

Women of the European Avant-Garde

Paula K. Kamenish

*Mamas of*  
**DADA**



The University of South Carolina Press

© 2015 Paula K. Kamenish

Published by the University of South Carolina Press  
Columbia, South Carolina 29208

[www.sc.edu/uscpres](http://www.sc.edu/uscpres)

Manufactured in the United States of America

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Kamenish, Paula K., 1955–

Mamas of Dada : women of the European avant-garde / Paula K. Kamenish.  
pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-61117-468-7 (hardback)

1. Dadaism—Europe. 2. Women artists—Europe. 3. Women and the arts—Europe—History—20th century. I. Title.

NX456.5.D3K36 2015

700.82'09041—dc23

2014041368

## Contents

List of Illustrations vi

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xiii

- Introduction: The Problem with Dada 1
1. Emmy Hennings: From Cabaret Singer to the First Mama of Dada 10
  2. Gabrielle Buffet and Germaine Everling: Picabia's Cacodylic Eyes 37
  3. Céline Arnaud: Parisian Dada's Best-Kept Secret 66
  4. Juliette Roche: Dada Scandals and Scoundrels 94
  5. Hannah Höch: Expanding the Dada Network 122
  6. The Woman Dadaist: The Advantages of Being a Female Dadaist 150

Notes 169

Bibliography 187

Index 195

## Introduction

### *The Problem with Dada*

**O**f all forms of twentieth-century avant-garde, Dada is the most international in its adherents, the most interdisciplinary in its mediums, and for its short duration the most widely spread geographically. Nevertheless, despite its pervasive and diverse nature, it remains incomprehensible and unappetizing to most palates. For many, Dada is a bad taste in the mouth, a goalless, nihilist revolt situated among many avant-garde “-isms.” For some, however, Dada stands as a captivating marker in the history of literature and art.

Although there are some variations in the recorded history of the genesis of the Dada movement with conflicting stories about how the movement got its name, it began in earnest in 1916 and flourished in Western Europe through 1924. The first group called “Dada” formed in Zurich at Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball’s Cabaret Voltaire in February 1916. During the war-ravaged years, Dadaists proclaimed to seek authentic reality through the abolition of traditional culture and aesthetic forms. Stephen C. Foster has summarized the commonly accepted goals of the Dadaists: “Mounted out of a setting that no one could measure and that defied conventional contextualization—World War I, the ‘war of wars’—Dada committed itself to the deconstruction of lethal culture and its reconstruction according to more humane principles. Its success was constituted in the intensity

and scope of its critique. Its efforts to organize and network itself were designed to guarantee, as best Dada could, the dissemination of its critique."<sup>1</sup>

Dada's method of deconstruction took the form of provocative acts of rebellion through theater, dance, poetry recitations, and musical performances with elaborate stage settings and costumes, as well as paintings, sculptures, drawings, puppets, collages, and an array of poetry journals, flyers, posters, and manifestos.

### *The War Orphan*

At the beginning of the twentieth century, nations were redefining their borders in Europe and in their colonies. Living in close proximity to their adversaries, Europeans were dramatically touched by the conflicts that arose and were fought on their soil. During a war that ultimately left ten million dead and some twenty million wounded or mutilated, the expatriate group who settled in Zurich in 1915 and 1916 was composed of young writers and artists, both male and female. They came from an assortment of national, linguistic, economic, and cultural backgrounds, driven by a strong urge to revolt and to create.

Dada had some early manifestations in New York before 1915 with Duchamp, Picabia, Man Ray, and the Arensberg circle. (Duchamp's first ready-made *Bicycle Wheel* dates from 1913). Yet the movement was a child of pure European blood, born of Germanic-Latin ancestry. Its supporters sought an escape from the military, political, or societal restrictions of their European homes, and New York offered this freedom to those who could afford the voyage. Others found the neutrality of a Swiss wartime refuge necessary, and so they formed the first official Dada center in Zurich, featuring a lively cabaret, gallery, and literary journal.

This 1914–16 immigration caused great personal and financial loss for many in the generation born during the 1890s. One can only admire their initiative and resolve to desert the familiarity of one's country at a time of war and strong nationalistic sentiment to establish a new home in a "neutral land." This uprooting of intense young artists and writers, combined with the disappointment and disillusionment of their generation, inspired acts of revolt against the established authority and set the stage for Dada events.

The Dadaists of Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire expressed their angst as well as their periodic joie de vivre through evenings of cabaret performances that incorporated their varied talents in music, dance, singing, and acting. Hennings, a noted German singer and diseuse, and Ball, a reputable German dramatist, were joined in their performances by Tzara, Hans Arp, Täuber, Marcel Janco, Huelsenbeck, Adya Van Rees Dutilh, and Otto Van Rees. On a typical evening crazed audiences protested the loud jangling of piano keys; marionettes and hats recited poems; performers screamed simultaneous verses to the beat of a kettledrum; dancers demonstrated endless gymnastic exercises; chairs with words attached to them were arranged and rearranged to form static, visual poems.<sup>2</sup> Artistic expression

had crossed over into a realm that defied the reliable rules of decorum, logic, and order.

These antiaesthetic, antiform, antibourgeois artists and war protesters spread the rebellious spirit of Dada as they left Zurich after the war. Eventually Dada groups formed in Berlin, Cologne, Hannover, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Rome, Prague, the Netherlands, and beyond during the early years of the twentieth century. Each location cultivated its own flavor despite often sharing its participants with Dada groups in other places.

Berliner Dada formed with a certain anarchical flare driven by Huelsenbeck, Richter, Raoul Hausmann, Johannes Baader, George Grosz, John Heartfield, Wieland Herzfelde, and Otto Dix, among others. The group was known for the political radicalism of its publications, the militant satire of its paintings or collages, and events of brutal monstrosity such as the First International Dada Fair of 1920, which included a suspended effigy of a "Prussian Archangel" set against Höch's photomontages featuring the faces of actual government and military leaders clipped from the daily newspapers.<sup>3</sup>

The Cologne Dada group was inspired by the less acerbic spirit of Arp, coming from Zurich to meet at the home of the more radicalized Heinrich and Angelika Hoerle with "Dadamax" Max Ernst and Communist activist Johannes Theodor Baargeld. At the same time, Hannover Dada gathered around Schwitters, known for his sound poetry and Merzbau assemblages. Both groups interacted heavily with the Berliner Dadaists and excelled at producing collage pieces of political and cultural critique.

Meanwhile Parisian Dada, held firmly together by poets, was a literary Dada. Key figures (who later favored Surrealism) were André Breton, Philippe Soupault, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, and Arnauld. When Tzara and Picabia united the group under an umbrella of proliferating journals, Dada exploded in iconoclastic displays of exhibitions, stage shows of music and drama, competing manifestos, and new poetry publications. Dada soirees featured such absurdist plays as Tzara's *Gas Heart* with actors playing the roles of Eye, Mouth, Nose, Ear, Neck, and Eyebrow and audience members calling the police.

Individual Dadaists were constantly on the move in wartime Europe, forming subgroups in Barcelona and New York. Dada proved portable and adaptable. It traveled light, going on tour in the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia. It borrowed whatever elements it desired from other forms of the avant-garde (such as Cubism, Expressionism, Constructivism, and Futurism) and transformed them according to its needs and perspective. It was open, inviting, and nondogmatic. Dada by definition was an experiment, unstable, without rules, and constantly reshaping itself. Having survived the war, Dada followed more individualized paths to MERZ or De Stijl<sup>4</sup> or was transforming into other movements such as Surrealism by 1924.

When studying the origins of Dada, some scholars emphasize the historical period and the significance of Zurich as a geographical crossroads. The prevailing opinion on the genesis of the movement implies that Dada activities began in Zurich because it became the meeting place of artists with a common sentiment against World War I. It is true that without the attitude of revolt against rising militarism and against the bourgeois values the war represented, there would have been no spark to ignite the Dada movement. The atmosphere of Zurich in 1916 certainly did create a politically neutral haven that encouraged a nonconformist display of artistic expression through its cabaret and gallery life. However, one must question how a supposedly antiwar protest movement could outlive the actual military conflict by at least four years.

There was at work a broader revolt against a way of life, a form of government, and the sustaining values of the dominant classes. A generation's exasperation was brewing against society at large. It took the form of behaviors that shocked and sometimes provoked riots. Its creative products were labeled irreverent, dangerous, and degenerate. Although Hamid Dabashi refers to the recent protests of Aliaa Magda Elmahdy and Golshifteh Farahani,<sup>5</sup> his 2012 description of such defiance equally defines Dadaist acts of rebellion when he points out the "staged formal destruction that disrupts the 'normality' of socializing norms for a deliberate pause."<sup>6</sup> There must be a public platform, a tangible display forced on the eye of society in order to startle and affect the viewer. Zurich performances of nonsensical sound poems emitted from anonymously masked faces and punctuated by heavy drums accompanying incomprehensible dance movements challenged the eye, the ear, and (for some) the stomach. Revulsion is a response, and physical reaction forces the mind's attention. Just because the frustration results in "art," the element of danger in the political and cultural protest is not reduced. When taking a stand against a regime that espouses the mechanized consumerism of war and uses the bodies of the young as its currency, the transgression of the rebellious act necessarily exposes and attacks the governing culture. More than any previous manifestation of the avant-garde, Dada remained offensively antagonistic to society, and that was enough to draw condemnation or attempts at obliteration.<sup>7</sup>

But clearly Dada relied on more than hostile acts to voice its war protests and political stances. Its identifiable sarcastic tone is built on the humor, irony, audacity, and youth of its participants, who nourished each other's imaginations. One outlandish joke in "DADA—Dialogue Between a Coachman and a Swallow," mocks the entire enterprise while it simultaneously advertises one of its publications. In the dialogue Huelsenbeck (the German-speaking coachman) and Tzara (the French-speaking swallow) feed off each other's words to poke fun at those who would nail down a definition of Dada:

Huelsenbeck (coachman): The sky is bursting open into little scraps of cotton wool. The trees are walking about with swollen bellies.

Tzara (swallow): Because the first edition of the *Dada Review* comes out on 1 August 1916. Cost 1Fr. Editorial and administration: Spiegelgasse 1, Zurich. It has nothing to do with the war and is an attempt at a modern international activity hi hi hi hi.

Huelsenbeck (coachman): Oh yes, I saw that . . . Dada emerged from the body of a horse as a basket of flowers. Dada bust like a boil from the chimney of a skyscraper, oh yes, I saw Dada . . . as the embryo of the purple crocodile flew his cinnabar tail.<sup>8</sup>

What, then, is the definition Dada? Is it what makes the spring arrive? Is it a new international experiment organized by a coachman and a swallow with acute linguistic challenges? Does it have more to do with fanciful flowers, skyscrapers, and a purple crocodile than it does with the cold reality of a world war?

By looking at the products of the Dadaists it is clear that the distinctive artistic qualities of Dada—the irreverent, provocative, nonsensical language and images evidenced in the movement's multidisciplinary manifestations—result from something other than just the political neutrality of its birthplace. Dada's birth, shaping, and reshaping are indebted to the outrageously inventive imaginations of the individual men and women who conceived, nurtured, and sustained the movement in a tumultuous world climate. The particular talents offered by the members of the ever-expanding group and the mixture of their personalities made possible the spontaneous and varied forms of Dada expression.

#### *The Hole in the Middle of Dada*

In their unifying goal to tear down a "lethal culture" that was found lacking and create a platform on which to test the accumulating and competing voices of the avant-garde, Dadaists relied on their unique abilities and followed their personal inclinations. Some painted and exhibited, others wrote, danced, acted, made collages, or music. Each talent contributed to Dada's objectives.

Involved in these endeavors were the most recognizable participants:

Tristan Tzara	Man Ray
Hugo Ball	Richard Huelsenbeck
Raoul Hausmann	Marcel Janco
Paul Dermée	Christian Schad
Paul Eluard	Hans Richter
Arthur Cravan	Marcel Duchamp

Otto van Rees	El Lissitzky
Walter Mehring	Johannes Baargeld
Wieland Herzfelde	Kurt Schwitter
Jean Crotti	Hans Arp
Philippe Soupault	Francis Picabia
John Heartfield	George Grosz
Rudolf Schlichter	Otto Dix
Max Ernst	Walter Serner
Georg Scholz	André Breton
Heinrich Hoerle	Johannes Baader
Louis Aragon	Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes

A generous list of less known contributors includes

Alice Bailly	Käthe Wulff
Marietta di Monaco	Ella Bergmann
Greta Knutson	Käte Steinitz
Maria d'Arezzo	Suzanne Duchamp
Katherine Dreier	Gala Eluard
Jane Heap	Mabel Dodge
Renée Dunan	Isadora Duncan
Valeska Gert	Emmy Hennings
Claire Walther	Käthe Brodnitz
Hannah Höch	Germaine Everling
Katharine Nash Rhoades	Florine Stettheimer
Juliette Roche	Adya van Rees Dutilh
Agnes Ernst Meyer	Margaret Anderson
Louise Stevens Arensberg	Germaine Albert-Birot
Alexandra Exter	Erika Deetjen
Sophie Täuber	Maya Chrusecz
Marie Laurencin	Angelika Hoerle
Mary Wigman	Meret Oppenheim
Gabrielle Buffet	Til Brugman
Marthe Tour-Donas	Liubov Popova
Bernice Abbott	Louise Norton
Adrienne Monnier	Marguerite Buffet
Clara Tice	Varvara Stepanova
Nina Naj	Mina Loy
Céline Arnauld	Sonia Delaunay
Florence Henri	Nelly van Doesburg
Natalia Goncharova	Djuna Barnes

Edith Olivié  
Olga Rosanowa  
and Else Von Freytag-Loringhoven

Beatrice Wood  
Claire Goll

In one contemporary directory of Dadaists, "Quelques Présidents et Présidentes" (composed by male members of the group and printed in the February 1920 issue of the journal *Dada*) there are seventy-five names arranged alphabetically. This roll represents a liberal grouping of individuals who were in some way involved in or supportive of the Dada philosophy. The presence of most names is predictable: Duchamp, Hausmann, Ribemont-Dessaignes, and Tzara. Others, such as Igor Stravinsky, are surprising. Yet all these male affiliates are easily recognizable to avant-garde scholars. Few art and literary scholars, however, will know all fifteen women listed in the roster: d'Arezzo, Arnauld, Bailly, Gabrielle and Marguerite Buffet, Chrusecz, Dodge, Duchamp, Everling, "Mina Lloyd" (Loy), "Miss Norton" (Louise), Olivié, Rhoades, Täuber, and Wigman.

Despite their documented participation in Dada events, most of the "Présidentes" are less easily identified than their male counterparts. Even such a well-edited contemporary source as *Dada*, either cannot spell correctly or manage to list Loy under her published name instead of a name used by her husband (Arthur Cravan, also known as Fabian Avenarius Lloyd). Misspelling of their names was a problem suffered by other female Dadaists. Höch's was spelled incorrectly at the Berlin International Dada Fair and the 1921 Vortragsabend, and Arnauld's is misspelled in volume 7 of *Dada*. In one history of Dada, Arnauld's name is misspelled "Arnaud" and mistakenly identified as a pseudonym for her husband, leading unsuspecting readers to doubt her actual existence.<sup>9</sup> Duchamp's name is perhaps recognized because of her brother Marcel's reputation, and a few people recall her work in conjunction with her husband, Jean Crotti, with whom she created the Dada offshoot called TABU; yet her own daring work made her a crucial link between New York and Parisian Dada, especially among visual artists. Until recently Täuber's reputation was tied to her husband's, but with her distinctive talents in sculpture, textiles, and dance, she helped solidify the establishment of Zurich Dada, even at the risk of losing her teaching position at the School of Applied Arts. Neglecting to note the many contributions of female Dadaists when compiling a history of this manifestation of the European avant-garde only muddles the picture. The works and words of the other half of Dada's participants, their essential contributions to the propagation of this literary and artistic movement through its cabarets of music, poetry and dance, its literary journals, and its art exhibitions, are the missing pieces in the story of Dada.

#### *Dada's Missing Pieces*

While many male artists and poets produced easily retrievable records in the form of manifestos, letters, poetry, plays, posters, canvases, or histories of Dada, many

female contributors to Dada expressed themselves through the visual or performing arts, leaving behind relatively few physical objects to mark their participation. Looking merely at what men published in the form of personal manifestos, for example, one finds a profusion of confrontational and contradictory texts that document the period from their perspectives. Between the founding of the Cabaret Voltaire on February 5, 1916, and the closing of the second great forum at Zurich's Galerie Dada on June 1, 1917, there were at least four published manifestos by Ball, Tzara, and Huelsenbeck. In Berlin, Dada debuted with Huelsenbeck's 1918 manifesto and the 1919 publication of *Der Dada*, and in Paris one need only look at 1920 for a surge of theories and declarations appearing in every French Dada publication. Among these, one is hard pressed to uncover a manifesto or history penned by a female Dadaist. This fact accounts for the single-gendered recording of the group's activities that has biased history. Relying on the male-authored discourses of Ball, Huelsenbeck, Tzara, Breton, and Richter to tell the story of Dada reveals only half the picture. The only way to present a fair and accurate record of Dada activity, its products, and its contributors is to take into account the testimony and products of all parties. Perhaps then the puzzle of Dada will be more easily deciphered.

Zurich Laban dancer Suzanne Perrottet's testimony "Ich war auch dabei" (I Was Also Around) is emblematic of the long-accepted state of affairs. This unpublished memoir, alongside Roche's, holds keys to defining Dada. Clearly women's renditions of the Dada years add a new dimension to the extensive body of contemporary male-authored texts that tell the story from a (more often than not) jealously competitive perspective. Huelsenbeck, Richter, Mehring, Tzara, Breton, Ball, Arp, Picabia and their intentional histories of the period do not supply the missing pieces of Dada. These records mention the contributions of the female members of Dada briefly, but usually do not provide details on their lives, works, or networking methods that led to the spread of Dada.

The women's narrations of events confirm that Dada was a collaborative and gender inclusive movement that grew through contacts between individuals. In Zurich, Dada owed a great deal to the painting and tapestry work of Bailly and van Rees-Dutilh; it relied on Hennings's voice and seductive presence; it was enriched by Täuber's and Hennings's marionettes and their dances with members of the Laban school, Mary Wigman, Maya Chruszcz, Suzanne Perrottet, Claire Walther, and Jeanne Rigaud. In Germany Dada was enriched by the photomontages and marionettes of Höch; it exhibited the paintings and drawings of Henri and Hoerle; and it collaborated and traveled with Höch and Brugman to Holland. In France, Dada was costumed by Delaunay and satirized by Roche; it was analyzed by Everling and Knutson, painted by Duchamp, and published by Buffet and Arnauld.

Dada was more than a brief and irreverent revolt against the war, the bourgeoisie, and existing moral and artistic codes. For eight years Dadaists remained true to their goals: to question, to tear down, and to rebuild art in every form.

Dada was neither steeped in theory, nor directed by a single individual. Perhaps the lack of a dominant manifesto expressing a unified declaration of intent and a strong central leadership to enforce its goals caused Dada to be short-lived compared to, for example, the more strictly structured Surrealist movement. But Dada by its nature was a paroxysm, a quick and spontaneous act. Too much deliberation, too clear a strategy, and the spirit of Dada would be destroyed, as both Ball and Picabia warned their colleagues. Dada offered to its unusually diverse and collaborative members new ways of creating via live performances and open soirees. By employing cabaret and theater, the most interactive forms of artistic expression, in addition to provocative and subversive exhibitions, Dada artists immediately reached a curious public that was shocked, exasperated, and even insulted, but at times it was attracted to and gradually seduced by Dada's irreverent creations.

## 1. Emmy Hennings

### *From Cabaret Singer to the First Mama of Dada*

Emmy Hennings (1885–1948) has been acknowledged by most revisionist scholars today as the cofounder of Dada's first home: the Cabaret Voltaire. But it is important to see this accomplishment and her further nurturing of Dada in a larger context. To understand Hennings and her involvement with Zurich Dada, one must first recognize her paradoxical nature, one that caused her to vacillate between two contradictory lives: the criminal and the pious. Hennings was forced to see herself as both sinner and penitent, and she showed unease with both roles. She was the ultimate nightclub performer, spending half her life in smoke-filled cabarets, captivating male audiences both on and off stage with her body and her voice. But her later autobiographical records of her earlier years are so deeply imprinted with her religious conversion that catching a glimpse of Hennings during the Dada period can be challenging. For a true portrait of the Dadaist Hennings, researchers must rely on a combination of sources and read behind her writings. Clues to her bohemian life appear in her early poetry; the chilling prose piece *Gefängnis* (Prison), which describes her stay in prison; her autobiographical *Ruf und Echo* (Call and Echo); and the accounts of other

Dadaists, such as Ball, Arp, Perrottet, and Huelsenbeck, who bore witness to her avant-garde performances and lifestyle.

#### *The Lure of the Cabaret*

Emma Cordsen was born in Flensburg, on the German border with Denmark, on January 17, 1885. Her German-Danish parents, Ernst Friedrich Matthias and Anna Dorothea, were fifty and forty-two years old when their only child was born. Her father had been a helmsman on a sailing ship but later worked as a wharf-side rig maker. From his daughter's memoir it is known that he used to build model boats in his free time and that young Emmy used to hem the sails. The imagery of ships and of the wandering life at sea recurs in Hennings's writing and seems to prophesy the instability of her itinerant life.

I love the white, loose  
Like sun, sea and wind,  
Because to the homeless  
They're sisters and angels<sup>1</sup>

Ich liebe die Weißen, losen  
Wie Sonne, Meer und Wind,  
Weil sie der Heimatlosen  
Schwestern und Engel sind . . .

Emmy became one of these "homeless" early in her life. She left her parents' household and, at the age of fifteen, began to earn her living as a maid, kitchen helper, and washwoman. At the same time, she made her first amateur stage appearances. At age seventeen she married a typesetter named Josef Paul Hennings and gave birth to a son. Leaving the baby with her mother in Flensburg, Hennings joined an itinerant theater troupe and traveled alongside her husband, who abandoned her after a few weeks. Soon afterward, she learned of the death of her child and that she was again pregnant. She chose not to look for her husband, but to go instead with a theater troupe to Schlesien, where her daughter, Annemarie, was born in Penzig. Once again Hennings left the baby with her mother and returned to the theater, where, according to her daughter's memoir, Hennings felt in her element.<sup>2</sup> By age twenty-three she had become a cabaret performer (Vortragskünstlerin), usually singing ballads and songs on request from seven in the evening to three in the morning. A stanza of her poem "Nach dem Kabarett" (After the Cabaret) describes how she saw her life at the time:

I go home in the early morning.  
The clock strikes five, it's already brightening,



But the light still burns at the inn.  
 The cabaret is finally over.  
 In a corner children cower,  
 To the market farmers already ride,  
 To the church go the quiet and old,  
 From the belfry solemnly ring the bells,  
 And a whore with wild curls  
 Still wanders, sleepless and cold.<sup>3</sup>

Ich gehe morgens früh nach Haus.  
 Die Uhr schlägt fünf, es wird schon hell,  
 Doch brennt das Licht noch im Hotel.  
 Das Cabaret ist endlich aus.  
 In einer Ecke Kinder kauern,  
 Zum Markte fahren schon die Bauern,  
 Zur Kirche geht man still und alt.  
 Vom Turme läuten ernst die Glocken,  
 Und eine Dirne mit wilden Locken  
 Irrt noch umher, übernächtigt und kalt.

The poem is descriptive of her life as a cabaret entertainer, not judgmental. Nevertheless her tone is clearly somber and uninviting. The poem suggests that loneliness results from living on a schedule that isolates the poet from the activities of the world around her. She sacrifices much to try to find success as a performer. In her autobiographical poetry Hennings often reflected on the costs, both physical and moral. In fact Hennings supplemented her meager music-hall earnings with work as peddler, nightclub hostess, and occasional prostitute as she traveled in Munster, Cologne, Frankfurt, and Hannover. "Nach dem Kabarett" alludes to her underworld occupations as it contrasts women of the night with workers and worshippers of the morning.

Still earning her living in cabarets and honkytonks, Hennings is said to have traveled as far as Russia, according to her daughter. She settled for a while in Berlin, where she entered the underworld through her acquaintance with artist and writer John Höxter. Through him she met Ferdinand Hardekopf, described by Höxter as the darkest of all morphine addicts. In 1910 Hennings traveled with Hardekopf to France, where she contracted typhus and turned to Catholicism. Returning to Germany, the young cabaret artist worked at the *Simplicissimus* nightclub in Munich and came into contact with poets Georg Heym, Frank Wedekind, and Franz Werfel, as well as other members of the Expressionist movement. Hennings continued to work on stage in Berlin and came to be known as the Danish Futurist. In what seems to be an action inconsistent with her previous life

choices, Hennings was then baptized in the Catholic church of St. Ludwig on July 14, 1910.

Wavering again between her religious conversion and the lure of the criminal world, Hennings returned to Paris with Hardekopf in 1913. She had just published her first poem, which suggests the difficulties she faced in her relationship with him and the life he represented. Hennings's layered imagery evokes a theme of drug-induced abandon in the poem "Aether" (Ether),<sup>4</sup> which was published in the August 14, 1912, issue of *Aktion* and then again in her 1913 collection *Die Letzte Freude* (The Last Joy).

Hennings's early poetry is full of expressionistic imagery that reflects the events (imagined or real) of her life and times. For example the short poem "Aether" produces complex hallucinogenic aural, visual, and tactile images. The word "schlägt" in the first line "An die Scheiben schlägt der Regen" (rain strikes the windowpanes) effectively uses sound imagery to capture a quotidian slapping sound that might awaken a sleeper, while "Eine Blume leuchtet rot" (A flower lights up red) evokes otherworldly characteristics by its ambiguity, as a red blossom is lit by an unknown source, be it from within or without. Awakened by a cool draft, the speaker is disoriented, seeing the outside world through rain-smeared glass that is unnaturally tinted by the diffused red light. Her exhaustion and confusion cause the sleeper to ask: "Wach ich, oder bin ich tot?" (Am I awake or dead?). Such an ontological question in the middle of the night suggests a drugged state. Meanwhile, the fifth line, "Eine Welt liegt weit, ganz weit" (A world lies far, far away) underlines the isolation of the speaker as "Eine Uhr schlägt langsam vier" (A clock strikes slowly four). The word "schlägt" connects the sound of rain from the first line to the tolling of bells, but the measuring of time is perceived in unsettling slow motion. The sleeper is suspended in her etherized trance. Ironically the slow ringing of the hour draws the sleeper from her hallucination so that she can return to comforting dreams, implied by falling back into the security and oblivion of her lover's arms.

This poem, a kind of waking dream, ends with her descent back to earth, as "aether" can mean either the narcotic that causes sleep or an ethereal realm. In its Greek origin, "aether" refers to the upper skies, where the stars are suspended and the gods live. In the poem the narrator's moment of wakefulness paradoxically brings the sleeper to a higher, "etherized" dream state, to an unconventional moment of salvation. Hennings's life of contradictions is encapsulated in this poem, which combines drug-induced hallucination with heavenly deliverance.

In 1913 Hennings published more poems, appeared in Berlin cabarets, and sang and danced in productions at Budapest's Royal Orfeum. While in Munich she met her future partner and husband, Hugo Ball, at the *Café Simplicissimus* in the autumn of 1913. One of Ball's biographers suggests that Hennings had a mysterious past that included a suspected homicide, but the basis of this

accusation remains unclear.<sup>5</sup> Rumors frequently spread through the World War I emigrant community to which Ball and Hennings belonged, and people's pasts were often embroidered with questionable adventures that they seemed reluctant to deny. In Hennings's case, she probably benefited from and thus cultivated a mysterious air as part of her stage persona. There is no doubt, however, that the young nightclub singer lived on the fringes of society and was frequently on the wrong side of the law as evidenced in her later arrests and incarcerations.

Ball frequented the Café Simplicissimus because of his interest in the lively Hennings, who was ten years younger than her future husband. He begged her to repeat certain songs for him, such as "Liebe ist Leben" (Love Is Life), and he asked for some of her poetry. By this time she had produced several hand-copied volumes with her own watercolor illustrations, bound in silk.

As seen in her handcrafted books and in her published 1913 collection, *Die Letzte Freude*, Hennings's early writing already uses the dark imagery for which she became known. In an excerpt of a poem dedicated to Hardekopf, the speaker wanders through the night and thinks of her missing lover:

Alone I wander through the nights and think of you  
Sometimes I see a coat that resembles yours.  
And then I softly call your name.  
My heart stands still with grief.<sup>6</sup>

Einsam irr ich durch die Nächte und denke an dich.  
Manchmal sehe ich einen Mantel, der deinem gleicht.  
Und dann rufe ich dich leise beim Namen.  
Mein Herz steht still vor Trauer.

The sense of loss and its resultant loneliness in these words are held together by the simple image of the overcoat, which is then strengthened by the recurring image of the speaker walking alone each night and whispering the name of the one she longs for. A heart that stands still with the grief of loss suggests her torment with the double meaning of the German "still" as "stopped" and "quiet." The choice of "Trauer" suggests that the loved one could have been lost through death, misfortune, or abandonment, while "Mein Herz steht still" allows the ambiguity of a resigned acceptance of one's grief, or the implication of the narrator following her lover in death, perhaps metaphorically. The theme of loss echoes throughout Hennings's work; her focus perpetually comes to rest on what is missing, what is lost to her, the emptied space, and her isolation. This kind of loneliness that haunted her for years made her search out and welcome the community of artists she later found in the Dada group.

The poetic excerpt, chosen for inclusion in Gisela Brinker-Gabler's two-volume encyclopedic study of women in German literature (*Deutsche Literatur*

*von Frauen*) by the chapter's editor, Ruth Wolf, is poetically richer than Wolf's commentary suggests. She merely credited the verses with illustrating the freer feelings about love that many women shared through poetry during this period. Wolf's commentary misses the mark, however; Ball reported in his diary, *Flucht aus der Zeit* (Flight Out of Time), that the bilingual Hennings thought the German language was poor in words of tenderness and love. She found Danish to be infinitely richer, and so she would presumably not choose to compose love poems in German. By seeing the verse purely as a love poem, Wolf has overlooked Hennings's artistic skill in capturing an everyday image (a familiar overcoat in the distance) and transforming it into a universally understood symbol of torment. The poem provides concise, stark, and personal images that evoke an unmistakably somber tone and an enigmatic theme of loss in what would otherwise be a simple sentimental verse. Hennings's dark and secret poetry is a personal expression of a kind of solitude that seems in contrast to, but is actually a consequence of, the extroverted life she found in the theaters and nightclubs.

Owing in part to Hennings's extensive experience and alluring stage presence, Ball found himself offering her the leading female role in the play he was to direct for the Munich Kammerspiele, saying "I knew it from the beginning. No one else can be considered for the role. Only you, you are it."<sup>7</sup> The young couple arranged to meet in Munich's Englischen Garten to read Leonid Andrejew's *Das Leben des Menschen* (The Life of Men); Ball took the role of the man while Hennings read the role of the woman. Hennings's autobiographical commentary on the dramatic discourse of the woman offers a glimpse into how she viewed her role as Ball's life partner and as a member of the avant-garde. It also gave her the title of her autobiography, *Ruf und Echo: Mein Leben mit Hugo Ball*, published in 1953: "She speaks as if she has no words of her own, often repeats the words of the man, without seeming monotone. It is like a call and echo. If the echo were not there, then the man would hardly hear his own voice. It's as if he hears himself only through the woman, and so his words flow pleasurably back to him. It is like music in a still night. The play of the man is transformed into that of the woman, the melody of the two beings flows through each other like one sound embracing the other, and the flowing harmony of the play is indescribably beautiful."<sup>8</sup>

Couples who collaborate on successful artistic projects often share a "call and echo" relationship. Hennings longed to regard her aesthetic relationship with Ball in such terms, perhaps as an alternative to the chaotic, itinerant life she was living. It remains to be seen if this was indeed a valid description of her role as an artist. Was her primary function to allow Ball to "hear his own voice" through hers? Her writings and her role in the Dada group reveal the answer.

Hennings's description of herself as Ball's echo also makes a point that can be applied to the Dadaists in Zurich and to other aesthetic movements in general. In each group, there are outspoken members (such as Tzara, Huelsenbeck, or Breton) who animate the activities and provide the much-needed publicity that

brings the movement to the eyes and ears of its spectators. There are also the less commanding collaborators (such as Hennings) who actively participate without leading. Without the important "echo" that the quieter members of an artistic or literary group provide, the more verbose partners would be speaking to themselves, without the benefit of the reflective gaze and echoing voice within the group that allows them to see, hear, critique, find direction, and put into context their artistic and literary products. Hennings's insightful commentary is applicable to the role played by many of the women and the less garrulous men of the avant-garde. They served as important echoes to the louder members, and their "echoes" often took the form of their own art and poetry, or valuable records and reviews of events.

As a dancer, poet, and cabaret singer in prewar Munich, Hennings participated in several Expressionist theatrical and cabaret evenings. She was friends with Expressionist poets and collaborated on publications such as *Die Aktion* and *Revolution*. One of her poems appeared in *Der Mistral* (1913), an anthology of lyric poetry, and several of her new poems were published in the October 1913 issue of *Die Neue Kunst* alongside works by Jakob van Hoddis, member of the "New Club" circle of early Expressionists. During this time Hennings also met and worked with Huelsenbeck, a future Berlin Dadaist.

Hennings's acting career and Ball's theatrical projects were soon abandoned when the outbreak of war closed the Kammerspiele. In 1914 Ball volunteered for military service but was refused for medical reasons. After a short visit to the war in Belgium, he moved to Berlin to work as an editor for the illustrated newspaper *Zeit im Bild*. Hennings joined him in the capital just after her release from a six-week prison sentence, allegedly for forging passports. It is possible that she was involved, along with fellow writer and future Dadaist Walter Serner, in the military desertion of Expressionist Franz Jung in December 1914. There is evidence of Hennings's other imprisonments, before and after this incident. In a letter to pacifist journalist Kurt Tucholsky, theater critic Siegfried Jacobsohn wrote that Hennings received a six-month sentence because, out of love for Hardekopf, "she walked the streets, and, at his suggestion, stole from clients."<sup>9</sup> An August 6, 1914, journal entry by Erich Mühsam, the anarchist poet who himself was not a stranger to prison sentences, supports this hypothesis, saying that he went to visit Hennings in prison, where she was being held on larceny charges.<sup>10</sup> Munich registration documents record that Hennings was again imprisoned for about a month (September 20 to October 19, 1914). It is believed that Hennings was returned to prison at the end of the year and at the beginning of 1915 for small infractions. These periods of incarceration had a lasting effect on her health and her writing.

Moving away from her Expressionist friends and their frequently harmful influence, Hennings left Germany with Ball to live in Zurich in May 1915. At first the couple lived in abject poverty as unregistered aliens, selling all their

possessions and scavenging for food. Hennings returned to drug use and prostitution. In despair Ball attempted to commit suicide. An October 1915 entry in Ball's *Flucht aus der Zeit* refers to the vaudeville troupe Flamingo, which he and Hennings joined to avoid starvation. According to Hennings's memoir, Ball sent her into the club Hirschen because they thought that a performer there might be willing to purchase Ball's tuxedo jacket. He waited outside for her to call him if the entertainers were interested in buying it. When she did not return, he walked inside and found her in a silver lamé dress and feeling quite at home, auditioning for a cabaret job.

With Flamingo the couple traveled to Basel but soon returned to Zurich. Hennings moved into the Goldenen Stern in Bellevueplatz, where she found time to read and write. It was at this time that she might have begun work on *Gefängnis*, her autobiographical account of her imprisonment. After December 1915 Hennings began working with Ball at the Cabaret Maxim in Zurich; she sang, and he played piano.

When Henning's mother died in March 1916, Hennings's nine-year-old daughter joined her in Zurich. This was the first time she was able or obliged to take on the role of parent. With the added responsibility of looking after her child came the stress and guilt associated with combining motherhood and a professional life. Hennings found escape through performance, poetry, and possibly drug use.

Ball's journals reveal that he had also been experimenting with narcotics just prior to 1916. During this period Hennings published a bleak poem titled "Morfin" (Morphine), which describes how she and Ball "float groundless through life." It is possible that her poems record her own narcotic-induced visions or those of Ball, who often told Hennings his dreams and asked her for explanations of them. Curiously enough Hennings reported in *Ruf und Echo* that, as a child, she was not allowed to tell her dreams in her parents' house, but "Hugo and I sometimes dreamed so vividly that we often told each other our dreams, like two people who are so close that they share with each other all their experiences."<sup>11</sup> She wondered, however, if telling dreams was healthy, because some dreams were better not shared when they could hurt someone. Perhaps they, like drug hallucinations, were better turned into poems.

During this pre-Dada phase of her life as Hennings strove to be a stage artist and poet, she was already part of the counterculture. But the threatening life choices she made led to chaos, despair, and misery. She lived perilously close to the edge of illness and incarceration. Soon wartime Zurich allowed her to find herself among new artistic influences as young, like-minded artists joined the exiled and marginalized immigrants at a new cabaret.

#### *The Lean Dada Years*

Although some sources neglect to mention Hennings's contribution to its foundation, the Cabaret Voltaire is certainly the child of both Ball and Hennings. In



Emmy Hennings.  
Photograph courtesy  
of the Benziger Archiv,  
Museum Fram, Einsie-  
deln, Switzerland.

February 1916 the pair began the cabaret in the Holländischen Meierei at Spiegelgasse 1, the address of the first center of European Dada. Ball recorded in his journal that among those present were Tzara, Janco, and Arp. A few days later Huelsenbeck, who had worked with Hennings and Ball on the revue *Die Aktion*, joined the group. Not long after came Friedrich Glauser and Serner, who had been actively involved with the Expressionist publication *Die Aktion* and with *Sirius*, which had featured the work of Arp. This group was joined in their Dada activities by the dancer and multimedia artist Sophie Täuber, artists Otto Van Rees and Adya Van Rees Dutilh, and poet-painter Francis Picabia during his brief Swiss sojourn. A network of avant-garde artists was forming around the talented cabaret couple.

Despite Huelsenbeck's assertion "There were almost no women in the cabaret. It was too wild, too smoky, too way out,"<sup>12</sup> women's contributions were fundamental to Dada stage entertainment. The implication is that the cabaret nightlife

was morally corrupting and no place for women, but Hennings, Dutilh, Täuber, and a company of Laban dancers<sup>13</sup> were active and important participants in Dada soirees. Dutilh's feminine reputation was safe because of her status as a married woman and the ever-constant presence of her husband. Täuber was respected because she was an art professor and one of the only legally and gainfully employed of the bunch, while the Laban dancers participated as a group. Hennings would have been seen as the only morally suspect woman of the cabaret—a financially unstable immigrant and unmarried mother who had served several prison sentences and made a living off pleasing men, both on and off stage. In spite of these shortcomings, or perhaps because of them, Hennings was able to draw audiences to the unorthodox performances of the Dada group.

To these avant-garde adventures, Hennings contributed her charming dancing and singing talents, made costumes and hand puppets, and recited her poems and the works of other writers. For example Hennings is listed in the program for the first public Dada soiree, the July 14, 1916, Autoren-Abend at the Zunfthaus zur Waag, as reciting a prose piece, "Zwei Frauen" (Two Women), and four of her poems (including "Aether") and performing three Dada dances to the music of Ball with masks made by Marcel Janco. She also took part in a "Cubistischer Tanz" (Cubist dance) with Ball, Huelsenbeck, and Tzara. Arp's description of the evening in his "Dadaland" gives us a glimpse of Hennings: "On the stage of a gaudy, motley, overcrowded tavern there are several weird and peculiar figures representing Tzara, Janco, Ball, Huelsenbeck, Madame Hennings, and your humble servant. Total pandemonium. The people around us are shouting, laughing, and gesticulating. Our replies are sighs of love, volleys of hiccups, poems, moos, and miaowing of medieval Bruitists. Tzara is wiggling his behind like the belly of an Oriental dancer. Janco is playing an invisible violin and bowing and scraping. Madame Hennings, with a Madonna face, is doing the splits. Huelsenbeck is playing away nonstop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano, pale as a chalky ghost. We were given the honorary title of Nihilists."<sup>14</sup>

Hennings was very much a part of this circuslike atmosphere and, with her many years of professional cabaret experience, she was decidedly a great asset to the entertainment value of the Dada programs, attracting the praise of newspaper reviewers. Her small physical appearance contrasted with her strong artistic gifts and assertive personality. She was described by her contemporaries, including Hermann Hesse, as original and bold.<sup>15</sup> Even Huelsenbeck admitted in *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer* that she recited aggressive poems powerfully, something he did not think her capable of.<sup>16</sup> Laban dancer Suzanne Perrottet recorded the following memory of Hennings at the Cabaret Voltaire: "I had never seen anything like it and was immediately won over by the Dadaists. Emmy Hennings stood there dressed in a roll of cardboard, from head to foot, her face was a ghastly mask, the mouth open, the nose off to one side, the arms lengthened in thin cardboard rolls, with long stylized fingers. The only living part that could be seen was her

feet, naked, all by themselves at the bottom; it was so terse and impressive. That's how she danced. She could do nothing else but clatter her feet and bend the whole thing like a chimney. While doing that she spoke now and then, but no one could understand it, they could feel it. And sometimes she let out cry, a cry. . . ."<sup>17</sup>

Hennings's place in the center of the Dada group is further confirmed by one of its most sexist members: in the great debate over the invention of the word *Dada*, Huelsenbeck named Hennings as a witness to validate his version of the story, a version that demonstrates his jealousy of Tzara. Huelsenbeck insisted that he and Ball (not Tzara) chose the word *dada* by chance from a German-French dictionary. Saying that only Ball, Hennings, and himself were in the room at the time, Huelsenbeck recalled suggesting they adopt the word as it conveyed the primitiveness of a child's first sounds and the newness of this avant-garde art. He claimed that Hennings was at that moment erecting an altar in a corner of the room and that she agreed with the men that *Dada* would be an excellent word.<sup>18</sup>

Hennings's own words add to the testimonies of Arp, Perrottet, and Huelsenbeck. Her *Ruf und Echo: Mein Leben mit Hugo Ball* is important to the study of Dada because it provides a behind-the-scenes perspective on the Dada events taking place in Zurich. It likewise defines her as a witness to and analyst of the personalities surrounding her. In the chapter "Der Dadaismus," Hennings claimed that Dada began quite innocently at the literary Cabaret Voltaire, when Ball, Arp, Huelsenbeck, and Tzara founded the movement. She did not spend as much time describing specific Dada events as one would hope. In fact, writing decades later, she seemed reluctant or ashamed to delve into her memories of the avant-garde, perhaps associating it with her illicit past, but she admitted that she could not skip over this tumultuous episode in her life.

Hennings was compelled to look back to 1917, when Dada was vital and new. Its proponents opened the first Galerie Dada in the Sprünglihaus (chocolate manufacturers) on the fashionable Bahnhofstrasse, where, according to Hennings, Cubist and Expressionist paintings were first exhibited. The expositions at the Galerie Dada were well attended despite what Hennings considered as a high entrance fee. The inaugural celebration was held on March 29, followed by the April 14 Dada Abend. Meanwhile, with an increasingly critical attitude, Ball described the gallery as having three faces: one is that of a "teaching body for schoolgirls and upper-class ladies"; a second is a candlelit Kandinsky room for esoteric philosophy; and the third is the face of lively soirees that "have a brilliance and a frenzy such as Zurich has never seen before."<sup>19</sup> Hennings initiated a political puppet show at the Galerie Dada with her Czar and Czarina marionettes. This project allowed her to work with Täuber, who also created many Dada puppets in Zurich. Later Hannah Höch continued the marionette or doll-making tradition in Berlin and, like Täuber with her wooden sculptures, developed it into abstract Dada heads in her paintings.

Hennings appreciated the excitement and the intellectual stimulation of her fellow poets, also in exile during the war. Above all, however, Hennings was a performer and loved the stage. She took an active part in the April 14 Sturm-Soiree at the Galerie Dada: not only did she recite poems by Jakob van Hoddiss, but she played the role of the "weibliche Seele" (Female Soul) Anima in Oskar Kokoschka's *Sphinx und Strohmann* (Sphinx and Straw Man). Ball described the alluring Hennings: "Emmy was the only one not wearing a mask. She appeared half sylph, half angel, lilac and light blue."<sup>20</sup>

At the third Dada Abend, on April 28, 1917, at the Galerie Dada at Bahnhofstrasse 19, Hennings contributed "Kritik der Leiche" (Critique of the Corpse) and "Notizen" (Notes). At the fourth Dada Abend, on old and new art, held on May 12, she recited her poem "O ihr Heiligen" (O You Saints), read from three texts of medieval literature, and presented her "Legende." "O ihr Heiligen" shows a break from her earlier style:

O you saints with the precious names,  
All who over the crossroads came,  
I lost my way,  
Went silently through thorny hedges  
Of most painful annihilation.

I am in the dark,  
And no stars spark  
In my dusk.  
My face turned toward the wall,  
The fire of my hearth is out.  
I am worth nothing now.<sup>21</sup>

O ihr Heiligen mit dem kostbaren Namen,  
Die alle über den Kreuzweg kamen,  
Ich vergaß meine Wege,  
Ging still durchs Dornengehege  
Schmerzlicher Abtötung.

Ich bin im Dunkeln,  
Und keine Sterne funkeln  
In meine Dämmerung.  
Das Gesicht zur Wand gekehrt,  
Verlöscht mein Feuer auf dem Herd.  
Ich bin jetzt nichts mehr wert.

This poem differs noticeably from those previously quoted. Although rich in imagery and resorting to rhyme, the poem remains obscure in its narration and takes the form of an intimate prayer or confession. With a sacred-sounding title and first stanza, the poem begins much like a hymn or biblical text. Nonetheless a more secular allusion can be found in the mention of holy ones coming together at a crossroads (or emigrants meeting in Zurich). Though the others have arrived at their destination, the narrator's way still lies through thorny and painful annihilation, which are the obstacles that have always threatened her art and her survival. The second stanza continues the use of the first-person pronoun, while it begins the dark/light imagery that causally connects the first stanza to the third. The speaker finds herself in darkness where no stars give direction or hope. She is isolated, even confined, in the final stanza. Her face seems voluntarily turned toward the wall, suggesting her lack of concern when the fire goes out in the hearth. The choices she has made and the situation in which she finds herself lead her to conclude that she no longer has any worth, a feeling she revealed in a lamenting letter she wrote to Tzara, also in the spring of 1917.

In some ways, this poem tells the story of Hennings's desire to be part of the cultural dynamism in Zurich, but she hesitated and questioned her role. It is important to notice that it is not her poetic light that dies out in the poem but the fire in her hearth. She seems to be unwillingly connected to the household fireside and what it represents: a reminder of the hardships of daily life and a type of domestic servitude that embodies traditional female tasks. These prevent her from taking a fuller part in the stimulating artistic activities that attract and complete her. The hearth can be seen as a symbol of obligations that come with motherhood, constant household financial concerns, and her emotional partnership with Ball. Her frustration takes the form of feelings of self-doubt and worthlessness. Again she faces the tension that lies between her bohemian and her domestic selves, between the lure of her errant ways and her moral conscience.

Hennings's poems of this period often reveal an ominous or even suicidal side to the cabaret performer. Ball noted her serious tone in his diary entry for December 21, 1917. Mentioning her "Brief einer Leiche" (Letter from a Corpse), he said that in the poem she "talks about the corpse's instinct for self-preservation in a mordantly humorless way."<sup>22</sup> Hennings's personal dilemmas undoubtedly influenced her poetry and how she was perceived by her fellow Dadaists.

Hennings was not only a founding participant in Dada soirees and responsible for opening the Galerie Dada with Ball and Tzara in 1917, but she served as a valuable eyewitness to much Dada history. For example, according to her *Ruf und Echo*, Tzara's arrival made a singular impression on her and others: when he recited his French poem "Adieu, ma mère; adieu, mon père" (Farewell, my mother, farewell, my father), he was generally mistaken for a young homesick Romanian. Later Hennings described Arp in his unforgettable pyramid skirt, which made

him resemble a native of Mars or the constellation Orion, on this planet only on a stopover to somewhere else. She also provided a portrait of Ball at work, reciting his *Lautgedichte*: "He wore a kind of knight's armor made of blue glazed paper, and his long, narrow, abysmally earnest face looked just like that of Don Quixote, like one imagines the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, and how Goya would have painted him."<sup>23</sup> Just such a serious and melancholic face appears in many photographs of Ball.

Hennings recorded her impressions of the Dada years in her journal, then converted them into a memoir of her life with Ball. Although she and Ball are principally known today because of their initiation of Zurich Dada, based on the slight number of pages she devoted to the period in *Ruf und Echo*, Hennings seems to have assigned this chapter of her life relatively little importance. Instead of revealing details about her life as a Zurich Dadaist, she intentionally withheld information. At the time she wrote her autobiography, the mother of Zurich Dada preferred to concentrate on her personal life with Ball and the more scholarly or theological accomplishments of his career in an effort to distance herself from a past that she viewed as morally contradictory to her later life. Throughout *Ruf und Echo* she nevertheless provided valuable insight into the events that affected her life with her husband by recalling specific incidents and often quoting Ball or including excerpts from his and other writers' poetry. She inserted letters exchanged between her and Ball, in addition to Hesse's effusive praise of her husband's work, praise she considered significant. Periodically she offered analyses of the episodes she recorded, and she described her role as similar to that of a spiritual medium, an intermediary between the event and its documentation in the memoir: "I am not writing a novel, it must truly be my life that I disclose and that haunts me. The more one wants to push it away, the more it flows through. I'm not the one who decides what I write, I have no choice, and I would like once to have a choice."<sup>24</sup> Overall Hennings had a special understanding—and dread—of the task of recording her history, and she recognized the responsibility of her text as a truthful witness of its era, despite its faults.

In addition to telling the truth, Hennings also took on the task of reconciling art and politics. Her discussion of the role of art in *Ruf und Echo* reveals yet another aspect of her personality: her antiwar stance. In her opinion art was purely a symbol of the times. Thus Dada art, according to Hennings, should not astonish anyone because it was the poetic transformation of actual events and experiences that were disturbing and puzzling. The chaotic artistic production of the Zurich Dadaists merely reflects the uncertain times. Hennings claimed that Dada was created as a reaction to the events of the period, to the atmosphere of madness and tumult in which "there is no longer any perspective in the moral world. Up is down and down is up."<sup>25</sup> With the advent of the war, the whole world had become monstrous and frightening. She elaborated: "The artist must be at



peace to work, if he wants to get to the center, to the heart of the matter. He is thrown off his track; his space will be taken from him in such an unpeaceful time when he is no longer the heart of the world. Where everything leads to annihilation, we see the violation of the soul. Where cannons thunder, where chaos reigns, harmony cannot be created. The voice of the poet dies out. There was so much desperation in Dada, at least in the beginning when it was not yet a fashion, not yet renowned, when it was still genuine."<sup>26</sup>

In her reflections on the period, Hennings asserted that Dada truly was a necessary, spontaneous, and desperate response to the war and its destruction, to the loss of peace and the resulting violence against the soul of the artist; the irreverent and provocative artistic manifestations of Dada clearly do reflect the uncertainty of the times. The notion of Dada as a spontaneous act was echoed by other Dadaists, namely Ball and Picabia. Avant-garde performance art, so common in the early Dada years in Zurich, was by its nature chaotic and ephemeral. Nevertheless, Hennings pointed out, as time went on and Dada became more widespread, it lost its original form and meaning: "Dadaism was pushed on further and further, and not only by the Dadaists. It was there, and yet it was somehow already gone. I don't mean that it was 'outmoded.' As soon as it was taken seriously by the press and the public it became recognized. The success was inevitable, and right before it became stamped into a mold, before the success, Hugo had an instinctive revulsion. He began to call Dadaism a whim that one should not make into an art movement. Everything should stay suspended, as suspended as possible."<sup>27</sup> For Hennings, the later manifestations of Zurich Dada were not truly "Dada" because they lacked the necessary initial spontaneous impetus. They no longer responded to the war and its perpetrators with impulsive desperation but became instead calculated and well publicized.

When Ball became disillusioned with the new commercialized form of Dadaism and physically exhausted by the overwhelming duties he took on in organizing the Zurich events, he distanced himself from the group by going to Magadino (in Tessin) with Hennings's daughter, Annemarie. Hennings joined them a few weeks later. In the meantime he wrote to her: "My dear little Emmy, I am so thankful that I am here and that you have helped me so much in my 'flight.'"<sup>28</sup> He mentioned to her that his voice, eyes, and heart were completely worn out, and he asked if Tzara was upset to have been left running the gallery. During this time Hennings served as Ball's intermediary in his dealings with the Dada group, and she seemed to take on this task willingly in order to stay in the city.

Hennings and Ball moved to the Swiss village Vira-Magadino in 1916 but were forced to abandon their plans to live in the countryside for lack of funds. Financial problems plagued the couple for the rest of their lives. Hennings stayed with her daughter in Ascona while Ball went to Bern to seek employment. By the end of November, Hennings and Ball were back in Zurich, in time for the January 1917

first public Dada exhibition at the Galerie Corray at Bahnhofstraße 19. Hennings's chaotic lifestyle began to take a toll on her health. On February 1, 1917, Ball noted in his diary: "Emmy fainted in the street. We were waiting under a streetlamp for the tram. She leaned against the wall, staggered, and gently collapsed. I got help from passers-by, and we carried her to the first-aid post in the nearby police station. Her little head was resting so peacefully and comfortably on my shoulder as I was carrying her. A strange scene in the police station: the two of us on and by the bed, and six or seven worried policemen's faces around us, giving her some water and stroking her blond hair. On the way home she smiled and said, 'Why is your mouth so bitter.'"<sup>29</sup>

Family responsibilities, lack of sleep, an unhealthy lifestyle, and poor nutrition probably contributed to Hennings's collapse. But Hennings, drawn by her love of performance and, more important, their financial need seemed fully engaged in activities several days later. In a letter she wrote to Ball on February 6, 1917, Hennings recounted her fruitful meetings with Hardekopf and Richter in Zurich, reporting (and perhaps bragging) that they had discussed all kinds of literary and political topics.

On May 12, 1917, Hennings again participated in a soiree on "Alte und Neue Kunst Dada," the fourth private soiree. She translated and read poems along with Janco, Ball, and some of the other Dadaists at the Galerie Dada. Around this time Ball was asking in his diary if Dadaism were "a game in fancy dress, a laughing-stock? And behind it a synthesis of the romantic, dandyistic, and demonic theories of the nineteenth century?"<sup>30</sup> By June 1917 Ball was rephrasing biblical scripture in his diary: "'Take the child and his mother and flee,' the angel said to Joseph. And Joseph fled to Egypt, to the land of magic. What we have experienced is more than a Bethlehem infanticide."<sup>31</sup> Ball felt that he again needed to distance himself from the Zurich Dada group, and Hennings and her daughter followed him to Ascona.

From there she wrote to Tzara that she was so separated from Zurich she felt like a picture fallen from the frame or like a silly little bad-timbered excursion boat that could not weather the storm at sea.<sup>32</sup> In the letter she wished him good luck on the opening, "as much as a woman can." The letter is disturbingly full of self-effacement, yearning, melancholy, and loss of hope in phrases such as "es ist das einzige, was ich kann" (it's the only thing I can do) and "Ich empfinde in mir etwas schwer und suche den Grund, sei dieser Grund selbst die unergründliche Unendlichkeit" (I feel something heavy in me and look for the reason, be this reason the unfathomable endlessness). In this second statement, Hennings played with the words "schwer" (difficult or heavy) and "Grund" (reason, basis, or ground): she found no stable ground, only an abyss. She said she was ready for a change and looked for a place for herself, the self-described naïve child in love. "You are right to live the way you do," she said to Tzara, "and I will always be glad

to see you, as much as I am able to." Her letter makes it clear that she longed to return to Zurich and take part in Dada events, while it underlines her feeling of helplessness, loss, confusion, and isolation in the countryside.

From the village of Vira-Magadino on May 19, 1917, Hennings again wrote to the "Tzara-Dada" and reaffirmed her allegiance to Dada and its manifestations. She mentioned that she would send Tzara a delicate silk picture and the czar puppets, because the others he requested had been promised to Hugo. Her concern for and support of Dada are clear: "Tonight you have your soiree, and I wish you much luck, and that our beloved gallery, our child of joy and sorrow will be well treated and entrusted to you to the end. And if I must, I will come."<sup>33</sup> Hennings showed more than a passing interest in the Galerie Dada. There is a maternal possessiveness in her words, but she entrusted the gallery to Tzara, almost as if she were leaving a child in his care. She seems saddened that she could not take part in the events, perhaps feeling obliged to stay in Vira-Magadino with Ball. She signed the letter, "Ihre Hennings-Dada" (Your Hennings-Dada), again asserting her membership in the group, while demonstrating her fondness for Tzara.

When Ball's poor health finally influenced him to retire permanently from Dada activities and lead a calmer life, he sent Hennings at the end of May 1917 to collect his belongings from Zurich and settle financial accounts with Tzara. In June he sent her a letter with detailed instructions for paying debts and packing his personal effects. He signed it, "I send my love, my darling, and a thousand thanks for your true help, your Hugo."<sup>34</sup> In September 1917, Ball moved to Bern, where he worked for *Die Freie Zeitung* for more than two years. He and Hennings married in Bern nearly three years later.

By this time the couple's direct involvement with Dada events was coming to an end, and Zurich was giving birth to new centers of Dada in Germany and France. Hennings's name still appears on the April 11, 1919, "Radical Artists' Manifesto," suggesting that she signed alongside Richter, Arp, Janco, and others. Nevertheless what remained for Hennings and Ball of their Dada years were their memories (to be recorded later, in the case of Hennings), their continued contact and friendship with Dadaist colleagues, and the influence of their cabaret years, an influence that they often tried to veil beneath their growing religious zeal. Hennings's spiritual struggle played out in her works, beginning with *Gefängnis* (Prison). For the rest of her life she was engaged in a battle between the lure of the artist's world of rebellion and the striving for a pious and peaceful, though perhaps less stimulating, existence.

#### *A Memoir of Prison*

During the hectic days of 1917, Hennings was readying her first major prose work, the autobiographical novella *Gefängnis* for its 1919 publication. Under two hundred pages in length, the text is divided into two parts: from her arrest to her trial and her subsequent prison sentence and release. The events she recounted

take place during the winter of 1914–15. *Gefängnis* is an important work in that it represents some of Hennings's most personal and tonally richest writing. It also marks the cabaret performer's first public success as a writer.

Hennings's text begins by revealing the confusion the narrator feels with the unsettling statement that "in the meantime three months passed" and she still has not received a summons for a trial.<sup>35</sup> Readers immediately seek a time frame for the action of this in medias res tale and thereby share her doubts and uncertainty. She reveals that she has returned to "M" (one assumes Munich) and that she dares not take a job abroad. She worries about the effect of a jail sentence on her ability to find work and about who would bother to ask after her if she were to disappear. Although she continues to receive compliments on her voice and acclaim for her performances, she feels a lack of personal, human connection. She dwells on her uncertain future, on being misunderstood and alone.

The text then offers a flashback to explain that when she wanted to accept a four-week job in Paris, she wrote a letter, requesting to know if she could have her court appearance scheduled in the next few days or after her return from France. The message is politely phrased but clearly makes the assumption that she is free to travel.

As a result of this short straightforward note, new problems arise, and a nightmarish plot begins to unfold. There is a knock on her door one morning around eight o'clock. When she does not answer, a man enters. He announces he is from the police and that she should appear for questioning at ten o'clock. At the police station she is kept waiting by a man writing at a desk. Finally he addresses her with one question, "Is this your letter?" When she answers yes, he studies her file, claps it shut, makes a quick phone call, and then ignores her for more than twenty minutes. The ominous mood of the text conveys her growing discomfort.

Suddenly a huge guard enters, startling her. The desk man declares, "Also Sie sind verhaftet" (Well, you are arrested). She protests, claiming there must be some mistake and asking where this is guard taking her. She receives no reply. Finally she is told she is being arrested for "Fluchverdacht," contemplating flight. She complains that she is being done an injustice, that she came of her own free will and that now they want to arrest her. She cries and tries to run to the corner of the office but is led down endless corridors and through doorways, sandwiched between the guard and the police officer who appeared earlier in her room. Finally, she writes, "I stay still . . . I cannot breathe. What is wrong? Now I know, I know forever: There is no space, there is no time, there is no air."<sup>36</sup>

Thus begins Hennings's story of hopeless imprisonment. The novella records daily routines, conversations with characters who move through the text without offering hope, and the narrator's methods of counting the seemingly endless days. The prose is direct, unencumbered, and honest in tone. Through her barely concealed narrator, Hennings captured her own self-doubt and vulnerability.



The story of her arrest and trial, the confusion and helplessness she felt, reminds readers of Kafka's tale of accusation and guilt, *Der Prozeß* (*The Trial*), published in 1925. Clearly not indebted to Kafka's text, since her book appeared in 1919, Hennings, like Kafka, reworked her life experiences with psychological insights to bear witness to the impersonal and inscrutable power of an unsailable wartime authority. The regime her novella evokes seems to compensate for its loss of control over the new age of technological progress by imposing its authority without reason or explanation on the weakest of its citizens. This short autobiographical work brilliantly conveys the traumatic psychological results of incarceration on those who believe themselves innocent.

Hennings's writing illustrates the reconstruction of the self that her main character must undertake in order to compensate for a gradual loss of mental balance. In a scene in her jail cell, the narrator strives to remain steady and focused but finds it difficult: "I lay my mouth in this little curve. The iron bars are cool. The glass is so smooth and cold! My lips move on the black glass that remains still. And I speak, whisper, so no one will hear us: 'Stay true to me. You will not disappoint me. Be smooth under my eyes. Submit to my will. Be merciful and let me seduce you until I dominate you. Be the reflection for my soul's picture. I need your echo. Sound it back, long: I love you, quietly, quietly, love you.' What spoke? Was I speaking?"<sup>37</sup>

All she seeks is some hope in the feeling that someone cares about her, but she has realized from the beginning of her incarceration that no one will know to look for her. Alone in her prison cell, she creates a comforting partner: the cell itself, with its iron bars and cold glass, becomes her secret lover that she will seduce and master. All she asks is that it return her words of love in an echo. This scene is the most startling of part 1, a section that captures images from the prisoner's wandering mind and sets them in precise language that appeals to the senses. The text begins to make a strong statement about the harsh reality of imprisonment and its accompanying loneliness and despair, which affected Hennings for a lifetime.

The second part of *Gefängnis* begins with the narrator's dreamlike vision, again foreshadowing Kafka's *Prozeß*: "I stand before a high iron gate that I try to open."<sup>38</sup> As the narrator describes her reconstructed past from the safety of her present, she wonders who now stands before that gate. In an accusatory tone she demands to know how many must stand before it, raped by its iron authority. With the opinion that the sooner she goes in the sooner she will be let out, she relinquishes her freedom to the power beyond the walls.

Six weeks after her arrest, she is released. Freedom is foreign to her and she is unsure of her way. But somehow it does not matter. In a memorable image, the protagonist moves across a wide snow-covered field, her eyes focused on an image of home: "The longer I go, the freer I feel."<sup>39</sup>

The final lines of the text are full of poetry and peace: "Slowly it becomes darker. I don't get frightened. The snow shines. I am so alone. And I pass no one.

No one sees me. I spread my arms wide out of happiness. I haven't yet reached the city, and the people."<sup>40</sup> Again she feels alone, but this time without the constraints and observing gazes imposed by her prison. She walks across the snow with arms outstretched. The solitary walk through the dark causes no fear. Her final puzzling remark about not yet reaching the city and the people shows both an excited anticipation of a life to recommence among others and an anxiety of what the future might hold for her.

Throughout the text, *Gefängnis* depicts a character who candidly reveals her confusions and fears but who has the will to withstand the deprivations and isolation of prison. Although her spirit will be battered, it will not be crushed. Though written early in her career, this depiction of a heroine who will not concede defeat perfectly describes Hennings during her entire lifetime of deprivation and loss. She was consistently uprooted and replanted throughout her cabaret career, as well as during her marriage with Ball. Every time she found herself in unfamiliar circumstances, Hennings took up the challenge, living by her wits, her talents, or her charms. She was always the consummate survivor. But what was the cost of her survival?

In his diary entry of June 9, 1919, Ball recorded his opinion of Hennings's *Gefängnis* and that of the press in a revealing excerpt: "People are beginning to be interested in Emmy's *Gefängnis*. The book expresses the character of the age and its sufferings. A Berlin critic calls it 'modern memoirs from a charnel house' and can compare his impressions only to those he received from Hamsun's *Hunger*. A Munich journal writes: 'One-third child, one-third woman, one-third gamin, the author of this book stands out from the many similar to her because the archetypal human element in her sympathetic, gentle hands glows like a red ruby, compared to which everything else disintegrates into gray ash.' The book is stylistically an incessant filing and gnawing at iron bars. It knows no capitulation, no compromise. It is unshakable in its precise honesty."<sup>41</sup>

Among these favorable reviews lies a reference to the "woman-child," a revealing description of Hennings that recurs in the texts of Ball and his colleagues, as well as that of a literary critic from Munich. Hennings was ten years younger than Ball, with a tiny frame and small, nearly pixielike features. Her physical appearance seemed to inspire in those around her a sense of protectiveness. But the critic leads us to believe that her writing itself reflects these physical characteristics. Certainly *Gefängnis* is precise, economical, and unpretentious in its style. It is never lofty, flamboyant, or verbose. Nor is it indifferent or aloof. Such a style suits a naïve and bewildered young narrator who feels unjustly imprisoned. Hennings was often stereotyped by those who limited their initial observations to her physical traits. Although petite, she proved to be hardy and enduring.

Nevertheless the six months that Hennings spent in jail certainly affected her emotional and physical well-being. Family members affirmed that the experience had a lasting effect on the writer. After the demanding Dada years in Zurich, as

she began to settle into a calmer life with Ball, Hennings felt the need to write about earlier experiences that made her who she was. Her days of being tagged a criminal, of living on the edge, separated from the bourgeois society of predictable routines and obeyed laws, led her to prison. Releasing the story of what she underwent as an accused woman and prisoner allowed her a cherished sense of freedom. Later in her life, Hennings showed a great interest in court trials and often attended them as a spectator, making sketches of court scenes.

#### *Muse and Mother*

Soon after the successful publication of *Gefängnis*, a series of entries in Ball's diary reveals that his wife suffered from a serious case of pneumonia. His February 12, 1919, entry notes that he gave Hennings the first copy of his *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz* (Towards a Critique of German Intelligence) in the hospital on her birthday. He wrote that "she had a high fever, barely recognized me, but caressed the book I brought her and smiled in a sad way as if she were saying good-bye forever. It was a few days before the crisis. The doctor really did not want to let me go into the room for a few minutes."<sup>42</sup> Although Hennings was suffering from a life-threatening case of the Spanish flu compounded by pneumonia, a week later Ball's diary offers a glimpse of her performing domestic tasks at home: "With Emmy, tired and drained, on the deck chair. It is nice to fall asleep slowly while she attends to her little jobs. She puts a lighted cigarette in my mouth; gives me an ashtray, and taps the ash into it herself. There is a cold draft through the crack in the door, so she covers me with her brown coat and makes pancakes. That is very nice."<sup>43</sup> Hennings's physical strength seemed to rally when she was given the task to care for Ball, who elicited her maternal persona.

A few days later Ball recorded in his diary a dream he had about Hennings: "In my dream I see Emmy with raised hands being carried down the aisle of the Munich Frauenkirche to the altar. I am in the crowd of people pushing forward in excitement. She stands with her back to the altar. I see grace, joy, and vigorous life; lovers sacrificing themselves; the dead leaving the requiem offered them with a smile."<sup>44</sup> This image of Hennings glorifies her as a saint or the Virgin Mary carried like a statue in a procession on Assumption Day. She represents a mixture of holiness, vitality, and joy that evokes excitement and rejuvenating hope in the admiring onlooker. Just like the woman-child figure mentioned in the Munich newspaper review, this depiction of Hennings as a holy vision also distorts her value as a thinking, productive artist and writer. Instead she becomes a kind of sacrificial virgin marched to the altar.

Again that month, Ball recorded: "I usually spend the evenings now with Emmy in her Marzilli room. She tells stories or reads to me. . . ."<sup>45</sup> It seems obvious from the testimony of Ball's diary that he viewed Hennings as a composite muse and maternal figure in his life. She was the lively and motivating spirit who drove his work, while her roles as housekeeper and domestic partner made his

research and writing time possible. But what was the effect of these traditionally female roles on her and her art? Usually Hennings accepted the tasks foisted on her. There were times, however, when she felt the need for some independence through writing, travel, or a return to cabaret performance.

While Ball often recorded Hennings's domestic contributions, his diaries also provide insights into her professional life as a writer. For example Ball mentioned that Hennings was preparing a new book, *Das Brandmal* (The Brand), which was published in Berlin in 1920. He recorded that he had read the first sixty pages and predicted that this book too would become a sign of the times: "The beginning, in which a small company of actors disbands and scatters to the ends of the earth; the useless prayer in the cathedral, hunger, disgrace—what is that if not abandonment? But then the heavens divide and the stars shine softly. A young bird sings . . . it whistles so white. A child walks at night and cries. . . . A ray of light over the child! A smile over the singing child! The soul wants to rise up out of decay and woe. . . ."<sup>46</sup> *Das Brandmal*, praised by both Hardekopf and Rilke, is rich in disturbing imagery, conveying a heaviness of tone that makes a strong personal statement about modern malaise. It draws on Hennings's experiences as a prostitute during World War I and the lean Dada years in Zurich.

After sharing years of poverty and hardship, Hennings married Ball on February 22, 1920. She finished *Das Brandmal* the day before her wedding. Soon thereafter, Hennings and Ball returned to Germany, stopping for a short visit in Ball's hometown of Pirmasens. According to Hennings's *Ruf und Echo*, they came upon some angry men who menaced them with stones in protest against Ball's *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz*. They called him "Landesverräter" (a traitor to his country) and encircled the couple. Hennings said she tossed a stone up from under her arm as she had learned to do in a juggling act for vaudeville, and made a comment about stoning. The antagonists might have thought she was ready to throw rocks at them, she reported, and so they dispersed.<sup>47</sup> Although Hennings was able to make a joke to lighten the situation, Ball was devastated by the attitude of the citizens of his hometown.

The newlywed couple and Annemarie soon moved to Hennings's family home in Flensburg, where she played the role of landlady in the house she had inherited at her mother's death. The couple was now living a life completely divorced from their Dada past. In fact Dada had moved out of Zurich and was on its way to Berlin and beyond. Meanwhile Hennings found her artistic outlet in her writing instead. *Das Brandmal* was published in November. Ball noted that there was no debate over its success in Europe. Everyone could identify with the text: "Here is this age, experienced and suffered physically."<sup>48</sup>

The couple sold the house in Flensburg and returned to live in Switzerland, in the Tecino village of Agnuzzo, in September 1920. Hennings said that they immediately fell in love with the place, its isolation, and its beauty, especially an old country palazzo that had not been inhabited for years. They stayed there

for four years, except for the twelve months that they spent in Munich (October 1921–October 1922) so that Ball could be near a library for his research. It was in Agnuzzo that Ball pursued his intense reading for his *Byzantinisches Christentum*, and Hennings became more committed to Catholicism. According to Ball, she was also working on a new book at this time, though he did not mention which one. She could have been writing her 1922 collection of religious-inspired poems, *Helle Nacht* (Luminous Night) or beginning *Das Ewige Lied* (The Eternal Song), published in 1923.

During the winter of 1923–24, Hennings left Ball in Agnuzzo and traveled to Italy. She wrote that “we wanted to try to work independently from each other. I have to admit here that for my part, I wasn’t completely thinking of work. I wasn’t convinced that work was the main or near to the most important thing in our life.”<sup>49</sup> During her time away from Ball, she visited Pisa, Florence, and Milan, and her *Ruf und Echo* includes letters that she and her husband exchanged during this time of separation. The letters reveal that she often went without adequate food or lodging during the trip. When he found out she went to bed hungry, Ball scolded her for not asking for more money. Her daughter remembered that, when Hennings rented a room in Florence, she paid for it by cleaning. This left her hardly any opportunities to see the city. One can also imagine that her labor left her little time for writing, reading, or relaxing. Even so, Hennings managed to draft a second novel on a recurring and haunting topic: her time in prison. The manuscript of “Das graue Haus” remains unpublished.

In one letter, she wrote from Italy about her despair and desire for Ball: “I am tired, very tired, and I would like to come home. I don’t know if I’ll send this letter. Maybe I’ll throw it in the Arno and then the waves will take my words, the gentle supporting waves.”<sup>50</sup> And in the same letter she noted, “I would like to speak to people unseen. I love them and I don’t want to see them. A dark glow is often in your words, Hugo, a burning beautiful thing like a fire that I cannot get enough of. I am addicted to your words and flame.”<sup>51</sup> Her letter shows her reluctance to write to her husband, fearing her level of energy and her mood would not match the task. At the same time she clearly hungered for Hugo’s written words more than his physical presence. Even when they felt inclined to live apart, Hugo and Emmy seemed to thirst for each other’s support and inspiration.

In October 1924 Hennings and Ball attempted to establish a residence together in Rome. She described their motives: “Maybe in Rome we were not seeking peace, not the ultimate peace, but only a little rest, a calm in the darkness of the days.”<sup>52</sup> But after six months they had exhausted their funds and settled instead in the southern Italian village of Vietri-Marina, where former Zurich Dadaists Arp and Täuber visited them. During the hot summer in Albori, Ball worked on his *Flucht aus der Zeit* while Hennings did some research for his work on exorcism. Hennings was Ball’s devoted helpmate, often collecting excerpts for his research and discussing theories with him. Although she respected his space and methods



Hugo and Emmy Ball with her daughter, Annemarie, in Sorengo, 1926. Photograph courtesy of the Benziger Archiv, Museum Fram, Einsiedeln, Switzerland.

of work, she worried about his tendency to write without adequate light or air, reporting that she found his office and sleeping room unhealthy.

Ball and Hennings stayed in southern Italy for approximately one year with financial support from their close friend Hermann Hesse. At one point Hennings made a trip to Rome, trying to sell artists’ ceramics, but she had little luck. In May 1926 the couple returned to Switzerland. A photograph taken that same year of them with Annemarie in Sorengo shows a thin, pale Ball and a tired but determined Hennings, her body slightly tilted towards his and dwarfed by his height. All three subjects appear serious and express no joy before the camera.

In order to earn a little money, Hennings returned for a while to Germany when she was invited to perform in Berlin, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, and Munich. Ball wrote to her that her book *Der Gang zur Liebe* (The Way to Love) had just

been published. The work is Hennings's record of her Italian trip. Meanwhile her daughter came down with typhus, and Hennings was anxious for news of her welfare. Ball told Hennings that she should stay in Berlin, because in Sorengo she could do nothing but wait for Annemarie's recovery: "we must realize, Emmy, that the child is in God's hands. So, you can stay calm."<sup>53</sup> When she received the letter, Hennings ignored Ball's advice and rushed to Tessin, obeying her maternal instincts, which told her she should be with her ailing daughter rather than on stage.

In May 1927 Ball wrote in his diary a list of plans for the year, which included Hennings's returning to work in Germany, Ball's writing the exorcism book, Annemarie's attending art school in Zurich, Ball and Hennings's moving to Heidelberg or Freiburg, and later their taking a trip to Paris. All these plans were abandoned when Ball was diagnosed with stomach cancer and underwent surgery in Zurich on July 2, 1927. The couple moved instead to the village of Sant' Abbondio, thirty minutes from Hesse's residence, for Ball's convalescence, but he died on September 14.

Afterward Emmy traveled to Rome, Assisi, Paris, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Cologne, Berlin, and Zurich, while she wrote and published poetry, biographical works about Ball, and novels. She professed one of her goals in the foreword to her 1940 *Flüchtige Spiel* (Fleeting Play): "Already for many years I've followed a plan to lay down a written confession of my life."<sup>54</sup> Although *Ruf und Echo* partially fulfilled this goal, not many details are known about Hennings's later years. She eventually settled in Tessin, rented out rooms to vacationers, did factory work, and continued a devoted friendship with Hesse. Her *Briefe an Hermann Hesse*, published in 1956, includes letters from 1920 until the month before her death. They remain the only readily available autobiographical records of her later years. She died of pneumonia on August 10, 1948, in the Clinica S. Anna at Sorengo/Lugano and was buried in Sant' Abbondio beside her husband.

The number of published works by Hennings illustrates how consistently committed she was to writing throughout her life. While her early poems allude to her bohemian lifestyle, her later works appear as acts of penance and affirmations of her faith. Her books include the poetry collection *Die Letzte Freude* (1913); the novella *Gefängnis* (1919); the autobiographical *Das Brandmal* (1920), which Ball mentioned by name in his journal; the poetry collection *Helle Nacht* (1922); the prose work *Das Ewige Lied* (1923); the prose work *Der Gang zur Liebe* (1926); the biographies *Hugo Ball: Sein Leben in Briefen und Gedichten* (1929) and *Hugo Balls Weg zu Gott* (1931); the prose work *Blume und Flamme: Geschichte einer Jugend*, with a foreword by Hesse (1938); the volume of poetry *Der Kranz* (1939); the prose work *Das Flüchtige Spiel: Wege und Umwege einer Frau* (1940); tales *Märchen am Kamin* (1943); and short stories *Das Irdische Paradies und andere Legenden* (1945). Finished just before her death, the posthumously published *Ruf und Echo: Mein Leben mit Hugo Ball* (1953) recounts her life but chiefly in relation to Ball's.

This extensive list of accomplishments does not mention her many Expressionist and Dadaist performances in dance, music, and poetic recitations—all ephemeral arts, unrecorded and easily overlooked. Hennings's contributions to the avant-garde and specifically to Dada were many and varied, as were her talents. Moreover, her courage, persistence, and attractive presence were essential to the founding and success of Zurich Dada. In honor of her work, the Museo Hermann Hesse at Montagnola, Switzerland, hosted the retrospective *Ich bin da. Pardon (I'm here. Excuse me)* from April 15 to September 10, 2006. The exhibition featured three months of cultural and educational activities and the catalog *Emmy Ball-Hennings: Musa, Diseuse, Poetessa*.

Two biographies of Emmy Hennings have come out in German: René Gass's 1998 *Emmy Ball-Hennings: Wege und Umweg zum Paradies* (Emmy Ball-Hennings: Paths and Detours to Paradise) and journalist Bärbel Reetz's 2001 *Emmy Ball-Hennings: Leben im Vielleicht* (Emmy Ball-Hennings: Life in Perhaps). Although both works shed light on Hennings's life, neither studies Hennings in one of her most important roles in literary and art history—as the mother of the Dada movement, as an instigator of Dada performance, or as a model for the group through her stage talent and sometimes disreputable lifestyle. What Hennings witnessed and recorded in her autobiographical writings about this era outlasts her initial and ephemeral theatrical contributions to Dada. Her antibourgeois perspective is historically significant because it provides another glimpse of early Dada and its proponents from a female participant and observer whose background and life experiences differed remarkably from those of the other women featured in this study.

Because of her initiative and support, Hennings was a motivating force behind the founding and success of Zurich Dada. She was an experienced and seductive actor and singer who drew clients to the cabaret. Without an audience, who would notice the Dadaists' antics? Nevertheless her intense involvement in Dada events lasted only a few years, primarily because of her relationship with Ball, who drew her away from her central Dadaist contribution: performance. One can see that her preoccupation with the avant-garde seemed to wane soon after Ball distanced himself from Dada activities in favor of the more scholarly life of a writer.

As her involvement with the outlandish behavior of Zurich Dada diminished, Hennings's poetry became more traditional in rhyme, phrasing, and imagery. Her dark doubts, so closely linked to her years of prostitution, illness, drug use, prison, and nightclub work were replaced with declarations of faith. Her prose continued to retain her early candor, but became increasingly influenced by religious thought. Even so, her impact on the members of the Dada group was deep and lasting. As the only entertainer with cabaret experience, she modeled a rebellious lifestyle in her choice of profession. In fact she was one of the few participants who had truly lived the daring bohemian life of the itinerant artist instead of a comfortable and stable middle-class existence that was conveniently shed to

indulge in artistic expression. Her life was a reexamination and reinvention of the self as she moved through the stages of singer, dancer, puppet maker, poet, essayist, novelist, and memoirist.

Ball's isolation and intense concentration on religion, history, and philosophy had a tremendous effect on Hennings and her choice of artistic medium. But her writings, personality, and energy affected him and his production just as much, especially during the couple's years in Zurich. Despite what Hennings herself might have suggested, she was not merely Hugo Ball's "echo" in their artistic relationship. Her many performances and publications—at least half of the latter dating from after his death—are witness to the fact that she was a worthy artist in her own right.

Nevertheless Ball's influence on Hennings's career choices foregrounds which part of herself as a woman she had to sacrifice for an intimate relationship and a family. In the case of Hennings, there is evidence that she reluctantly chose to relinquish her active and stimulating life, her devotion to Dada, and her love of performance for a partnership with Ball. When she made this commitment to her partner, she made it for the rest of her life in that she kept Ball's reputation alive through her biographical writings and by editing his works. However, if one wishes to discover the Hennings who was the mother of Dada, one must look beyond her self-effacing role as Ball's muse and nurturer and instead approach her through the impressions she made on her co-Dadaists. Additionally one must read deeply in her guarded poetry, memoirs, letters, and other prose works. As a result, one will uncover the most remarkable paradox surrounding Hennings: her presence was clearly compatible with and appropriate to each stage of her life, even when she remained incongruous within herself. As such, she emerges as one of the avant-garde's most enigmatic women.

## 2. Gabrielle Buffet and Germaine Everling

### *Picabia's Cacodylic Eyes*

Gabrielle Buffet (1881–1985) and Germaine Everling (1887–1975) had several things in common: they were intelligent, attractive, and articulate women who witnessed the explosion of Dada in Paris. But their most obvious connection stems from their simultaneous relationships with Francis Picabia, the Spanish-French painter and poet, who dabbled in Impressionism and Cubism on his way to Dada. In 1921 he began the controversial autograph painting *L'Oeil cacodylate*.<sup>1</sup> The canvas includes the prominent drawing of a single eye, photo collage, postcards, découpage, and approximately fifty signatures and messages from those who visited his Paris studio. Among the autographs and messages are one from his wife, Buffet, and another from his mistress, Everling. This was not the only document the two women signed together: letters addressed from Picabia to Tzara and the Zurich Dadaists often carried friendly greetings from both Buffet and Everling.

It is not solely the intersection of their lives with Picabia, however, that make Buffet and Everling noteworthy. Buffet's writings demonstrate her early involvement with and evaluation of the avant-garde through her Dadaist poetry, her "Petit Manifeste" of 1919, and her essay collection *Aires abstraites* (Abstract

entirely resistant to their influence and contributions. There were excellent collaborations in painting, acting, music, and publishing. In fact, with perhaps one exception (Picabia), male Dadaists portrayed women in their drawings, paintings, poems, and other writings in a favorable, or at least equal, light—once they got to know them as colleagues. Dadaists more readily allowed women equal access to create or compose than did the virulently antifeminist Futurists. Moreover the women of Surrealism, who followed in the footsteps of their Dadaist sisters, did not enjoy the same level of tolerance. In fact Leonard Koos has pointed out that, though Surrealism was Dada's inheritor, it "reverted to more traditional figurations of women, often with misogynistic overtones."<sup>21</sup> The works of female Surrealist painters often go one step further, recording self-portraits of pain and mistreatment. Referring primarily to the works of Dorothea Tanning, Frida Kahlo, and Oppenheim, Whitney Chadwick has confirmed this tendency: "Now it is violence directed against the self, not projected onto another, violence inseparable from the physiological reality of woman's sexuality and the social construction of her feminine role."<sup>22</sup> The women of Dada, on the other hand, joined with male members of the group, more often than not, in a unified attack on socializing norms.

The women who supported Dada activities across Europe certainly made sacrifices and fought the commonly held perceptions of their generation about women. They had an immense impact on the avant-garde, not in spite of the fact that they were women but because they were women. In contrast to the one-upmanship evidenced in many male-generated paintings and journals, the less competitive nature of female productions and collaborations made possible their linking relationships and transnational networking with each other and with male artists and poets. These personal skills—combined with their talent in painting, writing, dance, music, and textile work, their undaunted persistence, and their individual interpretations of the goals of Dada—make the appreciation of women Dadaists' contributions essential for understanding the development of the entire Dada enterprise.

## Notes

### Preface

1. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dada> (accessed January 10, 2012).
2. Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, 137.
3. Excellent volumes by Dachy, Faucherau, Hugnet, Sanouillet, Annabelle Melzer, Raoul Schrott, Hanne Bergius, Hans Bolliger, Raimund Meyer, Judith Hossli, Juri Steiner, and Guido Magnaguagno, provide insightful views of Dada and its most publicized manifestations.
4. See Whitney Chadwick, *Women Artists and the Surrealist Movement* (1985) and *Mirror Images: Women, Surrealism, and Self-Representation* (1998); Susan Suleiman, *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-garde* (1990); Mary Ann Caws, Rudolf E. Kuenzli, and Gwen Raaberg *Surrealism and Women* (1991); Renée Riese Hubert, *Magnifying Mirrors: Women, Surrealism, and Partnership* (1994); Penelope Rosemont, *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology* (1998); Annette Shandler Levitt, *The Genres and Genders of Surrealism* (2000); and Betty Ann Brown, *Gradiva's Mirror: Reflections on Women, Surrealism, and Art History* (2002).
5. This is nearly the same geographical focus as Francis M. Naumann's pioneering 1994 *New York Dada, 1915–1923*.
6. See for example Carolyn Lanchner, *Sophie Taeuber-Arp* (1981); Barbara Bloemink, *The Life and Art of Florine Stettinheimer* (1995); and Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (2004).

### Introduction

1. Steven C. Foster, review of *New York Dada*.
2. Georges Hugnet, "The Dada Spirit in Painting."
3. Ernst Cohn-Wiener, "Grosse Monster-Dada-Show," *Neue Berliner Zeitung* (noon edition), July 6, 1920, 3.
4. MERZ, begun and spearheaded by Hannover artist Kurt Schwitters (1887–1948), is best known for its use of discarded or found objects to create sculptures and collages. The Dutch De Stijl movement, influenced by some Dada ideas, merged art,



- architecture, and design. Its best-known artists are Theo Van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian, Gerrit Rietveld, and Vilmos Huszár.
5. Egyptian Aliaa Magda Elmahdy and Iranian Golshifteh Farahani have both staged feminist protests to their respective regimes by baring their bodies to the public. In comparing early-twentieth-century artistic protest with these manifestations of Islamic women's protest in the twenty-first century, we can see the provocations of Dada as protests against a society and its values. The political climate of World War I and following, with its air of revolution followed by rising fascist activity, finds an echo in the second decade of the twenty-first century with the specter of Islamic revolution being met by religious fundamentalist backlash.
  6. Hamid Dabashi, "La Vita Nuda: Baring Bodies, Bearing Witness." *Aljazeera*, January 23, 2012; <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/01/201212111238688792.html> (accessed January 28, 2012).
  7. According to Irmell Hautamäki, German culture was affected by the Nazi persecution and expulsion of avant-garde artists until the 1960s. It was only then that German theoreticians began to refer to the avant-garde, which they had preferred to label as "Modernism." See Hautamäki's *Avantgarden alkuperä, Modernin estetiikkaa Baudelairesta Warholiin* (Origin of Avant-garde: Modern Aesthetics from Baudelaire to Warhol), 2003.
  8. Qtd. in Dawn Ades, ed., *The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, 28.
  9. I was contacted by a researcher from the University of Southern California who was understandably confused by the error at a now-defunct website: <http://members1.chello.nl/~m.woestenburg/dada/alphabet/dermee.html> (accessed June 19, 2002). I notified the webmaster of the true identity of Arnauld, after which the site became inactive.

#### Chapter 1: Emily Hennings

1. Qtd. in Emmy Ball-Hennings, *Briefe an Herman Hesse*, 297. (Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.)
2. Schütt-Hennings, introduction to Emmy Ball-Hennings, *Ruf und Echo: Mein Leben mit Hugo Ball*, 9–10.
3. The poem "Nach dem Kabarett," on page 13 of her 1913 collection *Die Letzte Freude*, is reprinted in its entirety as "Nach dem Cabaret" in *Emmy Ball Hennings 1885–1948*, "Ich bin so vielfach . . .": *Texte, Bilder, Dokumente*, 70.
4. Reprinted with differing punctuation in *Emmy Ball Hennings 1885–1948*, 67. The poem (without title) appears on page 6 of *Die Letzte Freude*.
5. Elderfield, introduction to Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, xxvii.
6. The poem appears on page 15 of *Die Letzte Freude*.
7. "Ich weiß es im voraus. Es kann für die Rolle niemand sonst in Frage kommen. Nur Sie, Sie sind es." Qtd. in Ball-Hennings, *Ruf und Echo*, 39.
8. "Sie spricht, als habe sie gar keine eigenen Worte, wiederholt auch oft die Worte des Mannes, was aber nicht monoton wirkt. Es ist wie Ruf und Echo. Wäre das Echo nicht da, würde der Mann seine einsame Stimme kaum hören. Es ist, als vernehme er sich erst durch die Frau, und so strömt sein Wort ihm beglückend zurück. Einmal ist es dann wie Musik in stiller Nacht. Das Spiel des Mannes geht in das der Frau über, die Melodie der beiden wesen strömt ineinander, als umarme ein Klang den andern, und der harmonische Ein- und Ausklang des Stückes ist namenlos schön." *Ibid.*, 43.

9. "Weißt Du eigentlich, daß Hardekopf in Paris lebt und französischer Royalist geworden ist? Das ist aber nichts gegen den Fall Emmy Hennings, die aus Liebe für ihn auf den Strich ging und auf seinen Rat die Kunden bestahl." Qtd. in a letter from Siegfried Jacobsohn to Kurt Tucholsky, May 26, 1926. Reprinted from *Siegfried Jacobsohn: Briefe an Kurt Tucholsky 1915–1926*, in *Emmy Ball Hennings 1885–1948*, 88.
10. Journal entry by Erich Mühsam, reprinted in *Emmy Ball Hennings 1885–1948*, 86.
11. "Hugo und ich jedoch träumten bis weilen so eindrucksvoll, daß der eine dem andern oftmals seinen Traum erzählte, wie eben zwei Menschen, die einander nahestehen, sich ihre Erlebnisse mitteilen" Ball-Hennings, *Ruf und Echo*, 75.
12. Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, 10.
13. The Laban method of free, expressive dance as an art form in itself was formulated by Austro-Hungarian choreographer Rudolf von Laban. By 1913 one of his many dance schools was located in Monte Verità, overlooking Ascona, Switzerland, and by 1915 he had opened the School of Movement Art in Zurich. The dancers from the school regularly attended and contributed to Dada events. For a further discussion of Laban's role in modern dance, see Partsch-Bergsohn, *Modern Dance in Germany and the United States: Crosscurrents and Influences*.
14. Arp, "Dadaland," in *Arp on Arp: Poems, Essay, Memories*, 234.
15. Zeller, ed., *Hermann Hesse in Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, 90.
16. Huelsenbeck, *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, 16.
17. "Ich hatte so etwas noch nie gesehen und war sofort gewonnen für die Dadaisten . . . Emmy Hennings . . . stand da, angekleidet mit einem Rohr aus Karton, über den Kopf bis an die Füße, das Gesicht war eine gräßliche Maske, der Mund offen, die Nase auf die Seite gedrückt, die Arme in dünnen Kartonröhren verlängert, mit stilisierten langen Fingern. Das einzige Lebendige, was man gesehen hat, waren die Füße, nackt, ganz allein für sich da unten, das war so prägnant und eindrucksvoll. So hat sie getanzt. Sie konnte nichts anderes machen als mit den Füßen klappern oder das Ganze wie einen Kamin neigen, und dabei hat sie noch geredet hie und da, aber man hat es nicht verstanden, man hat es gespürt, und manchmal hat sie einen Schrei ausgestoßen, einen Schrei . . ." Qtd. in Schrott, *Dada 15/25*, 51.
18. Huelsenbeck's "Dada Lives" of 1936 is quoted by John Elderfield in his afterword to Ball's *Flight Out of Time*, 246.
19. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 112.
20. *Ibid.*, 106.
21. Ball-Hennings, *Helle Nacht*, 21.
22. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 95.
23. "Er trug deine Art Ritterrüstung aus blauem Glanzpapier und sein langes, schmales, abgründig ernstes Gesicht war auch sonst dem eines Don Quijote recht ähnlich, wie man sich den Ritter von der traurigen Gestalt vorstellt, und wie ihn etwa Goya gemalt hätte." Ball-Hennings, *Ruf und Echo*, 93.
24. "Ich schreibe keinen Roman, es muß zu sehr mein Leben sein, das ich preisgebe und das mir nachgeht. Je mehr man davon wegzustoßen meint, um so mehr strömt einem zu. Ich bestimme nicht, was ich schreibe, es bleibt mir keine Wahl, und ich möchte gerne einmal wählen dürfen." *Ibid.*, 74.
25. "es gibt keine Perspektiven mehr in der moralischen Welt. Oben ist unten und unten ist oben." *Ibid.*, 95.
26. "Der Künstler, der ohne Ruhe nicht schaffen kann, wenn er ins Zentrum, ans Herz der Dinge dringen will, wird aus seiner Bahn herausgeschleudert, der Raum wird

- ihm entzogen. In solch unruhvoller Zeit ist er nicht mehr das Herz der Welt, in der es auf die Zerstörung, die Vernichtung des Geistes abgesehen ist. Wo Kanonen donnern, wo das Chaos herrscht, kann nicht mehr harmonisch gestaltet werden, die Stimme des Dichters muß verstummen. Es war so viel Verzweiflung beim Dadaismus, wenigstens im Beginn, da er noch keine Modeangelegenheit, noch nicht durchgesetzt, also ganz echt gemeint war." Ibid.
27. "Der Dadaismus wurde geschoben und weiter geschoben, nicht nur von den Dadaisten selbst. Er war da und irgendwie auch schon verloren, um nicht zu sagen 'überholt,' sobald er von der Presse und vom Publikum ernsthaft anerkannt wurde. Der Erfolg war unvermeidlich, und gerade vor der Abstempelung, vor dem Erfolg hatte Hugo einem instinktiven Abscheu. Er sträubte sich, begann den Dadaismus als Laune zu bezeichnen, aus dem man keine Kunstrichtung machen dürfe. Alles mußte schwebend bleiben, so schwebend als möglich." Ibid., 98.
28. "Mein geliebtes Emmylein, ich danke Dir so sehr, daß ich hier bin und daß Du mir so gut zur 'Flucht' verholfen hast." Qtd. in *ibid.*, 99.
29. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 96.
30. Ibid., 117.
31. Ibid., 118.
32. The March 17, 1917, letter is reprinted in its entirety in Schrott, *Dada* 15/25, 90.
33. "Heute Abend habt ihr Soirée, und aller Erfolg möge mit euch sein, und daß ihr die geliebte Galerie, unser Freuden- und Sorgenkind, recht behandelt und betreut bis zum Schluß, und wenn es sein muß, komme ich." Qtd. in *ibid.*, 137.
34. "Sei herzlich geküßt, mein Liebling, und tausend Dank für deine treue Hilfe, dein Hugo." Qtd. in *ibid.*, 139.
35. "Inzwischen sind drei Monate vergangen." Ball-Hennings, *Gefängnis*, 7.
36. "Ich stehe still . . . ich kann nicht atmen. Was ist los? Jetzt weiß ich, weiß für immer: Es gibt keinen Raum, es gibt keine Zeit, es gibt keine Luft." Ibid., 34.
37. "Ich lege meinen Mund in diese kleine Rundung. Kühl ist die Eiseneinfassung. Das Glas, wie glatt und kalt! Meine Lippen berühren das schwarze Glas, das still bleibt. Und ich spreche, flüstere; denn niemand soll uns hören: Bleib mir treu. Du wirst mich nicht enttäuschen. Sei nachgiebig unter meinen Augen. Schmiege dich meinem Willen. Sei barmherzig und laß dich verführen, bis ich dich beherrsche. Immer spiegele das Bild, das meine Seele erträumt. Dein Echo brauche ich. Halle nach, lange: ich liebe dich . . . Leise . . . leise . . . liebe dich . . .  
Was sprach? Sprach ich?" Ibid., 47.
38. "Ich stehe vor einem hohen eisernen Tor, das ich zu öffnen versuche." Ibid., 115.
39. "Je länger ich gehe, desto freier fühle ich mich." Ibid., 178.
40. "Langsam wird es dunkler. Ich fürchte mich nicht. Der Schnee leuchtet. Ich bin so allein. Und niemand begegnet mir. Niemand sieht mich. Ich breite meine Arme aus vor Glück. Ich habe die Stadt noch nicht erreicht und die Menschen." Ibid., 178.
41. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 167.
42. Ibid., 159.
43. Ibid., 160.
44. Ibid., 162.
45. Ibid., 163.
46. Ibid., 167.
47. Ball-Hennings, *Ruf und Echo*, 132.

48. Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 196.
49. "Wir wollten einmal versuchen, unabhängig voneinander zu arbeiten. Hier muß ich freilich für mein klein Teil zugeben, daß ich in jener Zeit nicht allzusehr ans Arbeiten gedacht habe, nicht immer restlos davon überzeugt war, daß die Arbeit die Hauptaufgabe oder das nahezu Wichtigste in unserem Leben ist." Ball-Hennings, *Ruf und Echo*, 173.
50. "Müde bin ich, sehr müde, und ich möchte nach Hause. Ob ich den Brief fortschicke, weiß ich noch nicht. Vielleicht werfe ich ihn in den Arno und dann nehmen die Wellen meine Worte auf, die sachten, trügen Wellen." Ibid., 193.
51. "Ich möchte ungesehen zu den Menschen sprechen. Ich liebe sie und will sie nicht sehen. Eine Dunkel Glut ist oft in Deinen Worten, Hugo, ein versengend Schönes und ist wie ein Brand, von dem ich nie genug bekommen kann. Ich bin wort- und flammensüchtig nach Dir." Ibid., 194.
52. "Vielleicht suchten wir in Rom nicht den Frieden, nicht den letzten Frieden, nur eine kleine Rast, eine Ruhe in der Dunkelheit der Tage." Ibid., 216.
53. "Wir müssen wissen, Emmy, daß das Kind in Gottes Hand ist. Dann kannst Du auch ruhig bleiben." Qtd. in *ibid.*, 258.
54. "Schon vor vielen Jahren trug ich mich mit dem Plan, ein Schriftliches Bekenntnis meines Lebens abzulegen." Ibid., 9.

#### Chapter 2: Gabrielle Buffet and Germaine Everling

1. *L'oeil cacodylate* translates literally as "the cacodylic eye," or the eye affected by a poison of the organo-arsenic family that causes respiratory tract, skin, and eye irritation. The unusual use of the word *cacodylate* in the title of the painting is clarified in part by Germaine Everling's use of the same term to describe Dada in her chapter "Dada périclite" in *L'Anneau de Saturne*: "Pourtant convenons qu'il servit de piqûre de cacodylate à une époque anémiée par une assimilation difficile. . . ." (As long as it served as an injection of cacodylate to an era made anemic by its difficult assimilation. . . , 137). The painting and Dada itself were both intended to shock and awaken the viewing public. In addition Dan Franck mentions that at the time Picabia created *L'oeil cacodylate*, the artist was suffering from an eye infection that was being treated with sodium cacodylate. See Franck, *Bohemian Paris*, 338.
2. "Ses dons bien français sont l'intellect, l'esprit, le jugement, la compréhension, la finesse." Arp, "Gabrielle Buffet-Picabia," in *Rencontres*, 25.
3. "On demande: Pourquoi 391? Qu'est-ce que 391?" was published in Zurich Dadaist Sophie Täuber's periodical *Plastique* in 1937.
4. "Nous voulions nous libérer et nous dégager de toute la technique traditionnelle, de toutes les vieilles syntaxes et grammaires, pour explorer ce que nous appelions la musique pure." Qtd. in Borràs, "Une Jeune femme appelée Gabrielle Buffet," *Rencontres*, 16.
5. "Il les disait avec une certaine pompe, d'une voix contenue, appuyant sur les rimes. Son profil romain était éclairé par la flamme et toute cette ambiance romantique lui seyait à merveille je l'avoue. Il dit ainsi plusieurs poèmes du recueil *Alcools* qui n'était pas encore paru à cette époque, et l'un d'eux qui retrace sa vie, son enfance et ses déboires fit à ma mère une grande impression. . . . Ma mère lui demanda le titre de ce poème. 'Il n'est pas encore terminé, répondit-il et n'a pas encore de nom. . . .' Puis tout à coup, gentiment il se tourna vers elle et lui dit: 'je l'appellerai zone', ce qui fut fait." Gabrielle Buffet, "Rencontre avec Apollinaire," 194.