"I am back foremost" : Cinema Stardom, Charles Chaplin, and Parisian Dada

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Most translations are mine, and are at this point only provisional.

True thinkers cannot hope to be glorified by the masses, at least like their contemporary, in the manner of Charlot…
--Francis Picabia[1]

What I'm most impressed with is when I meet somebody I thought I could never meet—that I'd never dream I'd be talking to one day. People like Kate Smith, Lassie, Paloma Picasso's mother, Nixon, Mamie Eisenhower, Tab Hunter, Charlie Chaplin.

--Andy Warhol[2]

Dada kicks you in the behind and you like it!
--Berlin Dada slogan[3]

[1] Francis Picabia, "Trompettes de Jericho," *Comoedia*, January 19, 1922 (Paris) reprinted in Carole Boulbès, ed., *Francis Picabia, Ecrits Critiques* (Paris, Mémoire du Livre, 2005), p. 110. "Les véritables penseurs ne peuvent espérer être glorifiés par les foules, du moins de leur vivant, à la façon de Charlot ..."
[2] Andy Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 84.
[3] As cited in Mel Gordon, "Berlin Dada: 'A History of Performance' (1918-1920)," *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Rehearsal Procedures Issue and Berlin Dada (June, 1974), p. 117.

To examine the function of identity in Parisian Dada is, first, to examine names, signatures, and portraits. It is also to examine a field of logic in which the sign operates as an independent circuit simultaneously attached to and liberated from its referent—a logic that is largely indissociable from that of popular culture and the perhaps most salient technique of the rapidly expanding early twentieth-century "culture industry:" cinema stardom. For George Baker, who below refers to Francis Picabia's 1921 painting *L'Oeil Cacodylate* (Figure 1) the canvas's saturated surface of signatures declares itself to be "newly about the logic of the sign, about the full infiltration of the space of painting by a procession of deracinated signs."[4] But in the authors' description that begins his fuller consideration of the signature's status against and beside the similarly "deracinated" commodity circuits of the readymade, he nonetheless signals something beyond the "emptiness" of these marks: his own identification of and with them as the traces left by Parisian Dada's veritable stars:

> And so here is Picabia. He is staring at us, smiling, a face without a body, or rather, a face that has lost its body, a portrait of the artist under the knife. Decimated. Decapitated.... Picabia may be the only face that meets our gaze, but there is also Metzinger... And there, just below him, is Cocteau. And there is Gabrielle. And there is Marcel. All so many heads floating free of their bodies, they roll through the space of this painting, turning now this way and now that—backward, forward, sideways, and upside-down....These heads, however had companions. For the heads were joined, not to bodies, but to words. To signatures. So that along with Picabia, there is Germaine. And there is Tristan, and Man Ray, and Georges. And there is Isadora, and Pierre, and Marthe, and Clément, and Suzanne, and Marguerite, and Benjamin. And there is Jean, and Hania, and Renata, and Léo, and Michel, and René, and Paul, and Alice, and Marie, and Roland, and Serge, and Céline, and Vanentine, and François.[5]

[4] George Baker, "The Artwork Caught by the Tail," *October* 97 (Summer 2001), pp. 50-2; this essay also appears in George Baker, *The Artwork Caught by the Tail: Francis Picabia and Dada in Paris* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2007).
[5] Baker, "The Artwork," pp. 50-2.

Baker's enumerated, first-name "panoply of personages and signs" performs not only his own adoring identification of these Dada figures. It singles out the painting's iconographic techniques of floating, bodiless heads that are mirrored in the iconography of the popular press, while it furthermore encapsulates how the Dadaists appropriated iconic and semantic addresses of recognition alongside those of self-aggrandizement, referentiality, and self-promotion in order to transform identity into an ironically detached yet central operation of Dada logic: "I find myself very Tristan Tzara," Tzara inscribed in the lower right hand corner of *L'Oeil Cacodylate*.[6] Tzara's declaration epitomizes how Dada expression, between 1919 and 1923, was anchored by "[s]elf-celebration, idiotic subjectivism, a schizophrenic and despotic *Moi*... a solipsism lauding moral disengagement and a veritable activism of the ego, mixing psychoanalysis and publicity into an orchestrated cacophony."[7] Succinctly posited as a confluence of ego and publicity, this "cacophony" can also be heard as an echo of the terms of early twentieth-century cinema stardom as it was generated through the journalistic networks of mass popular media and international circulation—two aspects that should immediately recall important features and aims of both Dada practice, and the familiar modes of the Hollywood industry star system that assisted in the development and proliferation of Charlie Chaplin's "Tramp", or, to give him his French moniker, Charlot. Charlot's nimble rise to the forefront of international recognizability by way of early American cinema's trans-nationally distributed star system is not only the popular cultural context for the rise and international proliferation of the Dada movement. It is also, as I shall

[6] "Je me trouve très Tristan Tzara."

[7] Aurélie Verdier, "Ego Dada," in *Les Cahiers du Musée National d'Art Moderne* No. 88 (Summer 2004), p. 55. "Autocélébration, subjectivisme idiot, Moi schizophrène et despote, Dada s'exprime notamment à Paris entre 1919 et 1923, au travers d'un solipsisme qui prône un désengagement moral...et un véritable activisme de l'ego, mêlant psychanalyse et publicité dans une cacophonie orchestrée."

argue, a potent model from which Dada artists drew as they transformed stardom and its mass-popular effects into the workings of Dada art practice at large, and in turn inaugurated the particular avant-garde tactic Warhol would regenerate on a yet larger scale decades later. [8]

While Dada's use of the mass-media and its techniques has been studied most significantly in the German context, the specific contribution of (American) cinema industry star discourse to the development and proliferation of Parisian Dada art practice has not yet been fully examined.[9] Less "genius" and more iconically "anti-artist," artistic identity in Parisian Dada after 1920 is performed in works that utilize names, signatures, portraits, and events as strategically nimble affectations of mediatized selfhood—a strategy that becomes immediately familiar with Marcel Duchamp's pseudonymous incarnation as Rrose Sélavy. Although the French film industry initially capitalized upon nascent star discourse (1908-1913) to promote the cinema medium as a legitimately "theatrical" pastime, the influx of American cinema by the time of World War I introduced a far more fully realized concept of cinematic stardom into the mass cultural sphere. As Tom Mix, William S. Hart, Mary Pickford, Sessue Hayakowa, and, finally, Charles Chaplin arrived on French screens, young Dada artists witnessed with the masses an altogether different articulation of performative selfhood—stardom-- that, as Miriam

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[8]Juan A. Suárez, *Bike Boys, Drag Queens, and Superstars: Avant-Garde, Mass Culture, and Gay Identities in the 1960s Underground Cinema* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 228.
[9] See Simmons, Sherwin, "Adevrtising Seizes Control of Life: Berlin Dada and the Power of Advertising," *Oxford Art Journal* 22.1 (1999), 119-146; and "Chaplin Smiles on the Wall: Berlin Dada and Wish-Images of Popular Culture," *New German Critique* 84 (Fall, 2001), 3-32. Amelia Jones has written a significant study of masculine identity and New York Dada especially in the context of World War I; see *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004). Sawelson-Gorse, Naomi, ed., *Women in Dada: Essays on Sex, Gender, and Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); see especially Turner Hutton's evocative article "*La jeune fille américaine* and the Dadaist Impulse," one of the only essays to examine American cinema—especially Mary Pickford-- in relationship to Dada.

Hansen has argued, "cannot be reduced to the narrative function of character."[10] By 1920, a stabilized American-style star discourse had made Chaplin a household name in Europe; Rrose Sélavy is captured in her first photograph by Man Ray in New York (Duchamp would return to Paris with Man Ray the following year); and the homes of Francis Picabia and André Breton were abuzz with the name Tristan Tzara who in 1920 arrived in Paris from Zurich to similarly "stabilize" the systems of Dada practice in the French capital. As the initially disruptive introduction of American star discourse incrementally grew into a mature form of French journalistic address, assisted as it was by the trans-national irruptions of Chaplin's star image and persona, the mass popular vernacular of cinema stardom becomes much more than an analogy for the Dadaists' deployment of identity tactics that pilfered mass popular techniques to re-route, following Peter Bürger, the economy of individual production and reception.[11] As Philippe Soupault's and Louis Aragon's poetry and film criticism have amply demonstrated for art and film historians alike, Tristan and Francis, as well as Louis, Philippe, André, and their cohorts were early cinema spectators who, like the mass audience members of their day, found an empathic resonance and identification in Chaplin's comic persona.[12] But, as radical artists, the Dadaists recognized the specific operations of cinema stardom and its discourses that transformed Chaplin's uniquely expressive performative style into an

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[10] Hansen, Miriam, "The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism," *Modernism/Modernity* 6.2 (1999), p. 64; see also Hansen, Miriam, "Fallen Women, Rising Stars, New Horizons: Shanghai Silent Film As Vernacular Modernism," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 54, No 1 (Autumn, 2000), pp. 10-22.

[11] See Bürger, Peter, *Theory of the Avant Garde*. Authors of the recent Dada exhibition catalogue have come to a similar, albeit un-developed, conclusion: "The lure of Chaplin, beloved of many avant-gardes for his populist characters and his comedic inventiveness, astutely suggested media stardom as a model for Dada spectacle." See Janine Mileaf and Matthew S. Witkovsky, "Paris," *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, cologne, New York, Paris* (Washington D.C., The National Gallery of Art, 2006), p. 352. In the same volume, Brigid Doherty has an insightful interpretation of the cinema's function in Berlin Dada works.

[12] See Richard Abel's indispensable early research in "American Film and the French Literary Avant Garde (1914-1924)," *Contemporary Literature* 17 (1976), pp. 84-109. As Abel makes clear, there are many more mentions of Chaplin in avant-garde literature than I can address here.

internationally identifiable formal semantics that made the most oblique gesture a powerfully articulate statement capable of addressing and mobilizing the masses as Chaplin himself summarizes: "I am a being made inside out and upside down. When I turn my back on you in the screen you are looking at something as expressive as a face. I am back foremost."[13] By drawing upon the often deracinated and metonymic means of early-cinema stardom's signifying practices, and the attributes of the cinematographic image itself as it informs the basis of star system techniques, the Parisian Dadaists radicalized their own concept of identity to express the simultaneously recognizable and unknowable aspects of the modern self, or those contradictory qualities of the modern human being's capacity to signify as a star. Just how Parisian Dada appropriated and manipulated cinema star system techniques in order to expand and refashion the reach of their radical address, as well as the terms of its recognition, is the subject of this essay.

II. Life Before Charlot, Life Before Dada, and the Rise of the Cinema Star Vernacular

The years leading up to the Great War coincide with a surge in the stabilization of the star system in both America and France. Although the French film industry differs from its transatlantic rival insofar as it never has possessed an industry sector devoted strictly to the conceptual development and management of the star persona, the rise of the star persona in France is nonetheless a distinct phenomenon whose origins are found in

[13] Charles Chaplin as quoted in Benjamin De Casseres, "The Hamlet-Like Nature of Charlie Chaplin," *The New York Times Book Review and Magazine*, 12 December 1920, p. 5, in Kevin J. Hayes, ed., *Charlie Chaplin Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), p. 49.

café-concert and music hall traditions.[14] By 1908, Pathé Frères, its Films d'Art production unit, and SCAGL (Société Cinématographique des Auteurs et Gens des Lettres) began to foreground serious stage actors and popular café-concert performers such as Sarah Bernhardt or Mistinguett, respectively, to attract more white-collar spectators to the moving pictures and to raise the "moral" and artistic status and reputation of their cinematographic productions.[15] Pathé's production units and SCAGL were perhaps the first to foreground the real identities of its players in their publicity tactics: while Film d'Art famously promoted the names of its actors from La Comédie Française who "starred" in its 1908 film *Assassinat du Duc de Guise*, SCAGL's poster from the same year "cut" the bodies away from their stars' heads to render early celebrity portraits akin to those found in Picabia's 1921 painting. This particularly iconic strategy of visual promotion was of course not used solely by the early cinema industry; it was also used well into the teens in advertisements for café-concert players. Often taking the form of a miniature sketch that appeared within the program bill in publications such as *Comoedia*, the bodiless head, as small as it was, allied the performative style of café-concert players with the iconic import of their countenance alone.[16] Ultimately, as the mass-popularity of the cinematographe came to dominate popular music-hall or *Caf'-Conc* traditions by the mid teens, the *découpé* celebrity head may have become a visual sign more closely aligned with cinema stardom rather than that of live performers. (FIGURE 3 and 4)

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[14]For a sustained discussion of French film's heritage in café-concert practices and its stars, see Kelly Conway, *Chanteuse in the City: The Realist Singer in French Film* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004).

[15] Aldo Bernardini. "La Film d'Arte Italiana," in *Pathé: Premier Empire du Cinéma* (Paris: Editions Centre Georges Pompidou, 1994), p. 113. Bernhardt signed with Pathé's Films d'art in 1908. For a detailed history of SCGAL, see Carou, Alain, *Le Cinéma français et les écrivains*. *Histoire d'une rencontre* (Paris: Ecole des Chartres/AFRHC, 2003).

[16] Incidentally, by 1913, *Comoedia*, which would have been read on a regular basis by the Parisian avant-garde, began publishing regular cinema columns and film listings alongside those for the café-concert.

Yet it was also early film grammar that demonstrated the cinema's particular strength as a figural system of enunciation that, in foregrounding spectatorial proximity, placed the actor's face as the "object of prediliction" for an emerging system of star signification that would soon dominate as fully developed star-discourse within the mass-public and journalistic realm.[17] The ubiquity of the "emblematic shot" as a significant aspect of film language between 1903 and 1913 should not go unnoticed as a formal precursor of nascent star-system vernacular: a medium to medium-close-up shot of the film's principal player that alternately closed or opened a majority of Pathé's chase-film comedies in this period, for example, emphasized visual recognition over narrative coherence. Whereas the "emblematic shot" may have maintained the film's narrative status as a "not yet closed object,"[18] in an iconographic history of cinema stardom it metaphorically closes the gap between spectator and principle player, allowing characters/actors to be recognized, and re-recognized as burgeoning stars in filmic and extra-textual visual discourses alike. This was true for early French comic figures who pre-date Chaplin's recognition by way of *melon* (bowler hat) and cane, including Max Linder and Prince. By 1910 Max Linder was called by a monosyllabic moniker, Max, and was known also as "le roi du cinématographe."[19] Linder's film star persona (Linder was making films with Pathé beginning in 1905) solidified by 1909 as the eccentric if bourgeois dandy in a top-hat and tails, a character prone to domestic conundrums and

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[17] Lucien Belloï, "Reconfigurations: La question du plan emblématique," in *La Firm Pathé Frères*, 1896-1914, Michel Marie and Laurent Le Forestier, eds. (Paris, AFRHC, 2004), p. 181.

[18] Noël Burch, "Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response," *October*, Vol. 11, Essays in Honor of Jay Leyda (Winter, 1979), p. 79. See also Noël Burch, *Theory of Film Practice*, trans. Helen R. Lane (New York, Praeger, 1973).

[19] See Ginette Vincendeau, *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* (London, Continuum, 2000). Richard Abel's definitive account of early French cinema provides the basis for my understanding of early French stardom; he has remarked that Pathé renamed Linder's film series simply *Max* by 1910. Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*: *French Cinema 1896-1914* [1994] (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), pp. 234-40.

social mishaps. Prince, Linder's most significant rival during the late aughts, was at times similarly styled as a dandy yet more bumbling, less overtly bourgeois, and typed more aptly as a wide-eyed "rube." Prince starred in and subsequently directed a number SCGAL comedies that featured his screen character *Rigadin*.[20] By the early teens, the visual syntax of extra-filmic star system vernacular promoted the iconic and comic resonance of their actors' personae in a manner similar to the emblematic-shot form whose address, while either oblique or direct, foregrounded costume, gestural as well as narrative markers to promote recognizability. (Figures 5 and 6)

Yet, it was neither Max nor Prince who piqued the interest of Maurice Raynal, film critic for Guillaume Apollinaire's journal *Les Soirées de Paris*.[21] A friend of Picasso whose art criticism from this period fiercely promoted cubism's importance as a radical style, Raynal preferred the comedy of Polydor (André Deed) or the "comic people new-yorkais" epitomized by F.C. Buny (sic) who he wrote seemed to have escaped from the comic strip world of *Happy Hooligan*.[22] Yet, it is important that Raynal takes time in his column to distinguish his taste from the "reproduction of historical scenes" found in the "revolting" Film d'Art production of *Cléopatre* (Henri Adréani, Ferdinand Zecca, 1910) whose vulgar "stars" (Raynal refers to Madeline Roch and Statia Napierkowska) were, to

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[20] Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, p. 253.
[21] Throughout the late teens, close-up images adorn covers of the French film press such as *La Cinématographie Française*, which customarily ran two covers each featuring the close-up image of an actor—rarely in character. One exception would be their issue (No. 21, 29 March, 1919) where a close-up of Chaplin appears as his character from *Shoulder Arms*. Gun slung over his shoulder, he addresses the reader with a knowing wink.
[22] Maurice Raynal, "Chronique Cinématographique," *Soirées de Paris* no. 19 (December, 1913), p. 6-7. Raynal's writing contains many misspellings and mis-attributions. Stuart J. Blackton made several films based on Frederick Burr Opper's comic strip *Happy Hooligan* around 1900; I have yet to confirm that these films circulated in Paris, 1913.

him, both thoroughly uninteresting and un-cinematographic.[23] Here, Raynal demonstrates several essential aspects regarding early cinema stardom in France and its relationship to the emerging avant-garde who were all, with the exception of Picabia, in their late teens around 1915 (Picabia, born in 1879, was the oldest member of the Parisian Dada movement). On the one hand, it was "the sheer ludicrousness and subversiveness of cinema" that made film culture a lawless field opposed to the trappings of a bourgeois art market, hence an attractive venue for radical artists at all stages of their careers: the cinema was a place where the avant-garde could express "a fascination with a popular, even *louche* world, an outlaw medium, comic violence, anti-naturalism, irony and biting humor...."[24] On the other hand, Raynal's rejection of *Cléopatre*—a rejection made more succinct by his identification of the film's stars—confirms how early star discourse in France, yoked as it was to discourses of legitimization throughout the early teens, remained inevitably tied to bourgeois theater traditions that would become the object of critique for future Dada artists. French star discourse thus remained, in 1913, inconsequential to the avant-garde's burgeoning sense of radical address. While Raynal may have appreciated the cinema's visual, sensorial, and quite libidinous space where smoking and drinking accompanied wry commentary on everything from musical accompaniment to film acting, his distaste for Film d'Art's "out-moded" theatrical style anticipates what became a pervasive sentiment among the avant-garde toward French

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[23] *Ibid*., p. 6. "C'est dans ce sens que le cinéma pourrait, peut-être, créer quelque chose et non dans la reproduction de scènes historiques, telle que cette *Cléopatre* écoeurante et vue ailleurs, que la vulgarité de Mlle Roche et les désarticulations de Mlle Napierkowska, la désossée, ne parvinrent pas à rendre interessante." Both Roch and Napierkowska are featured on the 1908 poster from SCGAL, Figure 3. Napierkowska, a dancer from the Opéra Comique de Paris, was nonetheless a film star beholden by Francis Picabia who encountered her during his 1913 trans-Atlantic voyage on *La Lorraine*. See Jennifer Wild, "Francis Picabia, Statia Napierkowska, and the Cinema: Circuits of Perception," forthcoming in *Eggs Laid by Tigers*: *Dada and Beyond*, Eric Robertson and Elza Adamowicz, eds. (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2008).

[24] Natasha Staller, A Sum of Destructions: Picasso's Cultures and the Creation of Cubism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 207-8.

film by the time of the war.[25] Hence, despite the iconic and potentially critical resonance of Max's silk top hat and tails, or the comic *puissance* of Prince's characterization as a naive *arriviste,* the avant-garde, as it was being nurtured by early cinema and its surrounding culture, did not yet conceive of star discourse as a radical development in either figuration or the semiotics of identity. Rather, following Raynal, the artist cum early film spectator, who was nonetheless living in a culture saturated by early star system vernacular by 1913, continued to associate the concept and iconic palatte of stardom with the "legitimate" culture that would soon be the object of their own attacks.

Following this logic, there is furthermore little wonder that neither Max's nor Prince's name appears in Louis Aragon's schema for a "Projet d'histoire littéraire contemporaine" that was first printed in an autumn 1922 issue of the avant-garde journal *Littérature*.[26] In its "Avant-Propos" section describing the pre-1913 period, the reader encounters the name Nick Carter, American detective hero of the dime novel serial that had been circulating in the United States some twenty years before the Dresden-based publishing house Eichler translated it into French in 1907.[27] Yet the Eclair film production company had quickly transformed *Nick Carter* into a film serial by 1908; according to Abel, its first six episodes, directed by Victorin Jasset, were released bi-weekly between September 8 and November 15, 1908, no doubt circulating in the French capital. A *New York Times* article from July 26, 1908, reported on the popular "craze" for

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[25] See Philippe Soupault, "Le cinéma U.S.A," *Films*, No. 15 (January 15, 1924), in which he describes how French cinema had become a wasteland of bourgeois melodramas filled with "tranches de vie." Reprinted in Philippe Soupault, *Ecrits de cinéma* 1918-1931 (Paris: Plon, 1979). Chapter on Ballistics sustains this argument.

[26] *Littérature* (nouvelle série, No. 4, 1er septembre 1922), pp. 3-6. The prose form of the manuscript, largely composed in 1923 remained unpublished until 1994: Louis Aragon, *Projet d'histoire littéraire contemporaine*, Marc Dachy, ed., (Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1994). A facsimile of the piece for *Littérature* is contained in the preface (n.p.).

[27] Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, p. 195.

the newly translated literary series in Paris, a fact that maintains the difficulty of ascertaining to which media format Aragon referred in his avant-garde, literary, and popular-cultural historical framework .[28]

Nonetheless, in 1908 Nick Carter was far from being a "star" in a stricter sense of the term that specifies the identity of a real human being rather than a solely fictitious character. It is in the third section of Aragon's *Projet* entitled "Du 1er août 1914 à la mort d'Apollinaire (10 novembre 1918)" that we remark the first mention of a veritable star: in the first line that reads "Le Cinéma, Charlot et les Vampires, " Aragon evokes both Charlot and *Les Vampires* as metonyms for the new, powerful appeal of the cinema medium quite generally. Yet Charlot's specific mention here suggests that by 1914 the concept of "star" had been transformed into a paradigm in which character and real human identity were not only contingent but assimilable, as well as fully independent from the theatrical model of stardom that had diminished "Max's" power to critically, visually signify a beyond the narratives of both his films and the industry that had produced him.

The American cinema's wartime influx into France ignited such a powerfully new wave of interest in the medium that it resembled a second generation of a "cinema of attractions" whose effect was felt among the soon-to-be avant-garde artists, as well as within the French film industry at large.[29] The cinema's new "attractivity" was built on the introduction of new forms of cinematographic address, gender representation, mise-en-scène, and on-location shooting that garnered "exotic" views of Western landscapes,

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[28] "Nick Carter in France," *The New York Times*, July 26, 1908.

[29]In previous article I briefly lay out the terms of what I consider as the "second wave of attractions" in France; another chapter in the manuscript details this to a much fuller extent. "Feu sur le public. La balistique cinématographique de l'avant-garde en France," *CinémAction*, special issue, *Arts Plastiques et Cinéma*, no. 122 (2007), pp. 100-9.

for example. It was also forwarded in large part by the influx of American star-system strategies that made Chaplin's comedy as well as his identity a complex metaphor for the modern condition—a metaphor that further influenced the avant-garde's tactical address to a mass public by way of American star-system vernacular.

It is generally believed that Chaplin arrived upon French screens--to "change absolutely everything"--[30] in March 1915, only a year preceding the first appearances of either Dada in Zurich or Blaise Cendrars's poem "Le Musickissme" in which he writes: "CHARLOT conductor taps the cadence/Before/the hated European and his corseted wife" ["CHARLOT chef d'orchestre bat la mesure/Devant/L'européen chapeauté et sa femme en corset."][31] By 1915, the Parisian film press *Ciné-Journal* and *Le Film*, the most prolific early French journals devoted to the cinema, were replete with images of Chaplin and advertisements that evidence the copyright war surrounding the name "Charlot." Several companies distributed Chaplin's film during this period, but from 1915 until the early 1920s the name "Charlot" was the sole property of Jacques Haïk, independent distributor of Keystone and Essanay films.[32] Despite the continual trade press tug-of-war between Haïk and Pathé Frères--whose advertisements were bound by law to use the name Charlie Chaplin and who therefore underscored the "veritable" nature of their distributions-- Chaplin was quickly assimilated into French culture as Charlot.

(FIGURES 7 and 8)

[30] Soupault, Philippe, "Le Cinéma USA," in *Ecrits*, p. 42.
[31] Abel, "American Film and the French Literary Avant Garde," p. 90. According to Abel, Cendrars' text was dated November 1916, but was published in *L'Oeuf dur*, 14 (automne 1923). Cendrars may be referencing *A Night in the Show* (1915) in which an orchestra conductor taps Charlot on the head with his baton.
[32] See Theirry G. Mathieu, *La Naissance de Charlot*, No. 15 (La Reole, Ars Regula Editions), n.d. Mathieu's journal series is a wonderful source for French and American primary materials on Chaplin's Essanay and Keystone period.

Cendrars's early poem bears witness to this fact as does Max Jacob's 1918 comparative meditation on the cinema and the theater. Published in the avant-garde journal *Nord-Sud*, Jacob suggests that by this date film advertisements bearing declarations of "celebrity" by way of extra-filmic information about the life of the film star were merely remnants of an outmoded rhetoric belonging to bourgeois theater traditions—evidence of "theatrical mores in the cinematographic" ("les moeurs théâtrales aux cinématographiques").[33] On the one hand, Jacob shares Louis Aragon's similarly critical attitude toward contemporary theater, a stance Aragon takes the same year in *SIC*: "*Les Mamelles [de Tirèsias*, Guillaume Apollinaire, 1917] finally liberates us from boulevard theater…Already the cinema has given us Charlie Chaplin (won't he interpret *Les Mamelles*!), Apollinaire gives us Tirèsias." ["*Les Mamelles* enfin nous libèrent du théâtre des boulevards...Déjà le cinéma nous avait donné Charlie Chaplin (que n'interpréta-t-il *Les Mamelles*!), Apollinaire nous donna Tirèsias."][34] On the other hand, Jacob's subtle use of the word "cinematographic" here delineates the emergence of the *phenomenon* of stardom as a state of signification emancipated from the promotional techniques of the popular theater that were nonetheless contemporary practice. He thereby distinguishes the phenomenal operations of American stardom from the indigenous ones still at work in the French context. For Jacob, "Charlot," the only name in his treatise, does not discretely denote a player or a character; rather, "Charlot" is an assimilated signifier connoting Chaplin's simultaneous "immortality" and humanity, a "man made large by this art." Jacob explains that such an effect is made possible through

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[33] Max Jacob, "Théatre et Cinéma," *Nord-Sud*, *Revue Littéraire, Collection Complète* [No. 12, Février 1918] (Paris, Editions Jean-Michel Place, 1980), n.p.
[34] Louis Aragon, "Le 24 Juin 1917," *SIC* [No. 26, February 1918] (Paris, Editions Jean-Michel Place, 1993), p. 206.

the photographic nature of the cinema: "The mirror offered by the theater, in an attempt to aggrandize us as heroes, only deforms us; without wishing to, the photographic mirror aggrandizes us by externalizing us, by recreating us."[35]

Only eight months after Chaplin's image became fare for French audiences, *Ciné-Journal*—which began publishing again in spring of 1915—promoted Chaplin on its cover (see Figure 2) in a suite of images that drew upon Chaplin's uniquely expressive body as both actor and filmic personage. Significantly, the cover image bears the trace of neither Chaplin's name nor his copyrighted appellation; rather, his gestural form and vestiture make his identity metonymically recognizable even as his back is turned. "More and more IMITATED...Less and less EQUALED," the journal announced, hailing the reader's comprehension that Chaplin's style was inimitable even when performed by another filmic body.[36] One such imitator was film comedian Billie Ritchie who was also strongly promoted in *Ciné-Journal* throughout the mid-teens.[37] The journal's advertisements for Ritchie, who had similarly "crossed the Atlantic to make you laugh," suggested publicity tactics that, in their similarity, attempted to usurp those associated with Chaplin's metonymic recognizability. Advertising rhetoric suggested that a simple silhouette would suffice to attract and charm the film-going public of (Ritchie's) stardom, as well as ultimately communicate Ritchie's, rather than Chaplin's, identity as a form: "A life-sized silhouette will stand out before your clients ["Une silhouette grandeur naturelle

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[35] Jacob [1918], *Nord-Sud*, n.p. "Le miroir qu'offre le théâtre voulant nous agrandir en héros nous déforme; le miroir photographique nous agrandit sans le vouloir en nous extériorisant, en nous recréant."
[36] "De plus en plus IMITÉ...De moins en moins ÉGALÉ."
[37] Billy West, another notable Chaplin impersonator, was abundantly advertised in *La Cinématographie Française* during the late teens.

représenerez auprès de vos clients,"], while "A miniature silhouette will recall me to your memory" ["Une silhouette miniature me rapperllera à votre bon souvenirs."][38]

Despite evidence of film industry rivalry for the attribution of stylistic iconicity that Chaplin dominated in its most phenomenal, however basic, form of star-system vernacular, the French avant-garde made no mistake in their ability to identify the object of their filmic attention. For example, Louis Aragon's poem *Charlot sentimental*, first published in *Le Film* in March, 1918, was re-published in *Nord-Sud* two months later (May 1918).[39] Although the title denotes the poem's unmistakable object, its contents further confirms that it is Charlot's metonymic moustache that "mystically" made the star strangely "real": "Oh the clerk/how comic his moustache and eyebrows/artificial!/He cried when I pulled them/Funny!" ["Oh le commis/si comique avec sa moustache et ses sourcils/ artificiels!/ Il a crié quand je les ai tirés./ Etrange!"][40]

Similarly, Jean Cocteau's 1917 ballet *Parade* is well known for its character "The Little American Girl" whose jittery walk could signify none other than Chaplin's gestural "neurosthenia."[41] In 1917, Cocteau also addressed the readers of *Nord-Sud* concerning the creative process that he shared with choreographer Léonide Massine and Picasso, the ballet's costume and set designer, in the work's overall "marriage" of choreography,

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[38] *Ciné-Journal* (13 November 1915), n.p.
[39] Abel, "American Film and the French Literary Avant Garde," p. 9.
[40] *Nord-Sud*, [No. 15, Mai 1918], n.p.
[41] For a brilliant analysis of the figure of "La Jeune Fille Américaine" in works of the historical avant-garde, see Elizabeth Hutton Turner, "*La Jeune Fille Américaine* and the Dadaist Impulse," Naomi Sawelson-Gorse, ed., *Women in Dada* (Cambridge, The MIT Press), 1998, pp. 4-22. On the topic of neurosthenia and Chaplin's expressivity, see Rae Beth Gorden, *Why the French Love Jerry Lewis: From Cabaret to Early Cinema*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001); Rae Beth Gordon, "From Charcot to Charlot: Unconscious Imitation and Spectatorship in French Cabaret and Early Cinema," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 27, No. 3 (Spring, 2001), pp. 515-49.

decor and costuming.[42] Cocteau described how, during the early process, the dancers' movements were conceived to recall the image of insects whose "ferocious habits" were the revealed in early scientific films.[43] The film image's power to iconographically connote movement as form was transferred onto Chaplin's silhouette, whose appearance in the ballet was a "fortuitous" happenstance when, during the last rehearsals, the enormous and poorly constructed two-man horse (inspired by the Cirque Médrano's Fratellini Brothers[44]) seemed to metamorphose into the silhouette of *Fântomas'*s Hackney with Chaplin in the mount. The laugh that the silhouette subsequently generated in Picasso and the stagehands convinced the creators to leave this particularly powerful chimera intact to intimate the rather ghostly presence of the star whose walk was literally "imitated" by the young actress (Maria Chabelska) who inhabited the cinematographic "type" of The Little American Girl: "The little girl raced, rode bicycles, vibrated like film imagery, imitated Charlot, chases a pick pocket with a revolver, boxes, danses ragtime" ["La petite fille monte en course, se promène à bicyclette, trépide comme l'imagerie des films, imite Charlot, chasse un (pick) pocket au révolver, boxe, danse un ragtime..."][45] Cocteau's creative vision, as well as the fortuitous amalgamation of form on his stage, describes the transversal mobility of Chaplin's signifying capacity in 1917 as not simply an adored comic persona, but as an essentially present signified despite the sign's total absence.

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[42] Jean Cocteau, "La Collaboration de 'Parade," *Nord-Sud*, *Revue Littéraire, Collection Complète* [Nos. 4-5, Juin-Juillet 1917] (Paris, Editions Jean-Michel Place, 1980), pp. 29-31.
[43] Cocteau [1917], *Nord-Sud*, p. 30. "Nos bonshommes ressemblèrent vite aux insectes dont le film dénonce les habitudes féroces."
[44] See Deborah Menaker Rothschild, *Picasso's Parade* (New York, Sotheby's Publication, 1991).
[45] Cocteau [1917], *Nord-Sud*, p. 30.

Cocteau's absorption of "Charlot" into his modernist ballet exemplifies how avant-garde works had at times naturalized Chaplin's numinous star-figure into the simple contour of its visual expression. Ivan Goll's text *Die Chaplinade* (*La Chaplinade ou Charlot Poète*, 1920), illustrated by Fernand Léger (Figure 9), similarly drew upon the prima facie presence of Chaplin's form within the modern urban context. Beginning with a description of hundreds of giant, colorful advertising posters for Chaplin's films that lined the walls and kiosks of European streets during the teens, it goes on to recount the story of the Tramp's travels through Europe as if on a promotional tour for his films.[46] In the context of the avant-garde, Goll's text is a fascinating point of intersection between the various strains of Dada as an international movement, suggesting that Chaplin served as a powerful point of commonality capable of bridging the cultural, linguistic, and geographical distance that separated the various Dada groups in Berlin, the Netherlands, Paris, and Spain. For example, when Goll's text ends with a cinematographically inspired passage that announces a "Chaplin-Christ," we are provided an important segue to *Charlie-Christus*, Erwin Blumenfeld's 1921 drawing made when he was living in Amsterdam. (Figure 10). Spanish Dadaist Guillermo De Torres's 1920 aerogramme to Tristan Tzara reads less well as iconographic communication than as a literal testament to the Dadaists' epistolary legacy, but it nonetheless establishes the extent to which Chaplin's international circulation acted as a bridge between the international actors in the Dada program: "All of Madrid is becoming hyper-Dadaist. For my part, I'm going to read a study of spasmodic erudition on the 'influence of Chaplin on the movement

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[46] Matthew Witkovsky has suggested that Goll's poem possibly inspired Vítzslav Nezval's 1922 short filmscript 'Charlie in Court' ('Charlie ped soudem'). See Matthew Witkovsky, "Surrealism in the Plural: Guillaume Apollinaire, Ivan Goll and Devetsil in the 1920s," *Papers of Surrealism,* Issue 2 (Summer 2004). http://www.surrealismcentre.ac.uk/papersofsurrealism/journal2/index.htm

DADA" ["Tout Madrid devient hiper-Dadaiste [sic]. Moi, je vais au lire un étude [sic] d'érudition spasmodique sur 'l'influence de Charlot dans le mouvement DADA.'"[47] While the text to which he refers remains regrettably unknown, his message concludes with an enthusiastic description of his plans to organize a cinema screening with his fellow artists. The cinema generally, and Chaplin quite specifically, functioned as an essential calling card of commonality for the Dadaists. Signaling cinema's function as also a transnational communication technology, Chaplin established the range of shared cultural and conceptual experiences across divisions of time, space, and national identity—in turn mirroring the essential features of the Dada mouvment's culture of expatriation, international circulation, and renegotiated "geopolitical dislocation."[48]

While these examples efficiently clarify how Chaplin's international circulation and appeal as a global, cinematographic star served as a means of communication, or a serious, however comical, subject of avant-garde art works, they only gesture toward cinema stardom's deeper function with respect to Dada's identity tactics that wholly reformulated the work and concept of the artist. Blumenfeld's 1921 postcard addressed to Tristan Tzara, however, redirects the focus of our discussion. Titled *President-Dada-Chaplinist* (Figure 11) Blumenfeld's photomontaged missive is clearly a response to a message previously sent from Tzara's address: "To my Dear Tzara" ("à mon cher Tzara") is inscribed above a whimsical depiction of himself posed with his hands under his chin in a way that is meant to be "Chaplinesque." The gesture, combined with Chaplin's name, establishes a circuit of signification that positions Blumenfeld's identity, Chaplin's gestural iconicity, and the Dada movement into a voluble relay. Furthermore, the

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[47] De Torres, Guillermo, aerogramme to Tristan Tzara (Paris: Collection Bibliothèque Jacques Doucet, fonds Tzara, 1920).
[48] Demos, T.J., "Circulations: In and Around Zurich Dada," *October* 105 (Summer 2003), p. 148.

photomontage's bottom inscription reads "Charlotin," a play between "Charlot" and the French word *charlatan*, and thereby summarizes Blumenfeld's knowledge of the underlying tension contained in his self-portrait: by positing himself as both Chaplin and "President-Dada," he in fact performs a playfully fraudulent imitation of two far more powerful sources behind the formation of his identity—Chaplin as well as Tzara, the more authentic "Dada-President." As I will demonstrate, Blumenfeld's work corroborates Tzara's own use and interest in Chaplin both before and after his 1920 arrival in Paris from Zurich. Tzara's particular treatment of Chaplin worked to stabilize star-based operations of iconicity as an avant-garde tactic, which in turn facilitated a much broader implication of celebrity into the Parisian Dada style—a style that synthesized the popular cultural techniques of stardom with avant-garde revolution.

III: "Je me sens très Tristan Tzara": Becoming an Avant-Garde Icon

(FIGURES 12 and 13) In the years before Tristan Tzara relocated to Paris, he established the popular press as a key factor in the construction of Dada practice and its international circulation. As art historians and Dadaists alike have attested, the vast number of newspaper clippings amassed by Tzara, his colleagues, and by the professional agency the artists hired to track mention of Dada in the press, amounts to nothing short of a "life-panorama" of both Tzara and the movement Dada.[49] "Supposedly this is how it went: day by day, in their local café, the Dadaists read to one another newspaper critiques

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[49] Meyer, Raimund, "Zurich, Geneva: 'From High, Low, Dull, Errant to Mad Intent'—The Press as Dada-Motor," in Harriett Watts, ed, *Dada and the Press* (New Haven, G.K. Hall & Co., 2004), p. 11. See Richard Hulsenbeck, ed., *Dada Almanach*, (Berlin, 1920). See also Stephen C. Foster, *Dada: The Coordinates of Cultural Politics* (New York, G.K. Hall & Co., 1996).

from all over the world and delighted in the echo of Dada, each offering new proof 'that Dada had struck yet another heart.'"[50] With this image in mind, it is easy to imagine Tzara—newspaper in hand and accompanied no doubt by Hugo Ball, Marcel Janco, Sophie Taeuber, and Jean Arp—delighted by the international attention his antics were garnering, as well as narcissistically titillated to see his own name in print along side those of criminals, politicians, and movie stars: "A new literary school, recently launched by Tristan Tzara, is making much noise in Zurich…Anarchy and disorder dominate in the manifesto read by Tristan Tzara" ["Une nouvelle école littéraire, lancée dernièrement par Tristan Tzara, fait beaucoup de bruit à Zurich...L'anarchie et le désordre dominent dans le manifeste lu par Tristan Tzara."][51] In the following passage from the Geneva newspaper *L'Opinion* (February 21, 1920, No. 8), the reporter applies a tone better suited for a bank robbery than an avant-garde event:

> Mr. Tristan Tzara—whose nationality is unknown—works in Paris. But the World Congress of Dada took place last month in Zurich.
>
> During a discussion, at the point of argument, Mr. Tzara apparently fired four shots from a revolver—blanks, fortunately—upon one of his interlocutors. Intervention by police, appearance at the station.
>
> [M. Tristan Tzara—dont nous ignorons d'ailleurs la nationalité—opère à Paris. Mais le Congrès mondial Dada a eu lieu le mois dernier à Zurich.
>
> Au cours d'une discussion, à bout d'arguments, M. Tzara a, paraît-il, tiré quatre coups de revolver—à blanc, heureusement—sous un de ses interlocuteurs. Intervention de la police, comparution au poste.][52]

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[50] Meyer, "Zurich, Geneva," p. 11; Meyer quotes Richard Hulsenbeck, *En avant Dada* (1920).
[51] *La Feuille*, (Geneva, August 3, 1918), in Watts, ed., *Dada and the Press*, p. 35. Watts' edited collection has a wealth of reprinted primary articles.
[52] Watts, ed., *Dada and the Press*, p. 61.

One Geneva newspaper even reported a Dada "bluff" whose slapstick effect remarkably recalls Chaplin's tree costume gag in *Shoulder Arms* (1918; released in France in March, 1919). Apparently, Tzara and his cohorts built a shapeless, cardboard construction—three meters tall and covered with boards and colored paper with "different inscriptions" — that they then placed between some trees in the Place du Burkli on the Bahnhofstrasse in Zurich. When a mass people gathered around to proclaim their outrage at this strange sight, the Dadaist hiding within the structure's hollow center put the sculpture into movement as well as vocally responded to the onlookers' criticism, much to their surprise. "Dada or gaga, it's the same" ["Dada ou gaga, c'est tout un"], the reporter concluded.[53]

The press's undeniable role in the formation of Dada can be tracked to Dada journals that also circulated internationally, as is the case with the March, 1920, issue of *Dada* (Figure 14) whose contents and formal layout were designed to parody those of the mainstream press: read alongside the adjacent yet free-standing image-portrait of André Breton, the title for Tzara's poem "Mr. Aa submits to the tax" (*Monsieur Aa soumis à la taxe*) resonates more aptly as a newspaper headline than poetry. In the lower right-hand corner of the same page, above a photograph of Louis Aragon, a small poem by Jacques Edwards may be mistaken at first glance for *une petite annonce*, or classified ad: "Charlot//Déconcertons/troublons/énervons//partout//guerre à l'amidon"[54] The poem's placement between the photograph and Aragon's own prose-poem whose title (Salle de

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[53] "Les Dadaïstes," *La Tribune de Genève* (October 14, 1919), Watts, ed., *Dada and the Press*, p. 59. We might translate this sentence as "Dada or idiocy, its all the same." "Gaga," literally meaning "doddering," can also mean "to be crazy about," or "to be soft on something," as in "The police were not gaga for Dada."

[54] Jacques Edwards, *Dada* (*Dadaphone*) No. 7 (1920), p. 5. Loosely translated, the poem reads: "Charlot// Let's disconcert/ let's ruffle/let's annoy// everywhere/ war by starch." Edwards's use of the first person plural "Nous" form of verb tense complicates the translation, as does the placement of "Charlot" which is neither clearly the poem's title nor the "speaker" of the other lines.

Spectacles:Paris – Electric= Palace] operates in the guise of a short report on the cinema theater [salle de spectacle] the Electric Palace (located in the 2nd arrondissmement at 5, Blvd. Des Italians) no doubt pays homage to Aragon's particularly cinéphilic attitude as well as to his adoration of Chaplin.[55] However, as this small example also signals, the journalistic network alive in the Dada movement bears witness to the proliferation of the star-system's own tactics in mass media outlets. Should we follow Tzara to Paris in 1920, cinema stardom as media-savvy becomes the more specific culture-industry animus of Dada as it made Paris its new center of production.

In 1919, the same year Duchamp created his readymade *L.H.O.O.Q.*, Tzara was undoubtedly anticipating his arrival in Paris when he distributed his poster "The only expression of the modern man." (Figure 15) Originally created for his own Zurich-based journal, *Dada*, it was also destined as an insert in avant-garde journals abroad, most importantly in the Parisian journal *Littérature* that was itself founded in 1919 by André Breton, Phillippe Soupault, and Aragon.[56] As Michel Sanouillet suggests, the document denotes three kinds of subscribers to Tzara's publication: first, actual Dada agents (Aragon, Hans Arp, Paul Éluard, Arthur Cravan, Paul Dermée, Francis Picabia); second, supporters who had ties with *Littérature* such as André Gide, Jean Paulhan, and Paul Valéry. The third tier is, undeniably, in the words of Sanouillet, "pure fantasy":[57] the Prince of Monaco (Prince Albert I), Henri Bergson, and finally, Charlie Chaplin. These three figures, the Prince, the Philosopher, and the Clown—the last being an alternative

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[55] Abel, "American Film and the French Literary Avant Garde,", n. 25, p. 9. Only six months later, Aragon would publish the first two chapters of *Anicet ou le panorama* as "Toutes choses égales d'ailleurs" in the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, a work that indisputably took Chaplin as inspiration for his main character Pol.
[56] Sanouillet, Michel and Y. Poupard-Lieussou, *Documents Dada* (Bienne, Suisse : Weber, 1974), p. 23.
[57] *Ibid*., p. 23.

name for the "Tramp" or "Charlot"—stand together as icons for a transitional moment in European politics, contemporary thought, and popular culture.

While all of the names on Tzara's poster are fascinating and interpretable, these three are the most readable as sources for Tzara's conceptual and personal project that would soon be expressed by his clownishly decadent and undoubtedly philosophic antics when he arrived on Picabia's doorstep carrying a famously overstuffed suitcase. Recalling Tzara's arrival at her and Picabia's home on January 17, 1920, Germaine Everling described Tzara as nearly mechanical, his idiosyncrasies and appearance memorably emblematic:

> He was short, slightly stooped over, swinging two short arms at the end of which hung two chubby hands. His skin was waxy, his myopic eyes semed to search behind his pince-nez for a stable point to fix upon. Raising himself up at any moment, with a machine-like gesture, a long tuft of black hair swooped down over his forehead…
>
> [Il était petit, légèrement voûté, balançant deux bras courts au bout desquels pendaient des mains potelées. Sa peau était cireuse, ses yeux myopes semblaient chercher derrière le lorgnon un point fixe où s'accrocher. Remontant à tout instant, d'un geste machinal, une longue mèche de cheveux noirs qui plongeait sur son front....][58]

The subtler implications of Tzara's star-studded advertising campaign for Dada are revealed if we recall André Breton's letter to Tzara in June, 1919. At this moment, Tzara was still residing in Zurich; yet it is clear that by the time the letter reaches Breton, he has received the poster, because near the letter's end Breton pens a two-line paragraph that terminates with a question mark: "This echo of Charlie Chaplin is a delicious surprise. But of course, it's not true?"[59] The tentative quality of Breton's language is surprising in the context of a missive replete with names, references, confessions, and

[58] Germaine Everling quoted in Michel Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris* (Paris: Éditions CNRS, 2005), p. 119.
[59] Breton, André, letter to Tristan Tzara (June 12, 1919), in Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 409.

seductively effusive remarks. His reticence suggests that somewhere he believes, or wants to believe, that among all of Tzara's outlandish new subscribers to *Dada*, Chaplin may very well have been authentic. Hence, Breton confesses, perhaps unbeknownst to himself, his own fandom, his own desire, or his own identification with the star Charlot. In fact, Paul Éluard may have best perceived Breton's love for if not identification with Chaplin. In "Présentations de Circonstance" (1920), submitted to Francis Picabia's journal *391* (at the time published as *Cannibale*), Éluard descriptively enumerates the various participants of what, by 1920, had become the Parisian Dada movement:

> (*very rough translation) Tristan Tzara, inventor of underground flowers for volcanos…/Filippe Soupault, shard of a bottle, a do-it-all friend for his friends…Francis Picabia has managed to admit that young girls have only one charm…*Breton, a tragic Charlot*, Breton, eleven small dead men. Sure to never finish it with this heart, his doorknob. (emphasis mine)
>
> Tristan Tzara, inventeur des fleurs souterraines pour volcans…/ Filippe Soupault, tesson de bouteille, ami à tout faire pour ses amis…Francis Picabia a réussi à faire admettre que les jeunes filles n'ont qu'un charme …*Breton, Charlot tragique,* Breton, onze petits morts. Sûr de ne jamais en finir avec ce coeur, le bouton de sa porte.[60]

The second official Dada event of February 5th, 1920, elucidates both Eluard's reference and Tzara's introduction of stardom into the field of Dada practice—for Tzara's poster was only the first preparatory tactic for what was to come. To assure that a vast and varied public would be in attendance at the *Salon des Indépendants*, held at the Grand Palais des Champs Elysées, Tzara contacted *Le Journal du Peuple* with information that led to the following article of February 2, penned by Émile Duharme:

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[60] Éluard, Paul, "Presentation de Circonstance," in Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 182. (emphasis mine).

> Charlie Chaplin, the illustrous Charlot, has just arrived in Paris. He is going to give us reason to applaud; his friend 'the poets of the Movement Dada" invite us to the morning meeting they are organizing…the famous American actor with give an address…We only recently learned that Charlie Chaplin has joined the Dada Movement…Gabriele d'Annunzio, Henri Bergson, the Prince of Monaco will be converted to Dadaism.
>
> Charlie Chaplin, l'illustre Charlot, vient d'arriver à Paris. Il va nous être donné de l'applaudir; ses amis 'les poètes du Mouvement Dada' nous convient à la matinée qu'ils organisent...Le célèbre acteur américain y prendra la parole...On a su dernièrement que Charlie Chaplin venait d'adhérer au Movement 'Dada'...Gabriele d'Annunzio, Henri Bergson, Le prince de Monaco [se seraient] convertis au Dadaisme.[61]

This stunt indeed drew a large audience that historians have described as raucous: projectiles were thrown, insults hurled, and general outrage expressed because, of course, Charlot was not mentioned and he certainly did not appear.[62] In his place stood the Dadaists, who read manifestos or poems: Aragon pronounced, "Moi—Tout ce qui n'est pas moi est incompréhensible," while Picabia spoke as W. C. Arensberg and declared, "Dada est américain, Dada est russe, Dada est espagnol, Dada est suisse...."[63] Amidst the chaos, Tzara recalled in 1950, the Dadaists simply continued to perform, and maintained an iconic indifference to the climate of hostility that his media stunt had created.[64]

We might imagine the anticipation the Dadaists felt when the room at the Grand Palais had filled to maximum capacity with eager film fans by noon.[65] We might also

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[61] As quoted in Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 131.
[62] Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 131. See also René Lacôte and Georges Haldas, *Tristan Tzara: Poètes d'aujourd'hui* (Paris, Seghers, 1952), p. 26.
[63] Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, pp. 132-3.
[64] Tristan Tzara, in an interview with Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes (Chaine Nationale, Mai 1950), as cited in cited Lacôte, *Tristan Tzara*, p.26. Incedentally, when Ribemont-Dessaignes was asked to respond to the journal *Du Cinéma*'s December, 1928 survey entitled "Are You Afraid of the Cinema?" he responded in length but only mentioned two names: "Jusqu'à présent c'est dans les films de Charlie Chaplin et de Man Ray que j'ai saisi la présence immédiate de ce qui peut *faire peur*." Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes, "Avez-Vous Peur du Cinéma?" in Georges-Ribemont-Dessaignes, *Dada*, Jean Pierre Begot, ed., (Paris, Editions Ivrea, 1994), p. 511.
[65] Sanouillet, *Dada à Paris*, p. 131.

imagine that during the moments leading up to the scandal, Tristan, André, Louis, Paul, Francis, Jean, and Georges all potentially envisioned themselves as the American film star the masses were feverously awaiting to see in person. We should then also imagine the audience members who doubtless looked for Chaplin in the face of each Dadaist present on the stage. Perhaps some even wondered from a distance if the dark-haired Breton was in fact Chaplin himself for, of all the Dadaists present that day, it is Breton who perhaps best resembled a "tragic Charlot," to recall Éluard's poetic image.

Toward a conclusion…

(Figure 16 and 17) Marcel Duchamp's female persona, here enacted for Man Ray's camera (1921) is perhaps the best known of numerous other works by the artist before 1925—works that similarly touch on the stardom effect of the culture industry, and that I can only evoke here in a simple enumeration: R. Mutt, Tzanck, Haleine, George W. Welch (alias Bull, alias Pickens), Monte Carlo—a series that David Joselit suggests "establishes a Nietzschean 'vicious circle' of subject effects."[66] Considered against silent film starlet Jetta Goudel or the more recognizable Mae Murray, who incidentally was the subject of Jacques Rigaut's eponymous poem published in *Littérature* in March 1922, Duchamp's personage seems to have arrived directly from the star-unit of any Hollywood-based film production company. The point here is not to engage a discussion of the conditions out of which Duchamp alights upon the Oedipal circuits buried within a Deleuzean "desiring-machine," for that is the grist of many other

[66] David Joselit, "Marcel Duchamp's 'Monte Carlo Bond' Machine, *October*, Vol. 59, (Winter, 1992), p. 14. My list refers to the following works by Duchamp: *Fountain* (1917); *Tzanck Check* (1919); *Belle Haleine, eau de violette* (with Man Ray, 1921); *Wanted/$2000 Reward* (1923); *Obligation Monte Carlo* (1924).

mills. Rather, the importance lies in how Duchamp and others—including Tzara, I.K. Bonset (a.k.a Theo van Doesburg), and Francis Picabia (**Figures 18, 19, 20**)—seemed, in 1920s Paris and elsewhere, ill with symptoms similar to those of "Chaplinitis"—symptoms that, formally speaking, conditioned identity into a semiotic relay akin to cinema stardom's occasional operations of spurious human grandeur, beauty, wit, and talent. With this particular strain of the disease, as Chaplin might have put it, "The slapstick, of course, is a symbol."[67]

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[67] Anonymous, "What Chaplin Thinks," *New York Times,* 7 October, 1923, p. 4, in Hayes, ed., *Charlie Chaplin Interviews*, p. 72.