





University of
Zurich^{UZH}

English Department

CABARET VOLTAIRE

Dada Zürich

Dada + Zurich in
Anglophone Literatures

with contributions by Nathalie Buchli, Anna Fuhrer, Effrosyni Georganaki, Xenia Gokhberg, Roberto Mejías, Evangelia Metaxa, Rafael Mörgeli, Martin Mühlheim, Jorge Flores Real, Robin Renggli, Maja Ristic, Kate Rothwell, Lea Rügge, Aline Schlunegger and Magdalena Thysiadou

October 4, 2016

Image: "Fondue Frog,"
taken by Roberto
Mejías (2016)



Dada + Zurich in Anglophone Literatures: Overview

- 1) Anglophone Influences on Zurich Dada
- 2) Zurich Dada: A Short Portrait
- 3) Zurich Dada in Anglophone Literatures

Part I

Anglophone Influences on Zurich Dada



by Lea Ruegge



by Xenia Gokhberg

The Beautiful, the Good, and the True

freedom
from our
passions

goodly order
of the
universe

harmonize
with
Nature

moral
Magick

Love of **Decency**
and **Proportion**

Thus are the Arts and Virtues
mutually Friends

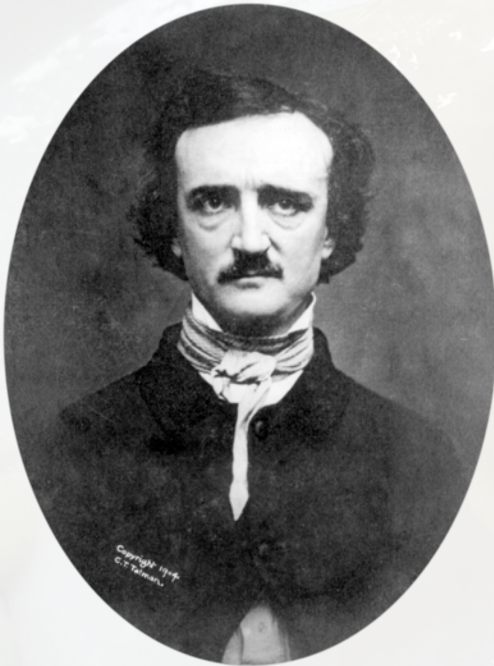
**vindicate the Truth and Justice [...] by
revealing the hidden Beautys**

→ *reference to Plato*



Anthony Ashley-Cooper,
3rd Earl of Shaftesbury
(1671–1713)

Poe, Baudelaire, and the Cabaret



Edgar Allan Poe
(1809–1849)



Charles Baudelaire
(1821–1867)



Plakat von 1896

Edgar Allan Poe's Literary Hoaxes

According to the website of the Museum of Hoaxes (San Diego, USA), Edgar Allan Poe published no fewer than six literary hoaxes.

http://hoaxes.org/archive/permalink/edgar_allan_poe (27.09.2016)

Baudelaire on Poe's Hoaxes:

! "I allow the reader to smile / The reader is allowed to smile, – I myself have smiled more than once when stumbling upon the *dadas* [i.e. hobby-horses] of my author."

(248; my translation)



New York Sun,
April 13, 1844

Image: http://pastispresent.org/wp-content/uploads/balloon_hoax_headline.JPG
(27.09.2016)

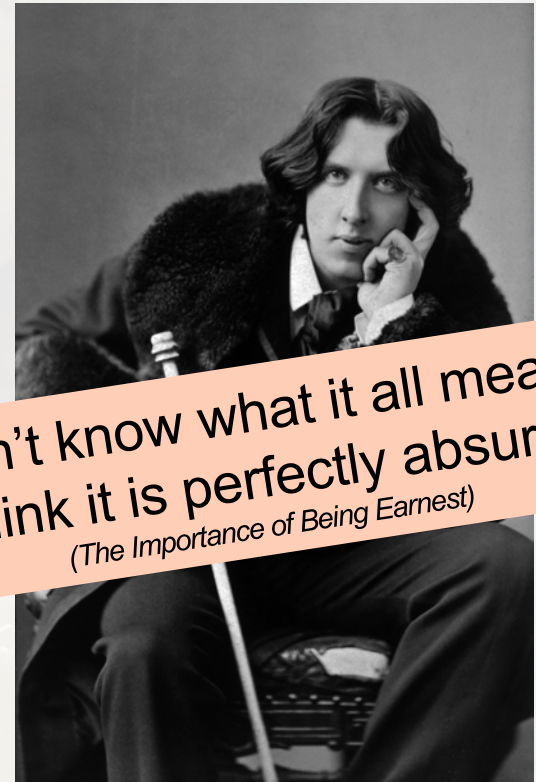
Absurdist Dandy: Oscar Wilde

“The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease. I amused myself with being a *flâneur*, a **dandy**, a man of fashion.”

(*De Profundis* 162–163; emphasis added)

Note:

The word absurd occurs no fewer than 12 times in The Importance of Being Earnest.



“I don’t know what it all means.
I think it is perfectly absurd.”
(*The Importance of Being Earnest*)

Oscar Wilde

Zurich Dada Dandy (I): Hugo Ball

“The adventurer is always a dilettante. [...] He seeks not insights, but confirmation of his superiority. [...] It is different with the inquisitive man, the **dandy**. He too **seeks out danger**, but he does not dabble in it. He **sees it as a riddle; he tries to solve it**. [...] The adventures of the dandy are **at the expense of the age he lives in**; the experiences of the adventurer, on the other hand, are gratuitous and are his own affair.” (*Flight Out of Time* 30; emphasis added)

also: *Flametti: or, The Dandyism of the Poor* (1918)



Hugo Ball in
Zurich Dada's
most iconic photo



Zurich Dada Dandy (II): Tristan Tzara

the train once more the fool **spectacle of the
dandy's tower** I'm left on the bench
what does **the fool the dandy the newspaper**
what's going to happen matter it's cold I'm
waiting to speak up
hearts and eyes roll in my mouth
get moving

(from Tzara, *Selected Poems* 15; emphasis added)



Tristan Tzara
(Samuel
Rosenstock)



Part II

Zurich Dada: A Short Portrait

Street Parade

by Nathalie Buchli

Soldiers dropped bombs while Sophie threw a party on Spiegelgasse. Bang bang. Dada invaded Zurich with drums, strings and other things. Then technology replaced those weapons of midnight silence destruction with machines that go boom boom. The kids go dada in the dark when the DJ drops the bass.

Zurich Dada: Key Characteristics

- cabaret & live performance
(dance, song, masks → “African” art)
- chance as an aesthetic principle
- *objets trouvés* & everyday materials
- opposition to war & bourgeois culture
- multimedia

**Wood &
Screws**



Hans Arp,
Relief Dada (1916)



Zurich Dada: A Very Rough Timeline

- 1916** - Feb. 5: the Cabaret Voltaire opens (Spiegelgasse 1)
 - June: first issue of “Cabaret Voltaire” published
 - July: first “Dada Soirée” (at Zunfthaus zur Waag)
- 1917** - The "Galerie Dada" opens
 - July: periodical “Dada” published (issues 1 & 2).
- 1918** - Sept.: exhibit “Die Neue Kunst” (“The New Art”)
- 1919** - April 9: final “Dada Soirée” in Zurich

Zurich Dada: Cast of Characters



Hans
Richter



Hugo
Ball



Emmy
Hennings



Hans
Arp



Sophie
Taeuber



Richard
Huelsenbeck



Tristan
Tzara



Francis
Picabia



Marcel
Janco

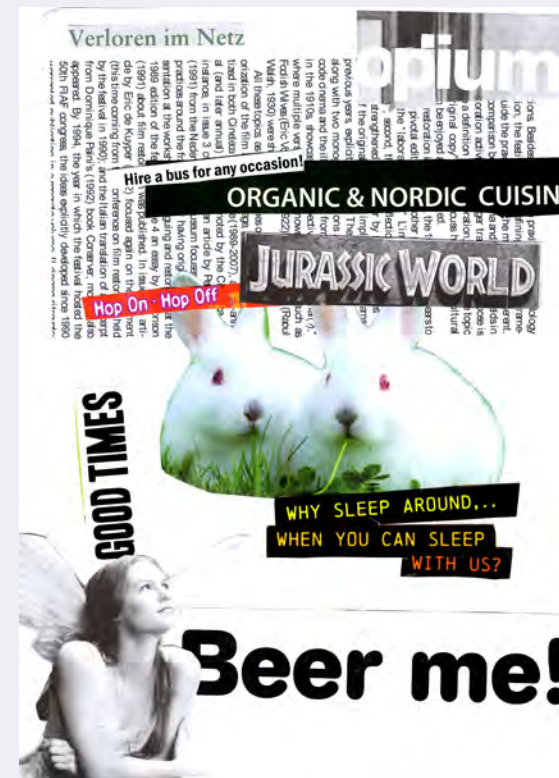
Also there:
Hans Heusser
Christian Schaad
Walter Serner
Viking Eggeling
Arthur Segal
Otto van Rees
Adya van Rees

Part III

Zurich Dada in Anglophone Literatures



by Robin Renggli



by Aline Schlunegger



Dada + Zurich: 15 Texts (→ Google Books)

9 Poems

Mike Doyle, “Arp & Richter Meet on the Zurich Bahnhofstrasse” • Allen Ginsberg, “Why I Meditate” • Louis Johnson, “Homage to Dada: Zurich 1916: Cabaret Voltaire” • Kent Johnson, “Poetry Blogs (of the Fourth Generation” in Zürich” • John Matthias, “Zurich to London, Tzara to Trotzky” • Jerome Rothenberg, “The Holy Words of Tristan Tzara” • Edward Sanders, “Dada Comes to Zurich” & “Hymn to the Rebel Café” • Anthony Sobin, “Zurich: February 5, 1916”

3 Novels

Alan Isler, *The Prince of West End Avenue* • Meredith Tax, *Union Square* • Chris Walton, *Sound Bites*

2 Plays

Christopher Farran, *Dada on Rails* • Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*

1 Short Story

Pamela Zoline, “The Heat Death of the Universe”

Edward Sanders, "Dada Comes to Zurich"

They came to the wealthy, liberal city of Zürich
from the slaughterous zones of trench
like boats on a scroll



in the year of Dada

Lenin lived at #12 Spiegelgasse
a little street in the red light district
& just down the hill at #1 was a nightclub
that changed its name
to the Cabaret Voltaire



Anthony Sobin, “Zurich: February 5, 1916”

Seventy kilometers away World War I rages on.
It is Zurich, February 5, 1916, and at No. 1
Spiegelgasse, a quiet residential street,
it is opening night at the Cabaret Voltaire.

Tristan Tzara, young Romanian poet,
screams from his works as Huelsenbeck, drunk,
blindfolds Hugo Ball [...].

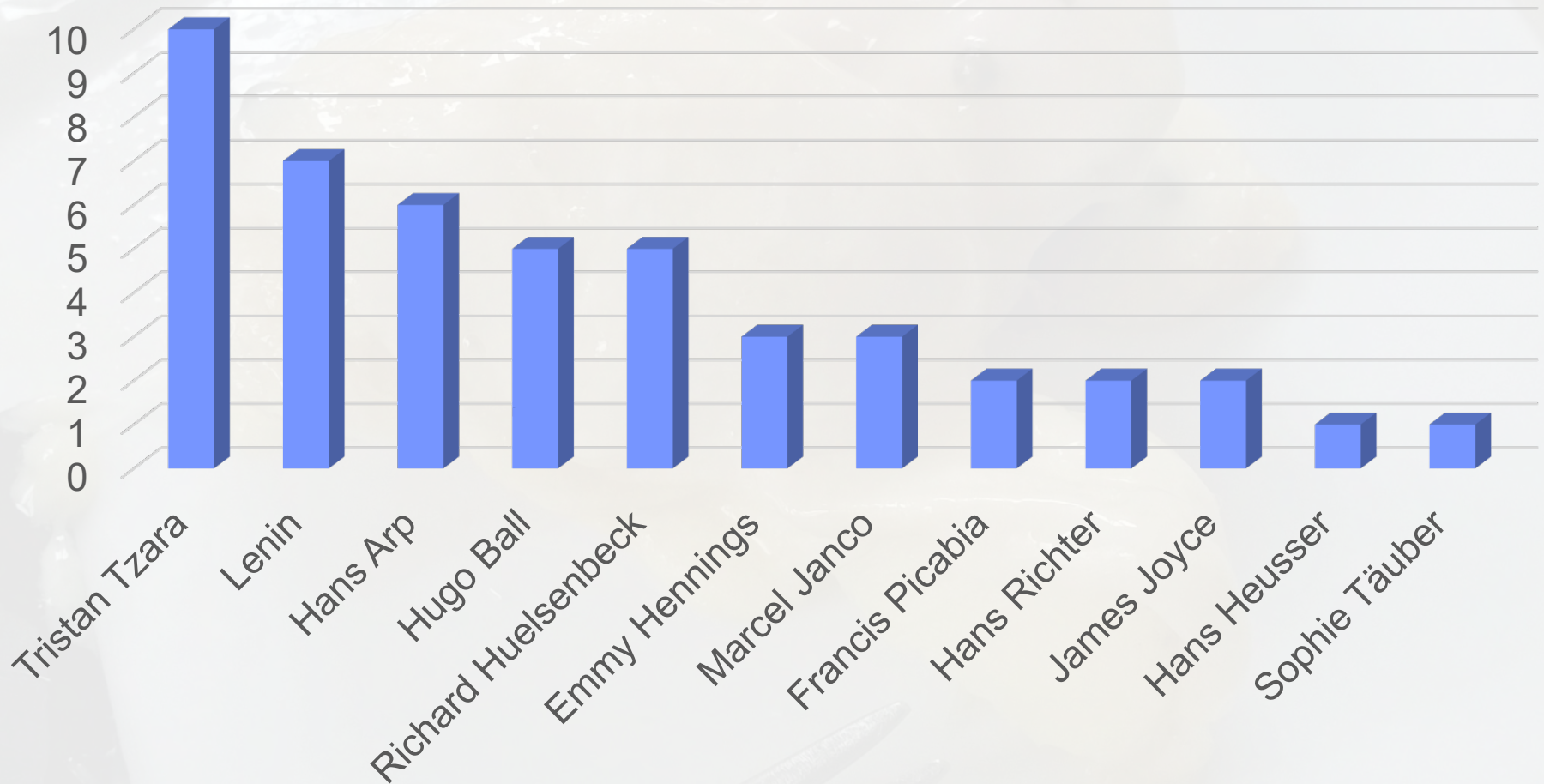
The singer at the cabaret has a new name!
Everyone yells to her, “Dada! Dada! Dada!”
In her honor, Hans Arp, with a sledge hammer,
noisily destroys antique Greek statuary [...].

.....

Directly across the street,
in house No. 6 Spiegelgasse,
Lenin tries to read.

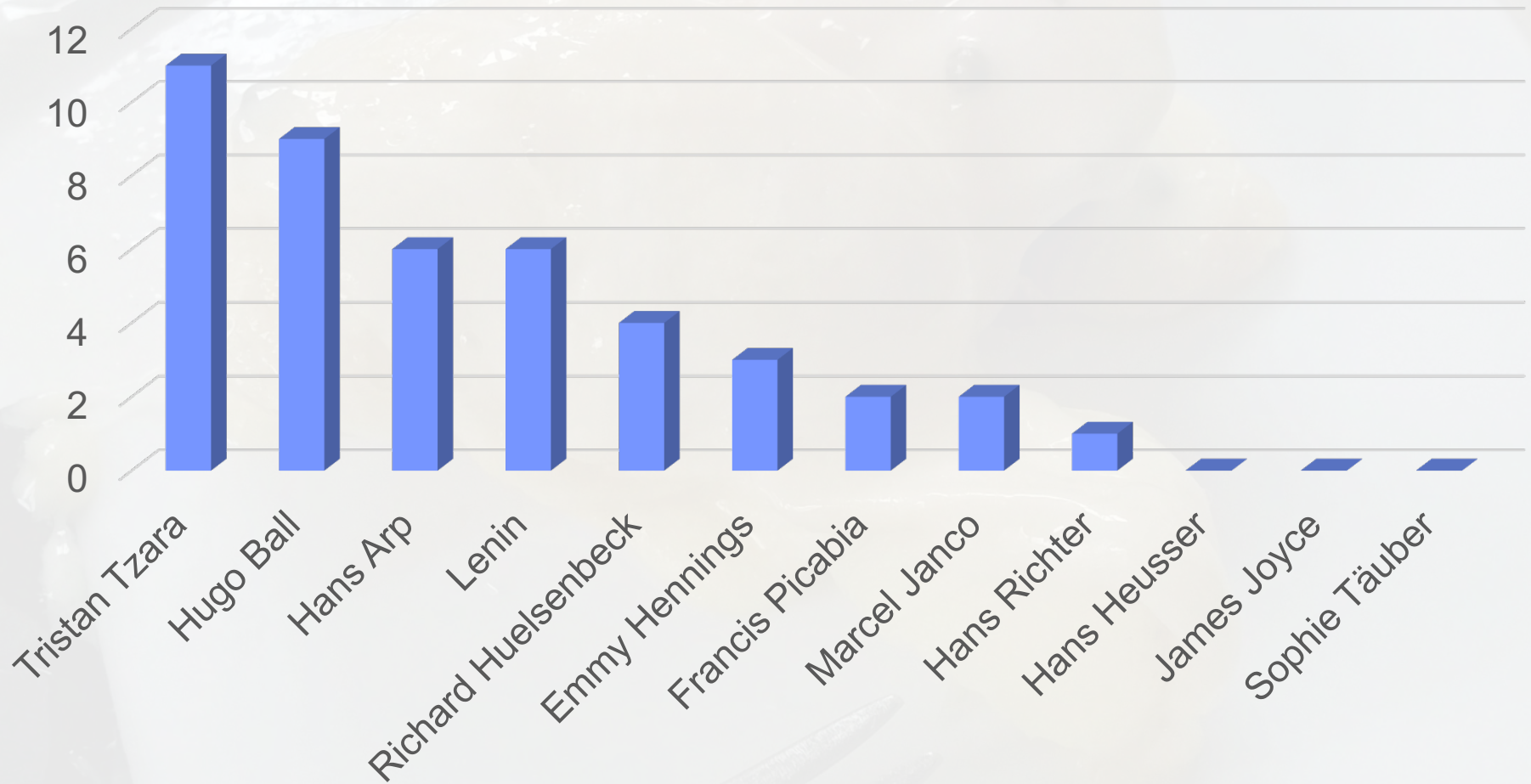


(1) Number of Texts in Which Mentioned

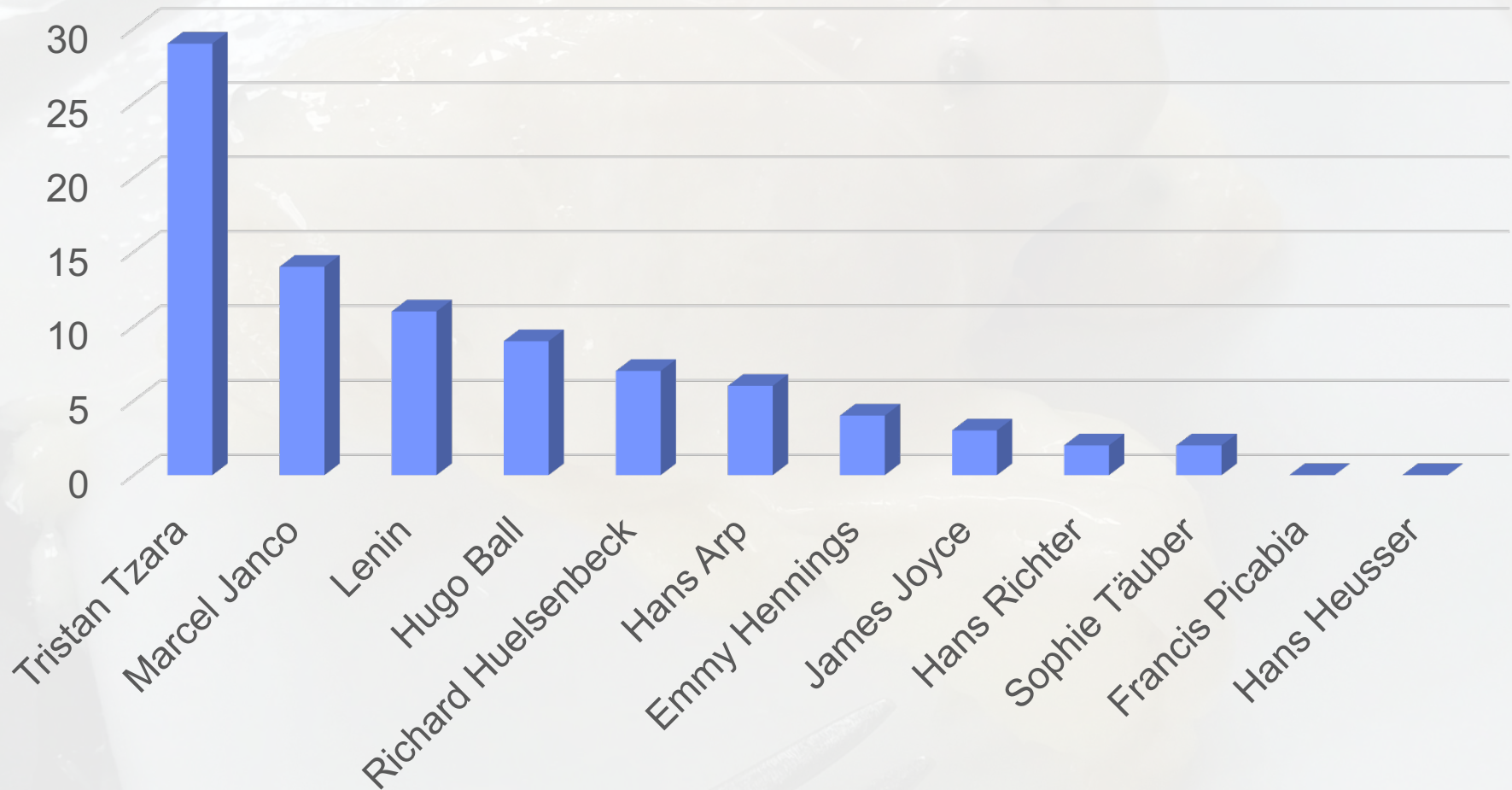


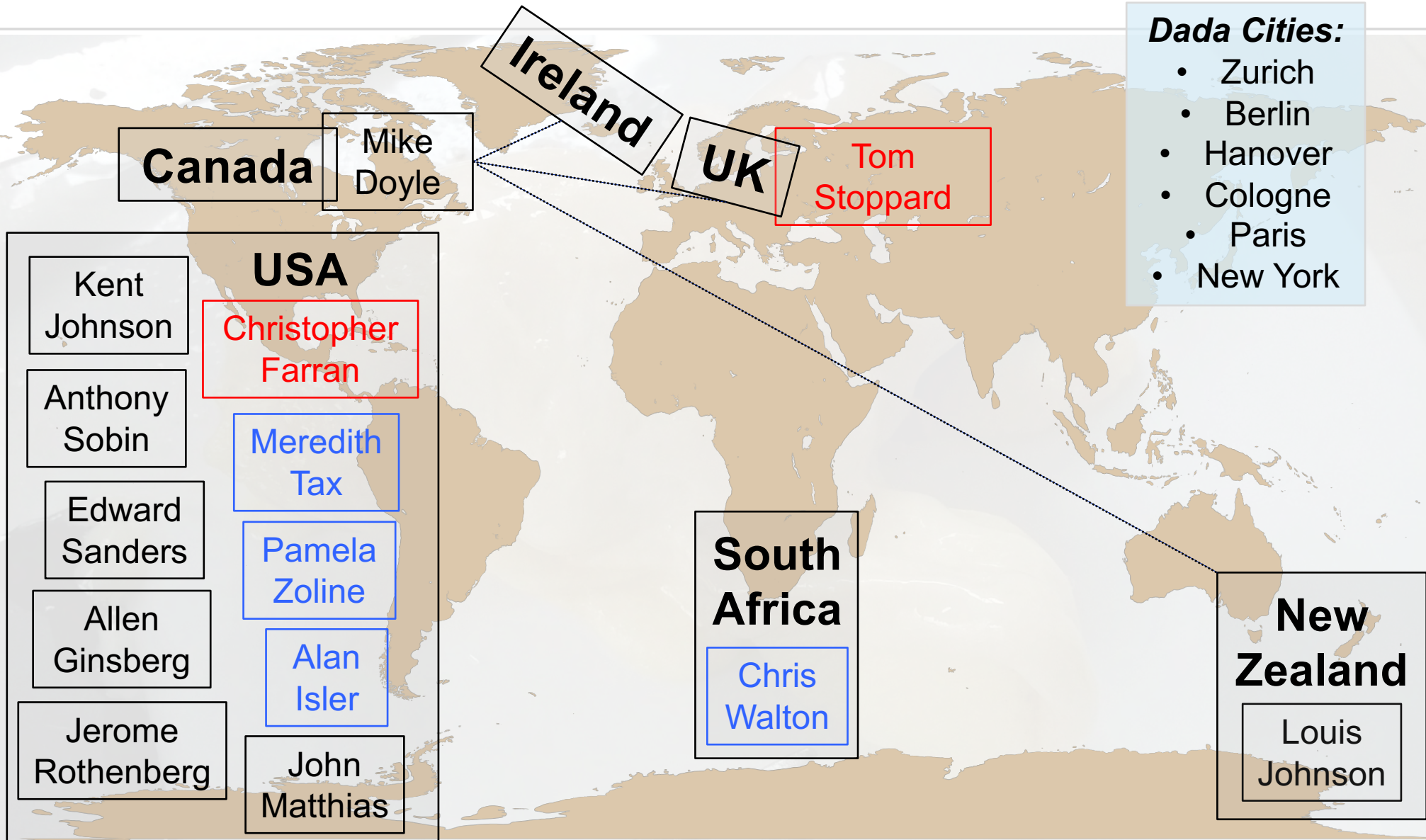


(2) Times Mentioned in All Poems



(3) Times Mentioned in Isler's Novel







Tom Stoppard, *Travesties*

TZARA: Oh, what nonsense you talk!

CARR: It may be nonsense, but at least it is clever nonsense.

TZARA: I am sick of cleverness. In point of fact, everything is
Chance.

CARR: That sounds awfully clever. What does it mean?

TZARA: It means, dear Henry, that the causes we know
everything about depend on causes we know very little
about, which depend on causes we know absolutely nothing
about. And it is the duty of the artist to jeer and howl and
belch at the delusion that infinite generations of real effects
can be inferred from the gross expression of apparent cause.

CARR: It is the duty of the artist to beautify existence.

Other Kinds of Influence: Three Examples

- Cut-up: William Burroughs
- Cabaret Voltaire (band)
- *Monty Python's Flying Circus*



from *Monty Python's Flying Circus*



Conclusion

Dada + Zurich in Anglophone Literatures

Nobody's Child *by Kate Rothwell*

Born in Zurich to immigrant parents, little Dada's B-Permit was a gesture of wartime generosity. Despite some evidently brilliant gurgling, chattering and finger painting, he was eventually deported for draining the economy.

Rejected worldwide, he became a permanent resident of the cosmos and lived out his life in peaceful disorder.

Dada + Zurich in Anglophone Literatures

- direct and indirect influences on dada:
Shaftesbury, Poe, Wilde
- in Anglophone texts
 1. prominence of Tzara (and Lenin)
 2. neglect of women
 3. geographical focus USA
- more general influence, for example:
Burroughs, Cabaret Voltaire, Monty Python



by Magdalena Thysiadiou

I AM SOPHIE'S HEAD

I AM 1920 TESSIE DADA ART I EARNED

LAUGHTER AND MOCKERY
BUT THERE WAS NO ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
FOR MY SOPHIE. ERASED FROM
HISTORY - YET NOT FORGOTTEN!
FOR TWENTY YEARS I WAS
OFF WORTH. NOW EVEN

THAT IS GONE; AND
ALL THAT IS LEFT IS
NOTHING BUT
MERE MEMORY

SHD
DUME



Appendix I: Shaftesbury's Speech

Note: The following speech, given during the event by a student impersonating the Earl of Shaftesbury, is compiled from various sections of Shaftesbury's *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinion, Times* (1737). Phrases from the original are given within quotation marks.

“Can you not call to mind what we resolved concerning nature?” We gain “freedom from our passions and low interests” if “we are reconciled to the goodly order of the universe” – if “we harmonize with Nature”.¹ How, for instance, could poets deny “this Force of *Nature*, or withstand this *moral Magick*”? Indeed, “the very Passion which inspires 'em, is itself *the Love of [...]* *Decency and Proportion*”.² “Thus are the *Arts and Virtues* mutually Friends : and thus the Science of *Virtuoso's*, and that of *Virtue* itself, become, in a manner, one and the same.”³ Therefore, everyone will attempt to “vindicate the Truth and Justice of their Art, by revealing the hidden Beautys” that are to be found in their works.⁴

¹ *The Moralists*, Part III, Section 3.

² *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour*, Part IV, Section 2.

³ *Advice to an Author*, Part III, Section 3.

⁴ *Advice to an Author*, Part 2, Section 2.



Appendix II: Wilde Quotations

Note: During the event at the Cabaret Voltaire, three of the following four quotations were drawn out of a hat and read out loud. The audience was told that they were quotations by Oscar Wilde, but they are all completely made up – our very own little hoax.

- **Nothing is worth more than a mind susceptible to absurdity.**
(by Aline Schlunegger)
- **Lying with a woman is sometimes the same as lying to a woman.**
(by Raphael Mörgeli)
- **A man who dresses as a clown soon becomes one.**
(by Raphael Mörgeli)
- **In drama, as in novelistic prose, the ring of truth is the death knell of beauty.**
(by Martin Mühlheim)



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