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

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Dada scholars are bombarded with varied and often contradictory primary accounts of a movement that refused concrete definition, and whose claims of rejecting all labels are widespread and well-known. Through the movement's dis- and re-assembling of art, language and life, a desire to re-write history becomes apparent. Accounts of the movement, especially those related by Dadas themselves, are rife with ambiguity, fiction, and varyingly absurd claims to authority. In this respect it is also a parody of historiography, *in medias res* of the actual cultural phenomenon that is Dada. The name of the movement itself presents, beyond its initial appearance as an infantile repetition of a single syllable, a word whose polyvalent associations give us 'hobbyhorse' in French, 'yes, yes' in various Slavic languages, and in English a child's early paternal moniker; yet together, these definitions only contribute to its linguistic inexactitude. Furthermore we know that, despite all attempts to attach meaning to the word, Tzara famously claimed that 'Dada ne signifie rien' [Dada means nothing] (in *D*3, p. 1).[1] Pegrum explains that 'the word Dada itself has

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[1] It is instructive but not surprising that Da(da) is a word with functioning meaning (beyond its use as an infantile sound, or indeed as indicating the movement itself) in most common world languages, including 'nothing' in Irish, perhaps unknowingly proving Tzara's claim that Dada means

an undermining, destabilising function', and that Picabia thought that its unique importance sprang from the way in which it 'rest[e] le même dans toutes les langues, ne précisant rien, ne limitant rien' [remains the same in all languages, clarifying nothing, limiting nothing] (in Pegrum 2000, p. 173). From this we can posit that the word is both asemic and polysemic, providing a productive basis in ambiguity on which to build a movement that revelled in confusion.

Further exploration of accounts of Dada by its adherents on the origin and choice of this name are yet more convoluted. Ball's early diary entry claims 'my proposal to call it Dada is accepted' (*FT*, p. 63). Ball's statement relates to the eponymous review, rather than the movement, but the suggestion of ownership and/or invention of the name remains. While Huelsenbeck allows for Ball's involvement, he does not give him sole ownership of the term, and writes that 'the word Dada was accidentally discovered by Ball and myself in a German-French dictionary when we were looking for a stage-name for Madame Le Roy, the singer in our cabaret' (in *AA*, p. 32). Richter writes retrospectively that 'I heard the two Rumanians Tzara and Janco punctuating their torrents of Rumanian talk with the affirmative 'da, da'. I assumed […] that the name Dada, applied to our movement, had some connection with the joyous Slavonic affirmative 'da, da'—and to me this seemed wholly appropriate' (*AA*, p. 31).

Despite his historical status as 'leader' of Dada, an account from Tzara lays no claim to invention of the word, stating that 'a word was born, no one knows how' (in *AA*, p. 32). Tzara's statement reflects the performative nature of his 'characteristic' immodesty,[2] and is in part denied by Arp's claim that 'I hereby declare that Tzara invented the word Dada on 6ᵗʰ February 1916, at 6pm. I was there with my 12 children when Tzara first uttered the word…it happened in the Café de la Terrasse in Zurich, and I was wear-

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

[2] Accounts reference in great detail Tzara's impresario character and boisterous performances. However, his more fragile side is less often referenced, which gives a skewed impression wherein the self-assured and self-promoting person of the history books dominates. Buot relates, however, that on the decline of the Cabaret Voltaire and the departure of Huelsenbeck and Ball, '[p]longé dans une forte dépression, Tzara a du mal à sortir de sa chambre' [thrown into a deep depression, Tzara had trouble leaving his room] (2002, p. 60). This reveals a dependence on both activity and the presence of others which somewhat undermines the notion of his indefatigable confidence.

ing a brioche in my left nostril' (in *AA*, p. 32). These varying accounts not only demonstrate the privileging of performative artistic identity, but also highlight the parodic nature of Dada's relationship with cultural history, the reification of which will be brought out in this chapter.

If, as Rex Last claims, 'in a real sense, there are as many 'Dadas' as there are Dadaists' (in Sheppard 2000, p. 172), what meaningful conclusions are we to draw from the varying texts as scholars of the movement? Is it possible, or even advisable, to arrange these accounts in terms of a hierarchy of truthful content? Should we favour the account of Ball, arguably the first Dada, who established the movement's birthplace, the Cabaret Voltaire, yet who was among the first to distance himself from it? That of Huelsenbeck, who wrote notoriously bitter accounts—including accusing Tzara of having 'permitted himself to live all his life off a fame for an arrogated founding of dada' (1974, p. 103)—and vied for leadership with other members of the movement? Arp, long-time Dada adherent whose pseudo-formal account is sprinkled with perceivable absurdities, perhaps in a deliberate attempt to undermine its own credibility? Or Tzara, who is historically accepted as the founder and/or leader of Dada and yet who denies ownership of the movement's name?

[AU1]

Moving from this series of questions emerging from the discussion of the invention of the word 'Dada', along with its associated meaning(s) as both a word in its own right and as the name of the movement, this chapter examines a selection of the 'stories' and histories of Dada, alongside Existentialist notions of 'truth', as well as in contrast with its opposing concepts: lies, untruth, and doubt. Through its analysis of truth and travesties in a foregrounding of written texts from Dada and beyond, this chapter explores the importance of writing as not only a documenting of, but also a (de)construction of, the self. As Chap. 5 traced freedom through censorship, so Chap. 6 evaluates the possibility of new truth through lies.

[AU2]

This investigation will be performed through three 'non-fiction' Dada methods—the memoir, the diary, and the manifesto—against three fictional texts. Firstly I consider the memoirs of Richter (*Dada: Art and Anti-art*, 1965) and Huelsenbeck (*Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, 1974). These are analysed alongside two works of Tom Stoppard, a postmodernist writer whose works often involve significant references to Dada: *Travesties* (1975), a play that is designed as a feasible fake, filled with genuine anecdotes and

sprinkled with historical accuracy, and *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972), more evidently fictitious and yet which references a plethora of names, places and events, with a characteristic splash of postmodern confusion. Both plays are constructed in such a way that they fold back on themselves and partially repeat in an effort to destabilise the perception of a 'correct' storyline. Secondly I assess the role of the journal as illustrated in Ball's *Flight out of Time: a Dada Diary* (1974), and Tzara's 'Zurich Chronicle' (1915–1919). These are compared with Sartre's *La Nausée*, a novel whose use of a protagonist in existential crisis promotes the importance of diary form as an Existentialist exploration and development of the self, as well as a constant re-writing of the truth. The manifestos are analysed primarily in their own right, but with the view to bringing out Dada's own philosophy (as well as its alignment with core Existentialist thought), through its most clearly proclaimed expression of identity. This is particularly applicable if we consider the etymology of 'manifesto', which comes from the Latin *manifesta*: clear, conspicuous (*Latdict*).

The discussion of language and its relation with the Dada self will be central to this analysis, especially regarding Existentialist thought on the reciprocity of the creation and implementation of values. The memoirs are analysed with a view to assessing the usefulness of different types of retrospective, as well as comparing the notions of 'lasting impressions' and 'fading memories', and furthermore the Stoppard as a text entirely constructed from false memory. Discussion of the diaries will address the significance of the writing of the self at the time of happening, as well as its relationship with being seen and/or published, especially in regard to the process of editing. These texts are deliberately analysed in approximately reverse chronological order, so as to begin from the idea of the most distant memory of Dada (as defined by inevitable loss through temporal distance), and progress toward the most concentrated and 'in the moment' idea of Dada values.

Truth and Lies, Faith and Disguise

Before analysing our key texts, it is useful to consider the etymology behind our terms 'travesty' and 'truth', in order to assess their relationship with the accounts and principles of Dada. The word 'travesty' is rooted

in the French *travesti*, 'disguised' (from Latin trans- + vestire (to clothe)). 118
Conversely, 'truth' derives from the Old English *trēowth*, cognate of the 119
[AU6]   Old Norse *tryggth*, 'faith' (*All Dictionary.com*). The ways in which dis- 120
guise can be used to deceive are closely related to the ways in which truth 121
(and, by extension, faith) can be manipulated, including deception by 122
feigning to deceive. In Stoppard's *Travesties*, the character *Henry Carr*[3] 123
states (on *Tzara*) that 'he is obviously trying to pass himself off as a spy' 124
(*T*, p. 12), and later, that 'to *masquerade* as a decadent nihilist—or at 125
any rate to ruminate in different colours and display the results in the 126
Bahnhofstrasse—would be hypocritical' (*T*, p. 47; original emphasis). 127
The pertinent underlying similarities and differences between the two 128
terms 'truth' and 'travesty' are fundamental to an understanding of Dada 129
and its (hi)stories. Is disguise essentially deception, or rather a reimagin- 130
ing of the truth? Is a travesty always to be considered a disaster, or can the 131
word be used in a positive, creative sense? 132

Beyond these common definitions, our analysis must take into 133
account the specifically Existentialist definitions of truth as expressed by 134
Sartre, Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty. We have already seen that French 135
Existentialist thought places the creation of values in the individual: this 136
attitude has a delicate relationship with definitions and usage of 'truth' 137
and its associated terms including 'lies' and 'doubt'. Existentialist writ- 138
ing foregrounds subjectivity, and this includes subjectivity (or even 139
non-existence) of truth. Sartre states that 'la connaissance nous met en 140
présence de l'absolu et il y a une vérité de la connaissance. Mais cette 141
vérité, quoique ne nous livrant rien de plus et rien de moins que l'absolu, 142
demeure strictement humaine' [knowledge brings us face to face with the 143
absolute and there is a truth of knowledge. But this truth, even if it gives 144
us no more or less than the absolute, *remains strictly human*] (*EN*, p. 255; 145
my emphasis). Merleau-Ponty's theories provide a continuation of this 146
embracing of the subjectivity of truth, stating that 'toutes mes vérités *ne* 147
sont après tout que des évidences pour moi et pour une pensée faite comme 148
la mienne, elles sont solidaires de ma constitution psychophysiologique 149
et l'existence de ce monde-ci' [all of my truths *are after all only obvious* 150
to me and for a way of thinking such as my own, they are united in my 151

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[3] Names of Stoppard's characters will be placed in italics, as they are fictional by design and are not to be confused with the individuals outside of the play.

psychophysiological constitution and the existence of this world] (*PP*, p. 458; my emphasis). Beauvoir relates truth to ambiguity and, through this, back to subjectivity: 'pour atteindre sa vérité l'homme ne doit pas tenter de dissiper l'ambiguïté de son être, mais au contraire accepter de la réaliser' [to obtain their truth the individual must not try to dispel the ambiguity of their being, but rather to accept and embody it] (*MA*, p. 19). These Existentialist approaches to truth find their match in Dada writing, most notably through Ball, who claimed that the psychologist 'knows a hundred different truths, and one is as true to him as another' (*FT*, p. 7).

Truth is productively connected to its opposite, the lie, or untruth, through Beauvoir, who posits 'les vérités *nécessairement partielles* que dévoile tout engagement humain' [truths that are *necessarily partial* that reveal all human engagement] (*MA*, p. 87; my emphasis). The homonymically dual function of the English word 'partial' is instructive in relation to subjectivity of truth because truth is individual and based in choice. Furthermore, Beauvoir elucidates that 'le mot mensonge a un sens par opposition à la vérité établie par les hommes mêmes, mais l'Humanité ne saurait se mystifier tout entière puisque *c'est précisément elle qui crée les critères du vrai ou du faux*' [the word 'lie' has meaning through opposition with 'truth' established by people themselves, but Humanity cannot mystify itself entirely because *it is precisely humanity that creates the criteria for truth and falsehood*] (*MA*, p. 195; my emphasis). We can extend this subjectivity while relating back to Chap. 3 through Merleau-Ponty, who theorises that 'la vérité ou la fausseté d'une expérience ne doivent pas consister dans son rapport à un réel extérieur' [the truth or falsehood of an experience should not consist of its relationship to an external reality] (*PP*, p. 393).

Fitting with the exploration of the many stories of Dada, in terms of being experienced and related as two very different things, Sartre states that 'l'essence du mensonge implique, en effet, que le menteur soit complètement au fait de la vérité qu'il déguise' [the essence of the lie implies, in fact, that the liar is completely aware of the truth that they are covering up] (*EN*, p. 82), and furthermore that 'il y a une *vérité* des conduites du trompeur: si le trompé pouvait les rattacher à la situation où se trouve le trompeur et à son projet de mensonge, elles deviendraient parties inté-

grantes de la vérité, à titre de conduites mensongères' [there is a *truth* in   188
the behaviour of the deceiver: if the deceived were able to connect this   189
behaviour to the situation of the deceiver and their lie, it would become   190
an integral part of the truth, by way of lying behaviour] (*EN*, p. 84f;   191
original emphasis). In lying to the press, and to history more broadly, the   192
Dadas were not only aware of the truth of their situation, but also were   193
creating a plurality of truth through the lie.   194

Connected tightly with the multiplicity of truth and the lie is doubt,   195
which Sartre analyses in detail (cf. *EN*, pp. 191–92). To select points   196
that are key to the current argument, he instructively notes that 'le doute   197
paraît sur le fond d'une compréhension préontologique du *connaître* et   198
d'exigences concernant le vrai' [doubt appears against a background of a   199
preontological understanding of *knowledge* and of requirements concern-   200
ing the truth] (*EN*, p. 191; original emphasis), foregrounding that the   201
implicit way in which we relate to knowledge (a version of truth) and   202
doubt are intrinsically linked. Sartre develops this notion of doubt in   203
relation to temporality, stating that   204

> Se découvrir doutant, c'est déjà être en avant de soi-même dans le futur qui   205
> recèle le but, la cessation et la signification de ce doute, en arrière de soi   206
> dans le passé qui recèle les motivations constituantes du doute et ses phases,   207
> hors de soi dans le monde comme présence à l'objet dont on doute (*EN*,   208
> p. 191f).   209
>
> [To discover oneself doubting is already to be ahead of oneself in the   210
> future which contains the goal, ending and meaning of this doubt, behind   211
> oneself in the past which contains the constitutive motivations of doubt   212
> and its phases, outside of oneself in the world as a presence to the subject   213
> of one's doubt.]   214

Sartre's discussion of the importance of doubt is reminiscent of a fre-   215
quently occurring (sarcastic) line in *Travesties*: 'Intellectual curiosity is   216
not so common that one can afford to discourage it' (*T*, p. 47, among   217
others). Stoppard's comment on the state of affairs in early twentieth-   218
century Europe, as well as the compulsion to create material with which   219
the questioning intellectual can engage, can be filtered through a point of   220
[AU7] view of Dada's desire not only to *épater la bourgeoisie*, but also to intro-   221
duce a provocation of intrigue in Dada scholars for years to come.   222

Through the existence of Dada's many tales the scholar is required to constantly research further, and will find not *the* truth, but a number of truths about the movement. Additionally, it might be said that this is part of Dada's aim of provocation as a means to self-knowledge. Tzara claimed that 'Dada doute de tout' [Dada doubts everything], and warned 'méfiez-vous de Dada' [beware of Dada] (1996, p. 227). Perhaps this is part of a wider incitement for the reader to question traditions and narratives. Furthermore, in weaving falsities into the recording of history, Dada activities promote and celebrate Sartre's notion of 'discovering oneself doubting', as well as being 'ahead of oneself in the future', 'behind oneself in the past', and 'outside of oneself in the world as a presence to the subject of one's doubt'. Dada created a relationship with itself that moved in and out of coincidence with reality, as well as a flexible approach to time that concealed the creation of false truths enough to introduce a lasting ambiguity. Our exploration of Dada film demonstrated Dada's desire to evoke this ambiguity through states of dreaming. Here we can link it to the truth through Tzara, who theorised that 'le sommeil est un jardin entouré de doutes. On ne distingue pas la vérité du mensonge' [Sleep is a garden surrounded by doubts. It is not possible to distinguish the truth from the lie] (cited in Buot 2002, p. 22).

Further to this, Merleau-Ponty suggests that every action or thought is a truth of some sort, stating that

il n'est pas une de mes actions, pas une de mes pensées même erronées, du moment que j'y ai adhéré, qui n'ait visé une valeur ou une vérité et qui ne garde en consequence son actualité dans la suite de ma vie non seulement comme fait ineffaçable, mais encore comme étape nécessaire vers les vérités ou les valeurs plus complètes que j'ai rencannues dans la suite. Mes vérités ont été construites avec ces erreurs et les entraînent dans leur éternité (*PP*, p. 454).

[there is not one of my actions, not one of my even incorrect thoughts, from the moment that I have adhered to it, that is not directed towards a value or a truth and that does not consequently keep its relevance in my ongoing life not only as an indelible fact, but also as a necessary step towards the most complete truths and values that I have consequently known. My truths have been constructed with these errors and take them with them in their eternity.]

Not only does Merleau-Ponty's statement on the omnipresence of truth have value in relation to Dada's outlook on the multiplicity of truth, but his emphasis on the importance of error reminds us of Beauvoir's theory of 'sans échec, pas de morale' [without failure, there can be no morals] (*MA*, p. 15). This constant re-writing is not only a method of self-exploration, but also a means to finding personal truth: 'Tout serait vérité dans la conscience' [everything is truth in one's conscience] (*PP*, p. 437). This is not only instructive in the sense of the subjectivity of truth, but also if we consider that we are never really able to know that that which we perceive is reality: everything is reality as we know it.

Memoirs of (a) Dada, or, the Importance of Being…Tzara

Stoppard's *Travesties* (1975) is a fictional account of the fictional meeting of Henry Carr with Tristan Tzara, James Joyce, and Lenin in wartime Zurich, all loosely based around the plot of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). The play puts forward a collection of retellings by a rather senile *Carr*, giving a similar effect to that created by Dada's various reports and diaries. *Travesties* integrates a number of postmodern techniques that are shared with its Dada counterpart, including playfulness, intertextuality, and of course fabulation. Stoppard's play was first performed in the same year that the English translations of Ball's diaries and Huelsenbeck's memoirs were published (1974), lending the movement and its fictional successor a notable temporal cross-over.

Stoppard based his historical references on Richter's account, as well as Motherwell's *The Dada Painters and Poets* (1989).[4] Yet *Travesties* is a self-aware, self-confessedly less-than-accurate account: is this attitude more important than the inevitable bias the author risks portraying through his choice of source(s)? Ira Nadel claims that Stoppard would consider historical accuracy secondary to 'the imaginative encounter, the possibility

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

that these figures might have met and what they could have said', and furthermore that 'truth is not only imaginative but irregular' (2008, p. 482). Indeed such parallels are not unprecedented: not only was the real James Joyce acquainted with Dada, but he was also once believed to be the movement's founder; the varyingly hypothetical (yet highly possible) meeting of Lenin and Tzara is frequently posited, especially due to the apparent proximity of the Cabaret Voltaire to Lenin's temporary living quarters on Spiegelgasse. Richter supports the claim (in *AA*, p. 16), and perhaps most tellingly, Tzara claimed (in a BBC recording in 1959):

> Je peux dire que j'ai connu personnellement Lénine à Zurich avec lequel je jouais aux échecs. Mais à ma grande honte, je dois avouer à ce moment-là, je ne savais pas que Lénine était Lénine. Je l'ai appris bien plus tard (in Buot 2002, p. 50f).
>   [I can say that I personally knew Lenin in Zurich, with whom I played chess. But to my great shame, I must admit that at that point, I didn't know that Lenin was Lenin. I learned that much later.]

Whether this is true or part of a long-standing Dada prank, the element of embarrassment is certainly indicative of a lack of awareness that allows for the meeting to be simultaneously 'true' and 'false'.

Travesties is constructed as two acts of *Carr*'s memories, that he recalls in a way that they become repeated and recycled. The predictable Chinese whispers effect created by this method is compounded by the second act's inclusion of Wildean farce, centred on *Carr*'s deception of *Cecily* by pretending to be *Tristan Tzara*. Meanwhile the 'real' *Tristan Tzara* is revealed to be posing as his fictional brother named *Jack* ('my name is Tristan in the Meierei Bar and Jack in the library' (*T*, p. 27)). It is thus clear that 'the merging or collapsing of identities and differences is the biographical fantasy at the center of the play' (Nadel 2008, p. 483).

As a text that has little or no known connection to Dada or its adherents, and certainly no claim by its author, *Travesties* not only demonstrates Dada's continued use as a literary and artistic reference point throughout the twentieth century, but also raises questions about the nature of truth and telling. *Travesties* therefore might potentially be named a Dada text in its own right, making us wonder whether Stoppard himself could be

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[AU9] dubbed the (or a) 'new dada' (cf. Huelsenbeck on Sartre). Additionally, this   322
fulfils Richter's conditions of the Dada myth through his statement that: 323

> From the beginning, Dada was thus replaced by a thoroughly blurred   324
> image of itself. Since then even the mirror has broken. Anyone who finds a   325
> fragment of it can now read into it his own image of Dada, conditioned by   326
> his own aesthetic, national, historical or personal beliefs or preferences.   327
> Thus Dada has become a myth (*AA*, p. 10).   328

It is instructive that Richter chooses to call Dada a 'myth', since the   329
construction of myth is based in a delicate balance of truth and doubt,   330
linking the two in the same way that we saw in Sartre. Richter's description   331
of Dada as fragments of a mirror also reiterates our findings in Chap. 2   332
on the subjectivity of selfhood, the possibility of constructing and recon-   333
structing, interpreting and reinterpreting, one's own identity.   334
    The content of Richter's *Art and Anti-Art* has taken a central role   335
throughout this book, but here I would like to focus on the way in which   336
Richter collects together memories that are not always his, as well as ana-   337
lysing the choice of content for what is one of Dada's definitive primary   338
sources. Published for the first time in German in 1964, it was quickly   339
followed by its English translation in 1965. Richter was not present or   340
active in each individual Dada centre that he describes, and confesses in   341
his account both to inevitable bias, and reliance on the stories of others: 342

> I shall not be able to confine myself within the bounds of academic art-   343
> history. I shall depend above all on my own memories and those of my   344
> surviving friends. […] Having been involved in this revolt myself, I shall   345
> try to tell what I experienced, what I heard, and how I remember it. I hope   346
> to do justice to the age, to the history of art, and to my friends, dead and   347
> living (*AA*, p. 7).   348

From the outset it is clear that Richter's account will unavoidably be   349
affected by his personal relationships, as well as inferring an edge of 'fond   350
memory' rather than an entirely objective outlook. We can instantly com-   351
pare this to Stoppard's *Carr*, who recounts his memories with fondness,   352
as well as a slightly senile inaccuracy. *Carr* gets around this by claiming   353

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

Continuing his discussion of the reliability of accounts in relation to actual events, Richter states that

the image of Dada is still [i.e. in 1965] full of contradictions. This is not surprising. Dada invited, or rather defied, the world to misunderstand it, and fostered every kind of confusion. This was done from caprice and from a principle of contradiction. Dada has reaped the harvest of confusion that it sowed (*AA*, p. 9).

Perhaps Dada, like Stoppard, knew its audience, and preferred to privilege the process of storytelling over the accuracy of its content, a fundamental part of mythmaking. Yet despite this portrayal of Dada as something as simultaneously undefinable and multiplicitously definable as its name, Richter still claims three categories for 'proof' that events happened (which he forwards as having been his criteria for inclusion of 'facts' and 'events' in his own text):

1. Dates and facts supported by published documents, diaries, etc., dating from the period itself.
2. Dates and facts for which there is no documentary proof dating from the period, but for which there are at least two disinterested witnesses or testimonies.
3. Dates and facts which can only be attested to by the author or one friend (*AA*, p. 10).

Was Richter genuinely trying to provide an accurate account of his former movement? Or is this yet another tongue-in-cheek refusal of the authority of the written text? It is precisely this ambiguity that makes his work a key player in the history of Dada, gently reminding us that though the text is one of the most comprehensive pieces of documentation of Dada, it is also written by a Dada member.

Richter's own text does not always clarify who is 'talking', nor does he reference consistently or clearly. This initially suggests the problematic

notion of Richter's account being interpreted as a desire for a single, homogenised viewpoint, reducing Dada's wildly heterogeneous individuality. However, we might instead say that this text is a collage of fond memories of a movement that refused definition, faithfully preserved in its ambiguity and productively incorporative of 'errors' (cf. Beauvoir (*MA*, pp. 38–39); Merleau-Ponty (*PP*, p. 454)). Richter's text highlights an often overlooked cross-over between primary text and post facto account, primarily because it straddles the divide between primary and secondary source itself, but also because it effectively calls into question the authority of both texts written by Dada adherents and secondary accounts.

Both Richter's account and *Travesties* foreground the notion of playing a role, or playing an identity, whether this is constructing and projecting a self-created identity, or absorbing an externally conceived image of the self, inadvertently or deliberately perpetuating the character in the course and recording of history. This is particularly visible in the historicised 'character' of Tzara. I would argue that this began through the creation of the name: on taking on a multifaceted moniker—with meanings in French, German and Romanian—the former Samuel Rosenstock initiated a play of not only words, but also identity. Disengagement with the past was a key Dada theme: here Tzara could be argued to be the most disengaged of all adherents, fully changing his name in 1915, just before embarking on Dada (so not changing it *for* Dada, nonetheless). Tzara was not the only Dada who changed his name around the time of or because of the movement. Others include Hannah Höch (Schwitters added the 'h' to the end of Hannah to make it a palindrome), John Heartfield (b. Helmut Herzfeld), and George Grosz (b. Georg Ehrenfried Groß). The common theme of nationality is no coincidence: often German(ic) members changed their names to distance themselves from national or political association.

Nadel's suggestion that *Travesties* is a 'merging or collapsing of identities' is an effect that comes across in Richter's account, which as we have seen displays an occasional lack of differentiation between 'characters'. However, through the constant need to reinvent oneself that is brought out by the name-changing habits of the Dadas (including such grandiose epithets as Dadamax (Max Ernst) and Oberdada (Johannes Baader)), we can move beyond a merging of identities and posit a multiplicity of

identities. This no doubt stems from the movement's refusal of concrete definition, as the presentation of a perpetual non-coincidence with the self challenges the reader to question every account. Furthermore, breaking with, while remaining in, a creative relationship with the past, links Dada and the individual Dadas with Beauvoir's theory that 'on n'aime pas le passé dans sa vérité vivante si on s'obstine à en maintenir les formes figées et momifiées. Le passé est un appel, c'est un appel vers l'avenir qui parfois ne peut le sauver qu'en le détruisant' [we do not love the past in its living truth if we stubbornly maintain fixed and mummified forms. The past is a call, a call towards the future which sometimes can only save the past by destroying it] (*MA*, p. 118). Dada accounts demonstrate a need to both consider the truth a living (and thus malleable) present entity, but also a desire to change any potential future(s), and moreover that it embodied fundamentally more than the simple negation of the past that the movement is often considered to be.

Brigitte Pichon states that 'the writing of history is the writing—the construction—of stories' (in Pichon and Riha eds. 1996, p. 7). In order to illustrate the desire for ambiguity of cultural and historical memory construction through the distortion of 'truth' in Dada, we can look at an example of an event that was reported in different ways: the mock duel between Tzara and Arp near Zurich. We have seen that one of Dada's strongest tools in the construction of hybrid or ambiguous meaning was manipulation of the press. Because of its scandalous reputation as a movement, which nevertheless maintained a productive relationship with the European cultural scene, members were able to feed stories to the media, sowing confusion at the time, and weaving in a subtle manipulation of history for years to come. The announcement for the Rehalp duel was sent by the Dadas to around thirty newspapers in Switzerland and beyond:

Sensational Duel. We have received this report from Zurich, dated 2ⁿᵈ July [1919]: A pistol duel occurred yesterday on the Rehalp near Zurich between Tristan Tzara, the renowned founder of Dadaism, and the Dadaistic painter Hans Arp. Four shots were fired. At the fourth exchange Arp received a slight graze to his left thigh, whereupon the two opponents left the scene unreconciled. […] We have learned that the Zurich

prosecutor's office has already opened up an investigation into all those involved. Its findings the [*sic*] will certainly interest the public greatly. (in *ZC*, p. 34).

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

[AU11]

Tzara recorded the same event, in his 'Zurich Chronicle' (1915–1919) as 'mock duel Arp + Tzara on the Rehalp with cannon but aimed in the same direction audience invited to celebrate a private bluish victory' (*ZC*, p. 34). Does Tzara's statement mean that the duel did not, as we suspect, happen at all, or does it simply imply that the event was staged? We are told by Richter that one of the cited 'witnesses' of the event, the poet Jakob Heer, sent in a disclaimer to the press, only to be countered by a Dada response from two (Dada) witnesses, confirming Heer's presence.[5] Huelsenbeck notes that the report was 'a COMPLETE FABRICATION from someone wishing us ill' (in *ZC*, p. 34). We must bear in mind that according to Richter's own rules both would be considered true accounts, owing to the presence of witnesses and documents to support each side. The event was reported, along with dates, in the Zurich press, as well as in Tzara's diary (both dating from the period itself). Witnesses backed up these accounts: for Tzara, Walter Serner and Heer, and for Arp, Otto Kokoschka and Picabia (*ZC*, p. 34). Finally, Richter himself attests to the occurrence of the event. In this way, all three of Richter's rules have been adhered to, giving the event a certain logical consistency, even if it is only in the context of the movement itself.

By infiltrating the press in this way, Dada erodes our foundations of truth in relation to authority. Sheppard explicates that the point of

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[5] Ball cites Heer as 'one of our most regular customers' at the Cabaret Voltaire, whose 'voluminous cloak sweeps the glasses off the tables when he walks past' (FT, p. 58). Is Heer's denied presence another Dada-style prank on the part of the poet?

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

Richter claims that 'the public likes nothing better than to be made fun of, provoked and insulted', because it is 'the moment when the public finally begins to think'. So by lying to the readers in this way, 'they all go home with a contented feeling that self-knowledge is the first step towards reforming oneself' (*AA*, pp. 66; 66; 67). This collection of statements represents a useful provocation of personal truth and a consequent proposing of authenticity through choice, an incitement not to simply take on pre-packaged values as so flagrantly offered by traditional narratives. Additionally, while Sheppard highlights the undermining of authority as a purpose of this type of venture, it seems appropriate to suggest that, beyond this aim, Dada was asserting its own authority, by levelling notions of reliability. As a self-reflexive product of this manipulated authority, Dada's effort represents an attempt to undermine authority, level authority, *and* undermine itself as authority: a compound and perpetually replicating process that we began to explore through the concepts of authority and deviance.

The oral invention of the word Dada may have been openly ambiguous, but Richter writes that 'the word Dada first appeared *in print* at the Cabaret Voltaire on 15th June 1916; this is a fact' (*AA*, p. 32; my emphasis). Richter's use of the word 'fact' is instructive because of its reliance upon the authenticity lent to a statement through its occurrence in print or in the press. We also know that the word dada (in its general,

lower case sense) did not literally appear in print for the first time under the circumstances that Richter presents (the term has been around in some form since the seventeenth century), but it may have done in the specific context of the little magazine and/or the movement. If Dada deliberately undercuts the authority of the press, this statement about its own press cements the movement's parodic relationship with historicity. Additionally, the highlighting of their own press as 'to be questioned' underlines Dada's desire to not be taken as an authority, especially as it was those in traditional positions of authority who (mis)used this power to wage war. We will discuss towards the end of this chapter how this mistrust of (self-)authority interacts with the creation of a 'system' of morality.

[AU14]   *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* is a collection of essays by Huelsenbeck, written after the Dada period. Huelsenbeck's account is an aggressive attempt to reassert his role in Dada, despite his denial of any association when he moved to the United States. This cross-continental migration combined with denial was not necessarily through any malice on his part; rather, affiliation with Dada was varyingly persecutable, from threats against livelihood to threats against life. Unlike Tzara, who changed his name shortly before Dada, seemingly to embrace his new life in Zurich, Huelsenbeck changed his name, to Charles R. Hulbeck, on leaving Europe, 'motivated by a desire to relinquish Dada completely' (Kleinschmidt in Huelsenbeck 1974, p. xxiii). However, he was one of the only Dadas to claim that Dada never died, claiming that 'it has never grown old and even today, after fifty years, it shows no symptoms of old age or senility' (Huelsenbeck 1974, p. 136). It is (perhaps deliberately) difficult to know what Huelsenbeck means by this, and we may conclude that he simply implies that the *spirit* of Dada never died, and never will.

Huelsenbeck's account differs from Richter's in that although Richter's is *told* from a single viewpoint (Richter being the sole author), Huelsenbeck's account rarely acknowledges the presence of other opinions. In this sense his account is a personal memoir, an autobiography, rather than a memoir or biography of Dada. *Memoirs* crosses several types of text through this style: like Richter, Huelsenbeck comments on the movement from outside of it (temporally speaking) but, like Ball, his is

an account of personal experience of the events. A third element, present in differing levels across these three accounts, is the (arguably failed) effort towards a distanced analysis, as evident in Huelsenbeck's essay 'The Case of Dada' and the presence of several accounts on Dada adherents including Tzara and Richter.

The different ways in which Richter and Huelsenbeck tell the stories of Dada can be compared again to a Stoppard play: *Artist Descending a Staircase* (1972). The play describes the demise of an artist from the point of view of his various peers, and at whose hands he possibly came to his unfortunate end. *Artist Descending*, while not directly incorporating Dada or its adherents, alludes to Duchamp not only through the play's title, but also through his characters Martello and Beauchamp, whose phonetic similarity cannot be accidental.[6] Not only have Stoppard's characters changed their names over time, but they also adapt their memory of events for their personal gain. *Artist Descending* is divided into eleven scenes, structured around dates and events to form a precise symmetry. The chronology begins in 1972, moves through 1922 and 1920 to a centre of 1914, and then systematically reverses back to 1972. This structuring gives the feel of a deliberate manipulation of memory as none of the four separate time periods is told with any greater clarity than others. The older times are not told as memories, either, but *in situ*. Though not as symmetrical, Huelsenbeck's collection flits between times in a similar way as *Artist Descending*. Both texts present their 'story' (taking Huelsenbeck's collection as a whole) *in medias res*, a method that we saw earlier as forming a fundamental part of Dada's means of parodying history. Additionally these means of storytelling question the authenticity of reproduction in a similar way to that of Neo-Dada explored in Chap. 5. Both stories depend upon their originals in a way that suggests inauthentic reproduction, yet both produce something new and as such authentic as a product in its own right.

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[6] It might additionally be argued that *Artist Descending* hints at Neo-Dada through experimental (tape) music: over the course of the play, Beauchamp records, overwrites and interprets the sounds of the apartment, creating a creative multiple exposure in the style of both experimental music and Dada's relationship with History. The product is distorted and multiple, simultaneously linear and circular, but all versions are still present.

Diaries and Journals: Documenting the Self 589

Moving on from Richter's and Huelsenbeck's texts as Dada 'memoirs', 590
Ball's *Flight out of Time: a Dada Diary* is a subtly different medium for 591
[AU15] the documenting of the self. Although all three texts (Ball's, Richter's and 592
Huelsenbeck's) were adapted for publication, only Ball's was written at 593
the time of Dada, in the form of a journal. Ball completed the editing 594
of his diary for publication shortly before his death in 1927 (the diary 595
itself finishes in 1921). The work was first published in German in 1927, 596
an edition was published in 1947, and the English language edition was 597
published in 1974. We saw that Richter's first 'rule' for the validity of 598
accounts not only stressed the high status of published documents of the 599
movement, but also included the diary as an important means of record- 600
ing the period as it happened. In this respect it is worthwhile considering 601
[AU16] the role of fiction that is written in this way. Sartre's *La Nausée* is particu- 602
larly instructive to analyse because the novel highlights the importance 603
of diaries or accounts in a diary style, as well as the compound factor of 604
the protagonist's project of documenting a historical figure (something 605
he gives up when his nausea reaches its peak). *La Nausée* is also useful in 606
terms of philosophical content in a work of fiction: as such it provides 607
a readily accessible summary of many of Sartre's themes and concepts 608
[AU17] expressed considerably more verbosely in *L'Être et le néant*. 609

> Cohn comments that *La Nausée*'s journal form is doubly significant: 610
>   first, by eliminating connectives or "verbal" flow, Sartre obtains for his 611
> fragments a total simultaneity much like that of poetry since, say, Rimbaud. 612
> […] Secondly, the journal-form allows for the interpenetration of past and 613
> present, of action and comment, such as we see in Proust (1948, p. 63). 614

To take this further than Rimbaud and Proust, we might compare 615
Sartre's flow of fragments to the Dada simultaneous poems, as we saw 616
in Chap. 2, whose lines intermingle to the extent that no single line 617
takes precedence over others and we are forced to hear the mélange in 618
its incomprehensible entirety. Throughout *La Nausée* the protagonist, 619
Antoine Roquentin, develops an increased awareness of himself through 620
the flow of images created by the diary. The flow is neither linear nor 621

truth-based, yet enables Roquentin to construct his world in fragments and through active interpretation. By constantly narrating the present he is able to decipher his nausea and come to terms with his experiences, in a way that we saw in Sartre's ideas on temporality and the importance of doubt. This is similar to the way in which Ball wrote in order to make sense of his environment; doubt is found throughout the diary in his constant questioning of his activities (and including the fact that he 'left' and returned to Dada several times). It is clear that the diary form is valued in Dada as well as in Existentialism: Arp wrote of Ball's diary that 'in this book stand the most significant words that have thus far been written about Dada' (1949, in Motherwell ed. 1989, p. 293).

The way in which both Ball and Roquentin narrate the events of Dada and the novel respectively (and fundamentally, their own lives) occasionally falls into the cyclical patterns presented by *Carr*'s narration in *Travesties*. This latter text becomes like a diary with the repetition of 'Yes, sir. I have put the newspapers and telegrams on the sideboard, sir', which becomes a common precursor to temporal slips and recaps. Though *Carr*'s stories are subject to his failing memory, they maintain their likeness with Roquentin's through their aspect of correction through re-telling. On occasion Roquentin admits to having not told the truth—'du moins pas *toute* la vérité' [at least, not the *whole* truth] (*N*, p. 24; my emphasis). He appears fascinated by his 'lie' (omission) and wonders why he would deceive himself in this way. This self-deception is something that he revisits later, stating that 'je viens d'apprendre, brusquement, sans raison apparente, que je me suis menti pendant dix ans' [I have just learned, suddenly, for no apparent reason, that I have been lying to myself for ten years] (*N*, p. 61).

This statement from Roquentin has a strange relationship with the diary process. Indeed the character had earlier noted that 'je pense que c'est le danger si l'on tient un journal: on s'exagère tout, on est aux aguets, on force continuellement la verité' [I think that is the danger of keeping a diary: you exaggerate everything, you are on the look-out, you constantly force the truth] (*N*, p. 13). How can we reconcile the ability to (accidentally or deliberately) lie to oneself with the need to 'constantly force the truth'? We do not necessarily need to consider Roquentin's worry about his self-deception a time-span to be written off: rather, we can explicate

it as a sudden awareness of the *perception* of self and the authenticity of an engaged means of thought. As Ball writes, 'I read Rimbaud differently today from a year ago' (*FT*, p. 94): it is not surprising that our relation of self to world would be fluid and variable, not to mention subject to development. The diary form notably encourages this constant rethinking of the truth and its meaning, and the way it may change over time. Roquentin's 'realisation' that he had been lying to himself may then be itself an exaggeration: at the time of writing, he believed he was recording the truth, and thus it is a form of truth in its own right. It only becomes falsehood on the changing nature of truth(s) over time. Yet remembering, forgetting, and documentation all relate to our definitions of truth. Roquentin expresses the concern that he does not even exist, and this is because he has little relation to public record, and thus little impact on society. He writes, 'Je n'étais pas un grand-père, ni un père, ni même un mari. Je ne votais pas, c'était à peine si je payais quelques impôts' [I was not a grandfather, nor a father, nor even a husband. I did not vote, I barely paid any taxes] (*N*, p. 127). Perhaps it is his lack of influence on others that compels him to record himself for posterity: furthermore, this need to record would inevitably affect the self-awareness of his writing style.

The way that Roquentin considers himself outside of time through his familial detachment can be compared and contrasted with Cohn's comments on the 'interpenetration of past and present', as well as Sartre's thoughts on our relationship with the position of the self in time that we saw earlier in the chapter (cf. *EN*, pp. 191–92). Roquentin sees himself as disconnected because of his lack of impact on his environment, but his severance also allows him to see more clearly his isolated self-development. Valerie Raoul links the diary to a way in which to monitor and/or change the way time passes, in that

> the diary provides […] a trace, something that continues into the future. The role of the narrator-actor as potential reader is dependent on the survival of the written record. It is Roquentin's critical comments on rereading his entries […] that convey the sense of a changing and unseizable existence, as much as his reflections on the difference between "then" and "now"' (1983, p. 705).

A particularly poignant moment in relation to the inevitable passing of time is in Ball's diary when he notes: 'I scribble and look down at the carpenter who is busy making coffins in the yard' (*FT*, p. 66). Ball's comment manages to simultaneously remind the reader of the daily horror of wartime mass slaughter and the existentially troubling notion of the unusually heightened awareness of one's own mortality. It is also a reminder of the inevitable alienation of the self from the idea of one's death: we simply cannot completely conceive of our own non-existence, and thus this thought produces an anxious tension of thinking about the self as object, while not being able to detach from the self as subject. Richter described Ball in terms of his philosophical position in a way that furthers this implication of an underlying Existentialist way of thinking:

> There can be no doubt of Ball's unswerving search for a *meaning* which he could set up against the absurd meaninglessness of the age in which he lived. He was an idealist and a sceptic, whose belief in life had not been destroyed by the deep scepticism with which he regarded the world around him (*AA*, p. 13; original emphasis).

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

The editing process of diaries, particularly in its additive form, performs a constant redefinition of truth, leading us to definitions of identity and role of the diary as something to be (re)read. Raoul considers this in relation to temporality, as well as the developing relationship between writer, journal and reader:

> The process that aims at defining the self as it recedes into the past paradoxically contributes to the emergence of a new present self-as-writer and posits the future role of the self-as-reader. The journal, meanwhile, acquires an autonomous existence as a written text (1983, p. 706).

This relationship is additionally highlighted by the Autodidact, who asks Roquentin at one point, 'N'écrit-on pas toujours pour être lu?' [Don't we always write with a view to being read?] (*N*, p. 169). This

question, along with Raoul's discussion, moves the authority and own- 725
ership of words from the writer to the reader. We may wonder if the 726
Autodidact's question is still applicable if this reader is only the author, 727
as the notion of re-reading will change the course of personal narrative. 728
Notably, although Ball edited his work for publication, it still reads as 729
an incredibly personal, intimate account. This makes the reader wonder 730
whether Ball deliberately exposed his life in this way in order to highlight 731
the vulnerability of the self in general, but also specifically in the wartime 732
context that provided the backdrop for his text. 733

Tzara's 'Zurich Chronicle' is significantly shorter and less detailed 734
than Ball's It was originally published in Huelsenbeck's *Dada Almanach* 735
and only later as an independent text, and seems to simply document 736
events as they happened. This is demonstrated particularly strongly by 737
Motherwell's edition of the text, which cuts out almost all typographic 738
and visual interest, showing not only the highly varying representa- 739
tion of Dada texts but also a normalisation of deviance, as Dada has 740
become increasingly academicised. However, the version that appears in 741
Huelsenbeck's *Dada Almanach* conveys a sense of excitement through 742
typography that is then complemented every so often by Tzara's personal 743
reactions to these happenings, and it is instructive to analyse both the 744
content and the events to which it relates. 745

This varying detail is a characteristic of *La Nausée*, and is particularly 746
noticeable when Roquentin begins his entry with 'rien de nouveau' [noth- 747
ing new] (for example *N*, p. 20), yet goes on to describe his day in several 748
pages' worth of detail. While Tzara tends not to elaborate on the entries 749
that imply such 'nothing new' dates, certain small linguistic fragments 750
are repeated in a relatively insistent manner: for instance, he maintains a 751
striking obsession with red lamps across the chronicle. This suggests a sen- 752
sitivity to and awareness of their effects and meaning. Richter describes 753
the location of the Cabaret Voltaire (the Niederdorf district) as a 'slightly 754
disreputable quarter of the highly reputable town of Zurich' (*AA*, p. 13). 755
Niederdorf is a former Zurich red light district, something of which the 756
Dadas would likely have been keenly aware, particularly with a heavy 757
wartime police presence. An example of Tzara's preoccupation is noted in 758
the entry dated February 1916: 'In the darkest of streets in the shadow of 759
architectural ribs, where you will find discreet detectives amid red street 760

lamps' (*ZC*, p. 15). This must have given a particularly ominous feel in the Niederdorf quarter—location of the Cabaret Voltaire—with its narrow medieval streets lined with tall buildings.

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

> The Cabaret lasted 6 months, every night we thrust the triton of the grotesque of the god of the beautiful into each and every spectator, and the wind was not gentle—the consciousness of so many was shaken—tumult and solar avalanche—vitality and the silent corner close to wisdom or folly—who can define its frontiers?—the young girls slowly departed and bitterness laid its nest in the belly of the family-man. A word was born no one knows how **DADADADA** we **took an oath of friendship** on the new transmutation that signifies nothing, and was the most formidable protest, the most intense armed affirmation of salvation liberty blasphemy mass combat speed prayer tranquillity private guerrilla negation and chocolate of the desperate (*ZC*, p. 18; original formatting).

The ferocious energy with which this is described implies that this entry is significant in relation to the development of events as well as the diary more widely, and aspects of its vocabulary can be found across the rest of the chronicle. There is a particularly strong focus on references to explosions and harsh weather, for example 'the subtle invention of the explosive wind' and 'the explosions of elective imbecility' (*ZC*, pp. 24; 25). The June 1916 entry and its ripples across the diary are reminiscent of Roquentin's bouts of nausea, and its effects on his daily existence. Roquentin experiences the waves of nausea as explosions of his senses, often combined with the humidity of Bouville and an unusual sensitivity to the weather.

A heightened sensitivity to colour is integral to both accounts, perhaps unsurprising for the artist, whose work would have revolved around manipulation of colours and forms. Tzara states in his May 1919 entry: 'Inaugurate different colours for the joy of transchromatic disequilibrium and the portable circus velodrome of camouflaged sensations' (*ZC*, p. 34). Unlike Tzara, however, who revels in this disruption of chromatic normalcy, Roquentin's sensitivity to colour is disquieting to him when he

does not yet understand his nausea. He reports an episode of discomfort that focuses on the changing colour of a pair of purple braces:

> Les bretelles se voient à peine sur la chemise bleue, elles sont tout effacées, enfouies dans le bleu, mais c'est dans la fausse humilité: en fait, elles ne se laissent pas oublier, elles m'agacent par leur entêtement de moutons, comme si, parties pour devenir violettes, elles s'étaient arrêtées en route sans abandonner leurs prétentions (*N*, p. 37f).
>
> [The braces barely show up against the blue shirt, they are all faded, buried in the blue, but it is with false modesty: in fact, they do not let themselves be forgotten, they bother me with their pig-headed stubbornness, as if, starting out with the aim to become purple, they had stopped mid-way without abandoning their aim.]

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

[AU19]

Just as Roquentin's episodes of nausea get more frequent and all-pervading due to his increasing self-awareness, Tzara's diary entries get more clustered and intense as the diary goes on, centring around important events. The entries of early 1916 are longer and more detailed, documenting the early days of the Cabaret Voltaire, but then a shorter series pile up from September and especially in the early months of 1917, when Dada was expanding throughout Zurich. The entries then mirror the earlier ones in size, expanding but getting less frequent through 1918 and 1919. As the diary progresses Tzara also begins to reference repetition and newness (or lack thereof), a concern that would plague Dada as its audience began to enjoy and not heckle their events. He notes that 'the public appetite for the mixture of instinctive recreation and ferocious bamboula which we succeeded in presenting forced us to give on | May 19 [1917]| REPETITION OF THE OLD ART AND NEW ART EVENING'

[AU20]

[AU21]

829 (*ZC*, p. 26; original formatting). In essence this occurrence represents
830 a doubled repetition, in that the night itself is already centred around
831 'the old and new' and the fact of repeating the night as a whole. This is
832 further emphasised by the use of upper case, exaggerating the highlighted
833 words in a way that is the visual equivalent of shouting. We have seen
834 that repetition interrogates the notions of identicality and, through it,
[AU:5] 835 authenticity. It is therefore logical that repetition of such events should be
[AU:6] 836 undesirable. We might even wonder if this is the reason for which Tzara
837 brought an end to Dada: a movement that had been born out of a desire
838 for individual freedom and choice had stagnated into a recipe. In short,
839 it was losing its authenticity.
840 Drawing together our analysis of the diary form, through Ball, Tzara
841 and Sartre (in the form of Roquentin), we can posit that texts in this style
842 create and maintain a unique and flexible relationship with time and
843 truth. Joseph Halpern notes that

844 Sartre's novels—*Nausea*, in particular—are more than illustrated syllo-
845 gisms; their metonymic unity opens onto the realm of similarity and rep-
846 etition, metaphor and synchrony. The strength of Sartre's novels lies in the
847 way they convey lived experience, but lived experience resists intelligibility
848 (1979, p. 71).

849 This emphasis on similarity and repetition is certainly evident in
850 Tzara's chronicle. Ball's text often draws upon descriptive metaphor for
851 his synthesis of his environment and events. And all three accounts show
852 a resistance to intelligibility that highlights the flawed or subjective nature
853 of the process of historicisation. Ball's diary is particularly useful to the
854 scholar of Dada because it documents the earliest days of the movement
855 from a first-hand point of view. Additionally, as the co-founder (with
856 Emmy Hennings) of the Cabaret Voltaire, his account dates exactly to
857 Dada's beginnings (if we are to agree on Zurich as its birthplace and start-
858 ing point). Tzara's account, though shorter, is informative in highlight-
859 ing moments of particular importance, and an idea of Dada—or at least
860 Tzara's—values starts to come through. Ball reported the purpose of the
861 movement and its review as *rejecting* nationalism and labels, but which
862 aspects did the Dadas *promote*? Identifying these values will give an idea

of how this heterogeneous movement wanted to be represented, as such   863
allowing a nascent Dada philosophy to come to the fore.   864

Manifestos, Morals and Mindsets   865

Through an assessment of Dada accounts and diaries, as well as interac-   866
tion with the written word in previous chapters, it is evident that Dada's   867
relationship with published material included a desire to be taken at its   868
word, even if that word is deliberately fabricated. Despite evidence of   869
such fabrication, however, examples of (anti-)morality come through   870
such bold statements, especially in the movement's own journals. Dada's   871
own little press essentially represents the movement's public diary, or   872
journal: an indelible and pseudo-live commentary on the movement's   873
activities and thoughts. Stoppard illustrates Dada's opinions on the fickle   874
nature of words in a debate between *Carr* and *Tzara*:   875

[AU24]   Don't you see my dear Tristan you are simply asking me to accept that the   876
word Art means whatever you wish it to mean; but I do not accept it.   877
— Carr   878
Why not? You do exactly the same thing with words like patriotism,   879
duty, love, freedom, king and country…   880
— Tzara   881
(in *T*, p. 21)   882

Dada considered words manipulable, and by extension that meaning   883
can be manipulated in a similar way. As such, the construction of tenets   884
and morals is just as subjective as anything else. And as Huelsenbeck   885
claimed, 'Dada is the desire for a new morality' (1974, p. 141). Perhaps   886
the most direct proclamation of morals and values is in the manifestos,   887
an active declaration of the Dada self. Let us take two examples of these   888
manifestos to investigate Dada morality: Tzara's infamous 'Manifeste   889
Dada 1918' (published in the eponymous review *Dada* (*D*3)) and   890
Picabia's 1920 'Dada Philosophe' (published in *Littérature* (*L*13)).   891
Early in his manifesto, Tzara engages in a critique of objectivity in the   892
realm of aesthetics: 'Une œuvre d'art n'est jamais belle, par decret [*sic*],   893

objectivement, pour tous. La critique est donc inutile, elle n'existe que subjectivement, pour chacun, et sans le moindre caractère de généralité' [A work of art is never beautiful, by decree, objectively, for everyone. Criticism is thus useless, it exists only subjectively, for each individual, and with no element of universality] (*D3*, p. 1). This is furthermore expressed in his desire not to tell others how to act: 'je n'ai pas le droit d'entraîner d'autres dans mon fleuve, je n'oblige personne à me suivre et tout le monde fait son art à sa façon' [I do not have the right to drag others into my river, I do not force anyone to follow me and everyone makes their art in their own way] (*D3*, p. 1). We have seen that Sartre believes that we choose in a way which we believe would be universally applicable, but it would still remain inauthentic to *impose* our own way of thinking on others. This is a sentiment that is foregrounded in Tzara's statement that 'ceux qui appartiennent à nous gardent leur liberté' [those who belong to us retain their freedom] (*D3*, p. 1). Through this idea Tzara directly confronts philosophy, defying critics who claim that Dada did not engage with it. Indeed although his discussion of it is characteristically humorous, Tzara raises philosophical issues that have real value:

La philosophie est la question: de quel côté commencer à regarder la vie, dieu, l'idée, ou les autres apparitions. Tout ce qu'on regarde est faux. Je ne crois pas plus important le résultat relatif, que le choix entre gâteaux et cerises après dîner (*D3*, p. 2).
  [Philosophy is the question: which angle from which to start to look at life, God, ideas, or other spectres. Everything we look at is false. I do not consider more important the relative result than the choice between cake and cherries after dinner]

Tzara's thoughts show immediate alignment with Existentialist notions of the authenticity of personal choice: whether one chooses cake or cherries is not as important as the act of choosing for oneself. As he states, 'il n'y a pas de dernière Vérité' [there is no final truth] (*D3*, p. 2). Through his theorising both that everything is false, and that there is no real truth, Tzara pre-empts Merleau-Ponty's statement that we saw at the beginning of this chapter that 'everything is truth in one's conscience' (*PP*, p. 437).

Existentialism is often (falsely) accused of indifference. Indeed Sartre noted early on that 'on lui a d'abord reproché d'inviter les gens à demeurer dans un quiétisme du désespoir' [it has been reproached for inviting people to live in a state of desperate quietism] (*EH*, p. 21). Tzara offers a novel alternative to indifference, and in doing so manages to refute a resulting denial of the choices of others: 'Je nomme jem'enfoutisme [*sic*] l'état d'une vie où chacun garde ses propres conditions, en sachant toutefois respecter les autres individualités, sinon se défendre' [I call Idon'tgiveadamnism [*sic*] the state of existence where each individual keeps their own conditions, knowing all the while how to respect other individualities, other than defending oneself] (*D3*, p. 2). He later extends choice to the creation and subjectivity of morality:

> La morale a determiné la charité et la pitié, deux boules de suif qui ont poussé comme des éléphants, des planètes et qu'on nomme bonnes. Elles n'ont rien de la bonté. La bonté est lucide, claire et décidé, impitoyable envers le compromis et la politique. La moralité est l'infusion du chocolat dans les veines de tous les hommes. Cette tâche n'est pas ordonnée par une force surnaturelle, mais par le trust des marchands d'idées et accapareurs universitaires (*D3*, p. 3).
>
> [Morality has determined charity and pity, two dumplings that have grown up like elephants, planets, and that we call good. They have nothing good about them. Goodness is lucid, clear and decided, ruthless towards compromise and politics. Morality is the infusion of chocolate in the veins of all individuals. This task is not organised by a supernatural force, but by the trust of traders of ideas and academic monopolisers]

By rejecting bygone morals created by another, Dada takes responsibility for its own ethical position, as evidenced in Chap. 4 analysis of the rejection of common judgement values. Notably, Stoppard's *Tzara* rejects the use of former ideas by claiming that 'causality is no longer fashionable owing to the war' (in *T*, p. 19). If ideas are not linked by causality, choice is foregrounded, in that it does not matter what choice is made, only that it is on one's own grounds. We are reminded here of (the real) Tzara's claim that 'only contrast links us to the past' (in Jakobson 1987, p. 39). Additionally, both of these quotations can be linked to Beauvoir's

statement that 'we do not love the past in its living truth if we stubbornly maintain fixed and mummified forms' (*MA*, p. 118).

Sartre's Roquentin depicts a similar rejection of common values through a group of women looking at a statue that represents a generic forefather. He states derisively that:

Au service de leurs petites idées étroites et solides il a mis son autorité et l'immense érudition puisée dans les in-folio que sa lourde main écrase. Les dames en noir se sentent soulagées, elles peuvent vaquer tranquillement aux soins du ménage, promener leur chien: les saintes idées, les bonnes idées qu'elles tiennent de leurs pères, elles n'ont plus la responsabilité de les défendre; un homme de bronze s'en fait le gardien (*N*, p. 49).

[In the service of their narrow and unchanging little ideas he put his authority and immense scholarship drawn from the in-folios crushed in his heavy hand. The women in black felt relieved, they could quietly tend to their household duties, walk their dogs: the virtuous ideas, the good ideas that they held onto from their fathers, they no longer had the responsibility of defending these ideas; a bronze man made himself their caretaker.]

These women are not only exempt from creating their own ideals, but they also do not have to even think about or take responsibility for them, as they are defended by a form of authority that precedes them. Additionally the non-identity of the statue means that these individuals do not care what form authority takes as long as they have faith in it as an ideal. This goes against both Dada and Existentialist ethics whereby everything, particularly systems, is questioned in order to believe in (yet not be defined by) ideals that stem from personal, specific choice.

Picabia's 'Dada Philosophe' engages with what we might call a Dada*ism* or Dada theory through its title. Its opening section reflects Ball's state-ment cited at the beginning of the chapter, that of the supranational aims of Dada and the Cabaret Voltaire (both the place and the review). The manifesto performs a levelling of characteristics, as well as taking on a plethora itself, claiming that Dada simultaneously has aspects of mul-tiple nationalities, and leading to a hybrid identity that we saw through fragmentation and assemblage in Chap. 2. By claiming to be so many nationalities, Picabia foregrounds the theory that the idea of nationality

is simply a construct, especially since the aspects he identifies with par-   997
ticular nations are often based in ridicule.   998

For example, he claims that 'DADA a le cul en porcelaine, à l'aspect   999
français' [DADA has a porcelain ass, with a French look] (*L*13, p. 5).   1000
We may wonder whether this reference to porcelain represents a fragile   1001
purity as well as a standard of quality. However, this pure cleanliness,   1002
especially when related to toilet humour, may rather be incorporated into   1003
a Duchampian pun through his porcelain *Fountain*, parodying the cover-   1004
ing up of less desirable qualities. I refer here to the infamous *L.H.O.O.Q.*   1005

[AU25]   ['elle a chaud au cul', roughly 'she has a hot ass'], where we could replace   1006
the implicit 'chaud' with a phonetically identical whitewashing metaphor   1007
to create 'elle [la France?] a [de la] chaux au cul' [she (France?) has a   1008

[AU26]   whitewashed arse]. This would create yet another stinging Dada invective   1009
that accuses national interests of hiding undesirable qualities. Listing a   1010
wide variety of cultural references of which Dada 'dreams', the manifesto   1011
introduces an inherent ambiguity created by this multifaceted identity: 1012
'Changeant et nerveux, DADA est un hamac qui berce un doux balance-   1013
ment' [changeable and nervous, DADA is a hammock that rocks and   1014
swings gently] (*L*13, p. 5). Not only does this changeability depend upon   1015
a balance of contradiction supported by Beauvoirian ambiguity, but also   1016
Picabia then goes on to claim that 'nous ignorons le chemin qu'il faut   1017
choisir' [we do not know which path we should take] (*L*13, p. 5): we have   1018
seen that in Sartrean thought, refraining from being influenced by that   1019
which one *should* do is preferred as a means to forming personal choices   1020
uninfluenced by external pressures.   1021

These two manifestos foreground a constant balance of rejection of   1022
narratives and acceptance of egalitarian principles, leading to a general   1023
philosophy of choice and subjectivity, authenticity through ambiguity.   1024
Maurice Weyembergh shows us that the tension between acceptance and   1025
refusal through revolt leads to truth(s), in that 'les vérités existentielles   1026
les plus profondes […] ne s'éprouvent que dans la contradiction, ce que   1027
montre la révolte elle-même avec son accent sur le *oui et le non*' [the   1028
most profound existential truths […] only express themselves through   1029
contradiction, which shows revolt itself with its emphasis on the *yes and*   1030
the no] (in Guérin, ed., p. 918; my emphasis). This definition reminds us   1031
of Tzara's characterisation of Dada as 'le point où le **oui** et le **non** et tous   1032

les contraires se rencontrent' [the point at which the yes and the no and all contradictions meet] (in *Merz* 7, p. 70; original emphasis/formatting), and the statement in his 'Manifeste Dada 1918' that 'j'écris ce manifeste pour montrer qu'on peut faire les actions opposées ensemble, dans une seule fraîche respiration' [I am writing this manifesto to show that it is possible to perform opposing actions together, in a single fresh breath] (in *D3*, p. 1).

Tzara's desire for freshness through creativity is also expressed by Roquentin, who states that 'J'écris pour tirer au clair certaines circonstances. […] Il faut écrire au courant de la plume; sans chercher les mots' [I write in order to clarify certain circumstances […] It is necessary to write off the cuff; without searching for words] and that 'J'ai besoin de me nettoyer avec des pensées abstraites, transparentes comme de l'eau' [I need to cleanse myself with abstract thoughts that are transparent like water] (*N*, p. 87). While contradiction and clarity may initially be unhappily combined, we can instead consider both types of writing active desires to interrogate thought and versions of the truth, especially through spontaneity ('without searching for words'). We have seen that Huelsenbeck explains the embracing of rejection by claiming that 'the fact that the Dadaists said no was less important than the manner in which they said it' (cf. *DE*, p. 144). This cements our notion that it is the telling that is key, rather than the certainty of the content portrayed.

Conclusion

When Tzara was asked for permission to use the name Dada on the avant-garde periodical *New York Dada*, he was compelled to respond that the very idea of the request was absurd: 'You ask permission to name your periodical Dada. But Dada belongs to everybody' (in Ades ed. 2006, p. 159). However, as Ades elucidates, 'whether they were seriously interested in forming an alliance with Tzara's movement or were operating an ironic game of testing the very idea of ownership that the notion of "authorisation" introduces is impossible to say' (ed. 2006, p. 146). This rejection of both authorisation and authority is also present in Dada's

response to the reactions of others. For example, Richter related his   1066
thoughts on Dada scholarship: 1067

> If I am to believe the accounts which appear in certain books about this   1068
> period, we founded an association of revolutionary artists, or something   1069
> similar. *I have no recollection of this at all*, although Janco has confirmed   1070
> that we signed manifestos and pamphlets, and Georges Hugnet (who   1071
> admittedly gets his information at second hand) says that Tzara received   1072
> one of these manifestos from me, scored through it with red pencil, and   1073
> refused to publish it in *Der Zeltweg. I regard this as doubtful.* Tzara was no   1074
> red-pencil dictator (*AA*, p. 80; my emphases).   1075

It is instructive that Tzara is not denied having refused something, just   1076
that he refused to red-pencil it. This underlines the difference between   1077
rejection of the undesirable, and imposition of external morals. The con-   1078
stant replacement or addition (or removal, in Richter's case above) of   1079
truths to accounts creates an impression of chaos, one which loops back   1080
on itself in its perpetual redefinition. As Huelsenbeck describes, 'Dada is   1081
the chaos out of which a thousand orders arise which in turn entangle to   1082
form the chaos of Dada' (in Sheppard 2000, p. 195).   1083

[AU27]   We can link notions of truth to subjectivity of the perception and   1084
interpretation of reality, and as C. D. Innes states on *Travesties*, 'repre-   1085
senting reality […] depends on the artist's capacity to see what reality is.   1086
And Stoppard underlines that Joyce is almost blind, needing heavy spec-   1087
tacles for his astigmatism, that Tzara sports a monocle, and that Carr's   1088
memory is particularly unreliable' (2006, p. 228). To add to this, in *Artist   1089
Descending*, *Sophie* is blind. We have seen through the exploration of real-   1090
ity in Chap. 3 that reality has no inherent structure, but is instead shaped   1091
by our own, personal experience of it: thus, it inevitably contains or rep-   1092
resents chaos from time to time. Ball writes that 'perhaps it is necessary to   1093
have resolutely, forcibly produced chaos and thus a complete withdrawal   1094
of faith before an entirely new edifice can be built up on a changed basis   1095
of belief' (*FT*, p. 60). We can therefore consider that the embracing of   1096
chaos in general, and contradiction in particular, is mutually dependent   1097
on an assertion of absolute freedom through personal choice unfettered   1098
by external pressures. As Ball claimed, 'perfect skepticism makes perfect   1099

1100 freedom possible' (*FT*, p. 59), and Tzara that 'comment veut-on ordon-
1101 ner le chaos qui constitue cette infinie informe variation: l'homme?' [how
1102 can we order the chaos that makes up this infinitely shapeless variation:
1103 man?] (in *D3*, p. 1).

1104   The balance of chaos and order within reality has a strong link to the
1105 imaginary, which we have already assessed in terms of chaos in film and
1106 its links with the effect of pareidolia. Imagination allows us to plug gaps
1107 in the truth, as is indeed perfectly necessary in works such as *Travesties,*
1108 with its frequent slips and cuts. Applied to an account, imagination ren-
1109 ders the banal memorable and, in extension,

1110   pour que l'événement le plus banal devienne une aventure, il faut et il suffit
1111   qu'on se mette à le *raconter*. C'est ce qui dupe les gens: un homme, c'est
1112   toujours un conteur d'histoires, il vit entouré de ses histoires et des histoires
1113   d'autrui, il voit tout ce que lui arrive à travers elles; et il cherche à vivre sa
1114   vie comme s'il la racontait (*N*, p. 64; original emphasis).

1115   [in order that the most banal event become an adventure, it is necessary
1116   and sufficient to start to tell it. That is what tricks people: a person is always
1117   a storyteller, they live surrounded by their stories and those of others, they
1118   see everything that happens to them through these stories, and they try to
1119   live their life as if they were telling it.]

1120   The various Dada accounts of the movement certainly demonstrate
1121 that the telling (and re-telling) of stories is important to its history as a
1122 series of improvised, spontaneous adventures. The emphasis on imagina-
1123 tion reminds us of the need to question accounts, to maintain intellectual
1124 curiosity at all times. For the Existentialists, the truth of something takes
1125 a backseat to a person's attitude towards it. This is notably illustrated by
1126 Beauvoir's ideas on 'internal truth', in that 'la valeur d'un acte n'est pas
1127 dans sa *conformité* à un modèle extérieur, mais dans sa vérité intérieure'
1128 [the value of an act is not in its *conformity* to an external model, but in its
1129 internal truth] (*MA*, p. 171; original emphasis). Additionally Roquentin's
1130 views can be used to describe Dada's own self-historicising nature, as well
1131 as its view of 'History' as contingent, arbitrary, and partial. This view of
1132 history and (hi)stories aligns with Sartre's views on temporality, particu-
1133 larly his theory of the non-existence of the past, present and future.

Beauvoir writes that 'c'est parce que la condition de l'homme est   1134
ambiguë qu'à travers l'échec et le scandale il cherche à sauver son exis-   1135
tence' [it is because the individual's condition is ambiguous that through   1136
failure and scandal they try to save their existence], and furthermore that   1137
'l'art, la science ne se constituent pas malgré l'échec, mais *à travers* lui'   1138
[art and science do not establish themselves despite failure, but *through* it]   1139
(*MA*, pp. 160; 161; my emphasis). Dada's artistic output is predominantly   1140
defined by an ethos of improvisation and spontaneity. Thus inevitable   1141
failure allowed for the development of expression, a constant redefini-   1142
tion of the movement's sense of self, along with the fact that humour   1143
was a central part of Dada, with members constantly egging others on   1144
and ironically allowing a sense of centredness in the chaos in which they   1145
lived and worked. Ball explained that 'the special circumstances of these   1146
times […] do not allow real talent either to rest or mature and so put its   1147
capabilities to the test' (*FT*, p. 67). The uncertainty consequently raised   1148
with the contemporary reader is not only part of Dada's constant desire   1149
not to be fixed in a certain cultural memory, but also appears to embrace   1150
Beauvoir's conclusions on ambiguity (cf. *MA*, p. 14). We might conclude,   1151
therefore, that Dada's fluctuating relationship with reality, truth, decep-   1152
tion and façade lends itself richly to explorations of authenticity through   1153
ambiguity. Dada's structure as 'not a dogma or a school, but rather a con-   1154
stellation of individuals and free facets' (Tzara in Ades ed. 2006, p. 44)   1155
allows the individual to strive for authenticity through spontaneity, ambi-   1156
guity, and the embracing of multiple or hybrid identities.   1157
    Alternatively, to re-conclude with Tzara's bizarre but instructive   1158
thoughts on the ambiguity of truth,   1159

On croit pouvoir expliquer rationnellement, par la pensée, ce qu'on écrit.   1160
Mais c'est très relatif. La pensée est une belle chose pour la philosophie   1161
mais elle est relative. […] La dialectique est une machine amusante qui   1162
nous conduit /d'une maniere [*sic*] banale/ aux opinions que nous aurions   1163
eu en tout cas. Croit-on, par le raffinement minutieux de la logique, avoir   1164
démontré la vérité et établi l'exactitude de ces opinions? Logique serrée par   1165
les sens est une maladie organique. Les philosophes aiment ajouter à cet   1166
élément: Le pouvoir d'observer. Mais justement cette magnifique qualité   1167
de l'esprit est la preuve de son impuissance. On observe, on regarde d'un   1168

1169 ou de plusieurs points de vue, on les choisit parmi les millions qui existent.
1170 L'expérience est aussi un résultat de l'hazard [*sic*] et des facultés individu-
1171 elles (in *D3*, p. 2; original formatting).

1172 [We believe that we can explain rationally, through thought, that which
1173 we write. But it is very relative. Thought is a beautiful thing for philosophy
1174 but it is relative. […] Dialectics is an amusing machine that drives us to
1175 have/in a banal manner/the opinions that we would have had anyway. Do
1176 we believe, by painstaking refinement of logic, that we have revealed the
1177 truth and established the accuracy of these opinions? Logic that is hemmed
1178 in by the senses is an organic disease. Philosophers like adding to this ele-
1179 ment: the power of observation. But really this wonderful quality of mind
1180 is proof of its powerlessness. We observe, we look at things from one or
1181 many points of view, we choose them from the millions that exist.
1182 Experience is also a result of chance and individual faculties.]

1183 Tzara foregrounds several fundamental elements of truth and rational-
1184 ity, which also strengthens our links with Existentialism. He shows that
1185 writing and thought are both subjective and situational, as well as hold-
1186 ing the potential for dangerous manipulation. He repeatedly highlights
1187 the desire for final or singular truth as a 'disease', primarily because it
1188 seeks to eradicate the individual, and the chance for personal choice or
1189 chance itself.

1190 The exploration of storytelling and history demonstrates the ethical,
1191 epistemic importance of the subjectivity of truth from a perspective of
1192 Dada. But the challenging of truth and reality initiated in part by Dada
1193 also had long-lasting effects on the way we continue to perceive our envi-
1194 ronment. The Dada accounts manipulate both reality and history, and
1195 the movement more widely has led to a new way of thinking that was
1196 rebellious at the time, but has now been incorporated into the normalcy
1197 of the contemporary world. The assimilation of the revolutionary into
1198 the routine has impermeably changed the way the movement is remem-
1199 bered, as well as the way in which we approach history and even histori-
1200 ography: the Dada spirit has become omnipresent.