Arnauld's planned adoption of the title 'M'Amenez'y' and another, 'Ipéca', in a letter to Tzara. His words suggest that there was some question about Arnauld's first choice: "There is no point changing "M'Amenez'y" since it's already on the prospectus for "Littérature". The point is Céline Arnauld had found a really great title:

21 Mai 1920

# PROJECTEUR

Directrice : Céline Arnauld  
29, Rue du Mont-Cenis  
PARIS

Dépositaire  
**AU SANS PAREIL**  
37, Avenue Kléber, Paris

Le N° : 1 fr. — Sur Chine 5 ex. : 10 fr.  
ABONNEMENT  
12 Numéros : 10 fr.

## PROSPECTUS PROJECTEUR

*Projecteur* est une lanterne pour aveugles. Il ne marchande pas ses lumières, elles sont gratuites. *Projecteur* se moque de tout : argent, gloire et réclame — il inonde de soleil ceux qui vivent dans le

froid, dans l'obscurité et dans l'ennui. D'ailleurs, la lumière est aussi produite par une pullulation madréporique dans les espaces célestes.

CÉLINE ARNAULD

*Céline Arnauld*

80 Front page of *Projecteur*, May 1920. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.

“Ipéca” ou “I.P.K.,” an extremely powerful vomiting agent! This can be used for another publication or some type of pamphlet.<sup>38</sup> Like ‘M’Amenez’y’, the word ‘Ipéca’ had also appeared in more than one text. It had featured in a poem, ‘ZA’, by Ribemont-Dessaignes, in *Z* of March 1920: ‘Coffre-fort à mot ipéca’ (Ipecac word safebox). As seen, the unabbreviated form ‘ipécacuanha’ also appeared in Arnauld’s ‘Ombrelle Dada’ of May 1920. Ipecacuanha is a medicinal preparation made from a low-growing tropical American shrub of the same name and is used, as Dermée indicated, to induce vomiting, for example in patients who have suffered poisoning or a drug overdose. Arnauld presumably chose the word firstly for its strange sound and appearance, which she renders as ‘I.P.K.’, and secondly for its connotations. It suggests an extremely radical, purging agent.

In the end, neither ‘M’Amenez’y’ nor ‘Ipéca’ ever transpired but instead *Projecteur* did. This final, published journal includes a reference to Arnauld’s initial choices. In his contribution, the text ‘Signalement’ (Particulars), Dermée listed a few humorous lines on each writer. Of the editor he wrote: ‘Céline Arnauld has already killed off two reviews: “M’Amenez’y” and “Ipéca” are nowhere to be found today. Don’t go on Mr. Doucet . . . whereabouts unknown, whereabouts unknown.’<sup>39</sup> The extract is notable for its self-referentiality as well as its refusal – and presumably its editor’s, who printed it, after all – to take publication and prestige too seriously.

*Projecteur* included contributions by Breton, Dermée, Renée Dunan, Eluard, Picabia, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Soupault and Tzara, with Arnauld herself contributing two poems, ‘Luna Park’ and ‘Les Ronge-Bois’. She introduced the review with a front-page text entitled *Prospectus Projecteur* (fig. 80). It reads like a manifesto but the word ‘prospectus’ specifically outlines and introduces this particular journal. The opening line, ‘*Projecteur* est une lanterne pour aveugles’ (*Projecteur* is a lantern for the blind), both sums up the tone and attitude of this short text and is characteristic of Dada, with its forthright statement, immediate provocation and humorous edge. Aiming itself at *aveugles*,

an unseeing, ignorant or uncritical populace, it effectively scorns its own readership. This message is continued yet more sharply: ‘il inonde de soleil ceux qui vivent dans le froid, dans l’obscurité et dans l’ennui’ (it bathes in sunshine those who live in the cold, in darkness and in ennui). The metaphors, clichés even, of coldness and darkness are pinned down to ennui – boredom, lethargy or apathy. The claim ‘*Projecteur* se moque de tout: argent, gloire et réclame’ (*Projecteur* mocks everything: money, glory and advertising) is equally direct and critical on a socio-political level.

At the same time the text’s grandiose claims to shed light are evidently self-mocking in the way of many of Dada’s extravagant proclamations. If there is any doubt as to the humour of Arnauld’s prospectus, it is dissolved by the final phrase: ‘D’ailleurs, la lumière est aussi produite par une pullulation madréporique dans les espaces célestes’ (The light, moreover, is also produced by a madreporian [corals of the genus *Madrepora*] proliferation in heavenly spaces). It is heavily ironic, not least because it begins this excessive concept with *d’ailleurs*, as if it were merely an aside. It invites the reader not to take anything too seriously, confounding him or her with obscure words, juxtaposed to create an ungraspable image. Most importantly, Arnauld revels here in the appearance and sounds of words: ‘produite par une pullulation madréporique,’ for example, is driven by alliteration.

The content of *Projecteur* is made up of a mix of poems, short prose texts and odd phrases. There are five prose texts, each invoking an absurd scene: ‘Julot’ by Eluard, ‘L’un pour l’autre’ (One for the Other) and ‘Philosophie de l’histoire’ (Philosophy of History) by Dermée, ‘Parfums d’Orsay’ by Breton and ‘Hyper Dada’ by Renée Dunan. The poems are ‘Handicap’ by Picabia, ‘Le Cierge et la vierge’ (The Candle and the Virgin) by Tzara, ‘Les Méditations du saladier’ (Salad Bowl Meditations) by Dunan, ‘Salutations distinguées’ (Cordial greetings) by Soupault, ‘Pneumatique’ (Pneumatic) by Ribemont-Desaignes and Arnauld’s own poems ‘Luna Park’ and ‘Les Ronge-Bois’ (figs 81 and 82). Additionally, there is a dialogue, ‘Café crème’ by Aragon, the text ‘Signalement’ by Dermée and short notes and phrases at various points. One labelled ‘N.D.L.R.’ (‘Note de la Rédaction’ or ‘Editor’s Note’), reads ‘*Projecteur* n’insère aucune rectification, aucun droit de réponse, aucune publicité!’ (*Projecteur* will include no rectifications, no right to reply, no advertising!) – another rejection by the reader of its readership and humorous proclamation of an independent attitude.

Finally, Arnauld included two texts, ‘*Dadaphysis*’ and ‘*Hyper Dada*’, by another woman writer, the prolific novelist, poet and feminist Renée Dunan.<sup>40</sup> In the latter text (see fig. 82), Dunan attacks logic and rationality and advocates free, unlimited thought over routine and regulation: ‘*Dada* ouvre enfin le palais fastueux où l’âme pourra se baigner dans la totalité de ce qui vit’ (*Dada* finally opens the sumptuous palace where the soul will be able to bathe in the totality of what is alive). This particular text is straightforward and serious, relative to many Dada proclamations, but reveals the impetus behind numerous Dada manifestations: a break with past traditions, a rejection of individual artistic introvertedness and a desire for boundless expression. Dunan’s use of metaphors of air and water – ‘Le monde est un milieu mental, analogue à l’eau ou à l’air, illimité et impersonnel (au sens circulaire) et formé de toutes les idées possibles’ (The world is a

81 (facing page top) Céline Arnauld, ‘Luna Park’, *Projecteur*, May 1920. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.

82 (facing page below) Céline Arnauld, ‘Les Ronge-Bois’, *Projecteur*, May 1920. Collection of the International Dada Archive, Special Collections, The University of Iowa Libraries.



## LUNA PARK

Sinistre étalage de cette glace optique  
plaquée sur mon épaule  
photophore horoscope des mauvais jours  
tatouage de mes ennemis  
submergés au fond des tristes réservoirs  
cristallisés par des éclairs fuyants

Mes mains s'allongent démesurément  
pour saisir la fleur  
péniche en rumeurs sur l'océan  
cornemuse de rêveurs

Dans leur fort les escargots  
tournent la roue de l'Univers

Mais la spontanéité des sentiments  
dans la vie...

C'est l'hydre sombrée  
sur l'unique sornette des turfs  
aubaine des glaces dans les Palaces

Au Luna Park on jongle  
avec les cœurs en cristal  
L'horoscope en gobelets  
écoute parler les mimes...

Ne vous méfiez pas de moi  
je ne suis que le reflet éphémère  
du projecteur  
aubade à porte-voix

CÉLINE ARNAULD

## LES RONGE-BOIS

Tout près de l'angoisse  
les moustiques en folie  
Autour de l'ampoule la mort de l'oiseau  
Dans l'atmosphère les atomes en oripeaux  
s'envolant avec la pluie  
trainent dans une parade novice  
des mouleurs harmoniques

Tandis qu'au pays de Mendoza  
les mandores chassent les chevaux de bois  
à travers champs  
et les grandes roues sont poussées  
par des éléphants  
Au Collège de France  
ils s'endorment sur les bancs

Moi je ne sais rien que maudire  
et divaguer contre l'hypothèse...

CÉLINE ARNAULD

## HYPER DADA

Tout est identique... HÉGEL

Qu'on prenne ceci pour base : la logique est une erreur, la rationalité un concept absurde et le principe d'identité une monstrueuse blague. Le monde est un milieu mental, analogue à l'eau ou à l'air, illimité et impersonnel (au sens circulaire) et formé de toutes les idées possibles. Le moi est un centre de polarisation. D'innombrables siècles de sottise et de routine ont tendu à annuler la divine faculté humaine de tout comprendre sans règles. Fruits de l'obscurantisme, la logique, délire du parallélisme, la rationalité, folie de l'immobilité causale (cf. Zénon) le principe d'identité, enfin, coprolatrie vésanique, ont maintenu depuis des siècles innombrables leurs œillères à l'esprit humain. Dada ouvre enfin le palais fastueux où l'âme pourra se baigner dans la totalité de ce qui vit. Tout ce qui ne se formule qu'en se niant, tout ce qui possède cette forme supérieure d'existence qu'est l'absurdité, tout ce qui n'apparaît incompréhensible aux sots que grâce à leur imperméabilité intellectuelle, tout cela nous le connaissons. Quant au logicien, ce pithécotide, il sera utilisé à sa propre reliure en sous-veau.

Renée Dunan

mental environment, analogous to water or to the air, unlimited and impersonal [in the circular sense] and formed out of all the ideas that are possible) – recalls Arnauld's recourse to nature, especially birds, flight and light. Both women's approaches can also be read in terms of gender. Nature is commonly personified as female, with associations of fecundity and instinct, and is set in contrast to patriarchal systems.

Feminist literary theories have enabled new ways of thinking about such practices. For example, Hélène Cixous, in *La Jeune Née* (1975; *The Newly-Born Woman*), drew attention to the ways oppositions are set up between nature as female and history, art

and mind as male.<sup>41</sup> Her concept of *écriture féminine* offers a particularly rich frame of reference for Arnauld's work. Cixous emphasised women's writing as flow and drift; as plural, chaotic, spontaneous, endless and without closure; as tactile, passing through the ear, drawing on the symbolic and archaic; and against the constraints of reason and logic. All are characteristic of Arnauld's writing. In the broader context, Susan Rubin Suleiman (in 1991) noted the applicability of *écriture féminine* to avant-garde writing: 'H.C. reinvents . . . , in describing the process of a free-flowing writing that she associates with femininity, some of the vocabulary of early Surrealism. . . . Cagey H.C., to rewrite the avant-garde by feminizing it!'<sup>42</sup>

To end this section, I return to Arnauld's journal *Projecteur*, drawing a last point from its final pages, to clarify the close relationship between Arnauld and Dada. The publication ends with the programme for the forthcoming Festival Dada, scheduled to take place on 26 May, five days later, at the Salle Gaveau. This event was one of only a handful of major events staged by the Paris Dadaists. Its advertisement in *Projecteur* brings home the fact that Arnauld's journal sat, chronologically, at the most intense and fertile point of Dada's manifestation in Paris and indicates a will to promote the Dada enterprise. Meanwhile *Projecteur* as a project bears witness to a determination by Arnauld to bring together, in print at least, a number of key avant-garde writers as well as introducing another woman, Dunan, into the mix. Arnauld's journal shows her to be a networker and an innovator.

## In transition: from Dada to Surrealism

As various disagreements between Picabia, Tzara and Breton intensified, individuals allied themselves with one or other faction. Arnauld was no exception. In July 1921, as discussed, she contributed to Picabia's publication *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, a demonstration of his break with both Tzara and Breton. On 25 February 1922 she attended a meeting at the Closerie des Lilas to sign a resolution against Breton's recently launched Congrès International, backing Tzara in the face of an intensifying feud between the two men.<sup>43</sup> In 1924 she contributed a text, 'Faux managers' (False Managers), to an anti-Breton pamphlet published by Dermée called 'Le Mouvement accéléré' (The Accelerated Movement). There she attacked Breton, accusing him of megalomania, a negligence of his precursors and a restrictive, exclusive approach to poetry.<sup>44</sup> She then announced her own manifesto, on *projectivisme* (projectivism), which she briefly outlined in her foreword 'Avertissement aux lecteurs' (Warning to Readers) to the 1925 publication: *L'Apaisement de l'éclipse, passion en deux actes. Précédé de diorama, confession lyrique* (fig. 83).

Arnauld's body of work sits at the intersection between Dada and Surrealism. In its extraordinary versatility, it displays a number of interesting aspects that relate to each movement. At its core is a focus on free experimentation with language as material and a challenge to the prevalence of linearity, rationality and logic. This challenge was directed at the arts. Arnauld's prose pieces and manifestos made explicit attacks on out-



83 Portrait of  
Céline Arnaud by  
Louis Favre,  
*L'Apaisement de  
l'éclipse*, 1925.

dated aesthetic conventions. These attacks also took place in a wider context. Arnaud advocated liberation of language, and so thought, from strict convention and limitations. Her challenge to language may also be seen as an attack on the social consensus and hierarchies that it upheld. In the introduction to his anthology of Dada poetry, Bohn wrote:

Dada's one overriding concern was the achievement of total liberty: social, moral and intellectual. In this vein, its adherents questioned the basic postulates of rationalism and humanism as few had done before. Taking as their watchword Tzara's declaration 'Thought is made in your mouth', they strove to liberate language and poetry in particular.<sup>45</sup>

This key Dada concern is always evident implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, in Arnaud's work. It bridged Dada and Surrealism in other ways too. She plumbed fantasy and the unconscious, for example, and so anticipated concepts and approaches that were explored more programmatically by Surrealism. Her apparently unfettered use of language, in some examples, tied in with the famous automatic writing techniques developed by Breton and Soupault. In addition, one might make cross-disciplinary comparisons with the painter Leonora Carrington, who foregrounded and subverted the codes of mythology and fantasy in her images.

Given Arnauld's highly experimental work and participation, Clayton Eshelman's judgements, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, appear all the more ridiculous. It seems that Arnauld rattled the chains of her background and tradition long before he 'resurrected' her gospel. In fact, she played some considerable part in loosening those shackles herself. Arnauld has suffered from obscurity more than any other woman in this study and much work remains to be done in order to uncover more details about her life and work.<sup>46</sup> At an early stage in this project, few details were available on Arnauld, to the point that the Bibliothèque Nationale de France gave no date of death. Several biographical notes and sources claiming that she committed suicide the month after Dermée's death in 1952 have been proved correct, confirmed by Arnauld's heirs. The circumstances of her birth are equally mysterious. Some sources name her place of birth as Nice, others as Romania. Her year of birth is variously listed as 1893 or 1895, and sometimes as early as 1885, but is in fact 1895. Her name has been spelt 'Celine Arnauld' (by Eshelman), 'Céline Arnault' (in *Littérature*) and 'Céline Arnaud' (by John D. Erickson).<sup>47</sup> Actually, Céline Arnauld was, it transpires, a pseudonym for Carolina Goldstein. Born in Romania, she had changed her name on arrival in Paris around 1915 and continued to write and live professionally under that name all her life. The absence of biography of Arnauld is at once frustrating – further research is imperative – and liberating: these scant details can scarcely overshadow readings of her work. It invites further research, now under way. For the moment, her identity remains unclear and her name a shifting sign but her work provides ample confirmation of her claim to have been a productive contributor in the story of Dada.

## CONCLUSION

In Céline Arnauld's letter quoted in the introduction, in which she reproached Tzara for omitting her from his version of Dada history, she nevertheless sanguinely wrote: 'My books are there and they will not fail to defend themselves, through their own strength, through their new lyricism.'<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, Arnauld's conviction proved to be at best optimistic and at worst naïve and did not reckon with a continued practice of exclusion. Still, it is an apt reminder of the ambitions and resilience of those women who chose to intervene in Dada and a further impetus, if any were needed, to pay heed to those qualities and their resulting achievements by giving a fuller account of their work.

Women indeed intervened in Dada but their status was uneasy. Ultimately, it is disappointing that this movement's radical political approach, sometimes explicit but always implicit, did not extend to any significant appraisal or understanding of women's issues. In part, this is because of the socio-historical context – it is perhaps idealistic, after all, to expect a sophisticated gender-consciousness from Dada's men in the early decades of the century. Nonetheless, it must be said that the question of women's roles was becoming increasingly audible, visible and vital in Europe. In part, then, such oversight may have been a result of Dada's very freedom from restriction. Its eschewal of any specific programmatic agenda meant that it stopped short of any real engagement with principles of inclusiveness and equality. Its utopian claims to reject boundaries, meanwhile, between nations, languages, cultures, workers and artists, street and museum, arguably occluded a more thorough acknowledgement of difference. In order to attack patriarchal traditions it would first have had to come to an understanding and recognition of how they operate on and on through women's lives. While there is evidence of elements of such consciousness within Dada, they remained in the background, articulated theoretically, rather than exercised pragmatically. By the time the Dadaists wrote their memoirs, mostly in the 1950s and 60s, the socio-political and cultural context had changed substantially but still not enough to inspire a positive commitment to include Dada's women in history. Memoirs have played an important role in setting perceptions of Dada and the absence of women from these accounts has been to the detriment not only of women artists and writers but also of Dada as a complex, heterogeneous and diverse movement.

Several critical studies of individual women involved in Dada have tended to distance the artist from her role in the movement. This bears witness to misconceptions, or at least fixed conceptions, of Dada, which have failed to embrace its different manifestations. Where some critics have sought to illustrate that the women were aesthetic, 'unlike Dada', others, not least scholars with a feminist approach, have sought more acceptable, more politically and socially constructive aspects to the women's work, again 'unlike Dada'. There is a constant struggle to find a site for the avant-garde woman who appears at times to fit neither the revolutionary nor the feminine trope. To return to Susan Rubin Suleiman's phrase quoted in the last chapter, she is 'doubly intolerable'. In any case, little justice is done either to Dada or to the women artists whose histories do not always conform to certain ideologies. With the benefit of a large body of scholarly research into Dada, enriched by an awareness of developments in contemporary arts almost a century after its appearance, Dada's innovations and the impact of these innovations are clearer.

The first aim of this study of five women was to heighten awareness of each individual's work. Additionally, by considering the work of five women together, it has sought to augment understanding of the practices of the Dada movement in Zurich, Paris and Berlin with examples of engagement across these three geographical centres and a wide range of art forms. Each woman's work displays many of the formal preoccupations and techniques that are associated with Dada and with the historical avant-garde more broadly, entrenching the women firmly within that particular environment. Key issues include the rejection of mimesis and narrative, the thematisation of the role of the artist or writer, exploration of the material qualities of the medium, the recognition of the impact of technology and its appropriation into art, the transgression of boundaries between art forms, the use of performance, of collaborative working and experimentation with language. Between them, the women in this study have contributed to every one of these areas. Their work demonstrates how they were as concerned as their male counterparts with the impact of technology and the material basis of art, aspects that are often considered male domains. Thus, they provide plenty of examples of machine imagery, photomontage and geometric painting. At the same time as enriching ideas about core Dada concerns and manifestations, the particular approach of each of these artists has brought to light individual differences, highlighting alternative treatments of similar themes and techniques – a reminder of Dada's heterogeneity.

Additionally, this examination of women Dadaists' work has offered fertile ground for considerations about gender and art. The women's fate in accounts of the movement has been paradigmatic of the fate of women artists and writers excluded from histories of art and literature. A close look at Dada has revealed that such exclusions are not confined only to the canon or mainstream but also to the avant-garde. Even on the so-called social, cultural or aesthetic margins there will be yet more margins. Even where art and literature are called on to extend their materials, some materials chosen by women (handicrafts for example) or art forms (dance) are considered less appropriate or trivial. Even when the notion of the author or artist as personality is rejected,

women's lives are analysed more than their work. Even in those cases where mimetic realism is rejected in favour of interior or fragmented experiences of life, women's concerns are labelled personal or intimate as compared with some elusive male universal standard.

In the following points, I conclude that Dada women and men shared similar key preoccupations but that they were inevitably fed and shaped by gender and by the different social and cultural experiences that gender entails. This is not to say that masculinity only worked through men's work and femininity through women's work, nor that women's work should be confined to questions of gender. The issues that I draw out are not removed from avant-garde techniques but are essentially rooted in shared innovations, distinguished by a particular female twist and still differing from individual to individual. While I do not argue that these women sought to express a shared, conscious feminist stance in their work, I propose that there are a number of specific aspects of production, representation and expression which tie in to acculturated female experience and which anticipate later, more cognisant, explicitly feminist approaches to the arts. In this sense, the interventions and work of Dada's women, which subtly yet surely undermined the group's male hegemony, can be acknowledged as neo-feminist.

## Diffused bodies: artworks and artists

An underlying issue that has emerged during the course of this study, which provides one pathway through this diverse selection of Dada themes, women Dadaists and gender issues, is that of the body. The work of each of these five Dadaists engages at some point with questions around the body – as subject or object, as artist, as the site of expression, representation or resistance and around which questions of agency, passivity, identity, threats, gender, sexuality, politics and technology revolve. Here, feminist and post-modern theories prove useful in raising consciousness about different aspects of the work, enhancing understanding of the avant-garde and revealing connections between their work and later developments in the arts. In each case, I shall start by describing the shared innovations, followed by the gender-connected aspect I seek to highlight.

The most compelling point of departure in this line of thinking is performance, in which the literal use of the body is evident. It is also an appropriate point at which to begin, since it is too often confined to an afterthought or footnote in accounts of avant-garde movements. Dada began in a performance venue, the Dadaists taking their endeavours from the page to the stage, no longer concealed as hierarchically removed artists but instead implicating themselves in an immediate communication process with the reader or viewer. Theatre and popular performance were arenas in which women frequently participated during the early decades of the century but in which opportunities to direct or produce were scarcer. Hennings's career illustrates this most prominently but through the Cabaret Voltaire, at least, her opportunities to innovate broadened. For Hennings, her body was her material – her means of acceptance and

survival on the one hand and her site of rebellion on the other. It was her physical presence in front of an audience, in the forum she helped to establish, that was a major marker of Dada's materialisation in Zurich. Her body strongly shaped her identity, sexuality and work. She also provided a female voice in the cabaret, the experience of which is obviously lost to us now but which constituted a powerful component of the cabaret soirées. Additionally, she placed herself as a subject at the core of her own poetry, which centres on her physical and emotional existence in the world and the threats she perceived from her environment, the results also lending themselves to performance, unmediated by the page.

Sophie Taeuber, conversely, concealed her body in Dada dances. With the aid of costumes and masks, the contours of the human body were disguised, the figure geometrised, and personal, individual expression assigned a lesser role. Instead, the body was used as sign to stand in for areas beyond the single figure. It was shown in various guises – as primitive or as machine, as threat or under threat, as agent or pawn. The physical body was put into the service of aesthetic experiments that included utterance, music and movement. Artists appeared and performed as bodies; they were not removed from view. These performance activities challenged dialectical divisions between the intellectual and physical, mind and body, and poetry and performance. In the cases of both Hennings and Taeuber, different though they were, the body as the artist's tool or material anticipated later modern and post-modern performance where the body became the artwork and the performance space the artwork event.

In literature, Dada questioned language as the body's communication tool: here, Céline Arnould's work is relevant. The Dadaists in Zurich sought to break down the conventions of language and to throw into relief its arbitrariness and untrustworthiness. Sound and simultaneous poetry exemplified their approach. In Paris, Arnould and other poets aimed, too, at liberating written expression from governing norms. The deconstruction of language was a vital issue, since language structures social, political and human relationships and was seen to maintain hegemony. After the Dada years, literary theory took more explicit leaps with respect to language, as did feminist theory. Scholars within the latter have argued that the restrictions of language are a particular issue for women, who do not share the communication norms of the dominant patriarchal modes of discourse.<sup>2</sup> It can be argued that the non-linearity and anti-rationality of Dada with respect to language held a particular appeal for women who, prior to consciousness-raising and theorising by feminists, questioned how to engage with man-made language systems (spoken and written) that ultimately fail to allow for one's own expression and even circumscribe it. As briefly discussed in the chapter on Arnould, the concept of *écriture féminine*, too, intensified theoretical questions around gender and literary creativity. Abigail Bray's 2004 overview of Cixous considers the strengths and weaknesses of the notion. One criticism, Bray notes, has been that 'Cixous's celebration of what she argues is a specifically feminine style of writing is largely derived from male avant-garde writers.'<sup>3</sup> Increased visibility for less well-known women's avant-garde writing, such as that by Arnould, surely has the potential to revitalise the debate about whether, and to what extent, gender informs modes and techniques of writing.



In the fine arts, the rejection of mimesis or narrative was a core issue. Avant-garde artists across art forms challenged the insistence on semantic content and abandoned the naturalistic. Instead of producing figurative portrayals of the external world, artists and writers aimed for new ways of depicting multiple views of the world and of experience. This freedom from restrictions was undoubtedly part of the avant-garde's appeal for women artists who, historically, had been expected to deal with limited, appropriate subject matter and who had different perspectives, views and visions to offer. Greater freedom from realist representation is especially pertinent for women, since the woman's body is often the subject matter in the fine arts, with the traditional gaze directed at the female form. The loosening of expectations with regard to subject matter, then, and of the means of representing it, drew attention away from the objectification of figures, especially the female figure, and offered liberation from the restriction to represent bodies in a certain way.

Höch explored fragmented bodies, challenging the wholeness and unity of the human subject. She depicted 'the body in pieces', to use a term coined by Linda Nochlin in *The Body in Pieces: The Fragment as a Metaphor for Modernity* (2001). Höch dissected and rebuilt female bodies, in particular, the subjects in her photomontage work offering multi-faceted representations that encompass contrary impulses of modernity, including participation and passivity, pleasure and fear, and demonstrate the ambiguity of the gendered subject. In a prescient step, she tackled issues of race as well as gender in her photomontage series *Aus einem ethnographischen Museum (From an Ethnographic Museum)*. Suzanne Duchamp replaced the human body with machine imagery and thematised representation of the female (and male) subject/object. Her use of technology and mechanomorphic forms makes connections between the human body and machinery and explores sexuality and threats against the body. She pre-dated structuralism, which theorises how different sign systems codify and shape understanding of the world, in her combinations of word and image and her interest in sound and music. Sophie Taeuber abandoned the body and figuration altogether, in favour of an even more gender-anonymous approach that explored geometric patterns and attempted to break aesthetic expression down into the simplest forms. Where pioneering women Impressionists had responded to the focus on the fleeting moment to thematise domestic scenes, itself enormously useful in drawing attention to female experience, the Dada women drove an even greater loosening of content in suitably diverse ways. Whether the fragmentation of the body, the challenge to conventional forms of representation or the removal of the (unstable) figure altogether, these radical gestures constituted attempts to find new means of representation and expression.

With the freedom from narrative came the freedom from prescribed materials. The focus shifted from the story to what was used to tell the story. Overturning expectations about the suitability of materials for art, Dada sought new ways and means of creative expression, questioning the very tools and processes that go into creating a piece of art (be it fine art, a text or a performance) and exploring new combinations that transgressed categories. In literature, words were broken down to their most basic elements and re-assembled freely. In fine art, the processes of collage and assemblage

brought everyday materials into the frame. Works by Taeuber, Höch and Duchamp stand out for their use of a variety of materials and techniques to create painting, tapestry, collage, photomontage, sculpture and assemblage. Of particular interest to any examination of developments in women's art over the last century is their use, and subversion, of traditionally female materials. Höch's use of sewing patterns and Taeuber's use of tapestry are exemplary here, not least for the way in which they incorporated their materials into geometric compositions.

Most striking of all is the fact that three of these five artists made either dolls or puppets during their period of involvement with Dada. Hennings and Höch both sewed dolls, while Taeuber sculpted and assembled a series of puppets. Each woman was photographed with her creations. Dolls, puppets and mannequins became chief components of the Surrealist movement, demonstrated most radically and graphically in the photographic work of Hans Bellmer, where the doll stands for the eroticised, sexualised and often violated female body. Claude Cahun, too, photographed herself in poses and costumes reminiscent of dolls, as well as fashioning dolls from different materials, which she then photographed. In the 1938 International Surrealist Exhibition, mannequins took up considerable space, though chiefly presented from a male point of view. The dolls and puppets, variously used by the three Dada women examined here, can be investigated both as new materials or art objects and as representations of the female body and identity.

All these approaches represent challenges not only to the shape and form of the art object but also to the status of the artist. The artist as body is a major point of debate in avant-garde art, questioning how the artist's hand effects creation. Methods and techniques of production were foregrounded and demystified. Conceptual questions and the use of machine-made, found and reproduced objects took on unprecedented significance. Through an examination of the artist's position and authority, the place of the individual – in art and in life – was thematised. Rather than a far-removed, superior genius, the avant-garde artist was implicated in life, as elucidated by the Berlin Dadaists' use of terms such as engineer and *monteur*. This was arguably an appropriate and palatable principle for women, since women artists had generally enjoyed less status in any case: Dada's women exemplify collaborative workers, creating in partnerships and without inflated self-promotion. On the most pragmatic level, each of the five women worked to earn her own living; in three cases at least, those of Hennings, Taeuber and Höch, she provided financial support at crucial points for her partner too.

A common prejudice is that women's work concerns itself less with materials and techniques than men's work, that it is predominantly personally and socially driven. Yet in each case, the women in this study innovated with materials, genres and form. The critical gaze is turned on the relationship between the artist or writer and the artwork. Devices are laid bare. Art reflects on itself and is demystified. The pictorial surface, the formal organisation and the materials take over from mimesis or narrative. Two of the three fine artists in this study, Sophie Taeuber and Hannah Höch, went on to take an interest in Constructivism, in which material, structure and process were privileged. As for literature, Arnauld's work took language as its crux, privileging its acoustic and

visual qualities over semantics. Moreover, in each case the women here demonstrated a liberal attitude to the materials and processes of high art and low art: Hennings incorporated cabaret and entertainment; Taeuber explored textiles and ornament; Höch innovated with photography and revitalised models for handicrafts; Duchamp examined technology; and Arnauld revisited fantasy and mythology.

Yet, despite this general shift from the artist as personality, and away from narrative, many critical treatments of women Dadaists display a predisposition towards subject matter and meaning, and biographical details and readings, over materials and techniques. This approach appears absurd in the cases of many avant-garde women. The Dadaists, these women included, sought to turn art away from an introverted, personal, esoteric pursuit to a collective, social, political and cultural context. This insistence on highly personal readings, when they are applied over-zealously to women's work, must be challenged since it is often substituted for connections that place the artist at the heart of technical and formal innovations. The implication is that women can only produce work based on their own particular lives and experience, rather than produce great or universally appealing works, even as assumptions about the latter are vulnerable and highly suspect. Dada's women attempted to expose and blur rigid lines between categories of experience such as art and life, self and other, inner space and outer space, representation and reality, the personal and political, but artist and artwork should not be conflated.

## Dada's multiple names, Dada's multiple genders

What conclusion can be drawn, then, about Dada's gender? Dada was not a fully radicalised forum. Whatever the nuances of attitudes in the various Dada groups, the socio-historical and cultural background before which women artists operated still presented them, in any case, with various difficulties, pragmatic and cultural. Dada did not provide a utopian alternative to exclusion and prejudice, especially from a modern feminist perspective. In theory, its non-programmatic approach offered unlimited freedom but in practice it fell short – arguably inevitably – of such an ideal. Dada's men were radical and revolutionary on some levels but shockingly conventional, and even reactionary, on others. Yet Dada did not exclude women altogether. Somewhere on the spectrum between the extremes of misogyny and open collaboration, women participated and contributed. During the course of these chapters, I have deliberately shifted the emphasis away from judgements about men in Dada, about Dada as men's club, to a focus on the contributions individual women made and on aspects that demonstrate gender and multiplicity even where they might neither have been welcomed nor fully recognised.

This work has addressed Dada as a whole, not setting up women's work as an annexe to men's but as a series of 'cells' that constituted part of Dada. Much has been made of the name 'Dada'. The debates around the name tend to seek specific meanings and origins, arguably in direct contradiction to avant-garde objectives of freeing language

and to the Dadaists' attempts to find a term that could not be easily neutralised. Perhaps this objective could never be reached, since language has not been broken down after all but continues to betray and be betrayed by ideological positions. Readings such as that by Sawelson-Gorse, in which the term Dada is deconstructed for subconscious misogynistic tendencies, illustrate the difficulties, or impossibility, of finding new language as well as new attitudes. Even in attempts to challenge Dada's reputation as masculine, it has proved difficult to evade the tendency to connect Dada to 'father' in the English language. So it is that a smaller exhibition held at the Francis M. Naumann Gallery in New York at the same time as the 2005–6 MOMA blockbuster was named 'Daughters of Dada'.<sup>4</sup> While this showcase of New York women Dadaists was a welcome counterpoint to the large-scale show, and even as the title may contain a sense of irony, a patriarchal undertone persists. It is an enduring problem for the feminist project – how to consider women's work not only in relation to men's.

Dada need not be considered a quality seal, to be bestowed or withheld by art historians. The Dadaists each continued to produce conflicting, humorous, baffling, contrary, provocative statements about what Dada was throughout its existence. Even then, they too became caught up in establishing the parameters, pinpointing the founders and aims retrospectively, just as critics have done, in trying to make everything fit a coherent ideological model. A comment by Debbie Lewer recalls a more pragmatic, less fanciful aspect of Dada:

Given the diversity of material shown and performed at the Cabaret, it is clear that the newly-found 'Dada' banner did not refer to a new style or set of aesthetic characteristics. Initially, it encompassed a loosely defined interest in abstract art. There were, however, very practical reasons for putting a new name to the activity of the group; 'Dada' was a distinctive name under which performances could be staged and publications sold.<sup>5</sup>

This draws attention to Dada as a sort of brand name, applied to a set of activities, as opposed to determining those activities. Rather than make the name a starting point, seeing it as an indicator of intentions and attitudes, one might see it as an inadequate, fluid or even arbitrary signifier. This attitude to language was one that the Dadaists themselves realised and emphasised in language experiments. Of course, it has since become a signifying 'myth', to use Roland Barthes's term, its name heavy with connotations about rebellion, iconoclasm – and even maleness.

If Dada was a shifting sign, then the attempts to extend understanding of it in this study are perhaps not overly objectionable. Arp later stated: 'There were Dadaists before the name Dada existed for Dada, before the Dadaists were Dada.'<sup>6</sup> The Dadaists claimed Dada as a philosophy of life as opposed to an artistic movement: they did not demand adherence to a rigid style or framework. If this attitude is adopted, questions about who was and was not a true, or core, Dadaist assume lesser importance, as do questions about its founders, its key players and their gender. Where John D. Erickson, for example, distinguished between 'Dadas' and 'Dadaists', the former being more truly Dada or more authentic than the latter, I have preferred to take a more open approach

to definitions of Dada.<sup>7</sup> My approach is closer to the stance taken by Penelope Rosemont, who in her anthology of Surrealist women sets out her definition of a Surrealist according to three criteria. I paraphrase: that she considers herself a Surrealist, that she is recognised as a Surrealist by other Surrealists and accepts the designation and that she takes part in Surrealist activity (such as demonstrations, exhibitions or periodicals). The women Rosemont selects, and it is a wide selection, meet at least one of the first two criteria and contribute in more than one way under the third category.<sup>8</sup>

The second criterion, acknowledgement by colleagues, has proved to be the most contentious aspect in my study of Dada. Even so, for all the exclusiveness of some of Dada's men, primary sources have disclosed many references, covert and overt, to the participation of each of the five women. More importantly, each woman considered herself a Dadaist at some point and each participated in substantial and innovative ways in Dada events and publications. Where Ball used writing and performance to pursue his philosophical and intellectual interests, Hennings networked, performed and wrote for the cabaret. While Huelsenbeck celebrated Zurich's rowdy, macho performances, Taeuber nevertheless featured steadily on stage in innovative dance performances and developed her own form of non-representational, geometric art. After Dada, she continued to collaborate and innovate. If Hausmann saw Berlin Dada as his men's club and his colleagues each carved out their territory and hierarchy, Höch recognised this and nevertheless made every use of the forum to advance her art. Suzanne Duchamp, arguably overshadowed as much by history as by her colleagues at the time, pursued the fine art side of Paris Dada in technically and thematically innovative works that intersected with peers including Picabia, Crotti and Marcel Duchamp but which are distinguished by her particular concerns. Finally, Arnauld raised a lone female voice in the male-dominated Dada literary group, sought to develop her own stance on writing and insisted on her place in history. Both Suzanne Duchamp and Arnauld responded to the break-up of Dada with attempts at their own movements, *Tabu* and *projectivisme*. These women were not short on ambition and ideas. None simply accepted being marginal to male colleagues as a social norm.

Many of the issues that these five women explored were key to both men and women participants. Even issues around the body and the subject, this conclusion's focus, were core to male and female Dadaists but treated in nuanced ways. The menace to the concrete or whole being as a subject centre, to the place of the individual or body in the world order, was explored by avant-garde artists in the early twentieth century and has not waned. As visual culture has become increasingly important, the body as sign has assumed ever greater significance. The angst of the multi-faceted subject's existence and the suggestion that both reality and identity are unstable are core to post-modernist theory. Each Dadaist's work deals, in some part, with the dialectics between self/subject, other/object, personal/political and male/female. In each case, gender has played a part, offering specific challenges and resulting in particular approaches by both women and men. Yet work by women has been thoroughly overlooked, to the point where a false coherence has been imposed on Dada, one which renders its rebellions macho, its outlook male and its point of view monochrome. This belies the feminine aesthetic of

much avant-garde work, its acceptance of flux, refusal of authority and interrogation of patriarchal norms. The work of women Dadaists is a reminder that Dada had a feminine side too – not only quantified by, and isolated in, women participants but also evident in a continuum of resistances to man-made sign systems and conventions. To recall Britta Jürgs's claim, quoted in my introduction, 'Dada is feminine'.<sup>9</sup>

Engagement with the question of women in Dada is long overdue. As this book was being prepared, a study entitled *Dada's Boys* was under way and published in 2008. Its author, David Hopkins, proposes that questions around masculinity were at the heart of Dada experiments. Hopkins considers homosociality, sexual jokes and rites of masculinity, setting aesthetic experiments within the context of massive changes in gender roles and a perceived threat to masculinity. Where Hopkins chooses to emphasise its workings through male protagonists, I have highlighted the presence and persistence of Dada's women. What both studies agree on is that gender played a part in Dada, in its composition and its output. Where we also agree is that explorations of masculinity are not confined to men, nor issues of femininity to women, but that the question of gender roles is at the fore in these early years of the twentieth century and inevitably of enormous interest to artists of the avant-garde. Where we diverge is a question of our readings of Dada works, our selected scope of geography and individuals and our ideological priorities. If 'Dada's Boys' felt themselves under threat, they nevertheless retained most of the cultural ground then and retain it even now. Dada's women, meanwhile, had plenty of ground to cover and those women who intervened had to take determined steps to participate in a male-dominated forum, to produce experimental work and to challenge colleagues and audiences alike. Perhaps Dada's boys were right to be afraid of Dada's women.

## From 1920s to 2020s: women and the avant-garde

This study has sought to bring out nuances in the approaches of women Dadaists. Their work examined here exists and persists beyond that context and its value can be considered in ways that acknowledge developments since. The debate about the death of the avant-garde is a complex one, which cannot be fully discussed here.<sup>10</sup> Suffice it to say that a purely temporal, linear approach to the history of the avant-garde is already flawed, if one accepts that artistic approaches from the early decades of the twentieth century, such as those myriad practices of the five Dada women discussed here, are still being uncovered and re-explored. These delays in reception illustrate how practices disappear and reappear, are neglected, discovered or repeated in ways not clearly defined by time and space.

Without returning to the language of influence and origins, there is, as a next step, plenty to ask about the relationships between women artists over the last century. How does Hennings's semi-confessional work, in which art and life intersect, relate to the soul-baring of the British artist Tracey Emin? How does Hannah Höch's photomontage work compare with Barbara Kruger's or Martha Rosler's more explicitly feminist

work, which makes use of similar techniques? What do these photomontage artists owe to Höch and how do they take the connections between advertising, photography and fine art further? How do Suzanne Duchamp's word and image combinations relate to examples by Louise Bourgeois? How does Arnould's approach to language make sense now, in the context of feminist evaluations of language? How might the concept of *écriture féminine* illuminate avant-garde women's writing and vice versa? Might Arnould's wild poetic experimentation now be explained using these terms? Why is it that dolls persisted in the art of the twentieth century, from a fledgling start by the Dada women, through Bellmer's photographs of mannequins around the time of Surrealism, up to artists such as Louise Bourgeois and Sarah Lucas, as well as in the work of Jake and Dinos Chapman?

This revisiting of Dada and its 'second' gender is not a historical rewriting. It is an uncovering of themes, aspects, techniques and approaches that have resonance in ways that are not necessarily time-bound. In response to the publication of Sawelson-Gorse's book *Women in Dada*, a review of 2000 entitled 'Women Behaving Badly' by Hopkins invited links between Dada and young British artists such as Tracey Emin and Sarah Lucas.<sup>11</sup> In her introduction to an exhibition catalogue of 1996, which traverses twentieth-century women's art via a diverse set of individuals, Catherine de Zegher writes: 'Through repoliticizing the body, the ceaseless play of unraveling (hidden) traps of language, and challenging the triumphant gaze, some women have participated for decades in the development of issues essential to the art of the 1990s.'<sup>12</sup> This statement applies as far back as Dada's women and can be taken forward into the twenty-first century. There is huge potential for comparative work between the early, neo-feminist experiments of women Dadaists and later developments in art, literature and performance. This means that, both within and beyond the Dada context, these women's work offers great scope for further examinations into how avant-garde women have challenged and continue to challenge the institutions of art, and the wider social, political and cultural status quo. It demonstrates that avant-garde women both exist and persist. This study insists not on sameness and equivalence but glorious variation and difference, century after century.

## NOTES

### Introduction

- 1 Céline Arnauld, letter to Tristan Tzara, 24 October 1924: 'Mon cher ami, Je suis très étonnée que dans votre historique du Mouvement Dada – où vous vous montrez assez généreux même pour vos adversaires actuels – vous oubliez mon effort tant dans le lyrisme que dans l'action.' Tristan Tzara papers, Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris (hereafter BLJD). My translation. Where an English translation of source texts in French or German is published and was available, I have quoted from it and acknowledged it. In all other cases, translations are my own.
- 2 Nochlin, 'Why have there been no great women artists?'; abridged in Jones, *Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*, pp. 229–33.
- 3 See bibliography for useful overviews of women in art including Borzello, *World of Our Own*; Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*; Perry, *Gender and Art*; Pollock, *Vision & Difference*.
- 4 In addition to the publications mentioned in n. 3, see Jones, *Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* for a survey of key theories.
- 5 Arnauld, letter to Tzara, 24 October 1924, 'Pourtant d'autres que vous ont étudié sans parti pris l'évolution lyrique des dernières années et ne tarderont pas à me donner ma place. Car on peut jongler avec les noms et les individus, selon l'opportunité, mais non avec les oeuvres, qui ont du poids et ne se laissent pas manier comme des balles.'
- 6 Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada*, is an extremely useful source for women in the USA in particular. These lists still require interrogation and I would argue against including a number of the women as Dadaists.
- 7 Perloff, *Futurist Movement*, p. xxxviii. The context was a review of an exhibition 'The Avant-Garde in Russia, 1910–1930' at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1980.
- 8 E.g. an exhibition was devoted to Kahlo at Tate Modern, London, 9 June–9 October 2005. Catalogue: Dexter and Barson, *Frida Kahlo*. For an insightful critique of the exhibition and media coverage see Heath, 'Women Artists, Feminism and the Museum', in Kokoli, *Feminism Reframed*, pp. 20–40.
- 9 See e.g. Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'Dialogue and Double Allegiance: Some Contemporary Women Artists and the Historical Avant-Garde', in Chadwick, *Mirror Images*, pp. 128–55.
- 10 Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada*. The editor is well aware of this limitation and explains that the New York emphasis was a result of essays not being ready for publication; n. 10, pp. vii–viii.
- 11 'Dada war keine reine Männersache!'; 'Dada ist weiblich'. Jürgs, *Etwas Wasser in der Seife*, pp. 10 and 7.
- 12 Jones, *Irrational Modernism*, pp. 12–13.
- 13 Sylvester, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, p. 1.



- 14 Trans. David Britt in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 12. 'Es schien geradezu, als ob die Verschiedenartigkeit, ja Unvereinbarkeit der Charaktere, der Herkunft, des Lebensbildes der Dadaisten jene Spannung ergab, die dem zufälligen Zusammentreffen von Leuten aus aller Herren Ländern schliesslich die gleichgerichtete "dynamische" Energie lieferte.' Richter, *DADA-Kunst und Anti-Kunst*, p. 11.
- 15 As well as Behr, *Women Expressionists*, see Broude and Garrard, *Feminism and Art History*, for two essays on Expressionism and gender: Comini, 'Gender or Genius? The Women Artists of German Expressionism', pp. 271–91; Duncan, 'Virility and Domination in Early Twentieth-Century Vanguard Painting', pp. 293–313.
- 16 Hopkins, *Dada and Surrealism*, pp. 123–5; see ch. 5 esp. for gender.
- 17 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 34. 'Dada hatte nicht nur kein Programm, es war ganz und gar anti-programmatisch. Dada hatte das Programm, keins zu haben . . . und das gab zu der Zeit und in dem geschichtlichen Moment dieser Bewegung die explosive Kraft, sich nach ALLEN Seiten ohne ästhetische und soziale Bindungen frei zu entfalten.' *DADA-Kunst und Anti-Kunst*, p. 33.
- 18 Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada*, p. x.
- 19 Trans. in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 236. 'Un mot fut né, on ne sait pas comment DADADADA on jura amitié sur la nouvelle transmutation, qui ne signifie rien, et fut la plus formidable protestation, la plus intense affirmation armée du salut liberté juron masse combat vitesse prière tranquillité de guerrilla privée negation et chocolat du désespéré.' Tzara, *Chronique zurichoise*, p. 10.
- 20 Hugo Ball, 18 April 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. 63. 'Mein Vorschlag, sie [die Zeitschrift] Dada zu nennen, wird angenommen. . . . Dada heisst im Rumänischen Ja Ja, im Französischen Hotto- und Steckenpferd. Für Deutsche ist es ein Signum alberner Naivität und zeugungsfroher Verbundenheit mit dem Kinderwagen.' Ball, *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 95.
- 21 Richard Huelsenbeck and Jean Arp, in Motherwell, *Painters and Poets*, pp. 265 and 280.
- 22 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, p. 17. 'Meine Beziehung zu Frauen waren kärglich genug, obwohl Zürich im Jahre 1916 voll von interessanten weiblichen Wesen war. Die sexuelle Revolution, die man auch die Befreiung der Frau gennant hat, hatte damals noch nicht eingesetzt oder war noch nicht sichtbar. Sie wurde auch in unseren Köpfen nicht gefühlt. Oder zum mindesten ich fühlte sie nicht. Meine Haltung Frauen gegenüber war so primitiv wie möglich. Ich wollte eine Freundin, und ich wollte sexuelle Freuden. Ich hielt es für selbstverständlich, dass jede Frau sich meiner Lebensform anzupassen hätte. Ich wusste nichts von weiblichen Wünschen, von weiblichen Interessen. In der Schweiz ebenso wie in Deutschland bestand damals noch eine patriarchalische Ordnung, und ein männliches Wesen lebte zum grossen Teil von der Illusion seiner Überlegenheit.' *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze*, pp. 34–5.
- 23 Raoul Hausmann, 'Die Befreiung der Frau muss gerade hier einsetzen'; 'Die "wahren" Männer treten heute für die Ablösung der Besitzrechte des Mannes an der Frau.' First pub. in *Die Erde*, Breslau, 1919; abridged in van den Berg, *Das Ding an sich*, pp. 92 and 93.
- 24 Exceptions are: Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*; Camfield, 'Suzanne Duchamp and Dada in Paris', in Sawelson-Gorse, *Women in Dada*, pp. 82–103.
- 25 Scholarship by Scheunemann, *European Avant-Garde*, for example, focused on re-evaluating Bürger's theory.
- 26 For a detailed introduction to and discussion of these terms see Showalter, 'Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', *New Feminist Criticism*, pp. 243–70.
- 27 Borzello, *World of Our Own*, p. 13.
- 28 Charles Baudelaire said this of Eugénie Gautier in 1846. See Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, p. 8; ch. 1 gives a useful résumé of these tendencies.
- 29 See e.g. Kaplan, 'Language and Gender',

- Spender, 'Extracts from "Man Made Language"', and Irigaray, 'Linguistic Sexes and Genders', in Cameron, *Feminist Critique of Language*, pp. 54–64, 93–8, 119–23. Writings by Cixous include 'Coming to Writing' and *Other Essays*.
- 30 For an important essay see Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', in Jones, *Feminist and Visual Culture Reader*, pp. 393–402. See also Butler, *Bodies That Matter*.
- 31 David Hopkins has research interests and publications in this area. For a consideration of sexuality in general in Dada and Surrealist work, see his *Dada and Surrealism*, ch. 4. For a study of masculinity in Dada see *Dada's Boys*.
- 32 Paris, 5 October 2005–9 January 2006; Washington, D.C., 19 February–14 May 2006; New York, 16 June–11 September 2006. Two widely different catalogues were produced: Dickerman, *Dada*; Centre Pompidou, *Dada*.
- 33 [www.cnac-gp.fr](http://www.cnac-gp.fr)
- 34 Stoppard, *Travesties*, p. 24; spoken by Carr.
- 35 For more detailed discussions of the exhibitions in Paris and New York, see my essays 'Outside the Frame', in Bolton *et al.*, *Framed*, pp. 209–24, and 'Why have there been no Great Women Dadaists?' in Kokoli, *Feminism Reframed*, pp. 41–60.

## 1 Emmy Hennings

- 1 Ball, trans. in Howard and Lewer, *A New Order*, p. 12. 'Künstlerkneipe Voltaire. Unter diesem Namen hat sich im Saale der "Meierei" an der Spiegelgasse 1 eine Gesellschaft junger Künstler und Literaten etabliert, deren Ziel es ist, einen Mittelpunkt für die künstlerische Unterhaltung und den geistigen Austausch zu schaffen. Das Prinzip der Künstlerkneipe soll sein, dass bei den täglichen Zusammenkünften musikalische und rezitatorische Vorträge der als Gäste verkehrenden Künstler stattfinden und es ergeht an die junge
- Künstlerschaft Zürichs die Einladung, sich ohne Rücksicht auf eine besondere Kunstrichtung mit Vorschlägen und Beiträgen einzufinden.' *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 3 February 1916, 2nd edn, in Sheppard, *Dada Zürich in Zeitungen*, p. 8.
- 2 Ball, letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball, 12 November 1915, in Howard and Lewer, *A New Order*, p. 11. 'Ein eigenes Ensemble haben, selbst die Sachen dafür schreiben, es herausarbeiten bis ein richtiges Theater daraus wird: unser letzter Ehrgeiz.' Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 28.
- 3 Huelsenbeck, *Dada Drummer*, p. 32.
- 4 Van den Berg, 'Star of the Cabaret Voltaire', in Pichon and Riha, *Dada Zurich*, pp. 69–88.
- 5 Gass, *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, 1998; Reetz, *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, 2001; Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, 1999.
- 6 Reetz, *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, p. 34.
- 7 Emmy Hennings, diary entry, 20 December 1947: 'Von mir will man kein Werk – nur ich wünsche es von mir, aber die Menschen wollen nur meine Person.' Robert Walser Archive, Carl Seelig-Stiftung, Zurich, in Reetz, *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, p. 319.
- 8 Police files in Munich and Zurich refer to these incidents. For more detail see van den Berg 'Star of the Cabaret Voltaire', p. 77, and Reetz, *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, pp. 102ff. Hennings's own *Gefängnis* (1919) offers a semi-fictional, semi-autobiographical account of imprisonment.
- 9 Both the Kunsthaus Zürich and Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings archives, which form part of the Robert Walser Stiftung, have copies of *Variationen über ein weibliches Thema* but rights issues currently prevent reproduction.
- 10 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 26. 'Ihr kindliches Gehabe, ihre toternst vorgetragenen Unwahrscheinlichkeiten konnte ich nicht deuten; das machte sie mir fremd, als Frau wie als Mensch. Nur Ball verstand in seiner liebevollen Menschlichkeit ihr Wesen

- durchaus. Und wenn er das Gehabe auch nicht übersah, so durchschaute er es doch und fand in Emmy das Bild eines einfachen Mädchens, dessen oft missbrauchte Zutraulichkeit seine Männlichkeit ansprach, ohne diese stark zu beanspruchen.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 24.
- 11 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, pp. 49 and 18. 'Hugo suchte aber bei Emmy keine hausfrauliche Sorge, sondern die Unschuld, die Kindlichkeit, das Unbewusste, die Fee und das Übersinnliche'; 'Sie war seine Geliebte, seine Mutter, sein Engel und sein oberster Priester . . . Sie war nicht nur ein Kind, sie verstand es auch, Kind zu spielen.' *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze*, pp. 83 and 35–6. *Memoirs* is translated from and based on the German publication but does not equate with it exactly.
  - 12 Butler, 'Performative Acts', p. 393.
  - 13 Erich Mühsam, diary entry, 28 August 1910: 'Ich habe sie so gern in ihrer naiven Hurenhaftigkeit, die von nichts weiss als vom Lieben und Liebenlassen.' Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 48. Diary entry, 25 May 1911: 'Das arme Mädchen kriegt viel zu wenig Schlaf. Jeder will mit ihr schlafen, und da sie sehr gefällig ist, kommt sie nie zur Ruhe. Bis drei muss sie bei der Kathi [Kobus'] sein, die sie scheusslich ausnutzt, und morgens um 9 Uhr sitzt sie dann schon in der Malschule.' Trans. in Pichon and Riha, *Dada Zurich*, pp. 72 and 74.
  - 14 Huelsenbeck, *Witz, Licht und Grütze*; Richter, *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 25; Arp, 'Betrachten' (1958), in Ernst Scheidegger, *Zweiklang: Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Hans Arp*, Zurich: Arche Verlag, 1960, pp. 97–8; Ball, *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 96.
  - 15 Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia, 'Some Memories of Pre-Dada: Picabia and Duchamp (1949)', in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 265.
  - 16 Ball, letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball, 30 August 1915: 'Wenn jemand nach mir fragt: Ich bin Schriftsteller, im Ausland, und ich kämpfe für meine Erkennung.'
  - Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 22.
  - 17 Mühsam, 'ihre . . . eigene . . . Berufung als Dichterin.' Mühsam, 'Unpolitische Erinnerungen', *Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 11, Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1978, in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 47.
  - 18 Van den Berg, 'Star of the Cabaret Voltaire', p. 75.
  - 19 Hennings, 'Dann aber sagte er mir, dass er Dramaturg an den Kammerspielen sei, und da hörte die Einsilbigkeit zwischen uns beiden rasch auf. Wir begannen über das Theater zu sprechen, über Wedekind, Sternheim und Claudel', 'Erste Begegnung', in Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, pp. 91–2.
  - 20 Wagner used the term originally in *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849) for a dramatic work in which drama, music, song, poetry and paintings would be united into a complete art form. Kandinsky also promoted the concept.
  - 21 Ball's experience as a piano player and occasional sketch writer in this ensemble formed the basis of his novel *Flametti* (1916–18).
  - 22 'Ewige Wahrheit, nur zwanzig centimes'; 'Die ewige Wahrheit kommt natürlich von mir und das finde ich komisch. Und dass diese so billig sein soll. Als wäre nicht viel wert, wonach wir verlangen. Ein Theatertod, ein richtiger Varietéod wäre eigentlich das Gegebene für mich. Man möchte doch die Wahrheit sein, nicht nur scheinbar und wenn man mich in meinem Netz erdrosselt vorfände, wäre ich die Wahrheit. Noch im letzten maskiert'; 'Wir glauben an die erwiesene Wahrheit der Illusion', in Riha and Weber, *Emmy Hennings, Betrunknen taumeln*, pp. 88–9.
  - 23 Hennings, 'Er sagte, dass ihm das Theater die Freiheit, die unfassbare Freiheit bedeute, während ich annahm, dass diese mehr innerhalb des Lebens zu finden sei. . . . Das war kurz vor Kriegsausbruch, im Jahre 1913, da man einen visionären Advent in der Kunst glaubte. Schon stand man im Begriff,

- auch in der Kunst das Leben zu erfassen ohne den Umweg durch den Intellekt', 'Erste Begegnung', in Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, p. 92.
- 24 Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, p. 1.
- 25 Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 10. 'Emmy, von deren Erfolg oder Misserfolg als Sängerin die Existenz des Kabarets abhing'; *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze*, p. 22.
- 26 'Cabaret Voltaire', *Zürcher Post* morning edn, 23 May 1916; trans. in Goldberg, *Performance Art*, p. 60. 'Der Stern dieses Cabarets aber ist Frau Emmy Hennings. Stern wie vieler Nächte von Cabarets und Gedichten. Wie sie vor Jahren am rauschend gelben Vorhang eines Berliner Cabarets stand, die Arme über den Hüften emporgerundet, reich wie ein blühender Busch, so leiht sie auch heute mit immer mutiger Stirn denselben Apachenliedern einen Körper, seither nur wenig ausgehöhlt von Schmerz.' Sheppard, *Dada Zürich in Zeitungen*, p. 12.
- 27 Ravien Siurlai [Ferdinand Hardekopf], 'dieses Mädchen, das die Hysterie, die Gereiztheit und die Hirn zerreissende Intensität der Literaten besitzt', *Die Aktion*, 5 June 1912, in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 63.
- 28 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, pp. 26–7. 'Als einzige Frau in diesem nur mit Dichtern und Malern bestückten Kabarett brachte Emmy eine höchst notwendige Note in die Darbietungen, auch wenn (oder vielleicht gerade weil) ihre Vorträge weder stimmlich nicht vortragsmässig im herkömmlichen Sinne künstlerisch waren. Sie stellten vielmehr in ihrer ungewohnten Grelle einen Affront dar, der das Publikum nicht weniger beunruhigte als die Provokationen ihrer männlichen Kollegen.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 24.
- 29 Ball performed as a pianist in cabaret but not as an actor. For his background and involvement in theatre as a writer, literary manager and director see Elderfield's introduction to *Flight Out of Time* (1996), pp. xv–xix.
- 30 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 15. 'Frauen gab es wenig im Kabarett. Es war zu wild, zu rauchig und zu seltsam.' *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze*, p. 22; Tzara, 'le mélange cosmopolite de dieu et de bordel', *Chronique zurichoise*, p. 8.
- 31 Reetz, 'Die Grenzen zwischen Animation und Prostitution waren fließend', *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, p. 55; see pp. 53ff for more detail.
- 32 The most startling allegations about Ball, for example, were made by a Zurich police report from 2 July 1919: that he lived off her earnings, they fought regularly, he hit her and she had attempted suicide; in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, pp. 109–10.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 45, from Max Halbe, *Jahrhunderwende: Erinnerung an eine Epoche*, Munich and Vienna: Langen Müller, 1976.
- 34 Ball, letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball, 22 March 1916: 'Sie hat so treu mit mir ausgehalten und wir haben das Cabaret hochgebracht', in Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 49.
- 35 Hugnet, 'Elle participe activement à la bonne marche du Cabaret Voltaire . . . chanteuse, elle est l'animatrice du cabaret', *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 176.
- 36 *Cabaret Voltaire*, 'Da hatten wir am 5. Februar ein Cabaret. Mde. Hennings und Mde. Leconte sangen französische und dänische Chansons. Herr Tristan Tzara rezitierte rumänische Verse. Ein Balalaika-Orchester spielte entzückende russische Volkslieder und Tänze.' Full issue of *Cabaret Voltaire* repr. in Giroud, *Dada: Zurich, Paris, 1916–1922*, p. 21.
- 37 Ball, letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball from Zurich, 1 March 1916: 'Ohne Emmy und eine kleine Französin, die entzückende französische Liedchen singt, wäre es mir nicht möglich.' Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 44.
- 38 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 20. 'Wenn man Balls Klavier-Interpretationen, Emmy Hennings dünne, kleine, künstliche Mädchenstimme, (die zwischen Volks- und Hurenliedern wechselte), mit den

- abstrakten Negermasken von Janco zusammenbringt . . . so erlebt man einen Teil der Vitalität und des Enthusiasmus, der die Gruppe belebt.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, pp. 18–19.
- 39 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 10. 'Diese Chansons, die man nur in Mitteleuropa kennt, sind Lieder, die die Politik, Literatur, das menschliche Benehmen oder sonst etwas ironisieren, was jedermann versteht. Dies Chansons sind frech, aber nicht verletzend. Sie wollen niemandem wehetun, aber dennoch eine Meinung vermitteln. Manchmal sind sie erotisch, sie behandeln alte Lustspielthemen, den betrogenen Ehemann oder die Unwissenheit der Braut vor der Hochzeitsnacht. Ihr intellektuelles Niveau ist niedrig, aber nicht unangenehm. Sie leben von Refrains und populärer Musik. Ball erfand die Melodie, die zu jedem Chanson gehörte.' *Mit Witz, Licht und Grüte*, p. 22.
- 40 Ball, 16 June 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 67. 'Die Bildungs- und Kunstideale als Variétéprogramm – : das ist unsere Art von *Candide* gegen die Zeit.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 101.
- 41 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 137. Original German not found.
- 42 *Totentanz*, text taken from Riha and Schäfer, *DADA total*, p. 51. Hennings claims that Hardekopf called it 'das beste Lied der Revolution' (The best song of the revolution). See Hennings, letter to Ball from Ascona, 1916, in Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 72.
- 43 Ball, 'Oh, wie mich Deine Stimme zum Schreiben anregt! Ich hielt nicht viel von meinem "Totentanz", als Du ihn mir aber das erstemal vorgesungen hast in der grauen Schoffelgasse in Zürich, oh, Emmy, das werde ich nie vergessen', Hennings, *Hugo Ball: Sein Leben*, in *Echte*, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 112.
- 44 *Nieuwe Amsterdamer*, 'Sie singt es auf eine einfache, fast fröhliche Melodie. Und der Sarkasmus und Hass, die Verzweiflung der in den Krieg gejagten Männer klingt in jedem Satz', in *Echte*, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 117.
- 45 See Brecht, 'The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre', *Brecht on Theatre*, pp. 33–9.
- 46 Ball, 11 April 1915. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 16. 'Wo der Dramatiker sein Publikum rühren oder erschüttern will, da lässt er zum Gesang übergehen. . . . Die Worte des Gesanges sind gleichgültig, die rhythmischen Gesetze sind wichtiger.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 28.
- 47 Ball, letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball, 1 March 1916: 'Man ist ganz erschüttert, wenn Emmy das Lied singt.' Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 44.
- 48 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 54. 'Man kann zwar Laute – musikalisch-rhythmisch-melodisch sich zufällig miteinander verbinden lassen, aber mit ganzen Worten wird es schwieriger. Worte sind für den praktischen Gebrauch mit Inhalt geladen und fügen sich nicht ohne weiteres dem Zufallen und der freien Handhabung.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 54.
- 49 Ball, 9 July 1915. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 25. 'Im Ausschaltung der angreifbaren Syntax oder Assoziation bewährt sich die Summe dessen, was als Geschmack, Takt, Rhythmus und Weise den Stil und den Stolz eines Schriftstellers ausmacht.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 42.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 4 March 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 54. 'Nirgends so sehr als beim öffentlichen Vortrag ergeben sich die Schwächen einer Dichtung. . . . Das laute Rezitieren ist mir zum Prüfstein der Güte eines Gedichtes geworden, und ich habe mich (vom Podium) belehren lassen, in welchem Ausmasse die heutige Literatur problematisch, das heisst am Schreibtische erklügelt und für die Brille des Sammlers, statt für die Ohren lebendiger Menschen gefertigt ist.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 83.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 30 March 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 57. 'Der Eigensinn eines Organons kommt in solchem Simultangedichte drastisch zum Ausdruck, und ebenso seine Bedingtheit

- durch die Begleitung.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 87.
- 52 Bernhard Merkelbach, 'Die avantgardistische Stossrichtung des Dadaismus, die sich in diesem Cabaret entfaltete, hat Emmy Hennings – anders als Hugo Ball – jedoch nie ganz mitvollzogen. Sie blieb als Brett-Künstlerin stärker an den Text-Vortrag mit begleitender Mimik, Gestik, Musikbegleitung zurückgebunden', 'Nachwort', in Riha and Weber, *Betrunken taumeln*, p. 101.
- 53 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 18. 'Die schöpferische Aktivität der Gruppe bestand in Herstellung, Vortrag und Veröffentlichung von Gedichten, Geschichten und Gesängen. Alle diese Gedichte, Gesänge und Geschichten fanden ihre entsprechende Form der Darstellung.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 17.
- 54 Ball, 1 March 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 53. 'Producere heisst herausführen, ins Dasein rufen. Es müssen nicht Bücher sein. Man kann auch Künstler produzieren.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 82.
- 55 Rugh, 'Emmy Hennings and Zurich Dada', p. 5.
- 56 Goldberg, *Performance Art*, p. 9.
- 57 Ball, letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball from Zurich, 1 March 1916: 'Den grössten Erfolg hat Emmy. Man übersetzt ihre Verse für Bukarest. Sie hat dort eine ganze Kolonie von Freunden. Die Franzosen küssen ihr die Hand. Man liebt sie unaussprechlich. Sie liest aus den Gedichten, *Aetherstrophien* und *Krankenhaus*. Daneben neue Sachen. Dann singt sie ihre kleinen zärtlichen Chansons.' Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 45.
- 58 Corresponds in part to trans. in Richter, 'Dada X, Y, Z . . .' (1948), in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 286. 'Emmy Hennings, die während ihrer Lebenszeit einige der besten deutschen Dichter getroffen und inspiriert hatte, die immer, solange ich mich erinnern kann (1912), unter Künstlern und Schriftstellern gelebt hatte, wurde schliesslich selbst Schriftstellerin. Bücher über Hugo Ball, Kurzgeschichten und empfindsame, intelligente Gedichte erschienen in der *Neuen Zürcher Zeitung*, der Basler *Nationalzeitung* und in Zeitschriften.' Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 177. Originally from *Dada-Profile*, Zurich: Arche, 1961.
- 59 Johannes Becher, 'Mein erstes poetisches Wagnis, mein leidenschaftliches Abenteuer, das mich mitten hinein in die Literatur wirbelte und mich mit Leonhard Frank, van Hoddiss, Hardekopf zusammenbrachte', *Auf andere Art so grosse Hoffnung: Tagebuch. 1950*, Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1951, in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 78.
- 60 Her first published poem was 'Äther' (Ether), *Die Aktion*, August 1911.
- 61 See bibliography for a list of her work. The most useful and comprehensive source was Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*.
- 62 'Cabaret Voltaire', *Zürcher Post* morning edn, 23 May 1916: 'Sie wurde, als in Berlin die neueste Prager Dichtergeneration, nur ein wenig fett von Gefühl, aufkam, auch als Dichterin entdeckt und die Anmut ihrer Verse, irrtümlich genug, für die neue Richtung ausgebeutet', in Sheppard, *Dada Zürich in Zeitungen*, pp. 12–13.
- 63 Anna Rheinsberg, 'Bohème ist männlich. Die Frau hat kein Wahlrecht. Sie tritt auf, niemals aber ein (in den Kreis), sie ist Lied, (Mal-) Modell oder Schreibmaschine', 'Ein blonder Hunger', p. 27.
- 64 Hugnet, 'Images catastrophées, juxtapositions insolites, recours au hasard (mots tirés d'un chapeau), langage inventé dont les sonorités rappellent les chansons africaines, simultanéisme . . . Son aventure est une révolte de l'esprit, une révolte morale et poétique', *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 23.
- 65 Thomas F. Rugh, commenting on 'Morfin', for example, asserts that its pessimistic ending and universal, rather than social or contemporary, protest distinguish it from the utopian messages of much Expressionist poetry:

- 'Expressionist poets eagerly proclaim their visions of a new reality, and it is their eagerness and enthusiasm that differentiate them from the Dadaists and Emmy Hennings,' 'Emmy Hennings and Zurich Dada', p. 22. Renée Riese Hubert also considers Hennings to be a Dadaist: 'Her verse is in no way reducible to lament and elegy. Far from indulging in polemics it barely hints at protest, an underlying note often found in expressionistic poetry', 'Zurich Dada and its Artist Couples', p. 520. These two conclusions are at odds with each other.
- 66 'Brief an Hugo Ball', Zurich, November 1917, in Riha and Weber, *Betrunkene taumeln*, pp. 96–7.
- 67 Poems reprinted in Giroud, *Dada: Zurich*, Paris. English trans. of *Gesang zur Dämmerung* and *Morfin* from Bohn, *The Dada Market*, pp. 100–01. Trans. of *Die Vielleicht letzte Flucht* from Howard and Lewer, *A New Order*, p. 89.
- 68 'Holunderbäume' should be translated as elder bushes rather than as lilac trees. According to Reetz, these grew in the garden of Hennings's childhood home; *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, p. 16.
- 69 Lasker-Schüler's poems reproduced in Howard and Lewer, *A New Order*, in German on pp. 60 and 66 respectively; English trans. pp. 61 and 67.
- 70 Hennings, 'Es wäre interessant, das kaum mehr Begreifliche darzustellen. Das unbekannte, unlogische Leben', 'Aus dem Tagebuch', in Riha and Weber, *Betrunkene taumeln*, pp. 88–9.
- 71 Bohn's trans. slightly amended. His version is 'Lake Klintekongen sings an old tune.' I have translated 'der Klintekongensee' as 'The Lake of the Cliff King'.
- 72 Hennings, letter to Junghanns from Munich, August 1912, in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 65.
- 73 This distinction recalls Richter's comment that Hennings was alien to him 'als Frau wie als Mensch' (as a woman and as a human being), *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 24.
- 74 Hennings, *Vor der Premiere*, in Rheinsberg, *Kriegs/Läufe*, p. 31, citing Bernhard Merkelbach, ed., *Emmy Hennings, Frühe Texte*, Siegen: Universität-Gesamthochschule Siegen, 1987, pp. 17ff.
- 75 Howard and Lewer, *A New Order*, p. 101.
- 76 See Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, pp. 32–5.
- 77 Hennings, 'Erste Begegnung.' In Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, pp. 86–102.
- 78 See catalogue entry, Bolliger, Magnaguagno and Meyer, *Dada in Zürich*, p. 275.
- 79 Hennings, 'Die Gedichtbändchen waren federleicht, doch war eines dem anderen insofern nicht ähnlich, da ja jedes anders illustriert war, auch verschiedenartig ausgestattet, mit Schilfgras beklebt oder mit kleinen Bildchen aquarelliert'; 'mein eigener Verleger', *Ruf und Echo*, p. 38.
- 80 Ibid., 'kahl und nüchtern', *Das flüchtige Spiel*, p. 264.
- 81 Felix Strössinger in *Vossische Zeitung*, 3 April 1914: '[Die Gedichte] sprechen wirklich die letzte Freude eines kärglichen Variété- und Bohèmelebens aus, ohne Scham, aber auch ohne letzte Preisgabe des Ich', in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 70.
- 82 Elderfield, 'Introduction', Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. xliii n. 8.
- 83 Hennings, 'Das Variété: Die Zeit vor dem Cabaret Voltaire', in Riha and Weber, *Betrunkene taumeln*, p. 86.
- 84 See Ball and Hennings, *Damals in Zürich*, p. 78.
- 85 Erickson, *Dada: Performance, Poetry, and Art*, p. 139.
- 86 See Reetz, *Emmy Ball-Hennings*, p. 37. The chapter 'Goldene Eva und Hurenkind' looks at Hennings's Catholicism in much greater detail.
- 87 Every autobiography or biography takes a certain ideological stance towards the past. Ball, as discussed, revised his diaries significantly to make them coherent. See Elderfield, 'Introduction', Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. xiv.
- 88 For more detailed treatment of these works see Werner-Birkenbaum, 'Emmy Hennings', pp. 167–200.

- 89 Hennings, 'Ich habe doch noch nie die Wahrheit gesagt, nicht einmal als wahrsagende Spinne', in 'Einmal Königin', first pub. *Berliner Tageblatt*, vol. LV, no. 321, 10 July 1926, in Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, p. 69. Hennings refers to her performance as Arachne with Flamingo's Maxim-Ensemble; see above.
- 90 *Der Friede*, Vienna, July 1919, in Echte, *Emmy Ball Hennings*, p. 164.
- 91 Hennings, 'Wenn es verboten ist, sich Liebesstunden bezahlen zu lassen, muss es verboten werden Liebesstunden zu kaufen', *Gefängnis* (1985), p. 105.
- 92 *Ibid.*, 'Der man machte viel bessere Geschäfte als ich'; 'Er liess sich viel öfter photographieren als ich'; 'Schliesslich war ich doch auch ein kleiner Liebling des Volkes', *Ruf und Echo*, pp. 54–5.
- 93 Hennings, 'Ich wollte nicht das private Eigentum eines Mannes sein, und was manche Frauen ershenen, sich einzig und allein einem Menschen hinzugeben – ich spürte es mehr und mehr – das war nicht meine Sache', *Das flüchtige Spiel*, p. 86.
- 94 Hennings's daughter, Annemarie Schütt-Hennings, states her aim to point out her mother's varied work beyond memoirs of Ball in 'Emmy Ball-Hennings: Anmerkungen zu ihrem Werk und ihrer Person', with Franz L. Pelgen, in Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, pp. 1–18. In fact, other than noting her mother's works, she restricts herself mainly to 'correcting' misconceptions about her life.
- 95 Van den Berg, 'Star of the Cabaret Voltaire', p. 71.
- 96 Hennings, 'Über diese Zeit habe ich einmal Aufzeichnungen gemacht, die ich bald und zum grössten Teil vernichtet habe. Vergessen, begraben sein lassen wollte ich, was gewesen ist', from 'Das Varieté: Die Zeit vor dem Cabaret Voltaire', in Riha and Weber, *Betrunken taumeln*, p. 78. This text is an extract from the unpublished work 'Rebellen und Bekenner: Aus dem Leben von Hugo Ball', c. 1930–31.
- 97 Hennings, 'Wissen Sie, dass man spielen kann, wie man leben möchte? Wie soll ich Ihnen sagen? Ich spielte immer, was ich ersehnte. Spielte mir mein Ideal . . . spielte so lange, und alles wurde mir Wahrheit', *Gefängnis*, p. 23.
- 98 *Ibid.*, 'Dabei war er so naiv und leicht mitgenommen, dass er das Theater mit der Wirklichkeit, dem Leben, verwechseln konnte', from 'Das Varieté', in Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, p. 115.
- 99 Hennings, 'Von einer Spielgier besessen, von einer Wander- und Melodiensucht, war selbst mein Kind nicht fähig, mich zurückzuhalten. Das Ungewisse, in das es mich hineinzog, war stärker noch als die Liebe zu meinem Kinde', *Das flüchtige Spiel*, p. 198.
- 100 In 1912 a *Puppenbuch* was published, which included images of Pritzel's dolls alongside texts by Theodor Däubler and René Schickele. In 1913 Rainer Maria Rilke devoted an essay to them, which Pritzel recommended to Hans Bellmer, who later made dolls a central theme in his Surrealist photographic work.
- 101 Hennings, 'Wenn der Mensch lebt, handelt, ist er Automat, Puppe. Doch wie empfindlich ist der Mensch als Puppe. Wir waren Marionetten und Gott war wie ein Kind, das uns am Fäden hält, um uns spielen zu lassen nach Belieben. Es war schwer, nicht von der Szene verschwinden zu dürfen', from 'Das Varieté', in Teubner, *Hugo-Ball Almanach 1984*, p. 111.
- 102 René Schickele and Solomon Grumbach were friends and erstwhile members of the Strasbourg literary and artistic circle Jüngstes Elsass in the early years of the twentieth century. Ball, 29 March 1917. Trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 102. 'Später kamen Schickele und Grumbach; der letztere improvisierte im Tür-rahmen zwischen zwei Sälen mit Zar und Zarin von Emmy ein politisches Puppentheater.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 149.
- 103 Hennings, 'Da sitze ich vor meinem Spiegel und kann diese Puppe betra-



chten. Ich weiss, dass ich mich verdoppeln kann', *Das Braudmal*, p. 150.

## 2 Sophie Taeuber

- 1 Jean Arp, 'Elle fut sereine, lumineuse, véridique, précise, claire, incorruptible', in *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, exh. cat., Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris, 24 April–22 June 1964, p. 13.
- 2 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, pp. 45 and 70. 'Meistens ersetzte ein scheues oder sinnendes Lächeln bei ihr die Notwendigkeit zu reden'; 'So gesprächig, angeberisch, krachmachend, herausfordernd wir waren, so still war Sophie'. *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, pp. 45 and 72.
- 3 Claude Rossignol, 'Jouant avec beaucoup d'habileté de son espièglerie (attesté par tous ceux qui l'ont approché), Sophie porte avec le sourire les attaques les plus percutantes à la laideur architecturale et décorative de son temps.' *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, exh. cat., Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg, 26 March–12 June 1977, p. 9.
- 4 'Même sa fin, accidentelle et prématurée (elle n'avait que 54 ans), fut toute de discrétion.' *Ibid.*
- 5 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 35. 'Sophie Täubers Talent und Kraft waren erstaunlich. Ich sah sie nur selten, sie zeigte sich im Kabarett, nahm aber nicht an unserer Wildheit teil. Sie arbeitete als Lehrerin und lebte mit Arp, der heute den Ruhm seiner inzwischen verstorbenen Frau liebevoll pflegt. Sie ist so die einzige Frau geworden, die in der Entwicklung der neuen Kunst einen grossen Namen bekommen hat.' *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze*, p. 61.
- 6 Jill Fell has undertaken important research on Taeuber's performance activities, including both marionette-making and dance. See e.g. 'Sophie Täuber: The Masked Dada Dancer', in *Forum for Modern Languages Studies*, vol. xxxv, no. 3, 1999, pp. 270–85. I came across Fell's research after having carried out my own independently and found substantial convergences in our conclusions. Fell's work should be consulted for further detail.
- 7 Hans Trog, 'Dann Sophie Täuber (Zürich), die vortreffliche Marionettenfiguren zu entwerfen weiss aus sicherem Farbensgeschmack und lebendigem Charakterisierungsvermögen heraus, und die in Halsketten und Perltaschen exzelliert', from Trog, 'Kunstchronik: Aus dem Zürcher Kunsthaus 111 [Auszug]', *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 2 February 1919, in Sheppard, *Dada Zürich in Zeitungen*, p. 50.
- 8 'Dada X, Y, Z . . .' (1948), in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 288. Richter attributed the puppets to Arp and Taeuber but I have found no other sources that link Arp with puppet-making.
- 9 For excellent chapters on both Futurism and the Bauhaus see Goldberg, *Performance Art*. For a more recent overview of performance art up to the present see Berghaus, *Avant-Garde Performance*.
- 10 The premiere took place on 11 September 1918. *Re Cervo* was written by the Italian Carlo Gozzi in 1762. Essentially a fairytale, it has been described as a mixture of *commedia dell'arte*, puppet theatre, political satire and romantic comedy.
- 11 Kleist, 'Über das Marionettentheater', pp. 9–16. Trans. 'The Puppet Theatre', pp. 411–16. Olga Taxidou, 'Actor or Puppet', pp. 225–40, was useful in informing this section.
- 12 Trans. in Kleist, 'Puppet Theatre', p. 412. '[D]iese, für den Haufen erfundene, Spielart einer schönen Kunst.' 'Über das Marionettentheater', p. 11.
- 13 Kleist, 'Puppet Theatre', p. 414. 'Zudem . . . haben diese Puppen den Vorteil, dass sie antigrav sind. Von der Trägheit der Materie, diese dem Tanze entgegenstrebendsten aller Eigenschaften, wissen sie nichts: weil die Kraft, die sie in die Lüfte erhebt, grösser ist, als jene, die sie an der Erde fesselt.' 'Über das Marionettentheater', p. 12.
- 14 Kleist, 'Puppet Theatre', p. 414. 'Ich sagte, dass . . . er mich doch nimmermehr

- glauben machen würde, dass in einem mechanischen Gliedermann mehr Anmuth enthalten sein könne, als in dem Bau des menschlichen Körpers'; 'Nur ein Gott könne sich, auf diesem Felde, mit der Materie messen.' 'Über das Marionettentheater', p. 13.
- 15 Ball, 11 April 1915. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. 16. 'Das Drama . . . führt in eine Welt der Magie, die oft einen marionettenhaften Charakter annimmt und die Einheit des Bewusstseins fortwährend in der Art und Weise des Traumes unterbricht.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 28.
- 16 See Brecht, 'Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre', pp. 33–9.
- 17 Hugnet, 'Dada', in Barr, *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism*, p. 17.
- 18 Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 97. It is fair to note that he also remarks on how Arp tended to keep a distance from the noise and publicity around the cabaret.
- 19 Hennings, 'Wie man aber Musik nicht recht beschreiben kann und man sie selbst hören muss, so ergeht es mir auch mit dem Tanz von Sophie Taeuber, von dem ich gerne einen Begriff geben möchte', Hennings, 'Zur Erinnerung an Sophie Taeuber', in Schmidt, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 17.
- 20 Laban's *Schrifttanz*, of 1928, was one of two modern dance notation systems, consisting of abstract symbols for direction, rhythm and level of movement.
- 21 Hopkins, *Dada and Surrealism*, p. 116.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 69. 'War das Odeon unser irdisches Hauptquartier, so war Labans Tanzschule unser himmlisches. Dort trafen wir die jungen Tänzerinnen der Generation: Mary Wigman, Maria Vanselow, Sophie Taeuber, Susanne Perrottet, Maja Kruscek, Käthe Wulff und andere. Nur zu bestimmten Zeiten war es uns erlaubt, in dieses Kloster einzudringen, mit dem uns mehr oder weniger zarte Bande vorübergehend oder dauernd verknüpften.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 71.
- 24 Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 70. 'Serger dagegen, flatterhaft wie er war, liebte es nicht, seine Laban-Zelte oder was immer es war an einem einzigen Platz und dauernd in dieser schönen Umgebung aufzuschlagen. Es war jedenfalls ein reiches Feld von Gefahren, in das wir uns mit nicht geringerem Enthusiasmus stürzten als in Dada. Es gehörte dazu!' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 72.
- 25 Mair, *Von ihren Träumen sprach sie nie*, p. 34. Mair quotes a letter to Sophie Taeuber's sister dated 27 November 1911.
- 26 Bolliger, Magnaguagno and Meyer, *Dada in Zürich*, p. 42. On p. 42 they list those performances where it is known that the Laban dancers participated on 29 March 1917, 14 April 1917, 28 April 1917, 31 December 1918 and 9 April 1919.
- 27 Ibid, p. 41. This information comes from conversations between the authors of *Dada in Zürich* and Perrottet on 19 February 1981 and 30 March 1982.
- 28 'Und die ersten Kontakte mit den Dadaisten?' Käthe Wulff, 'Arp und seine Frau Sophie Taeuber kannte ich bereits vor den Dada-Veranstaltungen. Sophie Taeuber war ja Schülerin bei uns und eine gute Freundin von Mary Wigman.' Ibid., p. 44.
- 29 Hennings, 'Keine aber hat auf uns solch starken Eindruck hinterlassen wie Sophie Taeuber', in Schmidt, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 17.
- 30 Hennings, 'Sie stand um diese Zeit, da ich sie kennenlernte, in der Blüte ihrer Mädchenjahre, doch schon des Lebens innig bewusst und ihrer Bestimmung als Künstlerin entgegenreifend. Sie war von mittelgrosser, schlanker Gestalt, auch waren Gang und Bewegung bei ihr sehr schön, von natürlicher Anmut und Grazie. Nichts Starres, nichts Ungelöstes haftete ihr an', in Ibid., p. 15.
- 31 Suzanne Perrottet, 'Ich wollte weg vom Harmonischen, vom Konsi-Stil . . . das stimmte für mich einfach nicht mehr. Ich wollte kreischen, mehr kämpfen', in Bolliger, Magnaguagno and Meyer, *Dada in Zürich*, p. 71 n. 145.
- 32 Ball, 'An Stelle der Tradition treten bei ihr die Sonnenhelle, das Wunder. Sie ist voller Erfindung, Kaprize, Bizarrerie. . . . Jede Geste ist hundertmal gegliedert,

- scharf, hell, spitz. Die Narratei der Perspektiven, der Beleuchtung, der Atmosphäre wird hier einem übersensiblen Nervensystem Anlass zu gestreicher Drolerie, zur ironischen Glosse. Ihre Tanzgebilder sind voller Fabulierlust, grotesk und verzückt.' Ball, 'Die Tänzerin Sophie Taeuber' (1917), in Schmidt, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 20.
- 33 See Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, pp. 17–18.
- 34 Dada, 'Mlle. S. Taeuber: bizarrerie délicate dans l'arraigné de la main vibre rythme rapidement ascendant vers le paroxysme d'une démente goguenade capricieuse belle', *Dada* no. 1, repr. in Giroud, *Dada, Zurich Paris*, p. 112.
- 35 Richter, *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 72; *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 70.
- 36 Tzara, trans. in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 240. 'NOIR CACADOU, Danse (5 personnes) avec Mlle Wulff, les tuyaux dansent la rénovation des pythécantropes sans tête, asphyxie la rage du public.' Tzara, *Chronique zurichoise*, p. 23. This performance took place on 9 April 1919. It was the second and last Dada public soirée in Zurich. Taeuber was absent because of illness.
- 37 'Through Serner's contribution the public had gained in self-awareness.' Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 79. 'Das Publikum war doch durch Serners Ausführungen zum Bewusstsein seiner selbst gekommen.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 82.
- 38 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, pp. 79–80. 'Das war um so bemerkenswerter, als der Tanz 'Noir Kakadu' mit wildesten Negermasken von Janco, die helfen sollten, die hübschen Mädchengesichter zu verbergen, und mit abstrakten Kostümen über den schlanken Leibern unserer Labaneserinnen etwas völlig Neues, Unerwartetes, Antikonventionelles war.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 82.
- 39 'Dada X, Y, Z . . .' (1948), in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 288.
- 40 Wulff, 'Wenn jemand einen Tanz machen wollte, zum Beispiel die Sophie Taeuber, so habe ich mir den Tanz zeigen lassen und ihn mit ihr besprochen'; 'Neu dazugekommen sind die Masken, das gehört zur Gruppe, zu uns und zu dieser Zeit.' Conversation with Wulff on 20 January 1982, in Bolliger, Magnaguagno and Meyer, *Dada in Zürich*, p. 43.
- 41 Laban, *A Life for a Dance*, p. 48. I am grateful to Claire Warden for this quotation.
- 42 Perrottet in Bolliger, Magnaguagno and Meyer, *Dada in Zürich*, p. 71 n. 55.
- 43 Ball, 24 May 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, pp. 64–5. 'Was an den Masken uns allesamt fasziniert ist, dass sie nicht menschliche, sondern überlebensgrosse Charaktere und Leidenschaften verkörpern.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 97.
- 44 Germaine Albert-Birot, 'Elle [la danse] peut et doit s'accompagner de chants et de cris suggérés par le rythme même. La danse par excellence ce sont les enfants qui sautent en riant, qui font une ronde en chantant; ce sont les paysans qui claquent leurs sabots en rythmant la bourré ou autre; ce sont les sauvages, les sauvages surtout, criant, hurlant, gesticulant, trépignant, exprimant frénétiquement de TOUT leur être l'émotion rythmique', 'Réflexions sur la Danse', *SIC*, no. 25, January 1918, ed. Pierre-Albert Birot.
- 45 Ball, 29 March 1917. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. 102. 'Ein Gongschlag genügt, um den Körper der Tänzerin zu den phantastischen Gebilden anzuregen. Der Tanz ist Selbstzweck geworden.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 149.
- 46 Ball, 24 May 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. 97.
- 47 Ball, 29 March 1917. *Ibid.*, p. 102. 'Hier im besonderen Falle genügte eine poetische Lautfolge, um jeder der einzelnen Wortpartikel zum sonderbarsten, sichtbaren Leben am hundertfach gegliederten Körper der Tänzerin zu verhelfen.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 149.
- 48 Tzara, trans. in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 236. 'Danse cubiste, costumes de Janco, chacun sa grosse caisse sur la tête, bruits, musique

- nègre/trabatgea bonoooooooo oo ooooo.' Tzara, *Chronique zurichoise*, p. 10.
- 49 Arp, 'Wir wollen nicht mehr die Natur nachahmen, wir wollen nicht abbilden, wir wollen bilden', 'Konkrete Kunst' (1955), in Scheidegger, *Zweiklang*, p. 73.
- 50 Dietrich Scheunemann, 'On Photography and Painting', *European Avant-Garde*, p. 33.
- 51 Ball, 5 March 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. 55. 'Dass das Bild des Menschen in der Malerei dieser Zeit mehr und mehr verschwindet und alle Dinge nur noch in der Zersetzung vorhanden sind, das ist ein Beweis mehr, wie hässlich und abgegriffen das menschliche Antlitz, und wie verabscheuenswert jeder einzelne Gegenstand unserer Umgebung geworden ist. Der Entschluss der Poesie, aus ähnlichen Gründen die Sprache fallen zu lassen, steht nahe bevor. Das sind Dinge, die es vielleicht noch niemals gegeben hat.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 84.
- 52 Arp in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 294.
- 53 Arp, '(En 1915), Sophie Taeuber et moi, nous avons réalisé les premières oeuvres tirées de formes les plus simples en peinture, en broderie et en papier collés. Ce sont probablement les toutes premières manifestations de cet art. Ces tableaux sont des réalités en soi, sans signification ni intention cérébrale. Nous rejetions tout ce qui était copie ou description, pour laisser l'élémentaire et le spontané réagir en pleine liberté.' Arp, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp', in Scheidegger, *Zweiklang*, p. 51, original article in *XXème siècle* (Paris), 1915.
- 54 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 46. 'In der Auseinandersetzung, in der ich damals begriffen war, die Elemente einer Zeichen- und Bildersprache suchend, waren Sophies Beiträge stets anregend für mich. Als langjährige Lehrerin am Kunstgewerbemuseum in Zürich war sie gewohnt und gezwungen, die Dinge, die Welt der Linien, Flächen, Formen, Farben, auf ihre einfachste und präziseste Gestalt zu bringen und einfachste Formulierungen zu finden.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 46.
- 55 Ball, 1 March 1916. Trans. in Ball, *Flight out of Time*, p. 53. 'Er möchte die Imagination reinigen und alle Anspannung auf das Erschliessen nicht so sehr ihres Bilderschatzes als dessen richten, was diese Bilder konstituiert. Seine Voraussetzung dabei ist, dass die Bilder der Imagination bereits Zusammensetzungen sind. Der Künstler, der aus der freischaltenden Imagination heraus arbeitet, erliegt in puncto Ursprünglichkeit einer Täuschung. Er benutzt ein Material, das bereits gestaltet ist, und nimmt also Klitterungen vor.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 82.
- 56 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), Paris: Payot, 1972; *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, London: Duckworth, 1983. A popular publication by Barthes, dealing with cultural texts in the widest sense, is *Mythologies*.
- 57 Arp, 'Schon in den Aquarellen aus dem Jahre 1916 ordnet Sophie Taeuber rechteckige und quadratische Felder senkrecht und waagrecht nebeneinander an. Wie ein Mauerwerk füllt die Komposition das Bild aus. Die Farben leuchten und gehen vom grellsten Gelb bis zum tiefsten Rot und Blau', 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp', in Schmidt, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 24.
- 58 Lesley Baier in Herbert, Apter and Kenney, *Société Anonyme*, p. 653.
- 59 Wassily Kandinsky, 'Pour posséder la maîtrise de formes muettes, il faut être doué du sens affiné de la mesure, savoir choisir les formes mêmes, selon la rapport de leurs trois dimensions, selon leurs proportions, leur hauteur, leur profondeur, leurs combinaisons, leur manière de concourir à un ensemble, – en un mot il faut avoir le sens de la composition.' Kandinsky, 'Les reliefs colorés de Sophie Taeuber-Arp', in Scheidegger, *Zweiklang*, p. 34.
- 60 Marcel Duchamp in Herbert, Apter and Kenney, *Société Anonyme*, p. 654. Comments reprinted from 1950 edition.
- 61 Lanchner, 'Für Sophie Taeuber-Arp stand die bildnerische Abstraktion nicht am Ende, sondern am Anfang ihres künst-

- lerischen Forschens.' Lanchner, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp: Eine Einführung', in Gohr, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 11.
- 62 Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, p. 19.
- 63 Trans. in Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs*, p. 35. 'Von Piet Mondrian . . . wusste man damals noch wenig, und es ist deshalb umso erstaunlicher, dass in Sophie Täubers Werken der Kern alles dessen erschien, was die Zukunft wahr machen sollte.' *Mit Witz, Licht und Grüte*, p. 61.
- 64 Hubert, 'Sophie Taeuber und Hans Arp', p. 25.
- 65 Lanchner, 'Das Umwandeln der rhythmischen Muster des Tanzes in eine zweidimensionale Oberfläche schien ihr völlig natürlich, insbesondere deswegen, weil die Notenschrift für den Tanz dem Muster abstrakter Malerei ähnlich sein kann', in Gohr, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, pp. 15–16.
- 66 Bilanz, 'Sophie Taeuber', p. 94.
- 67 Lulinska, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp: und die Reise geht weiter', in Stiftung Hans Arp und Sophie Taeuber-Arp exh. cat., p. 69.
- 68 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 62. '[Eine] Art von gebundener Freiheit oder freier Disziplin.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 63.
- 69 Janzen, 'Die Gegenstandslosigkeit war für Sophie Taeuber-Arp kein Dogma, sondern erscheint eher als die Möglichkeit einer direkten Beschäftigung mit den Grundverhältnissen des bildnerischen Materials.' Janzen, 'Struktur, Komposition, Figur', in Gohr, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 38.
- 70 Kurt Schwitters, 'Dadaistisches Manifest', trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 105. 'Dada will die Benutzung des neuen Materials in der Malerei.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 109.
- 71 Arp, 'Das Ölgemälde schien uns einer überheblichen, anmassenden Welt anzugehören.' Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, p. 12.
- 72 Taeuber studied at the St Gallen Gewerbeschule 1908–10; attended Wilhelm von Debschitz's Studio for Training and Experiment in the Applied and Fine Arts in Munich and the School of Arts and Crafts in Hamburg during 1911–13.
- 73 Arp, 'In den Arbeiten, die Sophie Taeuber mir damals kurz nach unserer ersten Begegnung zeigte, waren als Materials ebenfalls Wolle, Seide, Stoff und Papier verwendet.' Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, p. 10.
- 74 Hennings, 'Sie verstand die kunstgewerblichen Handarbeiten, Stickereien und Webereien mit bewundernswerter Exaktheit auszuführen. Ich sah damals Perlenstickereien von ihr, sowie Webereien mit farbigen Arabesken, die so bildhaft wirkten, dass man diese Handarbeiten kaum mehr als Kunstgewerbe bezeichnen konnte. Sie waren weit mehr als dies.' Hennings, 'Zur Erinnerung an Sophie Taeuber-Arp', in Schmidt, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, p. 16.
- 75 Arp, 'Es gehörte viel Mut dazu, im Jahre 1915 an der Kunstgewerbeschule von Zürich zu unterrichten, wenn man die Absicht hatte, den Kampf gegen den Blumenkranz aufzunehmen. Der Blumenkranz war ein Ungeheuer, und Sophie Taeuber rang mit ihm wie der Ritter St. Georg mit dem Drachen. Scharen junger Mädchen eilten aus allen Kantonen nach Zürich mit dem brennenden Wunsch, unaufhörlich Blumenkränze zu sticken.' Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, p. 73.
- 76 Other members of Das Neue Leben included Arp, Janco, Richter, Eggeling, Giacommetti and Tzara. For more information see van den Berg, *Avantgarde und Anarchismus*, pp. 58–9.
- 77 'Max Bill rappelle "qu'elle s'efforça de donner à ses élèves une idée des problèmes de l'époque, de manière que les jeunes filles qui suivent ses cours ne s'égarèrent pas dans un artisanat dépourvu de sens, mais deviennent des membres utiles de la société."' *Sophie Taeuber-Arp*, exh. cat., Musée d'Art Moderne de Strasbourg, 26 March–12 June 1997, pp. 9–10.
- 78 Taeuber, 'Zur Erkenntnis vom Wesen des Materials kam diejenige von der Bedeutung der Funktion des Gegenstandes', extract from *Anleitung zum Unterricht im Zeichnen für Textile Berufe*, Zurich: Gewerbeschule der Stadt Zürich, 1927, pp. 5–7, in Fricker, *Sophie Taeuber Arp*.

- 79 Taeuber, 'Über den Weg der Handarbeit kam man dazu, auch die Maschinenarbeit zu werten'; 'Die Maschine leistet, was die Menschenhand nicht leisten kann.' Ibid.
- 80 Arp, 'Manchmal sind ihre Arbeiten als angewandte Kunst bezeichnet worden. Dies geschah teils aus Dummheit, teils aus Böswilligkeit. Kunst kann mit Wolle, Papier, Elfenbein, keramischen Platten, Glas ebenso gebildet wie mit Ölfarbe, Stein, Holz, Ton.' Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, pp. 10–11.
- 81 For a more discursive reading of their personal relationship (its problems as well as successes) see Mair, *Von ihren Träumen sprach sie nie*.
- 82 Marcel Duchamp in Herbert, Apter and Kenney, *Société Anonyme*, p. 654.
- 83 Arp, 'Die Arbeiten der konkreten Kunst sollten nicht die Unterschrift ihres Autors tragen . . . Die Künstler sollten in einer Gemeinschaft arbeiten wie die Künstler des Mittelalters. In 1915 schon versuchten dies O. van Rees, C. van Rees, Freundlich, Sophie Taeuber und ich.' Arp, 'Konkrete Kunst', in Scheidegger, *Zweiklang*, p. 73.
- 84 Hubert, 'Sophie Taeuber und Hans Arp', p. 25.
- 85 *Plastique*, ed. Taeuber and César Domela, Paris: Imprimerie des 2 Artisans, 1937–9. The editors described it as 'a magazine devoted to the study and appreciation of Abstract Art'. The first issue was devoted to Kasimir Malevich. Others included, e.g. Kandinsky, van Doesburg, El Lissitzky and Max Bill. The last two issues, edited by Taeuber alone, featured *L'Homme qui a perdu son squelette* (The Man who Lost his Skeleton), a collaborative novel by Arp, Leonora Carrington, Marcel Duchamp, Paul Eluard, Max Ernst, Georges Hugnet, Michel Pas-toureaux and Gisèle Prassinos.
- 86 Richter, 'In einer Kunstgeschichte, in der heute eine Jagd auf "wer war erst?" getrieben wird, sollte Sophie's Beitrag zur Disziplin und Problemstellung moderner Gestaltung nicht verschwiegen werden.' Richter, 'Sophie Taeuber' (1960), in Scheidegger, *Zweiklang*, p. 37.
- 87 Yve-Alain Bois, 'Sophie Taeuber-Arp against Greatness', p. 413.
- 88 Ibid., pp. 414 and 415.
- 89 Ibid., p. 414.
- 90 Ibid., p. 417.
- 91 The Stiftung Hans Arp and Sophie Taeuber-Arp has nevertheless been instrumental in making Taeuber's work prominent and available. Thanks go to Walburga Krupp for providing images and information for this book.
- 92 For example, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, mounted a large solo exhibition in 1981, which travelled to Chicago, Houston and Montreal.
- 93 Swiss National Bank website, 19 August 2005. See [www.snb.ch](http://www.snb.ch) for a colour reproduction. The banknote was designed in 1991 by Jörg Zintzmeyer and issued 3 October 1995.

### 3 Hannah Höch

- 1 The first solo exhibition of her work took place in 1929. Recent exhibitions include those held at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, in 2004 and the Berlinische Galerie in 2007. See bibliography for these catalogues, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *Hannah Höch*, and Burmeister, *Hannah Höch*.
- 2 Thater-Schulz has published many of the documents in two volumes, *Hannah Höch*.
- 3 Hille, *Hannah Höch und Raoul Hausmann*. This account is unusual in its emphasis on a more positive relationship, offering a counterpoint to criticisms of Hausmann.
- 4 'Durch meine nahe Beziehung mit Hausmann, sie währt fast 7 Jahre, war ich mit DADA von Anfang an verwachsen'; 'Meinen persönlichen Beziehungen zu den Berliner Dadaisten waren durch die Autorität Hausmanns Grenzen gesetzt.' Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 25 (first quotation from Walter Mehring, *Berlin Dada*, Zurich: Arche Verlag, 1959, p. 91).

- 5 'Vor dreissig Jahren war es für eine Frau nicht leicht, sich in Deutschland als moderne Künstlerin durchzusetzen. Die meisten männlichen Kollegen betrachteten uns lange Zeit als reizende, begabte Amateure, ohne uns je einen beruflichen Rang zuerkennen zu wollen.' Quoted by Remmert and Barth, *Hannah Höch*, p. 74, from Roditi, 'Hannah Höch und die Berliner Dadaisten'. The interview is not an exact transcription – Roditi wrote it up into a dialogue afterwards – but it marked a significant turning point in the rediscovery of Höch.
- 6 Raoul Hausmann, 'Sie war niemals Mitglied des Club.' Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 153.
- 7 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 132. 'Meister' has been translated as 'mentor' but might alternatively be translated as 'master'. 'An den ersten Dada-Veranstaltungen in Berlin hat sie ausser mit ihren Collagen kaum teilgenommen. Ihr Stimmchen wäre sowieso von dem Tosen ihrer männlichen Kommilitonen überdröhnt worden. Aber als Vorsteherin der Atelier-Abende bei Hausmann war sie unentbehrlich, sowohl durch den grellen Kontrast ihrer leicht klösterlichen Grazie zu dem Schwergewichtsanspruch ihres Meisters, als auch durch die belegten Brötchen mit Bier und Kaffee, die sie trotz Geldmangel auf irgendeine Weise hervorzuzaubern verstand. An solchen Abenden durfte auch sie ihre kleine aber sehr präzise Stimme erheben und, wenn Hausmann die Anti-Kunst proklamierte, für die Kunst und für Hannah Höch in die Bresche springen. Ein tüchtiges Mädchen!' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 136.
- 8 Höch, 'Das ist ein Märchen . . . die Höch, die hat . . . die Dadaisten so schön versorgt bei Zusammenkünften', Suzanne Pagé, 'Interview mit Hannah Höch', Berlin, 18 November 1975, in *Hannah Höch*, exh. cat., Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris/Nationalgalerie Berlin, p. 26.
- 9 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 132. 'Bei den Ausstellungen und Vorträgen war sie dabei und gab ihrer kleinen Stimme Gewicht durch die Ernsthaftigkeit ihres Wesens.' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 136.
- 10 E.g. Carolyn Lanchner, 'The Later Adventures of Dada's 'good girl': The Photomontages of Hannah Höch after 1933', in Boswell, Makela and Lanchner, *The Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, pp. 129–48.
- 11 Makela in *ibid.*, p. 49, and Peter Boswell, 'Hannah Höch: Through the Looking Glass', in *ibid.*, p. 7 n. 1.
- 12 Interview with Roters, quoted in Götz, *Hannah Höch*, p. 53.
- 13 Hannah Höch Archives, Berlinische Galerie. Published in Moortgat and Thater-Schulz, *Hannah Höch 1889–1978*, pp. 195–9. English version in Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, p. 213.
- 14 Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, pp. 201–13. Hannah Höch Archives, Berlinische Galerie, labelled 'Vortrag Düsseldorf', 1966.
- 15 See Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*. He included whole sections on Baader, Huelsenbeck, Schwitters, Jung and Golscheff. Höch is mentioned briefly in a number of sections but without particular emphasis on her contributions.
- 16 Höch, 'Erinnerung an Dada: Ein Vortrag', in Moortgat and Thater-Schulz, *Hannah Höch*, p. 203.
- 17 Erickson, *Performance, Poetry, and Art*, p. 36.
- 18 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 107. 'Dada ist ein CLUB, der in Berlin gegründet worden ist, in den man eintreten kann, ohne Verbindlichkeiten zu übernehmen. Hier ist jeder Vorsitzender und jeder kann sein Wort abgeben wo es sich um künstlerische Dinge handelt. Dada ist nicht ein Vorwand für den Ehrgeiz einiger Literaten (wie unsere Feinde glauben machen möchten).' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 109.
- 19 Hausmann, 'Hannah Höch hat nur an zwei Ausstellungen teilgenommen', *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 153.
- 20 Höch, 'Ich [habe] mitgemacht', programme in Thater-Schulz, *Hannah Höch* p. 569. She also participated in other per-

- formance events not specifically tied to Dada e.g. on 10 February 1921 she performed her own 'Grotesken' alongside Hausmann and Mynona (Salomon Friedländer).
- 21 Adolf Behne, 'Hannah Höch und namentlich Jefim Golyscheff zaubern fabelhafte Ornamente', in *ibid.*, p. 563.
  - 22 Höch gave this list (with the addition of a further assemblage) in 'Lebensüberblick', in Moortgat and Thater-Schulz, *Hannah Höch*, p. 196.
  - 23 Höch, 'Der Gedanke jedenfalls stammte von ihm', in Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 15.
  - 24 Höch, 'A Few Words on Photomontage' (1934), trans. in Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, p. 220, from *Stredisko* 4, no. 1, on the occasion of Höch's solo photomontage exhibition in Brno. See also 'Die Fotomontage' (1946) in Moortgat and Thater-Schulz, *Hannah Höch*, pp. 218–19.
  - 25 Höch, 'Bereits als Kind kannte ich diese Technik. Es gab z.B. Juxpostkarten, die durch Zusammenkleben von Fototeilen komische Situationen bewerkstelligten. Oder Hochzeitspaare, die mit den zukünftigen Freuden und Leiden der Ehe konfrontiert wurden. Und ähnliches', Pagé interview, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris/Nationalgalerie Berlin, *Hannah Höch*, p. 31.
  - 26 Hausmann, 'In meinem Neuerungsseifer brauchte ich auch einen Namen für diese Technik. Gemeinsam – George Grosz, John Heartfield, Johannes Baader, Hannah Höch und ich – beschlossen wir, die Erzeugnisse *Fotomontage* zu nennen'; 'Es waren vor allem ich, Johannes Baader und Hannah Höch, die die neue Technik entwickelten und ausbauten', *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 45.
  - 27 Maria Makela, 'By Design: The Early Work of Hannah Höch in Context', in Boswell, Makela and Lanchner, *Photomontages of Hannah Höch*, p. 49.
  - 28 Harris and Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, p. 58.
  - 29 See esp. Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, ch. 1.
  - 30 Höch, 'A Few Words', in *ibid.*, p. 220.
  - 31 Höch, 'Ich benutze es [das Foto] wie die Farbe oder wie der Dichter das Wort. Soviel zu der mich bis heute intensivst beschäftigenden Form von Dada', in Remmert and Barth, *Werke und Worte*, p. 7, from Mehring, *Berlin Dada*, p. 92.
  - 32 Höch, 'A Few Words', in Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, p. 219.
  - 33 Höch, 'Ich finde irgendwo etwas Nebensächliches, je nebensächlicher desto besser – etwas Nichtssagendes, das aber meine Phantasie schlagartig anregt und mich zu einer Aussage zwingt. Diese wird dann systematisch erarbeitet. Das heisst, dass von nun an Zufälliges kaum noch eindringen darf, nicht im Formaufbau, nicht im Inhalt (sofern einer angestrebt wird). Das heisst auch, dass im weiteren Fortgang der Arbeit ein oft mühseliges Suchen nicht aufhört', in Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 30.
  - 34 Hausmann, 'DADA verzichtete auf jede magische oder mystische Prozedur', *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 11.
  - 35 Höch, 'Wir nannten diese Technik Photomontage, weil dies unsere Aversion enthielt, den Künstler zu spielen. Wir betrachteten uns als Ingenieure, wir gaben vor, zu konstruieren, unsere Arbeit zu 'montieren' (wie ein Schlosser)', in Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 16. This statement is similar to the better-known statement from Hausmann: 'Dieser Name entstand dank unserer Abneigung, Künstler zu spielen; wir betrachteten uns als Ingenieure (daher unsere Vorliebe für Arbeitssanzüge), wir behaupteten, unsere Arbeiten zu konstruieren, zu montieren', *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 45. 'This name arose from our aversion at playing the artist; we considered ourselves to be engineers (hence our preference for work clothes), we professed to construct, or "assemble" our artworks.'
  - 36 Höch, 'Ja, unser ganzes Ziel bestand darin, Dinge aus der Maschinenwelt und aus der Industrie von der Kunst her zu erfassen. Und unsere typographischen Klebebilder oder Collagen bezweckten etwas ähnliches, denn sie verliehen einem Gegenstand, der nur mit der Hand gefe-



- tigt werden konnte, den absoluten Anschein eines Maschinenproduktes. In einer erdachten Komposition vereinigten wir, in einer Anordnung, die keine Maschine bewerkstelligen konnte, Elemente, die Büchern, Zeitungen oder Reklameblättern entnommen waren', in Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 16.
- 37 Walter Benjamin's seminal essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' is pertinent to this argument; pp. 211–44.
- 38 Scheunemann, *European Avant-Garde*, p. 26.
- 39 See Hausmann, 'Fotomontage', *Am Anfang war Dada*, pp. 45–77, in which he gives a detailed account of its conception and subsequent development.
- 40 Huelsenbeck, trans. in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 40. 'Der Hass gegen die Presse, der Hass gegen die Reklame, der Hass gegen die Sensation spricht für Menschen, denen ihr Sessel wichtiger ist als der Lärm der Strasse;' 'Dadaist sein kann unter Umständen heissen, mehr Kaufmann, mehr Parteimann als Künstler sein – nur zufällig Künstler sein.' 'Das dadaistische Manifest', read by Huelsenbeck, 12 April 1918; reproduced in Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, pp. 24–5.
- 41 Frank Whitford, 'Introduction', Fischer Fine Art, *Hannah Höch 1889–1978*, pp. 2–4.
- 42 Trans. in Richter, *DADA: Art and Anti-Art*, p. 132. 'Ihre Collagen waren manchmal politisch (denn man war ja im Schützen-graben), manchmal dokumentarisch (sie klebte alle Berliner Dadaisten und Freunde in bedeutungsvollen Posen auf ein riesiges Klebebild . . .), manchmal lyrisch (als kleines Mädchen, das sie war).' *DADA-Kunst und Antikunst*, p. 136.
- 43 Höch, 'Von diesem Augenblick an habe ich auch politisch sehr bewusst gelebt', in Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 11. Höch provided this statement, along with others not otherwise attributed in this book, for the publication.
- 44 Roditi, 'Hannah Höch', trans. in Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, pp. 68–77.
- 45 A member of the November group from the beginning, she exhibited in 1920–23, 1925, 1926, 1930 and 1931.
- 46 Höch, 'Ich . . . sah eine, meine Aufgabe darin, zu versuchen, diese turbulente Zeit bildlich einzufangen. Es entstand "Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser" und ähnliches', Pagé interview, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris/Nationalgalerie Berlin, *Hannah Höch*, p. 25.
- 47 Götz, *Hannah Höch*, p. 18, from Jula Dech, 'Untersuchungen zur Fotomontage bei Hannah Höch anhand des Bildes *Schnitt mit dem Küchenmesser Dada durch die letzte Weimarer Bierbauchkulturepoche Deutschlands*', in *Maschinenschrift*, Berlin, 1978, p. 15.
- 48 Roditi, 'Hannah Höch', trans. in Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, p. 73. 'Wenn man bei dieser primitiven Fotomontage überhaupt von einem ästhetischen Ziel sprechen kann, so bestand es darin, die Wirklichkeit zu idealisieren, während die Dadamontage einem gänzlich Unwirklichen den Anschein von etwas Wirklichem geben wollte, das tatsächlich fotografiert worden war.' Remmert and Barth, *Werke und Worte*, p. 23.
- 49 Berger, 'The Political Uses of Photomontage', pp. 185–6.
- 50 Ades, *Photomontage*, p. 19.
- 51 Höch, 'Hierzu möchte ich sagen, dass mir zu allen Zeiten daran lag, meine Aussagen, auch die Kritik, über die Mittel der Kunst zu machen', Pagé interview, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris/Nationalgalerie Berlin, *Hannah Höch*, p. 24.
- 52 Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution', p. 395.
- 53 For an excellent discussion of Hausmann's *Fiat Modes* in relation to fashion, the body, gender and modernity see Doherty, 'Fashionable Ladies, Dada Dandies', *Art Journal* (Spring 1995), pp. 46–50.
- 54 Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, pp. 9 and 4. See also Lavin, 'The Mess of History or the Unclean Hannah Höch', pp. 117–24.
- 55 Lavin, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, pp. 9 and 23.

- 56 Doherty, 'Fashionable Ladies'.
- 57 For a more comprehensive discussion on marriage as a theme in Höch's work see Maria Makela, 'Von Paaren und Paarungen: Hannah Höch und die Institution der Ehe in der frühen Weimar Republik', in Burmeister, *Hannah Höch*, pp. 38–49.
- 58 Hausmann, 'Das dadaistische Manifest', trans. in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, p. 40. 'Die höchste Kunst wird diejenige sein, die in ihren Bewusstseinsinhalten die tausendfachen Probleme der Zeit präsentiert, der man anmerkt, dass sie sich von den Explosionen der letzten Woche werfen liess, die ihre Glieder immer wieder unter dem Stoss des letzten Tages zusammensucht.' Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 23.
- 59 Höch, 'Die Verherrlichung der modernen Frau war in meiner Arbeit nicht angestrebt. Dagegen hat mich öfter die leidende Frau engagiert. Wenn ich aber ein Zeitbild geben will, dann lasse ich natürlich die guten Leistungen von Frauen nicht aus', Pagé interview, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris/Nationalgalerie Berlin, *Hannah Höch*, p. 27.
- 60 Harris and Nochlin, *Women Artists*, p. 309.
- 61 Höch, 'Die Zartheit der Spitze, aber mehr noch ihre, aus ihrer spezifischen Technik erwachsene Eigenart reizte mich. Ebenfalls der immer unterschiedlich unterbrochen sein müssende Strich bei dem Schnittmuster', Pagé interview, Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris/Nationalgalerie Berlin, *Hannah Höch*, p. 27.
- 62 For a useful, detailed reading see Janina Nentwig, 'Meine Haussprüche', in Burmeister, *Hannah Höch*, p. 50.
- 63 Lavin looks at these in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*, ch. 4.
- 64 *Dompteuse* is reproduced in Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, *Hannah Höch*, p. 173. The last two are reproduced and commented on briefly in Burmeister, *Hannah Höch*, pp. 20–21.
- 65 For an excellent and detailed discussion of the series see Lavin, 'Hannah Höch's *From an Ethnographic Museum*', pp. 330–59.
- 66 Höch, 'Heute, wo das Fotomaterial so reichhaltig und durch das Farbfoto so überaus reizvoll zur Verfügung steht, ist es geradezu eine immerwährende Verlockung, damit neue sehr phantastische Gebilde zu schaffen', in Remmert and Barth, *Werke und Worte*, p. 90.
- 67 Hausmann, 'DADA suchte nichts als den PRESENTEN Augenblick herbeizuführen; DADA war der Konflikt mit ALLEM.' Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, p. 7.
- 68 Ibid., 'Die Epoche, in der DADA auftauchte, war gegen die Vorherrschaft der ewigen und unwandelbaren, Ideale gerichtet, von viel tiefer liegenden Gemeinschaftskomplexen her als einer bloss oberflächhaften Skandalüberkompensation.' Ibid., p. 12.
- 69 Höch, 'Dada-Berlin bricht auf und los, destruktiv, obstruktiv – und konstruktiv, wie sich dann, sehr viel später herausstellen wird', in Ohff, *Hannah Höch*, p. 13.
- 70 Roditi, 'Hannah Höch', trans. in Lippard, *Dadas on Art*, pp. 74 and 75.

#### 4 Suzanne Duchamp

- 1 In biographical notes of the brothers, Suzanne's name is often omitted altogether, along with any mention of two younger sisters, Yvonne and Magdeleine. Even in a rare publication about her – Bettex-Cailler, *Suzanne Duchamp* – the notes stated that she had three brothers and made no mention of her sisters.
- 2 The great renown of her brother Marcel makes it difficult to refer to Suzanne Duchamp by only her surname, especially since I also discuss him in this chapter. I prefer, in general, to use her full name, rather than 'Suzanne'. Where I write about both artists, I use first names for both.
- 3 Camfield, 'Suzanne Duchamp and Dada in Paris', pp. 82–103.
- 4 Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (1969, 1996).
- 5 Beekman and von Graevenitz, *Marcel Duchamp*. Schwarz reads Marcel's paint-

- ing *Young Man and Girl in Spring*, e.g., which he gave to Suzanne and Crotti as a wedding gift, in this context.
- 6 Schwarz, *Complete Works*, pp. i–ii.
  - 7 M. Duchamp, letter of 15 January 1916, trans. in Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately Marcel*, p. 45. ‘Prends pour toi ce porte bouteilles. J’en fais un “Ready-made” à distance. Tu inscriras en bas et à l’intérieur du cercle du bas en petites lettres peintes avec un pinceau à l’huile en couleur blanc d’argent la inscription que je vais te donner ci après, et tu signeras de la même écriture comme suit: [d’après] Marcel Duchamp.’ *Ibid.*, p. 43. In a letter of 17 October 1916 Marcel made more enquires about it.
  - 8 Trans. in Ades, *Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*, p. 48. ‘Le vent devait compulser le livre, choisir lui-même les problèmes, effeuiller les pages et les déchirer. Suzanne en a fait un petit tableau: *Ready-made malheureux de Marcel*. C’est tout ce qu’il en reste puisque le vent l’a déchiré. Ça n’avait amusé d’introduire l’idée d’heureux et de malheureux dans les ready-mades.’ Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, p. 111–12.
  - 9 Cabanne, ‘C’est en tout cas très symbolique pour un mariage’; Marcel Duchamp ‘Je n’y ai même pas pensé.’ Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, p. 28.
  - 10 M. Duchamp, letter from New York, to S. Duchamp and Crotti, c. 20 October 1920, in Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately Marcel*, p. 94. ‘J’ai beaucoup aimé la photo du Ready Made qui s’ennuie sur le balcon. S’il est complètement déchiqueté vous pouvez la remplacer.’ *Ibid.*, p. 92.
  - 11 For reproduction see Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, fig. 28, p. 52. It is Camfield who draws attention to the orientation in this painting, p. 17.
  - 12 Cabanne, ‘La personne la plus proche de vous, c’était votre soeur Suzanne?’ Marcel Duchamp, ‘Oui. Elle était également *dans le coup* puisqu’elle a peint toute sa vie, un peu moins mais avec beaucoup plus de persévérance et beaucoup plus d’enthousiasme que moi.’ Cabanne, *Entretiens avec Marcel Duchamp*, p. 28.
  - 13 Suzanne Duchamp, letter to Marcel Duchamp, c. 15 March 1912, in Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately Marcel*, p. 23. The paintings were *Portrait (Magdeleine et Yvonne)*, *Intimité (Intimacy)* and *A des Esseintes (fleurs) (To des Esseintes [flowers])*.
  - 14 The most comprehensive and detailed account of events in Paris Dada is Michel Sanouillet’s excellent *Dada à Paris*.
  - 15 As pointed out by Camfield, ‘Suzanne Duchamp’, p. 82.
  - 16 ‘French Artists spur on American Art’, *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, part IV, p. 2, cited in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 77. Picabia arrived in New York in June 1915 and started producing his machine imagery within a month.
  - 17 Camfield, ‘Suzanne Duchamp’, p. 86.
  - 18 Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 18.
  - 19 Paul B. Haviland, 291, nos 7–8 (New York, September–October 1915), in Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 80.
  - 20 *Ibid.*
  - 21 Other examples include *Voilà elle (Here She Is, 1915)*, *Voilà la femme (Here is Woman, 1915)* and *Novia au premier occupant (Sweetheart of the First Occupant, 1917)*.
  - 22 Cathy Bernheim, ‘Des mécanismes inutiles tournent à vide, des machines célibataires s’enroulent sur elles-mêmes.’ Bernheim, *Picabia*, p. 93.
  - 23 Camfield, *Francis Picabia*, p. 88.
  - 24 Also in 1916, Crotti made *Clown* (see fig. 75) which includes a spring, wire, discs and glass eye mounted on glass, but which does not share the emphasis on mechanical symbolism apparent in *Un et une menacés*.
  - 25 Camfield, ‘Suzanne Duchamp’, p. 82.
  - 26 Camfield’s translation. An alternative is *Radiations of Two Lone Ones at a Distance*, as used in Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, p. 111.
  - 27 James Joyce also used this method of dating *Ulysses*, the final line of which reads ‘Trieste–Zürich–Paris, 1914–1921’. Both emphasise the creative process behind the final product.
  - 28 Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*; see p. 112 for discussion of this work and fig. 103

- for a drawing, 'Guarini's antenna with Ducretet method of suspension', from Henri Poincaré and Frederick Vreeland, *Maxwell's Theory and Wireless Telegraphy*, New York, 1904, p. 142.
- 29 Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 18.
- 30 Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, p. 111.
- 31 Ibid., pp. 111 and 268 n. 44. She writes: 'The term *éloignement* is translated in *Salt Seller* as "deferment", but the word signifies a spatial remoteness and distancing, not the temporal deferment derived, perhaps, from the military-service context of the note.'
- 32 Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, p. 204.
- 33 In 1888 Hertz proved the existence of electromagnetic waves, as well as their capability to generate a spark in a second circuit at a distance from the first. In 1899 Guglielmo Marconi sent the first radio signal across the English Channel and in 1901 the first across the Atlantic.
- 34 Marinetti, 'Destruction of Syntax – Imagination without Strings – Words-in-Freedom 1913', pp. 96 and 95.
- 35 M. Duchamp, letter of 15 January 1916, trans. in Naumann and Obalk, *Affectionately Marcel*, p. 45.
- 36 Ball, 13 June 1916, trans. in Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, p. 66. 'Das Wort und das Bild sind eins. Maler und Dichter gehören zusammen.' *Flucht aus der Zeit*, p. 99.
- 37 Apollinaire, *Calligrammes*, pp. 43–5 and 75–6. With thanks to Anna Schaffner for some of the references in this discussion about telegraphy. See also Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, p. 204.
- 38 *S'envolleraient* would usually be spelt with one 'l' only. This may be a mistake or a deliberate alteration.
- 39 Camfield, 'Suzanne Duchamp', p. 87.
- 40 This title has also been translated as *Broken and Restored Increase*. See Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, p. 281 n. 175.
- 41 I am grateful to Karine Mue-Gaspais for her reading of 'gla gla'.
- 42 The title *Give Me the Right to Life* was used in Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, ill. 60, p. 122, but Camfield uses *Give me the right right to life* in 'Suzanne Duchamp', ill. 4.3, p. 90. The second version of the title is more appropriate in its retention of the double 'right'.
- 43 Ibid., p. 86.
- 44 Ibid., p. 101 n. 16.
- 45 Picabia scholars have shown how he often selected phrases from the Larousse dictionary, specifically French translations of Latin phrases. It is possible that Suzanne took this English phrase from a dictionary or some other written source. Much later, in 1948, 'the right to life' was inscribed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 46 'Un jeu de langage à la base de la fabrication d'une oeuvre.' Drijkoningen, 'Un Tableau-manifeste de Picabia: le double monde', p. 111 n. 10.
- 47 Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 10, citing an unsigned interview quoting Crotti, 'French Artists Spur on An American Art', *New York Tribune*, 24 October 1915, part IV, p. 2.
- 48 Crotti agreed to cover one title with a flap of paper, which some visitors peeked beneath. Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 10.
- 49 Statement by Francis Picabia in 291, no. 12, February 1916, in Camfield, *Francis Picabia* (1972), p. 18.
- 50 Anon., '291 – A New Publication', *Camera Work*, no. 48 (New York, October 1916), p. 62, in Camfield, *Francis Picabia* (1979), p. 75.
- 51 William H. Gass, in Neidhardt and Cuoco, *The Dual Muse*, p. 71.
- 52 Hugnet, 'Mais, plus qu'à préconiser l'usage des moyens hors de leur spécialité, Dada tend à confondre les genres et c'est là, me semble-t-il, une de ses caractéristiques essentielles (tableaux-manifestes ou poèmes-dessins de Picabia, photomontages de Heartfield, poèmes simultanés à orchestration phonétique, etc.)' Hugnet, *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 7.
- 53 Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, 'Modernism in the Streets' (Berman took the phrase from Marx's *Communist Manifesto*). I was led to this reference by Nochlin, *The Body in Pieces*, p. 24.
- 54 Lesley Baier, in Herbert, Apter and Kenney, *Société Anonyme*, p. 246.

- 55 Ibid.
- 56 The English translation Camfield offers employs two phrases to get over the complexity of the French: 'Accordion Masterpiece' or 'Wrinkled Masterpiece'. The second offers a juxtaposition between the perfection and timelessness implied in masterpiece and the passing of time and imperfections in 'wrinkled', thus introducing some irony that the first title may not evoke. The French title does not refer to 'wrinkled' at all, however. Camfield, 'Suzanne Duchamp', p. 95.
- 57 *Portrait de Marcel Duchamp sur mesure* (1915–16); see Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 93. For *Clown* (1916) see fig. 75 (as featured in 391, no. 14).
- 58 Camfield makes these cross references, *ibid.*, pp. 14–15.
- 59 For a thorough discussion of the eye see Jay, *Downcast Eyes*.
- 60 Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 15.
- 61 Henderson, *Duchamp in Context*, p. 204.
- 62 He acknowledged a colleague, Jean-Louis Menin, for this interpretation. Camfield, 'Suzanne Duchamp', p. 102 n. 20.
- 63 Crotti, trans. in Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 9. 'Il semble puiser dans les grands espaces des Infinis les ondes qui le font vibrer et qu'il retransmet dans ses tableaux par des signes, formes et couleurs. Il semble être un instrument de Dieu chargé de transmettre aux hommes des messages... L'art serait donc une sorte de magie apportant des signes et des messages à l'homme et non la reproduction déformée ou non de la nature.' Camfield and Martin, *Tabu Dada*, p. 26, citing Jean Crotti papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., pp. 1–2.
- 64 '1924–1927. Suzanne Duchamp s'évadant du mouvement Dada retourne en arrière aussi loin que possible', *Cahiers d'art* (1957), in Bettex-Cailler, *Suzanne Duchamp*, p. 9.
- 65 'Dada Soulève Tout', January 1921, reproduced in full in Poupard-Lieussou and Sanouillet, *Documents Dada*, doc. 26, pp. 52–3.
- 66 *Plus de cubisme*, 1922, in *ibid.*, doc. 48, pp. 80–81.
- 67 Camfield, 'Suzanne Duchamp', p. 92.
- 68 Poupard-Lieussou and Sanouillet, *Documents Dada*, p. 16.

## 5 Céline Arnould

- 1 Bohn, *The Dada Market*, is unfortunately, at the time of writing, out of print. In correspondence, Professor Bohn wrote that he had come across Arnould's writing chiefly through examining Dada journals and periodicals.
- 2 *Particulars* is translated from *Signalement*, which appears in Arnould's journal *Projecteur*, but in fact is attributed there to 'P. D.' (Paul Dermée), rather than to Arnould. They may well have worked on some texts together.
- 3 Hugnet, *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 131.
- 4 Hugnet, 'Sa [Dermée's] femme, la poétesse Céline Arnould, dirige également une publication éphémère, *Projecteur*, où se trouvent des textes des principaux dadaïstes de Paris. Céline Arnould et Paul Dermée collaborent entre autres à *Dadaphone* qui reproduit leurs photographies avec celles d'Aragon, Breton, Tzara... et figurent au sommaire du no. 13 de *Littérature* parmi les signataires des 23 manifestes du mouvement dada (1920)'. *Ibid.*, pp. 154–5.
- 5 Sanouillet, 'Au mois de mai, la femme de Dermée, Céline Arnould, auteur d'un roman *Tournevire*, et de *Poèmes à claires-voies*, dadaïste active dont le nom paraît dans toutes les revues où écrivait son époux, reprit le flambeau abandonné par ce dernier. Elle lança *Projecteur*'. Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 225.
- 6 This list is a work in progress. The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France and the BLJD in Paris were especially helpful in providing me with these where facsimiles are not readily available.
- 7 Eshelman, *The Gospel of Celine Arnould*, omits the accent from Céline's name in the title and throughout.

- 8 All quotations are from *ibid.*, 'A Note on the Text', n.p., which follows the main text.
- 9 Céline Arnould, letter to Tristan Tzara, 24 October 1924: 'mon effort tant dans le lyrisme que dans l'action', Tristan Tzara papers, BLJD.
- 10 Suleiman, *Subversive Intent*, p. 15.
- 11 Hugnet, 'Soupault, chapeau melon et monocle; Tzara, mèche, lorgnon et laval-lière; Dermée, derrière une raquette de tennis; Eluard, le front haut; Ribemont-Dessaignes, le front plus haut; Céline Arnould, en cheveux; Breton, lunettes et pochette; Aragon, *amant de coeur du dadaïsme*, comme dit Picabia; et ce dernier, cannibale en tenue d'été.' Hugnet, *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 91.
- 12 All trans. of 'Avertisseur' taken from Bohn, *Dada Market*, p. 19. Trans. of others are my own.
- 13 Goll, 'Depuis une vingtaine d'années, l'oeil prend sa revanche. C'est le siècle du film. Nous communiquons davantage par de signes visuels. Et c'est la rapidité qui fait aujourd'hui la qualité.' 'Manifeste du Surréalisme', *Surréalisme*, no. 1, October 1924. This appeared a month before Breton's own Surrealist Manifesto.
- 14 Marinetti, 'Destruction of Syntax', p. 96.
- 15 *Prunelle*, 'pupil', can also mean 'sloe'.
- 16 Dermée, 'Dada ruinant l'autorité des contraintes tend à libérer le jeu naturel de nos activités. Dada mène donc à l'amoralisme et au lyrisme le plus spontané, par conséquent le moins logique. Ce lyrisme s'exprime de mille façons dans la vie.' Dermée in *Z*, March 1920.
- 17 Bohn, *Dada Market*, p. xx.
- 18 *Tournevire* was published by Editions de l'Esprit Nouveau, the experimental publishing house founded by Dermée, Amédée Ozenfant and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier). They produced 28 issues of a long-running journal in 1920–25.
- 19 Definition: '–1672; de *tourner*, et *virer*. Mar. (Anciennt). Chaîne ou cordage sans fin, manoeuvré à l'aide d'un cabestan, d'un guindeau', in Alain Rey, ed., *Le Grand Robert de la Langue Française*, 2nd edn, Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 2001. 'From *turn*, and *heave*. Chain or rigging without an end, manoeuvred with the help of a capstan or windlass.'
- 20 *Poèmes à claires-voies* (1920) lists 'Serpentine' and 'La lune dans le puits' (The Moon in the Well; 'féerie' or 'fairy-tale') as forthcoming, and *L'Apaisement de l'éclipse* (1925) signals *Le Musicien des marées* (The Musician of the Tides; 'roman poétique' or 'poetic novel').
- 21 Marinetti, 'Destruction of Syntax', p. 99.
- 22 Other examples include *die wolkenpumpe* and *die schwalbenhode*. For a full discussion of Arp's poetry, see Robertson, *Arp: Painter, Poet, Sculptor*.
- 23 Paul Eluard, 'Les mots s'usent à force de servir, et quand ils ont une fois réussi ne donnent plus beaucoup d'eux-mêmes (comme il arrive aux hommes)', *Proverbe*, no. 1 (Paris, 1 February 1920).
- 24 See e.g. Hopkins, *Marcel Duchamp and Max Ernst*, pp. 13 and 119–20.
- 25 Artaud, 'Une image appelle une autre image d'après des lois qui sont les lois même de la pensée.' Antonin Artaud, 'À propos de la littérature et des arts plastiques: *Point de Mire* par Céline Arnould', *Oeuvres Complètes, Tome II*, Paris: Gallimard, 1961, p. 227. The review is of *Point de mire* which includes *Jeu d'échecs*.
- 26 Bohn, *Dada Market*, p. xvii, from Jacques Baron: *L'An du surréalisme* and *L'An dernier*, Paris: Denoël, 1969.
- 27 'Dada Soulève Tout', 15 January 1921, repr. in Poupard-Lieussou and Sanouillet, *Documents Dada*, pp. 52–3. Cubism is at the top of a list that includes Expressionism, Simultaneism, Futurism, unanism, neo-classicism, paroxysm, ultraism and creationism.
- 28 Picabia, 'La Pomme de pins', February 1922, in Motherwell, *Dada Painters and Poets*, pp. 268–71. 'Plus de cubisme', in Poupard-Lieussou and Sanouillet, *Documents Dada*, doc. 48, pp. 80–81. March 1922. Both Arnould's and Suzanne Duchamp's names appear on it. In December 1912 Gleizes and Metzinger had published *Du Cubisme*, in which they outlined a vision of art that celebrated the artist as the arbiter of beauty and taste.
- 29 Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, 'Le Ca-

- fard', in *Cannibale*, 1922, reproduced in Hugnet, *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 201.
- 30 For a detailed account of these events see Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, ch. vii.
- 31 Hugnet, 'Nous connaissons déjà les manifestes de Tzara. Comme ceux-ci, les autres rivalisent d'insolence ou d'absurdité, de lyrisme, de gratuité ou d'humour.' Hugnet, *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 93.
- 32 Hugnet, 'L'ordre de leur publication a été tiré au sort.' *Ibid.*
- 33 E.g., consider the photographs of the murderous Papin sisters in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution*, May 1933. Discussed by Hopkins, *Dada and Surrealism*, pp. 50–51.
- 34 Z, March 1920. *Cannibale*, no. 1, 25 April 1920. *Cannibale*, no. 2, 25 May 1920. Of course Picabia was more prolific in terms of journals, rather choosing to begin new names to effect change.
- 35 Published in *Proverbe*, no. 1, 1 February 1920.
- 36 From *Rose Sélavy: oculisme de précision, poils et coups de pied en tous genres (Precision Oculism, Complete Line of Whiskers and Kicks*, collection of puns published in 1939). Seen in Hugnet, *L'Aventure Dada*, p. 162.
- 37 For more on 'M'Amenez'y' with reference to Picabia, see Drijkoningen, 'Un Tableau-manifeste de Picabia', pp. 97–112. He uses 'ready-made verbal'.
- 38 Dermée, letter to Tzara, 1920: 'Il est inutile de changer "M'Amenez'y" jusque c'est déjà sur les prospectus de "Littérature". C'est que Céline Arnould avait trouvé un bien beau titre: "Ipéca" ou "I.P.K". vomitif extrêmement puissant! Ce sera pour une autre publication ou forme de pamphlet.' Tristan Tzara papers, BLJD; also in Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 227 n. 43.
- 39 Dermée, 'Céline Arnould a déjà tué deux revues: "M'Amenez'y" et "Ipéca" aujourd'hui introuvables. N'insistez pas M. Doucet . . . introuvable, introuvable.' Dermée, *Signalement*, in *Projecteur*, 21 May 1920.
- 40 Dunan went on to write some 50 novels, the most famous of which is the erotic story *Les Caprices du sexe ou les Audaces érotiques de mademoiselle Louise de B*, published under the name Maurice Duflou in 1928 but since attributed to her.
- 41 Cixous, *La Jeune Née* (1975), trans. Cixous and Clément, *The Newly-Born Woman* (1987).
- 42 Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'Writing Past the Wall', in Cixous, 'Coming to Writing' and *Other Essays*, p. x. For a recent critical overview of Cixous's work see Bray, *Hélène Cixous*.
- 43 For a detailed account of the Congrès see Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, ch. xx.
- 44 *Le Mouvement accéléré*, November 1924. Other contributors included Erik Satie, Picabia, Goll, René Crevel, Frantisek Kupka, Vincente Huidobro and Ribemont-Dessaignes.
- 45 Bohn, *Dada Market*, p. xvii, quoting Tzara, 'Dada manifeste sur l'amour faible et l'amour amer', *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Henri Béhar, Paris: Flammarion, 1975, vol. 1, 379.
- 46 I am working on a research project on Arnould, which will look at her work in the context of avant-garde writing, identity and gender.
- 47 Erickson, *Dada*, pp. 57, 62 and index. On p. 60 he spells it Arnould.

## Conclusion

- 1 Céline Arnould, letter to Tzara, 24 October 1924: 'Mes livres sont là, et ils ne manqueront pas de se défendre eux-mêmes, par leur propre force, par leur lyrisme nouveau.' Tristan Tzara papers, BLJD.
- 2 See e.g. Kaplan, 'Language and Gender', and Spender, 'Extracts from "Man Made Language"'.
  - 3 Bray, *Hélène Cixous*, p. 32.
  - 4 'Daughters of Dada', Francis M. Naumann Gallery, New York, 8 June to 28 July 2006. Included Beatrice Wood, Clara Tice, Mina Loy, Katherine S. Dreier, Florine Stettheimer, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven.

- 5 Debbie Lewer, 'Dada in Zurich', in Howard and Lewer, *A New Order*, p. 15.
- 6 Arp, trans. in Bohn, *Dada Market*, p. xi. 'Il y avait des dadaïstes avant que n'existe pour Dada le nom Dada et que les dadaïstes ne soient Dada', from José Pierre, *Le Futurisme et le dadaïsme*, Lausanne: Rencontre, 1967, p. 69.
- 7 Erickson, *Dada*, ch. 4.
- 8 Rosemont, *Surrealist Women*, p. xxxvii.
- 9 Jürigs, 'Dada ist weiblich!' Jürigs, *Etwas Wasser in der Seife*, p. 7.
- 10 On this question see Buchloh, 'The Primary Colours for the Second Time', pp. 41–52; Foster, *The Return of the Reak*; Mann, *Theory Death of the Avant-Garde*.
- 11 Hopkins, 'Women Behaving Badly', pp. 317–33.
- 12 Zegher, *Inside the Visible*, p. 21.



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