

**TRISTAN TZARA'S SHIFT
FROM SYMBOLISM TO FUTURISM, TO DADAISM, 1912-1916**

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Abstract. My paper will present Tristan Tzara's artistic development from his early Symbolist days via Futurism to his Dadaist days in Zurich. In particular, I shall discuss how Futurism lingered on in the first phase of Dadaism and in Tzara's Dada poetics (1916-1918). I shall first analyse some traits of his Symbolist poetry, composed in the 1910s, until his departure from Romania. I shall argue that his orientation towards Futurism was possible thanks to his Symbolist beginnings, an aesthetic the young Tzara

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shared with many Futurists, including F.T. Marinetti. Following a reconsideration of the network of cultural relations forged by the Romanian writer between the young Dada group in Zurich and members of the Futurist movement in Rome, Naples and Mantua, or more precisely: between anti-Marinettian representatives of Futurism who edited the magazines *Noi*, *Le pagine*, *Procellaria* and *Brigata*, I shall demonstrate that Tzara continued to be open to Futurist influences, albeit from the Florentine and Ferrarese strands, which were more moderate and less dogmatic than the Milanese circle around Marinetti. Examining some Tzara works in *Cabaret Voltaire* and *Dada*, I shall demonstrate certain Futurist affinities in his Dadaist production, in particular with regard to the graphic-typographic features of his poems and the performative tactics in his theatrical practice.

Keywords: Symbolism; Postsymbolism; Futurism; anti-Marinettian Futurism; Dadaism; *paroliberismo*; simultaneous poem; theatrical practices.

1. Tristan Tzara's Shift from Symbolism to Futurism

In the early 1910s the movement promoted by F.T. Marinetti quickly became a major incentive for artistic debates across Europe, including in Romania. The founding manifesto of 1909 was translated into many languages and published in countless periodicals in Europe. The news of the emergence of this new artistic trend reached the Romanian town of Craiova, the capital of a historical province, on the very day it was launched in *Le Figaro*, on February 20, 1909. Its novelty was met with tremendous enthusiasm, but also with some critical reservations concerning the prospect of burning libraries and museums, in a country where the number of such institutions was ultimately quite meagre. Certain political ideas, deemed to be reactionary, also caused some vexation.

From that time on, however, several journals, including, above all, the periodical publication *Democrația* (*Democracy*, 1908-1914), which launched the first futurist manifesto in Romanian culture, and the literary magazine *Biblioteca modernă* (*Modern Library*, 1908-1912), printed in Bucharest around the same time period, as well as other magazines would consistently bring to the awareness of their readers the most important theoretical, poetic, and literary texts that appeared in Italy. They would also publish various reproductions of graphic and pictorial works, editorial notes and news about the Futurist trend, but also numerous translations and reports on the evolution of French Symbolism and Postsymbolism.

The cultural exchanges and relations between Futurism and the pre-avant-garde – and, as of 1924 –, the avant-garde milieus in Romania were intense. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the considerable consistency and depth with which the Futurist aesthetics infused the thematic concerns and the main expressive modalities envisaged by the avant-garde groups in the Romanian capital city but, at the same time, also the literary ideology of that moment. Taking all that into account, an important literary critic like Adrian Marino rightly states that Futurism was the catalyst for defining and consolidating the very concept of Romanian modernism (Marino 1982: 179).

The intense editorial activity supporting Symbolism, to which I referred above, accompanied the development of an autochthonous strand of Symbolism, illustrated by an entire group of Romanian poets. It largely shaped the literary formation – in Symbolist, or rather, Postsymbolist spirit – of the future Romanian avant-garde writers. Among them was Tzara.

By 1912, when young Tristan Tzara, by his real name Samuel Rosenstock, founded, together with Ion Vinea, the Symbolist journal *Simbolul* (*Symbol*), in which he used the penname S. Samyro, six other futurist theoretical texts besides the founding manifesto had already been published in the magazine *Biblioteca modernă*, including “Il manifesto dei drammaturghi futuristi” (Marinetti 1911: 22-23) and “Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista” (Marinetti 1912: 9-11), and there had also been appeared reviews of poetry volumes or of poems by Postsymbolists such as Camille Mauclair, Henri de Régnier, Francis Viéle-Griffin and others.

Only four issues of *Simbolul* appeared in print from October to December 1912. Tzara published poems of his own in it. Starting in 1913, he also published lyrics in the magazines *Noua Revistă Română* (*New Romanian Magazine*) and *Chemarea* (*Calling*).

I will now analyse some traits of his Symbolist poetry, written before his departure from Romania and published mainly several years later, except for the poems that appeared in *Chemarea*, in other avant-garde magazines (after 1924), in the actual journals of the Romanian historical avant-garde in the 1920s and in the volume *Primele poeme* (*First Poems*), which came out in 1934. I start from the premise that Symbolism was the orientation not only to many Futurists, including Marinetti, but also to many Romanian poets who had evolved under the auspices of Symbolism and Postsymbolism.

These first poems prepared and, in part, anticipated the Zürich nihilist provocation of only a few years later: Tzara often used tones specific of Late Symbolism to explode the clichés of that very poetics and to mock the rhetorical devices of such poetry. The tools of Late Symbolist sentimentalism were deployed in a polemic with traditionalist poetic models (rhetorical and solemn), to which Tzara opposed elliptical constructions, internal rhymes, prosaism, associations of new images in the Romanian literature of that time, playful or cynical irony, as well as the rehabilitation of the banal language of everyday life.

The agenda of the beginnings also featured the intention of undoing the constraints of logic and syntax, of using provocative discourse, meant to vex *bourgeoise* morality, and engaging in polemic with a moderate strand of poetic modernism, which was just being born.

The scholars' opinions are divided on the genuinely nihilistic, Dadaist nature of his first poetic texts written and published in Romania and on the possibility of Dada poetics having emerged while Tzara was still in his native country. The author refused the title *Poems before Dada*, originally proposed by his friend Sașa Pană, who had collected Tzara's first poetic texts (in 1934), opting for the title *The First Poems*: the poet peremptorily claimed that there was "continuity" and "compenetration" in his creation, despite the "more or less violent or determining shocks" that had shattered it (Tzara Tzara's letter to Sașa Pană, 1934, in Pană ed. 1969: 39-40). Commenting on Claude Sernet's translation of *The First Poems* in 1965, Henri Béhar, the editor of Tzara's French-language *œuvre*, saw in this first volume a poetics founded on ostentatious irreverence. While written "in symbolist tonalities, it can by no means be said to announce the subsequent negation and refusal", and the critic was convinced that "Tzara [...] was not, in any case, born a Dadaist" (Béhar 1976: 104). Perhaps this was too harsh a judgment on the part of the French critic, considering that the attitude of nonconformism, of generalised rebellion, of going against the grain of literary tradition and the leading models of Symbolism did prepare the ground for the "Zürich insurrection", as Sașa Pană called it in the title of Tzara's previously quoted volume of poetry (Tzara 1934).

But the Dada explosion was near, prepared over the course of three years of poetic creation in Romania (1912-1915). There was a very

short time span between his expatriation to Switzerland in the autumn of 1915 and the founding of the Dada Cabaret in early February 1916. Therefore, having been influenced by the Postsymbolist Romanian poets Ion Minulescu and George Bacovia, having taken over Symbolist motifs from these poets for the sake of deconstructing them and the foundations of lyrical and poetic discourse, having also found inspiration for this purpose in an anti-lyrical model that imitated Jules Laforgue, Tzara anticipated in these first poems his later radical criticism of language and rationality: in other words, he foreshadowed the lines of force of the first Dada stage.

Not least, the lesson he received from Urmuz played a fundamental role towards the goal of language destruction. Urmuz, the author of short prose fiction included in 1970 in the volume *Pagini bizare* (*Weird Pages*), but first published in literary magazines in the '20s, was chosen by the Romanian avant-garde as the precursor and symbol of its own literary and existential revolt.

2. Tzara's Transition from Symbolism to Futurism

The contact with *il paroliberismo*² and, in general, with Futurist aesthetics, which he had come to know thanks to the pre-avant-garde artistic environment and the cultural press in Bucharest around 1910, would also be useful to him in this radical approach. He would continue to observe these phenomena with great interest once he arrived in Zürich.

As the first proof of the artist's attention to and propensity for *paroliberismo*, in a pioneering moment even for the Marinettian trend of the Italian movement, let us mention the presence, in the sole issue of *Cabaret Voltaire*, of the Futurist leader, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, with two pages extracted from the beginning of the spectacular "Dune" (1981: 38-39). This was one of the Futurist artist's poems most suited to being recited with performative means. The issue also hosted the contribution of Francesco

² It. *paroliberismo* – another name for the concept of *parole in libertà* (*Words-in-Freedom*). The term is obtained by merging the same vocables. This is a subsequent phase to that of free verse poetics in futurist poetics, which also comprises, among other devices, a species of visual literature (in the form of a drawing or illustration), called *tavola parolibera* (*synoptic table*) in the original.

Cangiullo, one of the most ingenious poets of *Words-in-Freedom*: a visual poem entitled “Addioooo” (1981: 46), composed according to the same poetic canons laid down by the founder of the Italian movement in his “technical” manifestos. In addition, the critic Giovanni Lista states that the catalogue of the first 1916 exhibition at the Cabaret Voltaire also contained Futuristic synoptic tables (It. *tavole parolibere futuriste*) by Paolo Buzzi, Corrado Govoni and, once again, by Cangiullo and Marinetti (Lista 1972: 82-97).

But it seems that there were few cultural relations aiming towards Futurism, as shown by the very limited epistolary correspondence with this movement, available to us today. Lista discovered and published three of Marinetti’s letters to Tzara in two of his articles, “Marinetti et Tzara” (the first two) (Lista 1972: 84) and, respectively, “Prampolini, Tzara et Marinetti: inédits sur le futurisme” (the last) (Lista 1973: 111-141).

I will briefly discuss the first one because of its relevance for my inquiry. It is dated July 15, 1915, that is, during a period when the future director of the magazine *Dada* had just arrived in Zürich. Lista reports that the first phrase in the text appears written in blue, while the second is in ink, graphically figuring that which the missive also stated in words: Marinetti was actually telling his correspondent that for Futurism, advanced poetry – the most experimental and representative at that time for his movement – meant *Words-in-Freedom*, which had surpassed the novelty initially brought by free verse. Marinetti was thus answering Tzara’s request, which had been addressed to many artists of the avant-garde who were active at that time, such as Nicola Moscardelli (poet and director of the literary magazine *Le Pagine*), as attested by Tzara’s letter of March 3, 1917 (Lista 1983: 159), artists whom he had authorised to request, on his behalf, contributions from interesting men of letters, and painters *avancés*, for a future international anthology. So, we may assume that by 1916 he had asked the leader of the Futurists the same thing about his movement, because Marinetti described “*Words-in-Freedom*” as “*des poésies futuristes parmi les plus avancées*”, for they represented a “*lyrisme absolu, délivré de toute prosodie et de toute syntaxe*” (Lista 1972: 85)³.

³ I provide here the translation of the two passages quoted in the text: “among the most experimental Futurist poems”; “absolute lyricism, free from any prosody and any syntax”.

Then, if there was no contact with the direction of Futurism, how was the Futurist influence exerted on Dadaist poetics? To answer this question we should first reconsider the network of cultural relations forged by the Romanian artist between the nascent Dada movement – and, more precisely, between anti-Marinettian representatives and directors of literary magazines such as *Noi*, *Le Pagine*, *Brigata*, etc., who epitomised certain characteristics of the Florentine and Ferrarese strands of Futurism (more moderate and less dogmatic than their Marinettian counterpart) – and the artistic periodicals *Cabaret Voltaire* and *Dada*.

In this way it will be possible to examine some of Tzara's works, attitudes and aesthetic ideas which prove his Futurist affinities in his first stage of Dadaist production, in particular with the graphic-typographic literature and with performative or theatrical practices – which partially inspired him to theorize Dadaist poetry.

Therefore, I will sum up a few historical-literary aspects, useful for a more adequate understanding of the evolution of the idea of poetic – and, closely related to it – theatrical performativity from the early years of Dadaism, which also defined the poetry of the future director of the magazine *Dada*. We could say that from 1916 to 1918, and possibly until 1920, documentable literary – or cultural, in a broader sense – connections, exchanges and relations linked two representatives of Romanian origin of the European avant-garde, namely Tristan Tzara and Marcel Iancu, and the magazines *Cabaret Voltaire* and *Dada*, to the directors and editors of some Futurist or modernist literary periodicals in Italy. These relationships were also reinforced by interesting epistolary correspondences.

Among the most fruitful connections were those with the editorial offices of the magazines *Noi* (Rome), run by Enrico Prampolini; *La Brigata* (Bologna), led by Francesco Meriano; *Le Pagine*, which was founded in Naples by Nicola Moscardelli and continued its publication in Aquila. The first issues of Dadaist magazines and the art events in Zürich hosted poems, texts to recite at *soirées*, book signings by many Futurist artists, including by the important above-mentioned editors Prampolini, Meriano, and Moscardelli.

All these magazines adopted an intelligent program of merging artistic orientations: Postsymbolism, Futurism, and “metaphysical art”, to which I will return. They were overtly open to Dadaism, and this also entailed an intense exchange of contributors between the editorial offices (Godoli ed. 2001: 824-825).

But Tzara also cultivated exchanges with other magazines. I will mention here only their titles and the names of their editors. Thus, poetic

and theoretical texts of Tzara's and reproductions of graphic and pictorial works by Marcel Janco or, in certain cases, simple news about the activity of Dadaism, appeared in Futurist magazines or in magazines that simply published the contributions of Futurists, such as *Procellaria* (Mantua, I series April-October 1917, II series 1919-1920), *Cronache d'attualità* (Rome, I Series 25 April – 30 August 1916, II series 1916-1919), *La Diana* (Naples, 1 January 1915 – March 1917), *Crociere barbare* (Naples, 24 February 1917 – 15 February 1918), *Arte Nostra* (Ferrara, 20 February – 31 December 1920), *Bleu* (Mantua, 1 July 1920 – 3 January 1921), to limit the analysis only to publications that appeared until 1920 and which are of direct interest to my research.

The epistolary correspondence with Prampolini, Meriano and Moscardelli was the richest, not just in terms of quantity. The dialogue partners debated many topics of great interest (issues related to the mutual exchange of literary texts and pictorial works, the common need to find the right channels for the activity of each to be promoted in the other's country, the promise to procure new contributors for each other, etc.). Still, this correspondence does not contain their thoughts on *Words-in-Freedom* and *paroliberismo*, although Futurist books of this kind were signaled or pages included in them are recited in Zürich.

A much more comprehensive spectrum of cultural exchanges between the two *isms* was facilitated by the links with the magazine *Noi*, led by Prampolini and founded together with Bino Sanminiatielli. These were some of the most representative cultural exchanges, given the prestige of the publication among the most important mouthpieces of Futurism and considering that many of the contributors to *Noi* also joined other previously mentioned periodicals.

It should be noted that, along with Tzara, who was the organizer and animator of the *soirées*, exhibitions and moments of the Cabaret Voltaire insurrection, as well as the director of the magazine *Dada*, Marcel Iancu also contributed to the Italian periodical publications to which I will refer: Iancu was often mentioned as the second recipient in the epistolary correspondence that his countryman received from Italy.

Most of the Italian interlocutors in these remote dialogues were, as stated above, anti-Marinetian poets or writers, some of whom did not accept at all, or only at the beginning of their own artistic path, the stimuli of Marinettian Futurism, that is, of the noisier and more radical trend, instituted in Milan (Salaris 1985: 109-110; 151-152).

For others, as is the case of Enrico Prampolini, the movement that emerged in 1909 was a part of their intellectual biography to which they devoted special attention, but which ultimately remained just a stage in a wider complex of cultural concerns. To characterize Enrico Prampolini, one of the most prestigious personalities of Futurism, who was also, at the same time, a fundamental figure in the cultural exchanges between Italy and the European avant-garde, widely recognised on the continental and international cultural scene before the mid-twentieth century, it must be stated that thanks to the fertile cultural eclecticism that defined him, between 1917 and 1919, in a period of particular relevance to us, Prampolini followed with keen interest the evolution of Cubism, as can be inferred from the examination of some covers from the first series of *Noi*, as well as from the achievements of Constructivism and Bauhaus aesthetics.

Tzara's interlocutors – those mentioned above, but also others – joined the group of so-called “metaphysical” artists, originally consisting of Giorgio de Chirico and his brother Alberto Savinio, of Carlo Carrà and Ardengo Soffici (Lista 1998: 134-144). The “metaphysicals” incarnated certain tendencies of Florentine and Ferrarese Futurism, more moderate, as I said, manifesting explicit propensities towards Apollinaire and entertaining a certain critical distance from Marinetti and his sociocultural ideology (Lista 1983: 19).

So, to complete the framework of Italian participation in Dadaism, let us note that it mainly revolved around the cultural and editorial work of Enrico Prampolini and Giulio Evola and, respectively, around *Noi* and *Bleu*, the periodicals they edited. Italian literary criticism considers that Prampolini's support of the Zürich-based movement was unquestionably substantial, but still partial compared to that of Evola (Crispolti 1968: 51), the one who gave life to the more decidedly Dadaist publication, *Bleu*: although its Rome the *Bleu* issues were limited to less than two years, from 1920 to 1921, it stayed in close contact with representatives of another major centre of Dadaism in Italy, namely Mantua. There, between 1917 and 1920, Gino Cantarelli and Aldo Fiozzi were the directors of the magazine *Procellaria*, a magazine of the Futurist strand, with progressive openings to Dada (Sanouillet 1967: 149-150)⁴.

⁴ Sanouillet extensively documents the presence of Giulio Evola, Gino Cantarelli, and Aldo Fiozzi as representatives of Dadaism in Italy, at the International Exhibition that was held at the Galerie Montaigne in Paris in June 1921.

These transnational links between the artistic circles established in Zürich (and, as of 1920, in Paris) and the one in the Italian capital can be documented, for example, by observing, on the one hand, the actual summaries and contents of the *Cabaret Voltaire* and those of the first three issues of *Dada*, and, on the other hand, the first issues of the first series of the magazine *Noi* (those that appeared between June 1917 and January 1920).

The analysis of the summaries and contents of the *Cabaret Voltaire* and those of the first three issues of *Dada*, and, on the other hand, the first issues of the first series of the magazine *Noi*, undertaken for this purpose in a previous paper, confirms that the cultural dialogue between the directors of the respective publications, between the works and the artistic initiatives promoted by them, was intense especially between 1917 and 1918. The most diverse events in one country became known to the interlocutors in the other country almost as soon as they occurred (David 2006: 184-195).

So, the contributions of the two Romanian artists – two poems by Tzara, “Froid jaune” (1996: 5) and “Les Saltimbanques” (1996: 13), and an engraving by Iancu, untitled, but published with the mere mention “bois” in brackets (1996: 2) – must be contextualised in this framework of openness even towards canonical, Marinettian Futurism, as attested by the presence of the Marinetti-Cangiullo pair, referred to above, in the single issue of *Cabaret Voltaire*.

Therefore, what kind of poetry did Tzara write during this period, that is, at the beginnings of Dadaism, for both the Zürich-based and the Italian publications? It should be noted that this was one and the same poetics.

For example, “Amer aille soir” and “Pélamide” published in *Procellaria* in 1917, reveal a penchant for decidedly phonetic experimentalism (Tzara 1917: 42), which led Tzara to define *les poèmes de voyelles*, given that he regarded vowels as “les éléments primitifs de la voix” in his theoretical reflections from “Le poème bruitiste” (Tzara 1975: 552-553). The theorist identified “le concert de voyelles” as an appropriate way to link “la technique primitive et la sensibilité moderne”⁵.

These were the motivations underlying the emerging connection between formal, phonetic experimentalism, and the propensity for African art, as well as for the transcription or translation of *black poems*, whose

⁵ I provide here the translation of the two passages quoted in the text: “the primitive elements of voice”; “primitive technique and modern sensibility”.

features he adapted into his own poetry. In "Note sur l'art nègre"⁶, originally published in the magazine *Sic* (director Pierre Albert-Birot), in 1917, the portrait of the so-called "primitive" man comprised the image of human ingenuousness, of purity and uncontaminated joy of living, which was playfully expressed through dance (Tzara 1975: 705). Poetic Dadaism therefore resorted to words with African sonorities out of nostalgia for a genre of art and civilisation that was unpliant to the rigors of reason, but was envisaged as a model of spontaneous or authentic existence and thought, ideally achievable through liberation from and to everyday language. In other words, the prevailing idea was that the condition of modern man should be reinvented following the anthropological model of primitive, African, black or Oceanic populations. This was different from the Futurist ideal of existence, projected towards the future, progress, and industrial civilisation.

Moreover, the pre-eminence of vowel elements was meant to signal Tzara's different stance on the relevance of consonantism, which had been privileged by the Futurist poetics of *Words-in-Freedom* (*paroliberismo* in It.), as part of a phase first identified in the Marinettinean manifestos in 1912.

Returning to Tzara and the Dadaist poetics with Futurist influences that appeared in Italian periodicals, it can be noted that "Les Saltimbanques", a poem published in 1920, but composed as "Ange" (Tzara 1921: 4) in 1914, and included in the volume *De nos oiseaux* (1929), is peppered with seemingly "African" onomatopoeic sounds and words. In two successive verses, towards the middle of the poem, we may notice a kind of identity emblem of Dadaism: "qui est dada qui est DADA / le poème statique est une nouvelle invention" (Tzara 1920: 13)⁷. Tzara therefore makes a reference to the *static poem*, which foregrounds the graphic dimension of the text. The genre had been defined by the Dada leader at the *soirée* of July 14, 1916. The spectacular page layout obviously allows a multi-directional reading, oriented according to the reader's combinatorial options and abilities (Tzara 1975: 552).

While the typographic aspect was not missing from the Dada experiments, as stated above, sonorous exuberance was, however, predominant

⁶ See, in the same volume (*Ceuvres complètes*, vol. I.), H. Béhar's clarifications regarding the *poèmes nègres*, pp. 714-715.

⁷ The two quoted verses are reproduced here in my own English translation: "Who is dada who is DADA / the static poem is a new invention". See also Tzara 1975: 235-236.

in the Dadaist poems. Poeticism often arose from the rhythmic vowel sounds being repeated in echo-rhymes or on the horizontal axis of the verse.

Therefore, this lyrical production was intended for recitation during evenings at the Cabaret Voltaire. This was also the case with the *simultaneous poem* for three voices “L’amiral cherche une maison à louer”, performed by Tzara, Richard Hüelsenbeck and Marcel Janco, a poem with which the first of the performers inaugurated the poetics of that literary species, theorised in the footnotes of the page. It appeared in *Cabaret Voltaire* (Tzara 1981: 22-23).

“L’amiral...” represents a mixture between the linguistic dimension – in fact, plurilinguistic, as the lyrics appear composed in several languages – and another dimension, which lends itself to performance with the help of musical instruments. Halfway through the poem was introduced “un intermède rythmique” (Eng. *a rhythmic intermezzo*) supported by three musical instruments, and at other times, for onomatopoeic sequences, by the voices of the performers. The part of sung lyrics, attributed to Janco, consistently came up during the recitation, being interspersed with the one intended only for recitation. It was not a singular experience, as we may read in Tzara’s “Notes” from *Dada 1*, on the same topic (Tzara 1981: 112)⁸.

Regarding *la soirée* of July 14, 1916, described in the same “Notes”, the information contained in the notes is incomplete. One of the most appropriate sources, through which it is possible to make up for the partial lack of documentation is the event program, now available among the original bibliographic documents collected by Marc Dachy in *Journal du mouvement Dada*, which includes at least five other similar shows (Dachy 1989: 39).

Other performative moments that completed the program of the same evening proves that sonorous/onomatopoeic poetry – as a genre of

⁸ This is the original excerpt discussed in the essay: “Le 14 juillet 1916 à l’occasion de la première soirée de manifestation Dada, donnée à la Waag on interpréta devant quelques centaines d’assistants ‘La fièvre puérpérale’, poème simultanée à 4 voix par Tzara. Le 28 Avril à l’occasion de la III^e Soirée de la Galerie Dada on exécuta: ‘Froid lumière’, poème à 7 voix par le même auteur. I provide here the original excerpt in translation: ‘La fièvre puérpérale’, a simultaneous poem for 4 voices by Tzara, was performed in front of hundreds of participants on 14 July 1916, at the first Dada *soirée* taking place at the Waag Guildhall (at the Zunfthaus zur Waag restaurant). ‘Froid[e] lumière’ a poem for 7 voices by the same author, was performed on 28 April, at the third *soirée* at the Dada Gallery”.

literature – needed to be made accessible to the public through a performative act, of a directorial or, in a broader sense, theatrical nature: “Chant nègre I”, whose thematic and phonic motifs were developed, as indicated in the program, in collaboration with Ball, Hüelsenbeck, Janco and Tzara, and “Chant nègre II”, inspired by the Sudanese tradition, and performed as a duet by H. E. L. E. and Tzara.

The same couple of artists was also involved in the presentation of the most important novelties of Dada poetics, namely *le poème mouvementiste*, *le concert de voyelles*, *le poème de voyelles*, and *le poème bruististe*. For the first of these it is specified that the stage *performance* involved some masks created by Janco. Here are some other “black poems”, published in *Dada 1*, “La chanson du cacadou” and “2 poèmes nègres traduits par T. Tzara”, printed in *Dada*, the issue of December 2, 1917.

Thus arose a seductive experimentalism of a scenic and interpretative nature. This experimentalism was characteristic not only of the *soirées*- or theatre *performances*, but also of this literature in which the emphasis shifted from the letter to the sound. The stage atmosphere animated by Janco’s play of anthropomorphic masks and his scenography, inspired by prehistoric, African and Oceanic art was to become an original feature of Dada’s artistic practices. In addition, collective interpretation, entailed by the poetics of those *chants nègres*, it was a specific Dadaist prerogative.

Therefore, the need to declaim, which governs Dadaist literature, and no less an extensive part of Marinettian poetics, acquired a central importance. Its most appropriate expression resided in the performance of either one or several performers.

As a possible term of comparison, some examples of the richly varied onomatopoeic Futurist production should be mentioned: for instance, the passage of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti taken from the beginning of “Dune” and the visual poem “Addioooo” by Francesco Cangiullo. These were present in the very pages of *Cabaret Voltaire*, but the corpus of *paroliberismo* was much larger and illustrated both the Futurist myths of civilisation (the velocity, the machine, the advertising, etc.) and the interventionist political orientation of the movement. Some of the most suggestive volumes belonged to the following artists: Paolo Buzzi, *L’Elisse e la spirale* (1915), Luigi Russolo, *L’arte dei rumori* (1916), Francesco Cangiullo, *Piedigrotta* (1916), and *Caffeconcerto* (1919), Ardengo Soffici, *BİFŞZF + 18* (1919),

F. T. Marinetti, *Les mots en liberté futuristes* (1920). Perhaps more than any of the Futurists, apart from Marinetti, it is precisely in the two works by Cangiullo that we see a transformation of the graphic gesture into stage presence, as well as a transformation of the theatre into a hybrid form, open to the most diverse modes of expression.

As for directing the performances occasioned by the explosive *soirées*, the Tzara's essay "Le poème bruitiste" indicate – precisely through gestures and stage acts performed by actors-performers – the ideal way to communicate an artistic message that is complementary to the linguistic code:

L'acteur doit ajouter à la voix les mouvements primitifs et les bruits, de sorte que l'expression extérieure s'adapte au sens de la poésie. Le poème mouvementiste que nous interprétons maintenant a pour titre: 'La Lumière'; les vers sont faits par moi et Huelsenbeck, les masques par Marcel Janco⁹. (Tzara 1975: 552-553).

Therefore, we believe that an analysis of the forms of performance and the moments of presentation in public should, in fact, start from the observation that for these artists, such poetics involved, to a good extent, the tools of the theatre.

From a Futurist perspective – the one from which Tzara and the Dadaists drew inspiration – the interpretative technique considered the most suitable for such texts was theoretically codified in the manifesto "La declamazione dinamica e sinottica" ("Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation", 1916) (Marinetti 2001: 122-129). Reading it allows us to understand the conceptual and scenographic differences regarding Dadaist innovations, some of which are discussed above.

As is known, the fabulous multinational Cabaret environment lasted for less than a year, from February to July 1916. It was forced to close its doors after being accused of disturbance against public order and morals, similar to what was happening in Italy during the Futurist

⁹ This is the English translation of the excerpt: "The actor must complementarily add primitive and noisy movements to the voice so that his performance can be adapted to the poem's significance. The *movementist* poem we are performing right now is entitled 'The Light'; the verses were written by me and Hüelsenbeck, and the masks were created by Marcel Janco".

soirées or theatrical performances, which took place, most of the time, in an atmosphere of howls, incendiary tones and burlesque disorder, and were interrupted by police interventions and with the arrest of the protagonists, Marinetti included.

Among the many examples, one can cite the *soirée* organised at the Teatro Mercadante in Naples on April 20, 1910, when Marinetti, as the master of ceremonies, was accompanied by Palazzeschi, Boccioni, Mazza, Russolo, Altomare, and Carrà, in impeccably elegant outfits, and unleashed “una baraonda infernale” (Eng. *hellish chaos*), as the Cangiullo’s memories narrate in his volume *Le serate futuriste*¹⁰:

Marinetti in stiffe, magro, fiero, in primo piano; [...]. Fuori del teatro è Piedigrotta: il putiferio, il maremoto. Escono I futuristi pigiati pestati e sballottati. Grida, urli da ogni parte: – Eccoli! – Eccoli! – I futuristi! Estate. Sudore. Note di Piazza Castello afosa. – Ecco Marinetti! È Marinetti! È lui! È milionario! (Allora, quando si diceva milionario, specie a Napoli, c’era da cavarsi il cappello). (Cangiullo 1961: 46).

These statements reveal, I believe, the fact that the appeal to the spectacular and to the techniques of assaulting and insulting the public (through both verbal and performance gestures) was a practice for which Futurism could offer some of the most interesting stimuli, derived from its vast experience with theatrical declamation that it theorised in its manifestos, without resorting, however, to the suggestions of primitive art (David 2006: 184-195; see also Berghaus 1998: 86-97).

From the perspective of Dada, I shall limit myself to a retrospective moment regarding the period of Futurist influence, which recalls Tzara’s *one-man-show* experience from the Zürich period, which I have previously illustrated with some other examples as well. This moment refers to a new beginning of the activity of “Monsieur Dada”, more precisely to the

¹⁰ The original excerpt quoted in the body of the article is provided in translation: “Marinetti in a frock coat, lean, proud, in the foreground; [...]. Outside the theatre is Piedigrotta: a bang, a tsunami! Futurists shoved above, squashed and jolted. Shouts, screams from all sides: – Here they are! – It’s them! – the Futurists! Summer. Sweat. Notes from the hot Piazza Castello. – There’s Marinetti! It’s Marinetti! It’s him! He’s a millionaire! (Back then, when someone was called a millionaire, especially in Naples, it was time to take off your hat)”.

first *matinée*, held on January 23, 1920, in the Hall of the Palais de Fêtes, right after the artist's arrival in Paris, a *matinée* where he had already played the role of protagonist. Michel Sanouillet comments on the atmosphere that had gripped the Dada group before the event: "Tzara captivated his new friends with his stage technique, with his ability to anticipate the reactions of the audience. The past experiences from the Cabaret Voltaire, from the halls of Meise and Kaufleuten, proved precious" (Sanouillet 1965: 143).

3. Conclusions

To conclude this paper, it is clear that Tzara's transition from Futurism to Dadaism took place in the period 1916-1918 and was influenced by his collaboration with Futurist or, more broadly, modernist magazines in Italy. This was, in fact, the first stage of the poetics of Dadaism.

The influences of Futurism on the Dada movement were multiple. They have already been carefully documented also by the histories of these currents, but the present paper has also shed light on a series of irreconcilable differences, incompatibilities and distances that the more recent movement and, in particular, Tzara's poetics assumed in the mature phase of their evolution, after 1918. Thus, I think it is fair to say that Dadaism and Tzara, as one of its founders, took over and considerably enriched the artistic techniques invented by Futurism.

Related to this, I have shown that Dadaism gradually developed its own conceptual program animated by an internal tension that would lead it to reshape certain artistic solutions identified in Futurism. Dadaism, in reality, used certain artistic solutions identified in Futurism them only at the level of artistic practice, that is, as creative means and procedures, but it did so in order to express another aesthetic function, predicated on the anthropological values of primordial civilisations.

A critical reading of Tzara's poems published in the above-mentioned Italian magazines between 1916-1920 allows us to outline a fairly accurate poetic profile of the author during that period. This period brought about a decisive transformation not only for the poet's creation, but also for the evolution of the movement itself, with the publication of "The Dada Manifesto 1918". The poetic work of the artist

of Romanian extraction, which was published in parallel in Italy and in Zürich, was created, to a considerable extent, through opposition, sometimes even against the means of Futurism. It had highly original features, especially in terms of phonetics, sound and the development of a complex scenographic apparatus, consisting of choreographies and anthropomorphic masks, through which the Dadaists wished to highlight the performative side of their literature, in a clearly different way than the Italian artists. This happened despite the fact that Futurism, like Dadaism, created poetic works in which onomatopoeic qualities held centre stage. It cannot be denied, of course, that the interest in the Futurist *paroliberismo* left traces in several of Tzara's poems from the same period.

Starting from the poetics of the onomatopoeic texts elaborated in the prodigious laboratory of the Cabaret Voltaire, which gave rise to a whole range of poetic species – *les poèmes simultanés*, *les poèmes bruitistes*, *les poèmes mouvementistes*, etc. – inspired by cultural models reminiscent of the beginnings of humanity, I discovered the inseparable connection between the poetic text and the need to interpret it with the help of extra-literary means, more precisely, with theatrical means. This finding also holds about Tzara's poetry.

But theatricality, obtained only in part with the same stage means, also permeated *le serate futuriste*, whose main organizer and protagonist was almost always Marinetti. However, the most important difference comes from the nature of the motivations underlying the Futurist sociological model and myths, fascinated by the present and the future, and never by the past.

Both *les soirées Dada* and *the Futurist soirées*, as well as their own theatrical productions stirred similar reactions from the audience, ranging from misinterpretation and rejection to complicity with the performers.

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