**Dada (Literature)**

Against the carnage of World War I, Dada literatures resounded their anti-war protests in wildly playful poetry, song, aphorism, parody, satire, manifesto, essay and autobiography. Dadaist poets, who often doubled as painters (George Grosz, Mina Loy and Francis Picabia), singers (Emmy Hennings) and performance artists (Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven), reveled in radical non-conformity and provocation. Fiercely anti-bourgeois, these literary rebels aimed to shock their modernist readers, such as Ernest Hemingway, William Carlos Williams and Ezra Pound, who appropriated Dada’s radical élan, even as they outwardly dismissed the movement as irrational, excessive and uncontrolled.

The incoherent babbling of sound poetry was pioneered as a Dada trademark with the help of earlier antecedents in 1916 by the German pacifist and conscientious objector Hugo Ball (1886-1927), who stripped language of semantic meaning and syntactical structure, purposefully counteracting the bellow of the cannons. ‘In these phonetic poems we totally renounce the language that journalism has abused and corrupted’, explained Ball in his diary, after performing ‘Elefantenkarawane’ to a flabbergasted audience at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich (Ball 71). Hannover dadaist Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) likewise composed a *Sprechoper* titled *Ursonate* (1922-32; http://bit.ly/NBr83D), while the *emigrée* poet Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874-1927; known in New York as ‘the Baroness’) delivered a sensuously stuttering poetry by channeling sound through her own body (*Body Sweats* 180-84). With such blunt treatment of eros and desire, as evidenced in Schwitters’ anti-love poem ‘An Anna Blume’ (1919; To Eve Blossom [http://bit.ly/LPhEBa]) or the Baroness’s delirious ‘Cast-Iron Lover’ (1919) (*Body Sweats* 277-86), Dada anticipates Surrealism, as Hubert van den Berg observes (105-108). Moreover, recent scholarship has tracked the significance of a ‘Dada Ecopoetics’ (Gammel and Wrighton) in the work of Hans Arp, Freytag-Loringhoven and Schwitters, who used waste as raw materials for poetry, recycled advertisement slogans in poetry and blended nature and technology in presciently new hybrid forms.

With their highly flamboyant personalities, and their radical dismantling of boundaries of art and life, dadaists authored memorable diaries (Ball’s *Die Flucht aus der Zeit* [1927], *Flight out of Time*), memoirs (Huelsenbeck’s *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* [1974]), and other outrageous self-portraits. Romanian dadaist Tristan Tzara proffered a parody recipe in ‘How to make a Dada Poem’, instructing readers to procure a newspaper, scissors and a paper bag, to mix the cut-outs in the bag, and then pull them out one by one: ‘Copy consciously. / The poem will be like you’ (http://bit.ly/LcGbAw). Dadaists likewise expanded the plasticity of the essay form and fueled the polemics of the manifesto to the point of satirical absurdity; Tzara’s ‘Dada Manifesto’ (1918) ostensibly proclaimed Dada to be about nothing, whereas Hans Richter’s *Dada Art and Anti-Art* (1965) carefully historicized and nuanced the movement to ensure its legacy. Less favored was the novel, and it was not until 1929 that the ‘first Dada novel,’ *The Eater of Darkness* by Robert M. Coates (http://ti.me/L8Nubo), was published.

Perhaps because of its radical and self-referential élan, Dada literatures were published predominantly by small presses or in avant-garde magazines such as *The Little Review, 391*, *New York Dada, Der Dada* and *Littérature*. Many Dada writings lingered in archives to be published only posthumously, such as Freytag-Loringhoven’s *Body Sweats: The Uncensored Writings of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven* (2011), with Dada writings also anticipating late twentieth and early twenty-first century postmodern notions of identity.

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