

Paul van Ostaijen, the Bond zonder gezegeld papier, and the Dadaist salvation of Europe

Clément Pansaers and Paul van Ostaijen

Clément Pansaers may have been the only genuine Belgian Dadaist who placed his work expressly in the framework of the Dadaist project. There were, however, also other representatives of the avant-garde in Belgium who showed a profound interest in Dadaism without joining the Mouvement Dada themselves. Mention has been made of the French-language reviews *Ça Ira!* and *Haro!*, which published prose and poetry by Pansaers. Also interested in Dada, and to some extent kindred with Dada, were the oeuvre and activities of a small, informal group of Flemish writers and artists, in which the Antwerpian writer and art critic, Paul van Ostaijen (fig. 4.1), played a pivotal role.

Van Ostaijen had much in common with Pansaers. Both shared a Flemish background and both were involved in the Flemish national movement. Both played a major role in the introduction of modernism—particularly German expressionism—in Belgium. Both excelled in radical literary experiments. Both had to leave Belgium at the end of World War I, due to their association with the German occupying force and its *Flamenpolitik* during the war. Both went to Berlin where they became acquainted with Dadaism. There is another similarity—in a way, both drifted south. Van Ostaijen was born in Antwerp, but was in possession of Dutch nationality, since his father came from the Dutch province of North-Brabant. Although a Dutch national, van Ostaijen became a resolute advocate of the Flemish cause, whereas Pansaers, Flemish-born and Flemish-raised, became a protagonist of the Walloon cause and ultimately emigrated to France.

At the same time, this correspondence reveals an important difference between Pansaers and van Ostaijen: they used different languages, at least as representatives of the avant-garde. There are other differences as well. To start with, a generation gap can be discerned: Pansaers was born in 1885, van Ostaijen in 1896. This gap had significant consequences for their respective literary developments. When Pansaers started writing, he joined the tradition of Flemish nationalist *Heimat* literature, as developed primarily by Albrecht Rodenbach and the poet-

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priest Guido Gezelle in the second half of the nineteenth century. Before his avant-garde turn in the years 1917–18, only a slight overture in a post-impressionist direction can be found in Pansaers's pre-war work. In the case of van Ostaijen, this impressionism was more or less the starting point of his literary development.

Impressionism was introduced and represented in Flanders by the influential review *Van Nu en Straks*, and its editor, August Vermeylen. *Van Nu en Straks* and the related Flemish impressionism were Flamingant as well. However, they did not focus exclusively on the Flemish countryside nor did they indulge in praise of the revered Flemish rural life. On the contrary, they looked at developments on a European, international level, rather than in a retrograde, pan-Germanic way (as in *Onze Stam*), focusing instead on innovative movements, both political and cultural. Whereas *Van Nu en Straks* showed a particular interest in anarchism on a political level, the review was culturally receptive to impressionism, symbolism, and art nouveau. Van Ostaijen's earliest writing was substantially influenced by the modernist multiformity represented by *Van Nu en Straks*.

Another biographical difference is the fact that Pansaers grew up and lived for almost thirty years in the eastern Flemish hinterland, whereas van Ostaijen's home base was Antwerp and its environs, a large harbor town that was an open window on the rest of the world. Antwerp was, at the same time, the main center of Flemish cultural life. Van Ostaijen and Pansaers also differed in the course of their respective literary developments. Whereas Pansaers's work is marked by several drastic changes, van Ostaijen's oeuvre is characterized by a more gradual development and a much higher degree of continuity, although clear differences can be made out between his writings in the early 1910s and his book *Bezette Stad* (Occupied City), written in 1919 and sometimes characterized as Dadaist. Likewise, substantial differences between *Bezette Stad* and van Ostaijen's later work can be made out, yet with a much higher degree of continuity than between the different phases in Pansaers's oeuvre. Furthermore, van Ostaijen and Pansaers differed in their respective place in Belgian cultural life. Pansaers may not have been completely isolated, but he was certainly a marginal figure. Van Ostaijen, however, was a well-known figure in Antwerpian cultural life—especially in his self-chosen role of dandyish Bohemian and radical art critic—even when he had to go into exile.

Finally, both Pansaers and van Ostaijen were granted only a short life. Pansaers died at the age of thirty-seven; van Ostaijen died when he was five years younger. Pansaers's merits as an avant-garde writer however, were soon forgotten. His fame is based in particular on the continuing effort of his hagiographer, Marc Dachy, as well as on the fact that he was a Dadaist—the only Dadaist in Belgium. Despite his small oeuvre, van Ostaijen is generally regarded as one of the most important representatives, if not the champion, of Flemish twentieth-century

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modernism.¹ In the general recognition of his pioneering role in Dutch and Flemish modernism, his short overtures to Dadaism seem to be rather irrelevant (and perhaps even a little bit inconvenient?).

The similarity between the layout of van Ostaijen's volume of poetry, *Bezette Stad*, and typographic experiments by Berlin Dadaists like George Grosz, John Heartfield, and Raoul Hausmann, as well as a certain degree of nihilism common to both van Ostaijen and Dada, are recurring features in studies on van Ostaijen. Still, it is quite unusual to characterize him primarily as a Dadaist.² This results, no doubt, from the fact that van Ostaijen's rapprochement with Dadaism was only a short phase in his literary development. Furthermore, van Ostaijen didn't regard Dada as a fitting framework for his literary ventures and never presented himself as a wholehearted Dadaist. As mentioned, he never joined Dada and on the contrary, assumed a rather distanced attitude towards Dada as a project. This is probably the most decisive difference between Pansaers and van Ostaijen: whereas Pansaers presented himself as a Dadaist and sought an alliance with the *Mouvement Dada*, van Ostaijen brushed aside Dada—as a project, movement, or style—as a viable option for himself, as well as for the literature and art he propagated as a critic.

Van Ostaijen and expressionism

I.

During World War I, van Ostaijen became the major spokesman of a new generation of Flemish writers and artists who were interested in the development of a new literature and art—a more “dynamic” literature and art, in accordance with the dynamics of modern life.³ They were oriented toward new artistic and literary developments abroad—expressionism, cubism, and, to some extent, futurism. Van Ostaijen's particular focus on German expressionism is indicated by two mottos, among others, stemming from the German expressionist authors Max Brod and Klabund (pseudonym of Alfred Henschke) in his first collection of poetry, *Music-hall* (1916). An apparent congeniality can be made out between the poems in his second volume of poetry, *Het Sienjaal* (The Signal) (1918) and a “humanitarian” current in German expressionism. This “humanitarian” expressionism, with rather vague, utopian visions about a “new life” and “new man,” was represented by German literary reviews like *Die Aktion* and *Die Weissen Blätter* (The White Papers), among others, and by authors like Johannes Becher, Franz Werfel, and Kurt Hiller.

In particular, Hiller and his so-called *Aktivismus* (Activism), can be regarded as a major orientation for van Ostaijen, who made a case for the introduction of such an “Activist” expressionism in his extensive

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essay, "Ekspressionisme in Vlaanderen" (Expressionism in Flanders), written in June 1918. In this essay, van Ostaijen paired aesthetic innovation with a new "spiritual" politics (*Geistespolitik* in German). As in German expressionism (and in Flanders, previously, in *Van Nu en Straks*), the objective was a new "community" (*Gemeinschaft* in German, *gemeenschap* in Dutch). It was in this context that Paul Hadermann pointed at van Ostaijen's aim to oppose "bourgeois Impressionism" by a "a wider socialism based on a spiritual community," as propagated by van Ostaijen in "Ekspressionisme in Vlaanderen."⁴ Van Ostaijen's expressionism was, in other words, more than just literature and art. It also comprised an insurgent politics and, furthermore, a wider mentality and attitude: an alternative way of life. In the case of van Ostaijen and his circle in Antwerp, this was marked by a dandy-like public appearance and behavior. A Bohemian subculture was staged by van Ostaijen and his small circle of friends in Antwerp, an offence against both bourgeois decorum and morality and against the rules of the cultural and political establishment.

The Activist expressionism of Hiller constituted an important orientation for van Ostaijen in the humanitarian turn of the poetry collection *Het Sienjaal*. Van Ostaijen's understanding of expressionism, though, was much wider. It actually encompassed the whole spectrum of German expressionism; not only Hiller's Activism and the humanitarian, left-wing, politicized positions represented by *Die Aktion* and *Die Weissen Blätter*, but also the more aesthetic, spiritual approaches that could be found in *Der Sturm* or, for example, in the writings and work of Vassily Kandinsky.⁵ Yet van Ostaijen's "Expressionism" was even broader. It actually comprised the whole spectrum of avant-garde tendencies documented in *Der Sturm*. As such, van Ostaijen's "Expressionism" was by and large a common denominator for the whole pre-war European avant-garde, including cubism and futurism as well. In van Ostaijen's essay, "Ekspressionisme in Vlaanderen," Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Albert Gleizes, Jean Metzinger, Fernand Léger, Umberto Boccioni, and Gino Severini were presented next to Kandinsky, Alexander Archipenko, Ernst Barlach, Marc Chagall, Alexej van Jawlensky, Franz Marc, and Erich Heckel as protagonists of "Expressionism."⁶

On a local Flemish level, this gave van Ostaijen the opportunity, on the one hand, to widen his criteria or, on the other hand, to now focus in particular on his closer friends, Paul Joostens, and the brothers Floris and Oscar Jespers. Van Ostaijen's friends may have been quite radical in a Flemish context, as they experimented now and then with the new (expressionist, cubist etc.) approaches from abroad. They were, however, at the same time still attached to (post-) impressionist and (post-) naturalist aesthetics. Van Ostaijen's broad understanding of expressionism enabled him, nevertheless, to discern certain "dynamics" in their work. These "dynamics" were, as van Ostaijen saw it, a common feature "of all contemporary currents; Futurism, Expressionism, Cubism."⁷

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II.

Not only van Ostaijen's "Expressionism," but also his "Activism" had a much wider, or rather, a double character. He was, on the one hand, an "Activist" in the sense of an expressionist with a clear affinity with Hiller's *Geistespolitik*, as well as with the left-wing expressionism in *Die Aktion*. On the other hand, van Ostaijen was an Activist in the particular Flemish sense of the word—a radical nationalist who considered the German occupation of Belgium an opportunity to realize the objectives of the Flemish movement.⁸ Many of van Ostaijen's early essays were devoted to the Flemish cause and were published in organs of the nationalist movement, such as *Vlaamsche Gazet* (Flemish Gazette), *Het Vlaamsche Nieuws* (The Flemish News), *De Goedendag* (The Mace, or Good Day), *Ons Land* (Our Country), and *Vlaamsch Leven* (Flemish Life).

Van Ostaijen also participated in a Flemish Activist demonstration against the French-speaking archbishop of Flanders, Desire Joseph Cardinal Mercier. Mercier, representative of the Walloon elite, openly opposed both the German occupation and Flemish nationalism, in particular, collaborationist Activism. During a procession in Antwerp, Mercier was hissed and jeered at by a group of forty Activists who invoked "Holy Lutgardis, patroness of the Dutch provinces, to give Flanders soon a Flemish bishop."⁹ Van Ostaijen was arrested along with four other Activists. In January 1918, all were sentenced for insulting Mercier and disturbing the religious happening—van Ostaijen and the others received three months' imprisonment and were fined. The sentence was postponed, however, because all convicted Activists lodged an appeal against their conviction. When the war ended in the fall of 1918, van Ostaijen feared the execution of this sentence and possible further repercussions for his highly visible participation in the Activist movement. He left for Berlin with his partner, Emmeke Clément.

Van Ostaijen stayed in Berlin for more than two years.¹⁰ In his absence, van Ostaijen was sentenced in Belgium to another eight-month jail sentence for his involvement in the Activist journal, *Antwerpsche Courant* (Antwerp Daily). His second volume of poetry, *Het Sienjaal*, had been printed on the press of this newspaper. Still, van Ostaijen returned to Antwerp in May 1921, as it became obvious that he could not find a proper job and would not be able to support himself in Berlin any longer. Besides, his relationship with Clément was coming to an end. Back in Antwerp, van Ostaijen was not sent to prison. His sentence was initially suspended and a short time later, he was finally granted amnesty as part of a general pardon for wartime political offenses.

III.

Through regular correspondence with and visits from his Flemish friends, van Ostaijen kept in touch with the artistic and literary life at home during his Berlin exile. Van Ostaijen had formed the informal Bond zonder gezegeld papier,¹¹ (federation without stamped paper) with Jos. Léonard, René Victor, Joostens, and the brothers Jespers. At the same time, he made contacts in the circles of the Berlin review *Der Sturm* with such people as Alfred Behne, Heinrich Campendonk, Lyonel Feininger, Salomo Friedlaender, Arthur Götz, Erich Heckel, Georg Muche, Fritz Stuckenberg, Arnold Topp, and Herwardt Walden.¹²

It was during van Ostaijen's sojourn in Berlin that the first signs of a new self-understanding, both political and aesthetic, were observed. Whereas "Expressionism" had previously been the general denominator for van Ostaijen's literary and artistic conceptions, this designation was gradually replaced by "Cubism." This "Cubism" was not a new general denominator for the whole artistic and literary spectrum hitherto subsumed under the caption "Expressionism," but served as a designation for a radical, consequent nucleus in the broader movement formerly qualified as "Expressionist." In a letter to his friends in Antwerp, dated January 1919, van Ostaijen expressed the hope that their "federation" would not fall apart and that they would keep to "the road of solely sanctifying Expressionism." Following this remark, van Ostaijen made mention of his study of Metzinger's book, *Le Cubisme*, "since I have seen now that Cubism is the clearest, most exact direction."¹³ A year later, in July 1920, Joostens was expelled by van Ostaijen from the Bond zonder gezegeld papier in a self-ironical, but nevertheless serious "bull," in which "Paul I," also known as "Pope Paul from Halensee," announced "the excommunication" of Joostens as a member of the "Holy Cubist and Flamingant Church" (fig. 4.2).¹⁴

Sienjaal, "emancipated Cubism," and "creative indifference"

I.

In November 1920, van Ostaijen's conversion to, or more precisely, his new particular focus on cubism resulted in a manifesto-like text that appeared in a prospect for a new review entitled *Sienjaal*, which was envisaged as a platform for the Bond zonder gezegeld papier. The review was never launched, however, as only two dozen subscribers could be registered on the basis of the first prospect.¹⁵ Although the title was identical with that of van Ostaijen's second volume of poetry,

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the program developed in the prospect was no longer an activist, humanitarian expressionism. The planned review was to be, instead, an "organ of the Constructivist direction in modern art, for clarity's sake of emancipated Cubism."¹⁶ This emancipated cubism was notably distinguished from the "confusing compromises," "Baroque-" and "Pseudo-Expressionism" and "mannerist Naturalism," as well as from classicism and impressionism.

Fundamental features of the proposed emancipated cubism were the restriction of each art to its own domain and the commitment of art (and each art for itself) to its own intrinsic principles.¹⁷ Van Ostaïjen rejected not only a moral, ethical, or political instrumentalization of art (one of the main characteristics of "humanitarian" expressionism), but also the combination of different artistic disciplines (as in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the "complete" or "total work of art"). Instead, "de-individualization" (*ontindividualisering*, in Dutch) was forwarded as the new general principle of emancipated cubism.¹⁸ The result should be a threefold "UNIO MYSTICA," (mystical union) as van Ostaïjen argued in an extended version of his outline for *Sienjaal*—"Et voilà. Een inleidend manifest." (And there you have it. An introductory manifesto).¹⁹ This *unio mystica* entailed the following:

1. The work of art was to be envisaged as a "unity," as an autonomous "organism," a "living creature," which was to be regarded, as such, as "for itself" individual in the first meaning of the word: for itself undivided," as an "aseity."²⁰ For the artist, this posed the necessity of "de-individualization": the work of art had to be "determined according to the laws of its matter and its spirit and not according to the laws of an alien body and of an alien spirit."²¹ In other words, the artist should abandon his personal individuality for the sake of the undividedness of the work of art.

2. The *unio mystica* was to be understood simultaneously as a transcending unity of subject and object, as synthesis of subjectivity, and as objectivity through a double operation: the forms, which together constitute the organism-work of art, are torn away from all other relations: the objective forms torn away from their empirical coherence; the subjective vision torn away from the creator, since its localization constitutes an independent micro-cosmos, through the exteriorization of subjective vision, i.e. through estrangement from himself, the artist. Objectivity is de-individualized through subjective affect and this affect [is] in turn [de-individualized] by means of exteriorization.²²

3. This implied already that the *unio mystica* of emancipated cubism also comprised a different relationship between the work of art and external reality—external to the work of art, i.e. both the inner reality of the artist (as under 1.) and the outer reality of things "out there." Either reality was "torn away," resulting in

complete abstraction, i.e. the detachment of the work of art from any external reality. According to this conception, the work of art did not represent, but was just a completely autonomous presentation of itself, of its own presence. The work of art should—as van Ostaïjen stressed, in contrast to futurism and its techniques to represent modern times, for example, by abstract representations of speed—not offer such an abstract representation of another reality, of another presence, but should be understood, instead, as a *concrete* presentation of itself.²³

In analogy to the expressly non-political conception of his emancipated cubism, van Ostaïjen stated at the end of his manifesto that *Sienjaal* was not intended as a political group or journal. “[H]owever,” van Ostaïjen concluded, “we don’t believe that the still-nascent comprehensive Constructive art direction can find its realization in bourgeois society. Bourgeois society cannot relate with non-individual art.”²⁴ In other words, in a somewhat concealed way, politics re-entered emancipated cubism by the back door, since bourgeois society was regarded by van Ostaïjen as highly individual, whereas emancipated cubism pursued de-individualization.

Van Ostaïjen’s rejection of bourgeois society might have been in part a remnant of his anti-bourgeois Bohemian attitude during the war years. It coincided, though, with a new political stand. While van Ostaïjen remained a Flemish nationalist, his nationalism, however, became integrated in a revolutionary council-communism. In an article in the Dutch communist review, *De nieuwe tijd* (The New Time), he argued that Flemish nationalism was not at odds with the aims of internationalist socialism, since the Flemish movement was essentially fighting in Belgium for the rights of the Flemish section of the international proletariat against the Belgian Walloon bourgeoisie.²⁵

II.

Van Ostaïjen’s aesthetic, *unio mystica*, may have been part of an “emancipated Cubist” program. This doesn’t alter the fact, however, that apparent similarities can be observed between his holy trinity and some basic principles held by Dadaists in Zurich and Berlin. The third element of his de-individualized understanding of the work of art can be found in the self-reflections of Hans Arp in terms almost identical with those of van Ostaïjen. Arp declared time after time that he was in pursuit of “the undividedness of nature and spirit, object and subject,”²⁶ of a reality, that was neither “objective reality” nor “subjective reality,” but a “mystical reality” in between.²⁷ And since he didn’t want to copy or reproduce nature, but rather to produce like nature, there was “not the slightest trace of abstraction in this art,” which he therefore called “concrete art.”

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Since works of concrete art shouldn't represent the subjective reality of their maker, they should not bear the signature of the artist.²⁸

It may seem rather doubtful whether van Ostaijen was familiar with these particular views of Arp. They nevertheless indicate van Ostaijen's proximity to Dada. And there are more indications of this conceptual proximity—in particular, the first two elements of van Ostaijen's *unio mystica* can be retraced to the philosopher Salomo Friedlaender, who lived in Berlin and stood in close contact with several Dadaists. During his stay in Berlin in June 1919, van Ostaijen became personally acquainted with Friedlaender and subsequently held him in very high esteem. According to van Ostaijen, Friedlaender was "a beautiful person."²⁹

The impact of Friedlaender on van Ostaijen was twofold. Friedlaender was not only a philosopher, but also a writer of fiction, most notably of grotesques published under the pseudonym "Mynona"—*anonym* (anonymous) in reverse. Friedlaender's example—"Mynona is the best," as van Ostaijen noted in his correspondence³⁰—inspired van Ostaijen to start writing grotesques as well. One of them, a story entitled "Het bordeel van I. K. Loch" (The Brothel of I. K. Loch),³¹ portrayed a whorehouse in which logic was reversed, as indicated in the name of the madam—I. K. Loch—following the key to Friedlaender's pseudonym.³² Although this grotesque wasn't Dadaist as such, the name I. K. Loch seems to hint at the likewise fictitious name of I. K. Bonset. The story also contained the essential formula of Dada, according to van Ostaijen. In an article on Campendonk, van Ostaijen equated "destruction Dada" with "a-priori alogic."³³

Van Ostaijen was not only inspired by Mynona's fiction, but also by Friedlaender's philosophical ontology, the philosophy of so-called creative indifference (*schöpferische Indifferenz*, in German).³⁴ In philosophical terms, Friedlaender was a radical idealist. According to Friedlaender, outer reality, the world surrounding us, was actually nothing but a complex radiation or extrapolation of the inner self, of the genuine subject. In principle, this subject held absolute sway over the world. However, in the previous hundred years or so, the omnipotence of the subject had been subverted in several ways. Immanuel Kant's observation that the "*Ding an sich*," (the thing in itself) could as such not be known by the human subject already implied a serious deprivation of the subject's power over the world—a world, which was, in Friedlaender's conception, in fact, nothing else than the world of the subject. Other setbacks for the omnipotence of the subject in its proper territory were, among others, the death of God, as announced by Friedrich Nietzsche, and Albert Einstein's formulation of the theory of relativity. As a result, human thought had lost its absolute foundations and as a consequence, man (or rather, the essential human subject called "*Person*" by Friedlaender) was stranded in a situation of relativism and uncertainty. *Person* had lost control over the world—in Friedlaender's idealist conception, over "its own" world.

In his philosophical reflections, Friedlaender tried to find an answer to the question of how this essential human subject could be reinstalled as an absolute ruler over the world. In other terms, Friedlaender's philosophy tried to answer the question of how this subject could regain control over its own world (and thought) once again. A first precondition for the reinstatement of the subject as omnipotent and single ruler over the (its) world was—according to Friedlaender—a new, solid, absolute foundation of its thought. This new foundation was conceived by Friedlaender in a quite paradoxical way as Nothing—a Nothing characterized by absolute indifference, and as such *not* a Nothing as opposed to Anything, but rather a *Nihil neutrale* (neutral Nothing).³⁵ This *Nihil neutrale* was defined by Friedlaender—in a mathematical metaphor—as a zero point situated in the exact middle between plus and minus. According to Friedlaender, this zero point could be distinguished in any other conceivable polarity as well: Good and Evil; Right and Wrong; War and Peace; Male and Female; Black and White; North and South, etc. All of these polarities had a zero point in their exact middle, a point where no Good and Evil, no War and Peace, no Male and Female, etc. existed, but where, for example, Good and Evil were still undivided—a unified whole. A contingent zero point, from which potentially all polarities could be differentiated (or polarized). A zero point in which all polarities could be dissolved. A zero point in which everything was—in other words—still one.

In a world which, according to Friedlaender, is basically composed of polar differences, the subject could regain control over this (its) world by finding a balance—an absolute balance between these polarities. Friedlaender believed that absolute balance could be attained simply by assuming absolute indifference, by taking zero as a standpoint, as a seat of absolute neutrality, of complete nothingness. This complete nothingness (Chuang-Dze was among Friedlaender's favorite authors) could be reached, as said, through the annulment of polarities like Male and Female or Good and Evil in their respective middle, in the zero point of Masculinity and Femininity, in the neutral middle between Good and Evil. This technique of indifferenciation results in a state in which all differences are canceled. Only indifference remains. In a world that manifests itself to the human subject on first sight as a sea of relativities (or in Friedlaender's terms, as a sea of polarities and polar oppositions), this indifference serves, thus, as an "absolute life buoy in the sea of relativity."³⁶ Indifference prevents the subject from drowning in this "sea of relativity."

Indifference is, however, more than just an unstable life buoy, enabling the subject to bob around over the waves of relativity. It is at the same time the only absolute and, as such, the only solid and steady foundation for the proper subject, "the most general principle of the world, the absolute center of the world."³⁷ This true subject should, according to Friedlaender, not be confused with ordinary, imperfect,

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flesh-and-blood man (*Mensch*, in German). *Mensch* was caught as well in a web of polarities and, as such, was only a relative manifestation of the proper subject, called *Person*, *Ich* or *Selbst* (Person, I, or Self).³⁸ This person, as Friedlaender argued, can only be a true *Individuum* (Individual) as far as he is truly *In-dividuum* (Un-divided), not yet or no longer marked by polar differences, residing in indifferent neutral Nothingness and at the same time, being such a neutral Nothing him/herself. As a neutral Nothing, the genuine subject contained and was capable of balancing all possible differences in a state of absolute indifference, from a position of complete balance, of full in-dividuality, of full undividedness.

Since Friedlaender argued from a radical idealist perspective in which the world is ultimately just a manifestation of the mind, Friedlaender's subject regained in the balanced state of indifference its "*eigne Allmacht*,"³⁹ (personal omnipotence), its "own" control over the world, which is in the end, once more (or rather, from the start) its "own" world. In Friedlaender's philosophy, "indifference" is, hence, not an expression of inactivity, passivity, or inertia, nor is it an expression of lack of interest in "the rest of the world." Quite on the contrary, Friedlaender conceived his "indifference" as "creative indifference."

Through "creative indifference," the subject, in Friedlaender's philosophical reflections, evolves once more into a "*Waghalter der Welt*"⁴⁰ (autonomous balance-keeper of the world), who has the world in his hands as an infinite set of polar scales that must be balanced continuously to stay in control. Friedlaender's indifference is, however, not just a defensive act of a waning subject. As *Waghalter der Welt*, the subject is, at the same time, a creative ruler over the world, in command of all possible polarities. In other words, the subject extrapolates the world in all its aspects, since the external world was, according to the radical idealist Friedlaender, only a result, a radiation of the spirit. This opinion was shared by van Ostaijen: "Everything is *to me* a phenomenon and exists only as phenomenon: the objects of the so-called world outside are no more than experiences with a psychic-subjective character."⁴¹

Van Ostaijen's conception of de-individualization is essentially an adaptation of Friedlaender's "creative indifference," as he himself indicated in the previously mentioned article on Campendonk in 1921:

The work of art is de-individualized and at the same time individual, that is to say, de-individualized in respect to the subject and the phenomenon in itself, and therefore individual in itself as a work of art, like a micro-cosmos.... One can express th[is] unity only by differences, which are then not this unity anymore, but only its scattered elements or effects. As individuality, the work of art is a primordial and in itself, indifferent whole. In its mechanism of expression, this individuality has to manifest itself by its differentiated expression. Indifference becomes appreciable by difference.⁴²

Dada-jazz revolution?

I.

Friedlaender's "creative indifference" had a profound ontological character with a strong ethical dimension, since "indifference" was also the position to be assumed in moral and political questions. In regard to this ontological character, Hadermann rightly concluded that the "disindividualization Friedlaender aimed at was to be an ethical, personal achievement. Van Ostaijen turned it into an aesthetic necessity."⁴³ Hadermann, however, missed the fact that van Ostaijen was not the first to apply Friedlaender in the field of the arts. Elements from Friedlaender's writings had actually been adopted by several Dadaists in previous years. Friedlaender notably left his traces—on a theoretical level—in the programmatic writings of Tristan Tzara in Zurich, as well as of Hausmann, Richard Huelsenbeck, and "Daimonides," also known as Carl Döhmman, in Berlin.⁴⁴ Huelsenbeck in particular referred time after time to the special relevance of Friedlaender's "creative indifference" for Dadaism in a series of publications in 1920: *Dada-Almanach* (Dada Almanac), *En avant Dada* (Forward, Dada), *Dada siegt* (Dada Triumphs), and "Die dadaistische Bewegung. Eine Selbstbiographie" (The Dadaist Movement. An Autobiography) in *Die Neue Rundschau* (The New Magazine):

The Dadaist... is the genuine Indo-American discussed by S. Friedlaender in his creative indifference.⁴⁵

Dada is the point of indifference between content and form, wife and man, matter and spirit, since it is the vertex of the magical triangle, which elevates above the linear polarity of human things and concepts.⁴⁶

The Dadaist takes advantage of the psychological possibility concealed in his capacity to unleash his own individuality, like one throws a lasso or lets flutter a cloak in the wind [without abandoning] the creative indifference, as Dr. Friedländer-Mynona calls it.⁴⁷

Although van Ostaijen referred to Friedlaender directly, it seems improbable that he wasn't familiar with the Dadaist appropriation of Friedlaender, since Friedlaender himself was involved in Dadaist ventures in Berlin, be it only marginally. Van Ostaijen, in turn, was not only acquainted with Friedlaender, but also with Walter Mehring (van Ostaijen spent Christmas of 1918 in Mehring's place),⁴⁸ with George Grosz, and with Paul Citroen. Van Ostaijen met with Mehring and Citroen several times during the *Erste Internationale Dada-Messe* in Berlin and it seems quite unlikely that this exhibition and Dada in general were not discussed. However, the contact with Mehring, Grosz, and Citroen should not

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be overestimated, since these contacts were impeded by mutual reservation and distrust. Van Ostaijen regarded Mehring and Grosz as money-makers with a bourgeois mentality.⁴⁹ In turn, Citroen's diary entries expressed a profound dislike of van Ostaijen, which may have been shared by Mehring and Grosz.⁵⁰

II.

Even though his relationship with the Berlin Dadaists was apparently rather aloof, van Ostaijen was nonetheless well-informed about Dada, as his film scenario, *De bankroet-jazz* (The Bankruptcy Jazz), in particular, may indicate.⁵¹ Dada is one of the main topics in this film scenario, written in the second half of 1920. The film is primarily situated in Berlin, with scenes from other European cities such as Brussels and Paris, and includes a cast with figures from all over the world. The theme of the scenario is the bankruptcy of European civilization. This bankruptcy coincides not only with the advance of jazz music and the rising popularity of Charlie Chaplin, but also with the foundation of a "Cabaret Dada" and the outburst of a "Dada-jazz revolution."⁵² Since Chaplin and jazz were among the main reference points of the Berlin Dadaists, the whole scenario could be regarded as a cinematic evocation of Dadaism, not least because the title of the scenario also refers to Dada. The German word for bankruptcy is *pleite*. *Die Pleite* was the title of a politico-satirical review edited by Grosz and Carl Einstein that was closely affiliated to Club Dada. According to van Ostaijen's scenario, the jazz that "swamps the street,"⁵³ originates from a "Cabaret Dada."

In van Ostaijen's text, the link between the title of his scenario and the actual journal, *Die Pleite*, is made by referring to *Die Pleite* in German in an otherwise Dutch text. *Die Pleite* is mentioned in a scene in which a variety of slogans can be found that are apparent similar to a number of comparable slogans in *Der Dada*, the main journal of the Berlin Dadaists, as well as slogans from the walls of the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe. In the second issue of *Der Dada* the following "advertisement" can be read:

What is dada?
An art? A philosophy? Politics?
A fire insurance?
Or: state religion?
is dada true Energy?
or is it Nothing at all, i.e.
everything?

The walls of the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe were covered with numerous slogans, including the following:

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Down with art!
Open up your head. Make it free for the demands of the time
DADA is the resolute subversion of the bourgeois conceptual
range
DADA stands on the side of the revolutionary proletariat
I can live without food and drink but not without DADA
Long live DADA!

Although the similarity between these “authentic” slogans and the slogans by van Ostaijen in *De bankroet-jazz* is apparent, van Ostaijen modified their content decisively by equating Dada with bankruptcy:

What is Dada? DADA is the global reason reachable through
the hyperidiocy of everyone
Dada is not bankrupt, but is bankruptcy
DADA is not an artistic affair, but the FORMULA of
BANKRUPTCY
long live Dada
JOIN DADA⁵⁴

Dada may be the “formula of bankruptcy.” This bankruptcy of civilization is made complete in the film scenario, though, when at a later stage in the film, the “Dadaist bankruptcy” is presented as the salvation of Europe, “A gigantic billboard: The government joins Dada/DADA SAVES EUROPE.”⁵⁵

Hansjürgen Bulkowski regarded *De bankroet-jazz* as a hitherto neglected genuine Dada film scenario.⁵⁶ Marc Reynebeau rightly pointed at the negative depiction of the “Cabaret Dada.” This cabaret is described in anything but sympathetic terms.⁵⁷ Next to the equation of Dada and bankruptcy, van Ostaijen depicted Dada as an enterprise primarily intended to make money and, in this respect, as an expression of the bankruptcy of European culture rather than as a viable alternative for a new culture (like his own emancipated cubism):

A cul-de-sac of Alt-Moabit-Berlin.... A Galician Jew bangs his fist on the table. Triumphant face as eureka-expression. Surprise.

Do you know Dada? Disillusion among the table-companions. Address by the Galician Jew. No, Dada isn't artistic bluff, but the overall solution for us, for the financial problem. Ambiance. This is Dada. Prophetic gesture of the Galician Jew:

THE CABARET DADA IS THE FUTURE, Dadaism a real value like petrol drilling. Syndicate for the exploitation of Dadaism is founded.⁵⁸

The historical point of reference for the foundation of the Cabaret Dada as “syndicate for the exploitation of Dadaism” in *De bankroet-jazz*

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is probably the adoption of commercial activities as part of the aesthetic praxis of the real Berlin Dadaists. Grosz, Heartfield, and Huelsenbeck, for example, founded advertising agencies more or less as part of the Dadaist project. At least, the advertisements for these agencies were published in the review *Der Dada*. These advertisements may well have been a satirical attempt to meet "the demands of the time." At the same time, these advertisements had a serious edge (some years later, Kurt Schwitters, for example, designed the stationary for the City of Hanover, whereas Vilmos Huszàr, participant in the Dutch Dada campaign in 1923, designed the publicity for the Dutch cigarette brand Miss Blanche). In this respect, the characterization of the Cabaret Dada as a commercial enterprise was in itself not necessarily a critique of Dadaism, since the combination in *De bankroet-jazz* of culture and commerce, of Dada and bankruptcy, was just documenting actual Dadaist praxis, and not only in Berlin: the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich was not least intended by its founders, Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings, as a source of income.⁵⁹ However, van Ostaijen revealed himself in his private correspondence to be especially critical of this commercialization of art and the "business mentality" of Dadaists like Mehring and Grosz. Hence, the assumption that *De bankroet-jazz* can be regarded as a straightforward Dadaist film scenario seems rather questionable.

Although *De bankroet-jazz* is foremost a panorama of contemporary metropolitan reality in Berlin, centering around Dada, jazz, and Chaplin, the text also contains an implicit critique of Dadaism. The fact that "the government" joins Dada in an attempt to save Europe (or perhaps the bankruptcy of Europe?) seems not exactly to speak in favor of Dada, at least not in the light of van Ostaijen's anti-statist stand in political matters (see below).

Yet, in a way, *De bankroet-jazz* can still be regarded as an attack on Dadaism by Dadaist means, both by form and content. The fragmented, cinematic narrative is similar to the narrative prose by the Berlin Dadaists, Huelsenbeck and Franz Jung. In particular, Jung's "Der Fall Gross" (The Gross Case), published in the proto-Dada review, *Neue Jugend* (New Youth), and the first chapter of Huelsenbeck's novel *Dr. Billig am Ende* (Dr. Cheap Finished), published in *Club Dada*.⁶⁰ The typographic layout of the text is kindred to the layout by Grosz, Heartfield, and Hausmann of *Neue Jugend* and *Der Dada*. Finally, van Ostaijen's critique of Dadaism as a bankrupt corruption of art can be found in a pamphlet entitled *Die dadaistische Korruption* (The Dadaist Corruption), written by Walter Petry. Despite its rejection of Dada, this pamphlet was presented as a Dadaist exhibit at the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe.⁶¹

Van Ostaijen, Friedlaender, and Dada

I.

Van Ostaijen's ambivalent attitude toward Dada can also be observed, in other terms, in his appropriation of Friedlaender's philosophy. The fact that van Ostaijen joined Dada in the aesthetic extension of Friedlaender's philosophy doesn't automatically imply that he adopted the specific Dadaist translation of Friedlaender's ontology. On the contrary, several differences can be discerned not only between van Ostaijen and Dada on the one hand and Friedlaender on the other, but also between van Ostaijen and Dada in their respective understanding and handling of the concept of "creative indifference."

The first difference between Friedlaender and van Ostaijen has already been identified: Friedlaender's creative indifference has an ontological character. The Dadaists related creative indifference—as a guiding principle of Dada—or rather, to Dada—as an agency of a new state of mind, of a Dadaist mentality. As such, the Dadaists regarded the concept of "creative indifference" as a psychological principle to survive in a chaotic world.⁶² Van Ostaijen applied "creative indifference" instead exclusively to the aesthetic domain.

Another contrast involves the notion of individuality. The Berlin Dadaists regarded creative indifference as a technique to transcend their individuality. Likewise, van Ostaijen propagated "de-individualization"—the abandonment of the subjectivity of the artist in the creative process. This congeniality is probably the clearest indication that van Ostaijen was influenced by the Dadaists in his appropriation of Friedlaender's philosophy, since Friedlaender did not want to annihilate individuality. Friedlaender's whole philosophy was, on the contrary, an attempt to overcome the fragmentation of the (false) everyday human subject—a fragmented subject termed *Dividuum* by Friedlaender. Man of flesh and blood was, in other words, marked by "dividedness." The restoration of the indifference, the undividedness of the *In-dividuum* as the true, undivided subject (called *Person* by Friedlaender) was instead Friedlaender's prime objective.⁶³ Although van Ostaijen's concept of de-individualization originated partly from Friedlaender's philosophical reflections, this de-individualization constituted at the same time a clear contrast with Friedlaender. Like Huelsenbeck, who claimed that the Dadaist can "unleash his own individuality, like one throws a lasso or lets flutter a cloak in the wind," van Ostaijen wanted to *de*-individualize. Friedlaender aimed instead at a *re*-individualization.

II.

Van Ostaijen differed from both Friedlaender and the Dadaists in his pursuit of the de-individualization of the work of art. The creative indifference of both Friedlaender and the Berlin Dadaists is applied in the first place to the human subject, in the case of Friedlaender, to an abstract *Person*, and in the case of the Dadaists, to the Dadaist artist of flesh and blood. To the extent that literature or a work of art are products (or in Friedlaender's terms, radiations) of this subject, "creative indifference" can also manifest itself in these literary and artistic manifestations of the subject. Thus, Friedlaender regarded his grotesques—written under the pseudonym "Mynona"—as exemplifications of creative indifference and as exercises in indifferenciation. Likewise, the Dadaists applied Friedlaender's creative indifference to their literary and artistic work as well, and not only in Berlin. In Zurich, Tzara claimed that "active indifference" led, as a guiding principle, to his own new "approach of words."⁶⁴ In the case of Tzara, this "active indifference," as it manifested itself in his literary work, resulted from the "true necessity of the author."⁶⁵ Tzara differed in this respect from the Berlin Dadaists—unlike Tzara's insistence on the omnipotence of the artistic self, Huelsenbeck and Hausmann tried to revoke their individuality in a process of psychological "indifferenciation." There can be no doubt, however, that both Huelsenbeck and Hausmann understood the work of art as a subjective expression of the artistic individual self as well. According to Huelsenbeck and Hausmann, the artist had to be indifferent, and this indifference had to be expressed in the work of art, quite compatible with Friedlaender's understanding of his grotesques as a playground for the *Person* Mynona (or perhaps more precisely, the *Person* behind Mynona).⁶⁶ In contrast to Friedlaender and the Dadaists, van Ostaijen did *not* relate the concept of creative indifference to a human subject, be it Friedlaender's *Person* or the Dadaist artist of flesh and blood, but rather to the work of art. On the contrary, van Ostaijen wanted to disconnect the work of art from the artist, as may be inferred from his reflections on the *unio mystica*. The indifference of the work of art implied in his *Sienjaal* manifesto a separation of the work of art from its creator.

Through de-individualization, the work of art was not only disconnected from the artist. According to van Ostaijen, de-individualization also implied that the work of art was set free from any ethical or political obligation whatsoever. Van Ostaijen's rejection of a political or moral engagement, of taking a specific political or moral stand, to some extent matched Friedlaender's stand that the point of indifference is basically the only acceptable "absolute" moral or political position to be assumed. This point of indifference, in Friedlaender's philosophy is, in other words, a zero-position, which does not allow the assumption of any

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particular moral codex or political partisanship (since such a partisanship is just resulting from a "relative" polarized and thus, unbalanced, differentiation).⁶⁷

Friedlaender's philosophy had, nevertheless, a profound ethical and political edge. Friedlaender's stress on *In-Dividuum*, on individuality, implied an obvious proximity to Stirnerian anarchist individualism. In the years 1919–20, Friedlaender was co-editor of the Stirnerian review *Der Einzige* (The Unique). The political dimension of the Dadaist state of mind cannot be doubted either. It may have been guided by a certain indifference in the field of politics and morals as well, but it was still intrinsically related to revolutionary ambitions, especially in the Berlin version of Dadaism.⁶⁸ Here, the capacity to "indifferentiate" allowed the Dadaists to absorb the outer reality in their art, in all its chaotic and contrary manifestations—not least, the highly politicized reality of Berlin in the wake of the war, marked by revolutionary turmoil. As indicated previously in van Ostaijen's *Sienjaal* manifesto, the aesthetic sphere of art is, instead, completely detached from politics.

III.

All in all, the conclusion seems justified that on a conceptual level, van Ostaijen was, to some extent, unmistakably influenced by (or at least suspiciously kindred to) Friedlaender's philosophical exercises, as well as by the Dadaist appropriation of Friedlaender's philosophy. Van Ostaijen's adaptation of the concept of "creative indifference" in the framework of his "emancipated Cubism" possessed, however, some fundamental particularities which don't allow its univocal subsumption under the general caption "Dada." Notwithstanding his conceptual congeniality with Dadaism, he differed from Dada on a programmatic level in more than one respect. Thus, it is not surprising that van Ostaijen never presented himself as a Dadaist.

It is still more remarkable that van Ostaijen himself never used the name "Dada" as a denominator for certain artists or certain types of work. Van Ostaijen seldom referred to Dada, aside from the extensive covering of Dada in the scenario, *De bankroet-jazz*, which was only published posthumously. The fact that van Ostaijen didn't use the term "Dada" may have been partly an attempt to avoid any public association with Dada. By ignoring and keeping silent about Dada, van Ostaijen had neither to admit his programmatic debt to Dada nor to consider the membership of the Dada movement. There may have been other, less opportunistic reasons as well. Dada presented itself as a synthesis of futurism, cubism, and expressionism. These currents were previously subsumed by van Ostaijen under the consecutive headings "Dynamism" (1916) and "Expressionism" (1918), and finally also

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included by him in his “emancipated Cubism” (1920). Dadaists like Aragon, Soupault, Ribemont-Dessaignes, Breton, Picabia, Tzara, Grosz, and Schwitters were discussed by van Ostaïjen, as a consequence, not as Dadaists, but as “Modernists,” “Expressionists,” and “Cubists.”⁶⁹ Citroen’s recollection that van Ostaïjen was despised by the Dadaist inner circle as a fellow traveler who pretended to be a Dadaist when Citroen met him in Berlin in 1920,⁷⁰ seems, thus, quite implausible.

It is self-evident that van Ostaïjen’s critical stand towards certain aspects of Dada, as well as his negligence of Dada as a relevant movement (or as a useful classification), does not automatically rule out that van Ostaïjen included or assimilated some elements of Dadaism in his work. The fact that the previously mentioned Dadaists were in his personal avant-garde canon indicates that he held them in high esteem. Since van Ostaïjen categorized them as “Modernists,” “Expressionists,” and “Cubists,” he presented Picabia, Grosz, Schwitters, etc., as congenial fellow avant-gardists, close to his own specific position in the avant-garde.⁷¹

In addition to his adaptation of certain conceptual considerations, van Ostaïjen’s literary work actually includes several traces of the inclusion and appropriation of techniques and practices common to Dadaist writing. Such traces are apparent in *De bankroet-jazz*. The typographic design of the manuscript is reminiscent of the design of many Dada texts and publications. Also, the fragmentary character of the text corresponds with the fragmentary character of many Dada texts. Furthermore, the mixture of reality and fantastic, grotesque elements in the scenario is typical as well of Dadaist attempts to grasp and—at the same time, to transform—reality in their writing. The most profound correspondence between *De bankroet-jazz* and Dadaist writing (in particular in Berlin) is probably the oscillation between incommensurable opposites in van Ostaïjen’s scenario. *De bankroet-jazz* can be characterized as an attack on Dadaism by Dadaist means. The text is, in other words, both an (affirmative) exercise in Dadaism and a resolute critique of Dadaism. Van Ostaïjen seems to have applied here the concept of “creative indifference,” which is at the heart of Dadaist poetics as well.

In addition to *De bankroet-jazz*, van Ostaïjen’s third volume of poetry, *Bezette Stad* (Occupied City), published in April 1921 in Antwerp, shortly before his own return, also indicates the proximity of his poetics to Dada during his stay in Berlin. Like *De bankroet-jazz*, *Bezette Stad* was written in Berlin in the second half of 1920. Van Ostaïjen started writing *Bezette Stad* during the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe, perhaps under the fresh impression of the exhibition, but in any case, immediately after visiting a boxing match with Citroen on July 27, 1920.⁷²

Bezette Stad

Bezette Stad (fig. 1.1) can be regarded primarily as a literary translation of the emancipated cubism outlined in the prospectus of *Sienjaal*, or perhaps the other way around: the emancipated cubism presented in *Sienjaal* tried to reflect the new poetics of *Bezette Stad*. *Bezette Stad* is, in short, a cycle of poems that gives an account of the occupation of Antwerp by German troops in 1914—the gradual approach of the Germans, triumphant entry of the Germans—followed by impressions of Antwerpian city life during the occupation and an account of the end of the war, marked by the final withdrawal of the Germans in 1918. The setting of the last poem is not Antwerp, but Berlin. Here, the murder of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg is reported.

This change of scenery has an obvious autobiographical background. Van Ostaijen also changed cities in 1918. By changing cities, the “occupied” city depicted in *Bezette Stad* takes on a more general character. The “occupied city” is no longer just Antwerp, but rather a modern (European) city in general, be it Antwerp, Berlin, or any other large urban agglomeration. One may even argue that the “occupants” of this city-in-general are not just German forces or any other alien military presence, but primarily the people, objects, and activities that can be found or which take place in a modern city—a city occupied by a plethora of phenomena. In this respect, *Bezette Stad* is not only an (autobiographical) account of recent events, but also a portrait—or rather a continuous flow of images—of contemporary city life, with its tramways, cinemas, and music halls, with all its speedy movements and loud noises, with all the loneliness and despair of the people in it.

Bezette Stad is, however, not an ordinary literary portrait of city life; most of the texts are not conventionally arranged poems. *Bezette Stad* stands out for the typographically conspicuous arrangement of these poems, with constantly changing characters, presenting not only words but visual images as well: a zeppelin is not only mentioned by name—the letters of the word “zeppelin” also have the shape of an airship (fig. 1.2). The sounds and the loudness of a drum in a music hall are not only described in words, but also evoked by the size of the characters of the words describing the drumming, etc. (fig. 1.3).

The extravagant use of variations in typography is unquestionably the most significant feature in *Bezette Stad*, at least the most significant on first sight. These variations are also addressed in van Ostaijen’s conception of literature outlined in his emancipated cubist *Sienjaal* manifesto:

Poetry is verbal art [*woordkunst*]. Not communication of emotions. Instead, vision is localized by the form of the word. And certainly not communication of thoughts. Poetry, communication of thoughts! Why not poetry, a rhymed moral codex! A carpenter should make a

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good table. Not a moral table, not an... ethical table. Likewise the poet. Only in a poetical sense does a good poem legitimize the existence of the poet. Ethical is the poet not by the *theme*, but only by *his point of view*, in regard to phenomenality. Ethics is concealed in the pursuit of each artist: de-individualization.

Printed poetry is *printed* verbal art. The possibilities of printing related to verbal art are, thus, to be exploited to the end. Here you are: the climbing and ascending of the lines, meager and heavy letters, the cascades of falling words over the pages, even different typefaces: as many typographic means shall represent the rhythm of the spoken word through suggestion. Bridges from poet to reader.⁷³

As in the case of the "physioplasmic" typography⁷⁴ presenting the word "zeppelin" in the form of zeppelin airship, van Ostaijen didn't keep completely to his principle of "rhythmic typography." The presentation of the word "zeppelin" in the shape of an airship was at odds with this principle, which implied that the printing process should be used exclusively to represent the rhythm of the originally spoken word, of basically oral, verbal poetry, and not for the communication of conceptions. It seems that another principle wasn't practiced in a completely consequent way either. While de-individualization seems to imply that the subject of the author disappears behind the work of art, behind the poems he has written, on several occasions, a self can be observed in the poems, although the "I" is remarkably absent in comparison with van Ostaijen's earlier work.

In this respect, *Bezette Stad* can be regarded at least as a first attempt of "printed verbal art," according to the principles of emancipated cubist and—more generally—as an example of constructivist poetry (and van Ostaijen pretended nothing more, since emancipated cubism will only be possible in full after the disappearance of contemporary bourgeois society and its inherent individualism). As such, *Bezette Stad* could, thus, be understood as the first substantial expression of a self-acclaimed literary constructivism in the Dutch language.

II.

The fact that *Bezette Stad* was the first major example of constructivist poetics in the Dutch language may explain why Theo van Doesburg, the editor-in-chief of the main Dutch-language constructivist periodical, *De Stijl*, reacted extremely negative to the publication *Bezette Stad*. Under his own name, van Doesburg sharply criticized *Bezette Stad* in the Dutch modernist review *Het Getij* (The Tide). In *Het Getij*, van Doesburg rejected *Bezette Stad* as a simple, epigone imitation of Blaise Cendrars's *La fin du monde* (The End of the World).⁷⁵ Under the heteronym of I. K. Bonset, van Doesburg was even more venomous

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in *De Stijl*. Here, Bonset characterized *Bezette Stad* as a “close imitation of French literary sports,” “pseudo mince” without “Dadaist skeleton,” as organized “crumbles” fighting “the Dadaist bread.” Its “typographic gymnastics” were, according to Bonset, a failed attempt to cut a “quite ordinary realist novel with war tendency” into slices.⁷⁶

There was, however, another reason for van Doesburg’s malicious remarks. Van Doesburg had already been writing “Cubist” and “Simultaneist” poetry in the mid-1910s, poetry labeled by van Doesburg himself in the 1920s as constructivist and (neo-)cubist as well. These poems were published in the issue of *De Stijl* preceding Bonset’s attack on van Ostaijen,⁷⁷ as part of van Doesburg’s attempt to establish his heteronym Bonset as the literary collaborator of *De Stijl*, engaged in the development of a constructivist poetics and the writing of constructivist poetry. Van Doesburg wasn’t exactly the person to tolerate any unwarranted competition by others, especially not when they were apparently surpassing and trumping him. Van Doesburg regarded *De Stijl* as the main platform of Dutch constructivism and regarded himself, as editor-in-chief, as a major, if not *the* most important propagandist of constructivism in the Low Countries. As a consequence, he was obviously annoyed by the fact that van Ostaijen had stolen the show from him just at a stage when Bonset started publishing in *De Stijl*.

It may be inferred from van Doesburg’s and Bonset’s reviews of *Bezette Stad* that van Doesburg/Bonset denied van Ostaijen’s *Bezette Stad* a Dadaist quality—a “Dadaist skeleton” was missing, according to Bonset’s criticism. Remarkably, yet perhaps not entirely surprisingly, *Bezette Stad* was quite frequently qualified in other contemporary reviews as a Dadaist book. In a letter to his friend Léonard, van Ostaijen objected to this classification: “I know already, they will interpret this as Dadaist again. Thinking has become: ‘open the closet and here I have a label.’ Glue it on the bottle. A critic is as harmless as a stamp collector.”⁷⁸ And there were many stamp collectors. In a “Letter from Flanders” in *Het Getij*, Léonard himself had made a comparison between *Bezette Stad* and Schwitters’s Merz collages.⁷⁹ An anonymous critic in the Flemish review *De Goedendag* described *Bezette Stad* as “a mixture of French Dadaism and Futurism.” The Dutch expressionist Hendrik Marsman pointed at the congeniality between van Ostaijen’s *Bezette Stad* and the neo-cubism with Dadaist leanings represented by Bonset. Van Ostaijen was, according to Marsman, like a “Futurist with Dadaist leanings.” In the Dutch review *Groot Nederland* (Grand Netherlands), the prominent Naturalist, Frans Coenen, discussed *Bezette Stad* in a critique entitled “Dadaïsme.” Coenen focused on the apparent nihilism of the volume.⁸⁰ Classifications like these may have partially been the result of a failing understanding or of an expression of the simple rejection of van Ostaijen’s new direction in poetry. The caption “Dada” was used as a disqualification of avant-garde art and literature as nonsensical madness, and not only in reviews of *Bezette*

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Stad. At the same time, not only *Bezette Stad*, but also some other works by van Ostaijen from the same period—*De bankroet-jazz* has already been mentioned—had an apparent Dadaist dimension.

III.

As in the case of the film scenario *De bankroet-jazz*, the conceptual congeniality between Dada in Berlin and van Ostaijen's emancipated cubism corresponded with an obvious similarity between the typographic arrangement of Dada texts and the typographic presentation of the poetry in *Bezette Stad*. Furthermore, several thematic similarities can be distinguished between *Bezette Stad* and the literature written in the framework of Dada. Like Dada, van Ostaijen attacked and exposed—the "Grand Circus of the Holy Spirit." In line with the political interventions of the Berlin Dadaists, he made a mockery of the "world-famous trio: Religion & Sovereign & State," like Dada in Berlin (fig. 1.4).⁸¹ *Bezette Stad* also described the extremities of war, the revolutionary events in the streets of Berlin, the Spartakus rising, the "white" reaction, and the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg. In *Bezette Stad*, van Ostaijen evoked as well the chaotic character of contemporary metropolitan life, the demimonde in the margins of metropolitan society, and urban night life entertainment in cabarets, music halls, cinemas, nightclubs, and brothels, with a special focus on sexuality.⁸²

In a letter to his former partner Clément, in early 1922, van Ostaijen revealed a moment of self-doubt, wondering whether the art envisaged by him was anything more "than a profusion of the first orgasm-urge."⁸³ Whether this was the case or not, the fact is that the introductory section of *Bezette Stad* closed with the claim that a new mapping of "EUROPE following EROTIC CHANNELS" was necessary:

legs thighs breasts Berlin Germany Brussels Amsterdam
Bucharest London Paris hair perfume fleurs Houbigant Lonchamp
Maison-Laffite mack pimp bosom nest having fun gigolo husks
honest woman⁸⁴

A map like this was drawn simultaneously not only by Pansaers in *Bar Nicanor* (1921), but also by Huelsenbeck in his *Dr. Billig am Ende* (1918–21), and by Grosz in his graphics. Van Ostaijen's complete repertoire can be retraced in the work of many Dadaists, not least in Grosz's work. Pansaers, Grosz, and Huelsenbeck were, however, not the only ones focusing on the margins of decency and civilization and beyond, in either the Dada movement or the avant-garde as a whole. Neither should it be overlooked here that van Ostaijen's first book, *Music-hall*, was already situated in the world of entertainment, cabarets, jazz music, and the demimonde.

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Another stylistic correspondence between *Bezette Stad* and Dadaist literature was the apparent intertextual use of existing texts in *Bezette Stad*. To a considerable extent, *Bezette Stad* presented a collage with (partially modified) fragments from newspapers, advertisements, placards, political pamphlets, etc., but also from spoken language—for example, announcements by moderators in variety-theaters.⁸⁵ Such a pregnant intertextuality may be typical of many Dadaist text collages. This practice however, was not unique or confined to Dada alone. The same held true for the typographic layout of *Bezette Stad*. Similarities between the typographical arrangement of the poems in *Bezette Stad* and the wild typography of many Dadaist publications from Berlin has led now and then to the opinion that *Bezette Stad* “is apparently a Dada poem.”⁸⁶

Certainly, the typography of van Ostaijen’s *Bezette Stad* can be related to Dada and may have been inspired or indeed incited by the design of some Dadaist publications in Berlin. However, obvious parallels can be made as well between the presentation of the texts in *Bezette Stad* on the one hand and futurist *parole in libertà* (words in freedom) and cubist typographical experiments in the work of Guillaume Apollinaire and Cendrars, on the other. Judging by van Ostaijen’s critical and theoretical writings, French cubism in particular seem to have been—as a point of reference—of far more importance to him than the typographic experiments of the Berlin Dadaists.⁸⁷ And furthermore, van Ostaijen had already been experimenting for some time, if only on a modest scale, with new typographic arrangements of his poetical texts during his stay in Berlin preceding the Erste Internationale Dada-Messe. This circumstance may indicate other backgrounds besides Dada.

IV.

The hitherto discussed thematic and typographic congruencies indicate that both Dada and van Ostaijen were kindred, yet by and large, as a result of their shared avant-garde provenance. There is, however, on a thematic level, at least one rather specific correspondence between Dada and van Ostaijen: a nihilism in the most literal sense. Van Ostaijen himself occasionally qualified *Bezette Stad* as “nihilist.”⁸⁸ Nihil and Nothingness are not only significant features in van Ostaijen’s work, but major Dadaist topics as well. And the special status of Nothingness in van Ostaijen’s work and Dada indicates once more the previously discussed conceptual congeniality between van Ostaijen, Dada, and Friedlaender.

Nothingness was a main term in Friedlaender’s philosophy, used by Friedlaender as qualification and synonym (in the sense of a *nihil neutrale*⁸⁹) for the zero-point of absolute indifference. At the same time, Nothingness was a major category in Dadaist reflections, in part under

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the influence of Friedlaender. Picabia finished his “Manifeste Dada Cannibale” (Cannibalist Dada Manifesto) (1920)—which was published in the Berlin *Dada-Almanach*, and thus accessible to van Ostaijen—with a list comprising Dadaist Nothingness in all its configurations:

In regard to Dada: it doesn't smell, it even signifies nothing,
nothing at all.

Dada is like your hopes: nothing
like your paradise: nothing
like your idols: nothing
like your political leaders: nothing
like your heroes: nothing
like your religions: nothing.⁹⁰

Van Ostaijen, in turn, evoked a comparably broad reach of Nothingness in the introductory section of *Bezette Stad*, “Opdracht aan Mijnheer Zodzno” (Dedication to Mister Such-and-such):

Nihil in all directions
Nihil in all genders
Nihil in all languages and dialects
NIHIL in all characters
rotating nihil
nihil in St. Andrews's cross
NIHIL in crux suastica
Nihil in vagina⁹¹

The same Nothingness is addressed again and again in *Bezette Stad* as a battle cry for a *tabula rasa*:

NIHIL
that is the word
destruction
God religion metaphysics churches art brothels spirit
stop lying talking rubbish
destroy
HAIL THE SENEGALESE
blessed art Thee Mary among all women because Your womb
IS INFERTILE⁹²

Friedlaender and Dadaists like Picabia, Tzara, or Huelsenbeck addressed Nothingness—at least, in explicit terms—mainly in theoretical writings, essays, and manifestos. Instead, van Ostaijen addressed Nothingness explicitly, particularly in his poetic work (in this respect, he was kindred with Pansaers). Nothingness is, instead, conspicuously absent from van Ostaijen's essayist and programmatic writing. Here, one finds the concept of de-individualization. Notwithstanding the obvious relationship between the Nothingness in *Bezette Stad* and the de-

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individualization brought forward in his critical prose, van Ostaijen apparently regarded Nothingness as topic for poetic texts and not for his essays and manifestos. Van Ostaijen's "Opdracht aan Mijnheer Zodzno"—a kind of preamble to *Bezette Stad*—seems to be an exception here, insofar as this "dedication" presents a programmatic outline to the reader of the following poems. However, "Opdracht aan Mijnheer Zodzno" can also be regarded as a poem itself, or rather as a text which possesses—like most Dadaist manifestos—a double literary and meta-literary Janus face.

A Richard Mutt Case on the Scheldt

To conclude the discussion of the (possible) relations between van Ostaijen and Dada, a congeniality with certain practices common in the framework of Dada can be discerned in the way van Ostaijen tried to expose his opponents on several occasions. In August 1920, he submitted a mock article entitled "Vers la période dodo dans le mouvement flamand" (About the Dodo Period in the Flemish Movement), to the newly founded review, *Ça Ira!* Van Ostaijen wanted to test the allegiance of the review to the Flemish cause. He obviously intended to provoke a refusal of the article—and he was successful.⁹³ Even though the text itself has disappeared, there can be no doubt that "Dodo period" should not be confused with "dada period."

The procedure followed reminds one, however, of Marcel Duchamp's famous submission of a urinal to the Independents exhibition in New York. This is even more the case with van Ostaijen's submission of several artifacts to the exhibition of the second Kongres voor Moderne Kunst (Congress for Modern Art) in Antwerp in 1922. This avant-garde meeting, organized by Jozef Peeters, co-editor of the constructivist review *Het Overzicht*, took place from January 21 to January 23, 1922.⁹⁴

The previous December issue of *Het Overzicht* contained a poem, "Voetbalmatch" (Soccer Match), signed by van Ostaijen, yet the poem was not written by van Ostaijen, at least not in the form presented in *Het Overzicht*. The text in *Het Overzicht* was actually a collage of lines from van Ostaijen's second poetry collection, *Het Sienjaal*, obviously intended as a parody. "Voetbalmatch" was probably compiled by the other editor of *Het Overzicht*, Fernand Berckelaers, also known as Michel Seuphor. Van Ostaijen's reaction was furious, yet neither a dementi by him nor an apology by *Het Overzicht* followed.⁹⁵ When the row over "Voetbalmatch" was still going on, van Ostaijen, who was a writer and not a visual artist, submitted a considerable number of works to the exhibition of the Congress for Modern Art. The exhibition catalog mentions five colored drawings as well as three water colors entitled *Stad. Akwarel 11* (City, Watercolor 11), *Estaminet. Akwarel 20*,

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(Bar. Watercolor 20) and *Dans la petite ville* (In the Small Town). In the sculpture category, the catalog mentions four more “sculpto-paintings” by van Ostaijen: assemblages with scrap material, entitled *Eroties stilleven* (Erotic Still Life), *Berlin W., nabij Lehninerplatz* (Berlin W., near the *Lehninerplatz*), *Dreigende vormen* (Ominous Forms) and *Landru, de stoker van Gambais* (Landru, the Stoker of Gambais). The last work was also entitled *La cheminée de Barbe Bleu* (The Chimney of Bluebeard). It consisted of an actual smokestack, calling to mind the French serial killer Henri Desiré Landru. Either *Eroties stilleven* or *Dreigende vormen* showed a large phallus.⁹⁶

The artifacts were initially admitted to the open exhibition without previous inspection, and were even cataloged. They were excluded from the exhibition, however, by a more-than-suspicious Peeters, when they were delivered shortly before the exhibition opened its doors. Peeters believed that van Ostaijen, who was at that time serving his military duty in Issum, in what was then the Belgian-occupied section of Germany, didn’t author the works submitted under his name. He thought that the whole submission was nothing more than a practical joke by van Ostaijen’s friend, Oscar Jespers, intended only to ridicule the exhibition and to expose the misuse of van Ostaijen’s name in *Het Overzicht*. Indeed, it seems most likely that van Ostaijen didn’t complete his sculpto-paintings without assistance from the Jespers brothers or Joostens, who made several assemblages under his own name.

Van Ostaijen’s submission was certainly not an ordinary submission by an artist who wanted to seize the opportunity to show some works that may not have passed the selection committee of a closed, academic exhibition. Van Ostaijen’s “works” were, however, not intended to ridicule Peeters. Van Ostaijen forwarded them as an “attack on the public mentality. Impudences, that one didn’t dare to exhibit. Ominous phallus,” as van Ostaijen indicated in a letter to Léonard, who regretted that he had missed van Ostaijen’s work. Van Ostaijen conceded that his plan had little success, since he was absent himself—being under arms in Germany—and since “nobody is so close to me as to elaborate my intentions.”⁹⁷ The affair remained limited to the small Antwerpian avant-garde community.

The “federation without stamped paper”

I.

Van Ostaijen’s aesthetic reflections may have been to a considerable extent the theoretical backbone of his own literary ventures—“Ekspressionisme in Vlaanderen” (Expressionism in Flanders) as the framework for the expressionist poetry in *Het Sienjaal*, and his *Sienjaal*

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manifesto as the conceptual setting of *Bezette Stad*. His programmatic deliberations, however, pretended to be reflections not only of his own work, but of the work of his friends in the "federation without stamped paper" as well.

Thus, in "Ekspressionisme in Vlaanderen," van Ostaijen focused on the apparent and concealed expressionist tendencies in the work of his friends Joostens and Floris and Oscar Jespers. He had to concede, however, that while their work showed a development in an expressionist direction, it could not yet be classified as unconditionally expressionist. As far as his expressionist program pretended to cover the work by the other members of the "federation without stamped paper" as well, this program was not the precipitation of their actual work, but rather the formulation of future objectives. The discrepancy between their work and the objectives of van Ostaijen's emancipated cubism, as proposed in the *Sienjaal* manifesto in 1920, was even more profound.

While the oeuvre of Joostens and the Jespers brothers may have contained cubist elements and may have even comprised works that could be regarded as genuine examples of cubist art (fig. 4.3), their work was in general marked by a high degree of eclecticism. They experimented with a wide variety of techniques, styles, and forms, sometimes cubist, sometimes futurist, sometimes only moderately expressionist, sometimes rather reminiscent of (post-) impressionism. In particular regard to the visual arts, van Ostaijen's *Sienjaal* manifesto seems to be rather the utopian outline for a new art still to come, as he expressly noted in the conclusion of the manifesto, in which he conceded that the program of emancipated cubism demanded a different social constellation still to come, and could not be realized in contemporary bourgeois society.

This discrepancy between van Ostaijen's theoretical conceptions and the actual work of Joostens and the Jespers brothers may even raise the question of whether these conceptions were shared at all by van Ostaijen's associates in the "federation without stamped paper" and the *Sienjaal* group. It is conspicuous that neither the Jespers brothers nor Joostens were reflecting their work in programmatic considerations like those of van Ostaijen. They may have appreciated van Ostaijen's programmatic tour de force to some extent, but whether they indeed shared or followed in every respect the aesthetic objectives outlined by van Ostaijen is uncertain, not least in regard to van Ostaijen's adoption of certain elements of Dadaism.

At least the Jespers brothers seemed to have differed from van Ostaijen in his Dadaist rapprochement. No substantial traces of correspondences with Dada can be discerned in their work, apart from their probable involvement in van Ostaijen's provocative submission to the exhibition of the second Congress of Modern Art in Antwerp in 1922, and apart from the actual involvement of Oscar Jespers and Victor in the realization of *Bezette Stad* in the previous year. In Antwerp, where *Bezette Stad* was printed, Jespers and Victor had been responsible for

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the typographic matching of the manuscript written by van Ostaïjen in Berlin. Oscar Jespers was also assigned the general design of the book. He created the title pages of the individual sections of the book and the frontispiece.⁹⁸

II.

Whereas the work of Floris and Oscar Jespers isn't generally associated with Dadaism, Joostens is frequently portrayed as an artist in the margins of Dada.⁹⁹ At least on first sight, Joostens's work—or to be more precise, some of his works—are almost indistinguishable from "typical" Dadaist creations. Joostens made drawings, collages, photomontages, and assemblages with obvious similarities to works by Picabia, Schwitters, Hausmann, and Hannah Höch. This similarity may have been, in part, the result of analogous developments, as Jan Cools has suggested with respect to the resemblances of some of Joostens's creations to comparable Merz works by Schwitters.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, it seems unlikely that Joostens was not aware of proximity between the work of the aforementioned Dadaists and his own Dada-like experiments. It also seems unlikely that the works by these Dadaists, most of them from an earlier date than the matching creations by Joostens, had no impact at all on Joostens's artifacts. For example, Joostens started to create drawings of imaginary mechanical constructions with sexual connotations, like those created by Picabia in preceding years, after a visit to Paris in December 1919. The close similarity between Joostens's *Syphilitimètre H3* (fig. 4.4)¹⁰¹ and comparable work by Picabia suggests that he probably studied Picabia's example in Paris. Likewise, Joostens started to create collages and assemblages with strong resemblances to the Merz work by Schwitters from 1920 onwards, when Schwitters's example became known in the Low Countries (fig. 4.5). While Joostens's photomontages possess a clear affinity with works by Höch, especially in their focus on sexual and gender matters, Joostens appropriated the technique of photomontage only in the late 1920s (fig. 4.6).

Although some of Joostens's works show an unmistakable proximity to Dada and may indicate a modest rapprochement to Dada, they shouldn't be misinterpreted as indications that Joostens can be counted among the members of the Dada movement in one way or another. First of all, while the Dada-like techniques and forms used by Joostens may have been typical for Dada as well, they weren't unique to Dada. These techniques and forms were—as indicated earlier—by and large, already developed in futurism, cubism, and expressionism and had also been adopted by other currents, such as constructivism and surrealism. Joostens had been working in an impressionist manner before World War I and had made an avant-garde turn more or less simultaneously with

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van Ostaijen during the war. Finally, in the late 1920s, he turned away from the avant-garde, assuming his own personal style of figurative neo-Gothic painting. This so-called "Joostens-Gothic" revived medieval Flemish art with modern themes.¹⁰² In his avant-garde decade—from the mid-1910s to the mid-1920s—Joostens was more or less shopping around, trying out all the techniques, styles, and forms that attracted his attention in one way or another. Joostens's work from this period is a random mixture of expressionism, futurism, cubism, surrealism, constructivism, and perhaps to some extent, of Dadaism as well.

A critique by Léonard, another member of the "federation without stamped paper," is significant here. In March 1923, Léonard discussed in the Dutch modernist review, *Het Getij*, the "entry of Dada in Flanders," specifically, Joostens's submission of a series of assemblages and collages to an exhibition of the review *Ça Ira!* in November 1922. Léonard criticized the imitative and epigone character of the seemingly Dadaist exploits of his fellow traveler, Joostens. "After the cities it is the turn of the provincial dumps. As such are the Dada manifestations of 1922 in Antwerp acceptable," Léonard began.¹⁰³ According to Léonard's rather cynical commentary, Joostens's assemblages and collages were only of use to irritate public opinion (as van Ostaijen intended with his earlier submission to the exhibition of the Congress for Modern Art): "The Antwerpian bourgeois elite came and saw stars. That is basically a real result. The only! Dadaism imported to enable those people to enjoy it, who don't have the opportunity to get acquainted with it from the original source. Real charity!"¹⁰⁴

Joostens's heterogeneous, rather indecisive eclecticism is reflected on a programmatic level in a complete absence of any aesthetic commitment. Joostens's program was simply his own changing interest in experimentation with different techniques, without a programmatic commitment to any group or current. This may also explain the excommunication of Joostens from the "Holy Cubist and Flammingant church" by van Ostaijen in response to rumors reaching van Ostaijen in Berlin that Joostens had ridiculed both cubism and the Flemish movement.

Joostens's main focus was the visual arts. In addition, he also created a small literary oeuvre. Actually, in one of his literary texts, *Salopes. Le quart d'heure de rage ou soleil sans chapeau* (Sluts. The Quarter of an Hour of Rage or Hatless Sun) published by the review *Ça Ira!* in 1922 (fig. 4.7), Joostens seemed to make an exception to his overall lack of commitment. On first sight, *Salopes* opens with a salute to Dada. The first line of *Salopes* reads "Bonjour Dada."¹⁰⁵ The following lines of the opening chapter are hinting (as Jean-Paul Bier has pointed out) in a slightly concealed way at Pansaers's *Pan-Pan au cul du nu nègre*. In the opening section of *Salopes*, Joostens presents an eye-catching accumulation of words starting with "pan" or "pen." The word "nègre" is also used, though not necessarily in the meaning of "Negro"—the word appears in the combination "*crépon nègre débine*," (tuft black mis-

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ery).¹⁰⁶ Still, Joostens seems to hint at Pansaers's wordplay with his own name, not only in the title of the book *Pan-Pan au cul du nu nègre*, but also in several of his poems, in which Pansaers endlessly repeats the syllable "pan."¹⁰⁷ Joostens did the same with the name of the protagonist of *Salopes*, a certain Mister Babilo—"Babilo - Wabilo - Apelo - Pabelo," etc.,¹⁰⁸ whose sexual exploits in a metropolitan demimonde are staged prominently in *Salopes*. Not only the setting and subject, but also the style of fragmented narrative, and use of slang in *Salopes* indicates a close affinity with Pansaers's second Dadaist collection, *Bar Nicanor*. Whether *Salopes* can be regarded unequivocally as a confession to—or an exercise in—Dadaism, seems, however, questionable. The opening words "Bonjour Dada" may be interpreted as "Good morning, Dada." They gain, however, another meaning through the following lines. Phonetically, these lines may hint at Pansaers's wordplay with the syllable "pan." At the same time, they introduce—semantically—the sexualized demimonde of the following narrative:

You understand, this results from the tits of Marie-Michel.
And a case of hanging: Two points, the showcases, the
pendulums and the Easter eggs. Hanging.
Buxomy paunch of liquid nurse weighed 2 x 2200 kilos.
Sing cauldron, pour out juices naughty birds, Pee-pee, piss,
miss globe.¹⁰⁹

The word "Dada" in the preceding line, "Bonjour Dada," seemingly hinting at the Mouvement Dada, can also be interpreted as a pet name or a pet word in this context. Hence, the line may point to the pet subject, the hobbyhorse, the fads and fancies ("dada" in French) of Mister Babilo, of Pansaers and "Pabelo" Joostens.¹¹⁰ In short, it has to remain undecided whether Joostens's "Bonjour Dada" is a plain confession to the Dada movement, even though *Salopes* may well have been a parody of or a play on Dadaist writing of Pansaersian provenance.¹¹¹

Notes

1. See Hadermann, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 7-8.
2. See Paul Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaijen and *Der Sturm*," in *Nijhoff, Van Ostaijen, "De Stijl"*, 56.
3. See Reynebeau, *Dichter in Berlijn*, 28; Paul van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, ed. Gerrit Borgers (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1979), 3:20-31.
4. Hadermann, *Het vuur in de verte*, 45.
5. Citation in Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaijen and *Der Sturm*," 37-39.
6. Citation in van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 3:20-31 and 53-99.
7. Citation in Gerrit Borgers, *Kroniek van Paul van Ostaijen, 1896-*

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1928 (The Hague/Bruges: Scheltens & Giltay/Orion, 1975), 37.

8. Van Ostaïjen was not the only one combining expressionist and Flamingant Activism. Cf. Hadermann, *Paul van Ostaïjen*, 3-118.

9. *Ibid.*, 39.

10. For a comprehensive study of van Ostaïjen's stay in Berlin; cf. Reynebeau, *Dichter in Berlijn*, passim.

11. Citation in Borgers, *Paul van Ostaïjen*, 1:206.

12. See *ibid.*, 1:201-3; Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaïjen and *Der Sturm*," 42. He was in contact with the future Nazi Hermann Goering, as well. Goering was a user of cocaine, like van Ostaïjen. He frequently slept in van Ostaïjen's apartment during the day and was probably using the cocaine that van Ostaïjen received from his visiting friends from Antwerp; cf. Borgers, *Paul van Ostaïjen*, 1:203.

13. *Ibid.*, 1:206.

14. *Ibid.*, 1:304-06.

15. See Borgers, *Kroniek*, 66-69.

16. Van Ostaïjen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:127.

17. *Ibid.*

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Ibid.*, 4:130.

20. *Ibid.*, 4:129.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, 4:129-30.

23. See *ibid.*, 4:130.

24. *Ibid.*, 4:128.

25. See Borgers, *Kroniek*, 67.

26. Citation in Arp, *Unsern täglichen Traum*, 76.

27. Citation in Hans Arp, *On My Way, poetry ad essays 1912.... 1947* (New York: Wittenborn & Schultz, 1948), 82.

28. *Ibid.*, 70.

29. Citation in Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaïjen and *Der Sturm*," 43.

30. Citation in *ibid.*

31. See van Ostaïjen, *Verzameld Werk*, 3:29-39.

32. See Hadermann, *Paul van Ostaïjen*, 55; Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaïjen and *Der Sturm*," 43-44. This second article by Hadermann contains the first extensive discussion of Friedlaender's significance to van Ostaïjen.

33. Van Ostaïjen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:162.

34. This was also the title of Friedlaender's main philosophical publication: *Schöpferische Indifferenz* (München: Georg Müller, 1918). For a general discussion of Friedlaender and his philosophy; cf. Peter Cardorff, *Friedlaender (Mynona) zur Einführung* (Hamburg: SOAK/Junius, 1988); Lisbeth Exner, *Fasching als Logik. Über Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona* (München: Belleville, 1996).

35. Salomo Friedlaender, "Der Waghalter der Welt," *Die Weissen Blätter* 2 (1915): 859.

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36. Salomo Friedlaender and Alfred Kubin, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Hartmut Geerken and Sigrid Hauff (Wien/Linz: neue texte, 1986), 28.
37. Friedlaender, "Waghalter," 879.
38. Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, passim.
39. Friedlaender and Kubin, *Briefwechsel*, 16.
40. Friedlaender, "Waghalter," passim.
41. Van Ostaïjen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:168.
42. *Ibid.*, 4:136.
43. Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaïjen and *Der Sturm*," 54.
44. For a general discussion of Friedlaender's philosophy in relation to Dada in Zurich and Berlin; cf. van den Berg, *Avantgarde und Anarchismus*, 339-98.
45. Huelsenbeck, "Die dadaistische Bewegung," 974.
46. Richard Huelsenbeck, "Einleitung," *Dada-Almanach*, 4.
47. Huelsenbeck, *En avant Dada*, 37.
48. See Reynebeau, *Dichter in Berlijn*, 91.
49. See *ibid.*, 91.
50. See Borgers, *Paul van Ostaïjen*, 1:308.
51. See van Ostaïjen, *Verzameld Werk*, 3:128-45.
52. *Ibid.*, 3:133.
53. *Ibid.*, 3:131.
54. *Ibid.*, 3:132. (German in the Dutch original.)
55. *Ibid.*, 3:139.
56. See Hansjürgen Bulkowski, "Nachwort," in Paul van Ostaïjen, *Der Pleitejazz*, ed. Hansjürgen Bulkowski (Berlin: Friedenauer Presse, 1996), 31.
57. See Reynebeau, *Dichter in Berlijn*, 145.
58. See van Ostaïjen, *Verzameld Werk*, 3:128-29.
59. See advertisements in the biweekly editions of *Neue Jugend* in 1917 and in *Der Dada* in 1919-20 as well as Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas*, 37-39.
60. See Franz Jung, "Der Fall Grosz," in *Neue Jugend. Prospekt zur Kleinen Grosz Mappe* (Berlin: Malik, 1917), 3; Richard Huelsenbeck, "Doktor Billig am Ende. Fragment," in *Club Dada* (Berlin: Freie Strasse, 1918), 10-19; cf. also Walter Fähnders and Andreas Hansen, "'Auch der Film winkt.' Kommentar zum Erstdruck von Franz Jungs Drehbuch *Vorbestimmung*," *Jahrbuch zur Literatur der Weimarer Republik* 2 (1996), 42-59.
61. See Walter Petry, *Die dadaistische Korruption. Im Auftrage der Liga zur Bekämpfung des Dadaismus* (Berlin: Leon Hirsch, 1920). The small brochure is mentioned as exhibit 145 in the catalog *Erste Internationale Dada-Messe*.
62. See Huelsenbeck, *En avant Dada*, 37. See also Raoul Hausmann's manuscript, "Die Psychologie des Dadaismus," first printed in *Hannah Höch. Eine Lebenscollage*, 740-44. A revised version of Hausmann's manuscript was published in *De Stijl* under the title "Dada

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ist mehr als Dada."

63. See Friedlaender, "Der Waghalter der Welt," 891.

64. Tzara, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:264.

65. *Ibid.*, 1:362.

66. See van den Berg, *Avantgarde und Anarchismus*, 399-436.

67. See Salomo Friedlaender, "Das Individuum und die soziale Frage," in *Massnahmen des Verschwindens. Salomo Friedlaender/Mynona, Anselm Ruest, Hein-Ludwig Friedlaender in französischen Exil. Ausstellung und Hörspiele*, ed. Hartmut Geerken (Munich: Kulturreferat München/BR Hörspiel, 1993), 88-90.

68. As in the manifesto "Was ist der Dadaismus und was er in Deutschland?," in Huelsenbeck, *En avant Dada*, 34-35.

69. See van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:162.

70. See Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:308.

71. See van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:162.

72. See Borgers, *Kroniek*, 57-65.

73. Van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:127.

74. Boyens, *De genese van Bezette Stad*, 30.

75. See van Doesburg, "Revue der Avant-Garde. België," 29.

76. I. K. Bonset, "Kritische Tesseracts," *De Stijl*, 4, no. 12 (1921):

179. Van Ostaijen, in turn, called Bonset a poet with the qualities of a high-school pupil imitating great examples without a trace of independence; cf. van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:253. Also on van Ostaijen and van Doesburg, see; José Boyens, "Paul van Ostaijen en Theo van Doesburg, twee verwante theoretici die niet nader tot elkaar wisten te komen," *De Gids* 142, no. 3 (1979): 193-201; no. 4, 258-68.

77. See "Anthologie-Bonset," *De Stijl* 4, no. 11 (1921), 162-73.

78. See van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 4:156.

79. See Jos. Léonard, "Brief uit Vlaanderen," *Het Getij*, 6, Second series (1921): 124-25.

80. See Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:444-48.

81. Van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk* 2:n.p. See also Hadermann, "Paul van Ostaijen and *Der Sturm*," 40.

82. See Reynebeau, *Dichter in Berlijn*, 210-14.

83. Citation in Borgers, *Kroniek*, 77.

84. Van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 2:n.p. Sexuality is an even more prominent topic in Paul van Ostaijen, *De marsj van de hete zomer* (Hilversum: RVU educatieve omroep, 1996).

85. See Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:309; Jef Bogman, *De stad als tekst. Over de compositie van Paul van Ostaijens Bezette Stad* (Amsterdam: Van Hezik-Fonds, 1991).

86. Baudin, "Typo DaDa," 45.

87. See Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 309-13; Boyens, *De genesis van Bezette Stad*, 32-40.

88. Citation in Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:314.

89. Friedlaender, "Der Waghalter der Welt," 858.

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and the Dadaist Salvation of Europe**

90. Francis Picabia, "Manifest Cannibale Dada," *Dada-Almanach*, 48.
91. Paul van Ostaijen, *Verzameld Werk*, 2:n.p.
92. *Ibid.*, n.p.
93. See Borgers, *Kroniek*, 67; Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:330.
94. See Melders, *Jozef Peeters*, 51-57.
95. See Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:452-54.
96. See *ibid.*, 1:360-61.
97. Citation in Borgers, *Paul van Ostaijen*, 1:456-61.
98. See notably Boyens, *De genesis van Bezette Stad*, *passim*.
99. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 304-11; Meyer et al, *Dada global*, 47; Jan Cools, *Er werd een lijkje geborgen. Over Paul Joostens* (Antwerpen: Dedalus, 1984), 11-12, 18-19, 32-33, 39-56.
 100. See Cools, *Er werd een lijkje geborgen*, 40-42.
 101. See *ibid.*, 63.
 102. See *ibid.*, 22-24.
103. The publication of Léonard's "Dada in Vlaanderen" in *Het Getij* in March 1923, in the wake of the Dutch Dada campaign by Schwitters and van Doesburg, can be regarded as an implicit critique of this Dada venture as well. The qualification of the "entry of Dada in Flanders" in 1922 as epigone, makes the entry of Dada in Holland half a year later even more epigone.
 104. Jos. Léonard, "De intree van Dada in Vlaanderen," *Het Getij* 8, no. 4 (1923): 57-58.
 105. Paul Joostens, *Salopes. Le quart d'heure de rage ou soleil sans chapeau* (Antwerp: Ça Ira!, 1922), 7.
 106. *Ibid.*
 107. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 307; Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 65-76.
 108. Joostens, *Salopes*, 7.
 109. *Ibid.*
 110. See also Cools, *Er werd een lijkje geborgen*, 5.
 111. See also Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 305. Typical of the then very modest significance and reception of Pansaers is the fact that Léonard, in his discussion of the epigone "entry of Dada in Flanders," did not relate *Salopes* to Pansaers. Instead, Léonard related *Salopes* to Picabia's *Pensées sans language* (1919) and Ribemont-Dessaignes's *Le Serin muet* (1921), both antedated by Léonard to 1915-16 and 1919 respectively, to stress the epigone character of Joostens's "patchwork" of hollow word sequences. Referring to Tzara's famous lines from the "Manifeste Dada 1918," "If I shout:/Ideal, Ideal, Ideal/Knowledge, Knowledge, Knowledge/Boomboom, Boomboom, Boomboom/I have recorded fairly accurately Progress, Law, Morals" (Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos*, 8), Léonard qualified *Salopes* as "words, words, words, horrible, horrible, horrible" (Léonard, "De intree van Dada in Vlaanderen," 57).