

Retrograde Chapbooks

DADA
MANIFESTO

Hugo Ball

Lucas Battich

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by Hugo Ball

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by Lucas Battich

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

Each thing has its word, but the word has become a thing by itself. Dada is the heart of words. I want the word where it ends and begins. A line of poetry is a chance to get rid of all the filth that clings to this accursed language, as if put there by stockbrokers' hands, hands worn smooth by coins. One shouldn't let too many words out. Au, oi, uh. Words emerge, shoulders of words, legs, arms, hands of words. I let the vowels quite simply occur, as a cat meows. I let the vowels fool around.

It will serve to show how articulated language comes into being. Mr Schulz's words are only two and a half centimetres long. If this pulsation is seven yards long, I want words for it that are seven yards long. I want my own stuff, my

own rhythm, and vowels and consonants too, matching the rhythm and all my own. All the words are other people's inventions. I don't want words that other people have invented. It's a question of connections, and of loosening them up a bit to start with. Dada mhm dada da. Dada m'dada. Dada Dalai Lama, Buddha, Bible, and Nietzsche. Dada Stendhal. Dada Johann Fuchsgang Goethe.

I shall be reading poems that are meant to dispense with conventional language, no less, and to have done with it. And in questions of aesthetics the key is quality. In plain language: the hospitality of the Swiss is something to be profoundly appreciated. Dada Mr Anastasius Lilienstein. Dada Mr Rubiner, dada Mr Korrodi. Dada is the world's best lily-milk soap. Dada is the world soul, dada is the pawnshop. By saying dada. How can one get rid of everything that smacks of journalism, worms, everything nice and right, blinkered, moralistic, europeanised, enervated? Till one loses consciousness. Till one goes crazy. With a noble gesture and delicate propriety. By saying dada. How does one become famous? By saying dada.

How does one achieve eternal bliss? Dada Tzara, dada Huelsenbeck, dada m'dada, dada m'dada dada mhm, dada dera dada, dada Hue, dada Tza. Dada world war without end, dada revolution without beginning, dada, you friends and also-poets, esteemed sirs, manufacturers, and evangelists. Dada psychology, dada Germany cum indigestion and fog paroxysm, dada literature, dada bourgeoisie, and yourselves, honoured poets, who are always writing with words but never writing the word itself, who are always writing

around the actual point. To make of it an artistic tendency must mean that one is anticipating complications. Quite terribly simple. Very easy to understand. Just a word, and the word a movement.

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

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Retrograde:

adj.: directed or moving backwards.

verb: revert to an earlier and inferior condition.

The Oxford Dictionary

In Arnold Schoenberg's 12-tone system, *retrograde* refers to the operation of time-reversing the tones in a musical series, while maintaining the original pitches and rhythms on the sequence. As a literary counterpart to Schoenberg's retrogression technique, *Retrograde Chapbooks* presents existing texts from the history of modernism and the avant-garde, where all sentences have been re-arranged in the inverse order. The immediate meaning and readability of each sentence is maintained, but the overall sense is displaced within the text as a whole.

Retrograde Chapbooks aims to celebrate the original texts, while at the same time proposes an inquiry on the forward linearity of historical development in culture, by performing a literal "going back" movement to modernist paradigms.

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