

MODERNIST MANIFESTI

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slap in the face of public taste

by d. burliuk, alexander kruchenykh, v. mayakovsky, victor khlebnikov
15th december 1913

To the readers of our New First Unexpected.

We alone are the *face* of *our* Time. Through us the horn of time blows in the art of the word.

The past is too tight. The Academy and Pushkin are less intelligible than hieroglyphics.

Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., etc. overboard from the Ship of Modernity.

He who does not forget his *first* love will not recognize his last.

Who, trustingly, would turn his last love toward Balmont's perfumed lechery? Is this the reflection of today's virile soul?

Who, faintheartedly, would fear tearing from warrior Bryusov's black tuxedo the paper armorplate? Or does the dawn of unknown beauties shine from it?

Wash Your hands which have touched the filthy slime of the books written by those countless Leonid Andreyevs.

All those Maxim Gorkys, Kuprins, Bloks, Sologubs, Remizovs, Averchenkos, Chornys, Kuzmins, Bunins, etc. need only a dacha on the river. Such is the reward fate gives tailors.

From the heights of skyscrapers we gaze at their insignificance!...

We *order* that the poets' *rights* be revered:

1. To enlarge the *scope* of the poet's vocabulary with arbitrary and derivative words (Word-novelty).
2. To feel an insurmountable hatred for the language existing before their time.
3. To push with horror off their proud brow the Wreath of cheap fame that You have made from bathhouse switches.
4. To stand on the rock of the word "we" amidst the sea of boos and outrage.

And if *for the time being* the filthy stigmas of Your "Common sense" and "good taste" are still present in our lines, these same lines *for the first time* already glimmer with the Summer Lightening of the New Coming Beauty of the Self-sufficient (self-centered) Word.

David Burliuk, Alexander Kruchenykh, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Victor Khlebnikov

Long Live the Vortex!

[from BLAST: Review of the Great English Vortex, No. 1, 7-8 (20th June 1914)]

Long live the great art vortex sprung up in the center of this town!

We stand for the Reality of the Present - not for the sentimental Future, or the sacripant Past.

We want to leave Nature and Man alone.

We do not want to make people to wear Futurist Patches, or fuss men to take pink and sky-blue trousers.

We are not their wives or tailors.

The only way Humanity can help artists is to remain independent and work unconsciously.

WE NEED THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS OF HUMANITY - their stupidity, animalism and dreams.

We believe in no perfectability except our own.

Intrinsic beauty is in the Interpreter and Seer, not in the object or content.

We do not want to change the appearance of the world, because we are not Naturalists, Impressionists, or Futurists (the latest form of Impressionism), and do not depend on the appearance of the world for our art.

WE ONLY WANT THE WORLD TO LIVE, and to feel it's [sic] crude energy flowing through us.

It may be said that the great artists in England are always revolutionary, just as in France any really fine artist had a strong traditional vein.

Blast sets out to be an avenue for all those vivid and violent ideas that could reach the Public in no other way.

...

Elephants are VERY BIG. Motor cars go quickly.

...

Blast presents an art of Individuals.

dada manifesto
by hugo ball
14th july 1916

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

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

How does one achieve eternal bliss? By saying dada. How does one become famous? By saying dada. With a noble gesture and delicate propriety. Till one goes crazy. Till one loses consciousness. How can one get rid of everything that smack of journalism, worms, everything nice and right, blinkered, moralistic, europeanized, enervated? By saying dada. Dada is the world soul, dada is the pawnshop. Dada is the world's best lily-milk soap. Dada Mr. Rubiner, dada Mr. Korrodi. Dada Mr. Anastasius Lilienstein.

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

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

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

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

monsieur antipyrine's manifesto
by tristan tzara
14th july 1916

DADA is our intensity: it erects inconsequential bayonets and the Sumatral head of German babies; Dada is life with neither bedroom slippers nor parallels; it is against and for unity and definitely against the future; we are wise enough to know that our brains are going to become flabby cushions, that our anti dogmatism is as exclusive as a civil servant, and that we cry liberty but are not free; a severe necessity with entire discipline nor morals and that we spit on humanity.

DADA remains within the framework of European weaknesses, it's still shit, but from now on we want to shit in different colours so as to adorn the zoo of art with all the flags of all the consulates.

We are circus ringmasters and we can be found whistling amongst the winds of fairgrounds, in convents, prostitutions, theatres, realities, feelings, restaurants, ohoho, bang bang.

We declare that the motor car is a feeling that has cosseted us quite enough in the dilatoriness of its abstractions, as have transatlantic liners, noises and ideas. And while we put on a show of being facile, we are actually searching for the central essence of things, and are pleased if we can hide it; we have no wish to count the windows of the marvellous elite, for DADA doesn't exist for anyone, and we want everyone to understand this. This is Dada's balcony, I assure you. From there you can hear all the military marches, and come down cleaving the air like a seraph landing in a public baths to piss and understand the parable.

DADA is neither madness, nor wisdom, nor irony, look at me, dear bourgeois.

Art used to be a game of nuts in May, children would go gathering words that had a final ring, then they would exude, shout out the verse, and dress it up in dolls' bootees, and the verse became a queen in order to die a little, and the queen became a sardine, and the children ran hither and you, unseen.

Then came the great ambassadors of feeling, who yelled historically in chorus:

Psychology Psychology hee hee

Science Science Science

Long live France

We are not naive

We are successive

We are exclusive

We are not simpletons

and we are perfectly capable of an intelligent discussion.

Be we, DADA, don't agree with them, for art isn't serious, I assure you, and if we reveal the crime so as to show that we are learned denounciators, it's to please you, dear audience, I assure you, and I adore you.

Handwritten mathematical scribbles and numbers, including a vertical addition problem and various other numbers:

$$\begin{array}{r} 5206742 \\ 190000 \\ 67914 \\ 876123 \\ \hline 9760519 \end{array} \left| \begin{array}{l} 10 \\ 578 \\ 921436 \\ 78910 \end{array} \right.$$

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dada manifesto
by tristan tzara
23rd march 1918

The magic of a word - DADA - which for journalists has opened the door to an unforeseen world, has for us not the slightest importance.

To launch a manifesto you have to want: A.B. & C., and fulminate against 1, 2, & 3,

work yourself up and sharpen you wings to conquer and circulate lower and upper case As, Bs & Cs, sign, shout, swear, organise prose into a form that is absolutely and irrefutably obvious, prove its ne plus ultra and maintain that novelty resembles life in the same way as the latest apparition of a harlot proves the essence of God. His existence had already been proved by the accordion, the landscape and soft words. * To impose one's A.B.C. is only natural - and therefore regrettable. Everyone does it in the form of a crystalbluff-madonna, or a monetary system, or pharmaceutical preparations, a naked leg being the invitation to an ardent and sterile Spring. The love of novelty is a pleasant sort

of cross, it's evidence of a naive don't-give-a-damn attitude, a passing, positive, sign without rhyme or reason. But this need is out of date, too. By giving art the impetus of supreme simplicity - novelty - we are being human and true in relation to innocent pleasures; impulsive and vibrant in order to crucify boredom. At the lighted crossroads, alert, attentive, lying in wait for years, in the forest. * I am writing a manifesto and there's nothing I want, and yet I'm saying certain things, and in principle I am against manifestos, as I am against principles (quantifying measures of the moral value of every phrase - too easy; approximation was invested by the impressionists). *

I'm writing this manifesto to show that you can perform contrary actions at the same time, in one single, fresh breath; I am against action; as for continual contradiction, and affirmation too, I am neither for nor against them, and I won't explain myself because I hate common sense.

DADA - this is a word that throws up ideas so that they can be shot down; every bourgeois is a little playwright, who invents different subjects and who, instead of situating suitable characters on the level of his own intelligence, like chrysalises on chairs, tries to find causes or objects (according to whichever psychoanalytic method he practices) to give weight to his plot, a talking and self-defining story. *

Every spectator is a plotter, if he tries to explain a word (to know!) From his padded refuge of serpentine complications, he allows his instincts to be manipulated. Whence the sorrows of conjugal life.

To be plain: The amusement of redbellies in the mills of empty skulls.



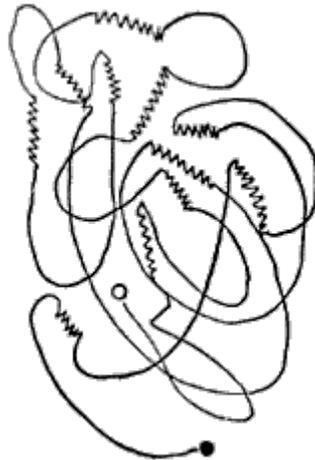
DADA DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING

If we consider it futile, and if we don't waste our time over a word that doesn't mean anything... The first thought that comes to these minds is of a bacteriological order: at least to discover its etymological, historical or psychological meaning. We read in the papers that the negroes of the Kroom race call the tail of a sacred cow: DADA. A cube, and a mother, in a certain region of Italy, are called: DADA. The word for a hobby horse, a children's nurse, a double affirmative in Russian and Romanian, is also: DADA. Some learned journalists see it as an art for babies, other Jesuscallingthelittlechildrenuntohim saints see it as a return to an unemotional and noisy primitivism - noise and monotonous. A sensitivity cannot be built on the basis of a word; every sort of construction converges into a boring sort of perfection, a stagnant idea of a golden swamp, a relative human product. A work of art shouldn't be beauty per se, because it is dead; neither gay nor sad, neither light nor dark; it is to rejoice or maltreat individualities to serve them up the cakes of sainted haloes or the sweat of a meandering chase through the atmosphere. A work of art is never beautiful, by decree, objectively, for everyone. Criticism is, therefore, useless; it only exists subjectively, for every individual, and without the slightest general characteristic. Do people imagine they have found the psychic basis common to all humanity? The attempt of Jesus, and the Bible, conceal, under their ample, benevolent wings: shit, animals and days. How can anyone hope to order the chaos that constitutes

that infinite, formless variation: man? The principle: "Love thy neighbour" is hypocrisy. "Know thyself" is utopian, but more acceptable because it includes malice. No pity. After the carnage we are left with the hope of a purified humanity. I always speak about myself because I don't want to convince, and I have no right to drag others in my wake, I'm not compelling anyone to follow me, because everyone makes his art in his own way, if he knows anything about the joy that rises like an arrow up to the astral strata, or that which descends into the mines stewn with the flowers of corpses and fertile spasms. Stalactites: look everywhere for them, in creches magnified by pain, eyes as white as angels' hares. Thus DADA was born* , out of a need for independence, out of mistrust for the community. People who join us keep their freedom. We don't accept any theories. We've had enough of the cubist and futurist academies: laboratories of formal ideas. Do we make art in order to earn money and keep the dear bourgeoisie happy? Rhymes have the smack of money, and inflexion slides along the line of the stomach in profile. Every group of artists has ended up at this bank, straddling various comets. Leaving the door open to the possibility of wallowing in comfort and food.

Here we are dropping our anchor in fertile ground.

Here we really know what we are talking about, because we have experienced the trembling and the awakening. Drunk with energy, we are revenants thrusting the trident into heedless flesh. We are streams of curses in the tropical abundance of vertiginous



vegetation, resin and rain is our sweat, we bleed and burn with thirst, our blood is strength.

Cubism was born out of a simple manner of looking at objects: Cezanne painted a cup twenty centimetres lower than his eyes, the cubists look at it from above, others complicate its appearance by cutting a vertical section through it and soberly placing it to one side (I'm not forgetting the creators, nor the seminal reasons of unformed matter that they rendered definitive). * The futurist sees the same cup in movement, a succession of objects side by side, mischievously embellished by a few guide-lines. This doesn't stop the canvas being either a good or a bad painting destined to form an investment for intellectual capital. The new painter creates a world whose elements are also its means, a

sober, definitive, irrefutable work. The new artist protests: he no longer paints (symbolic and illusionistic reproduction) but creates directly in stone, wood, iron, tin, rocks, or locomotive structures capable of being spun in all directions by the limpid wind of the momentary sensation. * Every pictorial or plastic work is unnecessary, even if it is a monster which terrifies servile minds, and not a sickly-sweet object to adorn the refectories of animals in human garb, those illustrations of the sad fable of humanity. - A painting is the art of making two lines, which have been geometrically observed to be parallel, meet on a canvas, before our eyes, in the reality of a world that has been transposed according to new conditions and possibilities. This world is neither specified nor defined in the work, it belongs, in its innumerable variations, to the spectator. For its creator it has neither case nor theory. Order = disorder; ego = non-ego; affirmation - negation: the supreme radiations of an absolute art. Absolute in the purity of its cosmic and regulated chaos, eternal in that globule that is a second which has no duration, no breath, no light and no control. * I appreciate an old work for its novelty. It is only contrast that links us to the past. * Writers who like to moralise and discuss or ameliorate psychological bases have, apart from a secret wish to win, a ridiculous knowledge of life, which they may have classified, parcelled out, canalised; they are determined to see its categories dance when they beat time. Their readers laugh derisively, but carry on: what's the use?

There is one kind of literature which never reaches the voracious masses. The work of creative writers, written out of the author's real necessity, and for his own benefit. The awareness of a supreme egoism, wherein laws become significant. * Every page should explode, either because of its profound gravity, or its vortex, vertigo, newness, eternity, or because of its staggering absurdity, the enthusiasm of its principles, or its typography. On the one hand there is a world tottering in its flight, linked to the resounding tinkle of the infernal gamut; on the other hand, there are: the new men. Uncouth, galloping, riding astride on hiccups. And there is a mutilated world and literary medicasters in desperate need of amelioration.

I assure you: there is no beginning, and we are not afraid; we aren't sentimental. We are like a raging wind that rips up the clothes of clouds and prayers, we are preparing the great spectacle of disaster, conflagration and decomposition. Preparing to put an end to mourning, and to replace tears by sirens spreading from one continent to another. Clarions of intense joy, bereft of that poisonous sadness. * DADA is the mark of abstraction; publicity and business are also poetic elements.

I destroy the drawers of the brain, and those of social organisation: to sow demoralisation everywhere, and throw heaven's hand into hell, hell's eyes into heaven, to reinstate the fertile wheel of a universal circus in the Powers of reality, and the fantasy of every individual.

A philosophical questions: from which angle to start looking at life, god, ideas, or anything else. Everything we look at is false. I don't think the relative result is any more important than the choice of patisserie or cherries for dessert. The way people have of looking hurriedly at things from the opposite point of view, so as to impose their opinions

indirectly, is called dialectic, in other words, heads I wind and tails you lose, dressed up to look scholarly.

If I shout:

Ideal, Ideal, Ideal

Knowledge, Knowledge, Knowledge

Boomboom, Boomboom, Boomboom

I have recorded fairly accurately Progress, Law, Morals, and all the other magnificent qualities that various very intelligent people have discussed in so many books in order, finally, to say that even so everyone has danced according to his own personal boomboom, and that he's right about his boomboom: the satisfaction of unhealthy curiosity; private bell-ringing for inexplicable needs; bath; pecuniary difficulties; a stomach with repercussions on to life; the authority of the mystical baton formulated as the grand finale of a phantom orchestra with mute bows, lubricated by philtres with a basis of animal ammonia. With the blue monocle of an angel they have dug out its interior for twenty sous worth of unanimous gratitude. * If all of them are right, and if all pills are only Pink, let's try for once not to be right. * People think they can explain rationally, by means of thought, what they write. But it's very relative. Thought is a fine thing for philosophy, but it's relative. Psychoanalysis is a dangerous disease, it deadens man's anti-real inclinations and systematises the bourgeoisie. There is no ultimate Truth. Dialectics is an amusing machine that leads us (in banal fashion) to the opinions which we would have held in any case. Do people really think that, by the meticulous subtlety of logic, they have demonstrated the truth and established the accuracy of their opinions? Even if logic were confined by the senses it would still be an organic disease. To this element, philosophers like to add: The power of observation. But this magnificent quality of the mind is precisely the proof of its impotence. People observe, they look at things from one or several points of view, they choose them from amongst the millions that exist. Experience too is the result of chance and of individual abilities. * Science revolts me when it becomes a speculative system and loses its utilitarian character - which is so useless - but is at least individual. I hate slimy objectivity, and harmony, the science that considers that everything is always in order. Carry on, children, humanity ... Science says that we are nature's servants: everything is in order, make both love and war. Carry on, children, humanity, nice kind bourgeois and virgin journalists... * I am against systems; the most acceptable system is that of have none on no principle. * To complete oneself, to perfect oneself in one's own pettiness to the point of filling the little vase of oneself with oneself, even the courage to fight for and against thought, all this can suddenly infernally propel us into the mystery of daily bread and the lilies of the economic field.

DADAIST SPONTANEITY

What I call the I-don't-give-a-damn attitude of life is when everyone minds his own business, at the same time as he knows how to respect other individualities, and even how

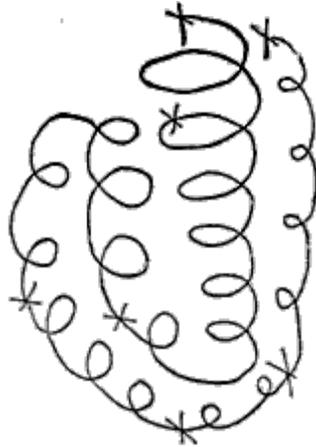
to stand up for himself, the two-step becoming a national anthem, a junk shop, the wireless (the wire-less telephone) transmitting Bach fugues, illuminated advertisements for placards for brothels, the organ broadcasting carnations for God, all this at the same time, and in real terms, replacing photography and unilateral catechism.

Active simplicity.

The incapacity to distinguish between degrees of light: licking the twilight and floating in the huge mouth filled with honey and excrement. Measured against the scale of Eternity, every action is vain - (if we allow thought to have an adventure whose result would be infinitely grotesque - an important factor in the awareness of human incapacity). But if life is a bad joke, with neither goal nor initial accouchement, and because we believe we ought, like clean chrysanthemums, to make the best of a bad bargain, we have declared that the only basis of understanding is: art. It hasn't the importance that we, old hands at the spiritual, have been lavishing on it for centuries. Art does nobody any harm, and those who are capable of taking an interest in it will not only receive caresses, but also a marvellous chance to people the country of their conversation. Art is a private thing, the artist makes it for himself; a comprehensible work is the product of a journalist, and because at this moment I enjoy mixing this monster in oil paints: a paper tube imitating the metal that you press and automatically squeeze out hatred, cowardice and villainy. The artist, or the poet, rejoices in the venom of this mass condensed into one shopwalker of this trade, he is glad to be insulted, it proves his immutability. The author or the artist praised by the papers observes that his work has been understood: a miserable lining to a collaborating with the heat of an animal incubating the baser instincts. Flabby, insipid flesh multiplying itself with the aid of typographical microbes.

We have done violence to the snivelling tendencies in our natures. Every infiltration of this sort is macerated diarrhoea. To encourage this sort of art is to digest it. What we need are strong straightforward, precise works which will be forever misunderstood. Logic is a complication. Logic is always false. It draws the superficial threads of concepts and words towards illusory conclusions and centres. Its chains kill, an enormous myriapod that asphyxiates independence. If it were married to logic, art would be living in incest, engulfing, swallowing its own tail, which still belongs to its body, fornicating in itself, and temperament would become a nightmare tarred and feathered with protestantism, a monument, a mass of heavy, greyish intestines.

But suppleness, enthusiasm and even the joy of injustice, that little truth that we practise as innocents and that makes us beautiful: we are cunning, and our fingers are malleable and glide like the



branches of that insidious and almost liquid plant; this injustice is the indication of our soul, say the cynics. This is also a point of view; but all flowers aren't saints, luckily, and what is divine in us is the awakening of anti-human action. What we are talking about here is a paper flower for the buttonhole of gentlemen who frequent the ball of masked life, the kitchen of grace, our white, lithe or fleshy girl cousins. They make a profit out of what we have selected. The contradiction and unity of opposing poles at the same time may be true. IF we are absolutely determined to utter this platitude, the appendix of alibidinous, evil-smelling morality. Morals have an atrophying effect, like every other pestilential product of the intelligence. Being governed by morals and logic has made it impossible for us to be anything other than impassive towards policemen - the cause of slavery - putrid rats with whom the bourgeois are fed up to the teeth, and who have infected the only corridors of clear and clean glass that remained open to artists.

Every man must shout: there is great destructive, negative work to be done. To sweep, to clean. The cleanliness of the individual materialises after we've gone through folly, the aggressive, complete folly of a world left in the hands of bandits who have demolished and destroyed the centuries. With neither aim nor plan, without organisation: uncontrollable folly, decomposition. Those who are strong in word or in strength will survive, because they are quick to defend themselves; the agility of their limbs and feelings flames on their faceted flanks.

Morals have given rise to charity and pity, two dumplings that have grown like elephants, planets, which people call good. There is nothing good about them. Goodness is lucid, clear and resolute, and ruthless towards compromise and politics. Morality infuses chocolate into every man's veins. This task is not ordained by a supernatural force, but by a trust of ideas-merchants and academic monopolists. Sentimentality: seeing a group of bored and quarrelling men, they invented the calendar and wisdom as a remedy. By sticking labels on to things, the battle of the philosophers we let loose (money-grubbing, mean and meticulous weights and measures) and one understood once again that pity is a feeling, like diarrhoea in relation to disgust, that undermines health, the filthy carrion job of jeopardising the sun. I proclaim the opposition of all the cosmic faculties to that blennorrhoea of a putrid sun that issues from the factories of philosophical thought, the fight to the death, with all the resources of

DADAIST DISGUST

Every product of disgust that is capable of becoming a negation of the family is dada; DADA; acquaintance with all the means hitherto rejected by the sexual prudishness of easy compromise and good manners: **DADA**; abolition of logic, dance of those who are incapable of creation: **DADA**; every hierarchy and social equation established for values by our valets: **DADA**; every object, all objects, feelings and obscurities, every apparition and the precise shock of parallel lines, are means for the battle of: **DADA**; the abolition of memory: **DADA**; the abolition of archaeology: **DADA** the abolition of prophets: **DADA**; the abolition of the future: **DADA**; the absolute and indiscutable belief in every god that is an immediate product of spontaneity: **DADA**; the elegant and unprejudiced leap from on harmony to another sphere; the trajectory of a word, a cry, thrown into the air like an acoustic disc; to respect all individualities in their folly of the moment, whether serious, fearful, timid, ardent, vigorous, decided or enthusiastic; to strip one's church of every useless and unwieldy accessory; to spew out like a luminous cascade any offensive or loving thought, or to cherish it - with the lively satisfaction that it's all precisely the same thing - with the same intensity in the bush, which is free of insects for the blue-blooded, and gilded with the bodies of archangels, with one's soul. Liberty: **DADA DADA DADA**; - the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE.

* in 1916 at the CABARET VOLTAIRE in Zurich

dadaist manifesto

**by tristan tzara, franz jung, george grosz, marcel janco, richard huelsenbeck,
gerhard preis, raoul hausmann
april 1918**

Dadaist Manifesto (Berlin)

The signatories of this manifesto have, under the battle cry

DADA!!!!

gathered together to put forward a new art from which they expect the realisation of new ideas. So what is DADAISM, then?

The word DADA symbolises the most primitive relationship with the surrounding reality; with Dadaism, a new reality comes into its own.

Life is seen in a simultaneous confusion of noises, colours and spiritual rhythms which in Dadaist art are immediately captured by the sensational shouts and fevers of its bold everyday psyche and in all its brutal reality. This is the dividing line between Dadaism

and all other artistic trends and especially Futurism which fools have very recently interpreted as a new version of Impressionism.

For the first time, Dadaism has refused to take an aesthetic attitude towards life. It tears to pieces all those grand words like ethics, culture, interiorisation which are only covers for weak muscles.

THE BRUITIST POEM

describes a tramcar exactly as it is, the essence of a tramcar with the yawns of Mr Smith and the shriek of brakes.

THE SIMULTANEOUS POEM

teaches the interrelationship of things, while Mr Smith reads his paper, the Balkan express crosses the Nisch bridge and a pig squeals in the cellar of Mr Bones the butcher.

THE STATIC POEM

turns words into individuals. The letters of the word " wood " create the forest itself with the leafiness of its trees, the uniforms of the foresters and the wild boar. It could also create the Bellevue Boarding House or Bella Vista. Dadaism leads to fantastic new possibilities in forms of expression in all arts. It made Cubism into a dance on the stage, it spread the Futurist bruitist music all over Europe (for it had no desire to maintain this in its purely Italian context). The word DADA shows the international nature of a movement which is bound by no frontier, religion or profession. Dada is the international expression of our time, the great rebellion of artistic movements, the artistic reflexion of all those many attacks, peace congresses, scuffles in the vegetable markets, social get-togethers, etc., etc.

Dada demands the use of

NEW MATERIALS IN PAINTING

Dada is a club which has been founded in Berlin which you can join without any obligations. Here, every man is president and everyone has a vote in artistic matters. Dada is not some pretext to bolster up the pride of a few literary men (as our enemies would have the world believe). Dada is a state of mind which can be revealed in any conversation so that one is forced to say: "This man is a Dadaist, this one isn't." For these reasons, the Dada Club has members all over the world, in Honolulu as well as New Orleans and Meseritz. To be a Dadaist might sometimes mean being a businessman or a politician rather than an artist, being an artist only by accident. To be a Dadaist means being thrown around by events, being against sedimentation; it means sitting for a short instant in an armchair, but it also means putting your life in danger (M. Weng pulled his revolver out of his trouser pocket)... A fabric tears under the hand, one says yes to a life that seeks to grow by negation. Say yes, say no; the hurly- burly of existence is a good training ground for the real Dadaist. Here he is lying down, hunting, riding a bicycle, half Pantagruel, half St Francis, laughing and laughing. Down with aesthetic-ethical

tendencies! Down with the anaemic abstraction of Expressionism! Down with the literary hollow-heads and their theories for improving the world!

Long live Dadaism in word and image! Long live the Dada events of this world! To be against this manifesto is to be a Dadaist!

Berlin, April

Tristan Tzara, Franz Jung, George Grosz, Marcel Janco, Richard Hülsenbeck, Gerhard Preisz, Raoul Hausmann

unpretentious proclamation
by tristan tzara
8th april 1919

UNPRETENTIOUS PROCLAMATION

Art is putting itself to sleep to bring about the birth of the new world **"ART"** — a parrot word — replaced by **DADA**, **PLESIOSAURUS**, or handkerchief

The talent THAT CAN BE LEARNT turns the poet into an ironmonger TODAY criticism balances doesn't throw up any resemblances

Hypertrophic painters hyperaestheticised and hypnotised by the hyacinths of the muezzins of hypocritical appearance

CONSOLIDATE THE EXACT HARVEST OF CALCULATION

HYPODROME OF IMMORTAL GUARANTEES: There is no importance there is neither transparency nor appearance

MUSICIANS SMASH YOUR BLIND INSTRUMENTS on the stage

The BAZOOKA is only for my understanding. I write because it's natural like I piss like I'm ill

Art needs an operation

Art is a **PRETENSION** heated at the **TIMIDITY** of the urinary basin, **hysteria** born in the **studio**

We are looking for a **straightforward pure sober unique** force we are looking for **NOTHING** we affirm the **VITALITY** of every **instant** the **anti-philosophy of spontaneous acrobatics**

At this moment I hate the man who whispers before the interval — eau de cologne — sour theatre. SWEET WIND.

IF EVERYONE SAYS THE OPPOSITE IT'S BECAUSE HE'S RIGHT

Prepare the action of the geyser of our blood — the submarine formation of transchromatic aeroplanes, metals with cells and ciphered in the upsurge of images

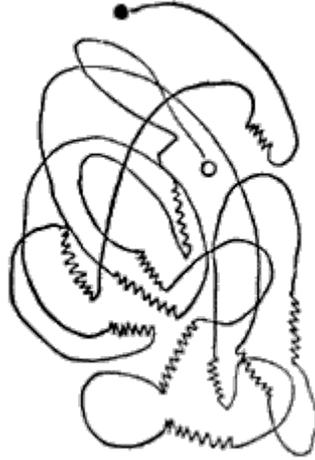
above the rules of the

Beautiful and of its inspection

It isn't for those abortions who still worship their own navels

manifesto of monsieur Aa the antiphilosopher
by tristan tzara
5th february 1920

without the pursuit of I worship you
which is a French boxer
maritime values as irregular as the depression of Dada in the blood of a bicephalous
animal
I glide between death and the vague phosphates that scratch slightly at the common brain
of dadaist poets
luckily
because
gold
mine
tariff's and the high cost of living made me Decide to abandon D's
it isn't true that sham dadas have Deprived me of them because
here's enough to bewail the nothing that is called nothing
and I've cleared illnesses at the customs
I the carapace and umbrella of the brain from noon till two o'clock
two hour's subscription
superstitious releasing the mechanism
of the spermatozoon ballet that you'll find being dress-rehearsed in all the hearts of
suspect individuals
I'll eat your fingers a bit
I'm renewing your subscription to the celluloid love that creaks like metal gates
and you are idiots
I shall come back once in the guise of your renascent urine as the obstetric wind of joie
de vivre
and I'm going to establish a boarding school for poets' supporters and I've come again to
start again
and you're all idiots
and the selfkleptomaniac's key only works with crepuscular oil on every knot of every
machine there's the nose of a new-born baby
and we're all idiots
and very suspect of a new form of intelligence and a new logic after our own manner
which isn't at all Dada



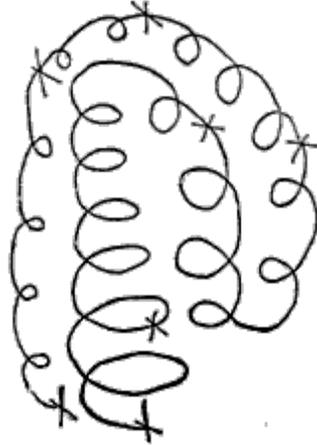
and you're letting yourselves be led astray by Aaism
and you're all idiots
poultices
of the surgical spirit of purified sleep
of bandages
and of virgin
idiots

tristan tzara's manifesto
by tristan tzara
19th february 1920

Have a good look at me!
I'm an idiot, I'm a practical joker, I'm a hoaxer.
Have a good look at me!
I'm ugly, my face has no expression, I'm small.
I'm like the rest of you!¹

But ask yourselves, before you look at me, whether the iris by which you dispatch arrows of liquid sentiments isn't in fact fly-shit, if you belly's eyes are not sections of tumours who looks will at one moment emerge from some part of your body in the form of a blennorrhagic discharge.

You see with your navels - why do you hid from your navels the ridiculous spectacle we offer them? And lower down, women's genitals, love, pure love, naturally - rare steaks and oil painting. Everybody who looks and who understands can easily be classified somewhere between poetry and love, between steak and painting. They'll be digested, they'll be digested. I was recently accused of the theft of some furs. Probably because people thought I should still be classified as a poet. One of those poets who satisfy their legitimate need of cold onania in hot furs. *H a H u*, I know other, equally platonic, pleasures. Ring up your family on the telephone



and piss down the hole designed for musical, gastronomic and sacred nonsense.

DADA suggests 2 solutions:

NO MORE LOOKS!
NO MORE WORDS!²

Stop looking!
Stop talking!

For I, chameleon alteration infiltration with convenient attitudes - multicoloured opinions for every occasion size and price - I do the opposite of what I recommend to other people.³

I've forgotten something:

where ? why ? how ?
in other words:

the ventilator of cold examples will serve the fragile snake of the procession and I have never had the pleasure of seeing you, my dear, the ear will take itself out of the envelope rigid like all marine equipment and the products of Aa & Co's firm, chewing-gum for example and dogs have blue eyes, I drink chamomile tea, they drink the wind, DADA introduces new points of view, people sit down now at the corners of tables, in attitudes which lean a bit to the left and to the right, that's why I've quarrelled with Dada, insist everywhere on the suppression of the Ds, eat Aa, brush yourself with Aa toothpaste, buy your clothes at Aa's. Aa is a handkerchief and genitals blowing their noses rapid collapse - made of rubber - noiseless, needs neither manifestos nor address books, it gives a 25% discount buy your clothes at Aa's he has blue eyes.

¹ I wanted to give myself a bit of publicity.

² No more manifestos.

³ Sometimes.

dada manifesto
by francis picabia
march 1920

The Cubists want to cover Dada with snow; it may surprise you, but it is so, they want to empty the snow out of their pipe on to Dada.

Are you sure?

Perfectly, the facts speak for themselves from great grotesque mouths. They think that Dada wants to stop them in their hateful trade: selling pictures at a high price.

Art is dearer than sausages, dearer than women, dearer than anything.

Art is as easy to see as God (see Saint-Sulpice).

Art is a pharmaceutical product for idiots.

Tables turn, thanks to the spirits; pictures and other works of art are like strong- box- tables, the spirit is within them and gets more and more inspired as the prices rise in the salerooms.

Comedy, comedy, comedy, comedy, comedy, dear friends.

Dealers do not like painting, they know about the hidden spirit....

Buy reproductions of signed pictures.

Don't be snobbish; having the same picture as your neighbour doesn't make you any less intelligent. No more fly-specks on the walls.

There will be some, all the same, but not quite so many.

Dada will certainly get more and more hated, for its wire-cutters allow it to cut processions singing " Come Darling ", what a sacrilege!

Cubism represents total famine in ideas.

They cubed primitive paintings, cubed Negro sculptures, cubed violins, cubed guitars, cubed picture magazines, cubed shit and girls' profiles and now they want to cube money!!!

Dada, on the other hand, wants nothing, absolutely nothing, and what it does is to make the public say " We understand nothing, nothing, nothing ".

"The Dadaists are nothing, nothing, nothing and they will surely succeed in nothing, nothing, nothing."

391, No. 12, Paris, March 1920

Francis Picabia

who knows nothing, nothing, nothing.

manifeste cannibale dada

by francis picabia

27th march 1920

You are all indicted; stand up! Stand up as you would for the Marseillaise or God Save the King....

Dada alone does not smell: it is nothing, nothing, nothing.

It is like your hopes: nothing.

like your paradise: nothing.

like your idols: nothing.
like your politicians: nothing.
like your heroes: nothing.
like your artists: nothing.
like your religions: nothing.

Hiss, shout, kick my teeth in, so what? I shall still tell you that you are half-wits. In three months my friends and I will be selling you our pictures for a few francs.

monsieur Aa the antiphilosopher sends us this manifesto

by tristan tzara

22nd may 1920

Long live the undertakers of the combine!

Every act is a revolver shot - both the insignificant gesture and the decisive moment are attacks (I open the fan of knock-outs for the distillation of the air that separates us) - and with the words put down on paper I enter, solemnly, into myself.

In the scalp of notions I implant my 60 fingers and brutally shake the curtains, the teeth, the bolts of their joints.

I shut, I open, I spit. Careful! The moment has come when I should tell you I've been lying. If there is a system in the lack of system - that of my proportions - I never apply it. In other words, I lie. I lie when I apply it, I lie when I don't apply it, I lie when I write that I lie because I do not lie - because I have lived the mirror of my father - chosen from the profits of baccarat - from town to town - for myself has never been myself - for the saxophone wears like a rose the assassination of the visceral car-driver - he's made of sexual copper and leaves of racecourses. Thus drummed the maize, the alarm and pellagra where the matches grow.

Extermination. Yes, naturally.

But doesn't exist. Myself: mixture kitchen theatre. Long live the stretcher-bearers of the convocations of ecstasies!

Lying is ecstasy - which lasts longer than a second - there is nothing that lasts longer.

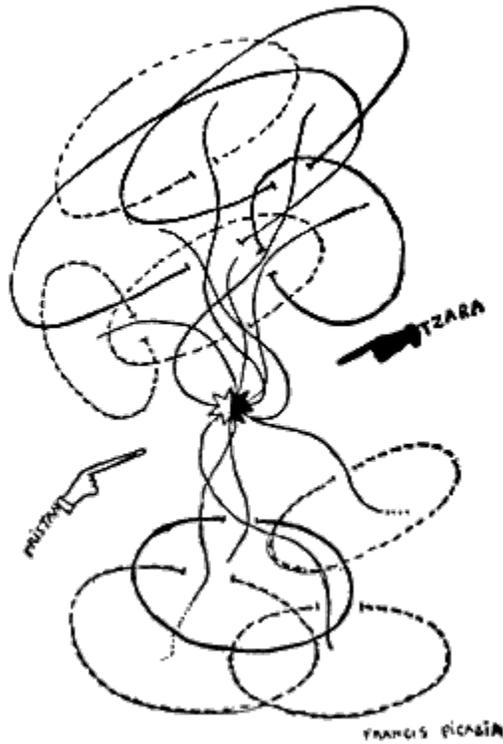
Idiots brood over the century - they start all over again several centuries later - idiots remain within the circle for ten years - idiots hover over the dial of a year - Myself (an idiot) I stay there for five minutes.

The claim of the blood to distribute in my body and my event the accidental colour of the first woman I touched with my eyes in these tentacular times. The bitterest banditry is to finish one's thought-out phrase. The banditry of the gramophone, the little anti-human mirage that I like in myself - because I believe it to be ridiculous and dishonest. But the bankers of language will always get their little percentage on the discussion. The presence of (at least) one boxer is indispensable for a match - affiliated members of a gang of dadaist assassins have signed a self-protection contract for operations of this sort. Their number is extremely limited - the presence of (at least) one singer for a duet, or (at least) one signatory for a receipt, of (at least) one eye for sight, being absolutely indispensable.

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

The shocks that have sensitized it will become visible and will surprise you.

Punch yourself in the face and drop dead.



dada manifesto on feeble love and bitter love

by tristan tzara

12th december 1920

preamble = sardanapalus

one = suitcase

woman = women

trousers = water

if = moustache

2 = three

stick = perhaps

after = sightreading

irritant = emerald

vice = screw

october = periscope

nerve = 

or all this drawn together in any old savory, soapy, brusque or definitive order - drawn by lot - is alive.

It is thus that over and above the vigilant spirit of the clergyman built at the corner of every road, be it animal, vegetable, imaginable or organic, everything is the same as everything that is not the same. Even if I didn't believe it, it's the truth of the fact that I've put it on paper - because it's a lie that I have FIXED like a butterfly on a hat.

Lies circulate - welcome Mister Opportune and Mister Convenient: I arrest them - they're turning into the truth.

Thus DADA takes on the job of the two-wheeled cops and of undercover morality.

Everyone (at a certain moment) was sound in mind and body.

Repeat this 30 times.

I consider myself very likeable.

Tristan Tzara

II

A manifesto is a communication made to the whole world, whose only pretensions is to the discovery of an instant cure for political, astronomical, artistic, parliamentary, agronomical and literary syphilis. It may be pleasant, and good-natured, it's always right, it's strong, vigorous and logical.

Apropos of logic, I consider myself very likeable.

Tristan Tzara

Pride is the star that yawns and penetrates through the eyes and the mouth, she insists, strikes deep, on her breast is inscribed: you will die. This is her only remedy. Who still believes in doctors? I prefer the poet who is a fart in a steam-engine - he's gentle but he doesn't cry - polite and semi-homosexual, he floats. I don't give a single damn about either one of them. It's by pure (unnecessary) chance that the first should be German and the second Spanish. Far be it from us, in actual fact, the idea of discovering theory of the probability of races and the epistolary perfection of bitterness.

III

We have always made mistakes, but the greatest mistakes are the poems we have written. Gossip has one single raison d'être: the rejuvenation and maintenance of biblical traditions. Gossip is perfecting itself, encouraged by the state-controlled tobacco company, the railways, the hospitals, the undertaking industry and cloth factories. Gossip is encouraged by the culture of the family. Gossip is encouraged by Peter's pence. Every drop of saliva that escapes from a conversation is converted into gold. Since the people have always needed divinities to protect the three essential laws, which are those of God: eating, making love and shitting, since the kinds are on their travels and the laws are too

hard, the only thing that counts at the moment is gossip. The form under which it most often appears is DADA.

There are some people (journalists, lawyers, amateurs, philosophers) who even think that other forms: business, marriages, visits, wars, various conferences, limited companies, politics, accidents, dance halls, economic crises, fits of hysterics, are variations of dada. Not being an imperialist, I don't share their opinion - I believe, rather, that dada is only a divinity of the second order, which must quite simply be placed beside the other forms of the new mechanism of the religions of the interregnum.

Is simplicity simple, or dada?

I consider myself rather likeable.

Tristan Tzara

IV

Is poetry necessary? I know that those who shout loudest against it are actually preparing a comfortable perfection for it; they call it the Future Hygienic.

People envisage the (ever-impending) annihilation of art. Here they are looking for a more art-like art. Hygiene becomes mygod mygod purity.

Must we no longer believe in words? Since when do they express the contrary of what the organ that utters them things and wants?* Herein lies the great secret:

Thought is made in the mouth.

I still consider myself very likeable.

Tristan Tzara

A great Canadian philosopher said: Thought and the past are also very likeable.

* Thinks, wants, and wishes to think

V

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

a shudder
a palmist **IS ONLY THE**
WAY PEOPLE SAY good morning **AND** good evening
WHICH DEPENDS ON THE FORM
THAT HAS BEEN GIVEN

TO ^{its forget-me-not}
^{his hair}

I answered

YOU ARE RIGHT ^{idiot}
^{prince} BECAUSE I AM

CONVINCED OF THE ^{contrary}
^{Tartary}

naturally

we hesitate WE ARE NOT (DO NOT)

right. I am called

wish to understand THE OTHER

Since diversity is diverting, this game of golf gives the illusion of a "certain" depth. I support all the conventions - to suppress them would be to make new ones, which would complicate our lives in a truly repugnant fashion.

We wouldn't know any more what if fashionable: to love the children of the first or second marriage. The "pistil of the pistol" has often landed us in bizarre and restless situations. To *disorder* meanings - *to disorder* notions and all the little tropical rains of *demoralisation*, *disorganisation*, *destruction* and *billiard-breaks*, are actions which are insured against lightning and recognised as being of public utility. There is one known fact: dadaists are only to be found these days in the French Academy. I nevertheless consider myself very likeable.

Tristan Tzara

VI

It seems that this exists: more logical, very logical, too logical, less logical, not very logical, really logical, fairly logical.

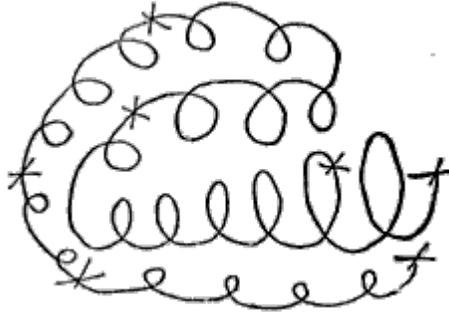
Well then, draw the inferences.

"I have."

Now think of the person you love most.

"Have you?"

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



VII

A priori, in other words with its eyes closed, Dada places before action and above all: Doubt. DADA doubts everything. Dada is an armadillo. Everything is Dada, too. Beware of Dada.

Anti-dadaism is a disease: selfkleptomania, man's normal condition, is DADA. But the real dadas are against DADA.

The selfkleptomaniac.

The person who steals - without thinking of his own interests, or of his will - elements of his individual, is a kleptomaniac. He steals himself. He causes the characters that alienate him from the community to disappear. The bourgeois resemble one another - they're all alike. They used not to be alike. They have been taught to steal - stealing has become a function - the most convenient and least dangerous thing is to steal oneself. They are all very poor. The poor are against DADA. They have a lot to do with their brains. They'll never get to the end of it. They work. The poor are against DADA. He who is against DADA is for me, a famous man said, but then he died. They buried him like a true dadaist. Anno domini Dada. Beware! And remember this example.

VIII

TO MAKE A DADAIST POEM

Take a newspaper.

Take some scissors.

Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem.

Cut out the article.

Next carefully cut out each of the words that makes up this article and put them all in a bag.

Shake gently.

Next take out each cutting one after the other.

Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag.

Them poem will resemble you.

And there you are - an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though

unappreciated by the vulgar herd.*

* Example:

when dogs cross the air in a diamond like ideas and the appendix of the meninx tells the time of the alarm programme (the title is mine) prices they are yesterday suitable next pictures/ appreciate the dream era of the eyes/ pompously that to recite the gospel sort darkens/ group apotheosis imagine said he fatality power of colours/ carved flies (in the theatre) flabbergasted reality a delight/ spectator all to effort of the no more 10 to 12/ during divagation twirls descends pressure/ render some mad single-file flesh on a monstrous crushing stage/ celebrate but their 160 adherents in steps on put on my nacreous/ sumptuous of land bananas sustained illuminate/ joy ask together almost/ of has the a such that the invoked visions/ some sings latter laughs/ exits situation disappears describes she 25 dance bows/ dissimulated the whole of it isn't was/ magnificent has the band better light whose lavishness stage music-halls me/ reappears following instant moves live/ business he didn't has lent/ manner words come these people

IX

There are some people who explain, because there are others who learn. Abolish hem and all that's left is dada.

Dip your pen into a black liquid with manifesto intentions - it's only your autobiography that you're hatching under the belly of the flowering cerebellum.

Biography is the paraphernalia of the famous man. Great or strong. And there *you* are, a simple man like the rest of them, once you've dipped your pen into the ink, full of

PRETENSIONS

which manifest themselves in forms as diverse as they are unforeseen, which apply to every form of activity and of state of mind and of mimicry: there you are, full of

AMBITIONS

to keep yourself on the dial of life, in the place where you've only just arrived, to proceed along the illusory and ridiculous upward path towards an apotheosis that only exists in your neurasthenia: there you are, full of

PRIDE

greater, stronger, more profound than all the others.

Dear colleagues: a great man, a little one, a strong, weak, profound, superficial one, *that's why you're all going to die.*

There are some people who have antedated their manifestos to make other people believe that they had the idea of their own greatness a little earlier. My dear colleagues, before after, past future, now yesterday,
that's why you're all going to die.

There are some people who have said: dada is good because it isn't bad, dada is bad, dada is a religion, dada is a poem, dada is a spirit, dada is sceptical, dada is magic, I know dada.

My dear colleagues: good bad, religion poetry, spirit scepticism, definition definition,
that's why you're all going to die,
and you *will die*, I promise you.

The great mystery is a secret, but it's known to a few people. They will never say what dada is. To amuse you once again I'll tell you something like:
dada is the dictatorship of the spirit, or
dada is the dictatorship of language,
or else
dada is the death of the spirit,
which will please many of my friends. Friends.

X

It is certain that since Gambetta, the war, Panama and the Steinheil affair, intelligence is to be found in the street. The intelligent man has become an all-round, normal person. What we lack, what has some interest, what is rare because he has the anomalies of precious being, the freshness and liberty of the great antimen, is

THE IDIOT

Dada is working with all its might towards the universal installation of the idiot. But consciously. And tends itself to become more and more of one.

Dada is terrible: it doesn't feel sorry about the defeats of intelligence.

Dada could rather be called cowardly, but cowardly like a mad dog; it recognises neither method nor persuasive excess.

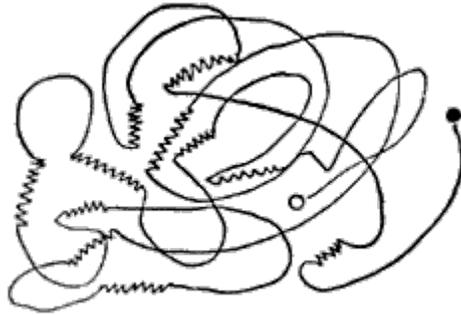
The lack of garters which makes it systematically bend down reminds us of the famous lack of system which basically has never existed. The false rumour was started by a laundress at the bottom of her page, the page was taken to the barbaric country where humming-birds act as the sandwich-men of cordial nature.

This was told me by a watch-maker who was holding a supple syringe which, in characteristic memory of the hot countries, he called phlegmatic and insinuating.

XI

Dada is a dog - a compass - the lining of the stomach - neither new nor a nude Japanese

girl - a gasometer of jangled feelings - Dada is brutal and doesn't go in for propaganda - Dada is a quantity of life in transparent, effortless and gyratory transformation.



XII

gentlemen and ladies buy come in and buy and don't read you'll see the fellow who has in his hands the key to niagara the man with a game leg in the game box his hemispheres in a suitcase his nose enclosed in a chinese lantern you'll see you'll see you'll see the belly dance in the massachusetts saloon the fellow who sticks the nail in and the tyre goes down mademoiselle atlantide's silk stockings the trunk that goes 6 times round the world to find the addressee monsieur and his fiancee his brother and his sister-in-law you'll find the carpenter's address the toad-watch the nerve like a paper-knife you'll have the address of the minor pin for the feminine sex and that of the fellow who supplies the obscene photos to the kind of greece as well as the address of *l'action francaise*.

XIII

DADA is a virgin microbe
DADA is against the high cost of living
DADA
limited company for the exploitation of ideas
DADA has 391 different attitudes and colours according to the sex of the president
It changes - affirms - says the opposite at the same time - no importance - shouts - goes fishing.
Dada is the chameleon of rapid and self-interested change.
Dada is against the future. Dada is dead. Dada is absurd. Long live Dada. Dada is not a literary school, howl

Tristan Tzara

XIV

To "prettify" life in the lorgnette - a blanket of caresses - a panoply with butterflies -
that's the life of life's chambermaids.

To sleep on a razor and on fleas in rut - to travel in a barometer - to piss like a cartridge -
to make faux pas, be idiotic, take showers of holy minutes - be beaten, always be the last
one - shout out the opposite of what the other fellow says - be the editorial office and the
bathroom of God who every day takes a bath in us in company with the cesspool clearer -
that's the life of dadaists.

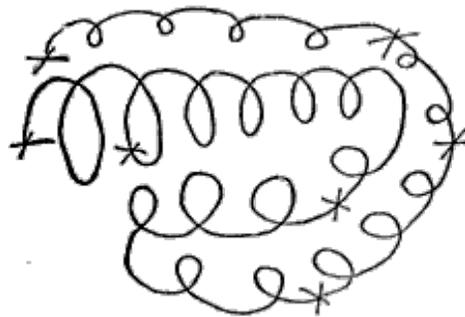
To be intelligent - respect everyone - die on the field of honour - subscribe to the Loan -
vote for So-and-So - respect for nature and painting - to barrack at dada manifestations -
that's the life of men.

XV

DADA is not a doctrine to be put into practice: Dada - is for lying: a successful business.
Dada gets into debt and doesn't live on its well-filled wallet. The good Lord created a
universal language, that's why people don't take him seriously. A language is a utopia.
God can allow himself not to be successful: so can Dada. That's why the critics say: Dada
goes in for luxuries, or Dada is in rut. God goes in for luxuries, or God is in rut. Who's
right: God, Dada or the critic?

"You're deviating," a charming reader tells me.

- No no, not at all! I simply wanted to reach the conclusion: Subscribe to Dada, the only
loan that doesn't pay.



XVI

howl howl howl howl howl howl howl howl
Who still considers himself very likeable

Tristan Tzara

how i became charming, likeable and delightful
by tristan tzara
19th december 1920

I sleep very late. I commit suicide at 65%. My life is very cheap, it's only 30% of life for me. My life has 30% of life. It lacks arms, strings and a few buttons. 5% is devoted to a state of semi-lucid stupor accompanied by anaemic crackling. This 5% is called DADA. So life is cheap. Death is a bit more expensive. But life is charming and death is equally charming.

A few days ago I was at a meeting of imbeciles. There were a lot of people there. Everyone was charming. Tristan Tzara, a small, absurd and insignificant individual was giving a lecture on the art of becoming charming. He was charming, at that. Everyone is charming. And witty. It's delightful, isn't it? Everyone is delightful, at that. 9 degrees below zero. It's charming, isn't it? No, it isn't charming. God isn't up to it. He isn't even in the directory. But even so he's charming.

Ambassadors, poets, counts, princes, musicians, journalists, actors, writers, diplomats,

directors, dressmakers, socialists, princesses and baronesses are charming. You're all of you charming, very subtle, witty and delightful. Tristan Tzara says to you: he's quite willing to do something else, but he prefers to remain an idiot, a practical joker and a hoaxer. Be sincere for a moment: what I've just said to you - is it charming or idiotic?

Handwritten mathematical scribbles and numbers. The top part shows a sequence of numbers: 5806742, 190000, 67914, 875123. To the right, there is a vertical arrangement: 5¹⁰, 767. Below these, there is a horizontal line, followed by 9760519 | 10, 578, 921436145123, and 78910.

There are some people (journalists, lawyers, amateurs, philosophers) who even think that business, marriages, visits, wars, various conferences, limited companies, politics, accidents, dance halls, economic crises, fits of hysterics, are variations of dada. Not being an imperialist, I don't share their opinion. I believe rather, that dada is only a divinity of the second order, which must quite simply be placed beside the other forms of the new mechanism of the religions of the interregnum. Is simplicity simple, or dada? I consider myself rather likeable.

Tristan Tzara

Thank you, Francis!
by Francis Picabia
January 1923

One must become acquainted with everybody except oneself; one must not know which sex one belongs to; I do not care whether I am male or female, I do not admire men more than I do women. Having no virtue, I am assured of not suffering from them. Many people seek the road which can lead them to their ideal: I have no ideal; the person who parades his ideal is only an arriviste. Undoubtedly, I am also an arriviste, but my lack of scruples is an invention for myself, a subjectivity. Objectively it would consist of awarding myself the légion d'honneur, of wishing to become a minister or of plotting to get into the Institute! Well, for me, all that is shit!

What I like is to invent, to imagine, to make myself a new man every moment, then forget him, forget everything. We should be equipped with a special eraser, gradually effacing our works and the memory of them. Our brain should be nothing back a

blackboard, or white, or better, a mirror in which we would see ourselves for a moment, only to turn our back on it two minutes later. My ambition is to be a man sterile for others; the man who set himself up as a school disgusts me, he gives his gonorrhea to artists for nothing and sells it as clearly as possible to amateurs. Actually, writers, painters, and other idiots have passed on the word to fight against the 'monsters', monsters who, naturally, do not exist, who are pure inventions, of man.

Artists are afraid; they whisper in each other's ears about a boogey man which might well prevent them from playing their dirty little tricks! No age, I believe, has been more imbecilic than ours. These gentlemen would have us believe that nothing is happening anymore; the train reversing its engines, it seems, is very pretty to look at, cows are no longer enough! The travelers to this backward Decanville are named: Matisse, Morandi, Braque, Picasso, Léger, de Segonzac, etc., etc. ... What is funniest of all is that they accept, as stationmaster, Louis Vauxcelles, whose great black napkin contains only a foetus!

Since the war, a ponderous and half-witted sentiment of morality rules the entire world. The moralists never discern the moral facts of appearances, the Church for them is a morality like the morality of drinking water, or of not daring to wash one's ass in front of a parrot! All that is arbitrary; people with morals are badly informed, and those who are informed know that the others will not inform themselves.

There is no such thing as a moral problem; morality like modesty is one of the greatest stupidities. The asshole of morality should take the form of a chamber-pot, that's all the objectivity I ask of it.

This contagious disease called morality has succeeded in contaminating all of the so-called artistic milieux; writers and painters become serious people, and soon we shall have a minister of painting and literature; I don't doubt that there will be still more frightful assinities. The poets no longer know what to say, so some are becoming Catholics, others believers; these men manufacture their little scribblings as Félix Potin does his cold chicken preserves; people say that Dada is the end of romanticism, that I am a clown, and they cry long live classicism which will save the pure souls and their ambitions, the simple souls so dear to those afflicted by dreams of grandeur!

However, I don not abandon the hope that nothing is finished yet, I am here, and so are several friends who have a love of life, a life we do not know and which interests us for that very reason.

originally published in *Littérature*, new series no. 8, Paris, January 1923 as 'Francis Mercii'

drop everything
by andré breton
1st april 1922

For the last two months I have been living in the Place Blanche. It is a very mild winter and women make short and delightful appearances at the tables in front of the café where we sit with our drug alcohol. The nights exist only in the hyperborean lands of legend. I can't remember ever having lived anywhere else; those who say they know me must be mistaken. Though now they say they thought that I was dead. You are right to call me to order. After all, who's speaking? André Breton, a man of rather small courage, who has up to now been more or less satisfied with one act of derision and that probably because one day he just felt permanently unable to do what he wanted. And it's true that I have a feeling of having done badly for myself on many occasions; it's true that I find I am less than a monk, less than an adventurer. But I still have a feeling that I shall find myself again and that in these early days of 1922 in the midst of gay and lovely Montmartre I am thinking what I can do with my life.

These days, we think of everything in terms of its opposite and of the union of both into one single category, this itself reconcilable with the first term and so on until the mind reaches the absolute idea, the reconciliation of all oppositions and the unity of all categories. If Dada had been this, then it would not have been so bad, even though I would still prefer the busy life of the first little tart I see to the sleep of Hegel on his laurels. Dada is far from such considerations. The proof of this lies in the fact that today, when it takes great delight in being taken for a vicious circle: "Some day or other, we shall know that before Dada, after Dada, without Dada, towards Dada, in spite of Dada, against Dada, it is always Dada", without noticing that it deprives itself thereby of all virtue and meaningfulness, it is astonished to find that its only supporters are poor fools who live in a world of the past, waxing warm and fierce at the memory of misdeeds long ago. The danger moved elsewhere a long time ago. And what does it matter if M. Tzara has to share his glory with Marinetti and Bajou! They say I change friends the way some people change their boots. But I can't go on wearing the same pair for ever and when they don't fit me any more, I give them to my servants.

I like and admire Francis Picabia and it would not upset me in the least if some of his comments about me were repeated. They have done all they could to mislead him about the way I feel, seeing clearly that if we were to understand each other, it would compromise the established position of those already settled in. Dadaism, like so many other things, has for some people been just a way of settling in. One thing I did not say earlier was that there can be no absolute idea. We have been subjected to a sort of mental mimicry which has stopped us going deeply into anything and has made us look with hostility at anything we held dear. To give one's life for an idea, Dada or the one I am evolving right now, would only cause great intellectual poverty. Ideas are neither good nor bad, they just are: and they can still rouse passion of one kind or another in my mind. You will forgive me if I maintain that, unlike ivy, I die if I cling on hard to something. Would you like me to worry in case these words seem to attack that cult of friendship which, according to M. Binet-Valmer, is at the basis of the cult of patriotism?

I can only assure you that I don't give a damn about it and repeat:
Drop everything.
Drop Dada.

Drop your wife, your mistress.
Drop your hopes and fears.
Sow your children in the corner of a wood.
Drop the substance for the shadow.
Drop your easy life and preparation for a comfortable future.
Get out and go.

from Littérature (new series) No. 2, 1 April 1922

manifesto of surrealism
by andré breton
1924

[391 note: this manifesto is included in our list of primarily dada manifestos because of the relevance to the 2005 [klitink manifesto](#)]

MANIFESTO
OF
SURREALISM
BY
ANDRÉ BRETON
(1924)

So strong is the belief in life, in what is most fragile in life - *real* life, I mean - that in the end this belief is lost. Man, that inveterate dreamer, daily more discontent with his destiny, has trouble assessing the objects he has been led to use, objects that his nonchalance has brought his way, or that he has earned through his own efforts, almost always through his own efforts, for he has agreed to work, at least he has not refused to try his luck (or what he calls his luck!). At this point he feels extremely modest: he knows

what women he has had, what silly affairs he has been involved in; he is unimpressed by his wealth or his poverty, in this respect he is still a newborn babe and, as for the approval of his conscience, I confess that he does very nicely without it. If he still retains a certain lucidity, all he can do is turn back toward his childhood which, however his guides and mentors may have botched it, still strikes him as somehow charming. There, the absence of any known restrictions allows him the perspective of several lives lived at once; this illusion becomes firmly rooted within him; now he is only interested in the fleeting, the extreme facility of everything. Children set off each day without a worry in the world. Everything is near at hand, the worst material conditions are fine. The woods are white or black, one will never sleep.

But it is true that we would not dare venture so far, it is not merely a question of distance. Threat is piled upon threat, one yields, abandons a portion of the terrain to be conquered. This imagination which knows no bounds is henceforth allowed to be exercised only in strict accordance with the laws of an arbitrary utility; it is incapable of assuming this inferior role for very long and, in the vicinity of the twentieth year, generally prefers to abandon man to his lusterless fate.

Though he may later try to pull himself together on occasion, having felt that he is losing by slow degrees all reason for living, incapable as he has become of being able to rise to some exceptional situation such as love, he will hardly succeed. This is because he henceforth belongs body and soul to an imperative practical necessity which demands his constant attention. None of his gestures will be expansive, none of his ideas generous or far-reaching. In his mind's eye, events real or imagined will be seen only as they relate to a welter of similar events, events in which he has not participated, *abortive* events. What am I saying: he will judge them in relationship to one of these events whose consequences are more reassuring than the others. On no account will he view them as his salvation.

Beloved imagination, what I most like in you is your unsparing quality.

There remains madness, "the madness that one locks up," as it has aptly been described. That madness or another.... We all know, in fact, that the insane owe their incarceration to a tiny number of legally reprehensible acts and that, were it not for these acts their freedom (or what we see as their freedom) would not be threatened. I am willing to admit that they are, to some degree, victims of their imagination, in that it induces them not to pay attention to certain rules - outside of which the species feels threatened - which we are all supposed to know and respect. But their profound indifference to the way in which we judge them, and even to the various punishments meted out to them, allows us to suppose that they derive a great deal of comfort and consolation from their imagination, that they enjoy their madness sufficiently to endure the thought that its validity does not extend beyond themselves. And, indeed, hallucinations, illusions, etc., are not a source of trifling pleasure. The best controlled sensuality partakes of it, and I know that there are many evenings when I would gladly that pretty hand which, during the last pages of Taine's *L'Intelligence*, indulges in some curious misdeeds. I could spend my whole life prying loose the secrets of the insane. These people are honest to a fault, and their naïveté

has no peer but my own. Christopher Columbus should have set out to discover America with a boatload of madmen. And note how this madness has taken shape, and endured.

It is not the fear of madness which will oblige us to leave the flag of imagination furled.

The case against the realistic attitude demands to be examined, following the case against the materialistic attitude. The latter, more poetic in fact than the former, admittedly implies on the part of man a kind of monstrous pride which, admittedly, is monstrous, but not a new and more complete decay. It should above all be viewed as a welcome reaction against certain ridiculous tendencies of spiritualism. Finally, it is not incompatible with a certain nobility of thought.

By contrast, the realistic attitude, inspired by positivism, from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Anatole France, clearly seems to me to be hostile to any intellectual or moral advancement. I loathe it, for it is made up of mediocrity, hate, and dull conceit. It is this attitude which today gives birth to these ridiculous books, these insulting plays. It constantly feeds on and derives strength from the newspapers and stultifies both science and art by assiduously flattering the lowest of tastes; clarity bordering on stupidity, a dog's life. The activity of the best minds feels the effects of it; the law of the lowest common denominator finally prevails upon them as it does upon the others. An amusing result of this state of affairs, in literature for example, is the generous supply of novels. Each person adds his personal little "observation" to the whole. As a cleansing antidote to all this, M. Paul Valéry recently suggested that an anthology be compiled in which the largest possible number of opening passages from novels be offered; the resulting insanity, he predicted, would be a source of considerable edification. The most famous authors would be included. Such a thought reflects great credit on Paul Valéry who, some time ago, speaking of novels, assured me that, so far as he was concerned, he would continue to refrain from writing: "The Marquise went out at five." But has he kept his word?

If the purely informative style, of which the sentence just quoted is a prime example, is virtually the rule rather than the exception in the novel form, it is because, in all fairness, the author's ambition is severely circumscribed. The circumstantial, needlessly specific nature of each of their notations leads me to believe that they are perpetrating a joke at my expense. I am spared not even one of the character's slightest vacillations: will he be fairhaired? what will his name be? will we first meet him during the summer? So many questions resolved once and for all, as chance directs; the only discretionary power left me is to close the book, which I am careful to do somewhere in the vicinity of the first page. And the descriptions! There is nothing to which their vacuity can be compared; they are nothing but so many superimposed images taken from some stock catalogue, which the author utilizes more and more whenever he chooses; he seizes the opportunity to slip me his postcards, he tries to make me agree with him about the clichés:

*The small room into which the young man was shown was covered with yellow wallpaper: there were geraniums in the windows, which were covered with muslin curtains; the setting sun cast a harsh light over the entire setting.... There was nothing special about the room. The furniture, of yellow wood, was all very old. A sofa with a tall back turned down, an oval table opposite the sofa, a dressing table and a mirror set against the pierglass, some chairs along the walls, two or three etchings of no value portraying some German girls with birds in their hands - such were the furnishings. (Dostoevski, *Crime and Punishment*)*

I am in no mood to admit that the mind is interested in occupying itself with such matters, even fleetingly. It may be argued that this school-boy description has its place, and that at this juncture of the book the author has his reasons for burdening me. Nevertheless he is wasting his time, for I refuse to go into his room. Others' laziness or fatigue does not interest me. I have too unstable a notion of the continuity of life to equate or compare my moments of depression or weakness with my best moments. When one ceases to feel, I am of the opinion one should keep quiet. And I would like it understood that I am not accusing or condemning lack of originality *as such*. I am only saying that I do not take particular note of the empty moments of my life, that it may be unworthy for any man to crystallize those which seem to him to be so. I shall, with your permission, *ignore* the description of that room, and many more like it.

Not so fast, there; I'm getting into the area of psychology, a subject about which I shall be careful not to joke.

The author attacks a character and, this being settled upon, parades his hero to and fro across the world. No matter what happens, this hero, whose actions and reactions are admirably predictable, is compelled not to thwart or upset -- even though he looks as though he is -- the calculations of which he is the object. The currents of life can appear to lift him up, roll him over, cast him down, he will still belong to this *readymade* human type. A simple game of chess which doesn't interest me in the least -- man, whoever he may be, being for me a mediocre opponent. What I cannot bear are those wretched discussions relative to such and such a move, since winning or losing is not in question. And if the game is not worth the candle, if objective reason does a frightful job -- as indeed it does -- of serving him who calls upon it, is it not fitting and proper to avoid all contact with these categories? "Diversity is so vast that every different tone of voice, every step, cough, every wipe of the nose, every sneeze...."* (Pascal.) If in a cluster of grapes there are no two alike, why do you want me to describe this grape by the other, by all the others, why do you want me to make a palatable grape? Our brains are dulled by the incurable mania of wanting to make the unknown known, classifiable. The desire for analysis wins out over the sentiments.** (Barrès, *Proust*.) The result is statements of undue length whose persuasive power is attributable solely to their strangeness and which impress the reader only by the abstract quality of their vocabulary, which moreover is ill-defined. If the general ideas that philosophy has thus far come up with as topics of discussion revealed by their very nature their definitive incursion into a broader or more

general area. I would be the first to greet the news with joy. But up till now it has been nothing but idle repartee; the flashes of wit and other niceties vie in concealing from us the true thought in search of itself, instead of concentrating on obtaining successes. It seems to me that every act is its own justification, at least for the person who has been capable of committing it, that it is endowed with a radiant power which the slightest gloss is certain to diminish. Because of this gloss, it even in a sense ceases to happen. It gains nothing to be thus distinguished. Stendhal's heroes are subject to the comments and appraisals -- appraisals which are more or less successful -- made by that author, which add not one whit to their glory. Where we really find them again is at the point at which Stendahl has lost them.

We are still living under the reign of logic: this, of course, is what I have been driving at. But in this day and age logical methods are applicable only to solving problems of secondary interest. The absolute rationalism that is still in vogue allows us to consider only facts relating directly to our experience. Logical ends, on the contrary, escape us. It is pointless to add that experience itself has found itself increasingly circumscribed. It paces back and forth in a cage from which it is more and more difficult to make it emerge. It too leans for support on what is most immediately expedient, and it is protected by the sentinels of common sense. Under the pretense of civilization and progress, we have managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition, or fancy; forbidden is any kind of search for truth which is not in conformance with accepted practices. It was, apparently, by pure chance that a part of our mental world which we pretended not to be concerned with any longer -- and, in my opinion by far the most important part -- has been brought back to light. For this we must give thanks to the discoveries of Sigmund Freud. On the basis of these discoveries a current of opinion is finally forming by means of which the human explorer will be able to carry his investigation much further, authorized as he will henceforth be not to confine himself solely to the most summary realities. The imagination is perhaps on the point of reasserting itself, of reclaiming its rights. If the depths of our mind contain within it strange forces capable of augmenting those on the surface, or of waging a victorious battle against them, there is every reason to seize them -- first to seize them, then, if need be, to submit them to the control of our reason. The analysts themselves have everything to gain by it. But it is worth noting that no means has been designated a priori for carrying out this undertaking, that until further notice it can be construed to be the province of poets as well as scholars, and that its success is not dependent upon the more or less capricious paths that will be followed.

Freud very rightly brought his critical faculties to bear upon the dream. It is, in fact, inadmissible that this considerable portion of psychic activity (since, at least from man's birth until his death, thought offers no solution of continuity, the sum of the moments of the dream, from the point of view of time, and taking into consideration only the time of pure dreaming, that is the dreams of sleep, is not inferior to the sum of the moments of

reality, or, to be more precisely limiting, the moments of waking) has still today been so grossly neglected. I have always been amazed at the way an ordinary observer lends so much more credence and attaches so much more importance to waking events than to those occurring in dreams. It is because man, when he ceases to sleep, is above all the plaything of his memory, and in its normal state memory takes pleasure in weakly retracing for him the circumstances of the dream, in stripping it of any real importance, and in dismissing the only *determinant* from the point where he thinks he has left it a few hours before: this firm hope, this concern. He is under the impression of continuing something that is worthwhile. Thus the dream finds itself reduced to a mere parenthesis, as is the night. And, like the night, dreams generally contribute little to furthering our understanding. This curious state of affairs seems to me to call for certain reflections:

1) Within the limits where they operate (or are thought to operate) dreams give every evidence of being continuous and show signs of organization. Memory alone arrogates to itself the right to excerpt from dreams, to ignore the transitions, and to depict for us rather a series of dreams than the *dream itself*. By the same token, at any given moment we have only a distinct notion of realities, the coordination of which is a question of will.* (Account must be taken of the *depth* of the dream. For the most part I retain only what I can glean from its most superficial layers. What I most enjoy contemplating about a dream is everything that sinks back below the surface in a waking state, everything I have forgotten about my activities in the course of the preceding day, dark foliage, stupid branches. In "reality," likewise, I prefer to *fall*.) What is worth noting is that nothing allows us to presuppose a greater dissipation of the elements of which the dream is constituted. I am sorry to have to speak about it according to a formula which in principle excludes the dream. When will we have sleeping logicians, sleeping philosophers? I would like to sleep, in order to surrender myself to the dreamers, the way I surrender myself to those who read me with eyes wide open; in order to stop imposing, in this realm, the conscious rhythm of my thought. Perhaps my dream last night follows that of the night before, and will be continued the next night, with an exemplary strictness. *It's quite possible*, as the saying goes. And since it has not been proved in the slightest that, in doing so, the "reality" with which I am kept busy continues to exist in the state of dream, that it does not sink back down into the immemorial, why should I not grant to dreams what I occasionally refuse reality, that is, this value of certainty in itself which, in its own time, is not open to my repudiation? Why should I not expect from the sign of the dream more than I expect from a degree of consciousness which is daily more acute? Can't the dream also be used in solving the fundamental questions of life? Are these questions the same in one case as in the other and, in the dream, do these questions already exist? Is the dream any less restrictive or punitive than the rest? I am growing old and, more than that reality to which I believe I subject myself, it is perhaps the dream, the difference with which I treat the dream, which makes me grow old.

2) Let me come back again to the waking state. I have no choice but to consider it a phenomenon of interference. Not only does the mind display, in this state, a strange tendency to lose its bearings (as evidenced by the slips and mistakes the secrets of which are just beginning to be revealed to us), but, what is more, it does not appear that, when the mind is functioning normally, it really responds to anything but the suggestions which

come to it from the depths of that dark night to which I commend it. However conditioned it may be, its balance is relative. It scarcely dares express itself and, if it does, it confines itself to verifying that such and such an idea, or such and such a woman, has made an impression on it. What impression it would be hard pressed to say, by which it reveals the degree of its subjectivity, and nothing more. This idea, this woman, disturb it, they tend to make it less severe. What they do is isolate the mind for a second from its solvent and spirit it to heaven, as the beautiful precipitate it can be, that it is. When all else fails, it then calls upon chance, a divinity even more obscure than the others to whom it ascribes all its aberrations. Who can say to me that the angle by which that idea which affects it is offered, that what it likes in the eye of that woman is not precisely what links it to its dream, binds it to those fundamental facts which, through its own fault, it has lost? And if things were different, what might it be capable of? I would like to provide it with the key to this corridor.

3) The mind of the man who dreams is fully satisfied by what happens to him. The agonizing question of possibility is no longer pertinent. Kill, fly faster, love to your heart's content. And if you should die, are you not certain of reawaking among the dead? Let yourself be carried along, events will not tolerate your interference. You are nameless. The ease of everything is priceless.

What reason, I ask, a reason so much vaster than the other, makes dreams seem so natural and allows me to welcome unreservedly a welter of episodes so strange that they could confound me now as I write? And yet I can believe my eyes, my ears; this great day has arrived, this beast has spoken.

If man's awaking is harder, if it breaks the spell too abruptly, it is because he has been led to make for himself too impoverished a notion of atonement.

4) From the moment when it is subjected to a methodical examination, when, by means yet to be determined, we succeed in recording the contents of dreams in their entirety (and that presupposes a discipline of memory spanning generations; but let us nonetheless begin by noting the most salient facts), when its graph will expand with unparalleled volume and regularity, we may hope that the mysteries which really are not will give way to the great Mystery. I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak. It is in quest of this surreality that I am going, certain not to find it but too unmindful of my death not to calculate to some slight degree the joys of its possession.

A story is told according to which Saint-Pol-Roux, in times gone by, used to have a notice posted on the door of his manor house in Camaret, every evening before he went to sleep, which read: THE POET IS WORKING.

A great deal more could be said, but in passing I merely wanted to touch upon a subject which in itself would require a very long and much more detailed discussion; I shall come back to it. At this juncture, my intention was merely to mark a point by noting the

hate of the marvelous which rages in certain men, this absurdity beneath which they try to bury it. Let us not mince words: the marvelous is always beautiful, anything marvelous is beautiful, in fact only the marvelous is beautiful.

In the realm of literature, only the marvelous is capable of fecundating works which belong to an inferior category such as the novel, and generally speaking, anything that involves storytelling. Lewis' *The Monk* is an admirable proof of this. It is infused throughout with the presence of the marvelous. Long before the author has freed his main characters from all temporal constraints, one feels them ready to act with an unprecedented pride. This passion for eternity with which they are constantly stirred lends an unforgettable intensity to their torments, and to mine. I mean that this book, from beginning to end, and in the purest way imaginable, exercises an exalting effect only upon that part of the mind which aspires to leave the earth and that, stripped of an insignificant part of its plot, which belongs to the period in which it was written, it constitutes a paragon of precision and innocent grandeur.* (What is admirable about the fantastic is that there is no longer anything fantastic: there is only the real.) It seems to me none better has been done, and that the character of Mathilda in particular is the most moving creation that one can credit to this *figurative* fashion in literature. She is less a character than a continual temptation. And if a character is not a temptation, what is he? An extreme temptation, she. In *The Monk* the "nothing is impossible for him who dares try" gives it its full, convincing measure. Ghosts play a logical role in the book, since the critical mind does not seize them in order to dispute them. Ambrosio's punishment is likewise treated in a legitimate manner, since it is finally accepted by the critical faculty as a natural denouement.

It may seem arbitrary on my part, when discussing the marvelous, to choose this model, from which both the Nordic literatures and Oriental literatures have borrowed time and time again, not to mention the religious literatures of every country. This is because most of the examples which these literatures could have furnished me with are tainted by puerility, for the simple reason that they are addressed to children. At an early age children are weaned on the marvelous, and later on they fail to retain a sufficient virginity of mind to thoroughly enjoy fairy tales. No matter how charming they may be, a grown man would think he were reverting to childhood by nourishing himself on fairy tales, and I am the first to admit that all such tales are not suitable for him. The fabric of adorable improbabilities must be made a trifle more subtle the older we grow, and we are still at the age of waiting for this kind of spider.... But the faculties do not change radically. Fear, the attraction of the unusual, chance, the taste for things extravagant are all devices which we can always call upon without fear of deception. There are fairy tales to be written for adults, fairy tales still almost blue.

The marvelous is not the same in every period of history: it partakes in some obscure way of a sort of general revelation only the fragments of which come down to us: they are the

romantic *ruins*, the modern *mannequin*, or any other symbol capable of affecting the human sensibility for a period of time. In these areas which make us smile, there is still portrayed the incurable human restlessness, and this is why I take them into consideration and why I judge them inseparable from certain productions of genius which are, more than the others, painfully afflicted by them. They are Villon's gibbets, Racine's Greeks, Baudelaire's couches. They coincide with an eclipse of the taste I am made to endure, I whose notion of taste is the image of a big spot. Amid the bad taste of my time I strive to go further than anyone else. It would have been I, had I lived in 1820, I "the bleeding nun," I who would not have spared this cunning and banal "let us conceal" whereof the parodical Cuisin speaks, it would have been I, I who would have reveled in the enormous metaphors, as he says, all phases of the "silver disk." For today I think of a *castle*, half of which is not necessarily in ruins; this castle belongs to me, I picture it in a rustic setting, not far from Paris. The outbuildings are too numerous to mention, and, as for the interior, it has been frightfully restored, in such manner as to leave nothing to be desired from the viewpoint of comfort. Automobiles are parked before the door, concealed by the shade of trees. A few of my friends are living here as permanent guests: there is Louis Aragon leaving; he only has time enough to say hello; Philippe Soupault gets up with the stars, and Paul Eluard, our great Eluard, has not yet come home. There are Robert Desnos and Roger Vitrac out on the grounds poring over an ancient edict on duelling; Georges Auric, Jean Paulhan; Max Morise, who rows so well, and Benjamin Péret, busy with his equations with birds; and Joseph Delteil; and Jean Carrive; and Georges Limbour, and Georges Limbours (there is a whole hedge of Georges Limbours); and Marcel Noll; there is T. Fraenkel waving to us from his captive balloon, Georges Malkine, Antonin Artaud, Francis Gérard, Pierre Naville, J.-A. Boiffard, and after them Jacques Baron and his brother, handsome and cordial, and so many others besides, and gorgeous women, I might add. Nothing is too good for these young men, their wishes are, as to wealth, so many commands. Francis Picabia comes to pay us a call, and last week, in the hall of mirrors, we received a certain Marcel Duchamp whom we had not hitherto known. Picasso goes hunting in the neighborhood. The spirit of *demoralization* has elected domicile in the castle, and it is with it we have to deal every time it is a question of contact with our fellowmen, but the doors are always open, and one does not begin by "thanking" everyone, you know. Moreover, the solitude is vast, we don't often run into one another. And anyway, isn't what matters that we be the masters of ourselves, the masters of women, and of love too?

I shall be proved guilty of poetic dishonesty: everyone will go parading about saying that I live on the rue Fontaine and that he will have none of the water that flows therefrom. To be sure! But is he certain that this castle into which I cordially invite him is an image? What if this castle really existed! My guests are there to prove it does; their whim is the luminous road that leads to it. We really live by our fantasies when we *give free reign to them*. And how could what one might do bother the other, there, safely sheltered from the sentimental pursuit and at the trysting place of opportunities?

Man proposes and disposes. He and he alone can determine whether he is completely master of himself, that is, whether he maintains the body of his desires, daily more formidable, in a state of anarchy. Poetry teaches him to. It bears within itself the perfect compensation for the miseries we endure. It can also be an organizer, if ever, as the result of a less intimate disappointment, we contemplate taking it seriously. The time is coming when it decrees the end of money and by itself will break the bread of heaven for the earth! There will still be gatherings on the public squares, and *movements* you never dared hope participate in. Farewell to absurd choices, the dreams of dark abyss, rivalries, the prolonged patience, the flight of the seasons, the artificial order of ideas, the ramp of danger, time for everything! May you only take the trouble to *practice* poetry. Is it not incumbent upon us, who are already living off it, to try and impose what we hold to be our case for further inquiry?

It matters not whether there is a certain disproportion between this defense and the illustration that will follow it. It was a question of going back to the sources of poetic imagination and, what is more, of remaining there. Not that I pretend to have done so. It requires a great deal of fortitude to try to set up one's abode in these distant regions where everything seems at first to be so awkward and difficult, all the more so if one wants to try to take someone there. Besides, one is never sure of really being there. If one is going to all that trouble, one might as well stop off somewhere else. Be that as it may, the fact is that the way to these regions is clearly marked, and that to attain the true goal is now merely a matter of the travelers' ability to endure.

We are all more or less aware of the road traveled. I was careful to relate, in the course of a study of the case of Robert Desnos entitled ENTRÉE DES MÉDIUMS,* (See *Les Pas perdus*, published by N.R.F.) that I had been led to "concentrate my attention on the more or less partial sentences which, when one is quite alone and on the verge of falling asleep, become perceptible for the mind without its being possible to discover what provoked them." I had then just attempted the poetic adventure with the minimum of risks, that is, my aspirations were the same as they are today but I trusted in the slowness of formulation to keep me from useless contacts, contacts of which I completely disapproved. This attitude involved a modesty of thought certain vestiges of which I still retain. At the end of my life, I shall doubtless manage to speak with great effort the way people speak, to apologize for my voice and my few remaining gestures. The virtue of the spoken word (and the written word all the more so) seemed to me to derive from the faculty of foreshortening in a striking manner the exposition (since there was exposition) of a small number of facts, poetic or other, of which I made myself the substance. I had come to the conclusion that Rimbaud had not proceeded any differently. I was composing, with a concern for variety that deserved better, the final poems of *Mont de piété*, that is, I managed to extract from the blank lines of this book an incredible advantage. These lines were the closed eye to the operations of thought that I believed I was obliged to keep hidden from the reader. It was not deceit on my part, but my love of

shocking the reader. I had the illusion of a possible complicity, which I had more and more difficulty giving up. I had begun to cherish words excessively for the space they allow around them, for their tangencies with countless other words which I did not utter. The poem BLACK FOREST derives precisely from this state of mind. It took me six months to write it, and you may take my word for it that I did not rest a single day. But this stemmed from the opinion I had of myself in those days, which was high, please don't judge me too harshly. I enjoy these stupid confessions. At that point cubist pseudo-poetry was trying to get a foothold, but it had emerged defenseless from Picasso's brain, and I was thought to be as dull as dishwater (and still am). I had a sneaking suspicion, moreover, that from the viewpoint of poetry I was off on the wrong road, but I hedged my bet as best I could, defying lyricism with salvos of definitions and formulas (the Dada phenomena were waiting in the wings, ready to come on stage) and pretending to search for an application of poetry to advertising (I went so far as to claim that the world would end, not with a good book but with a beautiful advertisement for heaven or for hell).

In those days, a man at least as boring as I, Pierre Reverdy, was writing:

The image is a pure creation of the mind.

It cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities.

*The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be -- the greater its emotional power and poetic reality...** (Nord-Sud, March 1918)

These words, however sibylline for the uninitiated, were extremely revealing, and I pondered them for a long time. But the image eluded me. Reverdy's aesthetic, a completely a posteriori aesthetic, led me to mistake the effects for the causes. It was in the midst of all this that I renounced irrevocably my point of view.

One evening, therefore, before I fell asleep, I perceived, so clearly articulated that it was impossible to change a word, but nonetheless removed from the sound of any voice, a rather strange phrase which came to me without any apparent relationship to the events in which, my consciousness agrees, I was then involved, a phrase which seemed to me insistent, a phrase, if I may be so bold, *which was knocking at the window*. I took cursory note of it and prepared to move on when its organic character caught my attention. Actually, this phrase astonished me: unfortunately I cannot remember it exactly, but it was something like: "There is a man cut in two by the window," but there could be no question of ambiguity, accompanied as it was by the faint visual image* (Were I a painter, this visual depiction would doubtless have become more important for me than the other. It was most certainly my previous predispositions which decided the matter.

Since that day, I have had occasion to concentrate my attention voluntarily on similar apparitions, and I know they are fully as clear as auditory phenomena. With a pencil and white sheet of paper to hand, I could easily trace their outlines. Here again it is not a matter of drawing, but *simply of tracing*. I could thus depict a tree, a wave, a musical instrument, all manner of things of which I am presently incapable of providing even the roughest sketch. I would plunge into it, convinced that I would find my way again, in a maze of lines which at first glance would seem to be going nowhere. And, upon opening my eyes, I would get the very strong impression of something "never seen." The proof of what I am saying has been provided many times by Robert Desnos: to be convinced, one has only to leaf through the pages of issue number 36 of *Feuilles libres* which contains several of his drawings (*Romeo and Juliet, A Man Died This Morning, etc.*) which were taken by this magazine as the drawings of a madman and published as such.) of a man walking cut half way up by a window perpendicular to the axis of his body. Beyond the slightest shadow of a doubt, what I saw was the simple reconstruction in space of a man leaning out a window. But this window having shifted with the man, I realized that I was dealing with an image of a fairly rare sort, and all I could think of was to incorporate it into my material for poetic construction. No sooner had I granted it this capacity than it was in fact succeeded by a whole series of phrases, with only brief pauses between them, which surprised me only slightly less and left me with the impression of their being so gratuitous that the control I had then exercised upon myself seemed to me illusory and all I could think of was putting an end to the interminable quarrel raging within me.* (Knut Hamsun ascribes this sort of revelation to which I had been subjected as deriving from *hunger*, and he may not be wrong. (The fact is I did not eat every day during that period of my life). Most certainly the manifestations that he describes in these terms are clearly the same:

"The following day I awoke at an early hour. It was still dark. My eyes had been open for a long time when I heard the clock in the apartment above strike five. I wanted to go back to sleep, but I couldn't; I was wide awake and a thousand thoughts were crowding through my mind.

"Suddenly a few good fragments came to mind, quite suitable to be used in a rough draft, or serialized; all of a sudden I found, quite by chance, beautiful phrases, phrases such as I had never written. I repeated them to myself slowly, word by word; they were excellent. And there were still more coming. I got up and picked up a pencil and some paper that were on a table behind my bed. It was as though some vein had burst within me, one word followed another, found its proper place, adapted itself to the situation, scene piled upon scene, the action unfolded, one retort after another welled up in my mind, I was enjoying myself immensely. Thoughts came to me so rapidly and continued to flow so abundantly that I lost a whole host of delicate details, because my pencil could not keep up with them, and yet I went as fast as I could, my hand in constant motion, I did not lose a minute. The sentences continued to well up within me, I was pregnant with my subject."

Apollinaire asserted that Chirico's first paintings were done under the influence of cenesthetic disorders (migraines, colics, etc.).)

Completely occupied as I still was with Freud at that time, and familiar as I was with his methods of examination which I had some slight occasion to use on some patients during the war, I resolved to obtain from myself what we were trying to obtain from them, namely, a monologue spoken as rapidly as possible without any intervention on the part of the critical faculties, a monologue consequently unencumbered by the slightest inhibition and which was, as closely as possible, akin to *spoken thought*. It had seemed to me, and still does -- the way in which the phrase about the man cut in two had come to me is an indication of it -- that the speed of thought is no greater than the speed of speech, and that thought does not necessarily defy language, nor even the fast-moving pen. It was in this frame of mind that Philippe Soupault -- to whom I had confided these initial conclusions - and I decided to blacken some paper, with a praiseworthy disdain for what might result from a literary point of view. The ease of execution did the rest. By the end of the first day we were able to read to ourselves some fifty or so pages obtained in this manner, and begin to compare our results. All in all, Soupault's pages and mine proved to be remarkably similar: the same overconstruction, shortcomings of a similar nature, but also, on both our parts, the illusion of an extraordinary verve, a great deal of emotion, a considerable choice of images of a quality such that we would not have been capable of preparing a single one in longhand, a very special picturesque quality and, here and there, a strong comical effect. The only difference between our two texts seemed to me to derive essentially from our respective tempers. Soupault's being less static than mine, and, if he does not mind my offering this one slight criticism, from the fact that he had made the error of putting a few words by way of titles at the top of certain pages, I suppose in a spirit of mystification. On the other hand, I must give credit where credit is due and say that he constantly and vigorously opposed any effort to retouch or correct, however slightly, any passage of this kind which seemed to me unfortunate. In this he was, to be sure, absolutely right.* (I believe more and more in the infallibility of my thought with respect to myself, and this is too fair. Nonetheless, with this *thought-writing*, where one is at the mercy of the first outside distraction, "ebullitions" can occur. It would be inexcusable for us to pretend otherwise. By definition, thought is strong, and incapable of catching itself in error. The blame for these obvious weaknesses must be placed on suggestions that come to it from without.) It is, in fact, difficult to appreciate fairly the various elements present: one may even go so far as to say that it is impossible to appreciate them at a first reading. To you who write, these elements are, on the surface, *as strange to you as they are to anyone else*, and naturally you are wary of them. Poetically speaking, what strikes you about them above all is their *extreme degree of immediate absurdity*, the quality of this absurdity, upon closer scrutiny, being to give way to everything admissible, everything legitimate in the world: the disclosure of a certain number of properties and of facts no less objective, in the final analysis, than the others.

In homage to Guillaume Apollinaire, who had just died and who, on several occasions, seemed to us to have followed a discipline of this kind, without however having sacrificed to it any mediocre literary means, Soupault and I baptized the new mode of pure expression which we had at our disposal and which we wished to pass on to our friends, by the name of SURREALISM. I believe that there is no point today in dwelling

any further on this word and that the meaning we gave it initially has generally prevailed over its Apollinarian sense. To be even fairer, we could probably have taken over the word SUPERNATURALISM employed by Gérard de Nerval in his dedication to the *Filles de feu*.* (And also by Thomas Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* ([Book III] Chapter VIII, "Natural Supernaturalism"), 1833-34.) It appears, in fact, that Nerval possessed to a tee the spirit with which we claim a kinship, Apollinaire having possessed, on the contrary, naught but *the letter*, still imperfect, of Surrealism, having shown himself powerless to give a valid theoretical idea of it. Here are two passages by Nerval which seem to me to be extremely significant in this respect:

I am going to explain to you, my dear Dumas, the phenomenon of which you have spoken a short while ago. There are, as you know, certain storytellers who cannot invent without identifying with the characters their imagination has dreamt up. You may recall how convincingly our old friend Nodier used to tell how it had been his misfortune during the Revolution to be guillotined; one became so completely convinced of what he was saying that one began to wonder how he had managed to have his head glued back on.

...And since you have been indiscreet enough to quote one of the sonnets composed in this SUPERNATURALISTIC dream-state, as the Germans would call it, you will have to hear them all. You will find them at the end of the volume. They are hardly any more obscure than Hegel's metaphysics or Swedenborg's MEMORABILIA, and would lose their charm if they were explained, if such were possible; at least admit the worth of the expression...** (See also *L'Idéoréalisme* by Saint-Pol-Roux.)

Those who might dispute our right to employ the term SURREALISM in the very special sense that we understand it are being extremely dishonest, for there can be no doubt that this word had no currency before we came along. Therefore, I am defining it once and for all:

SURREALISM, *n.* Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express -- verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner -- the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by the thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.

ENCYCLOPEDIA. *Philosophy.* Surrealism is based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought. It tends to ruin once and for all all other psychic mechanisms and to substitute itself for them in solving all the principal problems of life. The following have performed acts of ABSOLUTE SURREALISM: Messrs. Aragon, Baron, Boiffard, Breton, Carrive, Crevel, Delteil, Desnos, Eluard, Gérard, Limbour, Malkine, Morise, Naville, Noll, Péret, Picon, Soupault, Vitrac.

They seem to be, up to the present time, the only ones, and there would be no ambiguity about it were it not for the case of Isidore Ducasse, about whom I lack information. And, of course, if one is to judge them only superficially by their results, a good number of

poets could pass for Surrealists, beginning with Dante and, in his finer moments, Shakespeare. *In the course of the various attempts I have made to reduce what is, by breach of trust, called genius, I have found nothing which in the final analysis can be attributed to any other method than that.*

Young's *Nights* are Surrealist from one end to the other; unfortunately it is a priest who is speaking, a bad priest no doubt, but a priest nonetheless.

Swift is Surrealist in malice,

Sade is Surrealist in sadism.

Chateaubriand is Surrealist in exoticism.

Constant is Surrealist in politics.

Hugo is Surrealist when he isn't stupid.

Desbordes-Valmore is Surrealist in love.

Bertrand is Surrealist in the past.

Rabbe is Surrealist in death.

Poe is Surrealist in adventure.

Baudelaire is Surrealist in morality.

Rimbaud is Surrealist in the way he lived, and elsewhere.

Mallarmé is Surrealist when he is confiding.

Jarry is Surrealist in absinthe.

Nouveau is Surrealist in the kiss.

Saint-Pol-Roux is Surrealist in his use of symbols.

Fargue is Surrealist in the atmosphere.

Vaché is Surrealist in me.

Reverdy is Surrealist at home.

Saint-Jean-Perse is Surrealist at a distance.

Roussel is Surrealist as a storyteller.

Etc.

I would like to stress the point: they are not always Surrealists, in that I discern in each of them a certain number of preconceived ideas to which -- very naively! -- they hold. They hold to them because they had not *heard the Surrealist voice*, the one that continues to preach on the eve of death and above the storms, because they did not want to serve simply to orchestrate the marvelous score. They were instruments too full of pride, and this is why they have not always produced a harmonious sound.* (I could say the same of a number of philosophers and painters, including, among the latter, Uccello, from painters of the past, and, in the modern era, Seurat, Gustave Moreau, Matisse (in "La Musique," for example), Derain, Picasso, (by far the most pure), Braque, Duchamp, Picabia, Chirico (so admirable for so long), Klee, Man Ray, Max Ernst, and, one so close to us, André Masson.)

But we, who have made no effort whatsoever to filter, who in our works have made ourselves into simple receptacles of so many echoes, modest *recording instruments* who are not mesmerized by the drawings we are making, perhaps we serve an even nobler cause. Thus do we render with integrity the "talent" which has been lent to us. You might as well speak of the talent of this platinum ruler, this mirror, this door, and of the sky, if you like.

We do not have any talent; ask Philippe Soupault:

"Anatomical products of manufacture and low-income dwellings will destroy the tallest cities."

Ask Roger Vitrac:

"No sooner had I called forth the marble-admiral than he turned on his heel like a horse which rears at the sight of the North star and showed me, in the plane of his two-pointed cocked hat, a region where I was to spend my life."

Ask Paul Eluard:

"This is an oft-told tale that I tell, a famous poem that I reread: I am leaning against a wall, with my verdant ears and my lips burned to a crisp."

Ask Max Morise:

"The bear of the caves and his friend the bittern, the vol-au-vent and his valet the wind, the Lord Chancellor with his Lady, the scarecrow for sparrows and his accomplice the sparrow, the test tube and his daughter the needle, this carnivore and his brother the carnival, the sweeper and his monocle, the Mississippi and its little dog, the coral and its

jug of milk, the Miracle and its Good Lord, might just as well go and disappear from the surface of the sea."

Ask Joseph Delteil:

"Alas! I believe in the virtue of birds. And a feather is all it takes to make me die laughing."

Ask Louis Aragon:

"During a short break in the party, as the players were gathering around a bowl of flaming punch, I asked a tree if it still had its red ribbon."

And ask me, who was unable to keep myself from writing the serpentine, distracting lines of this preface.

Ask Robert Desnos, he who, more than any of us, has perhaps got closest to the Surrealist truth, he who, in his still unpublished works* (NOUVELLES HÉBRIDES, DÉSORDRE FORMEL, DEUIL POUR DEUIL.) and in the course of the numerous experiments he has been a party to, has fully justified the hope I placed in Surrealism and leads me to believe that a great deal more will still come of it. Desnos *speaks Surrealist* at will. His extraordinary agility in orally following his thought is worth as much to us as any number of splendid speeches which are lost, Desnos having better things to do than record them. He reads himself like an open book, and does nothing to retain the pages, which fly away in the windy wake of his life.



SECRETS OF THE MAGICAL

SURREALIST ART

Written Surrealist composition

or

first and last draft

After you have settled yourself in a place as favorable as possible to the concentration of your mind upon itself, have writing materials brought to you. Put yourself in as passive, or receptive, a state of mind as you can. Forget about your genius, your talents, and the talents of everyone else. Keep reminding yourself that literature is one of the saddest

roads that leads to everything. Write quickly, without any preconceived subject, fast enough so that you will not remember what you're writing and be tempted to reread what you have written. The first sentence will come spontaneously, so compelling is the truth that with every passing second there is a sentence unknown to our consciousness which is only crying out to be heard. It is somewhat of a problem to form an opinion about the next sentence; it doubtless partakes both of our conscious activity and of the other, if one agrees that the fact of having written the first entails a minimum of perception. This should be of no importance to you, however; to a large extent, this is what is most interesting and intriguing about the Surrealist game. The fact still remains that punctuation no doubt resists the absolute continuity of the flow with which we are concerned, although it may seem as necessary as the arrangement of knots in a vibrating cord. Go on as long as you like. Put your trust in the inexhaustible nature of the murmur. If silence threatens to settle in if you should ever happen to make a mistake -- a mistake, perhaps due to carelessness -- break off without hesitation with an overly clear line. Following a word the origin of which seems suspicious to you, place any letter whatsoever, the letter "l" for example, always the letter "l," and bring the arbitrary back by making this letter the first of the following word.

How not to be bored any longer when with others

This is very difficult. Don't be at home for anyone, and occasionally, when no one has forced his way in, interrupting you in the midst of your Surrealist activity, and you, crossing your arms, say: "It doesn't matter, there are doubtless better things to do or not do. Interest in life is indefensible Simplicity, what is going on inside me, is still tiresome to me!" or an other revolting banality.

To make speeches

Just prior to the elections, in the first country which deems it worthwhile to proceed in this kind of public expression of opinion, have yourself put on the ballot. Each of us has within himself the potential of an orator: multicolored loin cloths, glass trinkets of words. Through Surrealism he will take despair unawares in its poverty. One night, on a stage, he will, by himself, carve up the eternal heaven, that *Peau de l'ours*. He will promise so much that any promises he keeps will be a source of wonder and dismay. In answer to the claims of an entire people he will give a partial and ludicrous vote. He will make the bitterest enemies partake of a secret desire which will blow up the countries. And in this he will succeed simply by allowing himself to be moved by the immense word which dissolves into pity and revolves in hate. Incapable of failure, he will play on the velvet of all failures. He will be truly elected, and women will love him with an all-consuming passion.

To write false novels

Whoever you may be, if the spirit moves you burn a few laurel leaves and, without wishing to tend this meager fire, you will begin to write a novel. Surrealism will allow you to: all you have to do is set the needle marked "fair" at "action," and the rest will

follow naturally. Here are some characters rather different in appearance; their names in your handwriting are a question of capital letters, and they will conduct themselves with the same ease with respect to active verbs as does the impersonal pronoun "it" with respect to words such as "is raining," "is," "must," etc. They will command them, so to speak, and wherever observation, reflection, and the faculty of generalization prove to be of no help to you, you may rest assured that they will credit you with a thousand intentions you never had. Thus endowed with a tiny number of physical and moral characteristics, these beings who in truth owe you so little will thereafter deviate not one iota from a certain line of conduct about which you need not concern yourself any further. Out of this will result a plot more or less clever in appearance, justifying point by point this moving or comforting denouement about which you couldn't care less. Your false novel will simulate to a marvelous degree a real novel; you will be rich, and everyone will agree that "you've really got a lot of guts," since it's also in this region that this something is located.

Of course, by an analogous method, and provided you ignore what you are reviewing, you can successfully devote yourself to false literary criticism.

How to catch the eye of a woman

you pass in the street

Against death

Surrealism will usher you into death, which is a secret society. It will glove your hand, burying therein the profound M with which the word Memory begins. Do not forget to make proper arrangements for your last will and testament: speaking personally, I ask that I be taken to the cemetery in a moving van. May my friends destroy every last copy of the printing of the *Speech concerning the Modicum of Reality*.



Language has been given to man so that he may make Surrealist use of it. To the extent that he is required to make himself understood, he manages more or less to express himself, and by so doing to fulfill certain functions culled from among the most vulgar. Speaking, reading a letter, present no real problem for him, provided that, in so doing, he does not set himself a goal above the mean, that is, provided he confines himself to carrying on a conversation (for the pleasure of conversing) with someone. He is not worried about the words that are going to come, nor about the sentence which will follow after the sentence he is just completing. To a very simple question, he will be capable of making a lightning-like reply. In the absence of minor tics acquired through contact with others, he can without any ado offer an opinion on a limited number of subjects; for that he does not need to "count up to ten" before speaking or to formulate anything whatever ahead of time. Who has been able to convince him that this faculty of the first draft will

only do him a disservice when he makes up his mind to establish more delicate relationships? There is no subject about which he should refuse to talk, to write about prolifically. *All that results from listening to oneself, from reading what one has written, is the suspension of the occult, that admirable help.* I am in no hurry to understand myself (basta! I shall always understand myself). If such and such a sentence of mine turns out to be somewhat disappointing, at least momentarily, I place my trust in the following sentence to redeem its sins; I carefully refrain from starting it over again or polishing it. The only thing that might prove fatal to me would be the slightest loss of impetus. Words, groups of words *which follow one another*, manifest among themselves the greatest solidarity. It is not up to me to favor one group over the other. It is up to a miraculous equivalent to intervene -- and intervene it does.

Not only does this unrestricted language, which I am trying to render forever valid, which seems to me to adapt itself to all of life's circumstances, not only does this language not deprive me of any of my means, on the contrary it lends me an extraordinary lucidity, and it does so in an area where I least expected it. I shall even go so far as to maintain that it instructs me and, indeed, I have had occasion to use *surreally* words whose meaning I have forgotten. I was subsequently able to verify that the way in which I had used them corresponded perfectly with their definition. This would leave one to believe that we do not "learn," that all we ever do is "relearn." There are felicitous turns of speech that I have thus familiarized myself with. And I am not talking about the *poetic consciousness of objects* which I have been able to acquire only after a spiritual contact with them repeated a thousand times over.

The forms of Surrealist language adapt themselves best to dialogue. Here, two thoughts confront each other; while one is being delivered, the other is busy with it; but how is it busy with it? To assume that it incorporates it within itself would be tantamount to admitting that there is a time during which it is possible for it to live completely off that other thought, which is highly unlikely. And, in fact, the attention it pays is completely exterior; it has only time enough to approve or reject -- generally reject -- with all the consideration of which man is capable. This mode of language, moreover, does not allow the heart of the matter to be plumbed. My attention, prey to an entreaty which it cannot in all decency reject, treats the opposing thought as an enemy; in ordinary conversation, it "takes it up" almost always on the words, the figures of speech, it employs; it puts me in a position to turn it to good advantage in my reply by distorting them. This is true to such a degree that in certain pathological states of mind, where the sensorial disorders occupy the patient's complete attention, he limits himself, while continuing to answer the questions, to seizing the last word spoken in his presence or the last portion of the Surrealist sentence some trace of which he finds in his mind.

Q. "How old are you?" A. "You." (*Echolalia.*)

Q. "What is your name?" A. "Forty-five houses." (*Ganser syndrome, or beside-the-point replies.*)

There is no conversation in which some trace of this disorder does not occur. The effort to be social which dictates it and the considerable practice we have at it are the only things which enable us to conceal it temporarily. It is also the great weakness of the book that it is in constant conflict with its best, by which I mean the most demanding, readers. In the very short dialogue that I concocted above between the doctor and the madman, it was in fact the madman who got the better of the exchange. Because, through his replies, he obtrudes upon the attention of the doctor examining him -- and because he is not the person asking the questions. Does this mean that his thought at this point is stronger? Perhaps. He is free not to care any longer about his age or name.

Poetic Surrealism, which is the subject of this study, has focused its efforts up to this point on reestablishing dialogue in its absolute truth, by freeing both interlocutors from any obligations and politeness. Each of them simply pursues his soliloquy without trying to derive any special dialectical pleasure from it and without trying to impose anything whatsoever upon his neighbor. The remarks exchanged are not, as is generally the case, meant to develop some thesis, however unimportant it may be; they are as disaffected as possible. As for the reply that they elicit, it is, in principle, totally indifferent to the personal pride of the person speaking. The words, the images are only so many springboards for the mind of the listener. In *Les Champs magnétiques*, the first purely Surrealist work, this is the way in which the pages grouped together under the title *Barrières* must be conceived of -- pages wherein Soupault and I show ourselves to be impartial interlocutors.

Surrealism does not allow those who devote themselves to it to forsake it whenever they like. There is every reason to believe that it acts on the mind very much as drugs do; like drugs, it creates a certain state of need and can push man to frightful revolts. It also is, if you like, an artificial paradise, and the taste one has for it derives from Baudelaire's criticism for the same reason as the others. Thus the analysis of the mysterious effects and special pleasures it can produce -- in many respects Surrealism occurs as a *new vice* which does not necessarily seem to be restricted to the happy few; like hashish, it has the ability to satisfy all manner of tastes -- such an analysis has to be included in the present study.

1. It is true of Surrealist images as it is of opium images that man does not evoke them; rather they "come to him spontaneously, despotically. He cannot chase them away; for the will is powerless now and no longer controls the faculties."* (Baudelaire.) It remains to be seen whether images have ever been "evoked." If one accepts, as I do, Reverdy's definition it does not seem possible to bring together, voluntarily, what he calls "two distant realities." The juxtaposition is made or not made, and that is the long and the short of it. Personally, I absolutely refuse to believe that, in Reverdy's work, images such as

In the brook, there is a song that flows

or:

Day unfolded like a white tablecloth

or:

The world goes back into a sack

reveal the slightest degree of premeditation. In my opinion, it is erroneous to claim that "the mind has grasped the relationship" of two realities in the presence of each other. First of all, it has seized nothing consciously. It is, as it were, from the fortuitous juxtaposition of the two terms that a particular light has sprung, *the light of the image*, to which we are infinitely sensitive. The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of potential between the two conductors. When the difference exists only slightly, as in a comparison,* (Compare the image in the work of Jules Renard.) the spark is lacking. Now, it is not within man's power, so far as I can tell, to effect the juxtaposition of two realities so far apart. The principle of the association of ideas, such as we conceive of it, militates against it. Or else we would have to revert to an elliptical art, which Reverdy deplures as much as I. We are therefore obliged to admit that the two terms of the image are not deduced one from the other by the mind for the specific purpose of producing the spark, that they are the simultaneous products of the activity I call Surrealist, reason's role being limited to taking note of, and appreciating, the luminous phenomenon.

And just as the length of the spark increases to the extent that it occurs in rarefied gases, the Surrealist atmosphere created by automatic writing, which I have wanted to put within the reach of everyone, is especially conducive to the production of the most beautiful images. One can even go so far as to say that in this dizzying race the images appear like the only guideposts of the mind. By slow degrees the mind becomes convinced of the supreme reality of these images. At first limiting itself to submitting to them, it soon realizes that they flatter its reason, and increase its knowledge accordingly. The mind becomes aware of the limitless expanses wherein its desires are made manifest, where the pros and cons are constantly consumed, where its obscurity does not betray it. It goes forward, borne by these images which enrapture it, which scarcely leave it any time to blow upon the fire in its fingers. This is the most beautiful night of all, the *lightning-filled night*: day, compared to it, is night.

The countless kinds of Surrealist images would require a classification which I do not intend to make today. To group them according to their particular affinities would lead me far afield; what I basically want to mention is their common virtue. For me, their greatest virtue, I must confess, is the one that is arbitrary to the highest degree, the one that takes the longest time to translate into practical language, either because it contains an immense amount of seeming contradiction or because one of its terms is strangely concealed; or because, presenting itself as something sensational, it seems to end weakly (because it suddenly closes the angle of its compass), or because it derives from itself a ridiculous *formal* justification, or because it is of a hallucinatory kind, or because it very

naturally gives to the abstract the mask of the concrete, or the opposite, or because it implies the negation of some elementary physical property, or because it provokes laughter. Here, in order, are a few examples of it:

The ruby of champagne. (LAUTRÉAMONT)

Beautiful as the law of arrested development of the breast in adults, whose propensity to growth is not in proportion to the quantity of molecules that their organism assimilates. (LAUTRÉAMONT)

A church stood dazzling as a bell. (PHILIPPE SOUPAULT)

In Rose Sélavy's sleep there is a dwarf issued from a well who comes to eat her bread at night. (ROBERT DESNOS)

On the bridge the dew with the head of a tabby cat lulls itself to sleep. (ANDRÉ BRETON)

A little to the left, in my firmament foretold, I see -- but it's doubtless but a mist of blood and murder -- the gleaming glass of liberty's disturbances. (LOUIS ARAGON)

In the forest aflame

The lions were fresh. (ROBERT VITRAC)

The color of a woman's stockings is not necessarily in the likeness of her eyes, which led a philosopher who it is pointless to mention, to say: "Cephalopods have more reasons to hate progress than do quadrupeds."

(MAX MORISE)

Ist. Whether we like it or not, there is enough there to satisfy several demands of the mind. All these images seem to attest to the fact that the mind is ripe for something more than the benign joys it allows itself in general. This is the only way it has of turning to its own advantage the ideal quantity of events with which it is entrusted.* (Let us not forget that, according to Novalis' formula, "there are series of events which run parallel to real events. Men and circumstances generally modify the ideal train of circumstances, so that it seems imperfect; and their consequences are also equally imperfect. Thus it was with the Reformation; instead of Protestantism, we got Lutheranism.") These images show it the extent of its ordinary dissipation and the drawbacks that it offers for it. In the final analysis, it's not such a bad thing for these images to upset the mind, for to upset the mind is to put it in the wrong. The sentences I quote make ample provision for this. But the mind which relishes them draws therefrom the conviction that it is on the *right track*; on its own, the mind is incapable of finding itself guilty of cavil; it has nothing to fear, since, moreover, it attempts to embrace everything.

2nd. The mind which plunges into Surrealism relives with glowing excitement the best part of its childhood. For such a mind, it is similar to the certainty with which a person who is drowning reviews once more, in the space of less than a second, all the insurmountable moments of his life. Some may say to me that the parallel is not very encouraging. But I have no intention of encouraging those who tell me that. From childhood memories, and from a few others, there emanates a sentiment of being unintegrated, and then later of *having gone astray*, which I hold to be the most fertile that exists. It is perhaps childhood that comes closest to one's "real life"; childhood beyond which man has at his disposal, aside from his *laissez-passer*, only a few complimentary tickets; childhood where everything nevertheless conspires to bring about the effective, risk-free possession of oneself. Thanks to Surrealism, it seems that opportunity knocks a second time. It is as though we were still running toward our salvation, or our perdition. In the shadow we again see a precious terror. Thank God, it's still only Purgatory. With a shudder, we cross what the occultists call *dangerous territory*. In my wake I raise up monsters that are lying in wait; they are not yet too ill-disposed toward me, and I am not lost, since I fear them. Here are "the elephants with the heads of women and the flying lions" which used to make Soupault and me tremble in our boots to meet, here is the "soluble fish" which still frightens me slightly. POISSON SOLUBLE, am I not the soluble fish, I was born under the sign of Pisces, and man is soluble in his thought! The flora and fauna of Surrealism are inadmissible.

3rd. I do not believe in the establishment of a conventional Surrealist pattern any time in the near future. The characteristics common to all the texts of this kind, including those I have just cited and many others which alone could offer us a logical analysis and a careful grammatical analysis, do not preclude a certain evolution of Surrealist prose in time. Coming on the heels of a large number of essays I have written in this vein over the past five years, most of which I am indulgent enough to think are extremely disordered, the short anecdotes which comprise the balance of this volume offer me a glaring proof of what I am saying. I do not judge them to be any more worthless, because of that, in portraying for the reader the benefits which the Surrealist contribution is liable to make to his consciousness.

Surrealist methods would, moreover, demand to be

heard. Everything is valid when it comes to obtaining the desired suddenness from certain associations. The pieces of paper that Picasso and Braque insert into their work have the same value as the introduction of a platitude into a literary analysis of the most rigorous sort. It is even permissible to entitle POEM what we get from the most random assemblage possible (observe, if you will, the syntax) of headlines and scraps of headlines cut out of the newspapers:

POEM

A burst of laughter

of sapphire in the island of Ceylon

The most beautiful straws

HAVE A FADED COLOR

UNDER THE LOCKS

on an isolated farm

FROM DAY TO DAY

the pleasant

grows worse

coffee

preaches for its saint

THE DAILY ARTISAN OF YOUR BEAUTY

MADAM,

✓ 🚗 ✓ ⓘ ✕

of silk stockings

is not

A leap into space

A STAG

Love above all

Everything could be worked out so well

PARIS IS A BIG VILLAGE

Watch out for

the fire that covers

THE PRAYER

of fair weather

Know that

The ultraviolet rays

have finished their task

short and sweet

THE FIRST WHITE PAPER

OF CHANCE

Red will be

The wandering singer

WHERE IS HE?

in memory

in his house

AT THE SUITORS' BALL

I do

as I dance

What people did, what they're going to do

And we could offer many many more examples. The theater, philosophy, science, criticism would all succeed in finding their bearings there. I hasten to add that future Surrealist techniques do not interest me.

Far more serious, in my opinion* (Whatever reservations I may be allowed to make concerning responsibility in general and the medico-legal considerations which determine an individual's degree of responsibility -- complete responsibility, irresponsibility, limited responsibility (sic) -- however difficult it may be for me to accept the principle of any kind of responsibility, I would like to know how the first punishable offenses, the Surrealist character of which will be clearly apparent, will be *judged*. Will the accused be acquitted, or will he merely be given the benefit of the doubt because of extenuating circumstances? It's a shame that the violation of the laws governing the Press is today scarcely repressed, for if it were not we would soon see a trial of this sort: the accused has published a book which is an outrage to public decency. Several of his "most respected and honorable" fellow citizens have lodged a complaint against him, and he is also charged with slander and libel. There are also all sorts of other charges against him, such as insulting and defaming the army, inciting to murder, rape, etc. The accused, moreover, wastes no time in agreeing with the accusers in "stigmatizing" most of the ideas expressed. His only defense is claiming that he does not consider himself to be the author of his book, said book being no more and no less than a Surrealist concoction which precludes any question of merit or lack of merit on the part of the person who signs it; further, that all he has done is copy a document without offering any opinion thereon, and that he is at least as foreign to the accused text as is the presiding judge himself.

What is true for the publication of a book will also hold true for a whole host of other acts as soon as Surrealist methods begin to enjoy widespread favor. When that happens, a new morality must be substituted for the prevailing morality, the source of all our trials and tribulations.) -- I have intimated it often enough -- are the applications of Surrealism to action. To be sure, I do not believe in the prophetic nature of the Surrealist word. "It is the oracle, the things I say."* (Rimbaud.) Yes, *as much as I like*, but what of the oracle itself?** (Still, STILL.... We must absolutely get to the bottom of this. Today, June 8, 1924, about one o'clock, the voice whispered to me: "Béthune, Béthune." What did it mean? I have never been to Béthune, and have only the vaguest notion as to where it is located on the map of France. Béthune evokes nothing for me, not even a scene from *The Three Musketeers*. I should have left for Béthune, where perhaps there was something awaiting me; that would have been too simple, really. Someone told me they had read in a book by Chesterton about a detective who, in order to find someone he is looking for in a certain city, simply scoured from roof to cellar the houses which, from the outside, seemed somehow abnormal to him, were it only in some slight detail. This system is as good as any other.

Similarly, in 1919, Soupault went into any number of impossible buildings to ask the concierge whether Philippe Soupault did in fact live there. He would not have been surprised, I suspect, by an affirmative reply. He would have gone and knocked on his door.) Men's piety does not fool me. The Surrealist voice that shook Cumae, Dodona, and Delphi is nothing more than the voice which dictates my less irascible speeches to me. My *time* must not be its time, why should this voice help me resolve the childish problem of my destiny? I pretend, unfortunately, to act in a world where, in order to take into account its suggestions, I would be obliged to resort to two kinds of interpreters, one to translate its judgements for me, the other, impossible to find, to transmit to my fellow men whatever sense I could make out of them. This world, in which I endure what I endure (don't go see), this modern world, I mean, what the devil do you want me to do with it? Perhaps the Surrealist voice will be stilled, I have given up trying to keep track of those who have disappeared. I shall no longer enter into, however briefly, the marvelous detailed description of my years and my days. I shall be like Nijinski who was taken last year to the Russian ballet and did not realize what spectacle it was he was seeing. I shall be alone, very alone within myself, indifferent to all the world's ballets. What I have done, what I have left undone, I give it to you.

And ever since I have had a great desire to show forbearance to scientific musing, however unbecoming, in the final analysis, from every point of view. Radios? Fine. Syphilis? If you like. Photography? I don't see any reason why not. The cinema? Three cheers for darkened rooms. War? Gave us a good laugh. The telephone? Hello. Youth? Charming white hair. Try to make me say thank you: "Thank you."

Thank you. If the common man has a high opinion of things which properly speaking belong to the realm of the laboratory, it is because such research has resulted in the manufacture of a machine or the discovery of some serum which the man in the street views as affecting him directly. He is quite sure that they have been trying to improve his lot. I am not quite sure to what extent scholars are motivated by humanitarian aims, but it does not seem to me that this factor constitutes a very marked degree of goodness. I am, of course, referring to true scholars and not to the vulgarizers and popularizers of all sorts who take out patents. In this realm as in any other, I believe in the pure Surrealist joy of the man who, forewarned that all others before him have failed, refuses to admit defeat, sets off from whatever point he chooses, along any other path save a reasonable one, and arrives wherever he can. **Such and such an image, by which he deems it opportune to indicate his progress and which may result, perhaps, in his receiving public acclaim, is to me, I must confess, a matter of complete indifference.** Nor is the material with which he must perforce encumber himself; his glass tubes or my metallic feathers... As for his method, I am willing to give it as much credit as I do mine. I have seen the inventor of the cutaneous plantar reflex at work; he manipulated his subjects without respite, it was much more than an "examination" he was employing; *it was obvious that he was following no set plan.* Here and there he formulated a remark, distantly, without nonetheless setting down his needle, while his hammer was never still. He left to others the futile task of curing patients. He was wholly consumed by and devoted to that sacred fever.

Surrealism, such as I conceive of it, asserts our complete *nonconformism* clearly enough so that there can be no question of translating it, at the trial of the real world, as evidence for the defense. It could, on the contrary, only serve to justify the complete state of distraction which we hope to achieve here below. Kant's absentmindedness regarding women, Pasteur's absentmindedness about "grapes," Curie's absentmindedness with respect to vehicles, are in this regard profoundly symptomatic. This world is only very relatively in tune with thought, and incidents of this kind are only the most obvious episodes of a war in which I am proud to be participating. **"Ce monde n'est que très relativement à la mesure de la pensée et les incidents de ce genre ne sont que les épisodes jusqu'ici les plus marquants d'une guerre d'indépendance à laquelle je me fais gloire de participer."** Surrealism is the "invisible ray" which will one day enable us to win out over our opponents. "You are no longer trembling, carcass." This summer the roses are blue; the wood is of glass. The earth, draped in its verdant cloak, makes as little impression upon me as a ghost. It is living and ceasing to live which are imaginary solutions. Existence is elsewhere.

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**manifesto in a clear language
by antonin artaud
december 1925**

MANIFESTO IN A CLEAR LANGUAGE
by Antonin Artaud

If I believe neither in Evil nor in Good, if I feel such a strong inclination to destroy, if there is nothing in the order of principles to which I can reasonably accede, the underlying reason is in my flesh.

I destroy because for me everything that proceeds from reason is untrustworthy. I believe only in the evidence of what stirs my marrow, not in the evidence of what addresses itself to my reason. I have found levels in the realm of the nerve.

I now feel capable of evaluating the evidence. There is for me an evidence in the realm of pure flesh which has nothing to do with the evidence of reason. The eternal conflict between reason and the heart is decided in my very flesh, but in my flesh irrigated by nerves. In the realm of the affective imponderable, the image provided by my nerves takes the form of the highest intellectuality, which I refuse to strip of its quality of intellectuality. And so it is that I watch the formation of a concept which carries within it the actual fulguration of things, a concept which arrives upon me with a sound of creation. No image satisfies me unless it is at the same time Knowledge, unless it carries with it its substance as well as its lucidity. My mind, exhausted by discursive reason, wants to be caught up in the wheels of a new, an absolute gravitation. For me it is like a supreme reorganization in which only the laws of illogic participate, and in which there triumphs the discovery of a new Meaning. This Meaning which has been lost in the disorder of drugs and which presents the appearance of a profound intelligence to the contradictory phantasms of the sleep. This Meaning is a victory of the mind over itself, and although it is irreducible by reason, it exists, but only inside the mind. It is order, it is intelligence, it is the signification of chaos. But it does not accept this chaos as such, it interprets it, and because it interprets it, it loses it. It is the logic of illogic. And this is all one can say. My lucid unreason is not afraid of chaos.

I renounce nothing of that which is the Mind. I want only to transport my mind elsewhere with its laws and organs. I do not surrender myself to the sexual mechanism of the mind, but on the contrary within this mechanism I seek to isolate those discoveries which lucid reason does not provide. I surrender to the fever of dreams, but only in order to derive

Still VIII Words are the great levellers.
 Pathetic IX *Notions limit opening onto depths by merely standing ajar.*
 Still IX Words are family garments.
Poets enlarge words every year.
 Words already have been mended so much they are
 in stitches.
 Pathetic X People think it is impossible to break words.
 Still X Unique feelings are so unique that they can not be
 popularized. Feelings without words in the dictionary
 disappear.
 Pathetic XI *Every year thousands of feelings disappear for lack*
 lack
 of a concrete form.
 Still XI Feelings demand living space.
How remarkable the poet's disheartened absorption
in words.
 Things and nothings to communicate become daily
 more imperious.
 Pathetic XII *Efforts at destruction witness to the need to rebuild.*
 Still XII How long will people hold out in the shrunken
 domain of
 words?
 Pathetic XIII *The poet suffers indirectly:*
 Words remain the work of the poet, his existence, his
 job.

B Innovation I

Destruction of WORDS for LETTERS

ISIDORE ISOU Believes in the potential elevation beyond WORDS;
 wants
 the development of transmissions where nothing is
 lost in the process; offers a verb equal to a shock. By
 the overload of expansion the forms leap up by
 themselves.
 ISIDORE ISOU Begins the destruction of words for letters.
 ISIDORE ISOU Wants letters to pull in among themselves all desires.
 ISIDORE ISOU Makes people stop using foregone conclusions, words.
 ISIDORE ISOU Shows another way out between WORDS and RENUNCIATION:
 LETTERS. He will create emotions against language, for
 the
 pleasure of the tongue.
It consists of teaching that letters have a destination
other than words.
 ISOU Will unmake words into their letters.
 Each poet will integrate everything into Everything
 Everything must be revealed by letters.
 POETRY CAN NO LONGER BE REMADE.

ISIDORE ISOU IS STARTING

A NEW VEIN OF LYRICISM.

Anyone who can not leave words behind can stay back with
 them!

C Innovation II: The Order of Letters

This does not mean destroying words for other words.

Nor forging notions to specify their nuances.

Nor mixing terms to make them hold more meaning.

But it does mean TAKING ALL LETTERS AS A WHOLE; UNFOLDING BEFORE
DAZZLED

SPECTATORS MARVELS CREATED FROM LETTERS (DEBRIS FROM
THE DESTRUCTION);
CREATING AN ARCHITECTURE OF LETTRIC RHYTHMS;
ACCUMULATING FLUCTUATING LETTERS IN A PRECISE FRAME;
ELABORATING SPLENDIDLY THE CUSTOMARY COOKING;
COAGULATING THE CRUMBS OF LETTERS FOR A REAL MEAL;
RESUSCITATING THE JUMBLE IN A DENSER ORDER;
MAKING UNDERSTANDABLE AND TANGIBLE THE INCOMPREHENSIBLE
AND VAGUE; CONCRETIZING SILENCE;
WRITING THE NOTHINGNESS.

It is the role of the poet to advance toward subversive
sources.

the obligation of the poet to advance in the black and
burdened depths of the unknown.

the craft of the poet to open one more treasure-room
door for the common man.

There will be a poet's message in new signs. The ordering of letters
is called:

LETTERISM.

It is not a poetic school, but a solitary attitude.

AT THIS MOMENT: LETTERISM = ISIDORE ISOU.

Isou is awaiting his successors in poetry!

(Do they already exist somewhere, ready to burst forth
into history through books?)

EXCUSES FOR WORDS INTRODUCED INTO LITERATURE

There are things which are existent only in the strength of
their name.

there are others which exist, but lacking a name are
unacknowledged.

Every idea needs a calling card to make itself known.

Ideas are known by the name of their creator.

It is more objective to name them after themselves.

LETTERISM IS AN IDEA THAT

WILL BE LAMENTED BY ITS REPUTATION

Letterics is a material that can always be demonstrated.

Letterics seeds already existing:

NONSENSE WORDS;

WORDS WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS IN THEIR LETTERS;

ONOMATOPOEIAS.

If this material existed before, it didn't have a name to
recognize it by.

Letterics works will be those made entirely out of this element,
but with

suitable rules and genres!

The word exists and has the right to perpetuate itself.

ISOU IS CALLING ATTENTION TO ITS EXISTENCE.

It is up to the Letterist to develop Letterism.
Letterism is offering a DIFFERENT poetry.
LETTERISM imposes a NEW POETRY.
THE LETTERIC AVALANCHE IS ANNOUNCED.
1942.

**television manifesto of the spatial movement
by ambrosini, burri, crippa, deluigi, de toffoli, dova, donati, fontana, giancarozzi,
guidi, joppolo, la regina, milena milani, morucchio, peverelli, tancredi, vianello
17th may 1952**

Television Manifesto

of the Spatial Movement

For the first time throughout the world, we Spatialists are using television to transmit our new forms of art based on the concepts of space, to be understood from two points of view:

the first concerns spaces that were once considered mysterious but that are now known and explored, and that we therefore use as plastic material:

the second concerns the still unknown spaces of the cosmos - spaces to which we address ourselves as data of intuition and mystery, the typical data of art as divination.

For us, television is a means that we have been waiting for to give completeness to our concepts. We are happy that this Spatial manifestation of ours is being transmitted from Italy - a manifestation destined to renew the fields of art.

It is true that art is eternal, but it was always tied down to matter, whereas we want it to be freed from matter.

Through space, we want it to be able to last a millennium even for a transmission of only a minute.

Our artistic expressions multiply the lines of the horizon to the infinite and in infinite dimensions. They are a research for an aesthetic in which a painting is no longer painted, a sculpture no longer sculpted, and in which the written page leaves behind its typographical form.

We Spatialists feel ourselves to be the artists of today, since the conquests of technology are by now at the service of the art we profess.

Signed by,

AMBROSINI, BURRI, CRIPPA, DELUIGI, DE TOFFOLI, DOVA, DONATI,
FONTANA, GIANCAROZZI, GUIDI, JOPPOLO, LA REGINA, MILENA MILANI,
MORUCCHIO, PEVERELLI, TANCREDI, VIANELLO.

Milan, May 17, 1952

auto-destructive art manifesto
by gustav metzger
1959

Auto-destructive art is primarily a form of public art for industrial societies.

Self-destructive painting, sculpture and construction is a total unity of idea, site, form, colour, method, and timing of the disintegrative process.

Auto-destructive art can be created with natural forces, traditional art techniques and technological techniques.

The amplified sound of the auto-destructive process can be an element of the total conception.

The artist may collaborate with scientists, engineers.

Self-destructive art can be machine produced and factory assembled.

Auto-destructive paintings, sculptures and constructions have a life time varying from a few moments to twenty years. When the disintegrative process is complete the work is to be removed from the site and scrapped.

auto-destructive art manifesto
by gustav metzger
1960

Man In Regent Street is auto-destructive.

Rockets, nuclear weapons, are auto-destructive.

Auto-destructive art.

The drop drop dropping of HH bombs.

Not interested in ruins, (the picturesque)

Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummeling to which individuals and masses are subjected.

Auto-destructive art mirrors the compulsive perfectionism of arms manufacture - polishing to destruction point.

Auto-destructive art is the transformation of technology into public art. The immense productive capacity, the chaos of capitalism and of Soviet communism, the co-existence of surplus and starvation; the increasing stock-piling of nuclear weapons - more than enough to destroy technological societies; the disintegrative effect of machinery and of life in vast built-up a reason the person,...

Auto-destructive art is art which contains within itself an agent which automatically leads to its destruction within a period of time not to exceed twenty years. Other forms of auto-destructive art involve manual manipulation. There are forms of auto-destructive art where the artist has a tight control over the nature and timing of the disintegrative process, and there are other forms where the artist's control is slight.

Materials and techniques used in creating auto-destructive art include: Acid, Adhesives, Ballistics, Canvas, Clay, Combustion, Compression, Concrete, Corrosion, Cybernetics, Drop, Elasticity, Electricity, Electrolysis, Feed-Back, Glass, Heat, Human Energy, Ice, Jet, Light, Load, Mass-production, Metal, Motion Picture, Natural Forces, Nuclear Energy, Paint, Paper, Photography, Plaster, Plastics, Pressure, Radiation, Sand, Solar Energy, Sound, Steam, Stress, Terra-cotta, Vibration, Water, Welding, Wire, Wood.

dada

by jean (hans) arp

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Dada wanted to destroy men's pretences at reason and rediscover the natural, unreasonable order of things. Dada wanted to replace the logical nonsense of men today by illogical meaninglessness. This was why we beat the great Dada drum and trumpeted long and loud the praises of unreason. Dada gave a clyster to the Venus de Milo and allowed Laocoon and his sons to relax after fighting a several-thousand-year battle with that fat sausage-snake. Philosophers mean less to Dada than an old toothbrush long since thrown away and so Dada leaves them to the great world leaders. Dada denounces the devilish tricks of the official vocabulary of wisdom. Dada is for meaninglessness, which is not the same as nonsense. Dada is as meaningless as nature. Dada is for nature and against art. Dada is as direct as nature. Dada is for infinite meaning and definite means.

Dada objects are made from things that have been found or manufactured, plain or complicated. The Chinese a few thousand years ago, Duchamp, Picabia in the United States, Schwitters and myself during the 1914 war were the first to invent and spread abroad these toys of wisdom and perspicacity which were to cure human beings of the wild madness of genius and bring them gently back to their place in the proper order of things. The natural beauty of these objects is a basic part of them, like that of a bunch of flowers gathered by children. Thousands of years ago, an Emperor of China sent his artists to the furthest of his lands to find the rare and unusually-shaped stones he loved to collect and he set them on pedestals alongside his vases and his gods. This pleasant

pastime would never suit our thinkers, modern Jacks-in-office who lie in wait for the connoisseur like hotel porters stalking customers at a station.

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