Bart Philipsen

**van Hoddis, Jakob** (1887–1942)

**Jakob van Hoddis**, pseudonym and anagram of Hans Davidsohn, was a German poet, born in Berlin in a Jewish family. Suffering from schizophrenic attacks since his teenage years, he spent the larger part of his life after 1914 in mental hospitals and institutions. After unfinished studies in architecture, Greek and Philosophy, van Hoddis founded *Der Neue Club* (*The New Club*) in Berlin in 1909, together with his friends Kurt Hiller and Erwin Loewenson. The Club was an association of young artists and intellectuals, among them Georg Heym and Ernst Blaß, with a strong critical stance towards the old bourgeois culture and art; it would become the breeding ground of early Expressionism. Van Hoddis’ name and fame will forever be linked to one poem, “Weltende” (“End of the World”).The reading of the poem during one of the evenings of the Neopathetic Cabaret became an almost historical and symbolic event, as it expressed so poignantly the feelings of his generation at the dawn of the First World War. First published in 1911, the “Marseillaise of expressionist rebellion” (J. R. Becher) reappeared as the programmatic opening poem of Kurt Pinthus’ famous anthology of expressionist poetry *Menschheitsdämmerung* (The Dawn of Humanity, 1919). But the founder of Surrealism André Breton also included the poem in his Anthology of Black Humour (1940). In in a grotesque and ironic style, van Hoddis’ poem, consisting of only eight paratactic lines, evokes an apocalyptic ending of the modern metropolis and a miniature satire of bourgeois triviality. Van Hoddis was deported by the Gestapo in the spring of 1942 and probably killed in the Nazi extermination camp Sobibor.

List of works and further reading:

Regina Nörtemann (ed.) (2007): *Jakob van Hoddis.* *Dichtungen und Briefe*, Göttingen: Wallstein.

Helmut Hornbogen (1986, 2001): *Jakob van Hoddis. Die Odyssee eines Verschollenen*. Munich: Buch & Media.

Paratextual material

[Jakob Van Hoddis article (in English) by Darran Anderson - Laika Poetry Review, including a translation of *Weltende* and photos](http://laikapoetryreview.blogspot.com/2005/12/jakob-van-hoddis-and-neu-club.html) (via Wikipedia)