

READINGS: WAR POETRY AND DADA

Background
 Various war poems
 Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*
 Background: Eugen Weber, Dada
 Tzara, Dada Manifesto
 Tzara, "Lecture on Dada"
 Interpretations of Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare...

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DADAISM

Artistic and literary movement launched in Zurich in 1916 but shared by independent groups in New York, Berlin, Paris and elsewhere. The Dadaists channelled their revulsion at World War I into an indictment of the nationalist and materialist values that had brought it about. They were united not by a common style but by a rejection of conventions in art and thought, seeking through their unorthodox techniques, performances and provocations to shock society into self-awareness. The name Dada itself was typical of the movement's anti-rationalism. Various members of the Zurich group are credited with the invention of the name; according to one account it was selected by the insertion of a knife into a dictionary, and was retained for its multilingual, childish and nonsensical connotations. The Zurich group was formed around the poets [hugo Ball](#), Emmy Hennings, [tristan Tzara](#) and [richard Huelsenbeck](#), and the painters [hans Arp](#), [marcel Janco](#) and [hans Richter](#). The term was subsequently adopted in New York by the group that had formed around [marcel Duchamp](#), [francis Picabia](#), Marius de Zayas (1880–1961) and [Man ray](#). The largest of several German groups was formed in Berlin by Huelsenbeck with [john Heartfield](#), [raoul Hausmann](#), [hannah Höch](#) and [george Grosz](#). As well as important centres elsewhere (Barcelona, Cologne and Hannover), a prominent post-war Parisian group was promoted by Tzara, Picabia and [andré Breton](#). This disintegrated acrimoniously in 1922–3, although further Dada activities continued among those unwilling to join Surrealism in 1924

1. Early History: Zurich, 1914–18.

Zurich Dada's roots lay in the pre-war international avant-garde. Kandinsky's abstraction and theoretical writings, together with Cubism and the development of collage, liberated Dada from the dual constrictions of reality and convention. Similarly the writings of such German Expressionists as Christian Morgenstern combined with the influence of French poets, thereby allowing the Dadaists to break the direct link between words and meaning. Disgust at the war's outbreak was immediately voiced in Zurich at Walter Serner and Konrad Milo's Cabaret Pantagruel (from August 1914), and was reinforced by the arrival of intellectual refugees during 1915. Serner collaborated with the painter [christian Schad](#) on the periodical *Sirius* (1915–16), but the latter's move to Geneva restricted their participation in the group developing around Ball and Hennings, who founded the Cabaret Voltaire (5 February 1916), establishing performance as a central Dada medium (*see also Performance art, §(iii)*). Inviting participants, they met Arp and the Dutch painters [otto van Rees](#) and Adya van Rees-Dutilh (1876–1959), and the painter, sculptor and dancer Sophie Taeuber-Arp. They were joined by the Romanians Janco and Tzara and the Germans Huelsenbeck and Richter. Other painters contributed, including Walter Helbig (1878–1968) and Oskar Lüthy (1885–1945), as well as the Austrian Max Oppenheimer (MOPP), the Romanian Arthur Segal and the Ukrainian Marcel Slodki (1892–1943). This internationalism was reflected in the cabaret's French and Russian evenings, at which the artists exhibited. Following the example of Futurist provocations Tzara, Huelsenbeck and Janco performed *L'Amiral cherche une maison à louer*, simultaneously reading texts in three different languages. 'African' music and poetry were also performed at *soirées nègres*, emphasizing a spontaneity of expression absent from Western art. This attracted Rudolph Laban (1879–1958), who initiated African performances for which Janco made Cubist cardboard masks (e.g. 1919; Paris, Mus. A. Mod. Ville Paris).

The term 'Dada' first appeared in the periodical *Cabaret Voltaire* (June 1916), where Ball defined their activities as proving 'that there are people of independent minds—beyond war and nationalism—who live for different ideals'. The new name signalled the more combative spirit of the first Dada Soirée (Zunfthaus zur Waag, 14 July), where Ball performed astonishing *Lautegedichte* (sound poems) composed from invented words, which exposed an emotive power distinct from everyday language. Tzara read his irreverent *Manifeste de M. Antipyrine*, which acknowledged that 'Dada remains within the framework of European weaknesses, it's still shit, but from now on we want to shit in different colours'. Such shock tactics increasingly came to characterize their public position. During the summer sound poems by Huelsenbeck were published (*Phantastische Gebete*, Zurich, 1916). They were illustrated with abstract woodcuts by Arp, which showed a spontaneity centred upon chance as a governing principle. Rejecting a determining role, Arp experimented with abstract collages 'made according to the

laws of chance', in which papers were glued where they fell, reflecting a reverence for forces outside rationalism (see also [Automatism](#)).

Despite Huelsenbeck's return to Berlin, the group's activities developed in March 1917 when the Galerie Corray became the Galerie Dada, and the cabaret was replaced by the launching of a movement. Work by Campendonk, Klee, Kandinsky and others from the Sturm-Galerie in Berlin was exhibited in the gallery and accompanied by lectures. The soirées continued, including Ball's recital of *Gadji beri bimba* while dressed in cardboard cylinders designed by Janco. Music by Hans Heusser, Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg accompanied a later exhibition (May) combining de Chirico, August Macke, [enrico Prampolini](#), Fritz Baumann (1886–1942) and the Dadaists' works in unusual materials: Janco made plaster reliefs (e.g. *The Lock*, 1918; Tel Aviv, Mus. A.); Taeuber-Arp and Arp collaborated on geometric tapestries, for example *Pathetic Symmetry* (1916–17; Paris, Pompidou); and Arp made painted wooden reliefs, such as *Entombment of the Birds and Butterflies (Head of Tzara)* (1916–17; Zurich, Ksthaus; see fig. 1), which introduced [Biomorphism](#) into his work. At the same time Ball's withdrawal confirmed Tzara's leadership. He launched the periodical *Dada*, the first two numbers of which (July and December) reflected links with [der Sturm](#) in Berlin, Guillaume Apollinaire in Paris, Marinetti in Milan (see [Futurism](#)) and the [Pittura metafisica](#) group in Ferrara. Through the latter he contributed to the Bolognese periodical *La Brigata*, inviting the editor, Francesco Meriano, to launch Italian Dada in summer 1917. However, Futurism's dominance and wider nationalism in Italy caused Tzara to break these links.

During 1917 and 1918 Serner and Schad collaborated more closely, the latter revealing a parallel concern with chance in his 'schadographs', unforeseen compositions achieved, like photograms, by laying objects on photographic paper and exposing them to light (e.g. 1918; Zurich, Ksthaus). By contrast, Richter's *Visionary Portraits* were superseded by an ordered abstraction close to that of Swedish artist [viking Eggeling](#) (e.g. *Composition*, c. 1916; Basle, Kstmus.) and resulted in a lengthy collaboration. Janco established an association of abstract artists, the [Neue leben](#) (April 1918), with Arp, Taeuber, Lüthy, Fritz Baumann, Augusto Giacometti, Otto Morach (1887–1973) and other Basle painters, while Tzara's explosive *Manifeste dada 1918* proclaimed Dada as 'the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE.' By the time this appeared in *Dada 3* (December 1918), Zurich Dada was entering a more nihilistic stage resulting from contact with Picabia, who had arrived from New York, via Barcelona and Paris, earlier in the year.

2. New York, 1915–21.

The works made by Picabia and Duchamp in New York, which would later be acknowledged as Dada, differed from Zurich Dada by being less concerned with the war but more aggressive towards the art establishment. Picabia frequented the circle around Alfred Stieglitz's periodical *Camera Work*, including Edward J. Steichen, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, Charles Sheeler and others (see also [United states of america, §III, 3](#)), and exhibited at Stieglitz's Photo-Secession gallery (see [>291<](#)). There he met the Mexican Marius de Zayas, who, after contributing to Apollinaire's *Les Soirées de Paris*, returned to New York to help launch the innovative periodical *291* (March 1915), named after the gallery. While Picabia collaborated on *291*, Duchamp, who had also arrived in New York in June 1915, was introduced by the collector Walter Arensberg (see [Arensberg](#)) into a literary circle including William Carlos Williams, Margaret Anderson, Wallace Stevens, Alfred Kreyenborg and Elsa Freytag-Loringhoven, the painters Joseph Stella, [morton livingston Schamberg](#) and Man Ray. Other exiles followed, notably [jean Crotti](#), [albert Gleizes](#) and the composer Edgar Varèse; they gravitated around the Modern Gallery, which de Zayas opened in October. News of their work reached Tzara, but, although he contacted de Zayas in 1916, the parallels between them and the term Dada remained unnoticed.

In Picabia's mechanomorphic works, such as *Very Rare Picture on the Earth* (1915; Venice, Guggenheim; see fig. 2), and in Duchamp's studies on glass, images were adapted from technical diagrams. These commented upon the human condition and even assumed erotic overtones, sometimes implied in their titles, analogies taken up by Crotti, Man Ray and Schamberg (e.g. Man Ray's *Rope Dancer Accompanies Herself with her Shadows*, 1916; New York, MOMA). However, Duchamp went further in renouncing originality when he exhibited ready-mades (see [Ready-made](#)) at the Bourgeois Gallery (April 1916). These industrially produced objects constituted a deliberately anti-art gesture, raising serious questions about the accepted precepts of art. Ready-mades had been conceived in Paris, but Duchamp coined the term in New York and perfected the predetermined process of choice that removed all aesthetic judgement. While this encouraged such ironically titled objects as Schamberg and Freytag-Loringhoven's *God* (plumbing trap and mitre box, c. 1917; Philadelphia, PA, Mus. A.) and Man Ray's photograph of a mechanical egg-beater, *Man* (1918; Paris, Pompidou), the ready-made provoked the group's major controversy. Duchamp tested the juryless system of the Society of Independent Artists' exhibition held at Grand Central Palace, New York, in April 1917 (see [Society of independent artists](#)) by submitting a ready-made: an upturned urinal, entitled *Fountain* and signed 'R. Mutt' (1917, untraced; editioned replica 1964; Ottawa, N.G.; for illustration see [Ready-made](#)). He then publicly unmasked the fact of its concealment by the Society and defended 'Mr Mutt's' freedom of choice with a photograph of the work in *Blind Man* (no. 2, May 1917) supported by editorials written in its defence. In an additional provocation, he and Picabia (newly returned from Barcelona) invited Arthur Cravan (1887–1918), editor and sole author of the wittily insulting Parisian periodical *Maintenant* (1912–14), to lecture at the exhibition, resulting in a drunken strip-tease.

These events, and such periodicals as the single issue *Rongwrong* and Picabia's *391* (launched in 1916 with obvious reference to *291*, on which he had worked before), mocked establishment and avant-garde alike. They also coincided with the USA's entry into the war, which encouraged Picabia's embarkation for Europe in September 1917 and, a year later, Duchamp's move to Buenos Aires. Man Ray continued the provocation with *T.*

N. T. (March 1919, edited with the anarchists Adolf Wolff and Adon Lacroix) and a replacement of artistic styles with mechanical techniques in his photographs and 'aerographs'. Meanwhile the Modern Gallery assumed de Zayas's name in 1919, and his promotion of radical art may have influenced the Estridentismo movement, launched in Mexico City in 1921. Duchamp's return to New York in 1920 brought renewed collaboration with Man Ray; they acted as advisers (and president and secretary respectively) to Katherine S. Dreier's Société Anonyme collection of international modern art founded in the same year. Man Ray and Duchamp's single issue of *New York Dada* (April 1921), which included articles by Tzara and Freytag-Loringhoven, confirmed a similarity of purpose, and both set off to participate in Paris Dada.

4. Berlin Dada, 1917–22.

More so than in other cities, Berlin Dada was circumscribed by political events, as was already evident in Huelsenbeck's 'Der neue Mensch' (*Neue Jugend*, 23 May 1917), which marked his return to the collapsing city. At the artistic Alte Café des Westens, he met political writers and artists for whom Berlin Dada constituted an extension of their opposition to the status quo; they included Franz Jung (1888–1963), Gerhard Preiss, Heartfield and his brother Wieland Hertzfelde (1896–1988), and Grosz. They were joined by Walter Mehring, Raoul Hausmann, Hannah Höch and the self-publicist Johannes Baader (1875–1955). Their disgust with the contemporary cultural situation was exposed in February 1918 in Huelsenbeck's lecture on Dada at the Galerie I. B. Neumann, which initiated the Club Dada (12 April). There he called for an art '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' (*Dada Manifesto*, Berlin, 1918). While reiterating his moral concerns, he rejected the ideals of abstraction and of Expressionism, which was rapidly passing into the establishment. Hausmann, who became his close collaborator, responded with experiments across different media. Most notable were his phonetic poems (e.g. 'Selenautomobile', Dada matinée, 6 June), which, by the pronunciation of single letters, extended the Zurich sound poems. The form's abstraction was most evident in the printed 'scores', dubbed 'optophonetic poems', in which the force of each letter was indicated by its size. This was closely related to the mixed typography and overprinting of slogans that characterized Berlin Dada publications, such as *Club Dada* (1918).

The military defeat and the abdication of Emperor William II in 1918 brought the political crisis to a head and was followed by the brutal suppression of the communist-inspired Spartakist uprising (January 1919) by the Socialist Weimar government. The Dadaists responded in two publications in February: Baader's manifesto *Dadaisten gegen Weimar*, and *Jedermann sein eigener Fussball*, published by Hertzfelde's Malik Verlag. The former was simply anarchic, proclaiming Baader as President of the Earth, while the latter urged the renewal of the revolution and was immediately confiscated. Heartfield's cover of *Jedermann* ... was one of the earliest uses of the quintessential Berlin Dada medium of [Photomontage](#). The collaging of photographs from the mass media allowed the artists to dissect reality through unexpected combinations with other images or with words, without retreating into realism. Heartfield and Grosz made photomontage a satirical weapon, throwing back the images issued by the establishment media, while Höch and Hausmann added comments on everyday culture (e.g. Hausmann's *Art Critic*, 1920; London, Tate; for illustration see [Hausmann, raoul](#)). Assemblages of found objects, notably Hausmann's *Mechanical Head: Spirit of our Age* (wooden hatmaker's dummy with objects, 1919; Paris, Pompidou), also employed this technique. In both works the use of immediate and ephemeral materials ensured against commercial value.

The critical nature of this work meant that few German Dada periodicals survived confiscation, the exception being Hausmann's *Der Dada* (1919–20), which included contributions from Picabia in its third number (April 1920, edited with Heartfield and Grosz). This reflected the heightened international activity of 1920. In February, Baader, Huelsenbeck and Hausmann undertook an increasingly riotous performance tour to Leipzig, Teplitz-Schönau, Prague and Karlsbad. In May, at the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe, paintings and drawings were combined with Dada posters, photomontages and assemblages, including a uniformed dummy with a pig's head, for which Grosz and Heartfield were fined for ridiculing the military. The show was accompanied by the *Dada Almanach* (Berlin, 1920), edited by Huelsenbeck, which included contributions from Zurich, Barcelona and Paris Dada. That it included Tzara is remarkable, as Huelsenbeck bitterly attacked his ambitions in *En avant Dada: Eine Geschichte des Dadaismus* (Hannover, 1920). These events marked Berlin Dada's culmination, as personal conflicts led to its fragmentation shortly after.

The celebration of [vladimir Tatlin](#) in such works as *Tatlin at Home* (photomontage, 1920; Stockholm, Mod. Mus.) by Hausmann indicated the Dadaists' continuing aspiration for a revolutionary art, which developed into an exchange with international Constructivism in the 1920s. Richter and Eggeling, who arrived in 1918 but did not participate in Berlin Dada, completed the abstract film *Rhythmus 21* in 1921, the title indicating musical structures. In October Hausmann and Arp wrote 'A Call for an Elementarist Art' (*De Stijl*, iv/10, 1922) with the Suprematists Jean Pougny and László Moholy-Nagy, identifying an international art 'built up of its own elements alone'. These issues exercised the Kongress Internationaler Fortschrittlicher Künstler in Düsseldorf in May 1922, from which Richter, [theo van Doesburg](#) and El Lissitzky split to form the International Faction of Constructivists (see [Constructivism](#), §2). They became the nucleus for the Konstruktivisten und Dadaisten Kongress in Weimar (September), which was attended by Tzara, Arp and [kurt Schwitters](#), and which inspired Richter's periodical *G* (1923–4). In these exchanges the work of Arp, Richter, Hausmann and Schwitters maintained an unexpected balance between Dadaist chance and irony and Constructivist idealism.

5. Associated developments: Merz, Constructivism and Ma, 1919–25.

Huelsenbeck prevented Schwitters's admission to Berlin Dada because of his lack of political commitment, despite the considerable success of *An Anna Blume*, a chance poem published in *Der Sturm* in 1919. Schwitters had begun to produce such works and abstract collages (*Merzbilder*) soon after coming into contact with Hausmann and Höch in 1918. His response to Huelsenbeck's snub was to found his one-man 'movement', Merz, later in 1919, with its eponymous periodical (1923–32). His works relied upon chance finds of everyday materials, especially waste paper, with which he established a formal harmony, for example the *Kots Picture* (1920; for illustration see [Collage](#)). Schwitters remained close to several Dadaists, performing with Höch and Hausmann in Prague in 1921, where the latter's phonetic poem *fmsbw* inspired his own *Ursonate* (1924–5; published in *Merz*, 24, 1932). He invited Arp to collaborate on *Merz* and arranged Tzara's lecture tour on Dada (Hannover, Jena and Weimar) after the Weimar Congress (1922). He also collaborated with Van Doesburg, who, as 'I. K. Bonset', spread a mechanistic Dada through Holland via his periodical *Mécane* (1922–3) and a tour undertaken with Schwitters. This coincided with the creation of Schwitters's *Merzbau* (begun 1923; reconstructed 1980–83; Hannover, Sprengel Mus.), a haphazard construction of ephemeral material which would grow to fill his house (see Schwitters, kurt, fig. 2).

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Various war poems

Siegfried Sassoon, A Working Party

THREE hours ago he blundered up the trench,
Sliding and poising, groping with his boots;
Sometimes he tripped and lurched against the walls
With hands that pawed the sodden bags of chalk.
He couldn't see the man who walked in front;
Only he heard the drum and rattle of feet
Stepping along barred trench boards, often splashing
Wretchedly where the sludge was ankle-deep.
Voices would grunt 'Keep to your right -- make way!'
When squeezing past some men from the front-line:
White faces peered, puffing a point of red;
Candles and braziers glinted through the chinks
And curtain-flaps of dug-outs; then the gloom
Swallowed his sense of sight; he stooped and swore
Because a sagging wire had caught his neck.
A flare went up; the shining whiteness spread
And flickered upward, showing nimble rats
And mounds of glimmering sand-bags, bleached with rain;
Then the slow silver moment died in dark.
The wind came posting by with chilly gusts
And buffeting at the corners, piping thin.
And dreary through the crannies; rifle-shots
Would split and crack and sing along the night,
And shells came calmly through the drizzling air
To burst with hollow bang below the hill.
Three hours ago, he stumbled up the trench;
Now he will never walk that road again:
He must be carried back, a jolting lump
Beyond all needs of tenderness and care.
He was a young man with a meagre wife
And two small children in a Midland town,
He showed their photographs to all his mates,
And they considered him a decent chap
Who did his work and hadn't much to say,
And always laughed at other people's jokes
Because he hadn't any of his own.
That night when he was busy at his job
Of piling bags along the parapet,
He thought how slow time went, stamping his feet
And blowing on his fingers, pinched with cold.
He thought of getting back by half-past twelve,
And tot of rum to send him warm to sleep
In draughty dug-out frowsty with the fumes
Of coke, and full of snoring weary men.
He pushed another bag along the top,
Craning his body outward; then a flare
Gave one white glimpse of No Man's Land and wire;
And as he dropped his head the instant split
His startled life with lead, and all went out

Siegfried Sassoon, Glory of Women

You love us when we're heroes, home on leave,
Or wounded in a mentionable place.
You worship decorations; you believe
That chivalry redeems the war's disgrace.
You make us shells. You listen with delight,
By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.
You crown our distant ardours while we fight,
And mourn our laurelled memories when we're killed.
You can't believe that British troops 'retire'
When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run,
Trampling the terrible corpses - blind with blood.
O German mother dreaming by the fire,
While you are knitting socks to send your son
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

Wilfred Owen, Dulce Et Decorum Est

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that dropped behind.
Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling,
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling,
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.
If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues, -
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.

Wilfred Owen, Disabled

He sat in a wheeled chair, waiting for dark,
And shivered in his ghastly suit of grey,
Legless, sewn short at elbow. Through the park
Voices of boys rang saddening like a hymn,
Voices of play and pleasure after day,
Till gathering sleep had mothered them from him.

About this time Town used to swing so gay
When glow-lamps budded in the light blue trees,
And girls glanced lovelier as the air grew dim, -
In the old times, before he threw away his knees.
Now he will never feel again how slim
Girls' waists are, or how warm their subtle hands;
All of them touch him like some queer disease.

There was an artist silly for his face,
For it was younger than his youth, last year.
Now, he is old; his back will never brace;
He's lost his colour very far from here,
Poured it down shell-holes till the veins ran dry,
And half his lifetime lapsed in the hot race
And leap of purple spurted from his thigh.

One time he liked a blood-smear down his leg,
After the matches, carried shoulder-high.
It was after football, when he'd drunk a peg,
He thought he'd better join. - He wonders why.
Someone had said he'd look a god in kilts,
That's why; and may be, too, to please his Meg;
Aye, that was it, to please the giddy jilts
He asked to join. He didn't have to beg;
Smiling they wrote his lie; aged nineteen years.
Germans he scarcely thought of; all their guilt,
And Austria's, did not move him. And no fears
Of Fear came yet. He thought of jewelled hilts
For daggers in plaid socks; of smart salutes;
And care of arms; and leave; and pay arrears;
Esprit de corps; and hints for young recruits.
And soon, he was drafted out with drums and cheers.

Some cheered him home, but not as crowds cheer Goal.
Only a solemn man who brought him fruits
Thanked him; and then inquired about his soul.

Now, he will spend a few sick years in institutes,
And do what things the rules consider wise,
And take whatever pity they may dole.
To-night he noticed how the women's eyes
Passed from him to the strong men that were whole.
How cold and late it is! Why don't they come

Selections from Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front*

Once it was different. When we went to the district commandant to enlist, we were a class of twenty young men, many of whom proudly shaved for the first time before going to the barracks. we had no definite plans for our future. Our thoughts of a career and occupation were as yet of too unpractical a character to furnish any scheme of life. We were still crammed full of vague ideas which gave to life, and to the war as an ideal and almost romantic character. WE were trained in the army for ten weeks and in this time more profoundly influenced than by ten years at school. We learned that a bright button is weightier than four volumes of Schopenhauer. At first astonished, then embittered, and finally indifferent, we recognized that what matters is not the mind but the boot brush, not intelligence but the system, not freedom but drill. We became soldiers with eagerness and enthusiasm, but they have done everything to knock that out of us. After three weeks it was no longer incomprehensible to us that a braided postman should have more authority over us than had

formerly our parents, our teachers, and the whole gamut of culture from Plato to Goethe. With our young, awakened eyes we saw that the classical conception of the Fatherland held by our teachers resolved itself here into a renunciation of personality such as one would not ask of the meanest servants -- salutes, springing to attention, parade-marches, presenting arms, right wheel, left wheel, clicking the heels, insults, and a thousand pettifogging details. We had fancied our task would be different, only to find we were to be trained for heroism as though we were circus-ponies. But we soon accustomed ourselves to it. We learned in fact that some of these things were necessary, but the rest merely show. Soldiers have a fine nose for such distinctions....

"I don't want to do anything," replies Kropp wearily. "You'll be dead one day, so what does it matter? I don't think we'll ever go back."

"When I think about it, Albert," I say after a while rolling over on my back, "When I hear the word 'peace-time,' it goes to my head: and if it really came, I think I would do some unimaginable thing -- something, you know, that it's worth having lain here in the muck for. But I can't even imagine anything. All I do know is that this business about professions and studies and salaries and so on -- it makes me sick, it is and always was disgusting. I don't see anything at all, Albert."

All at once everything seems to me confused and hopeless.

Kropp feels it too. "It will go pretty hard with us all. But nobody at home seems to worry much about it. Two years of shells and bombs -- a man won't peel that off as easy as a sock."

We agree that it's the same for everyone; not only for us here, but everywhere, for everyone who is of our age; to some more, and to others less. It is the common fate of our generation.

Albert expresses it: "The war has ruined us for everything."

He is right. We are not youth any longer. We don't want to take the world by storm. We are fleeing. We fly from ourselves. From our life. We were eighteen and had begun to love life and the world; and we had to shoot it to pieces. The first bomb, the first explosion, burst in our hearts. We are cut off from activity, from striving, from progress. We believe in such things no longer, we believe in the war...

The terror of the front sinks deep down when we turn our backs upon it; we make grim, coarse jests about it, when a man dies, then we say he has nipped off his turd, and so we speak of everything; that keeps us from going mad; as long as we take it that way we maintain our own resistance.

But we do not forget. It's all rot that they put in the war-news about the good humour of the troops, how they are arranging dances almost before they are out of the front-line. We don't like that because we are in a good humour: we are in a good humour because otherwise we should go to pieces. Even so we cannot hold out much longer; our humour becomes more bitter every month.

And this I know: all these things that now, while we are still in the war, sink down in us like a stone, after the war shall waken again, and then shall begin the disentanglement of life and death.

The days, the weeks, the years out here shall come back again, and our dead comrades shall then stand up again and march with us, our heads shall be clear, we shall have a purpose, and so we shall march, our dead comrades besides us, the years at the Front behind us: -- against whom, against whom?

Background: Eugen Weber, *DADA, Movements, Currents, Trends*, pp. 270-271.

From 1914 to 1918, the most advanced and cultivated nations in the world devoted all their energies to slaughter. And the way in which they went about it convinced a growing proportion of the survivors that society was led not only by criminals but by lunatic muddlers as well-men who, behind a disguise of reason and logical purpose, were leading mankind to perdition, the Bible in one hand and a bloody butcher's cleaver in the other. To the absurdity of a world in which the most sensible and responsible men devoted themselves to destruction and mayhem, a small group of artists reacted by preaching salvation through nonsense. As its name indicates, Dada-developed in wartime Switzerland by a Romanian, Tristan Tzara, an Alsatian, Hans Arp, and a German, Hugo Ball-was nihilistic, anticreative and antiartistic. Above all, it was against reason. As Hans Arp would write some years later:

Art is a fruit growing out of man like the fruit out of a plant like the child out of the mother. while the fruit of the plant grows independent forms and never resembles a balloon or a president in a

cutaway suit the artistic fruit of man shows for the most part a ridiculous resemblance to the appearance of other things. reason tells man to stand above nature and to be the measure of all things. thus man thinks he is able to live and to create against the laws of nature and he creates abortions. through reason man becomes a tragic and ugly figure. I dare say he would create even his children in the form of vases with umbilical cords if he could do so. reason has cut man off from nature.

Disillusioned at the speciousness and hypocrisy of existing values, Dada set out to ridicule all values and standards, artistic, social, and intellectual. Even before the war had ended, Dada groups appeared in Germany and France led by George Grosz, Max Ernst, and Arp in the one, Apollinaire, Jacob, Breton, Aragon, and Soupault in the other. Then, in 1917, Dada appeared in New York, with Marcel Duchamp's contribution to the Independent show, a plain marble urinal entitled *Fountain*.

But Dada could not last or create without going against its own announced purpose. Destructive and nonsensical, it had to triumph on its own nihilistic terms which made propaganda itself impossible, or else give way to something that was ready to build as well as to destroy.

TRISTAN TZARA, *Dada Manifesto*

*The magic of a word--
DADA-which has placed the
newsmen before the gate
of an unexpected world
has for us no importance whatever*

To launch a manifesto one must wish A.B.C.
to fulminate against 1, 2, 3,

get mad and sharpen the wings to conquer and spread big and small a,b,c, cross oneself, shout, curse, contrive prose in the shape of absolute, irrefutable evidence, demonstrate one's non plus ultra and affirm that novelty resembles life like the last appearance of a courtesan proves the essence of God. His existence has already been proved by the accordion, the landscape and the soft word. ** To impose one's A.B.C. is a natural-hence regrettable-thing. Everybody does it in the shape of crystalbluffmadonna, monetary system, pharmaceutical product, bare leg inciting to ardent and sterile Spring. The love of novelty is the congenial cross, demonstrates a naive couldn'tcarelessness, sign without cause, passing, positive. But this need has also grown obsolete. Documenting art with supreme simplicity: novelty, one is human and real for fun, impulsive, vibrating to crucify boredom. At the crossroads of light, alert, carefully watching the years in the forest. ** I write a manifesto and I want nothing, yet I say certain things, and I am against manifestoes on principle, as I am also against principles (half-pints for the moral worth of every phrase-too easy; the approximation was invented by the Impressionists). ** I write this manifesto to show that one can do opposing actions together, in one fresh breath; I am against action; in favor of continuous contradiction, also in favor of assertion, I am neither for nor against and I do not explain because I hate common sense.

DADA-here is a word that leads the chase of ideas; every bourgeois is a little dramatist, invents different words, instead of disposing the characters in a manner befitting the quality of his intelligence, chrysalids on chairs, seeks the causes or the ends (according to the psychoanalytical method he practices) in order to strengthen his plot, speaking, self-defining history. ** Every spectator is a plotter, if he tries to explain a word: (to understand!) From the soft-lined refuge of meandering complications he has his instincts manipulated. Hence the calamities of married life.

Explaining: Amusement of redbellies in the mills of empty skulls.

DADA SIGNIFIES NOTHING

If one thinks it futile, if one wastes one's time for a word that signifies nothing . . .

The first thought that appears in those heads is of bacteriological order: to find its etymological, historical or, at least, psychological origin. The newspapers inform us that the Krou Negroes call the tail of a holy cow: DADA. The cube and the mother in a certain part of Italy: DADA. The wooden horse, the nurse, double affirmative in Romanian and Russian: DADA. Learned journalists see in it art for babies, other saints jesuscallinglittlechildren of the day see the return to a dry and boisterous, boisterous and monotonous, primitivism. Sensitiveness cannot be built upon one word; every structure converges upon the perfection that bores, stagnant idea of a golden bog, - relative human product. The work of art must not be beauty in itself, for it is dead; neither gay nor sad, neither clear nor obscure, rejoice or maltreat personalities by serving them the tarts of holy haloes

or the sweat of an arched race through the atmospheres. A work of art is never beautiful by decree, objectively, for all. Criticism is therefore useless, it exists only subjectively, for each and every one, and lacks all general character. Should one believe to have found the psychic ground common to all mankind? The attempt of Jesus and the bible cover with their broad and friendly wings: dung, beasts, days. How would one order the chaos that constitutes this infinite formless variation: man? The principle "love your neighbor" is hypocrisy. "Know thyself" is Utopian, but more acceptable because it bears malice within it. No pity. The slaughter over, we are left the hope of a purified humanity. I still speak about myself for I do not wish to convince, I have not the right to carry others away in my flow, I force none to follow me and everybody fashions his art in his own manner, whether he knows the joy that darts straight for the starry skies, or that which descends into the mines that bloom with corpses and with fertile spasms. Stalactites: seek them everywhere, in the cribs broadened by pain, the eyes white like the angels' hares.

Thus was DADA born of a need for independence, of suspicion for the community. Those who belong to us keep their freedom. We recognize no theory. We have enough of the cubist and futuristic academies: laboratories of formalistic ideas. Does one engage in art to earn money and stroke the pretty bourgeois? The rhymes ring with the assonance of coin, the modulation glides along the curve of a stomach seen in profile. All the groups of artists, riding on different comets, have come to this bank in the end. The door opens on the possibilities of wallowing in cushions and in food.

Here we anchor in fat ground. Here we have the right to proclaim for we have known the thrills and the awakening. Returning drunk with energy we drive the trident into the indifferent flesh. We are streams of maledictions in tropical abundance of vertiginous vegetations, resin and rain is our sweat, we bleed and burn the thirst, our blood is strength.

Cubism was born of a simple way of seeing things: Cezanne painted a cup twenty inches below his eyes, the cubists look at it from above, others complicate the appearance by taking a perpendicular section and placing it soberly beside. (I do not forget the creators, nor the great issues of the subject which they finally settled.) ** The futurist sees the same cup in successive movement of objects one beside the other and maliciously adds a few force-lines. That does not prevent the canvas being a good or bad painting destined for the investment of intellectual capital.

The new painter creates a world, whose elements are also its means, a sober and definite work without a theme. The new artist protests: he no longer paints (symbolic and illusionistic reproduction) but creates directly in stone, wood, iron, tin, it being possible to turn the rocks of locomotive organisms in every direction by the limpid wind of monetary sensation. : ** All pictorial or plastic work is useless; let it be a monster that scares the servile spirits, not sweetly-sick to decorate the refectories of animals in human garb, illustrations of this dismal fable of humanity.

A. painting is the art of causing two geometrical lines established as being parallel to meet on a canvas, before our eyes, in a reality which transposes into a world of other conditions and possibilities. This work is neither specified nor defined in the work, it belongs in its innumerable variations to the beholder. For its creator it is without cause and without theory. Order = disorder; self = non-self; affirmation = negation: supreme illuminations of an absolute art. Absolute in purity of cosmic and orderly chaos, eternal in the globule second without duration without respiration without light without verification. ** I like an ancient work for its novelty. There is only the contrast that binds us to the past. ** The writers that teach morality and discuss or improve the psychological fundamental principle have, apart from a hidden desire for gain, a ridiculous understanding of life, which they have classified, divided, canalized; they insist on seeing the categories dance to their tune. Their readers sneer and go on: what's the use?

There is a literature that never gets to the voracious mass. Work of creators, born of a real necessity of the author and for himself. Knowledge of a supreme selfishness, before which laws waste- away. ** Every page must explode, .be it by the profound and heavy seriousness, the whirlwind, the intoxication, the new, the eternal, the crushing hoax, the enthusiasm of its principles, or the way in which it is printed. Here is a reeling, fleeing world, affianced to the rattle of the infernal scale; here, on the other side, are new men. Rude, capering, riding on hiccups. See a mutilated world and the literary would-be doctors sighing for improvements. I tell you: there is no beginning, and we do not tremble, we are not sentimental. We tear apart, furious gale, the rags of clouds and of prayers and prepare the great show of the disaster, the conflagration, the disintegration. Let us prepare the suppression of mourning and replace tears by sirens that stretch from one continent to the next. Standards of intense joy, bereft of the dreariness of poison. ** DADA is the token of abstraction; advertising and business are also elements of poetry.

I destroy the drawers of the brain and those of social organization: to demoralize everywhere and throw the hand of heaven into hell, the eyes of hell to heaven, reestablish the fruitful cartwheels of an universal circus in the real powers and the fantasy of every individual.

The philosophy is the question: where to begin to look at life, god, ideas, or other phantoms. All one looks at is false. I do not consider the relative result more important than the choice between cake and cherries after dinner. The way of taking a quick look at the other side of a question in order to indirectly impose one's opinion is called dialectics, that is to haggle the spirit of french fried potatoes while dancing the method around.

If I cry:

Ideal, ideal, ideal,

Knowledge, Knowledge, Knowledge,

Bangbang, bangbang, bangbang,

I have given a fair account of progress, law, morality, and all the other fine qualities that different very intelligent people have discussed in so many books, in order to conclude in the end that, all the same, everyone has danced after his own personal bangbang, and that he is right because of his bangbang, satisfaction of sickly curiosity; private chimes for unexplainable needs; bath; financial difficulties; stomach with repercussion on life; authority of the mystical baton formulated in a bouquet of phantom-orchestra with mute bows, greased by philters with a base of animal ammonia. With the blue quizzingglass of an angel they have dug into the innards for two cents' worth of unanimous gratitude. **: If all are right, and if all pills are Pink's, **let us try for once not to be right.** #* People think they can explain what they write rationally, through thought. But this is very relative. **Thought is a fine thing for philosophy, but it is relative.** Psychoanalysis is a dangerous malady, lulls the anti-real inclinations of man and systematizes the bourgeoisie. There is no ultimate Truth. The dialectic is an amusing machine which leads us [in commonplace fashion] to opinions we should have had in any case. Do you think to have established the preciseness of these opinions by the minute refinement of logic? Logic strained by the senses is an organic illness. The philosophers like to add to this element: The power to observe. But, as a matter of fact, this magnificent quality of the mind is the proof of its impotence. We observe, we look from one or more points of view, we choose them from among the millions that exist. Experience is also a result of chance and individual faculties. ** Science disgusts me as soon as it becomes speculation-cum-system, loses its useful character-which is so useless-but at least individual. I loathe fat objectivity and harmony, this science that finds everything in its place. Carry on kids, humanity . . . Science says that we are the servants of nature: everything is fine, make love and break your necks. Carry on kids, humanity, pretty bourgeois and virginal journalists **: **I am against systems, the most acceptable of systems is that of having none on principle.** ** To complete oneself, to perfect oneself in one's own pettiness until one fills the cup of one's self, the courage to fight for and against thought, mystery of the bread sudden launching of an infernal propeller in economic lilies:

DADAIST SPONTANEITY

I call couldn'tcarelessness the state of a life in which everyone keeps his own circumstances, yet is able to respect other personalities, the two-step becoming the national anthem, curiosity shop, T.S.F. wireless telephone broadcasting the fugues of Bach, luminous signs and signposting for brothels, the organ spreading pinks for God, all this together, and truly, replacing photography and the unilateral catechism.

ACTIVE SIMPLICITY.

The powerlessness to discern between different degrees of light: to lick the semi-darkness and float in the great mouth full of honey and excrement. Measured on the scale Eternity all action is vain (if we allow thought to take its chance in an adventure whose outcome would be infinitely grotesqueimportant notion for the understanding of human impotence). But if life is a bad joke, without aim or initial delivery, and because we think we have to extricate ourselves properly from it, like washed chrysanthemums, we have proclaimed a single ground for understanding: art. It does not matter that we, knights of the spirit, have been singing to it for centuries. Art afflicts no one and those who know how to go about it will receive caresses and a splendid opportunity to fill the country with their conversation. **Art is a private thing, the artist makes it for himself; a comprehensible work is a journalist's product, and because right now I like to mix this monster with oil-paints: paper tube imitating metal that one presses and automatically squeezes out hatred, cowardice, villainy.** The artist, the poet rejoices over the venom of the mass condensed in a section-head of this industry, he is happy while he is being insulted: proof of his immutability. The author, the artist praised by the press, notes

the comprehensibility of his work: miserable substitute of a cloak of public utility; rags that cover brutality, piss collaborating with the heat of an animal that hatches the basest instincts; flaccid and insipid flesh that multiplies thanks to typographical germs.

We have hustled out our inclination to snivel. Every strain of this sort is pickled diarrhea. To encourage this art means to digest it. We need works that are strong straight precise and ever misunderstood. Logic is a complication. Logic is always false. It pulls the strings of notions, words, in their formal outside shape, toward the ends of illusory centers. Its chains kill, enormous myriapods stifling independence. Married to logic, art would live in incest, swallowing, devouring its own tail—always its body, fornicating with itself. Temperament would become an asphalt nightmare of protestantism, a monument, a heap of heavy grayish guts. But suppleness, enthusiasm, and even the pleasure of injustice, this little truth we innocently keep company with and that makes us beautiful: we are subtle and our fingers are malleable and glide like the branches of that insinuating and almost liquid plant; it sums up our heart, say the cynics. And that is another point of view; but happily all flowers are not holy, and the divine in us is the awakening of anti-human activity. I am talking here about a paper flower for the buttonhole of the gentlemen who attend the ball of masked life, kitchen of grace, white cousins supple or fat. They deal in the things we have selected. Contradiction and unity of polar opposites at one stroke, can be truth. That is if one has to pronounce this commonplace, appendix of a libidinous evil-smelling morality. Morality atrophies, like every scourge that intelligence has produced. The censure of morality and logic have inflicted on us our insensibility to policemen—cause of slavery, putrid rats that fill the bellies of the bourgeoisie and who have sullied the only corridors of clear, clean glass that remained open to artists. Let everyone cry out: there is a great destructive, negative task to be accomplished. Sweep, clean. The tidiness of the individual affirms itself after the state of madness, of aggressive, utter madness of a world left in the hands of bandits who tear each other up and destroy the centuries. Without aim or purpose, without organization: untamable folly, disintegration. Those who are strong by the word or by strength will survive, for they are quick in defense, the agility of their limbs and their perceptions blaze on their dappled sides. Morality has determined charity and pity, two greasy messes that have grown like elephants, like planets, and that are called good. They have nothing of goodness. Goodness is lucid, clear, decisive, pitiless toward compromise and politics. Morality is the infusion of hot chocolate in the veins of men. And this is not done at the behest of some supernatural power but of the trust of idea-merchants and of academic monopolizers. Sentimentality: seeing a group of men engaged in quarreling and tedium, they have invented the calendar and the medicine virtue. By sticking labels, the battle of philosophers broke out (mercantilism, balance, meticulous and petty measurements) and it was understood for a second time that pity is a sentiment, like diarrhea in respect to the disgust that spoils health, the impure task of putrid carrion out to compromise the sun.

I proclaim the opposition of all the cosmic faculties to this gonorrhea of a putrid sun produced by the factories of philosophical thought, the fierce, implacable struggle, with all the means of

DADAIST DISGUST

Every product of disgust apt to become a negation of the family, is dada; protest with the fists of all one's being in destructive action: DADA; knowledge of all the means up to now rejected by the sex chaste with facile compromise and manners: DADA; abolition of logic, dance of the impotents of creation: DADA; of all hierarchy and social equation set up for the values by our valets: DADA; every object, all the objects, the sentiments and the obscurities, the phantoms and the precise clash of parallel lines, are means in our struggle: DADA; abolition of memory: DADA; abolition of archaeology: DADA; abolition of prophets: DADA; abolition of the future: DADA; absolute undisputable belief in every god that is the immediate product of spontaneity: DADA; elegant and unprejudiced leap from one harmony to the other sphere; trajectory of a word cast like an emphatic record cry; respect of all individualities in their monetary folly: serious, timorous, timid, ardent, forceful, decisive, enthusiastic; stripping one's church of all heavy and useless accessories; spitting out like a luminous cascade the unkindly or loving thought, or pampering it—with the lively satisfaction of knowing that it doesn't matter either way with the same intensity in the thicket, unblemished by insects for the wellborn blood, and gilded by bodies of archangels, of one's soul. Liberty: DADA DADA DADA, shriek of the shriveled colors, blending of the contraries and of all the contradictions, the grotesqueries, the inconsistencies: LIFE.

“Meanings” of Duchamp, The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors, Even

The following analysis is based on Duchamp's notes that, given the artist's proclivity for paradox and irony, may be accepted, modified, or rejected. According to Duchamp, this is the story of a bride, located in the upper section and symbolized by an internal combustion engine with a reservoir of love gasoline and a magneto of desire. She is lusted after by the nine bachelors in the left lower section: the reddish-brown molds resembling chessmen. Each bachelor is a stereotype of what were, at the time, masculine occupations: priest, delivery boy, policeman, warrior, gendarme, undertaker's assistant, busboy, stationmaster, and flunky. Capillary tubes carry gas from each bachelor mold to the center of the glass and to one of seven funnels, where the gas solidifies into large needles. These needles, in turn, break into spangles of frosty gas and then into liquid drops of semen that splash into the bride's domain. At the moment depicted in the glass the bride is stripped but she remains undefiled; bride and bachelors are caught between desire and possession/surrender.

Text from Janis Mink, "Marcel Duchamp, 1887-1968: Art as Anti-Art" "The Large Glass is something like a department store window in size, and relates to the changing use of glass and metal in the architecture of the time. However, Duchamp uses it as a non-referential surface upon which some of the isolated components, such as the chocolate grinder and the glider, are shown with painstakingly convincing perspective. One is reminded of the disembodied reality reflected in store windows. Indeed, a note dated 1913 from the White Box deals exclusively with shop windows and ends with the comment, "No obstinacy, ad absurdum, of hiding the coition through a glass pane with one or many objects of the shop window. The penalty consists in cutting the pane and in feeling regret as soon as possession is consummated. Q.E.D." And also, "I. Show case with sliding glass panes - place some FRAGILE objects inside. - Inconvenience-narrowness-reduction of space, i.e. way of being able to experiment in 3 dimensions as one operates on planes in plane geometry."

"The Large Glass has been called a love machine, but it is actually a machine of suffering. Its upper and lower realms are separated from each other forever by a horizon designated as the "bride's clothes". The bride is hanging, perhaps from a rope, in an isolated cage, or crucified. The bachelors remain below, left only with the possibility of churning, agonized masturbation. Duchamp invents the working parts of these two sexual machines, which are as arbitrary and absurd as the machinery of Roussel which inspired them. Their mechanisms are so complicated that they are usually accompanied by a diagram, which leaves the viewer feeling a little helpless. In an artistic essay without punctuation, someone named "davidantin" quite rightly wrote, "now duchamp takes fragments of science his relation to science is that of a scavenger you reach in and you say 'what a nice set of wires' and you pull them out and if you survive you say 'now doesn't that look great' ... duchamp takes all sorts of physical laws they are physical laws in the sense that they are phrased like such laws this does this in such a way the feeble cylinders actuate the desire motor love gasoline you really don't know what he's talking about..." Still, it is useful here to give a rough summary of their "functioning". Some additional ideas for the machinery were never carried out and exist only potentially in the notes.

"The bride is made of several parts that supposedly work together like the parts of a motor. The motor runs on self-secreted love gasoline, inspired by Roussel's glass-caged worm, which created music with its metallic secretions. Despite her mechanization, the bride is also called the "arbor-type", recalling the young girl under the trees in Duchamp's painting, Young Man and Girl in Spring of 1911. The hanging figure, or "Pendule femelle", derives from the Munich Bride painting. It has a "halo", which blossoms out into stripped flesh, coral-colored with a tinge of green. It

corresponds to the comet's tail of the "headlight" child from Duchamp's 1912 car trip through the Jura mountains, namely his interpretation of the functioning headlight as a comet with, unusually, its tail in front. Here, the veil-like halo appears to protrude roughly from the bride's forehead. The headlight child was male; Duchamp compared him with Jesus, as the divine blossoming of his mother, with whom he was to be united, as well as with God. Since the notes refer to the bride's stripping as a cinematic blossoming, a halo and a milky way, it is clear that ideas are mixing here, as are the sexes of the bride and the headlight child. The flesh-colored protruding veil takes on explicit male qualities. The three wafting squares that so resemble the flat surface of the snow shovel in his *Advance of the Broken Arm* were derived from square sections of net curtain - one meter by one meter - that Duchamp had hung above a radiator and photographed as models. Although they have become soft like a veil, he called them "draft pistons", which also have male connotations in their mechanical functioning.

"It is hard to say what the bride is doing, besides hanging and potentially lusting to the degree her "feeble cylinders" (notes) will allow. She does, however, have the potential of communication through inscriptions. Once again, the readymades come to mind. A so-called letter box of the alphabet provides the "hinge" between the vertical and horizontal parts of the bride. There letters could be found to form an inscription moving across the pistons towards the only sign of the bachelors within the bride's realm, namely the shots drilled through the empty right side of the pane.

"The realm of the bachelors is even more complicated. There are nine of them crowded together to the left behind a strange framework. They look like hanging articles of clothing; only one bachelor has a tiny, wheel-like head tilted back in perspective. Duchamp calls them "malic molds" ("malic" for "male"), assigns professions to them in then- "cemetery of uniforms and liveries" and says they are to be filled with illuminating gas. They are connected to the rest of the machine by their ejaculations that travel in gas form from their head-regions along "capillary lines". These lines have been adopted from the Network of Stoppages, changed slightly so that they might be shown in perspective. Within the "capillary lines", the gas changes into a solid that breaks into short needles, which, in turn, ascend through the cone-shaped "sieves". These sieves are colored by the dust that collected on their glass surface while lying on the floor of Duchamp's studio for several months; a famous photograph by Man Ray documents the "dust breeding". Duchamp fixed the dust with varnish. During their passage through the sieves, the ejaculate "spangles" become liquid and spiral down into a great splash, the orgasm. At the same time, the strange framework signified as a "chariot", "glider", "sleigh" and "slide" is gliding back and forth on its runners, powered by an invisible waterfall turning the paddle-wheel. The right side of the framework is affixed with scissor-like bars that open and close with the movement of the "chariot". The chocolate grinder, resting on a round table with curving legs ("Louis XV chassis"), is connected to the threatening scissors at their joint. There doesn't seem to be any passage of energy here. As Duchamp suggested in his notes, the bachelor has to grind his chocolate himself. The "oculist witnesses" to the extreme right of the bachelors' domain personify the viewer.

"Many questions remain open, not the least of which is why the bride has so many bachelors and not a single husband. The passage of time is also unclear, now after the shots that have pierced the bride's realm have rung out. Although the machinery of the bride and her bachelors has the potential for movement, nothing visible is happening anymore. Duchamp called the work a "delay in glass", which suits the atmosphere of waiting and stillness. All of the energy and juices of the proposed activities remain hypothetical or mythic. The full title is also puzzling. In French, the title ends with "même", which is always translated as the adverb "even". Of course, as has often been noticed, phonetically it could also mean "m'aime", that the bride "loves me". (This interpretation has supported an incest theory coupling Duchamp with his sister Suzanne.) It appears Duchamp added the "même" to the title after his arrival in the United States in 1915, when he was experiencing the disjointedness of the French language from the point of view of someone trying to teach it to Americans. If "même" were understood as an adjective (Duchamp himself said it was an adverb), it could mean "the same", such as 'Vest la même chose' (that's the same thing),

'Vest moi-mémé' (it's me), or 'quand plusieurs verbes ont un même sujet' (when several verbs have the same subject). In any case, it does seem possible that Duchamp hints the bride and the bachelors could be diverging facets of the single person who invented them.

"No one is in the position of deciding what events determined Duchamp's psychological makeup. For the art historian, the most decisive aspect of his concentration on sexuality was its communicative potential as a universal human experience. Sexuality was for Duchamp a primary, a core element - that existential legitimacy all progressive artists were looking for at the beginning of the twentieth century. Lawrence Steefel, the art historian with whom Duchamp was perhaps most frank, was once told by the artist, "I want to grasp things with the mind the way the penis is grasped by the vagina." Steefel has written: "Seeking to distance himself from his own fantasies, Duchamp sought a means of converting pathos into pleasure and emotion into thought. His mechanism of conversion was a strange one, but essentially it consisted of inventing a 'displacement game' that would project conflicts and distill excitements into surrogate objects and constructs without which his mental equilibrium might not have been sustained." And Duchamp once said to Steefel, "I did not really love the machine. It was better to do it to machines than to people, or doing it to me." Steefel then adds, "By letting machines and mechanisms suffer outrageously, Duchamp could muster his energies for survival and the pursuit of poetry." Duchamp's poetry remains unspoken as an atmosphere "between the lines", it is always in the process of recreating itself through the mixing and

overlapping of forms, ideas and emotions."

<http://www.understandingduchamp.com/text.html>:

The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (called The Large Glass for short) isn't a painting in any usual sense of the word. It is made of two large plates of glass, one above the other, upon which Duchamp assembled images in a variety of media: paint, lead wire, mirror plating, foil, dust.

Duchamp worked on The Large Glass for eight years until 1923, when he abandoned it in what he called a "definitively unfinished" state. Years later, a network of cracks was accidentally added when it was shattered while being moved.

There are two keys to understanding what is depicted on The Large Glass. First, it is a representation of intangible things, not material things. Second, these things are active, not static. The subject of The Large Glass is the invisible, intangible aspects of human erotic activity — the realm of ego, desire, and other mysteries. To represent these abstract things, Duchamp created a world occupied by enigmatic but suggestive symbolic objects. The Large Glass is a static diagram of the interconnected activities of these symbolic objects.

What is depicted on The Large Glass is a sequence of actions, suspended in time. This sequence describes a narrative about human beings. It is, you may be surprised to learn, a comical look at the uncertainties of human romantic aspirations.

The characters in this narrative are a potential bride and her numerous suitors — all of them represented in their abstract urges, not in their physical selves. The Large Glass depicts their efforts to connect, and how chance and predestination intervene in their fates.

Since it depicts a sequence of interconnected events, it might be instructive to look at The Large Glass in action...

The objects depicted in The Large Glass are active, not static. That's why Duchamp subtitled it "a delay in glass" — because it shows a sequence of actions, suspended in time.

We can distinguish two component sequences within the action on the glass, which occur simultaneously and intersect.

One sequence describes the courtship of a bride by her suitors. Let's call it the Amorous Pursuit. It has a beginning and an end.

The other sequence describes the influence of chance and predestination. Let's call it the Fate Machine. It is continually in motion.

The Fate Machine is an imaginary mechanical contraption which represents the interaction of chance and predestination. The suite of objects that make up the Fate Machine is shown here. The names for its parts come from Duchamp's notes for The Large Glass, published in 1934.

Duchamp's notes for The Large Glass are essential to understanding its content. He said the notes were meant to complement the visual experience, like a guide book, but clarity is not their strength. They are the stuff of sublime nonsense, driven by free association and wordplay, and resolutely anti-rational. Yet they do provide some unambiguous cues for the actions depicted on the glass.

The Amorous Pursuit depicts the events surrounding a potential bride and her suitors as they attempt to connect. Shown here is the suite of objects that make up the Amorous Pursuit, with Duchamp's names for its parts.

The nature of this connection is open to interpretation. It could mean sexual intercourse, or wedding vows, or an exchange of flirtatious glances. In the abstract, dematerialized world of The Large Glass it can mean all of these.

Duchamp's notes for The Large Glass describe numerous elements that never saw completion, including the Spiral and the Region of the Splash, shown here. Among the omitted elements, these two are the minimum necessary to complete the action of the glass.

The upper half of the glass is the bride's domain. The lower half is the bachelors' realm. Between them lies the Horizon.

It is a universe of dualities: airborne femininity versus earthbound masculinity; fluid, amorphous forms versus dry, rigidly delineated forms. Most broadly, it is the domain of the creative feminine id above, and the reactive masculine ego below.

Between them lies the Horizon, "the garment of the Bride," which could also be the boundary of her fleshly being or the threshold of her psyche.

The Fate Machine dominates the earthbound realm.

The Glider, a flimsy metallic construction on elliptical runners, slides back and forth at random.

The Glider represents random forces of fate: chance, the unpredictable.

Encaged within the Glider is a waterwheel, powered by an unseen waterspout (another omitted element). The waterwheel drives the rotary motions of the Chocolate Grinder.

The Chocolate Grinder represents deterministic forces of fate: predestination, the inevitable.

Mounted on an axle above the Chocolate Grinder, powered by the back-and-forth movements of the Glider, is a dangerous-looking pair of gigantic Scissors.

The Scissors represent the oft-hazardous conjunction of random and deterministic forces of fate.

In the unhappy place between the blades of the Scissors are the Eyewitnesses, consisting of a peephole called the Mandala and three opticians' charts.

The Eyewitnesses represent visual knowledge.

If you peeked through Mandala, how much of The Large Glass would you see? None of it. You would look through the glass into the space beyond it, into the visible world that surrounds you.

The Mandala is a peephole which reveals nothing because the world of The Large Glass is a domain invisible to the eye. There, visual knowledge is beside the point.

The story of the Amorous Pursuit begins in the airborne sphere.

The Bride is an amorphous cluster of semi-visceral, semi-mechanical forms. She is not only stripped bare, she has shed her physical form completely, revealing a naked instinctual self. The Bride embodies expansive, uninhibited desire.

The irregular oblong shape at top is the Halo of the Bride.

The Halo represents the Bride's romantic and erotic aspirations. It is a cloudlike apparition which broadcasts the Bride's dreams and desires, like a thought balloon in the comics.

Within the Halo are unpainted blank sections called the Nets.

The Nets represent voids in the dreams of the Bride, whose romantic and erotic aspirations must be fulfilled by a successful suitor. The Nets are the Bachelors' target. The Amorous Pursuit is like a carnival dunk tank: if a suitor can strike the Nets, the Bride will plunge to his earthbound domain.

Here's an element described in Duchamp's notes but omitted from The Large Glass. From her Nets, the Bride broadcasts her desires, but in a language that is unintelligible to her suitors. To them, the dreams of the Bride are inscrutable. It is a deficiency that will undo them all. The Amorous Pursuit begins with an overture from the Bride. She suffuses the bachelor's realm with an invisible "love gasoline."

The Vapors represents the bride's erotic impulse. It is free-floating and pervasive.

Below, nine balloon-like pods called the Malic Molds are stimulated by the vapors. "Malic" is a word concocted by Duchamp meaning "male-like."

The Malic Molds are the bachelors of this story. They are the Bride's antithesis, embodying inhibited, self-centered desire. Alternatively, they might not represent nine bachelors at all, but nine aspects of one bachelor.

In response to the overtures of the Bride, gas forms within the bachelor molds, puffing them up like balloons. As they inflate, the molds imbue the gas with their distinctive characteristics.

The gas represents the bachelors' erotic impulses. It is contained within the bachelor molds, isolated from the free-floating vapors of the Bride: the ego-bound bachelors are unable to respond directly to the overtures of the bride.

The bachelor gas is siphoned out of the molds into conduits called the Capillary Tubes, which converge at their tips.

Unable to react directly to the overtures of the bride, the bachelors must respond in their own roundabout way. The Capillaries could represent anything capable of diverting the bachelors' response: narcissism or fear, sexual sublimation or preoccupation.

Exiting the tubes, the bachelor gas is captured by a series of Sieves, where its trajectory is inverted. The gas is drawn through the Sieves by a device called the Butterfly Pump, another element imagined by Duchamp but omitted from The Glass.

In the Sieves, the bachelor gas is homogenized and liquified. What began as nine distinctive responses to the overtures of the Bride has degenerated into a uniform potential to squirt.

Emerging from the Sieves in a single stream, the bachelor fluid spins downward in a spiral-shaped path, gaining energy as it descends.

Bachelor fluid spilling on the ground unavoidably suggests masturbation, either as a description of bachelor activity or as a metaphor for the narcissism of the bachelors, or both.

At the bottom of the Spiral, the bachelor fluid rebounds in an energetic Splash, splitting into nine distinct spurts.

The Splash is the bachelors' response to the overtures of the Bride, unconstrained at last. It could represent seminal fluid, or a flirtatious glance, or a marriage proposal.

As they hurtle upward, the Splashes pass between the blades of the Scissors. The trajectories of the Splashes may or may not be disrupted, depending on chance.

The intersection of the Fate Machine and the Amorous Pursuit represents the vicissitudes of fate that may disrupt the bachelors' course.

Here are two more elements described in Duchamp's notes but omitted from The Glass. The actions of two entities enable the Splashes to penetrate the Bride's domain. They are a Juggler of Gravity (who acts in response to impulses from the Bride), and a mechanism called the Boxing Match (which, it seems, causes distance to collapse).

The Splashes cross the Horizon, penetrating the Bride's domain.

Crossing the Horizon can mean unveiling the Bride, denuding her figure, penetrating her fleshly being, or breaching her mysterious psyche. In the abstract world of The Large Glass, it can mean all these things at once.

But, having penetrated the Bride's realm, the Splashes miss the Nets completely. Then they vanish from view, leaving behind nine holes drilled in the glass.

Despite the impressive heavings of their metaphysical apparatus, the bride and the bachelors have failed to connect. It's all over rather quickly, isn't it?

The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even is a comical look at the uncertainties of human romantic aspirations. At the same time, it is also an inquiry into what art can do. It is an attempt to show that artists can depict invisible worlds, not just visible ones, and that art can engage the imagination and the intellect, not just the eyes.