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IN THE SPIRIT OF DADA MAN RAY, THE RIDGEFIELD GAZOOK, AND TNT

by

Emma Husar

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the English

Jennifer Buckley
Thesis Mentor

Spring 2017

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
English have been completed.

Marie Kruger
English Honors Advisor

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on understanding two Dada Publications printed by artist Man Ray: *The Ridgefield Gazook* (1915) and *TNT* (1919). While the word Dada was not formally attached to the New York artists' movements at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was clear that some New York avant-garde poetry and art functioned in a "Dada Spirit". Here I will examine one publication issued before the word Dada was used to designate an artistic network and one after, to see how one artist (later proclaimed Dadaist) treated Dada in New York. Overall, these printed Dada periodicals help one see aesthetic, political, and social concerns that bred New York Dada.

Since understanding what exactly Dada is no easy feat, I will use Johanna Drucker's *The Visible Word* to glimpse how the physical and typographical elements of these New York periodicals relate to those in Europe. Second, Francis Naumann's scholarship on the life and works of Man Ray in New York offer a comprehensive understanding of the social and historical implications in Man Ray's specific works. These in combination with several other scholars whose works range from Dada's history to the history of mass media offer this thesis a more comprehensive picture of New York Dada periodicals and their implications.

Thinking about the periodical as principal medium to share Dada with the world, I attempt to see how typographic innovation and strategic production of each periodical was influenced by the cultural and political happenings surrounding them. Though Dada publications are largely an assemblage of contradictory works, Man Ray who would later launch the official "New York Dada" periodical in 1921, shows in these two how the proto-Dada sentiments were, like in Zürich, driven by a critique of the social and political climate than mere irreverence.

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Introduction

Dada came into being (came into consciousness) the same time that the Great War in Europe was at a peak. European artists fleeing the war sought refuge in places like Zürich, in neutral Switzerland, and New York City. In these places of sanctuary the new avant-garde art was emerging, in part, as a response to the war. It was an art that affronted conventional modes of representation through its attitude towards politics and media culture, often disrupting convention within the bounds of periodicals (compilations of art and poetry printed to share the works of artists working in a similar vein). Through these periodicals, often sent throughout Europe and across the Atlantic—to and from the US—an exchange of radical ideas concerning the prospects and limits of poetry and art was under way.

Avant-garde poetry and art at the beginning of the twentieth century challenged not only how one defines art, but how or if one understands reality. This sentiment, though not unique to Dada, was at a peak in the early 1900s. Tristan Tzara, one of the leading Dadaists in Zürich, describes Dada in the *Dada Manifesto 1918* as, “the roar of contorted pains, the interweaving of contraries and of all contradictions, freaks and irrelevancies: LIFE” (Tzara 13). If we take to this description, Dada and LIFE have a common base in contradiction. There is no stable ground on which to define Dada because it attempts to break the constraints of definition. Tzara wrote earlier in the manifesto, “this is a word that throws up ideas so that they can be shot down” (4), actively denying attachment to ideas or definitions, and if it strives for anything, it strives to stir up controversy and contradiction. Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to form this thesis around such a transient movement. A movement (if we can even call it such) that claims to make

no stance other than it has no stance. Both Tzara and Man Ray have said, “Dada is a state of mind,” Tzara in *Lecture on Dada* from 1922 and Ray from an article in *The New York Evening Journal* in 1921 (Tzara 112; Kuenzli 141). This statement strives to show its very ephemerality that is ironically challenged by the periodical, a fixed artifact of Dada that today is even commodified.

This thesis will examine two New York Dada “periodicals” printed by Man Ray. I put quotations around periodicals because, in fact, Dada even broke through the constraints of publishing a periodical periodically. I will call them “periodicals” because even though the two I will examine only include one issue, the majority indicate that there might be a succession of issues. They include an issue number (in the case of *The Ridgefield Gazook*, it is “no. 0” and in *TNT* it is “no. 1”) which indicates that the artist(s) are working in the realm of the periodical in order to challenge its assumed function as a timely, recurring publication. The periodicals I examine challenge the definition of a periodical that had been accepted by publications such as *291* or *Dada* whose issues follow a numerically linear progression—a nearly unquestioned convention (excusing the combined editions such as *291* no. 5-6 or *Dada* no. 4/5) that *The Ridgefield Gazook* and *TNT* seem to mock since they are the only issue or number of their kind. These dynamic compilations of art and literature—ironically—preserved that which challenged preservation on the basis that nothing is permanent. “Ironically” because ephemerality is central to both Dada art and the avant-garde more broadly. According to Tzara’s *Dada Manifesto on Feeble Love and Bitter Love*, “good bad, religion poetry, spirit skepticism,/ definition definition,/ that’s why you’re all going to die” (41). No matter what, Tzara reminds the audience of the imminence of death and the ephemerality of life, definition and convention. While these documents are scattered in different libraries and museums and will, with time, wither, they offer

the present time insights into thinking about what Dada was like and what, perhaps, it might have been responding to. Within the living documents we might understand (and in doing so, admit the potential to misunderstand) the wild and subversive attributes of Dada.

This thesis will examine two specific periodicals from New York published by Man Ray and Adolf Wolff (who will not be the main focus of this study): *The Ridgefield Gazook*, published before the term Dada was coined in Europe, and *TNT*, published just after, and two years shy of Dada's official arrival in New York. I examine these documents to see how Dada or proto-Dada functioned in New York, a place largely detached from WWI, yet was seemingly sprung from similar political tensions from which European Dada arose. In looking at the compilation of works in these publications, their material textuality, as well as the cultural and political climate which they may have critiqued, it becomes clear that Dada and all its contradictions were not simply neutral and destructive, but reflected important resistance to the political climate at the time.¹

Dada—the art and writing that means nothing and everything simultaneously—is generally thought to be born in Zürich, Switzerland where the word itself was first coined in 1916. There, the arts were in the midst of being torn to shreds by artists themselves. Groups of artists from across Europe had fled the war to create a community of experimental artists in neutral Switzerland. These artists—including Tristan Tzara, Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, and Marcel Janco, to name a few—stood upon the stage of a back room of the venue the Höllandische Meierei. Richter describes it as, “a bar in Niederdorf, a slightly disreputable quarter of the highly reputable town of Zürich,” that Dadaists took over for a few evenings and called it

¹ I will not have the space to delve into the intricate political climate of this time period, but will allow the interpretation of the texts to bring up specific political instances that might have shaped their construction.

the Cabaret Voltaire (13). At this café turned night club (just down the street from V.I. Lenin's apartment), the artists played musical instruments out of time and tune, wore "primitive" masks, and recited poetry that stripped language to only its sounds.

Imagine a fully grown man wrapped in a cylinder of silver cardboard complete with a cardboard cape, pointy claws and a tall crimped hat—he calls himself a "magic bishop"—chanting "jolifanto bambla ô falli bambla..." (Huelsenbeck 61). Or three people speaking poems in French, German, and Romanian all at once: "simultaneous poems" as they were called. The walls from which these sounds resonated were hung with images of distorted bodies and abstract machines, most notably by Pablo Picasso, Francis Picabia and Man Ray. These individuals battled against conventional definitions of painting, publishing, writing, sculpting, and performing. Any act of creation or expression that existed under certain unified constraints, these avant-garde artists strove to overthrow and recreate.

In February 1916, the Cabaret Voltaire produced a self-titled journal put together by Hugo Ball, a founder of the Cabaret whose time there was short lived, quitting the Dada scene and converting to Christianity. Its cover is bright, blood red and its contents combined experimental prose and amorphous black figures. Literature and art were entangled betwixt each other only to begin the long chain of blurred lines between the two mediums of artistic expression. It was among these unique pages that this raucous art was coined "Dada."

As typographic innovations expanded and when Tzara, a Romanian war refugee, took control of the magazine's production in 1918, the more regularly produced periodical *Dada* came on the scene. He elicited works not only from Dada artists, but expanded its scope to Italian

Futurists, Symbolists, and Cubists. Tzara made an enormous effort to spread the word of Dada across Europe and to America, and was able to do so with these periodicals.

While Dada's roots are generally assumed to be European, as early as 1911 in the United States, groups of artists congregated at salon parties and showed their art in confrontational galleries. In the early teens, at Grantwood, New Jersey, neighbors with the Ridgefield Artists' Colony, thirty minutes outside of Manhattan, a group of avant-garde artists migrated from the city to the picturesque country-side to party and talk poetry. At this soiree Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and Marcel Duchamp, among other prominent artists and poets shared sandwiches, alcohol, coffee, and the summer air. Some artists came from New England, some from Europe, some from Mexico, all working together to shift the conventional understanding of poetics. The festivities were brimming on "carnavalesque" (Voyce 629). According to scholar Robert M. Crunden, this among other parties was a "semi-mythical ur-source for inspiration, high-jinks, sexual liberation, and alcohol-fueled feelings of mateship" (629). The seams of art and poetry—the classics, the rhyme scheme, the meter—came undone. These revolutionary artists strove to step away from manifestos and constraints, in an anarchic spirit that flourished among them. Unlike the manifesto-bent Zürich Dadaists, those in New York seemed—perhaps in *more* of a Dada spirit than Dada—to create experimental works that broke conventions without re-categorizing them. While Zürich Dada categorized their works in an ironic sense—they defined Dada by saying it cannot be defined—those in New York did not even go that far, they seem to be wrapped up in the undefined, raw works themselves, not ascribing them a name by which they could be categorized.

The anarchic spirit imbued within this group of artists was spurred in one respect by an Anarchic school that got its start in the beginning of the twentieth century: the Ferrer Center. A

“liberal school of child and adult education located on East 107th Street in New York’s Spanish Harlem,” the School greatly experimented with modern art taught by diverse professionals who attempted to “create an atmosphere of complete freedom for the students” (Kuenzli 10, 16). This institution is where Man Ray of Pennsylvania and Adolf Wolff of Austria met. There most of the teachers were volunteers dedicated to education based in anarchy. In fact, Francis Naumann, arguably the most learned scholar on New York Dada (specifically on Man Ray) said that Man Ray’s most influential teacher at the Ferrer Center “helped to create a spirit of freedom in the art class which probably did not exist anywhere else in New York at that time” (Kuenzli 11). Along with several partygoers in attendance at Grantwood, they broke what was conventional to explore an art more in tune with the spirit of technology and manufacturing that was happening all over the New York city scape. As Picabia wrote during his second trip to America, “Since machinery is the soul of the modern world, and since the genius of machinery attains its highest expression in America, why is it not reasonable to believe that in America the art of the future will flower most brilliantly?” (Kuenzli 3).

In order to clarify—as much as one is able to clarify Dada—I hope to briefly conceptualize the “Dada Spirit” and how it functioned in New York pre-Dada. Ironically, the most effective way to do so is by asking the oh-so-complicated question: where did Dada actually get its name? In order to do so, we submit ourselves to, perhaps, one of the longest running Dada pranks, for defining Dada is a contradiction in it of itself.² The name itself “Dada” is a basic word that defies (as opposed to the similarly constructed word, defines) boundaries of language, as it is a part of numerous (predominantly Western) languages. Dada might mean hobby-horse (French); a double affirmative (yes-yes in Russian and Romanian); goodbye, get off

² For competing stories on the adoption of the term Dada, see Richter (32).

my back, or I'll be seeing you soon (German); father (English); or a baby's first words or sounds in practically any language. This overflow of meaning paradoxically strips meaning from the word itself (Richter 31). Thus the word "Dada" describes exactly what Dada means, at least to Tzara, as translated by Barbara Wright: "DADA DOES NOT MEAN ANYTHING" (Tzara 4).³

This is what we can imagine as the "Dada Spirit," the prank inside of which paradox lives. For in effacing the history of the very name of this artistic movement the Dadaists challenge the way in which Western culture remembers or historicizes and challenges the static nature of such a history. Further, in effacing any one definition of the word "Dada" they also challenge the national boundaries of language that during WWI were under attack. For my purposes and for clarity's sake, though New York artists did not accept the name Dada until 1921, I will use the name New York Dada and New York Dadaists to describe the artists that were working in this "Dada Spirit" even before the Cabaret Voltaire premiered.

To more accurately characterize the emergence of Dada in New York as the New Yorkers understood it, I take some quotes from the news media that sought to cover this new art. In a 1921 article by Margery Rex for *The New York Evening Journal*, "'Dada' Will Get You if You Don't Watch Out: It Is on the Way Here," Man Ray said, "It consists largely of negations" (Kuenzli 141). Earlier in the article, a subtitle reads, *Founder Explains What [Dada] Means*. The text beneath begins with the Tzara quote, derived from his 1918 manifesto: "Dada means nothing" (140). Later, Marcel Duchamp elaborates: "For instance the Dadaists say that everything is nothing; nothing is good, nothing is interesting, nothing is important[...]it is very contradictory" (140). Katherine Dreier, director of the Société Anonyme and significant New

³ The original French, "Dada ne signifie rien," is also translated to say "DADA MEANS NOTHING" included in *The Dada Painters and Poets* anthology edited by Robert Motherwell (77).

York modern art collector said: “Dada is irony [...] That is, its basic idea” (140). The parameters of Dada were clear (or rather, they were strikingly unclear) to those in New York in the late teens and early twenties. Yet while these artists now had a word to define their art, they had exercised their art and poetry in a very similar vein before Dada “arrived” in New York. However, what I will examine in the following chapters, is how even in Zürich the Dada spirit deliberately means nothing to challenge meaning itself. During the war the destabilization of meaning worked to disrupt political and social constructs that rely on words and their significations.

Dada critiqued those constructs, in one respect, in its defiance of boundaries—national boundaries, language boundaries, and boundaries of mediums. Works produced within the short time frame of the determined movement (1916-1924) were sculptures, paintings, plays, poetry, prose, costumes, and the performance of all, sometimes simultaneously, and most of which recorded in “periodicals,” like *Dada*, that comprised various formats. Some were published once, some, semi-frequently, some every time the artist felt like it, from a new city and printer each time. They were, in New York and Zürich, anarchists who, according to scholar Allan Antliff, “shared contempt for capitalism, war, and patriotism” (213).

To understand Dada’s role in the United States, Martin Puchner in his book *Poetry of the Revolution* notes, “Dada is always elsewhere, imported and transient, redirecting the print cultures that had created the imagined community of the nation-state into a multilingual and non-national direction” (136). In this sense, Dada resembles the US whose citizens are comprised of people from “elsewhere” to have created a “nation-state;” the publications comprise works from peoples all over the western world and comprise one singular publication. Dada was a borderless movement. Few Dadaists at the Cabaret Voltaire were in fact Swiss, most had defected there from the war and created a multi-national artistic community in a place to which none truly

belonged. The migration of diverse peoples to New York mirrors the melding of cultures that occurred in Zürich at that point in time.

Thus, the melting pot of ideas and perspectives in New York were crucial to forming this uniquely “American” art and literature that worked in the Dada spirit. For instance, Adon Lacroix, whose family was experiencing hardship in Belgium, mobilized Man Ray—her husband from 1914-19—to become more resistant towards the war (Kuenzli 25). Duchamp, in a similar vein sought refuge in New York, and became revered in there for his radical ideas and artworks. The language that came to characterize New York Dada was largely dependent on this mashup of culture and of medium. Duchamp, learning English in New York, found that there were words he could not translate: “ready-made” being one of them.⁴ This term demonstrates a mix of French and English specific to the New York consumerist rhetoric (one that describes Duchamp’s infamous art piece *Fountain*) that represents a nuanced way that Europeans in America played with language and meaning and came to be determined as American. Further, names, like ready-made, can even be seen as a critique of larger systems (fashion business and fashion as art works, and even language systems) at work in society.

The material progress of the United States during this industrial boom of the early nineteenth century could be considered symbolic for artistic progression, creating a unique atmosphere engendering the artistic engineering of a new poetic landscape. “America” according to Puchner “was specifically attuned to the internationalism of this gigantic capitalist circulation

⁴ According to Craig Adcock, an art historian, “ready-made” in English referred to “ready-made garments.” He writes, “Part of Duchamp’s fascination with the term had to do with the way he could use it to imply that works of art were cloaked in mere appearance and that their interpretation and evaluation changed according to systems amounting to nothing more serious than fashion. The use of the English designation thus gave the ready-mades another dimension of meaning—one that added to the significance of the original French expression without wholly supplanting it. By incorporating subtle language variations into the ready-mades, Duchamp could engage in a kind of transatlantic interchange of meaning” (Kuenzli 52).

of goods, capitol, people, and signs. ‘America,’ ‘Americanism,’ and ‘Americanization’ then—as now—served as the geographic markers, the topographic names, for stateless capitalism” (141). “Americanization,” seems to be a land driven by capital rather than national identity. The whole country was based off the “American” ideology of being a melting pot (despite the rejection and displacement of Native populations whose land was taken and citizenship denied for nearly two centuries). To Puchner, “America” as an idea mirrors the idea of Dada. Rather than in Zürich where artists came together because of the circumstances of war, the American population was more inherently diverse, more fertile ground for mixed and anarchic opinions and technological innovations.⁵ Thus it may be argued that America is more Dada—more organically Dada—than Zürich Dada ever was.⁶

New York art collector and poet, Walter Conrad Arensberg who alongside his partner Louise Arensberg hosted wild, poetic salon parties, wrote the manifesto “Dada is American” (qtd. in Puchner 141). Richard Huelsenbeck of the German Dada wrote, interestingly, “Dada is the American side of Buddhism” (141). Even Ball noted benefits of absorbing Americanism into art’s principles as a matter of progress away from the Eurocentric Romanticism (141). These sentiments render the United States as a place where modernism and Dada specifically are more embodied than theorized or attempted. However, in striving to find or define Dada, I fear I might unintentionally limit its scope—overall, I hope to offer a nuanced understanding of what Dada really was; it might have been more than just the subversion of meaning Tzara preached.

⁵ However, the argument might be made that Paris in the twenties was equally as mixed, if not more, and that spurred the highly experimental and almost Freudian-inspired surrealists.

⁶ However, to counter this idea, Kenneth Burke points out in his essay *Dada, Dead or Alive*, “Dada feeds off tradition [...] and America is not entitled to a Dada movement until we have created, after several hundred years, a cultural integer ripe for disintegration” (Kuenzli 124). This is perhaps why the word Dada never really stuck when referring to New York modernist movements.

This thesis will primarily focus on two lesser known New York periodicals published by Man Ray: *The Ridgefield Gazook* and *TNT*. The former was hand drawn by the artist in 1915 and embodies more playful aspects of Dada. The latter, published in 1919, is more serious, more professional, and demonstrates the more subtle disruption in Dada.

The first chapter outlines the more technical qualities of these two periodicals and how the typographic experimentation worked in order to primarily re-envision language, cross the borders of how language could be presented in these periodicals. The second chapter will show how these functions mock advertising and their mechanical and commercial influences in New York politics and industry. This chapter will then transition into how textual mockery of mass media offered New York Dadaists other opportunities to destabilize the meaning in language. Finally, the third chapter will reveal the political and social themes being parodied and will demonstrate how *The Ridgefield Gazook* and *TNT* differ in their presentation of societal critique.

All in all, what Dada really *is* is nearly impossible to define. My argument strives to show that what we classify as “Dada” today stretched beyond the bounds of what was classified as “Dada” then. The art and literature and periodicals in New York, produced before the word “Dada” came to classify the movement, are almost more Dada than what we understand to be Dada today. *The Ridgefield Gazook* and *TNT* sought to change conventional definitions of art and literature in response to their contemporary political and social climate in US and globally. These periodicals do so by re-imagining the uses of materials such as advertisements, urinals, and the printing press (to name a few), and upending the expectations of a consumer culture.

CHAPTER 1

Subversive Textuality on the Pages of the Periodicals

For many Dada periodicals, one of the most poignant characteristics became the typography: their innovative presentation of language. The possibility of radically redefining the scope of the printed page allowed avant-garde artists the ability to *impress* their ideas in a visually radical manner that matched their radical intentions. This innovation in typography that Dada draws on is something that allows the words to leap off the page in exclamation, in a fashion similar to advertising at the time. When words seem to leap off the page depending on different fonts and type-size and clauses that construct sentences are left scattered, disembodied; the meaning in symbols and letters visually break apart. That which we understand as a meaningful combination of symbols (that form words, sentences, paragraphs—units of meaning) is reformatted in many Dada publications to re-form that meaning, to revise (re-vision) language and meaning.

By Tzara's third number of *Dada* in Zürich, the Dadaists' anarchist printer, Julius Heurberger was sent to prison. It was up to Tzara himself to also supervise the typesetting (Lewer 1046). Thus in this issue the block text (typical of written works, this thesis included) shifted around the page, lines broke off from paragraphs, words from sentences and the experimental periodical in Zürich was taking off.

However, while Tzara admits influence by the Futurists typographic works, they do not appear in his own publications until the third number—at the same time Picabia was printing *391* no. 8 (February 1919) in Zürich. Picabia began *391* after spending time on and off in the United

States, modeling the name off of US born artist and curator Alfred Stieglitz's periodical *291*. Now, both *291* and Picabia's *391* hosted poetic and artistic experimentation three years before *Dada* was first printed in 1917. It is unknown whether Picabia directly influenced *Dada no. 3* (December 1918), however they were printed within two months of each other in Zürich, where Picabia and Tzara were in close contact. When *Dada 3* came out it was roughly 13.5 by 10 inches (from my own measurements), the same size as *391*, which was about was nearly a quarter larger than the size of *Dada 1* and *2*. *Dada 3* also adopted typographical nuances—the letters and phrases began to move across the page more so than they did with Heurberger as printer. The similarities between the two layouts suggest the possibility that this was a product of an aesthetic transaction between *391* and *Dada*. *Dada 1* and *2* followed a more traditional format where an image was placed on one page and a block of text on an adjacent page; while previous publications of *391* were larger than *Dada* and allowed image and word to appear side by side on the same page, it still only printed texts in one overarching font and direction (left to right lines in two columns). This changed for both publications that winter of 1918-19. The direction of two written pieces in *Dada 3*, on the fifth and fourteenth pages, face to the right so the reader must physically turn the page ninety degrees to read it; *391* no. 8 similarly, in a passage written by Tzara on the fifth page, is flipped upside down, requiring a one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn of the publication. If this transaction between Picabia and Tzara took place, then the transatlantic exchange of periodicals and printing ideas broke the boundaries not only of artistic convention but the national boundaries of culture.

However, predating Dada in Zürich and even proto-Dada in New York, were other avant-garde groups also attempting this material experimentation. This relatively new technique (for the early twentieth century) got its start in an earlier avant-garde movement, Italian Futurism. For

F.T. Marinetti the letters separated from the words and were splayed across the page to make just an individual letter represent so much more than its sound. In his publication of *Mots en Liberté* (Words in Freedom), his work entitled *Après la Marne, Joffre visita le front en auto* is a prime example of the typographic possibility. A large “M” is made to look like two mountain peaks in the top left corner of the page, within the “M” is the word “FRANCE.” The rest of the piece mixes symbols (+; =; x) with words, some onomatopoeic, and large letters (M; S; N; H; U; Z) slinking across the page, connecting all in an image that seems to represent the madness of the “GUERRE,” World War I in Europe. Here—to isolate just one aspect of this incredibly complex typographic image—the “M” no longer represents only an “mm” sound, but it represents mountains, the boundary between France and Spain, or France and Switzerland, or France and Italy. It was from experiments in type such as these that Dada inherited and took a step further. For Dada did not have a central focus of speed or blatant destruction of old institutions and libraries. Dada (in one way it was deployed) contradicted itself and everything that it came in contact with. It used this form of textual movement and experimentation not to show national boundaries with letters and depict war in the scattered and explosive typography, but more so to question the convention of war and depict its intrinsic contradictions.

Avant-garde periodicals through the beginning of the twentieth century are significant because of their manipulation of space on the printed page. Previous to this time period, as Johanna Drucker notes in *The Visible Word*, “While the graphic vocabulary of metal type had been unlimited, the conventions which governed its use had established a very limited range of applications” (96). These publications are significant because they began to manipulate the use of long established printing machines in completely new ways.

Interestingly, visual art became more mechanical with harsh straight lines as typography broke away from the straight lines and paragraphs and adopted visual qualities that link words more closely to that which they define; images became more mechanical while words morphed away from their mechanical state in contemporary printing. While artists like Tzara, Picabia, and Ray formed seemingly conventional periodicals, they used the pages to upend expectations in similar ways to what was happening to their art and writing. Overall, Dada typographic works did not always surpass the explosive qualities of Marinetti. Yet they deployed the periodical to house unique juxtapositions of their experimental works and allow that contradiction and questioning quintessential of Dada works.

This is clear in Man Ray and Adolf Wolff's publication of *TNT* (1919). This periodical was not circulated widely and was described as "not particularly amusing" and "monotonous" by a contemporary critic Henry McBride, and as "radical" by Ray—the descriptions embody the very uncertain or contradictory nature of *TNT* (Naumann 201-3). The first two pages that face each other are a line drawing of a woman with a bird in her hand and looking to the right towards the poem *ETYMONS* by Adon LaCroix. (I will explore the details of this image and its place on the first page of this periodical in the third chapter; for now it is significant to think of the bird in her hand and the printing of the poem on the second page). *ETYMONS* was originally hand-lettered and hand-printed by Ray in January 1917 (Naumann 175). In English, according to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), "etymons" means, "The antecedent form of a word; the word or any of the separate words from which another word has developed historically by borrowing, derivation, compounding, etc." Already the title alludes to a primitive language system, one that is not fully formed. In this way it is fitting that it appears as the first written piece in the periodical to kick off a potential progression of meaning.

ETYMONS as a visual construct is not totally stripped of conventional poetic structure; it appears in two columns on the page and each column consists of linear type. However, there is a mix of fonts and font sizes. The majority of the lines are bolded and appear in all caps, clearly dominating the page. Because of this, the other small, italicized words that are the only obviously legible words in English seem to fall into the background of the poem and can be easily overlooked. (In fact, the first few times I read this poem I completely overlooked the smaller type.) The majority of the “words” that construct the body of this poem are stripped of conventional meaning, a conglomeration of seemingly meaningless sounds. In this way, the poem utilizes more experimental typography for this time period to alter ones reading of the poem to focus on the sounds rather than the language.

To take a closer look at the poem, the first two bolded lines of the first six-line stanza reads, “DA DI ME / OMA DO RE TÉ.” These sounds are reminiscent of the “Do re mi” syllables of the musical scale system of solfege. However they are slightly altered so to be not totally recognizable. The writing of these sounds depicts a more human conceptualization of sounds and the organization and listing of tones. The middle two lines complicate this further. They read, “ZI MATA DURA / DI O. Q DURA.” Here the syllables of these sounds transform into two syllables. In the second line here, is the only form of punctuation—a period. If reading the letters before the period, their combination is reminiscent of the word for “God” in Italian: “Dio”. In this way, LaCroix uses punctuation, potentially, to make the reader want to find meaning out of the inherently meaningless sounds. What’s more, LaCroix introduces repetition of the word “DURA.” In using this recognizable poetic device, it may cause the reader to wonder why this is being emphasized. In Spanish, “Dura” means “hard.” Also “Mata” in Spanish could either mean “bush or shrub” or in the second or third person singular conjugation means “Kill.”

Yet, she was a Belgian and it is not certain if she is actually alluding to the Spanish (or Italian) here. Either way, it shows a progression of meaning making that alludes back to the title of the poem, *ETYMONS*, meaning as stated in the *OED*, “the antecedent form of a word.” In these antecedent forms it shows how the non-lingual edges on the multi-lingual since these almost-words can pass for many different languages (albeit, principally romance languages). As this stanza alone comes to a close, it reads, “TI MA TOITURA / DI ZRATATITOILA.” By the end, these syllabic sounds are more complex. The sounds that began with the single syllabic “DA” transform into a five-syllable sound. In doing so it nearly shows the confusion of sound, the more complex it becomes, the more difficult to decipher, such as with conventional forms of language.

The last syllable of the first stanza is “la” one of the solfege sounds that had not previously been used in that opening stanza. It transitions to the second stanza that relies almost solely on this sound. The second stanza is very repetitive, beginning with “LA LA LAR-R-RITA” and repeats “LAR-R-RITA” two more time. To recall the image that precedes this poem, these sounds are reminiscent of the bird that sits on the hand of the woman. The bird in this image is, in comparison to the mere line drawing of the woman, bolded, the wing and head are filled in to stand out like the prominent “meaning-less” syllables. Additionally, when one speaks “LA LA LAR-R-RITA” out loud, it almost sounds like bird noise. The placement of these two, though initially confusing, might inform the other. What’s more, at the end of this second stanza are the small and italicized words: “I love you.” In reading the bolded “LA-R-RITA” as the bird, the “I love you” seems to recall the more fragile drawing of the woman, the human. In this way language is nearly equated with humanity and the sounds, with the bird. While, if we are to consider this work a part of a Dada periodical then it becomes difficult to ascribe meaning to these pieces. Yet, there seems to be a critique of man versus nature hidden in the typographic

choices that surround this work—breaking the boundaries through the use of this typography to critique the social role of human beings.

Furthermore, from a distance, the first line of *ETYMONS* seems to be “DA DI ME,” however, the first line is actually the lower-case, small font, and italicized phrase, “not so.” The poem itself might be a dialogue between the woman and the bird, where she begins with the English language, and the bird responds with sounds that we can only understand when we ascribe our own meaning-making system: solfege. Otherwise, it appears to overthrow the very meaning it elicits. In beginning with the easily concealed and ambiguous phrase, “not so” it is unclear if the poem is “not so” or if the title, “etymons” is “not so” or not real, not correct.

After the next and final two stanzas that I do not have the space here to fully analyze, the poem ends with the small print words in the bottom of the page and just off center to the right. It reads, “mi o do r’e mi mi o/ ‘marmelade’.” While it is unclear what “marmalade” refers to, it seems as if the preliminary sounds or “etymons” have become a recognizable word. The visual and grammatical similarities between “mi o do r’e mi mi” and “marmelade” make it seem as if the human voice is attempting to cross the divide of sound and meaning. The disjointed sounds (the bird) and words (the human) combine into a word whose meaning is not clear in this context: “marmalade.” It is written in the text inside of quotations and it signifies a type of jam, often an orange jam, however its placement in this piece seems to harken on the similarity the sound has to sounds that are meaningless, ultimately confusing the meaning of the word “marmalade.” Overall, this is one instance that kicks off *TNT*, showing the subversive and complex use of typography to manipulate the meaning in this New York Dada publication.

Often, Dada's words visually and conceptually spill over the boundaries of twentieth century literary constraints in order to efface those constraints and their societally constructed significance. Doing so in fact creates a portal from which we see through the cracks of fractured language to envision new realities. This was a basis for Zürich Dada. Tzara states: "How can one expect to put order into the chaos that constitutes that infinite and shapeless variation: man?" (Tzara 5). In this way, Tzara invokes an important contradiction that exists within the public language and public documents, questioning the ability of language to actually characterize (put *characters* to) the human experience. Interestingly, in New York, a slightly different idea spread, that of a human resemblance to the machine, that which was brimming during industrialization of the US at the time of Dada's pervasion. Many artistic works such as the word art of Marius De Zayas and Katherine Drier found in *291*, replicate the mimesis of human and machine. The typographic image *Femme!* in *291* no. 9 equates an outline of a gun that is drawn on the following page with a lot of sexualized words referring to a woman (however, this is in French and I will not be able to further analyze it). Generally, this image equates language with the image of a machine that is thus sexualized by its denotation of *Femme!* in the first typographic image and *voilà ELLE* in the outline of the gun. Picabia was quoted in an anonymously published *New York Tribune* article *French Artists Spur on an American Art* in October 1915, he said, "I have been profoundly impressed by the vast mechanical development in America. The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of human life. It is really a part of human life—perhaps the very soul" (Kuenzli 131). Praising the "most admirable" architecture in New York, French Cubist Albert Gleizes says in the same article, "New York inspires me tremendously. [...] This is perhaps partly due to the height of buildings, but also the movement of humanity, streaming so steadily, so fixed of purpose,

knowing so exactly where the goal lies” (130). These artists demonstrate the close relationship between human and machine—the new technologies were a way to envision the “shapeless variation: man” in New York. The machines could “put order into” humanity, similar to the very printing press they used to print the periodicals that contained the machine styled art.

This use of typographic expression was only one way avant-garde artists began to radically redefine meaning through the space on the page that aestheticized language. The material construct of language in these periodicals “calls attention to the non-transparency of linguistic production served to demonstrate the way in which materiality necessarily embodied the semiological as well as the economic and political aspects of production” (Drucker 195-96). It is the physical materials, then, that are crucial to Dada’s attacks on “ideology through a subversive poetics” (195). As Drucker recognizes, what is significant about the construction (or destruction) of the typography and general materiality in the periodicals is that they allowed for Dada to push back at conventional meaning and logical representation, to use unexpected words and poetry from a “society of consumption” (195). “Meaning” as it appears in a “society of consumption” often takes the form of advertising in which the meaning of the words is persuasive and superficial. This type of language is thoughtlessly ingested by its audience, persuading them to enter into a capital exchange. Advertisement language and representation easily becomes part of the audience’s physical actions of purchasing that which is advertised. Dada, in mocking conventional meaning inherent to a capitalist society, questions the very foundation and consumption of meaning. It also pushes back at the logic and rhetoric that built up a capitalist society, picking it apart until the capitalist language is not recognizable. However, an issue with capitalist parody is that it becomes in itself a capital exchange of art, and falls into the structure which it mocks.

In this way, the periodicals begin to show chaos in their construction that brings one to question the role of language, of periodicals and of themselves in relation to it all. By this I mean to say it disrupts comfort and one's sense of self or community as it is imagined through the printed word. However, in relying on that structure and having an art that profits off of that very structure it parodies, Dada periodicals seem to fall back into the "society of consumption" (Drucker 195). They re-enter the capitalist world they once denied—viewing many of the original Dada periodicals in the library, knowing that they cost thousands of dollars apiece, shows their inability over time to evade the construct they set out to defy. An earlier periodical created by Man Ray, *The Ridgefield Gazook* (1915), denies the machine-quality of New York Dada in the hand drawn pages of this four-fold pamphlet, but parodies advertising conventions of the time as well as conventions of the periodical itself. In working within this format, Man Ray denies the audience the ability to fully understand or interpret the published pieces.

The Ridgefield Gazook (which from here on out I will abbreviate as *The Gazook*) was printed in 1915, one year before Dada, the word, was itself printed and established. Yet, like Dada it consisted of a chaotic and irreverent construction that in several instances mocks its own construction, mocks the reader, and mocks the political climate of the time. It does so, like Drucker points out, through the "non-transparency of linguistic production" (195). First and foremost, this work is clearly drawn by hand, breaking away from the constraints of a printing press and nearly reverting to a more primitive age before technology. In doing so, however, it opens up an even wider playing field for the linguistic formation and interaction with the page. Though *The Gazook* does resemble the layout of a newspaper, with headings suggesting different sections such as "Soshall Science" for "Social Science" or "Il'Litter-Ature" for "Literature," it flips that familiar construct on its head with its derisive content.

To follow Drucker's idea of "non-transparency," the most blatant example of this is on the final page—an example I will return to later—when a piece, allegedly by Kumoff (pseudonym for Manuel Komroff), entitled *Art Motes* is presented as just an ink splash that attempts to look accidental, but judging its perfect position on the page clearly shows that it was intentional.⁷ In one respect, this shows that even Dada works that attempt the unintentional or the random still have intention behind them. They too fall into a typical construct of art—its very intention that shapes the final product. In another, this appears to make the clear connection between the materials and the art it creates—they are only ink, and do not have a strict meaning. "Motes" is defined in multiple ways in the *OED*. One definition reads, "A particle of dust, *esp.* one of the innumerable minute specks seen floating in a beam of light," another, "A mound (natural or man-made), eminence, or hill," also, "The movement of a celestial object across the sky" ("Motes"). These varied definitions show also the varied definitions of art, or perhaps its indefinable qualities that here are boiled down to a splash of ink. In this way this periodical suggests what Tzara would later proclaim in *Dada 3* (1918), "Dada does not mean anything" as translated by Barbara Wright (Tzara 4). Also, in ending *The Gazook* with *Art Motes*, it questions the meaning of words came before it, making the reader recognize all that they had previously seen was just ink, nothing more. All the art may well be "a particle of dust," "a mound," or a "celestial body." The uncertainty in what art works actually are can only be

⁷ Man Ray met Komroff—an artist and musician who would later be known for his playwriting and novels—at the Ferrer Center where they presented art works side by side in the 1913 exhibition. Naumann notes that Komroff "published in the school's magazine an article entitled 'Art Transfusion,' by which term he meant that sculpture, painting and literature were becoming more and more like music while, at the same time, modern music was increasingly sharing qualities with the visual artists [...] he observed, 'they are all becoming one'" (Naumann 24). This, demonstrating, the breaking of boundaries between mediums to create a "melting pot" of art such as the melting pot of nationalities of people in the U.S. at the time.

represented as a symbol that attempts to destabilize the very meaning of art that pervades *The Gazook*.

An instance in *The Gazook* with a more compositionally radical construction is a piece on the third page entitled *Three Bombs*. In this piece there, like *Art Motes*, are no actual words aside from those in the title. Rather, it is a set of punctuation marks, emotive letters, and dashes where words might be. The first line of this piece reads: “—z—!!—z—“ and the last, “—zzz—?—“ (Ray). This shows, rather than as words would tell, the emotions following the drawn scene of three exploding bombs that accompany the “text” block—or should I say “punctuation” block. It renders a temporal scene where nothing happens (with the zs) and then lets the reader imagine some exciting event (with “!!”), and finally leaves the reader wondering what happened with the bombs (with the “?”). Because of the image present and the punctuation marks present (that range from exclamation points, to zs, to question marks) it renders the title nearly meaningless because the viewer can plainly see that there are three bombs. This not only doesn’t rely on words to tell the story. In a way it renders words meaningless—a strong theme throughout this publication.

In a piece about typography called *What is a Book?*, Roger Chartier and Peter Stallybrass recognize the significant role that punctuation plays in constructing a text. They quote from Hieronymus Hornschuch (1608) on the significance of punctuation in a conventional text: “Moreover, correct punctuation produces true elegance and leads more than anything else to a clear understanding of the subject-matter, whereas inconsistent punctuation is the product of a disorderly mind” (Chartier 190). In this way, Ray does key into an important role the printer/poet must play—including punctuation. However, in the Dada Spirit, *Three Bombs* takes it a step further and a step away from “a clear understanding of the subject-matter” since the punctuation

stands on its own and rather than being used to clarify words, it stands on its own, and clarifies, if anything the picture of the three bombs at the bottom of the section. The punctuation allows the reader to insinuate the general emotive plot of the story and breaks traditional convention of using punctuation only as an additional clarifier to the text.

Interestingly, this work is a non-fiction piece that depicts the events of three students of the Ferrer Center dying in an explosion.⁸ At first glimpse, without knowing the truth behind the symbols, it seems jocular and ridiculous. However, as seen at the very bottom of the piece, it does read, “Words by Adolf Lupo – Design by Man Ray” (Adolf Lupo being a more obvious pseudonym for Adolf Wolff). Perhaps this is Ray’s rendition of the poem he had dedicated to the dead men. While Wolff did have words to honor their memory, Ray seems to show that there are no words for death, only the emotion elicited by the symbols. Here, in deciphering the “meaning” of a piece such as this I seem to come to a dead end, or rather find myself caught in a web of potential meaningless interpretations. For in context with the rest of this periodical, one that is serious yet jocular, makes this interpretation of “death too strong for words” seem out of place. However, what the “prank” inherent in this very Dada publication could be that it was only meant to make light of the futility of language through the manipulation of the printed (or in this case, drawn, words/symbols). *The Gazook* demonstrates one way in which the visual (dare I say typographic) diversity of the page alters the meaning of the contents.

Dada periodicals became typographically diverse in the late teens and early twenties until the upswing of Surrealism overshadowed the efforts of dwindling Dadaists. During that time,

⁸ Naumann summarizes the incident and Wolff’s relation to it: “the three bombs are undoubtedly a reference to the three young anarchists from the Ferrer Center who were killed in July of 1914 when a bomb they were preparing blew up accidentally. Wolff knew the three young men and immediately after their deaths dedicated a poem to their memory, but he was best known in anarchist circles for his design of a bronze urn that was used to contain their ashes” (Naumann 123).

when Dada was on the rise in Europe and had not yet totally infiltrated New York, is when Ray published *TNT*. Despite the explosive and large type used on its cover, alluding to a periodical that will be in the theme of the more radical and typographically diverse Dada periodical, it is rather tame. *TNT* as opposed to *The Gazook* expresses a more mature Ray as printer; rather than written by hand, *TNT* was printed and employs a fairly conventional format that I will discuss in detail later. The only major typographical variety is in the center of the publication and is the only piece entirely in a language other than English. It is *Ill Heures* by Phillippe Soupault. However, even this instance where the words seem almost to float across two pages the letters are small and unassuming, even meager. (The whole poem hovers above an image of a simple building structure on the bottom left and the two part poem *The Malice of Shadows* by Mitchell Dawson in the bottom right. It is printed with the two columns beside each other, invoking the physical representation of a shadow, or a mimesis of form that also are mirrored in the adjacent image). Not only does this subversive use of typography to seemingly underscore the title of the periodical, *TNT*, but it is deployed to make the content of the periodical subtle and in some cases, even seemingly boring for a Dada periodical. The periodical became the near perfect platform to challenge language in this way, and visually express the possibilities, or rather lack of possibilities, of language even within Dada as a movement.

Now the textuality of one of these publications, as mentioned earlier, is not only dependent on the look of the words newly splayed across the page, but the machine that makes them (or in the case of *The Gazook*, the person). As Chartier and Stallybrass point out, “Textual production is a material process that involves specific places, machines, and workers. [...] a multiplicity of technical operations define a process in which the materiality of the text and the textuality of the material form cannot be separated” (Chartier 189). In this way, despite the fact

that these works often times try to question or defy their own materiality, they can only do so if bound to that mechanical materiality from which most all Dada periodicals were made.

Though clearly *The Gazook*, drawn by hand, seems to defy this idea, *TNT* surely falls under this category of a periodical defined by its own mechanical construction. Though it begins with the image of a nude woman holding a bird, it ends with Ray's very mechanical portrait entitled, *My First-Born*. Throughout the very periodical itself, the works transform from a more innocent and playful works to works nearly dominated by the "machine." It begins with *ETYMONS* lacking any complex language and bracing, at least somewhat, the expected text fonts and sizes. Then it ends with a mechanical drawing accompanied by a play called *The Theater of the Soul*, by Nikolai Evreinof. This play, in general, is a parody of modern psychology that the emotional and the logical self into two characters that live inside the chest of a man. The physical construct of this play on the page mirrors an article in a newspaper—small words organized into two columns, accompanied by an image. It is a very familiar format, however rather than a news article in this space, it is a play. While it does exercise some freedom in form, it is much less so than *ETYMONS*, and even less so than the hand drawn *The Gazook*.

Overall, the machine qualities of *TNT* and *The Gazook* are telling of how each interacts with the text it produces: *TNT* seems to self-reveal its mechanical construction, while *The Gazook* totally denies any mechanical quality. Mechanical drawings, as can be seen in *My First-Born* (a piece I will discuss in further detail in chapter 3), proliferated during this time in New York and Europe. Machine drawings though not wholly unique to Dada were certainly on the rise in the early twentieth century as cities and printing technologies also grew more mechanically advanced. As Matthew Gale recognizes in *Dada & Surrealism*, he suggests that machine drawings are oftentimes associated with their sexually suggestive titles—such as *My*

First-Born, or Picabia's *Daughter Born without a Mother* (1916-17) (*Fille née sans mère*). Gale says, "The titles and inscriptions of subsequent works [...] indicate the implicit sexuality of mechanical functions even as the mechanisms depicted are shown as soulless" (94). Gale continues to relate this function in context of Picabia offering that the depictions of soulless, sexual machines are, "perhaps as much a depiction of Picabia's difficulty with relationships as a comment on the human condition" (94), a sentiment that pervades modernist and avant-garde works such as Marinetti's play *Electric Sexuality*, Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*, or Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.* In this respect, the machine quality of these periodicals and of typographic works in general are intertwined the mechanics of their own construction with the "human condition," a question that pervaded the early twentieth century and continues to be questioned today.

In this respect, machine images, especially ones that reflect avant-garde art are reminiscent of printing presses, mechanical instrument to print the very periodicals, something desired yet "soulless."⁹ The machinery imagery alludes to the lifeless quality of the printed word itself, as do both *Three Bombs* and *Art Motes*. On the other hand, this might mean that the desire within human beings is solely mechanical and the machines on which words are printed and buildings, even cities constructed is reflective of the mechanics behind human desire. In both ways, the use of Dada typographic innovations, for Tzara in Europe and apparently for the yet proclaimed Dadaists in America, according to Drucker, investigate "the social and cultural functions served by language and its operation as a domain in which subversion might be effectively produced" (197). Thus, the critique of the machine or of mechanical production in

⁹ Such as *Ici, c'est ici Stieglitz* (1915), a mechanical drawing of a camera, calling Stieglitz to it (here, it's here Stieglitz) who was "one of the few to introduce America to artistic photography and the European avant-garde" (Gale 89).

TNT and *The Gazook* is a product of the material construction of the periodicals. In a further analysis of these periodicals in the following chapter, I attempt to demonstrate how Dada in New York, and more specifically Man Ray, used these periodicals as a platform to express deeper societal and cultural concerns.

CHAPTER 2

Employing the Materials for a Cultural Critique

Play on Advertising and Public Media

The way in which typography was used in *TNT* and *The Gazook* to hint towards a critique of the “human condition” is in part because of the choice of written versus printed text and the layout of words on the page. Rendering the “the human condition” in Dada periodicals suggests an uncanny ability of machines to replicate (perhaps even surpass) the ability of man—it is only the machine that can attempt a depiction of the condition. Advertising, mass media, and artists alike proliferated due to technological advances in the printing press. Created towards the end of the nineteenth century were the high-speed letterpress, linotype and monotype machines that facilitated quick setting and casting of type (Drucker 94). These advances made the printing press more accessible; one did not have to apprentice with a printer for several years to be able to print. In fact, when Man Ray, Adolf Wolff and Alfred Kreyborg living in Ridgefield, NJ decided to print their first artists publication, *The Glebe*, since, as Naumann points out, “the more established journals had consistently refused to publish the poetry and prose of the younger, more experimental writers” (51). When they did so, they had the possibility to acquire their own printing press from a friend, however, upon its arrival it had been damaged in transit and so they turned to a local printer to help facilitate the printing. Even though they were not able to use their own press at that time, it is clear from this instance that printing in the early twentieth century was becoming more accessible. A journalist recounts the life of the artists’ colony in Ridgefield: “With a colony of their own and a printing press running merrily to the tune of the new rhythms,

no doubt the reading public will soon have ample opportunity to taste their wares in larger and larger quantities” (51). Machines were increasingly prevalent in daily life, causing the media to flourish, and heightened human dependency on machines.

The relationship between printer and printed gave a more mechanized awareness to the art they created and the humanity represented in said art. *The Gazook* wholly rejects the printing press even though Ray had the skill set and the material capabilities to typeset. This shows his pushing back against the machine. *TNT*, on the other hand, subscribes to the use of the printing press and formal magazine techniques such as two column text blocks and small fonts. It is from the technology that marked the beginning of the twentieth century that seems to characterize the way in which Dadaists printed their periodicals in response to mass media and advertising firms that seem to blindly rely on the machines in explicit exchange for capital.

As early as 1913, after Ray left *The Glebe*, he continued to experiment with his own publications. According to Naumann, Ray “individually designed, hand-lettered, and printed manually at his own expense,” and Kreymborg recalls that Ray “had started to print by hand, stray, curious documents with a delicacy of line and feeling for a spatial values akin to the papyrus of an ancient era” (51-2). Ray used new letterpress technologies not only to experiment, but to learn the classical forms of printing; he was aware of the conventions there were to break and from where they stemmed. Outside of avant-garde experimentation, printed works including literary books and advertisements grew in number, reaching a larger audience, who was more keenly aware of specifics of the presentation of the printed word, like font size, orientation on the page, and color (Drucker 91-93). Increasing public awareness of mass media also meant an increased audience for those who mocked it: the Dadaists. Though their formal and linguistic manipulation transpired within the form from which they attempted to disassociate.

Literary texts, historically, appear on the page as a block of inky text, the words all on a single plane and all the same font and size. Literary texts nurtured the idea that words and the story speak for themselves—in this respect the reader gains a certain authority as interpreter. One point Michael Warner briefly makes in his essay about different forms of reading, *Uncritical Reading*, is that the reader, through their interpretation, creates individual meaning from the text.¹⁰ In order to understand how one might read these periodicals, it is important to note that the audience brings their own understanding (potentially for works considered to be Dada, their own misunderstanding) to these periodicals—works that are specifically made for other people to read, and as a consequence of that reading, interpret. If we will take on this understanding of readership then the black ink on the page invites audience participation, even audience manipulation. The simplicity of plain text offers space for the reader to impress their own imagined texture to the message on the page. However, other than printed literary and poetic texts, advertisements were increasingly more common. Advertisements grew apart from literary texts, in that they became a medium in which to force-feed the reader an interpretation via the visual manipulation of the text. These commercial advertising strategies were appropriated in *The Gazook* and though less so, still present in *TNT*, although not for pastiche, but parody.

What jolts me into the world of advertisement, apart from a typographic or mechanical manipulation, is the stark use of the second person. The second person identifies the reader as the *recipient* of the language rather than the *participant* in the language. In order to really scream at that audience—the YOU—the typographic presentation of said rhetoric became imperative to

¹⁰ “A history of ‘critical reading’ in particular, therefore, would have to include rather more than the protocols of text-processing, cross-referencing, and citation [...]; it would have to describe the way in which reading subjects can be imagined to assert their own agency and freedom in relation to maximally objectified texts” (Warner 33). Thus the reader, in many cases, it must be noted that readers brings their own interpretive assumptions to the text they analyze.

direct the audience's attention to the most important words and to visually present the interpretation they are meant to garner. Drucker quotes a 1913 article in *La Publicité* that addresses the importance of visual representation: "The judicious use of the space available in an advertisement is just as important as the phrases themselves, because the logical placement and presentation determine how the sentences strike the eye" (Drucker 99). In the realm of advertising this was important to get the message across clearly and effectively. Through creating bolded words, headings with a distinctly large font, or underlining key phrases graphic designers for advertising created new and different typographic innovations that became part of, as Drucker nicely puts it, a "public language." She defines "public language" in one way as, "the symbolic system which produces and reproduces the social order" (97). Thus, this new advertising language, a uniquely visual language, began to shape the public intake of information, one that emphasized the message of a text for the audience, without granting them the freedom of interpretation—a singular message for YOU. This technique was thus taken up by many Dadaists as a way to subvert the commercial utility of advertisements.

Dada publications in New York often mocked typical advertisements, turning their more serious tone on its head, advertising for the ridiculous. In order to create a subversive poetics that challenged the society from which the periodicals sprung, these early New York artists parodied the media.¹¹ To give a background on publications partaking in the manipulation of the media tactics in New York at the same time as *The Gazook* and *TNT* (c. 1915-19), I will outline New

¹¹ This was largely done throughout European avant-garde movements as well—however I do not have the space to delve into these particular regional differences. For a more comprehensive understanding of the European take on this topic (specifically in Italy, Zürich and Paris), I refer to Drucker's *Visible Word*, chap. 3, "Experimental Typography as a Modern Art Practice."

York publications involved in parodying everyday news and advertisements of the early twentieth century.

Through their print mediums, periodicals including *The Blind Man* and *291*, were able to parody politics and culture through typography. These publications follow a similar framework of a newspaper's typesetting, yet mock their presentation of events and of facts. In part, this makes the audience question the veracity of announcements and their blind acceptance of the announcements as facts, question their own reading (or consumptive) experience. While *The Gazook* was one of the first to make an explicit parody of the quotidian newspaper or magazine, other New York publications were doing the same.

The Blind Man no. 2 (May 1917), edited by Marcel Duchamp, Beatrice Wood and Henri-Pierre Roché featured Mina Loy, Francis Picabia, Clara Tice, and Walter Arensberg among several other reputable writers and artists. When asked if this periodical worked in the Dada spirit Duchamp said, "It was parallel, if you wish, but not directly influenced. It wasn't Dada, but it was in the same spirit, without, however, being in the Zürich spirit" (Hage 170). The second edition of this journal included an invitation to "The Blind Man's Ball." The location was described to be held at, "Prehistoric, ultra-Bohemian Webster Hall" and would "not end until the dawn. The Blind Man must see the sun" (Duchamp 2). This was indeed working with the Dada spirit, creating false events in the typographic style of a newspaper where people often unquestioningly consume facts—a parody via misleading typographic confusion and hilarious written sentiments.

The practice of parodying cultural event announcements filled an entire page of the second and last issue of *The Blind Man* (Hopkins 168). Though this periodical was short lived, it

marked the conception of the Independent Society of Artists in 1916. This group of artists, directed by Duchamp centered on freedom of artists to choose what goes into predominantly modern art exhibitions and in what way they are presented, as well as the “democratic principles informing the independents” (164-65). This group that backed this particular avant-garde magazine in the Dada spirit was crucial to expanding the critique of how art could be defined in New York. The Independent Society of Artists put on the gallery that hosted Duchamp’s famed *Fountain*. Through groups and periodicals like these, the New York Dada artists were able to connect and collaborate on their experimental art and poetry.

Many of the same writers and artists contributed to Walter Stieglitz’s publication *291* no. 2 (April 1915) which shows the connections they were able to make because of these periodicals. The cover of the second edition of *291* features several short news headlines as one would see on a traditional newspaper of that time. Beneath the headline “Economic Laws and Art” reads, “In short, it is safe to announce that cubism or futurism, or whatever else these men call their work, is not only beginning to pay its way, but is undergoing the trying ordeal of being the fashion” (Stieglitz 1). This excerpt parodies the struggle to be “the fashion” and shows that the goal of avant-garde movements was not to be the fashion, but to parody it. This differs from typical newspaper headlines that would praise “the fashion” rather than become irritated by it. This instance enquires if the parody of a capitalist society can really transcend that which it parodies or if it will inevitably become part of the system it parodies.

Further, Stieglitz recognizes the inability to categorize or name the art they produce—“whatever else these men call their work”—shows strong Dada sentiments in denying the categorization of their work. At the same time, he continues to show an urge to define the art for the audience, which both departs from convention of naming while feeling the need to mention

some name for the art—a cycle that ties this avant-garde artist to convention he struggles to defy. Stieglitz turns what should be a simple announcement of “Economic Laws and Art” into an irreverent space that denies the reader full understanding of the announcement, leading them to question the veracity or function of announcements such as these, while bringing up a question of the necessity of their own form and conventions.

Another way these “Dada” periodicals play a prank on the audience is through their self-advertisements, typically located on the front and back covers of the periodicals. Where typical magazines or newspapers announce their subscription details such as its price, place of publication, and even number of each publication in the series (if, in fact there is a series of publications), in these Dada periodicals there is nearly always some sort of false announcement. For instance, Stieglitz’s *291* no. 2 informs the reader of the price of the publication at the top, below the title as “10 cents.” Yet, on the same page, where one finds the publication information in the bottom right corner it initially says, “twelve numbers ONE dollar” and then two lines later says, “twelve numbers FIVE dollars” and then one line later confuses the reader more saying, “single copies ONE dollar.” This subtle ploy is confusing and clearly an irreverent ploy on the reader. Simultaneously, this mocks the commodification of the magazine but also draws attention to the fact that even though Stieglitz mocks this, he too exchanges this pamphlet for money, and that the art he creates, though irreverent, cannot fully escape the capitalist system it ridicules.

Similarly, *The Gazook* (1915) announces its own subscription details right under the title. It reads, “Published unnecessarily whenever the spirits move us. Subscription free to whosoever we please or displease. Contributions received in liquid form only [...]” (Ray). This demonstrates the very irreverent attitude towards periodical conventions of the time—instead of charging one subscription price and publishing a subscription on a determined time line, this

statement gives the creator full control over its pricing and dissemination, but then nearly leaves its production up to “the spirit,” in part relinquishing control of the publication. Ray even refuses to tell the audience if, when, or where another edition might be found. Before Tzara’s own periodicals were published, Ray was creating periodicals with similar bold intentions in mind. Drucker describes Tzara’s works’ “flagrantly conspicuous appropriation of commercial, mainly advertising, techniques, which he used to undermine many of the fundamental conventions according to which literary and linguistic value were traditionally determined” (200). This “crucial feature” of Tzara’s works was also present in Ray’s works before Dada was coined during Ray’s 1913 experiments in manual printing (Drucker 200; Naumann 51-2).

Later, in Ray and Wolff’s publication of *TNT*, this tactic continued to be employed. Thought this was the only issue of *TNT*, it reads on the last page, “Subscription to Six Issues \$2.50” (Kuenzli 162). Here, Ray presents subtle subversions of the periodical conventions while subscribing to the capital exchange necessary to disperse the publication. This persists from *The Gazook* in 1915 through to *TNT* in 1919. The outright prank serves also to make the audience question the conventions of periodicals and their subscription details—especially in both *The Gazook* and *TNT* in which both only ever saw one number and were not technically periodicals at all. Further, this challenges the very definition of the medium in which they work.

The prank on the audience on the cover of *The Gazook* is only the first of Ray’s works filled to the brim with very Dada-esque pranks. Though a “literary” publication, *The Gazook* contains almost totally bolded, evocative titles that direct the audience to nowhere. The second page elicits the interest of the reader with the bolded title, *How to make TENDER BUTTONS itch*, signifying the prominence of “TENDER BUTTONS.” This particular title piques the interest of the 1915 reader because “tender buttons” refers to Gertrude Stein’s modernist work by

the same name: *Tender Buttons: Objects, Food, Rooms* (1914), and simultaneously alludes to the female anatomy. This work has been historically associated with a Cubist or Dada sensibility, rightfully so or not. Michael Kaufmann notes, “Those who associate her with the Dadaists and Surrealists praise her for her Dadaist/Surrealist subversions of grammar which expose the ludicrousness of human impositions of order” (447). However, unlike Dadaists, Stein strives to strike meaning from language and later admits, “There is no such thing as putting [words] together without sense,” therefore becoming a direct target for mockery by Dadaists (448).

How to Make TENDER BUTTONS Itch in The Gazook is the title that looms above the author “Mac Kucera—of the Au-tomato Mash. & Fool Co.,” (pseudonym for Czech anarchist Joseph Kucera) (Ray; Kuenzli 27). Beneath the title is a rectangle that reads “CENSORED” in white letters that emerge on a diagonal from the black background (which I will address more closely in the third chapter). Dada, though associated with modernism, took steps to mock literature that took a genuine effort to mean (or in this case to erase meaning). Here, Kucera literally erases any potential meaning by way of censorship that has the power to conceal meaning. However, this work goes farther than artistic suppression, one can clearly see that there is no work hidden behind the “CENSORED” label—beyond the title the writer has made no effort to subvert meaning, mocking Stein’s honest effort to retract meaning from prose.

Formally, this demonstrates how Ray used a technique and format of newspapers and advertisements—large, evocative titles—to draw the audience to the work; he capitalizes “tender buttons” to place focus on the title. Yet, in the spirit of Dada, rather than satisfy his audience in revealing “how to make tender buttons itch” through accompanying text or image, he decidedly conceals the meaning to frustrate the audience and parody Stein’s modernist masterpiece.

Furthermore, Ray parodies the structure of a newspaper that includes different sections. *Tender*

Buttons appears under his appropriated title “Graftsmanship” a play off of “Craftsmanship.” Their irreverence towards Stein’s modernist literary style becomes increasingly clear. Rather than honor her artistic skill under “craftsmanship,” they employ the word “graftsmanship” which, though not a work of its own, references a graft, or a transplanting of living matter. In one respect this is a mocking slight to her skill, suggesting it is just a transplanting of language or a transplanting of skill, tainted and unoriginal.

TNT, as opposed to *The Gazook*, does the opposite—rather than eliciting the interest of the audience and then leaving them empty-handed or outright mocking other individual writers, *TNT* offers a profuse amount of text that is presented like many newspapers, in small font size and in two columns. The two column theme is recurrent throughout almost all the written works—in *ETYMONS* (149), *A Pantomime* (151), *Revolving Doors* (152), *The Malice of Shadows* (155), *From the Chinese* (156), *Leaves of Tea* (157-158), and *The Theater of the Soul* (159-162). However, unlike newspaper articles, the works in *TNT* are almost pointedly confusing. Themes that proliferate in *TNT*’s works draw on shadows, modern psychology, Chinese translation (doubtful that it is an accurate translation), and windows with blinds, all creating an elusive atmosphere that contradicts the seemingly certain and determined formation of the texts. Additionally, the works span mediums of poetry, prose, art, plays, pantomime, and translation. While each printed work reveals slight variation in its visual format, the two column structure reminiscent of mass media such as newspapers recurs, tying the mediums together—reaching across the boundary of medium to connect the disparate pieces into one “unified” publication.

One significant reaction to *TNT* was by Henry McBride, a columnist for the *Sun*. According to Naumann, McBride “especially disliked the quality of printing, which, he said, was

‘monotonous’ and resembled ‘commercial reports that are usually fired into the wastebasket without a glance’ (Naumann 201). McBride clearly did not see this as “a politically radical paper with a very radical slant” as Ray defined it years later (200). What it seems McBride did not consider was the potential intention behind this “monotonous” format on the part of Ray, the printer. In a manner totally opposite of *The Gazook*, *TNT* causes another type of confusion and rage in the viewer. The text does not visually excite the reader, and so works against their expectations from a Dada publication.

These publications utilized techniques in advertising and the print media to merge what Drucker notes are “two domains of language” through textual representation—literary language (unmarked text) and public language (marked text) (96-98). This fusion of conventionally opposite form to function was what makes the early avant-garde publications especially radical. In Dada publications the creation of art and literature was taken out of the plain block text and merged with advertising techniques. In doing so the periodicals challenge the logical construction of language and meaning on the page. They merge two domains of language and raise questions about our consumer-relationships with art versus media. Modernist magazines of the time, according to Mark S. Morrison, “tended to see the social role of art as an issue related to the nature of public discourse” (6). Art and poetry in these publications strive to mock the public discourse and modes of popular media representation—they attempt to bring their art and poetry into the public sphere in challenging the conventions of high art and high modernism. Ironically (and perhaps inevitably) the Dada publications eventually become high art, or become as Stieglitz bemoaned in 291 no. 2, “the fashion,” raising further questions about whether or not the radical implementations of Dada in New York were able to transcend the capitalist society which they mocked.

Breaking Boundaries of Meaning

Mocking more than the way mass media advertises itself, these periodicals also mock the form that the media takes on. The sixth page of *TNT*, featuring a piece by Walter Conrad Arensberg called *Vacuum Tires: A Formula for the Digestion of Figments* follows suit in criticizing the inability of language to escape its conventional forms. Arensberg's piece does not use typographic manipulation, but works within the very form of language to frustrate the trained reader's efforts to comprehend language. One might assume from the title is that it will be a formula for the digestion of figments. From the title alone, this piece invites interpretation banking on the assumption that "figments" refers to "figments of the imagination." However, as many Dada works tend to do, this piece takes the conventional structure of sentences and attempts to take all logical meaning out of them, replacing phrases with nonsensical combinations of words taken from wildly different discourses.

Vacuum Tires draws provokes the reader to try and make meaning out of the odd combinations of words. The last line of this prose piece reads, "The up town exit may, or may not, be in manuscript, but as a result of the binomial theorem of closing time, the water-mains, whenever they are directed to funerals, will make a vacuum flash" (153). Beyond conventional meaning that does not surface, this line presents clashing discourses within a grammatically sound sentence structure. "Up-town exit" seems to refer to urban transportation, "manuscript" to literature, "binomial theorem" to mathematics and "closing time" to the end of a work shift or a bar's service. Not only does this sentence reject "sense"; it also rejects maintaining one sphere of

speech. Though written in only one language—English—it nevertheless encapsulates alternate spheres of speech.

In this way, it pokes fun at conventional forms of encoding and decoding meaning playing by the rules of grammar. At the same time Arensberg creates a space where various registers of language are juxtaposed and negated by their ironic positioning in a literary space that is not coherent. Coherency depends upon writing or speaking in a unified discourse with logical flow of ideas within the larger grammatical structure. Here, Arensberg disrupts logic and discourse which reveals the dependency of logic on a unified discourse and the discordant clash produced by dismantling discourse.

Vacuum Tires attempts “vacuums of meaning,” something Duchamp explained, “There would be a verb, a subject, a complement, adverbs and everything perfectly correct as such, as words, but meaning in these sentences was a thing that I had to avoid” (qtd. in Kuenzli 163). For Duchamp, meaning is deliberately stricken from the work by the author. Arensberg assumes a position of power to determine what meaning is and is not. This opposes Tzara’s *To Make a Dadaist Poem* that relies on chance—the pulling of cut up newspaper words from a hat—to create poems without an authorial meaning (Tzara 39). However, Arensberg is able to prank the reader with this convention because the sentences read as if they should make sense, whereas the *Dadaist Poem* has no grammatical structure. When reading the first sentence—“When the shutter from a dry angle comes between the pin and a special delivery it appears at blue”—its structure seems to promise meaning (153). What meaning the reader does determine then becomes associative, reliant on surrounding words for context that are further distorted by the clash of discourse that confuses the context. Contextual meaning is prevalent in the periodical as a whole; in order to make any meaning from *TNT* it is imperative to look at how the different pieces are

positioned in relation to each other. Further, their own clash of discourse accounts for a confusing text that, in negating its own construction, recalls the Dada spirit.

On the page to the left of *Vacuum Tires* are two works, *Revolving Doors*, a series of descriptions of Man Ray's painting series with the same name, positioned above a reprinted image of a painting by Louis Bouché, *Physical Culture*. *Revolving Doors* consists of five short descriptions of an accompanying and excluded artwork. The second is titled *Shadows*, and the first sentence reads, "If three beams of light be thrown on an object from different angles, or if the object turned to three different angles simultaneously in relation to a single beam of light, the resulting shadows would assume proportions the same way[...]" (Kuenzli 152). Which is both reminiscent of the way the description itself is a shadow of the artwork it describes, as well as the shadow of meaning that Arensberg presents in the following *Vacuum Tires*. Beneath Ray's contribution, *Physical Culture* presents a boat in the foreground, a building in the background and three people positioned at ambiguous levels in the work. They recall the "three beams of light" and their "resulting shadows." One body is all black as if a shadow of one of the other men in the painting, though all are in dissimilar positions with their arms out. In reading these pieces together one gets the overwhelming sense of shadows: an obscured identity that is presented in the same form as the original. This is essentially what *Vacuum Tires* is, the same shape as a conventional written work with an unrecognizable meaning. What's more, after turning the page from *Vacuum Tires*, the poem in the bottom right page is titled *The Malice of Shadows* by Mitchell Dawson. The placement of the pieces surrounding *Vacuum Tires* suggests its similarity to a literary shadow, a shadow of meaning, or perhaps a subversion of meaning; a manifestation of the periodical at large that denies any determinate or knowable meaning.

This type of conventional subversion was a way in which the use of space on a page could overturn audience expectations, and thus question artistic and literary convention. Another way Dadaists interrogated conventions of mass media was in Zürich's Cabaret Voltaire (and later in Paris). They put on performances that defied normative ideas of sound, performance, and art—this was their base for both breaking boundaries and pranking audiences through another form of popular media. Not only did they physically perform, but when the periodicals grew in popularity they printed several of the performances as scripts. This became another way to meld the boundaries of medium. While New York Dadaists did not have explicit performances, they included plays, dialogues, and even pantomimes in their written works—such as *Theater of the Soul* and *A Pantomime in TNT* or *La Vie Artistique* in 291 no. 10-11.

Similarly, on the final page of *The Gazook* the piece *to HIM... (words without music)* by Adon La+ (pseudonym for Adon LaCroix) shows early attention to the translation of mediums in a physical text. This work includes a note-less musical staff that looms above the words of an apparently tune-less song. Here, La+ denies one's ability to hear the song, just as the page as medium denies one to really hear. It questions the place of music in the print form and plays into larger themes of censorship's ability to suppress music—the meaning or soul behind the words to a song. While I will detail this piece in the following chapter, melding different mediums is also prominent in *TNT*, where I will turn more attention to for the rest of this chapter.

While New York Dadaists scarcely pranked people through embodied performance, *TNT* was one of the only New York experimental journals in the spirit of Dada to print (*Dreaming of Dreaming*) *A Pantomime*, also by Adon LaCroix, which describes the mostly silent actions of

“three women, a man, an audience” (151).¹² It is largely obscure as to how the pantomime ends, but there is seemingly a death of a woman and calls out audience participation as the frame for understanding what is happening or what might not be happening on stage. This pantomime describes music playing in the background and rather than *to HIM*... relies on minimal words from the characters that address the uncertainty of whether the death of the woman is part of a dream or reality.

Here, the convergence of mediums mocks audience participation who “not knowing this to be the end the audience is silent as if at a funeral and it is only when the curtain before the foot-lights has fallen entirely that the spectators burst out into applause ... but the curtain does not go up” (151). This pantomime demonstrates effects of audience participation in an artwork (including their interpretive participation in *TNT* itself). The audience in this piece follows the accepted convention to keep quiet and not break the illusion (or dream) of the play until the curtain has fallen. However, LaCroix questions this very convention by ending it with the fact that the “curtain does not go up” to reveal the customary curtain call. Further, the audience here is written into the piece and is part of the play as much as the characters on stage are; it is a pantomime inside a pantomime (like a dream within a dream as the title suggests)—assuming what is written is meant for an audience outside the one written into the text. The layers here are also a shadow of themselves that upend the audience’s own participation in reading and interpreting this work. The boundary breached by printing this medium for the stage as well as the work breaking boundaries of where the audience is typically located (outside of the text

¹² One of the only embodied performances with one obvious exception of The Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, whose elaborate and outrageous outfits she paraded in her daily life. She went as far as shaving her head and coloring it a brilliant shade of red and “wore an inverted coal scuttle for a cap, and applied to her body as decorative elements mechanistic implements such as metal teaballs” (Kuenzli 86). Robert Reiss states that The Baroness was “described by her contemporaries variously as ‘the mother of Dada’” (81).

itself), shows LaCroix's irreverence in a piece that seems serious and goes on to fool the readership whose presence as an audience mirrors that of the audience in the piece who does not seem to know when or if the pantomime is really over.

The question of when a piece, whether play, poem or painting, is "over" is demonstrated on the page adjacent to *A Pantomime*, so that when closed, the two works are pressed against each other. A draft of the art work *The Large Glass* by Duchamp is on the third page under the title: *Combat de Boxe (Boxing Match)* (Kuenzli 150). The final product of his work, *The Large Glass* is also known by the title *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (Gale 87). Gale says, "Its central subject is the unconsummated passion of the nine uniformed bachelors for the stripped bride. The bachelors are mechanical in appearance and constricted to the lower zone with their 'bachelor machine'; the bride floats seductively above" (87). This draft does not include the images of the bride and bachelors, but a mechanized outline of what might be the mechanics of the sculptural work. It includes hand written and typed notes, drawing parallels between the human hand and the mechanized typewriter. The inclusion of this unfinished draft is another way in which the periodical breaks the boundary of medium and questions the conventional use of the periodical for "finished" art works. *Combat De Boxe* goes as far to show that the mere concept of art-in-progress is enough to be accepted as art. Its position beside *A Pantomime* demonstrates a sense of open-endedness, and questions what constitutes a finished product.

New York Dada stretched the definition of art in including art-in-progress and Duchamp's ready-mades. Boundaries of art were expanded in a myriad of ways in the early twentieth century. In Zürich, and later in Paris, the Dadaists pursued the performance of irreverence directed at the emotions of a bourgeois audience; Dada art riled the bourgeois up,

made them furious, and made them feel. However, considering when European Dada got its start, its motivation to break the boundaries of definition is also understood to be an artistic reaction to the most destructive, devastating and technologically advanced war yet to tear apart the European landscape; it was to break away at one's idea of a coherent national identity by eradicating a means by which we construct identity: culture. As already seen, Dada art and poetry tares apart the boundaries between images sentences and words to create sounds of utter nonsense. Dada in Zürich was a necessary art form that would enliven European culture in an era where war and trauma inflicted the homeland of many of these artists; in breaking the boundaries of art they were able, in one respect, to confront the national boundaries being broken in trench warfare.

According to Ball, the mashing together of all these languages and cultures at once was, as one would expect, funny and bizarre. Ball recognizes that one of their performative and printed pieces, the simultaneous poem “represents the battle of the human voice against a world which menaces, ensnares and finally destroys it, a world whose rhythm and whose din are inescapable” (31). Here, while there is a sentiment of simply breaking from tradition and thus breaking boundaries of the “normal” there also emerges a political sentiment, an urge for criticism or renewal of the political system that both brought on the war and that creates all the constraints (national boundaries and language to be sparse) that Dada dares to destroy.

For many of the works that Tzara produced, specifically the *Dada* periodical, according to Drucker's observations he used the specific subversive typography to “[attack the] existence of authorial subjects” (193). In this way, Dada as “defined” in Europe was more than just a revival, but a critique on modern society in general and on language production—how one processes events and emotions through art and the written word. It destroyed language

boundaries in this way, in order to question these national boundaries and these boundaries put up on language and meaning production overall.

As it occurred in Europe, it was also politically charged in New York, just in a very different way. The first of Ray and Wolff's publications, *The Glebe* (1913), was according to their partner Kreymborg, Ray who conceived of its idea—very early in the span of New York proto-Dada periodicals, that expressed the artists' relationship to place (and so to the politics of that place). The title, "Glebe," according to Antliff is "a word signifying the universality of the soil, 'without borders'" (141).¹³ Already, in 1913 when the idea was conceived (though the publication was officially published in September 1914) these New York artists conceived of the significance that borders, such as national borders and artistic boundaries, were to play in the coming years. And, indeed, this was one of the first publications in New York to cross the boundary of what art was, or at least it would lead Ray and Wolff to create further publications that really would break the boundaries of what art could be.

¹³ One definition in the *OED* indicates that "glebe" means, "The soil of the earth, regarded as the source of vegetable products; earth, land." In most definitions it refers to "a cultivated land." Whether or not this land has borders, the early Man Ray was insightful to the significance of land and the art produced upon it, or perhaps the relationship between a cultivated land and the printed page.

CHAPTER 3

Destabilizing Ideas of Industrialism and Censorship

The (Political) Machine

The boundaries being broken in avant-garde art, as artists crossed both national borders and borders of conventional mediums such as newspapers, they did so seemingly with a political intention in mind. Definitions of art or poetry largely came into question when European Dadaists faced the brutal reality that people behind both weaponry and more harmless machines such as a printing press gained an identity intertwined with those machines. Alongside the mass production incurred by machines, whether bullets or books, came the idea that the machine incorporated the human who operated it, who acted as another cog in its mechanized structure. The conflation of machines and humans was not original to Dada, but it did take on a versatile role that furthered the criticism of new machinery in the early twentieth century. Comparing European and US response to the war with art, Abraham A. Davidson says, “There was a deadly seriousness to the European attitude, especially concerning the human resemblance—physical and behavioral—to machines” (227). While in New York, Duchamp, impressed by technological advances and skyscrapers suggests with a more positive spin that machines are the “very soul” of human life (Kuenzli 131). To make a generalization, in Europe, machines were deadly, in New York, they were inspirational (at least up until 1917, the US involvement in WWI).

Some of the first mechanical images and typographic pieces were futurist by F. T. Marinetti that emphasized the speed of the machine and the power it held to move straight to the future (hence, futurist). However, Dada differed, rather than focusing on the speed and power of

the machine, they seem to focus on intrinsic human attributes to machines; not as something to be exploited, but as an entity equal to human progress. One example of this is *Ici, c'est ici*, *Stieglitz* with subtitle, *Foi et Amour* (faith and love) by Picabia that was featured on the cover of *291* no. 5-6 (July-Aug. 1915). This calls Stieglitz to the machine he uses, the camera. “Faith and Love” then suggesting the dedication and love for the machine, thus the human qualities attributed to the machine. In this case, Picabia draws on the American development of mechanized artwork. Picabia was quoted in an anonymously published article by *The New York Tribune* that appeared on 24 October 1915. He said, “I have been profoundly impressed by the vast mechanical development in America. The machine has become more than a mere adjunct of human life. It is really a part of human life—perhaps the very soul” (quoted in Kuenzli 131). Thus, this machine quality and its relation to humanity expressed in the periodicals might also be a new way to envision humanity, rather than seen as a negative attribute to human life, it is the essence of human life.

In New York, some of the first machine drawings came from Picabia, in America for his second time in June 1915 when he published the drawing *Fille Née sans Mère* (*Girl Born without a Mother*) in the fourth issue of *291* (Hopkins 161). From this platform New York began to be introduced to machine drawings. In 1915 an American-born artist, Morton Livingston Schamberg, began experiments with mechanical paintings around 1916 after studying mechanical drawing and architectural drafting in Pennsylvania, graduating in 1903 (Kuenzli 69). He was influenced by the idea of machine drawings from those earlier machine drawings by Duchamp and Picabia (69). Ray also got his start in machine drawings from an art class in high school around 1907. According to Naumann, Ray’s mechanical “drawing [...] documents an early interest in recording the mechanics of a given operation” (6). Therefore, it is not that these

machine images did not exist in New York, however they did exist under the influence of the European state of mind, during the war. For Schamberg, the machine drawings of European counterparts with whom he came into contact on a trip to Europe changed his style from the “landscapes and portraits” he had produced previously (Kuenzli 68). On the other hand, for Ray, he got the mechanical drawing education in Brooklyn before he was widely exposed to the European mechanical works. It is thus clear that the European sentiment had some influence on what machines art was present in New York.

The mechanized quality is significant because it shows the converging influences of US industrialism and WWI on New York Dada. This movement was not born on its own, but depended in part on the interchange of artists and ideas from across the Atlantic and so were enhanced by the surrounding political climate. *The Gazook* was printed a year after the war in Europe began, and a year before Dada was coined. Ray created this at the beginning of his artistic career as a painter when he was living in Ridgefield, NJ, in an artists’ colony just outside of New York. It differs specifically from this mechanic quality of art primarily because it was drawn by hand, disavowing the idea that the production of a periodical might be mechanical. Then, to tie itself into the political climate of the time, in the irreverent Dada style, it notes, just below the title, “We are not neutral!” (Ray). This is a clear jab at US neutrality during the war. As David Hopkins recognizes that “the comment ‘we are not neutral’ immediately beneath the title of the magazine suggests an attitude of defiance towards American indifference to the war in Europe” (Hopkins 163). Since *The Gazook* was published a year after Ray and LaCroix married (a Belgian refugee whose family was implicated by the war), it is speculated by Naumann that Ray’s political opinions involving the European war were exacerbated by his romantic relationship, and thus by the immigration of Europeans to New York (Kuenzli 25). If so, this

political engagement is unique to US proto-Dada because of its poignantly political stance and recognition of the international exchange of ideas.

Further upending the idea of a mechanical humanity, the cover of *The Gazook* features an original drawing by Ray titled *The Cosmic Urge* that explicitly depicts two mating grasshoppers. Not only does this oppose the European mechanization of art, but it even calls out a European artist in the caption: “with ape-ologies to PicASSo,” perhaps in an attempt to distance New York art from the primitive (“ape” or “ASS”) aspects of Europe. In these respects, *The Gazook* ruminates with the Dada spirit both because it pokes fun at Picasso and confronts authority of machines, European art, and the US government’s involvement (or lack thereof) in WWI. What Antliff notes about this particular time in which *The Gazook* (and other more politically radical publications) was published: “Prior to 1917, American anarchists carried out a sustained attack on artistic conventions [...] in the name of unfettered artistic expression, which they equated with individual liberation” (210). Ray uses the pages of *The Gazook* to dismantle the erudite position of art and poetry and bring it to a more innocent, raw and subversive level. In destabilizing the political climate of the time, and even the mechanical drawings that represent human relation to a war machine, Ray seems to work in a uniquely New York style, one that can poke fun both at the position of US neutrality but also at other artist’s mechanization of the war in Europe.

As noted above, the New York artists were not altogether apolitical or uninvolved in the war. Ray’s earlier works characterized as innocent in his landscapes and softly drawn nudes at the beginning of his art career (early 1900s) transitioned from painting landscapes to more machine/city based art as well as from nude drawings to nude photographs. Ray and Wolff, whose poetry is characterized by Naumann as having a “crude, unrefined power that reflected his

militant temperament,” attuned their attention to an anarchic spirit imbued by the Ferrer Center to be against the “oppression of the political authority” (Kuenzli 21, 10). In fact, in 1914 they both contributed to socialist magazines that showed their allegiance to the anarchic education at the Ferrer Center. An illustration Ray completed for the cover a radical periodical, *Mother Earth*, edited by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman depicts a human being eaten by a two headed animal: the left head reading “CAPITALISM” and the second head reading “GOVERNMENT” (23). As Naumann recognizes from this and other contributions he made to different periodicals, such as the socialist review, *The International*, Naumann says it is “Clear that Man Ray considered the individual powerless against the larger ideological forces that ultimately control humanity’s destiny” (22). From their history, the periodicals Ray and Wolff were to publish together came from a very political place.

What first appears controversial about *TNT* is the title. It alludes to destruction, yet what is found within the pages is far from the more explosive typography or imagery from many periodicals such as *291*, *391*, or *Dada 3*. The first page features an outline of a nude woman drawn with thin lines. Her left hand is held out, holding a bird that faces her. She is in an awkward position, with her left foot bent, ankle to knee, as if she is sitting down with crossed legs, however only a line in the shape of a drawn curtain is placed behind her, no discrete chair. This image might suggest, like *The Gazook*, a more natural sentiment to this New York side of Dada, something innocent and even vulnerable. Yet by the time we reach the end of the periodical, there is an image by Ray entitled *My First-Born*. This mechanical image employs the airbrush in order to “produce a convincing rendition of reflected light on smooth, industrial produced metallic surfaces” (Naumann 200). Naumann notes that *My First-Born* is used to frame or illustrate Nikolai Evreinof’s *Theater of the Soul*. This one-act play depicts a scene inside the

chest of a man where the Rational Self, Emotional Self, and the Soul are embodied by three people. These aspects of the man are torn between the rational concept of his wife, and the emotional desire for a cabaret singer. It ends when the emotional and seductive concept of the cabaret singer tells the man, “[M]oney first, love afterwards” and then, “I am not for you, my boy. It was all a joke,” after which he attempts to kill himself with a revolver (Kuenzli 162). The periodical and the play both end with the soul of the man (called M3) exiting the dead body, “yawning” (162). The relationship of this play to that of Ray’s image show how New York Dada, or perhaps simply Ray and Wolff’s trajectory towards a more mechanical art and poetics, one that is either undermining the machine in drawing it, or succumbing to it, in ending with the machine.

As for the relationship between *My First-Born* and *The Theater of the Soul*, Naumann offers the insight that, “the play inspired the making of [Ray’s] first aerographic picture *Suicide*” (200). In this way the pages of *TNT* delineate the transformation of New York Dada and Ray, moving towards the European style but also the mechanical style—so much so that in 1921 Ray, corresponding with Tzara, printed another periodical, his last in New York, which took on the name: *New York Dada*.

While the political aspects of New York Dada were presented differently, Europe potentially taking on a harsher reaction in the literature and art, that is not to dismiss the very political slant to New York “proto” Dada. Years after its publication, Ray commented on *TNT*, calling it “a political paper with a very radical slant [...] a tirade against industrialists, the exploiters of workers.” (Naumann 200). However, other than the title that appears at the top of the cover in large bolded letters, Naumann notes. “[T]here was little in the publication that could be even remotely construed as a reference to anything politically subversive” (201). The question

stands, is this just another Dada prank? Or does Man Ray sincerely ask the reader to analyze and decipher the political leanings of this work—is questioning this in the first place make me the victim of the joke already?

Censorship

Pieces made by Dadaists in New York constantly leave one questioning the role of politics and culture in the artwork. When looking at *The Gazook*, however, there seems to be a very clear critique of the political hot topic of censorship, the enforcement of which Dada clearly disregarded with their volume of nude images, suggestive mechanical titles and subversive poetics. Censorship is a prominent theme in *The Gazook* because it addresses a political tension in the US at the time, when the Comstock Act legally prohibited the mailing of lecherous materials—mailing being the principal form avant-garde artists transferred their art to each other.

One characteristic aspect of the periodical is that it can be read publically and circulate widely, by mail or through bookstores. Due to its more public position, an intimacy with the public arises when one no longer reads poetry in the parlor or by the bedside, but in a magazine in the streets of, say, 1910s New York. In *The Public Face of Modernism*, Morrison explains, “Unlike individual literary works, magazines are public forums” (11). Once private art enters a public space the implications and shock-value of these works takes on a new meaning. In this respect the Dada publications were radical in their expression of the private in public. The most iconic example of this was a submission in April 1917 to the Society of Independents open forum: *Fountain*. Duchamp’s infamous urinal, signed R. Mutt, was contentious among the Society. Even the anarchist George Bellows who, according to Antliff, was “against the

ensorship of art ‘in principal’” said “its place is not an art exhibition” (Antliff 211-12). Not only did it outright contest the Society’s apparent definition of art, but it created a space where the private sphere of one’s life would be forced into the public domain because of the urinal’s association with the male anatomy and its conventional uses—and was so again when the image was printed in *The Blind Man* (May 1917) (Duchamp 4). *Fountain* was shocking. When it appeared in the magazine as an image, it reinforced the merging of these public and private spheres while raising the issue of censorship to the public sphere as well.

However, two years prior to *Fountain* and the R. Mutt case, Ray’s *The Gazook* was in fact an outright critique on censorship. Not only did it bring these more intimate sentiments to the public sphere through the art magazine (such as the love-making grasshoppers on the cover), but it calls out Anthony Comstock, government proponent of legally censoring media and objects that go through the mail. Similarly the censored work entitled *How to make TENDER BUTTONS itch* suggests vulgar content, yet follows suit with the law, ironically, and censors the image or text it is told to present.

In a slim four page publication, it is extremely difficult to choose one instance in which Ray and his contributors breach the boundaries of political correctness—this work is simply packed with these examples. On the second page, the elusively erotic title which recalls Stein’s lesbianism, *How to make TENDER BUTTONS itch* presents a work whose entirety is denoted by the word “CENSORED” embedded into a black rectangle. Before one reads the title, the black “CENSORED” rectangle is, based on its central position on the page, likely to be seen first.

The following exhibition directly beneath the “CENSORED” box is the section title: “Soshall Science,” a play on “Social Science.” Social Science generally deals with economics

and politics; the piece featured in this section by Hipp O'Havel (pseudonym for Hippolyte Havel) reads in French: "Je M'en Fiche!!" (*I Do Not Care!!*). Clearly, "O'Havel" mocks social science by disrupting its importance in this publication. He also mocks conclusions that social scientists make in their experiments, and in the case of Dada, their inability to come to conclusions on this publication. This title attempts to forge meaning from different parts of the publication while challenging any meaning that could be made. What is most explicit about the inability for meaning making here is the following content under this heading: a rectangular outline of blank space, an empty box. This follows suit with Dada's stance on being largely made of "negations" (Kuenzli 141). Since the cover of *The Gazook* suggests a form of political activism with the announcement, "we are not neutral," this work in the section parodying "Social Science" clearly contradicts the non-political-neutrality the reader assumes going into this publication.

So it seems, the second page of this publication alone is inherently meaningless, it draws one into the periodical on the basis that it is clearly playful and unreliable. As Hopkins notes on the publication: "It is a calculated affront to 'seriousness' and 'taste' which adumbrates a later Dada sensibility" (163). What's more, it is a slight to the Comstock Laws in demonstrating that censorship erases and covers up poetry and art. However, at the same time, Ray challenges the very idea of art, demonstrating how even a censored image can also be poetry or art as it is included in this periodical.

In a different, non-sexual way, Adon La+'s *to HIM...* forces religious discourse into the public sphere of the periodical. Its subtitle (*words without music*) demonstrates the parodied church hymn that follows and directs the audience's attention to the fact that the print medium does not sound. Between blacked out music bars that surround each line of text, La+ writes,

“Hell-e-luyah ... Hell-e-luyah ... Glory to Comstock ... He destroyeth all evil ... He destroyeth all art ... Hell-e-luyah ... Ahem!” (Ray). On the surface, this mocks the Comstock Act that prohibited the mailing of any “lewd” materials (such as a lewd image of “how to make tender buttons itch”) (“Anthony Comstock’s Influence”). According to Mark Conrad, “The invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1457 marks the beginning of the transition from ancient to modern notions of censorship and obscenity. For the first time, the written word was accessible to broader segments of society than the noble and clerical classes” (29). So by the time the high-speed press was invented at the turn of the century, it follows suit that a push back of censorship succeeded. An 1876 amendment to the Comstock Act banned the mailing of “Every obscene, lewd, or lascivious book, pamphlet, picture, paper, writing, print or other publication of an indecent character, and every article or thing designed or intended for the prevention of conception or procuring of abortion” (“Anthony Comstock’s Influence”). *The Gazook* surely falls under several of these categories and was likely mailed to those who purchased it.

The back cover of this periodical reads: “Mail all remonstrances in the form of money orders or cash payable to Man Ray—P.O. Ridgefield N.J.” alluding to its being mailed (Ray). This either breaks this censorship law or mocks it—are mating grasshoppers considered “lewd”? Additionally, it says that “remonstrances” should be mailed to Man Ray. “Remonstrances” are defined by the *OED* primarily as “an appeal, a request.” however the majority of subsequent definitions specify that this is an appeal to “a governing body,” an appeal “expressing of disapproval or disagreement,” “usually representing negative views,” or “a protest” (“Remonstrances”). In this way Man Ray puts himself in a position of Authority equivalent to that of a governing body or of a general recipient of opposition to this periodical. As if calling on

Comstock, as La+ does, to elicit controversy, and then asking to send remonstrances in the form of money—so sabotaging one’s ability to “protest” and in turn support the publication instead.

The Gazook was published in March, three months after Comstock’s last court case in January 1915 and six months before Comstock’s death the following September. Reading *The Gazook* as an assemblage allows a more comprehensive mockery of The Comstock Act. Beginning with *The Cosmic Urge*, *The Gazook* counteracts the Comstock Act by drawing the “lewd” grasshoppers mating, and engaging the religious discourse, deems it “cosmic.” This is juxtaposed with the ironic giving of “glory” to Comstock at the end of a pamphlet. The one time Comstock’s name is mentioned in this way is by a woman whose name is a visual interpretation of the Christian cross: La+. Her work, *to HIM...*, references God and Comstock. The form of a music-less church hymnal suggests that the holy or even godly “HIM” suppresses the production of music and art through the law: “He destroyeth all art” (Ray). La+ critiques religion and of Comstock’s interpretation of that religion in irreverently giving “glory to Comstock”. The play with censorship throughout the work from the mating grasshoppers on the first page to the censored image on the second, exemplify aspects of a brash Dada and its association with leftist political involvement that directs the movement of this work.

Later, when Ray and Wolff assemble *TNT* it seems as though they are acting within the censorship laws perhaps to mock them. Other than the classically modeled nude woman in the beginning, it is almost wholly tame, visually. Perhaps the only major pieces that could be “lewd” would be the hints to infidelity and the subsequent suicide of the main character torn between his rational and emotional feelings about his wife versus the cabaret dancer in *The Theater of the Soul*, and the (supposed) translation simply titled *From the Chinese*. While this translation first of all seems unlikely to be accurate because the amount of Chinese characters are significantly

less than the English words presented in a totally different format, it also does not include the author's name. While it might be read in conjunction with the succeeding piece, *Leaves of Tea* by Adolf Wolff, it is not clear who translated or even wrote this poem.

From the Chinese is initially unreliable because it has no clearly defined author, it raises questions of authorship and in this case the veracity of a translation. The first stanza depicts the calm "Lord Rabbit" and "Lord Moon" who eat the fruits of the earth. However, by the third stanza a husband and wife are introduced who have had an unexpected child. When this happens, the husband says, "When I am drunk / I will beat my wife / And then / With flute players and drummer / I will marry another" (Kuenzli 156). In this case, what seems to be a non-controversial poem turns controversial and violent. The typography here is very simple, not "lewd" or imposing in any way, though the content becomes increasingly so.

By the next piece, Wolff's *Leaves of Tea*, the tone shifts. There are several fragmented images of calm moments concerning humans' relationship to the earth, spirits and to memory. In one fragment, he writes, "The day said / let there be / Silence / And it was / Night" (158). In another he writes, "The young woman / By the Mirror / The swan / On the lake / Both / Fussing with their / Feathers" (157). Another reflects religion, "If you are thru / Said the Lord / You may run along / And play / So they made / The flowers" (158). These scattered fragments of a poem suggest a calming down from the previous poem. It focuses on silence, perhaps, submission to the land and to the past. This oddly uncontroversial poem then leads into Ray's mechanical image, *My First-Born*. Rather than the politically driven *The Gazook*, *TNT* oddly seems driven by a lack of political involvement, one that is perhaps more involved with the aforementioned Ray and Wolff's relationships with LaCroix.

While this publication seems drastically apolitical in comparison with *The Gazook*, it does exercise radical qualities in that it goes against the exacerbating radicalness of Dada—then established in Zürich for three years. If anything, it seems almost blissfully unaware of any conflict (except perhaps for the conflict of Ray’s separation from LaCroix), perhaps because the war was then over or because in doing so was in fact more radical at this point when Tzara’s *Dada* periodical in Zürich was blooming with typographic experimentation unlike it had before. Either way, *TNT*, seems “monotonous” in its presentation, something that would thus be “monotonous” for readers accustomed to a Dada periodical at this time period. However, in denying the radical and explosive conventions of Dada, *TNT* becomes radical for Dada’s “standards” or even, shows the many hats Dada wears. Through the journey from innocent nude woman to mechanical “first-born” it mimics, perhaps mocks the culture of avant-garde art at the time—the name *TNT* and the corresponding lack of explosive typography creates controversy in its plainness.

As for *The Gazook*, the compilation of this publication shows a very prominent critique on the political climate in New York metropolitan area, and the United States at large. Though the means by which Man Ray (and contributors) attack the implications of the Comstock Act is through mocking the very act itself. This periodical, brimming with the Dada Spirit, though preceding Dada, is deployed in such a way to comment on the politics of the time. While many are hesitant to ascribe any blatantly political meaning to work that is Dada, the political implications seem inseparable from this particular publication. A work that is as much proto-Dada as it is political.

This is to say that though the lens of Ray and Wolff’s publications together they elicited a very unique New York Dada that survived though the manipulation of the physical text and the

play with mechanical quality of the text. What seems to guide the use of these material elements is the larger political machine they are working within and against. From their common ground at the Ferrer Center Ray and Wolff took with them an anarchic spirit that in the United States fought governmental control over art via the Comstock Act and in Europe, over the land and lives of people such as LaCroix's family. Though I cannot say that they were totally politically involved because several other things charged their work that space here does not allow, such as the culture, or as the mere presence of Picabia, or The Baroness, or Duchamp in New York during that time, it did play one significant role in the formation and the look of Dada in New York, a place that perhaps harbored more of a naturally occurring Dada sentiment in its technological progress, its inherent multi-cultural/multi-national people, and its radical periodicals that circulated at that time, in the dawning of the twentieth century.

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