

The Strange Case of Jul. Krelkel and Clément Pansaers

A Dadaist-style “I-give-a-damn-ism”

I.

The French-language author Clément Pansaers was not only the first Belgian representative of the avant-garde to join Dada explicitly—he was, in fact, the first writer in the Low Countries who threw in his lot with Dada. On December 8, 1919, Pansaers (fig. 2.1) sent a letter from Brussels to the Zurich headquarters of the Dada movement. He offered *Monsieur le Rédacteur en chef* (editor-in-chief) Tristan Tzara, who was on the verge of leaving for Paris, his collaboration on the “review *Da Dada*, which I neither have seen nor could obtain, which seems to correspond, though, with my poetic and artistic conception, following from what I have understood from some lines of bad criticism.”¹ Pansaers concluded his letter with the request that Tzara send him an issue of *Dada*, for which he, in return, offered to provide publicity in Brussels.

Apparently, Tzara responded promptly. Although Tzara’s letter has not been preserved, one may conclude from a second letter by Pansaers that Tzara sent him some back issues of *Dada*, asking in return to be kept informed of the avant-garde in Belgium and to be provided with newspaper clippings for his Dada archive. In his second letter to Tzara, dated December 20, 1919, Pansaers acknowledged the receipt of a parcel and asked Tzara to register him as a new member of Dada:

Please take notice of my adhesion to your group. Cocteau has arrived these days for a lecture in Brussels on the movement Apollinaire etc.—Enclosed is a clipping from *Le Soir*.

Hitherto, I am the only one in Belgium who defends principles analogous to yours. In Belgium, neither I nor the movement in general have been discussed. It’s in the English review *Infinito* that I have read some words on Dada, as well as in the French *Exportateur*. If you agree, I would like to centralize everything concerning *Dada* for Belgium.²

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It may seem here that Pansaers, having informed himself thoroughly about Dada, joined Tzara and Dada, as Holger Fock assumed.³ Judging by the sixth issue of the journal *Dada*, edited by Tzara on the occasion of the first Dadaist publicity offensive in Paris in February 1920, Tzara assumed the same and accepted Pansaers's offer. Tzara included Pansaers in the first extensive listing of Dadaist "présidents et présidentes," preceded by the closing line from the Parisian "Manifeste Dada": "All members of the DADA movement are presidents." Pansaers was presented on this list as the only Belgian Dada representative.⁴

Pansaers, however, did not establish contact with Tzara alone in December 1919. Just two days after his request to Tzara to be registered as a member of the Dada movement, Pansaers also sent a letter to Pierre Albert-Birot, the editor of the French avant-garde journal *Sic*:

My dear colleague,

Alone and since 1916, isolated in Belgium, in Brussels, I practice a Dadaist-style "I-give-a-damn-ism." Only through *Dada*, rather belatedly, I have learned of your existence and that of the others. Please send me all issues of *Sic*. And register me as a contributor and member of your group.... I am sending you the same propositions as *Dada*, *Nord-Sud* and *Littérature*. I want to centralize the whole movement for Belgium. Hence, I would like to propose to you to take care of the distribution of your review...

P.S. If you agree, could you please mention my name as member/editor/correspondent for Belgium.⁵

Pansaers's correspondence with Tzara may suggest that in December 1919, Pansaers associated himself with Dada without any reservation. His letter to Albert-Birot puts things in a different light. First of all, it seems obvious that Pansaers did not intend to attach his name exclusively to Dada. His solicitations as sole Belgian representative, member, correspondent, or even co-editor were directed at a whole range of French avant-garde periodicals: *Dada*, *Sic*, *Nord-Sud*, and *Littérature*. Although Tzara also published in *Sic* and *Nord-Sud* and mentioned these reviews in *Dada* as cognate magazines, these journals were certainly not extensions of the Dada movement, but rather platforms of the cubist-oriented French avant-garde. Only in 1920, still some months away, would *Littérature* eventually become an important mouthpiece of the Parisian Dada section. In December 1919, however, this review was not yet an exclusive organ of the Dada movement. And, whereas the journal *Dada* may have been the official Dada organ, it should be noted here that *Dada* didn't present a clear-cut aesthetic program of its own, but rather a synthesis of the European avant-garde with an unmistakably cubist tendency, as far as the French contributions were concerned.

Tzara may have been *directeur* of the Mouvement Dada, yet it seemed that Pansaers approached him primarily as "editor-in-chief" of the review *Dada*, as indicated by the way Tzara was addressed in Pansaers's first letter. When Pansaers subsequently applied for membership in Tzara's "group," this group probably didn't comprise the Mouvement Dada, but rather the regular group of collaborators of the review *Dada*, comparable with that other group Pansaers wished to join, the group of collaborators of Albert-Birot and *Sic*.

A strict division between the review *Dada* and the Mouvement Dada may, however, be impossible, since the publication of the review and collaboration with such a review were essential aspects of the organizational structure of avant-garde formations like Dada. It was not only in the case of Dada (as the name of both a review and a group or movement), that a periodical constituted the organizational center of an avant-garde grouping. Other kindred examples are the almanac *Der Blaue Reiter* and the reviews *Der Sturm*, *Die Aktion*, and *De Stijl*. In this respect, it should be no surprise that Pansaers, in his attempts to join *Dada* and *Sic*, equated editorial collaboration or responsibility for the distribution of these periodicals with the membership of a "group" connected with these reviews.

The assumption that the Dada "group" at which Pansaers pointed in his letter concerned primarily the review *Dada* and not the Mouvement Dada is confirmed by the distinction Pansaers made between the Dada group he wanted to join, on the one hand, and on the other, "the movement" he hoped to centralize for Belgium in full. When Pansaers mentioned this movement in his second letter to Tzara, one may assume that Pansaers was referring to the Dada movement. This specific movement, however, seemed not to have been at stake here, since the movement envisaged by Pansaers comprised not only *Dada*, but *Sic*, *Nord-Sud*, and *Littérature* as well. This movement, personified by Jean Cocteau, was specified by Pansaers in his second letter to Tzara not as Mouvement Dada, but as Mouvement Apollinaire.

II.

Nowadays, Dada is often regarded as the radical odd man out of the historical avant-garde. This understanding, however, does not correspond with the (historical) self-image of the Zurich Dadaists. On the contrary, Dada was envisaged as a synthesis of the contemporary avant-garde in all its heterogeneity, comprising "all new tendencies," as Tzara put it in a letter to Francis Picabia.⁶ Insofar as Pansaers associated himself with the Zurich version of Dada in his letter to Tzara, he seemed to employ the same broad-based avant-garde notion, although Pansaers referred to the Mouvement Apollinaire and not to the Mouvement Dada. At the

same time, though, Pansaers obviously tried to differentiate himself from Tzara in his specification of the movement he wanted to represent: not the Mouvement Dada, but a Mouvement Apollinaire. In other words, Pansaers stressed his independence from Tzara. Several other remarks in Pansaers's correspondence with Tzara and Albert-Birot point in the same direction. In his letters to Tzara, Pansaers asserted that in Belgium, he defended "principles *analogous*" to those of Tzara: kindred, not identical principles. Also, in his letter to Albert-Birot, Pansaers positioned himself *beside*, and not *in* Dada: "since 1916 in Belgium in Brussels isolated—I practice a Dadaist-style 'I-give-a-damn-ism'." Notably, this was not a Dadaist "I-give-a-damn-ism," but a "Dadaist-style 'I-give-a-damn-ism—in French, "*je m'enfoutisme*' genre dadaïsme."⁷

Pansaers's "I-give-a-damn-ism" apparently differed in one way or another from the genuine Dadaist "I-give-a-damn-ism," but at the same time, was closely related to this attitude. Pansaers's formulation actually referred directly to a remark by Tzara in the "Manifeste Dada 1918," contained in the third issue of the review *Dada*, which was most likely among the material sent by Tzara on Pansaers's request. In the "Manifeste Dada 1918," Tzara stated, under the heading "Dadaist spontaneity," "that I call the I-don't-give-a-damn-attitude of life [in the French original: "*je m'enfoutisme*"] is when everyone minds his own business, and at the same time, knows how to respect other individualities, and even how to stand up for himself, the two-step becoming a national anthem, a junk shop, the wireless [telephone] transmitting Bach fugues, illuminated advertisements and placards for brothels, the organ broadcasting carnations for God, all this at the same time, and in real terms, replacing photography and unilateral catechism. Active simplicity."⁸

On first sight, this "I-give-a-damn-ism" may seem at odds with the expressly stated objective of both Tzara and Pansaers to offer a platform to a wide range of "new tendencies" in the contemporary avant-garde. Tzara's description of the ominous "I-give-a-damn-ism," however, already encompassed this combination of the divergent avant-garde "tendencies", since his "*je m'enfoutisme*" implied not only that "everyone minds his own business," but also that one had to "respect other individualities." "Photography and unilateral catechism," on the contrary, had to be superseded. Tzara's "I-give-a-damn-ism" was, in other words, directed against the hegemonic conventions of illusionist realism in the artistic and literary field. Simultaneously, Tzara's "I-give-a-damn-ism" seemed pivotal in his own conception of the creative process. Elsewhere in his manifesto, Tzara proposed "...[a] kind of literature which never reaches the voracious masses. The work of creative writers, written out of the author's real necessity, and for his own benefit. The awareness of a supreme egoism, wherein laws become insignificant."⁹ In *Bar Nicanor* (1921), Pansaers's poetical considerations were similar to those expressed by Tzara in the "Manifeste Dada 1918":

1. Human beings only resemble each other by their dissemblance. As a consequence, every individual has to discover in himself that matter which makes him a stranger to—and differentiates him from—his neighbor; and as soon as this state has externalized itself in art, it is impossible to do this by painting like Cézanne, or by novels like Bourget or whosoever.

2. The description of nature is easy. In turn, the individual is nature by himself, and it is up to him to discover by himself an inexhaustible terrain in himself. The outer nature can serve him with propitious elements for the construction of his work.¹⁰

In a way, it is only consistent that Pansaers, who proclaimed his own subjectivity to be the measure of all things, positioned his own "I-give-a-damn-ism" next to Tzara's "I-give-a-damn-ism" without subjugating his own attitude to Tzara's identical attitude. Such a subjugation would not only have hampered his own subjectivity it also would have betrayed Pansaers's own creed that "every individual has to discover in himself that matter, which makes him a stranger to—and differentiates him from—his neighbor."

When Pansaers stated that he represented principles analogous to Dada, a Dada-like, or perhaps more precisely, a Tzara-like "I-give-a-damn-ism" (and not a fully-fledged Dadaist "I-give-a-damn-ism" completely identical with the one proposed by Tzara), one could argue that this was as far as Pansaers could go in his approach to Dada without damaging his own subjectivity. Against this background, it is obvious as well that Pansaers had claimed to be devoted to his very own "I-give-a-damn-ism" since 1916, the year Dada was founded in Zurich. By suggesting that the development in (Dada in) Zurich coincided with an independent, analogous development in Pansaers's exploits in Belgium, even if this analogous development was nothing more than an isolated turn in Pansaers's personal development, Pansaers stressed once more both his congeniality with Dada and, equally important, his own personal autonomy. In this context, it is consistent that in 1921, in an invitation to subscribe to his booklet *Bar Nicanor*, Pansaers presented himself as the ultimate Dadaist, despite his marginality in the Dada movement due to his position at the Belgian sideline:

Soon to be published
by Clément Pansaers
BAR NICANOR
A PAN-DADA book
Who is DADA? What is DADA!
DADA, that's PANSAERS. Long live PANSAERS DADA.
DADA is nothing.
DOWN WITH PANSAERS DADA.
READ

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BAR NICANOR
Luxury edition: 150 fr.
Ordinary edition: 5 fr.
and you will discover
between LONG LIVE and DOWN WITH
who is and what is only DADA.¹¹

III.

Pansaers's claim that he became a Dadaist in 1916 has yet another dimension. In November 1921, Pansaers guest edited a special Dada, or rather anti-Dada, issue of the Antwerp-based review *Ça Ira!* In an autobiographical essay entitled "*Dada et moi*" ("Dada and Me"), Pansaers wrote:

Dada claimed to be the solution of a certain spiritual attitude, compatible with that which is understood as Symbolism and Cubism.

In this sense, I became a Dadaist around about 1916, as the word Dada was not yet invented; in the same way that John Rodker became a Dadaist in England during the war and Ezra Pound in America. And as many others became Dadaist, without knowing and without the slightest external influence. And in this exact sense, the theoretical starting point of the school, which could have called itself Dadaist, and which, whatever happens, in spite of everything will remain so, can be traced back to Alfred Jarry, as far as the idea is concerned, and to the Stéphane Mallarmé of a *Coup de Dés* and some *Divagations*, as far as the expression is concerned.¹²

This autobiographical recollection of Pansaers's Dadaist turn is significant for several reasons. To start with, he didn't mention Tzara, Picabia, or Richard Huelsenbeck as other (fellow) protagonists of the Dada movement, or as his Dadaist associates. Instead, Pansaers mentioned two editors and authors of the *Little Review*, a journal edited by American émigrés in Paris, which was favorable to Dadaism, but certainly not a Dadaist organ itself. The fact that John Rodker and Ezra Pound were mentioned as congenial spirits and Stéphane Mallarmé and Alfred Jarry as Dadaist trendsetters (whereas Tzara etc. weren't mentioned at all), can in part be explained by Pansaers's dissociation from Dada some months earlier. Instead, in the fall of 1921, he associated himself more and more with the Anglophone community in Paris. To some extent, Pansaers's sketch of Dada echoed the way he associated himself with Dada by analogy in his correspondence with Tzara and Albert-Birot in December 1919 by claiming to have become a Dadaist in 1916, at a stage when "the word Dada was not yet invented." He compared

himself with other authors who weren't, strictly speaking, members of the Mouvement Dada, but who were regarded as members of a "school," which "could have called itself Dadaist."

In "Dada et moi," Pansaers situated his Dadaist turn of 1916 (Dadaist only in a metaphorical sense) as one of the most distinct avant-garde literary developments since the turn of the century—somewhere between Jarry and Mallarmé on the one hand and Rodker and Pound on the other. On other occasions, however, Pansaers explained this Dadaist turn in a quite different way. According to a posthumously published autobiographical fragment from 1921, probably an early draft of "Dada et moi," this turn resulted from a private existential crisis ending in mystical illumination and a personal "renaissance":

It was in 1916, after six months of meditation over a blind white wall, when I grasped the real sense of life; I repeat that I was born, thus, in 1916. At that time, I lived in La Hulpe, close to Brussels, at the fringe of the Soignes Wood (*Zonidwoud*), practically next to the former residence of the Flemish mystic Ruusbroec... after six months of meditation over a blind white wall, [I had] understood... that in life, only *fantasy riding chance* is of interest.¹³

These last words, italicized by Pansaers himself, "fantasy riding chance"—"*la fantaisie chevauchant le hasard*," in the French original—can be read as a triple hint at Dada. In the first place, Hugo Ball, among others, related Dadaism to the "Fantastic."¹⁴ Secondly, several Dadaists—among them Hans Arp, Tzara, and Marcel Duchamp—related Dada to chance—*hasard*.¹⁵ Finally, a French synonym for *chevauchant* (riding a horse) is *à dada*. Once more, Pansaers claimed in this fragment, "*Et je restai seul*" (And I remained alone), only learning "with surprise" at the end of World War I, "about comparable movements in France in Switzerland—and the label Dada."¹⁶

IV.

By pointing at the Flemish mystic Jan van Ruusbroec, Pansaers gave his supposedly Dadaist turn of 1916 a distinct mystical, spiritual dimension. Van Ruusbroec may have lived next door, albeit some centuries earlier. In Pansaers's oeuvre, however, no substantial influence by van Ruusbroec can be discerned.¹⁷ Another spiritual source, though, did have a profound impact on his work: the Taoist teachings of Chuang-Dze. In "Dada et moi," Pansaers referred to Chuang-Dze as the philosopher who was "the closest to me," and considered his teachings as an applicable "theory of *Destruction*." According to Pansaers, this theory implied "in the light of the impossibility of the isolated will," the sole solution of "destruction through *construction*."¹⁸ It is not improbable

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that Pansaers discovered Chuang-Dze and Taoism as a way out of a personal crisis in 1916.

The teachings of Chuang-Dze may well have been an important eye-opener in Pansaers's personal development toward Dadaism, not unlike the impact of the teachings by Chuang-Dze on Dadaists in Zurich and Berlin. It was certainly not accidental that on several occasions, Tzara described Chuang-Dze as "the first Dadaist."¹⁹ Chuang-Dze not only meditated on the oscillation between destruction and construction, he also reflected on such questions as the balancing of opposites and Nothing as a positive concept, which were at the heart of Dadaism. In the teachings of Chuang-Dze, nothing is not a negation, but rather the essence of Tao, as outlined in the parable "The Three Answers": "The Yellow Emperor spoke: Nothing has to be thought, Nothing has to be observed to approach Tao. Nothing should be followed, Nothing should be described to reach Tao."²⁰

Congenial notions of Nothing can be found in many Dadaist reflections. Ball described Dada as a "*Narrenspiel aus dem Nichts*" (clown's game from nothing).²¹ The first capitalized slogan in Tzara's "Manifeste Dada 1918" proclaimed: "DADA SIGNIFIES NOTHING."²² Also, Pansaers meditated repeatedly on Nothingness, particularly in his later work. In Pansaers's text "Blenorrhagie" (Blennorrhoea), written in 1920, "chaotic nothing breaks out."²³ Another text by Pansaers from the same year—"Aseptique noyade pour amateurs programmatiques" (Aseptic Drowning for Programmatic Amateurs)—begins:

O
in the name of the house *nothing* [*rien*]
all hands pass through the hole
bright in spiraling *nothing* [*néant*]²⁴

Likewise, in his posthumously published manifesto "Point d'Orgue programmatique pour jeune Orang-Outang" (Programmatic Organ Point for a Young Orangutan), written 1921, Pansaers hailed "*nothing/integral nothing/you/do you come*."²⁵

V.

Another remarkable feature in Pansaers's description of his Dadaist turn was the characterization of this apparent rupture in his personal development as birth, rebirth, and renaissance. In itself, this claim of a rebirth is neither surprising nor unique in a Dadaist context. Dada was, as Ball put it, from the start "a sign of foolish naïveté, joy in procreation, and preoccupation with the baby carriage."²⁶ Elsewhere, Ball noted, "There is a gnostic sect whose initiates were so struck by the image of the *childhood* of Jesus that they lay down in a cradle and let themselves

be suckled by women and swaddled. The dadaists are similar babes-in-arms of a new age."²⁷

In his later reminiscences about Dadaism, Max Ernst claimed, in a manner comparable to Pansaers's description of his Dadaist turn of 1916: "Max Ernst died on 1 August 1914. He returned to life on 1 November 1918 as a young man, who would become a magician and find the myth of his time."²⁸ Pansaers's characterization of his apparent renaissance in 1916 thus corresponded with a broader self-understanding among the Dadaists. Pansaers's Dadaist rebirth, however, possessed yet another dimension, a rather concealed personal dimension.

The chronological account of the life and work of Pansaers, as presented by his biographer Marc Dachy in accordance with the course of events stipulated by Pansaers himself in the early 1920s,²⁹ suggests that Pansaers's rebirth in 1916 marked the start of a brief literary career—a few years of intense artistic activity, during which Pansaers appeared as a "poet in his cockpit," as a "meteor shooting through the Dada sky." As "one of the most uncompromising combatants of Dada," Pansaers was, according to Dachy, "the first to observe perturbingly the menacing backlash of the Parisian Dadaists in schemes they wanted to destroy." According to Dachy, the fact that Pansaers "subsequently died at a moment when the Dada movement submerged as well³⁰ was symbolic. In short, Dachy creates an image of Pansaers as the ultimate Dadaist who epitomized Dadaism in its most radical form in such a way that he *had* to disappear when the movement itself collapsed.

Jul. Krekel and the "Flemish seed of recovery"

I.

Dachy's description of Pansaers as the most rigorous Dadaist par excellence needs some readjustment. While Pansaers may have claimed that he was truly born in 1916 in La Hulpe (Terhulpen) through an act of self-meditation, he actually came into this world some thirty years earlier. Pansaers was born on May 1, 1885, in Neerwinden, a small, dull village deep in the Belgian countryside, in the province of Brabant, east of Brussels.

According to Dachy's account, Pansaers's literary career started after his rebirth and from that point, followed a straight line upwards, like an airplane or even a meteor, ending with his early death in 1922, caused by a fatal lymphatic disorder. In fact, Pansaers's career was anything but a continuous development in one direction. Both his life and his work were marked by a series of profound ruptures and turns.

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offering the impression of a directionless *voetzoeker* (firecracker) rather than an airplane or a meteor following a steady, predictable trajectory.

In fact, Pansaers's supposed renaissance as a Dadaist was certainly not the beginning of his literary career, but was instead probably the most profound change of direction in this literary career, which had begun a decade or so earlier. Pansaers didn't begin writing or publishing in 1916—he probably started writing somewhere in the first decade of the twentieth century and his first publications followed at the end of the decade. Furthermore, Pansaers did not start off as an avant-garde radical. On the contrary, Pansaers was initially something of an epigone representative of a conservative, provincialist *Heimat* literature. Most remarkably, he didn't start as a French author, but as a Dutch—or to be more accurate, a genuine Flemish—author. In his early proto-Dadaist work, Pansaers wrote in a Flemish variant of Dutch with a substantial portion of regional vocabulary.

As noted earlier, since its foundation, Belgium had been divided by a cultural and linguistic conflict that split Belgian society geographically and socially. Born more or less on the language boundary, Pansaers's native village of Neerwinden was situated a few miles north of the boundary, just on the Flemish side. Pansaers was raised and educated in Dutch, but had to learn and speak French in school and later in the seminary, when he followed the training to become a Catholic priest. Pansaers left the seminary in 1905, shortly before his ordination. After finishing his education at the convent of the Josephites in Leuven (Louvain), Pansaers became a clerk at the local office of the Belgian Boerenbond (Farmers' Union) in 1907. In the same year, he married Marie Robbeets. This marriage resulted in a son born a decade later, in 1917.

It was probably during this period that Pansaers started writing under the pseudonym of Julius Krekel (*krekel* means "cricket") (fig. 2.2). In the early 1910s, this Jul. Krekel published several sentimentalist *Heimat* novels, with titles like *Ziek* (Ill), *Eene Moeder* (A Mother), *Hertebolken* (Heart Beating) and *Met z'n oogen open* (With his Eyes Opened).³¹ In 1909, Krekel also started to publish nature and love poetry in the Flemish nationalist, pan-Germanic oriented review *Onze Stam* (Our Tribe, or Our Stem).³² Pansaers's early work stands in the tradition of the Flemish *Heimat* literature of Guido Gezelle, Cyriel Buyssche, and Stijn Streuvels, which became popular in Flanders in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This literature glorified the Flemish landscape and the simple, "natural," laborious life of the ordinary rural population. In this context, Krekel presented himself as a radical Flemish nationalist, not only as a (minor) representative of Flemish *Heimat* literature, but also as a pamphleteer for the Flemish cause in cultural matters. In a programmatic essay entitled "Over het Vlaamsch Tooneel," (On Flemish Drama), published in 1911 in *Onze Stam*, Krekel regarded it a duty of the "writer-talents in Flanders... to ascend in mighty ambition after their own fashion... to make demands after their own fashion, to sow the seed

after their own fashion, the Flemish seed of recovery, of self-being among their own Flemish People and in their own Flemish Country."³³

Krekel presented himself as a representative "of a young flock... developing a mighty, magnificent life; the primordial force and natural beauty of their *Dietsche gouwen* (Dutch provinces), in their creative urge, buzzing like a hive full of bees; gurgling like the reckless blood through twitching foal bodies!"³⁴

Krekel was particularly enraged over the undermining character of French drama, which dominated the Flemish theaters. According to Krekel, the "French theaters [in Flanders] subvert and [smash] to smithereens in one single evening all what mighty desire has been built by unremitting labor for days in pursuit of turning into Flemish."

Krekel issued a call to "the best writers-forces" to "devote themselves to the theater... in order to enable their art and their language, which are the language and art of Flanders as well, to have an honored place in the mature European realm of thought, like Ibsen, Børnson, Strindberg, and others were able to attain for the Scandinavian countries."³⁵

Krekel suited the action to the word. In 1912, he published a small drama called *Een mysterieuse schaduw* (A Mysterious Shade, or Phantom). This one-act play differed from his prose and poetry, as it showed the influence of fin-de-siècle impressionism, represented in Flanders by the review *Van Nu en Straks* (From Now and Later). In other words, this play documented some progression in Pansaers's early work. However, Pansaers rejected an all too radical urge for innovation through one of the characters, who explicitly repudiates futurism. In this context, it is not unlikely that Pansaers visited (or at least read about) the first futurist exhibition in Brussels, where a painting by Gino Severini was shown, entitled *Danse du pan-pan au Monico* (Dance of the Pan-pan at Monico). Pansaers seemed to hint at the title of Severini's painting in the title of a later Dadaist publication, *Pan-Pan au Cul du nu nègre* (Pan-Pan at the Arse of the Black Nude) (1920).³⁶

II.

Pansaers's pre-war dismissal of futurism was undoubtedly not only an expression of his literary conservatism, but also resulted from the ideological setting of his early literary ventures. The "European realm of thought" that must have been evoked by the advance of a genuine Flemish theater was, in the context of the review *Onze Stam*, primarily a supposedly Germanic "realm of thought," as the subtitles of the review indicate: *Maandschrift voor Germaansche Talen en Wereldletterkunde* (Monthly for Germanic Languages and World Literature) and *Germaansch Tijdschrift voor Volksleven, Letteren en Kunst* (Germanic Review for Popular Life, Literature and Art). The Grand

Dutch chimera and a racist pan-Germanicism were regular components of the journal,³⁷ which contained pointed contributions from Flanders, the Netherlands, and Germany. Pansaers's early work has nothing in common with literary innovation, not to mention Dadaism.

For some literary historians, this observation has cast serious doubts over the question of whether Krekel and Pansaers were indeed one and the same person.³⁸ A closer look at Krekel's and Pansaers's writing reveals, however, that Krekel was indubitably writing in his mother tongue, whereas Pansaers obviously had a poor command of French. Besides, similarities in style and recurring semantic idiosyncrasies can be found in the work of both the Flemish Krekel and the Walloon Pansaers.³⁹ It should be noted, furthermore, that "Jul. Krekel (Leuven)" was deciphered in one of the last issues of *Onze Stam* as "Jul. Krekel (Pansaers, Leuven)."⁴⁰ (Pansaers lived in Leuven before the war.) Pansaers himself revealed to the Belgian surrealist Marcel Lecomte that he had used the pseudonym "Krekel" before World War I.⁴¹

One can argue that Pansaers's literary start as Krekel was irrelevant to his later Dada involvement. There is probably no Dadaist whose first adolescent literary or artistic steps weren't dominated by the conventions of the day and the established currents of the late nineteenth century. The first poems by Ball or Arp, the first paintings by Duchamp, Schwitters, or van Doesburg aren't exactly an avant-garde tour de force either. Although such juvenile debuts may be quite interesting from a biographical point of view, from a Dada-oriented perspective, they seem rather irrelevant. The same could be said for Pansaers's change of language. Dada was not just an international movement... it was also a polyglot movement. Several Dadaists changed from one language to another, in particular from their mother tongue to French: Tzara from Romanian, Arp and Ernst from German, and Picabia from Spanish.

In the case of Pansaers, however, there is a fundamental difference both in respect to his early traditionalism and his change of language. Writing as the Flemish traditionalist Krekel, Pansaers didn't publish one or two poems, like Ball or Arp, but left a quite voluminous oeuvre of conservative *Heimat* literature at a stage when most later Dadaists were already embracing expressionism, at least in Germany. It is particularly significant that as Krekel, Pansaers I was not only writing in Dutch or Flemish, he was also presenting himself expressly as a radical Flemish nationalist—a patriotic guardian of Flemish culture and language with a poignant Francophobic edge. Thus Pansaers's change of language wasn't just a simple change of verbal tools, especially in combination with his avant-garde turn. On the contrary, it marked a profound ideological turnover, which seemed to have been anticipated on the eve of World War I, by a curious double play after his appointment as a civil servant to the Royal Library in Brussels in 1913.

Under the new pseudonym of "J[ul.]-K[rekel or Klement] Pansaers," Pansaers published two books in 1913 and 1914 for the Algemeene

Katholieke Vlaamsche Hoogeschooluitbreiding (General Catholic Flemish Higher Education Extension), a nationalist platform that promoted higher education in Dutch. Both publications had a clear-cut nationalist purport: *Over Miniatuur of de Verluchting in de Handschriften tot de 13de eeuw* (On Miniature, or the Illumination of Manuscripts until the 13th Century) (1913) covered one of the highlights of Flemish national heritage. In the next year, there followed a publication on Richard Wagner's *Parzival*. Here, Pansaers exhibited an "unconditional Bayreuthism, nourished by the worst reactionary and Pan-Germanic commonplaces," as Jean-Paul Bier put it.⁴² Simultaneously, J. K. Pansaers was acting as the French-language author who compiled the monograph *Les artistes belges contemporains* (The contemporary Belgian artists). This book comprised a bizarre eulogy of Belgian official state art—a eulogy quite at odds with the Flemish nationalism propagated by Krekel and *Onze Stam*. As *attaché à la Bibliothèque Royale*, Pansaers was also one of the contributors to the official French language *Collection des Tables des Revues belges* (Collection of the Tables of Belgian Reviews). Bier, the literary historian, observed in this context that in the disguise of J. K. Pansaers, Pansaers seemed "to resort to the cynicism of a double strategy. He divides himself between his economic obligations at the bilingual library and his Flemish cultural activism as an amateur art critic, who places his hopes on Germany."⁴³

Pansaers's renaissance and the birth of Résurrection

I.

From 1919 onwards, Pansaers suggested that he turned into a Dadaist in 1916. As the title indicates, his autobiographical fragment, "Après six mois de méditation sur un aveugle mur blanc," probably from 1921, claimed that this Dadaist turn occurred—after six months of meditation over a blind, white wall.⁴⁴ Now, more than eighty years later, it is difficult to verify whether Pansaers really stared for a full half year at a blind wall. Against the background of Pansaers's pre-history it is, however, obvious that something drastic must have happened in the first years of the war, although when exactly this unknown event occurred will probably remain obscure. Pansaers's suggestion that a "renaissance"⁴⁵ took place "around 1916,"⁴⁶ can no longer be verified. It seems not unlikely, though, that an identity crisis may have manifested itself previously, perhaps even before the war, as a result of the double life Pansaers pursued as an obedient servant of the French-speaking administration on the one hand and as a radical anti-French

Flemish nationalist on the other.

The start of World War I, in August and September of 1914—when German troops invaded and conquered Belgium on their way to Paris—may also have precipitated Pansaers's crisis and "renaissance." The German invasion involved massive destruction and many casualties on the battlefield, as well as many atrocities against the civilian population. Pansaers apparently abandoned his workplace at the Royal Library and tried, in vain, to join the repulsed Belgian army as a volunteer⁴⁷ By the time he arrived in Antwerp, the army had already capitulated. Pansaers returned to Brussels, where he took up domicile in La Hulpe, on the edge of the Brussels's agglomeration and virtually a stone's throw away from the language boundary. Now, however, he was living on the southern, Walloon side, in French-speaking Belgium.

Pansaers's attempt to join the Belgian army in the late summer of 1914 may also have correlated with an identity crisis. He had been an ardent supporter and propagandist of pan-Germanicism in Flanders, placing his hope for a Flemish resurrection on the unification of Germany in the Second Empire of 1870 and furthermore, on the solidarity of the kindred German nation, whose soldiers were now massacring his fellow countrymen. His intention to participate in the defense of the Belgian fatherland against that same Germany, now in the role of a brutal aggressor and enemy, must have left its mark on Pansaers. It seems not unlikely that the war—or rather the German invasion and occupation—provoked a radical aversion to his pre-war Flemish nationalism. It should be noted here that even after all the brutalities by the German army, the more radical sections of the Flemish movement—to which Pansaers likewise belonged before the war—still placed their hopes on the German occupier as the savior of the Flemish cause. As a result, they welcomed the German invasion, or were at least involved in openly collaborationist politics.

II.

Pansaers's claim in 1919-21 that he was already a Dadaist in 1916 cannot be substantiated. This doesn't alter the fact that a radical rupture occurred between 1914 and 1917—a rupture that possessed, as Bier has argued, at least a threefold character: linguistic, cultural, and political.⁴⁸ The scope of this rupture was indicated not only by Pansaers's later claim of a rebirth in 1916, but also by a journal edited by Pansaers (who from then on wrote under the name of Clément Pansaers) in 1917 and 1918. This review had the symbolic title *Résurrection*.

Résurrection was an entirely French-language periodical. From 1917, Pansaers published exclusively in French, with the single exception of a

contribution entitled "Belgische Kroniek" (Belgian Chronicle) in *De Stijl* in 1921.⁴⁹ Furthermore, *Résurrection* was an innovative journal in both literary and artistic respects—it was the first French-language expressionist review in Belgium.⁵⁰ Finally, on a political level, *Résurrection* seemed to be the complete opposite of *Onze Stam* and Pansaers's earlier Flemish nationalism. A pacifist tendency was expressed in the first issue of *Résurrection*. Pansaers dedicated his opening article on German expressionism to one of the major French opponents of the war, Romain Rolland.⁵¹ In a series of "Political Bulletins" he published in *Résurrection*, Pansaers expressly presented himself as a mouthpiece and ardent defender of the Walloon cause, which was quite surprising in light of his background of Flemish nationalism.

In the first issue of *Résurrection*, Pansaers argued that since "the Flemish have resolved the problem of their identity, the Walloon have the duty to take a stand and to defend themselves."⁵² In a "Political Bulletin" in the second issue, he issued the following demand: "Let's constitute our own Government that will erect and organize the Walloon State."⁵³ This independent government and state (in accordance with Thomas Woodrow Wilson's principle of self-determination)⁵⁴ should participate in a Flemish-Walloon federation in the former Belgian territory, more or less like the Helvetic confederation, in order to secure the rights of the Walloon population "against Flemish predominance."⁵⁵ Only this devolution would guarantee the resolution of the "Belgian problem."

The contrast between Pansaers and Krekel seems to be complete. Among the protagonists of the international Dada movement, some similarity can be discerned in this respect with the Berlin *Oberdada* Johannes Baader. Bier compared the case of Pansaers with that of Baader because both had quite conspicuous appearances, even in the Dada spectrum, attracting a high degree of attention while at the same time remaining rather marginal figures on the whole.⁵⁶ A comparison with Baader seems appropriate for another reason. Baader was originally a petty-bourgeois architect who failed in his profession and dropped out to emerge later as a Dadaist messiah whose "regular" bourgeois life gradually collapsed. Pansaers's case shows significant parallels. Pansaers started as a respectable clerk and traditional writer (albeit he produced mediocre tear-jerkers). He soon he dropped out of his role of decorous breadwinner and turned to a completely different type of art and literature, emerging as Belgium's single Dadaist. In the end, Pansaers's initially quite orderly bourgeois existence collapsed as well.

III.

Although the contrast between the French-language, Wallingant avant-gardist Pansaers and the Dutch-speaking, Flamingant traditionalist Krekel seems complete, a certain continuity should be noted. Pansaers may seem to have differed radically from Krekel on a political level, due to his pacifist stand and his attempt to contribute to a final settlement of the Belgian language conflict from a Walloon perspective. As a defender of the interests of the Walloon population of Belgium, Pansaers may have seemed to oppose Flemish nationalism, and to some extent, this may be true. However, the political solution to the Flemish-Walloon language conflict advocated by Pansaers was, at the same time, completely in line with the *Flamenpolitik* of the German occupation authorities. What's more, his political solution for the "Walloon question" perfectly matched the ideas of the Activist, collaborationist section of the Flemish national movement.⁵⁷ In line with the Activist advocacy of the dissolution of Belgium as a single administrative unity and the Activist intention to separate Flanders in the long run from the Walloon provinces, Pansaers was opting for a "new Belgium" which actually consisted of two independent parts—the Flemish and the Walloon provinces, which are only associated by a loose federation:

The true solution of the Belgian problem is a Flemish-Walloon Federation.⁵⁸

Let's erect on the soil of the old Belgium a Flemish-Walloon federation in which the old discords are replaced by a simple cordial competition of intellectual development.⁵⁹

Also in line with the firm rejection of the ancien régime by the Flemish Activists, Pansaers spoke out time after time against the resurfacing of the "old Belgium." In a way, Pansaers's Wallingantism was a Flemish Activism in inverted disguise. As he noted himself, "the Flemish [Activists] agree with us in the necessity of a Flemish-Walloon Federation in which each faction will have its own and personal internal government with a federal delegation regulating the external relations."⁶⁰

Another example of continuity can be observed in the unremitting character of Pansaers's German orientation. While Pansaers had obviously distanced himself from his earlier anti-French attitude, as well as from his chauvinist and belligerent pan-Germanicism, Germany still remained a major political and cultural orientation. On a political level, this held true for his Walloon translation of the German *Flamenpolitik*, as well as for his interest in expressionism, particularly German expressionism. On a literary level, this was certainly more important in respect to his later Dadaism. *Résurrection* contained a wide variety of poems, prose, and essays by German expressionist

writers—Carl Einstein, Iwan Goll, Walter Hasenclever, Ernst Stadler, Herwardt Walden, Franz Werfel, and Alfred Wolfenstein. The journal also included graphics by the German expressionist artist Maria Uhden and a fragment from Frank Wedekind's drama, *Franziska*. Pansaers opened *Résurrection* with an extensive discussion of expressionist "young German literature." This "young literature" was presented both as an example *and* as an integral part of a new European literature that could be observed in Belgium as well as in France.⁶¹ Pansaers's focus on German expressionism was remarkable, against the background of his earlier conventionalism, but it isn't surprising, considering the fact that Brussels and La Hulpe accommodated an important German writers' colony, which comprised several major expressionists. Among them were Carl Sternheim and Ernst Stadler, who had already been living in the Brussels' agglomeration in the years before the war started. Others, namely Einstein, Gottfried Benn, and Otto Flake, came as members of the German occupying force in 1914.⁶² Pansaers had an intimate relationship with this German community. He was particularly close friends with Einstein. Beginning in 1917, Pansaers acted as a private teacher for the children of the wealthy Sternheim, who had inhabited a large estate in La Hulpe since 1912.

While Pansaers may indeed have been a private teacher in Sternheim's service, it does not seem unlikely, as Bier has suggested, that this appointment served as a cover for the diversion of money to Pansaers to enable the quite expensive publication of *Résurrection*, a monthly with a deluxe format. No doubt Pansaers was not in a situation to afford the publication of this review without funding by a third party, and this third party was probably the affluent Sternheim. Whereas, from a biographical perspective, the title of the review hints at Pansaers's rebirth in the preceding years, *Résurrection* can also be read as an allusion to Leo Tolstoy's novel of the same title, not only underlining the pacifist character of the review, but also hinting at Sternheim's involvement. The name of Sternheim's villa in La Hulpe, Claircolline, (Clear Hill), alluded to the name of Tolstoy's famous estate, Jasnaja polnaja, (Clear Field).⁶³ In *Résurrection*, Sternheim was promoted by Pansaers as the shining example of a "German with a completely Latin sensibility"⁶⁴—the personification of the German-French synthesis of *Résurrection*. It was probably through the mediation of Sternheim and of Einstein as well, that Pansaers could publish so many contributions by prominent German expressionists—translated rather ineptly by Pansaers, who obviously had a poor command of both German and French.⁶⁵

IV.

Most of the journal *Résurrection* was either written or translated by Pansaers. In regard to Pansaers's own contributions, the expressionist writer Einstein seems to have been of major importance in several respects. Einstein's impact on Pansaers was most obvious in regard to the so-called primitivist tendency in Pansaers's work, one of the significant features of Pansaers's later Dadaist oeuvre, as indicated, among others, by the title of his first Dadaist publication: *Pan-Pan au Cul du nu nègre*.⁶⁶

The first steps towards his later literary primitivism can be observed in a series of illustrations in *Résurrection* by a certain Guy Boscart, in fact another of Pansaers's pseudonyms. These expressionist-style woodcuts showed one of the major themes of contemporary primitivism: the apparent unlimited sex drive of the "Negro." The frontispiece of the second issue of *Résurrection* depicted a black figure bending over and caressing a reclining white figure (fig. 2.3).⁶⁷ Whereas the gender of both figures in this woodcut cannot be determined, subsequent woodcuts from the same series in the same issue show the black figure to be a black male clenching the thighs of a white female nude hanging upside down (fig. 2.4).⁶⁸ In the third issue of *Résurrection*, a white female nude is engaged in an exotic dance for some black males (fig. 2.5).⁶⁹

In 1915, Einstein had become overnight one of the major representatives of the primitivist tendency in German and French avant-garde circles, as a result of a rather unpretentious book entitled *Negerplastik* (Negro Sculpture). Preceded by a small introduction in which he argued that artifacts and religious objects of indigenous peoples from Africa, Australia, and Oceania offered the coordinates of a completely different (abstract) approach to the visual arts as initiated in Europe by French cubism, Einstein's book presented a wide selection of masks, statues, and other (religious) artifacts from Africa, Oceania, and Australia. Consciously withholding any information about their origin, original function, or intended meaning, Einstein presented these artifacts simply as examples of a completely different form of language, of a completely different aesthetic vision.⁷⁰ Pansaers's primitivism corresponded with Einstein's recuperation of so-called "Negro art," not only by the evocation of a "Negro" imagery, but also by the fact that he detached the image of the "Negro" from its "original" exotic setting and from anthropological or ethnic references and specifics.⁷¹ This holds true as well for the woodcuts Pansaers did under the name of Boscart for *Résurrection*, which depicted isolated black male figures engaged in sexual acts with white female figures without any substantial reference to the place where the encounters took place, although an exotic setting seems to have been suggested by some elements in the woodcuts, e.g. vegetation consisting of palm trees.

In Pansaers's later literary evocations of the "Negro," this "Negro"

seemed to be by and large identical with the subject, with the ego around which most of his experimental work centered—a self with unmistakable autobiographical contours. Pansaers's "Negroes" were not primarily black people from other continents, but rather representations of certain aspects of his own subjectivity and a hint at his own marginal and dependent position—marginal in the Belgian literary field, and dependent on the German community, particularly on Sternheim. Like Einstein, Pansaers failed, however, to completely eliminate the anthropological dimension, or perhaps not primarily the anthropological dimension, but rather the Western colonialist view on "Negroes." Although, for example, the exuberant sexuality of the "Negro" in Pansaers's work may have primarily been a reference to his own sexual frustrations and desires, his attribution of an unbridled sex life to "Negroes" was perfectly in line with contemporary prejudices about people of color, and was in fact one of the major racist biases exploited in German war propaganda against the presence of black soldiers in the Allied forces.⁷² One may argue that, in a way, this racist prejudice was defused by Pansaers, since he presented himself as a "Negro." But at the same time, the sexualized character of Pansaers's "Negroes" can be regarded as just another example of Western fantasies about the animal sexuality of black men—a not quite extraordinary extrapolation of a common cliché.

V.

In addition to the primitivist affinity, a poetic congeniality can be discerned between Einstein and Pansaers. Einstein was not only an important art critic and theoretician, he was also a writer of literary fiction who was renowned in expressionist circles for his experimental novelette, *Bébuquin oder die Dilettanten des Wunders* (Bébuquin, or the Dilettantes of Marvel).⁷³ In *Bébuquin*, Einstein eschewed common narrative schemes. Instead, the fragmented story developed by associations and sudden leaps, with several changes of perspective and a plot at odds with realist narration. Pansaers's French translation of the first sections of Einstein's book, published in *Résurrection*,⁷⁴ was regarded by Ball as directional for Dada in general and for his own experimental novel, *Tenderenda der Phantast* (Tenderenda the Visionary), in particular.⁷⁵ Pansaers's experimental prose, published in a Dadaist framework since 1920, was, according to his own account, already written in part in the years following his 1916 rebirth. Therefore, although Pansaers's prose cannot be regarded as a simple repetition of the techniques applied by Einstein in *Bébuquin*, some significant similarities can still be discerned between Einstein's and Pansaers's literary writings. In both Einstein's *Bébuquin* and Pansaers's prose, the absence of a continuing plot, the

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composition of fragmented episodes and reflections, as well as the combination of individual fragments through associations make an unambiguous, homogeneous interpretation impossible.

While German expressionism in general and Einstein in particular can be regarded as important orientations for the reborn Pansaers, another inspiration is indicated in an article in the third issue of *Résurrection*, entitled, "III. Epilogue." The Roman number relates this epilogue to the preceding article, "Autour de la littérature jeune allemande" (On the Young German Literature), published in two parts in the first two issues of *Résurrection*. The epilogue was, however, of a quite different nature. The first two parts offered a panorama of contemporary German literature in a European setting, and discussed the work of many explicitly named authors. The epilogue contained no reference to individual authors at all. The suggestion was even made that the aesthetic and poetic conceptions in the article transcended the spectrum of avant-garde currents, since Pansaers stated, "Expressionism, Simultaneism, Futurism, Orphism, Eternism = labels."⁷⁶ The presentation of the text however, referred unmistakably to the presentation of futurist manifestos and the futurist poetic forwarded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in the "Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futuristica" (Technical Manifesto of the Futurist Literature). Obvious similarities between this manifesto and Pansaers's epilogue are, for example, the usage of arithmetic signs as conjunctions and a clear preference for substantives and substantivations.⁷⁷ The influence of futurism is also obvious in the content of the epilogue, with the apparent claim to have trumped Marinetti:⁷⁸

The automobilism, the electricity, the radiotelegraphy—the airplane, the submarine influence the novel, music, architecture—all the arts. There is no apathy between these divergent orders.

Another way of living—requires a new way of seeing:—For modern noises [*bruits modernes*], the ear requires another music: The Bruitists aren't joking at all.⁷⁹

Whereas Marinetti pursued the literary representation of modern times by new means such as simultaneity and bruitism, in Pansaers's view, these techniques served another purpose—not as new ways to represent an external reality, but rather as presentations of a subjective condition. According to Pansaers, "the voyager in an airplane, in a submarine, even in a car with dazzling speed, sees something else than nature: images that cannot be translated into substantives."⁸⁰

Substantives were essential in the new futurist poetic of Marinetti and, despite Pansaers's dismissive remark on substantives, well represented in Pansaers's French prose. Pansaers described the effect of the imagery of the visual arts on his aforementioned voyager as "...a sensation of the image: the sensation suffices like the image suffices.... Speed

produces the same result on poetry. Ideas, sensations alternate, are tossing each other violently, mutilating each other. These mutilations form the elements of ideas, completely new sensations. The cook, the chemist, the butcher produce by means of the simplest elements, newly composed corpses."⁸¹

As a result, wrote Pansaers, "I create a new world, completely untranslatable in words (*mots*): painting no more imitative than music. Words are useless to the pictorial image."⁸² There are, though, resulting from the "free verse,"⁸³ "two ways to communicate a sensation:—by the idea—by words (*vocables*). The sensation, following from the succession of ideas, forms itself in the brain and communicates itself by concussions—the words (*vocables*) act organically by sonority. If one employs the first, one may gain profit simultaneously from the second—disposing as a consequence over a double clavier."⁸⁴

In other words, literature is to be understood as the expression of authorial subjectivity—a subjectivity that is determined in part by the "speed of living civilization," imposing "the rapid succession of systems." However, the authorial subjectivity should not be subjected entirely to the velocity of modern society: at the same time, Pansaers demanded, referring to Chuang-Dze, that a "natural sphere of equilibrium" should be pursued by means of the "marvelous antinomy, utopian source": "the strange conflict between the anarchical terrestrial order and human anarchy."⁸⁵ According to Pansaers, this conflict marked civilized man, but was still absent in the "neutral zones" of the Tropics, where the "natural sphere of equilibrium" was still intact.⁸⁵ Thus, on the one hand, the "Negro" was the personification of humankind still in command of this utopian equilibrium. On the other hand, in contemporary Western society, the "Negro" was at odds with the velocity that characterized "civilization," as indicated by Pansaers's reference to the "Negro" as a link in a chain of equations: "slowness = anarchie, = negro, = far niente."⁸⁶

In a nutshell, Pansaers formulated a poetics of his own, to legitimize his future experiments. The major elements of this poetics can be retraced in his subsequent literary work. At the same time, the title "Epilogue" can be regarded as an indication that Pansaers wished to distinguish himself from Marinetti's propositions as well as from the quite moderate German expressionism portrayed in the previous installments of "Autour de la littérature jeune allemande."

The epilogue was also a final farewell to his own pre-war conventionalism. This personal dimension was evoked as well in the title of a later text, "*Ici finit la sentimentalité*" (Here ends sentimentality).⁸⁷

The Dada overture of a “kraut and bolshevik”

A final point of concordance should be noted between Einstein and Pansaers in the setting of Brussels. In November 1918, an armistice ended the war, the German empire collapsed and, as a result, the power structures of the German occupying force crumbled. As in the German motherland, a revolutionary spirit took hold of the German troops in Belgium and a revolutionary Soldiers' Council was established in Brussels. For a short time, in the interregnum after the Armistice, this Soldiers' Council became one of the main bodies representing the remaining German soldiers in Belgium.⁸⁸ Pansaers sided with Einstein in this short revolutionary intermezzo.⁸⁹

The revolutionary interregnum soon came to an end, however, when the ancien régime returned from exile and the German soldiers were withdrawn or returned home under their own volition. The return of the ancien régime coincided with a day of reckoning. Accounts were settled with all those who had collaborated with the German occupiers. Not only did remaining Germans have to flee for safety, Sternheim and his family, for example, had to seek temporary shelter in the Netherlands.⁹⁰ Also, many Belgian citizens who had associated themselves in one way or another with the Germans—among them many Flemish nationalist Activists—were forced to seek refuge. As Pansaers later indicated, he was also associated with “*le bolchévisme et le boche*” (bolshevism and the kraut).⁹¹ In both respects, Pansaers was a member of an endangered species in the first months after the Armistice. His house was looted and he had to go into hiding. Like many others associated with the German occupying force in Belgium, he sought safety in Germany in late 1918. Pansaers went to Berlin where, like several other Belgian (chiefly Flemish) refugees, he received a small allowance from the German government in the course of the completion of the *Flamenpolitik*.⁹²

Pansaers returned to Brussels in 1919, when the worst paroxysms of anger had disappeared and peace and quiet had again been restored. Since Pansaers had only been associated with the German community in Brussels and had not acted as an active collaborator (as did several of his former Flamingant soul mates), he did not have to fear persecution for his role in the war. Nevertheless, his existence had fallen to pieces once again, his house and belongings had been demolished or looted, he had no steady job or income, and he had estranged himself as a Wallingant from his Flemish background. As an avant-garde writer and artist, Pansaers had become separated from the intellectual community of which he had been part since his move to La Hulpe.

It was actually in this crisis situation that Pansaers made advances toward Dada and the French avant-garde in December 1919. It should be noted here that by that time, Pansaers wasn't as uninformed about

Dadaism as he suggested in his previously discussed correspondence with Tzara. As he later admitted himself, it was in fact his friend Einstein who had introduced him to Dadaism, specifically, to Dada in Berlin in late 1918 and early 1919.⁹³ Pansaers had not associated himself with Dada at that stage. Perhaps he had been reluctant to embark upon a new adventure immediately. Perhaps Pansaers couldn't venture overly exposed behavior as an avant-garde radical, since he was dependent on a temporary state allowance that could be withdrawn instantly. Perhaps Pansaers didn't join Dada in Berlin because Einstein wasn't really favorable to Dadaism,⁹⁴ but there may have been yet another reason why he didn't associate himself with Dada in Berlin: Pansaers may have recognized that in the new post-war situation, a further association with the German art spectrum wouldn't benefit his career as a French-language author. Tzara had also experienced difficulties in post-war France because of this German involvement in Dada.⁹⁵ One may imagine that these difficulties were even greater for a writer in Pansaers's situation. In any event, Pansaers did not associate himself with Dada in Berlin and his rapprochement with the French avant-garde was, as it seems, more or less a last resort in order to overcome the splendid isolation in which he had landed. Pansaers took the bull by the horns and sought shelter in Dada—not in Berlin-style Dadaism, but in the Zurich version of Dadaism.

Pansaers's rapprochement with Dada in Zurich is not entirely surprising, since obvious similarities existed between Pansaers's wartime work and ideas, on the one hand, and the program of the Zurich Dadaists on the other. These similarities included not only the attempt to build a bridge between German and French culture a clear-cut primitivist tendency, and literary and artistic experiments, but also a particular interest in Eastern mysticism and spirituality, and finally, a revolutionary spirit in the aftermath of the war. In this respect, Pansaers's suggestion in his letters to Birot and Tzara that for some years already, he had represented positions analogous to Dada, wasn't entirely without truth. One could even speak of a considerable degree of "*je m'enfoutisme*", ("I-give-a-damn-ism.") Pansaers had burned his bridges completely in the course of his "resurrection" as a Wallingant transmitter of German expressionism. After this first contact with the avant-garde was disrupted by the end of World War I, Pansaers apparently wanted to resuscitate his avant-garde ambitions and start over once more, now as a Belgian outpost of French avant-garde radicalism, of Dada in particular. Once more, his ambitions led to only very limited success.

“Dada: its birth, its life, its death”

I.

Pansaers remained a rather isolated figure in Belgium. His contacts in the Belgian literary field were confined to two French-language avant-garde journals—*Haro!* (1919-20) and *Ça Ira!* (1920-23). *Ça Ira!* can be regarded in several respects as a continuation of *Résurrection*. This French-language journal was edited by Flemish intellectuals. It also contained mainly expressionist contributions, although the editors had an open eye for other avant-garde developments as well, including the constructivism developed in *De Stijl* and the Dadaism represented by Pansaers.⁹⁶ Pansaers had a friendly relationship with the editors of *Ça Ira!*, Paul Neuhuys and Maurice van Essche.⁹⁷ Contributions by Pansaers were published in the review itself, as well as in a special book series of the journal, in which Pansaers's book *L'Apologie de la paresse* (The Apology of Laziness) was published in 1921. This book was written in the years of *Résurrection* and was initially withheld by Pansaers in favor of his more aesthetically radical volume of self-reflective free verse, *Le pan-pan au cul du nu nègre*.⁹⁸ Pansaers was also offered the opportunity to edit a special Dada issue of *Ça Ira!*, which appeared in November 1921 under the title *Dada. Sa naissance, sa vie, sa mort* (Dada. Its Birth, its Life, its Death). In the preceding issues of *Ça Ira!*, Neuhuys had acknowledged Dada for its innovative drive as “the supreme pinnacle of the modern poetic sentiment” and named Pansaers as its “sole representative” in Belgium.⁹⁹

Haro! was an anarchist literary review in pursuit of “the most extensive internationalism, the incessant fight against all the bad forces of bourgeois society.”¹⁰⁰ *Haro!* was associated by van Doesburg with Dada on account of its nonsensical name.¹⁰¹ Pansaers published the first sections of his prose poem *Apologie de la paresse* in the review in May 1920. In a later issue of *Haro!*, someone writing under the name “Babylas,” (probably Paul Joostens), praised Pansaers as a “true Dadaist, modern in front of all modernism, master of future poetry.”¹⁰²

Aside from *Haro!* and *Ça Ira!*, Pansaers was by and large ignored by Belgian critics. It is significant that Paul van Ostaijen, the major Flemish avant-garde author and critic, never made mention of Pansaers at all. In the case of van Ostaijen, this may have been caused by his Flemish nationalism. Van Ostaijen also refused to collaborate with *Ça Ira!* because this Flemish journal was published in French and didn't take a stand “active” enough, according to van Ostaijen's standards. For the rest of the Belgian critics, Pansaers's work was probably too idiosyncratic and too extravagant to receive any notice.

Pansaers played a rather marginal role not only as a Dadaist in the

Belgian avant-garde, but also as a Belgian in the Mouvement Dada. In part, this marginality was self-induced. As mentioned earlier, Pansaers's rapprochement with Dada was characterized by a certain ambiguity and reticence. This is not surprising, considering the fact that his previous intense involvement with both Flemish nationalism and *Heimat* literature, as well as with German expressionism, had ended in personal catastrophes. Whereas Dachy attributed a pivotal role to Pansaers in Dada, not only Pansaers's involvement, but also his relevance to Dada, was actually quite marginal. It is remarkable that Pansaers initially confined his Dada engagement to the role of corresponding member of the Parisian Dada group in his Brussels outpost. When he finally decided to join the Parisian Dadaists and moved to Paris in person, he broke with Dada after only a fortnight, not because, as Dachy argued, he could not accept that the Parisian Dadaists didn't keep to their principles, but rather because Pansaers could not manage to conform to the subcultural (a)morality of his fellow Dadaists (see below).

II.

Pansaers's first public Dadaist act was the publication of a small volume, *Le pan-pan au cul du nu nègre*, in May 1920, in the Collection Aio of the obscure Éditions Alde in Brussels. This booklet was followed by some contributions to the Parisian journal *Littérature*, then an organ of the French Dadaists. Like these other texts, *Le pan-pan*, followed by and large, the poetics formulated in Pansaers's programmatic "Epilogue" in *Résurrection*. The book consists of fragmented prose and poems. These texts record not just "the discordant noises, which surround us today," as Neuhuys has suggested,¹⁰³ but also the inner conflicts of a subject, of a self as a "theater house,"¹⁰⁴ which "bathes itself naked, free of ambiance, in chaos,"¹⁰⁵ in pursuit of a zero-stage of individual balance. According to Pansaers himself, "the *self* is between yesterday and tomorrow like the conducting wire between negative and positive."¹⁰⁶ This self is obviously identical with the author, as indicated by the title *Le pan-pan*, which refers not only to a painting by the Italian futurist Severini and the sound of shooting, but also to Pansaers's own name.

After a visit to Paris in August 1920, Pansaers decided to arrange the first public appearance of Dada in Belgium. He planned a large soirée in the theater La Bonbonnière in Brussels. For this manifestation, Pansaers counted on the participation of several prominent Parisian Dadaists: Cocteau, Picabia, André Breton, Philippe Soupault, Paul Éluard, and Paul Dermée. All of them had shown interest in Pansaers's intention to organize a Dada manifestation in Brussels and had committed themselves to a Belgian trip. At the last moment, the theater having already been booked by Pansaers, the Parisian Dadaists bowed

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out, one after another. Pansaers had to cancel the manifestation.¹⁰⁷

This rather unresponsive attitude by the Parisian Dadaists didn't discourage Pansaers from seeking a closer alliance with them. Early in 1921, he left for Paris a second time. His name appeared as one of the signatories of the manifesto "Dada soulève tout" (Dada revolts everything), directed against Marinetti. He also participated in an extensive self-inquiry among the Parisian Dadaists, intended for publication in *Littérature*. In this inquiry, the participants had to give notes to indicate their appreciation of a wide range of phenomena, including their fellow Dadaists. The manuscript of the inquiry shows that Pansaers was not a member of the inner circle—his answers were added at a later stage.¹⁰⁸ Nevertheless, Pansaers seemed to have been recognized as a member of the Dada group in Paris.

It was certainly not accidental that Pansaers presented himself unconditionally as a Dadaist when his next booklet, *Bar Nicanor*, was published during his stay in Paris, in February 1921. *Bar Nicanor* was printed at the press of Éditions Aio. On the cover of the small volume, Éditions Aio claimed a wide network of branches in Brussels, London, Paris, New York, Madrid, and even Yokohama.¹⁰⁹ Stylistically, *Bar Nicanor* followed by and large the same principles as *Le pan-pan*, but while *LepPan-pan* reflected in a somewhat abstract way on the inner self with all its constituents and incongruities, *Bar Nicanor* revolved around the sensations of the self in modern civilization, or rather of the self in the margins of metropolitan life, in "the periphery of the reasonable world, in the difficult accessible regions of the absurd."¹¹⁰ The place of action is the imaginary obscure "Dancing-Bar Nicanor."¹¹¹

Four major obsessions are recurring themes in the fragmented, delirious prose poems of *Bar Nicanor*. The first is an obsession with the velocity of modern society and technology. The first chapter, entitled "Aero," opens with an airplane taking off, followed by references to tramways, railways, and electricity. The second obsession...sexuality... figures even more prominently. It is emphasized by a woodcut illustration showing a black male with his hand in the crotch of a white woman (fig. 2.6), as well as by the name of the airplane in the first chapter—"Soubrette 007."¹¹² The entertainment in *Bar Nicanor* consists of "café-concertos by *putanella* (little whore) with the old vagina kaleidoscope."¹¹³ "Perverted sensations go through the erotic zones," as Neuhuys put it.¹¹⁴ The text is interlaced with references to "tits," "cunts," wombs, "asses" and "pricks," whores and pederasts, "vibrating like the wings of a double-decker."¹¹⁵ A third recurring theme is the excessive consumption of narcotics in all their varieties: tobacco, cocaine, opium, absinthe, eggnog, gin, grappa, whisky, etc. Finally, *Bar Nicanor* is marked by an obsession with excrement and bodily secretions, saliva, and sperm, as well as with bodily decay and with (venereal) disease in all its varieties.

As in *Le pan-pan*, the autobiographical dimension is obvious. The first chapter was characterized as a “cataract” of “images of you of me,” of “autobiographic males females.”¹¹⁶ The text addresses “Bianca da Pansa,” Pansaers’s mistress Blanche Verstappen, also known as “Marchesa Bianca da Pansa.” She is invited to excite herself in front of the wax busts of shop-window mannequins and to desire the narrator—obviously Pansaers.¹¹⁷ Alcohol consumption is emphasized in what is presented as part of a “boozography,” intended as a short outline of a “pan-zeroist philosophy.”¹¹⁸ The stress on obscenity, decay, disease, drugs, and the velocity of modern society also characterized Pansaers’s subsequent work, with such telling titles as “I Blennorhoea.” Blennorhoea is a venereal eye-infection and Pansaers suffered from syphilis.¹¹⁹

III.

In April 1921, after two short visits to Paris, in the summer of 1920 and the winter of 1920-21, Pansaers left Brussels permanently for a new existence in Paris. This move can be seen partly as an attempt to join the Parisian Dada group as a full-fledged participant at last, yet it seems there were also quite different motives. A new existential crisis seemed to have taken hold of Pansaers. In his correspondence, Pansaers conceded a series of miscalculations at the Brussels stock exchange, resulting in his virtual bankruptcy. His marriage had come to an end. He already had an extramarital relationship with Verstappen, who in Paris, styled herself as “Mme. Pansaers.” The symptoms of venereal disease and of a severe, ultimately fatal, lymphatic illness had manifested themselves. Pansaers seriously considered emigration to some far country—to China, to Haiti or some other country on the American continent. Finally, he fled in great haste from Brussels to Paris with Verstappen. They took Pansaers’s son with them, a very young child who was not quite four. He was then left in a Catholic boarding school in Brittany. Pansaers did not inform friends, relatives, or even his wife of the child’s new domicile. Pansaers’s son was not found until after Pansaers’s death in 1922 and was then returned to his mother in Brussels.¹²⁰

When Pansaers arrived in Paris for a permanent stay at last, he broke with his fellow Dadaists just a few weeks later in a row over a lost briefcase.¹²¹ On April 25, 1921, a waiter in the Bar Cërta, a popular meeting point of the Parisian Dadaists, forgot his briefcase with the receipts of the day on the table of the Dadaists who were gathered for an informal meeting. In an act of Bohemian expropriation, the Dadaists withheld the briefcase and the money. A discussion followed over the question of whether the money should be returned or not. While several Dadaists, like Breton and Aragon, wanted to keep the money to mitigate

their poor financial situation, Pansaers condemned the expropriation as an immoral act of ordinary theft. In the course of the row, Pansaers openly dissociated himself from Dada as a group and from the Mouvement Dada. However, he kept in touch with Picabia, who also objected to the expropriation, and with Picabia's private circle. Picabia dissociated himself from Dada shortly after Pansaers, for other, more programmatic reasons. Picabia, though, offered Pansaers the opportunity to vent his gall on Breton and Tzara. A cryptic account of the affair, in Dadaist manner, was published by Pansaers under the title "Une Bombe déconfiture aux Iles sous le Vent" (A Bomb Failure at the Leeward Islands) in *Le Pilhaou-Thibaou*, a supplement of Picabia's review 391.¹²² In the meantime, Pansaers sought new alliances with representatives of the Anglophone writers' colony in Paris, such as Pound and the *Little Review* and James Joyce.

Despite his withdrawal from Dada, Pansaers continued the preparation of a special Dada issue of the Belgian journal, *Ça Ira!*, originally intended as yet another attempt to launch Dada in Belgium. The plan for a special Dada issue remained, no longer intended to promote the Mouvement Dada, but rather to document not only Pansaers's definitive rejection of Dada, but also the frictions between Breton, Tzara, and Picabia, and, as such, the "death" of Dada as a movement. Along with Picabia, also Albert-Briot, Éluard, Céline Arnould, Benjamin Péret, Jean Crotti, Pierre de Massot, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, and Renée Dunan (most of these authors belonged to Picabia's peer group) contributed to the special Dada issue. Pound's participation in *Ça Ira!* represented Pansaers's new acquaintances connected to the *Little Review*.

On the one hand, Pansaers announced the death—or rather, the successful "assassination"—of Dada in *Ça Ira!* Referring once more to the incident in Bar Cêrta, Pansaers claimed, "And I assassinated Dada."¹²³ Against this background, Pound could be regarded as an orientation for a new, post-Dadaist direction in Pansaers's development. At the same time, however, Pansaers presented a different, less restricted understanding of Dadaism: Dada not as a trademark confined to the members of the actual Dada movement, but rather Dada as a more general approach to art, literature, and life, which was represented, according to Pansaers, by the *Little Review* and its editors, Pound and Rodker, as well.¹²⁴

This may be regarded as a rather inflationary understanding of Dada. At the same time, this conception of Dadaism quite accurately characterizes Pansaers's work after his withdrawal from Dada. Furthermore, this conception essentially follows his stand towards Dada as already voiced in his first correspondence with Tzara and Albert-Briot in December 1919. His later and final publications and publication plans followed the same pattern as his Dadaist work in the previous years. His last major text, "Point d'Orgue programmatique pour jeune Orang-Outang," written in the second half of 1921,¹²⁵ or, for example, the brief text "Bruxelles-Berlin via Rotterdam," published in

the *Little Review*,¹²⁶ show the same stylistics and the same fragmented narrative, addressing by and large the same issues that were already at stake in *Le pan-pan au cul du nu nègre* and *Bar Nicanor*.

IV.

Although Pansaers had broken radically and publicly with Dada and Tzara, he preserved his contacts with Picabia and in 1922, he reconciled with Tzara. Pansaers even signed Tzara's protest against Breton in a row over the avant-garde "Congress of Paris" planned by Breton in early 1922.¹²⁷ He also planned a new journal entitled *Bilboquet* (in French, both "tumbler" and "little review"). For this prestigious project, he sought the participation of Cocteau, Duchamp, Pound, Constantin Brancusi, and Igor Stravinsky.¹²⁸ Pansaers also started to work for other journals, like the *Revue Mondiale*. Thus, he gradually moved away from the Dada spectrum, although it is not clear in which direction he was moving. In the course of 1922, Pansaers's illness became aggravated. He was admitted to the Parisian Charité hospital in April 1922 and couldn't leave his sickbed for several months. In the end, Pansaers was "without a house, without a dime, without a job, without courage, without energy, without health," as he wrote in his last letter to Picabia.¹²⁹ After being transferred, at his request, from Paris to Brussels Pansaers died of Hodgkin's disease aggravated by syphilis on October 31, 1921.

Notes

1. Ibid.
2. Clément Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc et autres textes. Lettres à Tzara, Picabia et Van Essche*, ed. Marc Dachy (Brussels: Transédition, 1972), 33.
3. Ibid., 34.
4. Holger Fock, "Poetischer Anarchismus. Die Auflösung des Seins mittels sprachlicher Alchimie. Eine Assoziation bizarrer Ideen jenseits von Dada (Nachwörter)," in Pansaers, *Vive Dada!*, 293.
5. Bulletin Dada, no. 6 (1920): 3.
6. Pansaers, *Vive Dada!*, 218.
7. Cited in Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, 499.
8. Cited in Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 295.
9. Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos*, 9–10.
10. Ibid., 7.
11. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 200.
12. Pansaers, *Vive Dada!*, 246.
13. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 198.

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14. Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc*, 9.

15. See Hugo Ball, *Tenderenda der Phantast* (Zürich: Arche, 1967); Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 90–91 and 109.

16. See Harriet Ann Watts, *Chance. A Perspective on Dada* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research, 1980).

17. Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc*, 10.

18. Pansaers mentioned Ruusbroec, though, in a discussion of mysticism in contemporary expressionism, in which he attributed to the mystic in general an “undisciplined” character and as such a “strange libertarian thrust.” Clément Pansaers, “Autour de la littérature jeune allemande (Suite et fin),” *Résurrection* 1, no. 2 (1917): 43. To some extent, Ruusbroec can be seen as a personification of Pansaers’s turn in the war years, since Ruusbroec was a Flemish mystic who had been living in an area now on the south side of the language boundary.

19. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 201; all italics by Pansaers.

20. Cf. Tristan Tzara, “Chronique Zurichoise,” in *Dada-Almanach*, 22; Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos*, 110. On the Dadaist pre-occupation with mysticism; see Richard Sheppard, “Dada and Mysticism: Influences and Affinities,” in *Dada Spectrum: The Dialectics of Revolt*, ed. Stephen C. Foster and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (Iowa City: Coda, 1979), 91–113; Hubert van den Berg, “Dada als Emanation des Nichts. Anmerkungen zum dadaistischen Verhältnis zu Religion und Mystik,” in *Erfahrung und System. Mystik und Esoterik in der Literatur der Moderne.*, ed. Bettina Gruber (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 82–101. Although Pansaers emphasized the import of Chuang-Dze, it seems unlikely that he didn’t know Salomo Friedlaender as well, a frequent contributor to the German expressionist reviews *Die Aktion* and *Der Sturm*, which Pansaers read regularly in his *Résurrection* period as an associate of the German community in Brussels. Friedlaender proposed a philosophy of “creative indifference,” in which nothingness and balancing were also main categories (see chapter four). Next to Chuang-Dze, Friedlaender was one of the main intertexts of the Dadaist focus on Nothingness; see van den Berg, “Tristan Tzara’s ‘Manifeste Dada 1918,’” and “Dada als Emanation des Nichts.” Noteworthy is Paul Neuhuys’s qualification of Pansaers’s *L’Apologie de la paresse* as “Erasmean indifference;” see Neuhuys, “Quelques poètes,” 65. This indifference may well have been Friedlaenderian and not Erasmean.

21. Tschuang-Tse, *Reden und Gleichnisse*, ed. Martin Buber (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1910), 73.

22. Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 98.

23. Tristan Tzara, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 1 (1912–1924), ed. Henri Béhar (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), 360.

24. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 130. This text was published in 1920 in *Littérature* entitled “Ici finit la sentimentalité.”

25. *Ibid.*, 154. In the same text, published in August 1920 in *Ça Ira!*,

the notion of "je m'enfoutisme" reappeared once more as programmatic self-characterization, emphasized in the original by italics; see *ibid.*, 155, and Clément Pansaers, "Aseptique Noyade pour Amateurs Programmatiques," *Ça Ira!* 5 (1920): 116.

26. *Ibid.*, 181.

27. Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, ed. John Elderfield (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 63; cf. Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 95.

28. *Ibid.*, 66; cf. Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 100.

29. Cited in Meyer, *Dada global*, 71.

30. See Marc Dachy, "Chronologie," in Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 35–47.

31. Dachy, "Portrait du poète en sa nacelle," 7.

32. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 292.

33. See Jul. Krekel, "Gedichten," *Onze Stam* 3, no. 1 (1909): 10–19; Jul. Krekel, "Lentemorgen," "Lentezon," "Paren," "Ochtend," "Passiebloem," *Onze Stam* 3, no. 5 (1909): 124–27; Jul. Krekel, "Gedichten," *Onze Stam* 3, no. 6 (1909): 158–61; Jul. Krekel, "O Vrouw....," "M'n Kopwilg," *Onze Stam* 4, no. 2 (1910): 37–38.

34. Jul. Krekel (Pansaers), "Over het Vlaamsch Tooneel," *Onze Stam* 5, no.1 (1911): 6.

35. *Ibid.*, 7.

36. *Ibid.*, 9.

37. On this theatrical debut; see Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 292.

38. See title pages of *Onze Stam* 2, no. 1–2 (1908) and 3, no. 1 (1909). Cf. also Ludwig Wilser, "Rasse und Volk," *Onze Stam* 4, no. 8–9 (1910): 225–29. *Onze Stam* was related to the reactionary Flamingant and Grand-Dutch organizations Nationaal Vlaamsch Verbond (National Flemish League) and the Algemeen Nederlandsch Verbond (General Dutch League) in several issues.

39. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 292.

40. *Ibid.*, 292–94.

41. See *Onze Stam* 5, no. 1, frontispiece, 9.

42. See Marcel Lecomte, "Sur Clément Pansaers," *Plein Chant*, no. 39–40 (1988): 107–08.

43. Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 292.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc*, 9–10.

46. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 201.

47. *Ibid.*, 199.

48. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 291–95.

49. See Clément Pansaers, "Belgische Kroniek," *De Stijl* 4, no. 4 (1921): 52–56. More contributions may have followed. Van Doesburg spoke well of Pansaers. *Pan-Pan au cul du nu nègre* and *Bar Nicanor* were characterized by van Doesburg as "truly modern writings, in which the new way of vision is transposed in language with admirable cleverness." Cf. Theo van Doesburg, "Revue der Avant-garde. België," *Het Getij* 6, 2nd ser. (1921): 29. Van Doesburg also invited Pansaers to

contribute to *Mécano*. "Belgische Kroniek" is announced as the first contribution of a regular column. The first episode was, however, also the last. The first contribution is dated Brussels, March 15, 1921. Pansaers left hastily for Paris soon afterward. On April 25, Pansaers broke with Tzara, Breton, and Aragon (see below). In the row that followed, van Doesburg chose Tzara's side and he broke off all connections with Pansaers; see van Doesburg's letters to Tzara in 1921, in Theo van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?* ed. Marc Dachy (Tusson: L'Échoppe, 1992), 38-44. In 1925, van Doesburg published a tribute to Pansaers, three years after Pansaers's actual death, finishing with "Adieu, mon pauvre Pansaers" (Good-bye my poor Pansaers); see "La langue. Clément Pansaers," *De Stijl* 6, no. 9 (1925): 127-28. The publication of Pansaers's "Belgische Kroniek" can also be regarded, in the light of van Doesburg's critical stand towards the Flemish nationalism in the Antwerp avant-garde, as a consciously anti-Flamingant counterpoint staged by van Doesburg in an attempt to counter the regular "Letters from Flanders" in the rivaling Dutch modernist review, *Het Getij*, by Jos. Léonard, a committed Flemish activist and close friend of van Ostaijen. These letters were intended as a chronicle of Belgian literature, though Flamingant colored; cf. Jos. Léonard, "Brief uit Vlaanderen," *Het Getij* 6, no. 1 (1921): 97-101. Whereas Léonard was skeptical about Dada, van Doesburg and his alter-ego Bonset firmly rejected nationalism in general and Flamingantism in particular; cf. I. K. Bonset, "Kritische Tesseracts," *De Stijl* 4, no. 12 (1921): 179; Cornelis Nelly Mesens [Theo van Doesburg], "...waar de maes K en Scheldwoorden vloeien," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 7.

50. See Jacques Marx, "Résurrection et les courants modernistes," in *Les Avant-gardes littéraires en Belgique*, 213-32; Leen, "In cirkels en kringen," 21-23; *Avant-garde in België*, 190-91.

51. See Dachy, "Portrait du poète en sa nacelle," 9-13.

52. Cited in Clément Pansaers, "Bulletin Politique. Prolégomènes" *Résurrection* 1, no. 1 (1917): 39.

53. Cited in Clément Pansaers, "Bulletin Politique. Camerades—il y de l'ouvrage," *Résurrection* 1, no. 2 (1917): 79.

54. Cited in Clément Pansaers, "Bulletin Politique," *Résurrection* 2, no. 6 (1918): 235.

55. *Ibid.*, 239.

56. Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 291.

57. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 298.

58. Pansaers, "Bulletin Politique. Camerades...," 77.

59. Pansaers, "Bulletin Politique. Prolégomènes," 39. In fact, the Belgian unitary state was transformed into a federation in 1989 to defuse the Flemish-Walloon conflict.

60. Clément Pansaers, "Bulletin Politique" in *Résurrection* 1, no. 3 (1917): 120.

61. See Clément Pansaers, "Autour de la littérature jeune allemande,"

Résurrection 1, no. 1 (1917), 3–16, and no. 2, 41–58.

62. Not only German expressionists came as members of the German occupation force. One of their longtime opponents, the author and critic Rudolf Alexander Schröder, also resided in Brussels during the German occupation. He became a censor for Brussels. For that reason, *Résurrection* was probably published in name in another town, Namen (Namur), not under Schröder's jurisdiction as a censor; see Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 296–97.

63. See *ibid.*, 293–96.

64. Pansaers, "Autour de la littérature jeune allemande (Suite et fin)," 54.

65. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 299.

66. See Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 49–78.

67. Guy Boscart, "Bois," *Résurrection* 1, no. 2 (1917): title page.

68. *Ibid.*, 51.

69. Guy Boscart, "Bois," *Résurrection* 1, no. 3 (1917): 85. In a way, this woodcut is contrasted by another one in the third issue of *Résurrection*. This woodcut shows an all-white couple not engaged in any sexual activity, but, instead, sitting side by side looking at a baby being nursed by the female figure (Guy Boscart, "Bois," *Résurrection* 1, no. 3 (1917): 96). This last image could be interpreted as a family portrait of Pansaers, his wife, and their son. Pansaers's son was born in the preceding year.

70. See Carl Einstein, *Negerplastik*, ed. Rolf-Peter Baacke (Berlin: Fannei & Waltz, 1992); Helmut Lethen, "Masken der Authentizität. Der Diskurs des 'Primitivismus' in Manifesten der Avantgarde," in *Manifeste: Intentionalität. Avant-Garde Critical Studies* 11, ed. Hubert van den Berg and Ralf Grüttemeier (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1998), 227–58.

71. On Pansaers's primitivism; see Joachim Schultz, "'Nackte Neger,' Kolonialismuskritik, Dadaismus?" in *Images de l'Africain de l'Antiquité au XXe siècle*, ed. Daniel Droixhe and Klaus H. Kiefer (Frankfort/Main/Berne/New York/Paris: Peter Lang, 1987), 177–90.

72. See Joachim Schultz, *Wild, Irre & Rein. Wörterbuch zum Primitivismus der literarischen Avantgarden in Deutschland und Frankreich zwischen 1900–1940* (Giessen: Anabas, 1995), 167–76.

73. See Carl Einstein, "Bébuquin" ed. Erich Kleinschmidt (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1985).

74. See Carl Einstein, "Bébuquin," trans. Clément Pansaers, *Résurrection* 1, no. 4 (1917): 132–36, 156–58; 2, no. 5 (1918): 176–77.

75. Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 20.

76. Clément Pansaers, "III. Epilogue," *Résurrection* 1, no. 3 (1917): 108.

77. Pansaers probably knew this manifesto in its German version in *Der Sturm*; cf. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Die futuristische Literatur. Technisches Manifest" and "Supplement zum technischen Manifest der Futuristischen Literatur," in Peter Demetz, *Worte in Freiheit. Der*

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italienische Futurismus und die deutsche literarische Avantgarde 1912–1934 (München/Zürich: Piper, 1990), 193–208.

78. See also Pansaers's later remark: "Marinetti has little invented," in Clément Pansaers, "Brève incursion dans le Blockhaus de l'Artiste," *Résurrection* 2, no. 6 (1918): 209.

79. Pansaers, "III. Epilogue," 107.

80. *Ibid.*, 108.

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. *Ibid.*, 109.

84. See Clément Pansaers, "Ici finit la sentimentalité," *Littérature*, no. 14 (1920): 18–22.

85. For Einstein's involvement in the German revolutionary council movement in 1918–19; cf. Dirk Heisserer, "Einsteins Verhaftung, Materialien zum Scheitern eines revolutionären Programms in Berlin und Bayern," *Archiv für die Geschichte des Widerstandes und der Arbeit*, no. 12 (1992): 41–78. It should be noted here that a conference on Einstein's stay in Brussels was scheduled by the "Carl-Einstein-Gesellschaft/Société Carl Einstein" after the completion of the manuscript for the present book in November 1998; cf. "Call for Papers: Carl Einstein in Brüssel—Dialoge über Grenzen," in *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Germanistenverbandes* 44 (1997), no. 4, 136–37.

86. See Dachy, "Portrait du poète," 9–13; Dachy, "Portrait des Dichters," 18–19.

87. Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 297.

88. Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc*, 10.

89. See Marc Reynebeau, *Dichter in Berlin. De ballingschap van Paul van Ostaïjen (1918–1921)* (Groot-Bijgaarden: Globe, 1995), 60.

90. See Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 202–03; cf. also the autobiographical narrative, "Einstein et Lamprido" on Pansaers's stay in Berlin; cf. *ibid.* 209–17.

91. In his role of editor of the reviews *Die Pleite* (The Bankruptcy) and *Der Blutige Ernst* (The Bloody Ernest, or The Bloody Earnest), published at the press of the Berlin Malik Verlag in 1919–20, Einstein was often regarded as a Dadaist himself, since many Berlin Dadaists contributed to these magazines; see Bergius, *Das Lachen Dadas*, 214–19. Einstein was, however, not favorable to Dada itself. When Pansaers distanced himself from Dada in 1921, he quoted Einstein's characterization of Dada as "a bad joke, that farts too long;" see Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 203; and Carl Einstein, *Werke*, vol. 2 (1919–1928), ed. Marion Schmid (Berlin/Vienna: Medusa, 1981), 202. In the program of the Malik Verlag, *Die Pleite* and *Der Blutige Ernst* were not presented as Dadaist publications either. For Dadaist publications, the Malik Verlag had a so-called Dada-Abteilung (Dada department). *Die Pleite* and *Der Blutige Ernst* were not published in this Dada-Abteilung. On their own pages, no explicit reference was made to Dada in either magazine.

92. Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, 102.

93. See Michel Huysseune, "Ça Ira! et l'expressionisme," *Les Avant-gardes littéraires en Belgique*, 233–40; see also *Avant-garde in België*, 177–79; Hadermann, Paul van Ostaijen, 30–31.

94. See Paul Neuhuys, "Mes souvenirs sur le Mouvement Dada," "Une mise au point qui n'est point de mise," "Secteur Dada," in *Plein Chant*, no. 39–40 (1988), 95–104; Pansaers's correspondence with van Essche in Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc*, 53–63.

95. Dachy, "Portrait du poète en sa nacelle," 13–14.

96. Neuhuys, "Quelques poètes," 56 and 64–66; cf. also Paul Neuhuys, "Quelques Poètes. V. - *La jeune poésie française en Belgique*. - Franz - Hellens. - Léon Chenoy. - Pierre Broodcorens, Charles Plisnier. - Paul Gustave Van Hecke. Arthur Pétronio," in *Ça Ira!* no. 15, (1921): 89.

97. Citation in *Avant-garde in België*, 198.

98. See Theo van Doesburg, "De nieuwe woordbeelding," *Het Getij* 6, no. 1 (1921): 83–89, and *Het Getij* 6, no. 2: 126.

99. See Bier, "Dada en Belgique," 305.

100. Neuhuys, "Quelques poètes IV," 65

101. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 64.

102. *Ibid.*, 61.

103. *Ibid.*, 68.

104. Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, 236.

105. See *ibid.*, 647–56.

106. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 81.

107. Neuhuys, "Quelques poètes IV," 64.

108. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 107.

109. *Ibid.*, 83 and 85.

110. *Ibid.*, 88.

111. Neuhuys, "Quelques poètes IV," 65.

112. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 88.

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*, 90.

115. *Ibid.*, 91.

116. See Dachy, "Dada Pansaers," 204; Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 113.

117. See *ibid.*, 204–05; Dachy, "Chronologie," 40–45.

118. See Dachy, "Dada Pansaers," 47–51; Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, 283–85.

119. See Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 192–94. "Leeward Islands" may be related to the exotic dimension of Pansaers's primitivism. At the same time, "Leeward Islands" points at the utopian and to some extent insular character of Dada. However, "Leeward Islands" also recalls Pansaers's birth place, Neerwinden. Both the French translation of Leeward Islands, (Iles sous le Vent) and the Dutch translation (Benedenwindse eilanden) can be translated literally in English as "islands below the wind" or "islands down wind." The place name Neerwinden also means "down winds," or "(be)low winds" in a literal translation (irrespective of its ety-

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mological origin). Pansaers's hint at his roots in the lower sections of the rural Flemish middle class could be read as an indication that the morality in which he was socialized, and to which he still adhered in matters of principle, such as the theft of a wallet, differed fundamentally from the Bohemian antimorality of the Parisian Dada circle.

120. Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 203. This interpretation is namely accepted by Marc Dachy. Dachy regards Pansaers's break with Dada as the start of the end of Dada as such, at least in Paris. Although the chronology of events seems to support Dachy's view, he overlooks the fact that other conflicts, in which Pansaers was no party, were already dormant for some time. The pivotal role of Pansaers in the dissolution of the Mouvement Dada seems wishful thinking.

121. See Pansaers, *Bar Nicanor*, 199.

122. *Ibid.*, 159-83.

123. *Ibid.*, 144.

124. Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, 346.

125. Dachy, "Dada Pansaers," 58-59.

126. Pansaers, *Sur un aveugle mur blanc*, 48.