

Theo Van Doesburg's, De stijl, and Dada

Van Doesburg's Dada overture

I.

Erwin Blumenfeld's submission to Tristan Tzara's *Dadaglobe* in the fall of 1920 not only marked the end of Blumenfeld's own Dada involvement, but also the end of the Dutch Dada-Centrale, if there was any before. Tzara's *Dadaglobe* was at the same time the platform where Theo van Doesburg (fig. 5.1) intended to make his first major appearance as a Dadaist, with no less than five contributions, though not under his own name, but under his newly invented heteronym, I. K. Bonset.

Dada had come to van Doesburg's attention in December 1919. On the same page of the December 1919 issue of *De Stijl* on which van Doesburg drew a clear line between *De Stijl* and *La Revue du Feu*, he also acknowledged the receipt of Dadaist material, probably forwarded to him by Tzara. Van Doesburg mentioned Tzara's first Dada publications, *La première aventure céleste de Monsieur Antipyrine* (The First Heavenly Adventure of Mister Antipyrine) and *Vingt-cinq poèmes* (Twenty-Five Poems) (both 1916), as well as the four issues of the journal *Dada* published in Zurich in the years 1917-19.¹ In a letter to his friend Antony Kok, poet and railway employee in Tilburg, dated December 23, 1919, van Doesburg commented, "These people may not be serious, but they still have good qualities."²

In February 1920, van Doesburg presented Dada for the first time to the readers of *De Stijl*. At this stage, van Doesburg only printed some citations from Tzara's "Manifeste Dada 1918" (published in *Dada* 3), as well as citations from a note by Tzara on Pierre Reverdy's *Le Voleur de Talan* (The Thief of Talan) (the note was originally published in *Dada* 2). Although van Doesburg did not comment on the quotes, all the referenced remarks by Tzara pointed to an apparent, albeit implicit, congeniality between Dada and *De Stijl*. In the "Manifeste Dada 1918," Tzara's remark "*Dada est l'enseigne de l'abstraction*" (Dada is the mark of abstraction) was quoted as a general point of reference.³ *De Stijl* aimed

at abstraction as well. Other congenial opinions include the rejection of sentimentality and realist illusionism. Like Tzara, van Doesburg and *De Stijl* also stressed the essentially cosmic quality of the work of art, which was congenial to the views held by Hans Arp in Zurich.

Van Doesburg's presentation of Dada in *De Stijl* coincided with his preparation for a journey through Belgium to Paris. In Paris, van Doesburg planned to visit Piet Mondrian, who had returned to Paris after the end of World War I. Shortly before his departure from the Netherlands, Mondrian sent a letter to van Doesburg in which he promised to show van Doesburg "something about 'le mouvement Dada.'"⁴ Although van Doesburg had already had seen Dadaist artifacts, as documented in the Zurich *Dada* review, as well as illustrations by Arp and Marcel Janco in the books by Tzara, it was in Paris that he first saw original Dadaist works of art with his own eyes. Van Doesburg attended the opening of the exhibition of the Section d'Or (Gold Section) in Paris and visited another exhibition, this one organized by the Société des Indépendants (Society of Independents) in the Grand Palais. The exhibition in the Grand Palais showed works by Jean Crotti, Suzanne Duchamp-Crotti, Francis Picabia, and Georges Ribemont-Dessaignes. It remains unclear whether van Doesburg met the Dadaists themselves during his short stay in Paris.

In the same issue of *De Stijl* in which he reported his visit to both exhibitions in Paris,⁵ van Doesburg included for the first time considerations originating from a Dadaist framework in his own aesthetic reflections. In a discussion of the work of the Stijl-related architect, J.J.P. Oud, and designer-architect, Gerrit Rietveld, van Doesburg quoted from Otto Flake's "Thesen" (Theses) in *Der Zeltweg*: "Art dies like religion died" and "Art...dies, because we set foot on a higher stage of spirituality, where this aid doesn't satisfy anymore." These citations were intended to support the argument that art will have to be reintegrated into ordinary life.⁶ Flake's theses, while perhaps not particularly Dadaist, reflected rather a common belief and objective in the avant-garde.⁷ This doesn't alter the fact that van Doesburg regarded Flake's notes and *Der Zeltweg* as genuinely Dadaist.⁸ Remarkable in this regard is van Doesburg's general claim—here to be understood as an element of the Stijl program—in the same article, "The meaning of life comprises the manifestation of *one-and-the-same* in a constantly different way."⁹

Almost three years later, in *Wat is Dada?*, van Doesburg presented more or less the same conception as typically Dadaist. "Dada denies evolution.... Nothing changes essentially. The world remains constantly equal to itself."¹⁰

As the references to Tzara, Flake, *Dada*, and *Der Zeltweg* indicate, van Doesburg was already considering the integration of Dada in his own aesthetic Stijl enterprise in early 1920. Not only did he integrate Flake in his considerations, he also started corresponding with Picabia immediately after returning home from Paris. Van Doesburg was particularly

attracted to Picabia's mechanical fantasies. In a letter dated March 29, 1920, he asked Picabia to send him material for a series of articles on Dada he intended to publish in the Dutch weekly *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* (The New Amsterdammer).¹¹ Picabia sent van Doesburg a photographic image of himself as well as photos of two paintings: *Paysage* (Countryside) (1908) and *Vagin brilliant* (Brilliant Vagina). These pictures can be found as illustrations in the first and only contribution on Dada in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, published May 8, 1920.¹² Most likely, Picabia also sent him a selection of French Dadaist publications, probably some back issues of 391, as well as *Dadaphone* (i.e. seventh issue of *Dada*), the ninth issue of *Cannibale*, and the first issue of *Z*. The receipt of these publications was noted in *De Stijl* in May 1920.¹³

Van Doesburg probably contacted not only Picabia in Paris, but also the Dadaists in Berlin, either the Malik Verlag (Publishers) or Huelsenbeck's Centralamt der deutschen Dada-Bewegung (Central Office of the German Dada Movement). The May 1920 issue of *De Stijl* also acknowledged the receipt of Huelsenbeck's *Deutschland muss untergehen. Erinnerungen eines dadaistischen Revolutionärs* (Germany Must Perish. Memories of a Dadaist Revolutionary) and the second Berlin edition of Huelsenbeck's *Phantastische Gebete* (Fantastic Prayers).¹⁴ Together with the material received from Zurich, these publications formed the basis for van Doesburg's article, "Dada," in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*. In this article, van Doesburg posed as a well-informed bystander who tries to explain to a broader audience the purport of Dadaism and to give an account of the previous development of Dadaism.

II.

Van Doesburg's article, "Dada," in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* was remarkable for several reasons. It was, first of all, van Doesburg's first extensive public discussion of Dadaism. At the same time, the article indicated, albeit in a concealed way, that van Doesburg himself intended to participate in the movement as well. This still hidden intention was exposed by Picabia in a note in *Cannibale*, in which Picabia reported "Mr. Theo van Doesburg, director of the review *De Stijl*, will publish a Dadaist manifesto and a series of articles on DADA in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*."¹⁵ Furthermore, van Doesburg's article showed a profound understanding of the intentions of the Dadaists. It indicated simultaneously, though, that van Doesburg was quite ill-informed about the actual genesis of the Dada movement. According to van Doesburg (or perhaps, rather, according to his informant, Picabia), the first step toward Dada was not made in Zurich, but by Picabia, when he founded the journal *361*, in New York in 1915. A year later—according

to van Doesburg, who was quoting Picabia—Tzara discovered the word "Dada." According to van Doesburg in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, Dada as a movement had started only, when Picabia and Tzara met in Switzerland (this contact between Tzara and Picabia was only established late 1918), with the Cabaret Voltaire in Geneva [sic] as its operating base. From Geneva, Dada had spread to Germany and later to other countries, comprising in the meantime an ever-growing number of already more than a hundred "presidents" all over the globe.

The essence of Dada was, according to van Doesburg, not comprehensible by means of "normal brain exercise." It was impossible, as an Doesburg stressed, "to test [Dada publications] by reason, trying to get hold of the *sense* of each one of them, trying to understand each word with sound bourgeois thoroughness."ⁱ

Dada, on the contrary, "does not want that. But what actually, does Dada want? *It wants nothing*. Yet, 'nothing' in a positive sense," van Doesburg continued. The essence of Dadaism, according to van Doesburg, was the complete doubt in everything and everybody. Although Dada was characterized by van Doesburg as "an attitude to life" rather than as an artistic phenomenon, he was more or less anticipating his later Dada involvement, when he argued that "the artist's nature is self-evidently revolutionary. A non-revolutionary artistic nature does not exist, cannot exist. Art is rebellion. Hence, artists are rebellious.... Some openly, others secretly."ⁱⁱ

The Dadaists were regarded by van Doesburg as the prime example of the first category. And, since every real artist is by nature a revolutionary artist and, in turn, every contemporary revolutionary artist predisposed to be a Dadaist, van Doesburg rhetorically asked "Who knows how many dormant adepts of this 'alarmingly' expanding Dadaism, this 'Bolshevism of the spirit,' exist already in Holland. Why should this resistance against a through and through vulgar, systematically bourgeois world, rancid of fraud, mushy of lies, corroded by materialist self-interest, not emerge in the brilliant brain of that single noble pariah called 'artist'?"ⁱⁱⁱ

There can be no doubt that van Doesburg regarded himself to be such a noble pariah, such a revolutionary artist. However, as van Doesburg understood himself expressly as an artist and (certainly in his own self-image) as main theoretician of De Stijl and as a mouthpiece of De Stijl's ambitions to create a new "Neo-Plasticist" art, he could not act as a Dadaist himself. This neo-plasticism comprised an art with a firm theoretical foundation. Dada, on the contrary, had given up art and was rejecting every theory, as van Doesburg acknowledged in his Dada presentation in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*. A pre-condition for passing "through the narrow gate of Dada" was the renunciation of all your own "dadas (fads and fancies)." "Dadaism asks sacrifices.... The first sacrifice it asks is—*your dada*. The renunciation of taking-yourself-and-your-dada-seriously, since 'the true Dadas are against Dada.'"¹⁶

The birth of I. K. Bonset

I.

On the one hand, van Doesburg was apparently attracted to Dadaism. On the other hand, he neither doubted the aspirations of De Stijl nor intended to drop the Stijl project. To resolve this personal dilemma, he resorted to a remarkable operation: the creation of "another face," the heteronym I. K. Bonset, with a biography and an oeuvre of his own, by and large separated from Theo van Doesburg-as-Theo van Doesburg.

The appearance of this "other face"^{IV} was in a way already announced in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*. Van Doesburg opened his article with the remark that Dada may seem to the bystander as *snobistische reclamezucht* (snobbish craving for publicity). The heteronym I. K. Bonset can be interpreted as an anagrammatic pun on this characterization of Dada. Understood as an anagrammatic pun, "I. K. Bonset" allows several related readings. The initials "I. K." can be read as the Dutch word *ik* (in English, I). "Bonset" can be read backwards as the Dutch words *te snob* (too snobbish). When the Dutch linguistic phenomenon of the hardening of the last consonant is reversed, *te snob* can also be read in Dutch as *de snob* (the snob)—in other words: "I, the snob" or "I, too snobbish."

Elsewhere, it has been suggested that "Bonset" can also be read as an inversion of the French phrase *c'est bon*, (it's fine). This allows an interpretation of "I. K. Bonset"—when "I. K." is read as *ik* in Dutch (I'm fine). This interpretation of "I. K. Bonset" as "I'm fine" leads, in a way, back to the other deciphering of "I'm a snob."

Yet another possible meaning of "I. K. Bonset" can be derived from the assumption that the name is—in one way or another—the result of a letter or word inversion. If one relates both *c'est bon* and *te snob* or *de snob* with the process of inversion, resulting in "I. K. Bonset," the heteronym I. K. Bonset could be interpreted as an indication that "I. K. Bonset" is a manifestation of the inverse, the other side, the backside, the contrary; in other words, "the other face" of the real ego—Bonset as the "other face" of van Doesburg, either fine, snobbish, or too snobbish.

There are still more interpretations of the name. Jean Leering suggested an anagram of *ik ben zot* (I am a sot); Jane Beckett added *ik bons het* (I thump/ban or jilt it), pointing at Bonset's confession to alogic and his destruction.¹⁷

II.

Next to van Doesburg's remark about the "snobbish craving for publicity,"

his discussion in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* of art as an act of rebellion and as an expression of the rebellious nature of the artist is another indication that van Doesburg was already considering an involvement in Dada when writing the article. Van Doesburg conceded in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* that every true artist is an insurgent "in his own way, following his own talent and temperament. Some openly, others secretly. Some by acting, others by not-acting. The first will always be the victim of the second, the egotists. The Dadaists belong to the first group."^v

In a way, it seems as if van Doesburg created his own openly rebellious Dadaist, a quasi-victim of himself—van Doesburg, as the secretive Dadaist. These conjectures concerning the creation of van Doesburg's alter ego, Bonset, are confirmed by his first letter to Tzara, dated June 6, 1920. Perhaps compelled by Picabia's remark that van Doesburg planned to publish a Dadaist manifesto, Tzara had contacted van Doesburg, among others, with the request to send him all newspaper articles on Dada. In response, van Doesburg sent Tzara some newspaper clippings. As well, van Doesburg explained to Tzara his stand toward Dada, by and large in accordance with his views as set out in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, while now introducing Bonset as the literary collaborator of *De Stijl*. He wrote, "My review *De Stijl* is the only modern review in the Netherlands. Organ of an extremely modern movement of painters, sculptors, architects etc. For the rest, there is nothing except reviews of cheese and soap merchants. This low country is very flat and the inhabitants still live in a two-dimensional world. A bit of Dada will be very necessary, one of my literary collaborators, I. K. Bonset, has the intention to found a Dadaist review, but he has no money, time and people."¹⁸

III.

Simultaneous with van Doesburg's Dada article in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, Bonset had made his debut in the May 1920 issue of *De Stijl* with a poem called "X-beelden" (X-Images). In the next issue, June 1920, Bonset contributed an essay on poetical issues to *De Stijl*, "Over het nieuwe vers en het aaneengeknoopte touw," (On the New Verse and the Knotted-Together Rope). A collection of aphorisms by Bonset, entitled "Het andere gezicht" (The Other Face), followed in two parts in August and September 1920.¹⁹

It was particularly in the manifesto-like collection of aphorisms, "Het andere gezicht," that Bonset paid tribute to "the intuitive philosophy of Nietzsche, Bergson, and Dada (Val. Serner),"²⁰ and presented himself as a supporter of Dadaism. The first aphorism reads "*Dadaism*—When behind 'nonsense' a sense is hidden, which is deeper than that of the standard, 'nonsense' is not only allowed but even necessary. Thus, Dadaism will create new *supersensible* [or: transcendental] standards."²¹

In subsequent aphorisms, Bonset dismissed the realist illusionism of Western art as a simple imitative protocol of reality. Conventional portrait painters, who try to reproduce the face of the portrayed person as precisely as possible, are nothing but "notary souls," Bonset suggested. Their portraits had, according to Bonset, "no more artistic value than the literary value of a notarial act."²² Reality is only *waan*.²³ In Dutch, the word *waan* is rather ambiguous—it means "only illusion" and "delusion," but it also means "lunacy." Bonset argued that only the strongest *waan* (illusion, delusion, and lunacy) will develop into a "sublime reality."²⁴ Contemporary *waan* and the sublime are contrasted by the unequivocal and unambiguous ways of expression and comprehension in so-called "dogmatic" periods. In these "dogmatic" times, mediocre, and, as such, untrue, standards not only allowed a common understanding of art and literature; these mediocre standards also created, more or less simultaneously, an "untrue order." Instead, "creative times," according to Bonset, were characterized by general misunderstanding and a lack of order.²⁵ This lack of order, however, was to be understood as "true disorder," as true "chaos," anticipating the "true order" of a "new world."²⁶ This "new world" could be reached through a combination of Dadaism and revolutionary will.

The role of Dada—or, to be more precise, of Dadaist "onzin"(nonsense) is essential here. The word "onzin" was already placed between quotation marks by Bonset, as in the previous citation. Bonset, thus, indicated that his "nonsense" was not just nonsense—it was no ordinary madness, but instead, the conscious "deviation of a standard, which has rusted and turned into a dogma."^{vi} The rejection of this standard, this norm, and the embracing of the abnormal are necessary preconditions for *nieuwe waarden*, meaning both "new values," as well as "new significances." In other words, Dadaist abnormality simultaneously offered a "new standard" and a "new sense."²⁷ In this respect, Dada appeared explicitly as the pre-condition of and, at the same time, as a first actual step toward "the creation of the new world"—the final objective of De Stijl. Obviously, De Stijl, as the rather vague ally of Dadaism, most likely implied "revolutionary will."²⁸ This will, Bonset argued, was—together with Dadaism—the driving force behind the creation of the necessary new world.

I. K. Bonset, Piet Mondrian, and Dada

I.

In regard to the pair Theo van Doesburg and I. K. Bonset, it is often

assumed the first was the constructivist, the second the Dadaist personality of Theo van Doesburg, or rather of Christian Küpper—van Doesburg's name according to his birth certificate. Furthermore, it is frequently assumed that van Doesburg (or Küpper, to be more precise) strictly divided his Dadaism and constructivism between the constructivist ego van Doesburg and the Dadaist alterego Bonset. Van Doesburg would have concealed the true identity of Bonset in an attempt not to jeopardize his image as a consequent propagator and protagonist of the constructivist avant-garde project, *Nieuwe Beelding*.²⁹ Allegedly, it was not until 1932 that the true identity of van Doesburg/Bonset was revealed by Nelly van Doesburg in a memorial issue of *De Stijl*, published after van Doesburg's sudden death the previous year.³⁰

The assumption of a complete and strict division between van Doesburg and Bonset is, however, not accurate. Certainly, not everybody was informed of the real identity of Bonset. For example, van Doesburg apparently concealed his personal unity with Bonset from Tzara.³¹ At the same time, there are some clues that cannot be ignored which indicate that Tzara was probably aware of the van Doesburg/Bonset identity riddle. Bonset was in possession of the official Dadaist stationary used by Tzara,³² and the only one to whom Tzara could have given this stationary was van Doesburg. In another case, van Doesburg's attempt to present Bonset as a separate, different personality was more obvious. When Hendrik Werkman, the Dutch printer, poet, and painter, sent a complimentary issue of his review, *The Next Call*, to van Doesburg, asking for an exchange with *Mécano*, Bonset, the "literary manager" of the review, reprimanded Werkman for directing his letter to the wrong person.³³

Van Doesburg apparently tried to hide his double existence from an outsider like Werkman. Several of his close friends and associates of the *Stijl* circle were, beyond any doubt, confidentially informed. His partner, Pétronella Pétro/Nelly van Doesburg (alias of Petronella van Moorsel) (fig. 5.2), even acted as Bonset in a blurred photo apparently showing Bonset with a motorist's cap and a little mustache (fig. 5.3).³⁴ In the circle of *De Stijl*, Oud, Kok, Vilmos Huszár, and Thijs and Evert Rinsema were also informed. Kurt Schwitters knew the true identity of Bonset as well. Schwitters even revealed in his journal *Merz*, as early as 1923, that van Doesburg and Bonset were actually one and the same person. In a short note called "Aufgedeckte Speudonyme," (Disclosed Pseudonyms), Schwitters wrote "In the battle for Truth and Beauty the editor hastens to inform the public, that the HIGHLY ESTEEMED MISTER THEO VAN DOESBURG has never existed. Derived from the name SODGRUBE, he is a badly unveiled pseudonym for I. K. Bonset (see illustration)."³⁵

The accompanying picture, dating—according to the caption—from 1899, shows a bearded man, apparently Bonset (fig. 5.4).

II.

Within the Stijl circle, not every member may have been informed about the true identity of Bonset. Piet Mondrian, who lived abroad in Paris, may have been among those from whom Bonset's identity was kept secret. It has sometimes been suggested that one major reason for the secrecy surrounding Bonset was Mondrian's puritanism in constructivist matters. The creation of Bonset could thus be regarded as an attempt by van Doesburg to prevent a conflict between Mondrian and himself about his Dadaist turn—a Dadaist turn which may seem a clear deviation from the rigid constructivism hitherto represented by De Stijl, Mondrian, and van Doesburg-as-van Doesburg.³⁶ This consideration may not be completely inappropriate, particularly in view of the fact that Bonset acted as the author of a clear-cut attack on Mondrian, which van Doesburg intended to publish in *Dadaglobe* (see below).

Yet even though Dada may seem quite at odds with Mondrian's puritanism, or rather, with the prevailing image of a rigid Mondrian, one should remember that Mondrian actually introduced van Doesburg to Parisian Dadaism. It should be noted as well that Mondrian (at least on a private level) was far from rejecting Dada. Mondrian signed several letters in 1920 as "Piet-Dada." This was not just a private joke: in a letter dated April 11, 1920, Mondrian expressed his affinity "for the family DADA."³⁷ One may regard this private identification with Dada as a personal inconsistency. However, the second manifesto of De Stijl, which articulated its stand on literature, was jointly written by van Doesburg and Mondrian during van Doesburg's stay in Paris in early 1920. They drew on previous reflections and experiments by futurists, cubists, and Dadaists.

In a pamphlet entitled *Le Neo-Plasticisme*, published in 1920, Mondrian extensively discussed a new constructivist poetics. He argues that the future neo-plasticist writer "will use and improve the perfections introduced in Syntax, Typography, etc., already found by the Futurists, Cubists, and Dadaists" (my italics, HvdB).³⁸ Whereas Mondrian rejected the apparent Dadaist literary technique of arranging words arbitrarily, he implicitly agreed with Dada when he demanded that "the principles of the contrary [should] dominate the entire [literary] work."³⁹ Mondrian related this balancing of opposites to the theories of the contemporary Dutch mathematical philosopher, M.H.J. Schoenmaekers. The congeniality with Dadaist conceptions of the literary balancing of opposites, though, is apparent. In a letter to van Doesburg dated June 30, 1920, Mondrian elaborated on his principle of the contrary, suggesting "that the word and the sentence can be made more profound only by placing its opposite immediately after it..., for example,

man - woman

boy - girl

soldier - sutler
etc., etc."⁴⁰

This conception for a poetics of the *Nieuwe Beelding* resembled Tzara's claim in the "Manifeste Dada 1918" that he wrote his "manifesto to show that you can perform contrary actions at the same time, in one single, fresh breath," by means of "continual contradiction, and affirmation too."⁴¹ The similarity between Mondrian's balancing of opposites and Richard Huelsenbeck's (and Salomo Friedlaender's) objective to transcend binary oppositions like "content and form, wife and man, matter and spirit"⁴² is obvious.

In regard to Mondrian's own proximity to Dada, the question arises as to why he should not have tolerated something comparable by van Doesburg, even after Mondrian returned from his private association with Dada in December 1920. At that time, Mondrian reported to van Doesburg that he had stopped writing "dada" all over his letters, "since it was nice to show *enthusiasm*, but in the long run we just aren't dada."⁴³ Bonset was created some half a year earlier, when Mondrian still signed his letters "Piet-Dada."

In regard to Mondrian, and as a possible explanation for the creation of Bonset, the suggestion has been made that Mondrian probably did not favor an increasing literary involvement by van Doesburg at the expense of van Doesburg's engagement in the field of the visual arts. Bonset, who appeared mainly as a writer—as *the* literary collaborator of De Stijl and later as the *gérant littéraire*, (literary manager) of *Mécano*—could have been a conscious creation of a semi-autonomous agency through which van Doesburg could express himself in the literary field without putting at stake his role as protagonist of new developments in the visual arts. Again, it may be true that Mondrian was mostly interested in the visual arts and the development of a new, neo-plasticist art may have been at the heart of his involvement in De Stijl. However, it has to be conceded once more that Mondrian was not only co-author and signatory of the second literary manifesto of De Stijl⁴⁴—Mondrian also was an author of literary prose.⁴⁵

Theo van Doesburg, I. K. Bonset, and Aldo Camini

I.

On closer inspection, the division of roles between van Doesburg and Bonset, was quite complicated. In the first place, it should be noted that van Doesburg-as-van Doesburg was involved in Dada as well. His stand toward Dada in his "role" as van Doesburg seemed, in general, to be the

position of the observing, surveying bystander. In general, van Doesburg pretended to maintain his distance from Dada, without concealing his sympathy for the movement. An early example is his article on Dada in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* in May 1920. Although only this first part of the intended series was published, van Doesburg returned frequently to Dada in other reviews of contemporary artistic developments. For example, in 1921, in a series entitled "De nieuwe woordbeelding," (The New Word Construction) in the Dutch monthly *Het Getij*, van Doesburg described Dada as battle cry attracting "the most brilliant and heroic personalities."⁴⁶

In the second half of 1920, Dada made its entry in *De Stijl*, initially through the introduction of Bonset and under the supervision and responsibility of van Doesburg as editor-in-chief. Bonset's contributions to *De Stijl* were followed by the gradually increasing participation of other Dadaists, like Arp, Schwitters, Tzara, Hugo Ball, Raoul Hausmann, and Clément Pansaers. By opening *De Stijl* to renowned Dadaists, van Doesburg obviously affiliated the journal (and himself in his role as editor-in-chief) with the Dada project. This holds true not only for the presentation of Dadaists like Tzara or Arp, but also for the presentation of van Doesburg's new Dadaist associate Bonset within the framework of *De Stijl*.

It was not Bonset who introduced himself as a new collaborator of *De Stijl*. It was not Bonset who insisted on the necessity of Dadaism, but actually van Doesburg himself who pointed at this very necessity both in his Dada survey in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* and in a letter to Tzara dated June 6, 1920, in which he wrote "[a] little bit of dada will be very necessary."^{vii} Besides, van Doesburg not only acted as the intermediary, mouthpiece, and letterbox of Bonset, he also presented himself as somebody who was highly interested in Dada. Van Doesburg, not Bonset, was corresponding and meeting with Dadaists in France, Germany, Italy,⁴⁷ and Belgium. Van Doesburg, not Bonset, asked Tzara, "How is the Dada temperature? Is he dead?" in a letter dated November 1920.⁴⁸ Van Doesburg, not Bonset, presented himself—next to his "friend I. K. Bonset, the wholehearted Dadaist"—in a letter to Tzara dated December 8, 1920 as "the first—and until this very moment—only one in Holland, who defends Dadaism."⁴⁹ Furthermore, van Doesburg not only offered Bonset the opportunity to publish in *De Stijl*, he also invited several "real" Dadaists to do the same. Hence, van Doesburg placed *De Stijl* as an avant-garde platform at the disposal of the Dada movement. One should be cautious, however. For example, Schwitters's contributions in *De Stijl* were not intended as Dadaist experiments, but as constructivist "elemental" cipher and sound poems, at least to Schwitters's and van Doesburg's understanding.⁵⁰ As well, Schwitters was expressly presented by Bonset not as a Dadaist, but as the champion of constructivist poetics.⁵¹ Hausmann, likewise, was not only represented by an article on Dadaism, "Dada ist mehr als

Dada" (Dada is more than Dada); *De Stijl* also printed a manifesto by Hausmann in which he outlined his constructivist "PRÉsentism," and an "Appeal for elementary art" of a constructivist provenance, signed by Arp, Hausmann, Ivan Puni and László Moholy-Nagy.⁵²

Furthermore, van Doesburg not only baptized his pet dog "Dada" (like Picabia, who named his dog "Zizi de Dada"), he also baptized himself a Dadaist, if only implicitly, as author of introductions into Dadaism with an obvious Dadaist touch. An example is *Wat is Dada?*, a survey on Dadaist programmatic published on the occasion of the Dutch Dada campaign of 1923.⁵³ Van Doesburg also participated under his own name in the Dadaist review, *Mécano*. He acted as co-editor of *Mécano* and was responsible for the visual arts, side by side with the "literary manager" Bonset. Finally, van Doesburg made his appearance as a performer in several Dadaist manifestations in 1922 in Weimar and Jena and, a few months later, in 1923 in the Netherlands. Van Doesburg's role in these soirées left no doubt about his proximity and affinity to the Dadaist project. Even though van Doesburg tried to keep up his image as a well-informed outsider,⁵⁴ at these soirées, he acted as a wholehearted Dadaist. At the Dutch soirées, van Doesburg shouted Dadaist slogans from the back of the theater or from a balcony, while Schwitters was reciting poems or reading stories.

Van Doesburg's active role as a Dadaist at the Dutch Dada soirées of 1923 was not only noted by the Dutch daily press, in which van Doesburg was described as a Dadaist. In the Dutch newspapers, ignorance towards the avant-garde as a whole prevailed. The word "Dadaist" was used as a pejorative bromide for a wide variety of misunderstood and rejected expressions of the avant-garde. Hence, the qualification of van Doesburg as a Dadaist in the Dutch press has to be taken with a grain of salt. However, van Doesburg's rapprochement to Dadaism, or at least his close affiliation with the "literary collaborator" of *De Stijl*, Bonset, was also well noted in other circles of the avant-garde in the Low Countries. In December 1921, Paul Joostens noted in a letter to Jos. Léonard written, after the publication of "Anthologie-Bonset" in *De Stijl*, "The latest news: van Doesburg has abandoned his planes peddlery he has become dadaist."⁵⁵ Likewise, Werkman apparently identified *Mécano* not with the imaginary Bonset but with the real van Doesburg.⁵⁶

II.

In summary, it may be obvious that van Doesburg was engaged in Dadaism as van Doesburg as well. However, it seemed as if van Doesburg tried to avoid public stigmatization as "just" a Dadaist by presenting Dada primarily in the wider framework of *De Stijl*. Dada wasn't the first non-constructivist avant-garde movement that van Doesburg

allowed to present itself in *De Stijl*. In the first volumes, the futurist Gino Severini had been a prominent collaborator, to some extent anticipating the more dynamic, vitalist constructivism of the later van Doesburg and Bonset.⁵⁷

Still, van Doesburg stressed repeatedly that Bonset was the only real Dutch Dadaist. In part, this stress on the singularity of Bonset can be interpreted as an expression of van Doesburg's overdeveloped self-esteem, which prevented his toleration of anyone besides him or his projects. As August Hans den Boef and Sjoerd van Faassen suggested, the stress on the singularity of Bonset as the first and only Dadaist matched van Doesburg's behavior in other matters, not least in his presentation of *De Stijl* as the only Dutch avant-garde group.⁵⁸ Comparable with van Doesburg's conscious omission of rival groups in his panorama of the Dutch avant-garde in *Valori Plastici*, van Doesburg/Bonset consciously denied the fact that the Dutch couple Otto and Adya van Rees had been involved in Dada in Zurich. The names of Otto and Adya van Rees had appeared in the Zurich review *Dada* in 1917. Their names were added as well to the list of (unsolicited) signatories of the Berlin "Dadaistisches Manifest" (Dadaist Manifesto) of April 1918. The van Rees couple also figured prominently in Tzara's "Chronique Zurichoise," (Zurich Chronicles) published in 1920 in Huelsenbeck's *Dada-Almanach*. Tzara's chronicle starts with an exhibition of works by "Arp van Rees Mme van Rees" in the Gallery Tanner in Zurich in November 1915 "as the start of Dada—as *grande rumeur des hommes nouveaux* [great rumor of new men]. Van Doesburg must have been familiar with the participation of the van Rees couple in the Dadaist ventures in Zurich⁵⁹ from the complimentary copies of the Zurich review *Dada*, sent to him in December 1919. Due to the *Dada-Almanach*, which van Doesburg probably obtained during his first trip to Berlin in December 1920, he must have been familiar as well with the fact that Paul Citroen and Erwin Blumenfeld were posing as directors of a Dada-Centrale in Holland. Van Doesburg must also have been familiar with the participation of Blumenfeld and Citroen in Tzara's *Dadaglobe* project in the first half of 1921. Whereas a submission by Blumenfeld has been found in Tzara's estate, Citroen was mentioned as a collaborator from Amsterdam next to "J. K. Bonset (Leyde)" in a first announcement of the *Dadaglobe* project in *new york dada*.⁶⁰ Although van Doesburg was in Paris at the time of the soirée of *La Revue du Feu* in February 1920—the occasion of the first Schwitters recitation in the Netherlands—it seems quite unlikely that he wasn't informed about this event after returning home.

Certainly, one may argue that the van Reeses were not so much Dutch Dadaists, but rather participants of Dada in Zurich (or only immediate precursors). One may argue as well that the Dada-Centrale in Holland was rather a fake set-up and—as far as it existed—rather an extension of Dada in Berlin. Furthermore, the Dadaist element in the

soirée of *La Revue du Feu* in February 1920 may not have been a univocal confession to Dadaism. In the end, this may leave van Doesburg/Bonset as the only clear-cut Dutch Dadaist. However, it should be noted here that part of the fictitious biography of Bonset was a domicile in Jutendorf, near Vienna.⁶¹ In this respect, Bonset was no more Dutch than the van Rees couple or Citroen and no less fictitious than the Dada-Centrale in Holland. Bonset appeared as a Dutchman only through his self-positioning as a *Dutch* Dadaist, through his language, and through the way he situated his poetics in (or rather, against) a Dutch tradition. There is, however, no explicit indication of Bonset's nationality.

The claim of Bonset's singularity as the only Dutch Dadaist may in part be induced by van Doesburg's personality, as Den Boef and Van Faassen have suggested. Aside from this psychological dimension of the claim of Bonset's singularity, there are other possible backgrounds. Another reason could well have been an attempt by van Doesburg to protect himself—as van Doesburg—against possible reproaches of Dadaism directed at him. As could already be observed in the hostile description of the soirée of *La Revue du Feu* in the review *De Kunst*, in the Netherlands, the epithet "Dada" was from the outset anything but a neutral classification. In this inimical critique of March 1920, the term "Dada" was not simply the denomination of a current or movement, but rather both stigmatization and indictment in one. It is noteworthy here that during and after their Dada campaign, both van Doesburg and Schwitters stressed that they—as acting Dadaists—weren't Dada at all. They pointed instead to the respective audiences, journalists, and critics, who shouted "Dada" and other nonsensical slogans during the soirées and behaved in a supposedly Dadaist manner, as the actual Dutch Dadaists (see below), even though the audiences at the soirées were deliberately put on the wrong track by van Doesburg and Schwitters, who situated the soirées in theaters and called them "Dada evenings." Van Doesburg and Schwitters thus suggested that a presentation of Dada would be offered and not an elicitation of Dada. The fact remains, though, that most texts presented at the soirées were not of a genuine Dadaist provenance, but rather literary and artistic works developed in the constructivist framework of De Stijl and Schwitters's Merz project, in accordance with the constructivist program of both enterprises.

Judging from the reactions registered in the contemporary press, however, the texts presented at the Dada soirées were regarded by the audiences—not as serious literary works or as examples of the constructivist aesthetics of De Stijl or Merz, but simply as acts of Dadaist lunacy and provocation. This misinterpretation, scrutinized by Schwitters as an expression of the "stylelessness" of the "Dadaist age,"⁶² was obviously provoked by the misleading (self-) presentation of the soirées. The public reproach of Dadaism, provoked as well as

incriminated by Schwitters and van Doesburg during the Dutch Dada campaign, was, however, neither an isolated phenomenon nor confined to the unfathomable appearance of Dada and its ambiguous presentation in the course of the campaign.

A similar case, not consciously provoked, occurred in the Frisian townlet of Drachten, in the north of the Netherlands. Here, van Doesburg was offered the opportunity to apply the color scheme of *De Stijl* to the interior and exterior of some newly built middle-class row houses. Since the exterior wood of houses in Holland was usually painted only in the colors green, brown, and white, van Doesburg's multicolored design of the houses in red, yellow, and blue caused considerable protest, not least from the new inhabitants, who refused to live in a "parrot hamlet" ridiculed in the local community and press. They removed the colors soon after the houses were surrendered.⁶³ In the context of the general misunderstanding and rejection of the principles of *De Stijl*, the creation of Bonset may well have been intended—at least in part—as a strategic measure: the creation of a lightning rod, attracting some, if not all, of the imputations of ridicule, lunacy, and supposed Dadaism directed at *De Stijl*.

III.

Yet Bonset was more than just a lightning rod. After Bonset's debut in May and June 1920, in a letter dated June 12, 1920, van Doesburg confided to Oud, "I can tell you in confidence that I am right now again splitting myself up. Therefore my great plan of attack under the pseudonym of I. K. Bonset in *De Stijl*. The old can only vanish by the perpetual creation of new and terribly strong contrasts. And that's what I am doing."⁶⁴

It may seem quite vague—letting the old disappear by the continual creation of "new and terribly strong contrasts." The same idea can be found in a (on first sight) no less obscure consideration concerning the "mathematics of life" in Bonset's collection of programmatic aphorisms, "Het andere gezicht" (The other face): "What we should learn from mathematics is the system of extension. When we want to construct from the point-I a superphysically-extended-I (R^4 -I) we have to start developing ourselves from point-I (a condition of totally in itself closed individualism) to line-I, from line-I to plane-I, from plane-I to body-I, from body-I to the superphysically-extended-I. This is not possible without the continuous liquidation of our previous I. This mathematical evolution, this multiplication of life axes is necessary to modern man."⁶⁵

Although the precise purport of this note may not be evident at first sight, it should be clear that Bonset's creation served a higher purpose: the development toward a "superphysically-extended-I." This "super-

physically-extended-I" has to be reached through the multiplication of life axes and the continuous liquidation of previous egos, leading from the individual point-I to the supersensible, superphysical, metaphysical, universal, transcendent self. This same process of gradual but radical transcendence of the simple outer nature can also be regarded as a prime objective of De Stijl. In a "dialog" on natural and abstract reality by Mondrian, preceding Bonset's "Het andere gezicht" in the August 1920 issue of *De Stijl*, Mondrian presented the Nieuwe Beelding propagated by De Stijl as the expression of a "new time," in which the individual has ripened into the universal. This "new time" differed from the old time by "total 'otherness'" (italics and quotation marks by Mondrian).⁶⁶ In other words, "new time" and "new man," as the universalized subject of "new time," possess a completely different "other face."

The creation of Bonset was in a way the anticipation of the "new world" and the "new man" envisaged in Mondrian's "dialog." In this respect, Bonset's status can be compared with the role of Dadaism in Bonset's first aphorism. Bonset was a transitory phenomenon (or personality), like the "true disorder" of Dadaism. This "true disorder" was defined by Bonset as a transitory phenomenon in the development from present-day "untrue order" to the "true order" envisaged by De Stijl. Thus, Bonset—as a Dadaist—not only appears as an ally of van Doesburg. Dadaism not only appears as a movement compatible and parallel with De Stijl and its Nieuwe Beelding. In fact, a higher purpose seems to have been envisaged by splitting up and redoubling van Doesburg into Bonset and van Doesburg. This redoubling was envisaged as a step on the road toward the complete abolishment of the individual and the victory of the Universal, which consists of a multitude of life axes.

Aldo Camini, another heteronym of van Doesburg made his debut in June 1921 in *De Stijl*. Camini was introduced by van Doesburg as a young Italian, "a shortly deceased, totally unknown painter-writer."⁶⁷ Van Doesburg claimed that he found a manuscript in the Milanese studio of the metaphysical painter "C.C." (this probably implied Carlo Carrà). Camini was not a Dadaist himself—he actually represented his own "Caminoscopy. An anti-philosophical (*sic*) philosophy of life without thread or system."⁶⁸ Camini's role was more or less that of a third party acknowledging the importance of Dada. In the eighth section of his "Caminoscopy", Camini asserted "Identity, simultaneity and spontaneity constitute the trinity of the Dadaist philosophy of life and I am sure that this explanation of life, in which the opposites touch each other, [and in which] genius and lunacy are identical, will conquer within the foreseeable future the space in which our planet maintains itself."⁶⁹

In a later essay, "Dadaïsme," written for the Dada campaign in 1923, van Doesburg called upon Camini as a foreign authority affirming the relevance of Dada.⁷⁰ The same role as third party affirming the importance of Dada was attributed to Camini by van Doesburg in a letter to Tzara. According to van Doesburg, Camini had "[m]any points of view

on Dadaism, as movement against Futurism and Cubism.... He defends Dada in each line and his philosophy (sic) is constructed with Dada temperament."⁷¹

IV.

The creation of Camini may have been in part an attempt by van Doesburg to strengthen the propaganda for Dada in *De Stijl*. Camini can be seen at the same time as yet another axis in the process of self-multiplication and (partial) self-liquidation that started with the creation of Bonset. This very process, however, not only led to the liquidation of Christian Küpper and the multiplication of heteronyms. Bonset and Camini were more than just the first more or less successful stages in the splitting of Küpper/van Doesburg into van Doesburg/Bonset, and the splitting of van Doesburg/Bonset into van Doesburg/Bonset/Camini. Bonset in particular can be regarded simultaneously as an artificial, experimental subject in which the multiplication of life axes, self-liquidation, and the creation and sharpening of contrasts could be probed—contrasts not only between different subjects and between separate life axes, but also contrasts in a single subject, as oppositions on an individual life axis. In the case of van Doesburg and Bonset, at least six apparent contrasts can be distinguished:

1. The apparent opposition of Dadaism and constructivism. Bonset was primarily the Dadaist, van Doesburg in the first place a constructivist. As such, Bonset's trade seemed to be rather of a destructive nature. Van Doesburg's program seemed to be, by and large, dominated by the aim of the construction of a new world, even though the destruction of the old was as essential to constructivism as the construction of the new was essential to Dadaism. Often neglected is the fact that the avant-garde experiments in the framework of the Dada project were no less "constructive" in their final objectives than the aesthetic innovations envisaged in constructivism. In this respect, it is significant that several Dadaists developed themselves gradually, without any notable crises or ruptures, into constructivists. Especially in Germany, the personal developments of Janco, Hausmann, Schwitters, Hans Richter, and Viking Eggeling showed a gradual personal (and group) development towards constructivism. It should be obvious that van Doesburg/Bonset can be situated on the same "Dadaist-Constructivist axis,"⁷² though in an inverse chronological order, as it were.

2. Van Doesburg seemed to be most keen on general recognition. He attached far more importance to the acceptance of his ideas and concepts and to the possibility of realizing his plans, be it as an architect or an interior designer, an artist who wants to show his

work at exhibitions, the editor of a review with a clear program, or a teacher of aesthetic principles who hopes to find allies and supporters. Bonset's mode seemed rather to be one of continuous attack and polemics.

3. Van Doesburg sought to establish his authority and he represented dogmas. Bonset's main occupation was subversion. Bonset's subversion was, in part, even directed against van Doesburg and *De Stijl*. His main focus was, however, the enemies of *De Stijl*—not only its bourgeois opponents from the artistic and literary establishment, which had to be attacked to create new possibilities for *De Stijl*, but also other groups and institutions in the avant-garde, which represented divergent and (in the eyes of van Doesburg/Bonset) aberrant ideas.

4. Van Doesburg tried to grasp the sensual in mathematical formulas and geometrical abstraction. Bonset tended towards the other end of the scale. He stripped sensuality from any sentimental connotation and indulged in a blunt evocation of sexuality. Thus, Bonset can also be regarded as a kind of secret outlet by which van Doesburg could vent his most private desires—desires that could not be articulated in the universalistic, pure and, at the same time, puritan artistic idiom of the *Nieuwe Beelding*.⁷³

5. Van Doesburg and Bonset seemed to cover divergent working areas. Van Doesburg was primarily involved in the visual arts as an artist, designer, and architect. Van Doesburg also acted as a theoretician and as the editor of *De Stijl*, striving for a *Nieuwe Beelding*. Bonset was primarily focused on literature as a writer, as a critic, and as someone developing a new poetics: the *Nieuwe Woordbeelding* (New Plastic Poetics, or New Word Construction). The problem—how to come to a new world, a new order, and a new man through a new aesthetics—was consequently, addressed from two sides: from a visual and from a textual perspective.

6. In this context, the predominance of the destructive momentum in Bonset's writing and the apparently more constructive tendency in van Doesburg's work could be related to the image/word contrast. Dada (Bonset) rejected and destroyed conventions in many different ways—both in the visual arts as well as in literature. When a constructive side of Dadaism is distinguished in studies on Dada, this Dadaist constructivity seems mainly situated in the visual arts; for example, in the experimentation with new forms and a new aesthetic. Comparable experiments in the sphere of literature, however, are instead more often interpreted as acts of fundamental destruction—the destruction of conventional language, of language as such, even though these experiments were explicitly described by the Dadaists themselves as attempts to reach a new language or to save, as Ball stressed, "the most sacred area of poetry."⁷⁴

Also in the case of Bonset and van Doesburg, the destructive tendency may well seem to prevail, not because destruction was the predominant trait of Bonset's work, but rather as a consequence of his literary starting point, whereas van Doesburg is perceived primarily as a visual artist. In a way, the quite different perception of the Dadaist (visual) works of art on the one hand and Dadaist literature on the other was anticipated by van Doesburg/Bonset in their respective programmatic—aesthetic and poetic—objectives. The visual artist van Doesburg was striving for the exact geometrical/mathematical (re-)presentation, formation, and construction of a sublime reality. Bonset stressed that literature should be met with destructivity and should be ruled by intuitive alogic.⁷⁵

The Dadaist as a constructivist poet and theoretician

I.

Van Doesburg was not exclusively a visual artist. Bonset was not exclusively a poet. Van Doesburg had been quite an active writer under his own name up to 1920, though not in *De Stijl*. In the moderate modernist reviews like *Eenheid* (Unity) and *Het Getij*, van Doesburg published poetry, prose, and drama in the late 1910s. In late 1920, a short narrative entitled "De Zwarte Vlek. Simultaneïstische Schets" (The Black Spot. Simultaneous Sketch), marked the end of his public career as a writer of literature under his own name. This end of van Doesburg's literary career coincided with the creation of his alter ego Bonset and Bonset's debut in *De Stijl*.⁷⁶

Although van Doesburg's literary writing as van Doesburg ended in 1920, van Doesburg still authored extensive essays on *Nieuwe Woordbeelding* in *Het Getij* and *Ça Ira!*, more or less flanking Bonset's articulation of a new constructivist poetics.⁷⁷ Bonset, in turn, also made his appearance as the creator of collages with apparent similarities to work by Schwitters and Hausmann (fig. 5.5).⁷⁸ Whereas van Doesburg was also marginally involved in Dadaist activities, Bonset was not only a Dadaist, but at the same time, a constructivist. Proportionately, the Dadaist share in the oeuvre presented under Bonset's name may be relatively high in comparison with that of van Doesburg. A comprehensive inventory of Bonset's works reveals, though, that—as in the case of van Doesburg—most works by Bonset are to be classified as constructivist, at least according to Bonset's self-understanding and the presentation of Bonset's oeuvre in *De Stijl* and *Mécano*. The Dadaist share in Bonset's work is proportionally smaller

than his constructivist output.

Next to Bonset's nominal role as editor of the small review *Mécano*, Bonset's Dada oeuvre comprised some manifestos and critiques, a small collection of aphorisms, and a few parodies. Bonset's expressly constructivist oeuvre comprised instead a considerable number of—in part, quite extensive—essays on his new poetics, a special issue of *De Stijl* with an encompassing collection of his poetry—the “Anthologie-Bonset”—and several separately published poems in *De Stijl*. In the years 1926-28, Bonset even published a serialized novel in *De Stijl*, entitled “Het andere gezicht. Abstracte, sur-humanistische roman” (The Other Face. Abstract, Sur-Humanist Novel)—not a strictly constructivist “abstract,” narrative, but rather a “sur-humanist” overture toward surrealism, Bonset's new focus in the late 1920s.⁷⁹

Bonset, as a poet, may have been a constructivist like van Doesburg, yet as a constructivist, Bonset followed different objectives, or to be more precise, van Doesburg introduced new objectives through Bonset.⁸⁰ It has been noted that in their final objectives, Bonset's Dadaism and the *Nieuwe Beelding* of *De Stijl* are intimately related and more or less congenial approaches with the same aim. Still, some apparent differences between van Doesburg and Bonset can be made out in the respective approach of this common goal. The concept of *Nieuwe Beelding*, as developed by van Doesburg and Mondrian in the first years of *De Stijl*, led to a static representation of reality or rather to a geometrically fixated presentation of a higher, sublime reality. In 1920-21, van Doesburg seemed to be more and more skeptical about the static result of the neo-plasticist experiments.

Without endangering his own authority as spokesman of the *Nieuwe Beelding*, the introduction of Bonset offered van Doesburg the opportunity to develop new concepts and to experiment with them. The concealed identity of Bonset (concealed at least from the outside world) can be regarded as van Doesburg's attempt to allow himself full space for divergent initiatives without risking his close relationship with Mondrian. As set out in a letter dated June 12, 1920, Mondrian still regarded van Doesburg and himself as *the* two protagonists of neo-plasticism who “had to make the whole movement.”⁸¹ To prevent an indicting response from Mondrian as the keeper of the Holy Neo-Plasticist Grail, it seems not so much the Dadaist appearance of Bonset which might have enraged Mondrian, but rather the revision of some basic principles of neo-plasticism in which Bonset played a pivotal role. And insofar as Mondrian was probably not unaware of the real identity of the new “literary collaborator” of *De Stijl*, the introduction of Bonset still allowed van Doesburg some latitude for a revision of his own aesthetic conceptions, avoiding a premature break with Mondrian.

II.

Initially, in mid-1920, the pair van Doesburg/Bonset made their appearance as two modes, as two different ways of interpreting the *Nieuwe Beelding*. Gradually, both van Doesburg and Bonset (but primarily Bonset) distanced themselves more and more from Mondrian. The philosophical foundation of neo-plasticism is fundamental. Mondrian and the early van Doesburg considered the essence of the outer world as a set of static principles. These static principles offered the guidelines for the abstract geometrical presentation of the true reality, of the true nature of things—a true nature of things more or less “behind” the outer world. In 1919–20, van Doesburg turned more and more toward a dynamic understanding of reality.

A major intertext of the considerations concerning geometrical abstraction in the constructivist framework of *De Stijl* were the theories of the Dutch philosopher Schoenmaekers. Mondrian had already been attracted to Schoenmaekers's “mathematical” philosophy some time before the foundation of *De Stijl*. Mondrian had introduced van Doesburg to Schoenmaekers in 1916. Schoenmaekers advocated the principle of so-called plastic mathematics (*Beginnselen der beeldende wiskunde* is the title of a book by Schoenmaekers published in 1916). In “‘plastic mathematics,’ *beelding* stands for the true regular figure which revealed itself as the essence of the natural object, since...nature was seen as operating fundamentally in a mathematical way.”⁸² As summarized by van Doesburg, Schoenmaekers considered “mathematics as the only pure” and “the only pure criterion for our sentiments. As a consequence, the work of art...has to be founded always on mathematical principle. Mondrian applies this [conception] by taking for his emotions the two most pure forms, i.e. the horizontal and vertical line.”⁸³

Initially, Mondrian was joined by van Doesburg in a combined effort to advance an art to a considerable extent (at least theoretically) based on the conceptions of Schoenmaekers. The impact of Schoenmaekers is the most apparent in the coining of the name of the constructivist proposition brought forward by Mondrian and van Doesburg in the late 1910s and early 1920s: *Nieuwe Beelding*. The word *beelding* was (and still is) an idiosyncratic neologism, coined by Schoenmaekers. Schoenmaekers not only coined the name of the *Stijl* project, as van Doesburg recollected in 1929, but also pointed out its direction:

This fundamental idea we expressed by the word *Gestaltung* [Dutch: *beelding*] in the sense of creative achievement. The word *Gestaltung* had been revalued; it meant for us the superrational, the a-logical and inexplicable, the depth coming to the surface, the balance of interior and exterior, the spoils of the creative battle we fought against ourselves. A new terminology came into existence

(note: Mondrian's method of expression was based for the greater part on the new philosophy of Dr. Schoenmaekers's "plastic mathematics"), by means of which we expressed the collective idea, the moving spring of our common action. All art, acoustic or visual, sprang only from one idea: Creation [*Gestaltung*].⁸⁴

Beelding, used here in a German text in the *Schweizer Rundschau*, *Gestaltung* (Swiss Magazine: Shaping, Forming, Design), is more than just a borrowed word from an esoteric philosopher, a borrowed word combined in De Stijl with the qualification *nieuwe*—the Dutch word for "new," used here in the sense of "modern." And Nieuwe Beelding is more than its usual English translation of neo-plasticism already introduced by Mondrian. Nieuwe Beelding is more than just another "ism." As a neologism still not included in Dutch dictionaries, the noun *beelding* is situated morphologically between the common Dutch substantive *beeld* (image, statue, sculpture, picture, or idea) on the one hand, and the also quite common Dutch adjective and adverb *beeldend* (plastic, provocative) on the other. At the same time, *beelding*, as a Germanism, is related to the German verb *bilden* (to form, or to shape) as well as to the German noun *Bildung*—culture, education, formation, "forming," and "shaping."

Although *beelden*, like the verb *bilden* in German, does not exist in Dutch apart from the vocabulary of De Stijl, this idiosyncratic Stijl verb can be regarded morphologically as the basic component or the stem of a series of other interrelated Dutch verbs: *afbeelden* (to depict, or to represent), *inbeelden* (to imagine), *uitbeelden* (to express, or to represent), and *verbeelden* (to imagine, or to represent). The essence of *beelding* as an artistic technique can be approximated by leaving the prefix "de-" from "to depict", the prefix "re-" from "to represent," and the prefix "ex-" from "to express." In short, *beelding* points at a common aspect of these verbs (and the activities described by these verbs) when the derivating aspect in all these words ("de-," "re-," and "ex-") is erased.⁸⁵ What was envisaged was not an image of something else, but rather an evocation of the pure. This mathematically approached pure was initially regarded by and large, as a stable constellation.

III.

Van Doesburg's understanding of Nieuwe Beelding changed in 1919–20 as a result of the attempted integration of another novelty from contemporary mathematics and physics: the newly established theory of relativity. This theory of relativity brought van Doesburg to rethink the question of time and space. In the process, drawing on contemporary scientific and pseudo-scientific literature, the conception of the fourth dimension as a moving principle entered van Doesburg's theoretical considerations as early as 1918. Whereas Mondrian rejected these new

theories about the fourth dimension, van Doesburg saw the essence of life more and more in a *mouvement perpétuel* (perpetual movement),⁸⁶ and it seems as if the creation of Bonset was a major step toward a review of the static neo-plasticism as advocated by Mondrian in particular.

The role of the fourth dimension is obvious in Bonset's note on the "mathematics of life." According to this previously quoted note, the subject should develop itself from the point-I (without dimension), through the one-dimensional line-I, the plane-I with two dimensions, and the body-I with three dimensions, to the highest state of the superphysically extended-I. In this superphysically extended self, the fourth dimension would have full play. The creation of Bonset as a new self was, thus, a step in the gradual development towards the apt apprehension of the fourth dimension by the multiplication of life axes. However, this approximation and comprehension of the fourth dimension is also obvious in the literary works of Bonset, notably in Bonset's poetical debut—two poems entitled "X-beelden" (X-Images).

"X-beelden" is not just the title of both poems. Rather, it is the denomination of a completely new genre, as Bonset claimed. The genre denomination pointed at the recent invention of X-ray photography. For the first time, X-rays allowed the visualization of the quasi-inner aspects of physical reality hitherto concealed from the human eye. In a comparable way, in the first "X-beelden" poem, Bonset recollected a series of impressions of daily reality as observed from the study in his house at the Galgewater in Leiden. In the poem, tramways and cyclists are passing by, trees are being moved by the wind, mooring posts stand in the water, etc. Finally, in the closing lines, Bonset hints at the fourth dimension:

the black and white dolphins
4 X HORIZONTAL
 uncountable vertical poles
 and also the high
 curved blue
 SPACE
AM I⁸⁷

Whereas this final "I" may be interpreted either as the spatial "body-I" ("space am I"), or as the superphysically extended-I ("4 x horizontal"), the next poem entitled "X-beelden" (fig. 5.6) starts with the dissolution of the spatial "body-I":

hey hey hey
 has thou experienced it physically
 has thou experienced it **physically**
 has thou ex **PE** rienced it physi **CALLY**
Oⁿ
 - space and

- time
 past present future
 the beyond-here-and-there
 the confusion of nothing and appearance
 ...⁸⁸

In this second X-images poem, Bonset tried to evoke the fourth dimension by placing the dynamic aspect of reality in the center. He already dissolved the physical subject, the body-I, in the first lines. A mathematical formula follows in the next three lines: "Oⁿ / - space and / - time." According to a note accompanying the poem, this formula should be read as "Zero n, minus space and minus time."⁸⁹ Only movement remains; only the simultaneity of the following observations count. Thus, Bonset attempted to present the dimension of perpetual movement verbally beyond conventional time and space. In "Chronique scandaleuse de Pays-Plats" (Scandalous Chronicle of my Flat Country), Bonset/van Doesburg defined this zero n as the essence of Bonset: "Bonset: Oⁿ."^{viii}

The closing line of the poem reads "I find fragments of the cosmos in my tea." These "fragments" are evoked in a manner comparable to the futurist *parole in libertà*. Conventional syntax is, by and large, abandoned. Sentences and words are splintered. The poem is not constructed in verses, but rather a collection of single lines and slogans with letters in different types and sizes, in part arranged diagonally on the paper. This futurist turn may be seen in part as a poverty solution. In a way, Bonset returned to principles of a section of the first pre-war generation of the avant-garde. Such a return, or rather a belated publication, is also suggested in a note accompanying Bonset's debut. This note suggests that the poem is part of "a series of 'Cubist verses' (1913-19)."⁹⁰ At the same time, the obvious futurist intertext stresses the dynamism that should be evoked. Besides, the suggestion that the "X-beelden" were part of an older series contributed to the creation of the fictitious biography of Bonset: Bonset didn't simply make his debut in 1920—he also had a history. Later, in 1921, a whole issue of *De Stijl* entitled "Anthologie-Bonset" would be devoted to Bonset's poetry, tracing his literary development from 1921 back to 1913.

IV.

Most poems published in 1921 in the "Anthologie-Bonset" were written before van Doesburg introduced Bonset. They stem from two unpublished collections, *Stillevens* (Still Lives), dated 1914-15 and *Soldaten* (Soldiers), dated 1916, written by van Doesburg before he started editing *De Stijl*.⁹¹ In the first years of World War I, Kok, whom van Doesburg had met in Tilburg during his military service, van Doesburg's first wife,

Agnita Feis, and van Doesburg himself were involved in poetical experiments on the intersection of cubism, futurism, and expressionism. Their poetry was closely related to the abstract *Sturm* poetry by August Stramm. Some of Feis's poems appeared in print in 1915, collected as *Oorlog. Verzen in staccato* (War. Verses in Staccato).⁹² Kok's and van Doesburg's poems remained largely unpublished at that time.⁹³ Occasionally, their poems, like those of Feis, were read at private soirées (their proper place, since sound plays a crucial role in these poems, which were more or less conceived for declamation).⁹⁴

Some experimental prose by van Doesburg was published in 1919 in *Het Getij*—a collection of “Expressionist-literary compositions” and a short futurist narrative, “De vrijwilliger” (The Volunteer), an account of the experiences at the front of a soldier under fire.⁹⁵ However, van Doesburg had neglected (or perhaps hesitated) to publish his poetry, probably because he had been too occupied with *De Stijl*, but perhaps also because he wasn't completely satisfied with it. Van Doesburg was most certainly not satisfied with his poems anymore, by the time he published them in 1921. In anticipation of the “Anthologie-Bonset” in July 1921, Bonset referred to them as “my previous verses”—forerunners of his Dadaist/constructivist “X-beelden” and *letterklankbeelden* (letter sound images).⁹⁶ Whereas some of Kok's poems were published in *De Stijl* to support Bonset's claim of an emerging new constructivist poetry in Holland, van Doesburg's painful divorce from Feis in 1915 led him to suppress her work in *De Stijl*, although she did maintain a correspondence with Kok until 1918. However, Feis was mentioned in a brief essay, “Littérature d'Avant-Garde en Hollande,” (Literature of the Avant-Garde in Holland) in *Ça Ira!* Together with Bonset, Mondrian, and Kok, Feis was mentioned as one of the few Dutch poets who practiced the principles of *De Stijl* in literature.⁹⁷ Whereas Feis was excluded from *De Stijl*, Bonset instead paired Kok's work with an occasional constructivist poem by Til Brugman, a writer and translator, who prepared translations for *De Stijl*.⁹⁸

V.

“Anthologie-Bonset” documents the evolution of Bonset's/van Doesburg's poetry away from sentimental impressionism (represented by the poem “Volle Maan” [Full Moon])⁹⁹ toward the more experimental poetry of *Stilleven*s and *Soldaten*. Congenial to Feis's and Kok's wartime poems, van Doesburg's poetry strongly resembles Stramm's *Sturm* verses. These poems continuously repeat and vary on phonetically related or even identical words. The typographic presentation of the words in the poems differs from Stramm's poetry. The divergent loudness of spoken words, as well as sounds—such as the hoof steps of a

horse or the percussion on a tin drum—are typographically represented by different typefaces. This use of typography seemed to derive from futurist and cubist experiments like the *parole in libertà* and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes*. Unlike the poetry of Apollinaire, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, or compatible work by Paul van Ostaïjen, in which text is sometimes printed diagonally or in circles, Bonset/van Doesburg by and large maintained a conventional order of horizontally printed words and lines (fig. 5.7). Whereas most of "Anthologie-Bonset" stems from *Stillevens* and *Soldaten*, the collection ends— or rather, starts (as it is arranged in reverse chronological order) with Bonset's "X-beelden" from 1920 and an example of his *letterklankbeelden* (fig. 5.8).

The chronology in Bonset's anthology not only contributed to Bonset's biography, it also served to protect against possible critics who would argue that Bonset's verses were a relapse into a type of poetry that remained far behind the "new" standards set in the second manifesto of *De Stijl*. In this manifesto, directives had been formulated by Mondrian and van Doesburg (and co-signed by Kok) for a new literature. The "old poetry," marked by illusionist naturalism and subjective sentimentalism, had to be replaced by a new poetry in which the word should obtain "new significance and a new way of expression" beyond conventional semantics by all available poetical means—syntax, prosody, typography, arithmetic, and orthography.¹⁰⁰ Bonset's first published poems, his "X-beelden," were certainly not yet a realization of these objectives. They were rather preparatory preliminaries to the new literature envisaged in this manifesto, since conventional meaning and a certain degree of realist referentiality continued to characterize these poems.

In accordance with the general characterization of Dadaism as a transitory phenomenon indulging in "true disorder" as an intermediate stage between "untrue order" and "true order," the "X-beelden" can be regarded as a transitional form of poetry. As Bonset explained in his first poetical intervention, in this transitory poetry, "alogic" dominates, since poetry has to be regarded as "the sphere of pure unreasonable-ness." In an attempt to develop a new poetry in which the "free summarizing of images" should prevail, logical, conventional meaning is eliminated. These images were understood by van Doesburg/Bonset as articulations of the contents of subjective consciousness in their purest form—without any contamination by sentimentalism or naturalism.¹⁰¹

Early examples of the new verse—as an expression or perhaps a first announcement of the new true aesthetic order—are Bonset's *letterklankbeelden*. In these poems, Bonset eradicated content, as he restricted himself to arrangements of letters. The "architecture" of these *letterklankbeelden* is, as Bonset claimed, the consequent continuation of the approach first adopted in his *Soldaten* poems. In these *Soldaten* poems, typography was used to represent sound volume and intensity. By abandoning the word, Bonset disposed of "annoying conceptual associations" caused by the meaning of the words.¹⁰² The "extensive

phono-gymnastics"¹⁰³ of the *letterklankbeelden* would eventually allow the reconstruction of "language as elemental speech" (*oerspraak*).¹⁰⁴ This was exactly the objective formulated in the literary manifesto of *De Stijl*: a new poetry transcending the "death" of the "word" in conventional poetry and speech.

Interestingly, a letter to Kok dated September 22, 1915 reveals that van Doesburg was already playing with the idea of poetry solely composed of sound elements. Van Doesburg reported in this letter that he was working on poetry intended for declamation, in which "the sounds must live and be lived, not read." As an example, he presented to Kok the first draft of a poem entitled "Buurtpraatje" (Neighbors' Chat). Van Doesburg's "Buurtpraatje" is a remarkable anticipation of the later constructivist sound poetry by the Dadaist Bonset:

A-
 aba-
 ça ça-
 ça ça ça-
 ça
 da,
 da, da.
 da da da-¹⁰⁵

The constructivist as Dadaist pamphleteer

I.

In 1920-21, Dadaism made its appearance in *De Stijl* little by little. The review still remained, by and large, a mouthpiece of the *Nieuwe Beelding*, of Dutch constructivism. It should be noted here that Bonset made his appearance in *De Stijl* as a constructivist poet, even though Bonset was presented by van Doesburg in his letters to Tzara as a genuine Dadaist. Certainly, Bonset voiced a clear affinity with Dadaism, starting with his collection of aphorisms, "Het andere gezicht," in *De Stijl* of August 1920. On the whole, Bonset's Dadaism in *De Stijl* remained, though, mainly a tool of van Doesburg's/Bonset's constructivist literary ambitions. Dada was discussed, Dada was welcomed, and Dada was deployed as a weapon, as an executioner: "Now Dada, do your duty!"¹⁰⁶ Dada was, however, at all times mobilized in a constructivist framework. The titles of Bonset's poetical essays in the early 1920s are an indication: "On the New Verse and the Knotted-Together Rope," "Introduction in the New Poetics," "Foundations for a New Verse Construction," "Plastic Poetics and its Relation to the Other Arts,"

"Symptoms of a Reconstruction of Poetry in Holland. Popular Introduction in Unpopular Poetry," and "To a Constructive Poetics."¹⁰⁷

Bonset's Dadaism manifested itself beyond *De Stijl* or the framework of the *Nieuwe Beelding*. Bonset also developed a separate Dadaist program of his own, including a different approach to literature, art, and life, in a different avant-garde setting—in the framework of the Dadaist project, as represented by Tzara and the *Mouvement Dada*.

From the outset, van Doesburg wanted to launch a Dada periodical, more or less simultaneously with the introduction of Bonset. However, as indicated in a letter to Tzara, van Doesburg initially—had not the means to start a second review.¹⁰⁸ In 1922, van Doesburg finally managed to launch the Dada review *Mécano*. *Mécano* was a quite minimalist periodical. The first three issues (numbered "red," "yellow," and "blue") consisted of just one sheet of paper; only the last double issue, numbered "white," had the appearance of a "real" magazine, albeit a magazine of only sixteen pages, the cover included (fig. 5.9).¹⁰⁹

II.

The first opportunity for Bonset to present himself as a Dadaist beyond the constructivist framework (and the programmatic confinements) of *De Stijl*, was offered to van Doesburg by Tzara in November 1920. At that time, Tzara was planning *Dadaglobe*, a comprehensive documentation of the global extension of the Dada movement. In the Netherlands, contributions were solicited from Blumenfeld and Citroen, the directors of the *Dada-Centrale* in Holland in Amsterdam, as well as from van Doesburg's "literary collaborator," Bonset. Van Doesburg apparently saw this invitation as a major opportunity to establish Bonset as the main or even the only true representative of Dadaism in Holland. In the section "Rondblik" (Survey) of the January 1921 issue of *De Stijl*, van Doesburg mentioned for the first time the *Dadaglobe* project and Tzara's invitation of "our collaborator" Bonset to participate in this mega-project. Another "Rondblik" of June 1921 stressed both the importance of *Dadaglobe* and the extent of Bonset's participation:

The Dadaists ... are preparing with their "Dadaglobe" ...an important international manifestation of the Dadaist inclination.... The "Dadaglobe" promises to be an international recapitulation of the genesis, growth and dissemination of the Dadaist spirit. I. K. Bonset (to whom we offered also hospitality in *De Stijl* and to whose work we will dedicate a special issue in the near future) will represent this spirit for Holland with: "Je suis contre tout et tous" [I'm against everything and everybody] (portrait); "Antikunstzuivereredemanifest" [Anti-Art Pure Reason Manifesto]; "Manifeste 69"; "Manifeste I. K. B."; "Chronique scandaleuse de mon Pays-Plat."¹¹⁰

Tzara's *Dadaglobe* project stalled. The envisaged book never came into being. The first submission mentioned by van Doesburg, the self-portrait "*Je suis contre tout et tous*," is hitherto missing and it is unclear whether it was ever submitted at all. Manuscripts of the other manifestos are preserved in a *Dadaglobe* file in Tzara's estate. Two of them, "Manifeste I. K. B." and "Manifeste 69" (fig. 5.10), were never published by van Doesburg and were only preserved by Tzara's estate. They are still typical of Bonset's style (or rather, anti-style) in his Dada texts. With the stamped letters I, K, and B whirling over the manuscript, the text of "Manifeste I. K. B." reads as follows:

Manifesto

I throw my skeleton in the garden and I dance the sarabande francis-tristan **I.K.** dada the most gentle for the lavatory are logical formulas my friend van doesburg is the cocotte of abstract painting and is busy with making a little **Pickwick little fellow bible of caca** for his friend plasgaert^{ix} the **QUACK** encyclopedia sewerage art is an urinal and I love the *MADONNA DELLA SYPHILIS* most
Pays-Poo 19bx21 i.k. bonset¹¹¹

The other unpublished manifesto was not signed by Bonset but by the fictitious Saint-Pierre de la Ligne Droite (Saint Peter of the Straight Line):

Manifesto 69

I am my-thymus-donkey saint-peter equilibrist martyr of abstract painting Holy Virgin of the Urinal Mont-Rouge I have shown to my friends-and-foes that nothing exists except me in shitty pi-pa-painting I believe in women in the position and the measure of the sexes in 69 and in the **God of Sperm-Theosophy**
Saint-Peter of the Straight Line¹¹²

This second manifesto is illustrated with a checkerboard presented as a canted rhombus—an obvious allusion to the canted hanging of several neo-plasticist paintings by van Doesburg and Mondrian.¹¹³ Whereas "Manifeste I. K. B." is obviously a self-parody, marking the personality split between van Doesburg and Bonset, the Dutch literary historian Marco Entrop believed the second manifesto also to be an attack by Bonset on his constructivist other, van Doesburg.¹¹⁴ Insofar as the *Nieuwe Beelding* was denounced, this may be true. The prime target seemed to be Mondrian, however. Mondrian had specialized in the equilibrium of "straight lines," with a profound interest in spirituality, in particular in theosophy. Two compositions created by Mondrian in 1919 were called *Dambord* (Checkerboard).¹¹⁵

The question remains open as to why van Doesburg didn't publish both manifestos. Possibly Tzara had the only copies. Possibly van Doesburg, on further consideration, didn't regard their publication as

opportune (although he didn't spare himself or *De Stijl* on other occasions). Possibly van Doesburg recognized that the texts were all too shallow. Still, both manifestos contain several recurring features of Bonset's other published Dada manifestos, critiques, and travesties. Bonset's programmatic and polemic prose is generally a torrent of abuse directed against celebrities of cultural life in the Low Countries. Major representatives of the avant-garde are targeted as well. They are cursed as "sentimental imbeciles"¹¹⁶ and submerged in an accumulation of vulgar, blasphemous, and obscene language. Bonset insisted on the principle of destruction by means of "terror (psychic disruption)" in the tradition of "De Sade, Lautréamont, Masoch, Péladan, all religious writing, Schwitters."¹¹⁷ Besides, Bonset complied with van Doesburg's apparent understanding of dung throwing as an essential characteristic of Dada.

Apart from the torrents of abuse, the manifestos contain no substantial program of their own. The essential message is, as summarized in "Manifeste 0,96013," published under the caption "Dada Hollande I. K. B.," in the second issue of *Mécano*:

I am without a name without trunk without importance
 I am all and nothing without sex and without any ambition
 I am an abortive Rasta Bandit and isolated

...

I spit I spit I spit
 on all revolutionary cockatoos with their nickel brain
The World is a little Sperm Machine
Life — a venereal disease
*All my prayers are dedicated to Saint Venerica*¹¹⁸

II.

Next to this "Manifeste 0,96013," two other manifestos written for the *Dadaglobe* project, "Antikunstzuivereredemanifest" and "Chronique scandaleuse de mon Pays-Plat," were published in 1922 in Bonset's and van Doesburg's magazine, *Mécano*, an "ultra-individualist, irregular, international journal for the distribution of Neo-Dadaist conceptions and spiritual hygiene."¹¹⁹

Plans to start a new Dadaist review already existed in mid-1920 when Bonset made his first appearance. The name *Mécano*, originally *Méchano*, appeared in van Doesburg's correspondence in mid-1921. The name can be seen as an allusion to the mechanical imagery in artifacts by Picabia and other Dadaists.¹²⁰ *Mécano* contained several mechanical representations of a Dadaist provenance by Man Ray, Serge Charchoune, Max Ernst, and Hausmann (once more introducing, thus, the vitalist dimension in constructivism). *Mécano* pointed also at van

Doesburg's own understanding of modern times as an essentially mechanized age. As indicated in the self-qualification of *Mécano* as a "journal for the distribution of Neo-Dadaist conceptions and spiritual hygiene," the review pursued three main objectives:

1. *Mécano* was envisaged as a Dadaist platform, as a magazine for Dada propaganda. Among the contributors were Arp, Gabrielle Buffet, Charchoune, Crotti, Ernst, Hausmann, Benjamin Péret, Picabia, Ray, Ribemont-Dessaigues, Schwitters, and Tzara.

2. At the same time, the review was intended for "spiritual hygiene." In this respect, *Mécano* can be regarded as a consciously created ambiance for Bonset's abusive attacks on the Dutch cultural establishment. An example is Bonset's "Chronique scandaleuse des Pays-Plats," originally intended for publication in the *Dadaglobe*, in which writers of the impressionist so-called Movement of Eighty are attacked: Lodewijk van Deysse, Frederik van Eeden, Willem Kloos, and Henriëtte Roland Holst, who had grown to stature at the end of the nineteenth century and dominated the literary field since then. Bonset also showered abuse on other prominent figures of Dutch cultural life since the turn of the century, like the renowned architect Hendrik Berlage, particularly famous for his design of the old Amsterdam stock exchange, the *beurs van Berlage* (Belage exchange), and the then popular extremely reactionary Hegelian philosopher G. J. P. J. Bolland, who died that same year. Bolland, for example, was characterized by Bonset as "diarrhea of Mister Hegel."^x

Although one may argue that *Mécano*, as a radical avant-garde magazine proposing a completely different type of art and literature, was in itself already an attack on the early twentieth century Dutch cultural and intellectual elite and the established art, literature, architecture, philosophy, etc., represented by them, most contributions to *Mécano* did not point directly at this cultural establishment and aesthetic tradition, but rather at rival developments in the avant-garde—opposing or diverging from *De Stijl*. On several occasions, *Mécano* was "dedicated" to the Bauhaus in Weimar. Van Doesburg published the first issues during an extended stay in Weimar in 1922. He had hoped for an appointment as a teacher at the Bauhaus. However, the expressionists Lothar Schreyer and Vassily Kandinsky were offered the positions instead. Furthermore, van Doesburg had attempted to reform the Bauhaus program and curriculum in terms of *De Stijl*, also with little success. Although he managed to attract some students for an alternative *Stijl* course—among others, Peter Röhl and Werner Graeff—he didn't succeed in his campaign against the still prevailing expressionist element in the Bauhaus program. In the "Bilanz des staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar" (Balance of the State Bauhaus in Weimar), signed by van Doesburg, Mondrian, and the *Stijl* architect

Cornelius van Eesteren, the result was summarized as "Square on the outside, Biedermeier on the inside," a white square was the symbol of De Stijl and the Nieuwe Beelding.¹²¹ Not only the Bauhaus was rejected and attacked. The "Neo-Classicists and aestheticists of the compass and the number in France and Italy," the Flemish review *Het Overzicht*, as well as Paul Klee were all targets of Bonset's polemics in *Mécano*. Against the background of Bonset's own preoccupation with sexual matters, the repudiation of Klee was remarkable. Bonset wrote, "We combat not only the nude in painting but also all naturalist imbecilities in form of *genitals*. **Au Boudoir** with these sexual transformations and erotic combinations! (Brand: Klee etc.)."¹²²

3. Attacks like these, however, served a higher purpose: the realization of a constructivist aesthetics and a constructivist reorganization of life. This objective was already indicated by the fact that the Bauhaus balance was signed by van Doesburg as well as by Mondrian. Another indication was the curious way in which van Doesburg/Bonset "numbered" *Mécano* according to the colors of De Stijl: yellow, red, blue, and white. The pictures of constructivist works by van Doesburg (responsible for the illustrations), Moholy-Nagy, Röhl, Schwitters, and Georges Vantongerloo point in a similar direction. Mechanical representations of a Dadaist provenance by Ray, Charchoune, Ernst, and Hausmann introduced once more a dynamic, vitalist dimension in constructivism. The final *Mécano* also contained a comprehensive outline of the poetics of Bonset, "Tot een constructieve dichtkunst" (Towards a Constructivist Poetry). In this outline, Bonset turned the apparent destructivity of *Mécano* into a constructivist direction: "The new poet forms only by means of overcoming, cancellation, destruction (like our politicians), non-humanist abstraction. In the new poetry is construction reduction. Résumé: The new poet construes his language from the ruin of the past and since everything exists by means of language, he forms in it despite 'dis-interested abstraction' the new man and the world. THIS IS HIS EFFICACY."¹²³

The congeniality between Dada and constructivism was stressed by Bonset once more in van Doesburg's *Wat is Dada?*: "We Neo-Vitalists, Dadaists, destructive Constructivists have revealed the whole suppurating field covering the body of the world crying: 'See see see here here here nothing nothing nothing.'"¹²⁴ This Dadaist "fight against the rule of FILTH"¹²⁵ can be seen as an attempt to resolve a more general problem of De Stijl, articulated in a citation from Mondrian in *Mécano*—namely, the problem that "the tentatives of Neo-Plasticism are still dominated by the old spirit, whereas the new spirit is not conscious to man yet."¹²⁶ From this perspective, Bonset's aggressive polemics were an integrated part of the necessity to disband this still dominant "old spirit."

Notes

1. Theo van Doesburg, "Ontvangen boeken en tijdschriften," *De Stijl* 3, no. 2 (1919): 24. The fact that van Doesburg received the Dada publications at the same time as Pansaers is noteworthy. Pansaers's request to Tzara may have prompted Tzara to also supply *De Stijl*.
2. Citation in Evert van Straaten, ed. *Theo van Doesburg 1883-1931. Een documentaire op basis van materiaal uit de schenking Van Moorsel* (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1983), 89.
3. Theo van Doesburg, "Rondblik," *De Stijl* 3, no. 4 (1920): 25; Tzara, *Oeuvres complètes*, 1:363; Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos*, 8. The same remark is referred to by Schwitters as a main point of correspondence between his own understanding of art and that of Dada in Zurich; cf. Kurt Schwitters, "Merz. Für den 'Ararat' geschrieben 19. Dezember 1920," *Der Ararat* 2, no.1 (1921): 6.
4. Citation in Carel Blotkamp, "Mondriaan als literator," *Maatstaf* 27, no. 4 (1978): 9.
5. See Theo van Doesburg, "Rondblik," *De Stijl* 3, no. 5 (1920): 47-48.
6. Theo van Doesburg, "Aantekeningen bij de bijlagen VI and VII," *De Stijl* 3, no. 5 (1920): 45.
7. See Peter Bürger, *Theorie der Avantgarde* (Frankfort/Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 43-44.
8. As in Theo van Doesburg, "Revue der Avant-garde. Deutschland," *Het Getij* 6, no. 3 (1921): 199.
9. Van Doesburg, "Aantekeningen bij de bijlagen VI en VII," 45.
10. Van Doesburg, *Wat is Dada?*, 10-11.
11. See Marc Entrop, "Vive l'Esprit mécanique! La revue dadaïste *Mécano*," in *Reviews, Zeitschriften, Revues*. Die Fackel, Die Weltbühne, Musikblätter des Anbruch, Le Disque Vert, Mécano, Versty. *Avant-Garde Critical Studies* 9, ed. Sophie Levie (Amsterdam/Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1994), 140.
12. See Theo van Doesburg, "Dada," in *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer*, May 8, 1920, 4.
13. See Theo van Doesburg, "Ontvangen boeken en tijdschriften," *De Stijl* 3, no. 7 (1920), 64.
14. See *ibid.*
15. Francis Picabia, *Écrits*, ed. O. Revault d'Allonnes and D. Bouissou (Paris: Belfond, 1975), 1:230.
 - i. Van Doesburg, "Dada," 4.
 - ii. *Ibid.*
 - iii. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.* Later, van Doesburg discerned another fundamental difference: whereas he regarded himself and *De Stijl* as part of the international avant-garde, and although he discussed Dada as an avant-garde formation as well, the Dadaists rejected this qualification, according

to Van Doesburg. Instead, they regarded themselves as *avant-hier* (before yesterday); cf. Theo van Doesburg, "Revue der Avant-garde," *Het Getij* 6, no. 1 (1921): 112.

iv. Several publications by Bonset are even entitled "Het andere gezicht"—"The Other Face;:" cf. I. K. Bonset, "Het andere gezicht." *De Stijl* 3, no. 10 (1920):84-86; no. 11 (1920): 90-92 and 4, no. 4 (1921):49-51; as well as the novel *Het andere gezicht*; cf. Theo van Doesburg, *Het andere gezicht van I. K. Bonset: Literaire geschriften van Theo van Doesburg, I. K. Bonset en Aldo Camini*, ed. Laurens Vancrevel. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1983.

17. See Jane Beckett, "Dada, Van Doesburg and *De Stijl*," *Journal for European Studies* 9, no. 33-34 (1979): 3.

v. Van Doesburg, "Dada," 4.

18. Van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 35.

19. See I. K. Bonset, "X-beelden," *De Stijl* 3, no. 7 (1920): 57; I. K. Bonset "Over het nieuwe vers en het aaneengeknoopte touw," *De Stijl* 3, no. 8 (1920): 70-72; I. K. Bonset, "Het andere gezicht," *De Stijl* 3, no. 10 (1920): 84-86; no. 11, 90-92; and 4, no. 4 (1920): 49-51.

20. Bonset, "Het andere gezicht," 91.

21. *Ibid.*, 84.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 85.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Ibid.*

30. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 32-34; Beckett, "Dada, Van Doesburg and *De Stijl*," 3; on the term and concept *Nieuwe Beelding*; see below.

31. See. I. K. Bonset, "Het andere gezicht. Kapitel 8," *De Stijl*, dernier numéro (1932): 31-33; his other heteronym "Aldo Camini" was likewise deciphered in *De Stijl*, dernier numéro (1932): 35.

32. Van Doesburg kept to his division between himself and Bonset in his correspondence with Tzara; cf. van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 35-53. He also wrote letters to Bonset together with Nelly van Doesburg and Tzara after the *Mécano* soirée in September 1922 in Weimar; cf. van Straaten, *Theo van Doesburg*, 110.

33. See a letter by Bonset to *Het Overzicht*, reprinted in Herbert Henkels, ed. *Seuphor* (Antwerp: Fonds Mercator, 1976), 28.

34. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 124.

35. See picture in *De Stijl* 7, no. 79-84 (1927): 9.

36. Kurt Schwitters, "Aufgedeckte Speudonyme," *Merz*, no. 4 (1923): 44. The anagrammatic neologism German "*Sodgrube*" may be literally translated in English as "pit quarry." An existing German word,

Sodbrennen, means "heartburn."

37. See Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," 40-41.

38. Citation in Blotkamp, *Mondriaan. Destructie als kunst*, 134; cf. also Blotkamp, "Mondriaan als literator," 15-16; Els Hoek, "Piet Mondriaan," in *De vervoljaren van De Stijl 1922-1932*, ed. Carel Blotkamp (Amsterdam/Antwerp: L.J. Veen, 1996), 121-22.

39. Piet Mondrian, *Le Neo-Plasticisme* (Paris: l'Effort Moderne, 1920), 8-9.

40. *Ibid.*, 8.

41. Citation in Blotkamp, *Mondriaan. Destructie als kunst*, 134.

42. Tzara, *Seven Dada Manifestos*, 4.

43. Huelsenbeck, "Einleitung," 4.

44. Citation in Hoek, "Piet Mondriaan," 122.

45. See Blotkamp, *Mondriaan. Destructie als kunst*, 130-32.

46. See *ibid.*, 132-37; Piet Mondrian, "De groote boulevards" [and] "Klein restaurant. Palmzondag," *Maatstaf* 27, no. 4 (1978): 25-30.

47. Theo van Doesburg, "De nieuwe woordbeelding," *Het Getij* 6, no. 2 (1921): 126.

48. Van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 35.

49. See Marc Entrop, "Holland Dada in Italië," *Het Oog in 't Zeil* 9, no. 2 (1992): 17-20.

50. Van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 36.

51. *Ibid.*, 37.

52. See Kurt Schwitters, "Drie laatste verzen," *De Stijl* 4, no. 7 (1921): 107-08; Kurt Schwitters, "Sonate," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 8-9. Kurt Schwitters, "Gedichte," *De Stijl* 7, no. 77, 70 (1926-27). In July 1921, the first collection of elemental poetry by Schwitters in *De Stijl* followed a first poetics and presentation of Bonset's *letterklankbeelden* in the same issue; cf. I. K. Bonset, "Grondslagen tot een nieuwe versbeelding," *De Stijl* 4, no. 7 (1921): 99-102; I. K. Bonset, "Letterklankbeelden," *De Stijl* 4, no. 7 (1921): 103-06. The intention of van Doesburg/Bonset to point at poetical experiments congenial to the *letterklankbeelden* was obvious.

53. See I. K. Bonset, "Tot een constructieve dichtkunst," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 11.

54. See Raoul Hausmann, "PRÉsentismus. Gegen den Puffkeismus der teutschen Seele," *De Stijl* 4, no. 9 (1921): 136-43; Raoul Hausmann, Hans Arp, Ivan Puni, and László Moholy-Nagy, "Aufruf zur elementaren Kunst," *De Stijl* 4, no. 10 (1921): 156.

55. The text may be identical with that of a never-published book *L'Esprit Dada* (The Dada Spirit). From December 1920 onwards, this book project was mentioned several times by van Doesburg in his correspondence with Tzara. The book was scheduled for publication in November 1921; cf. van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 37 and 39.

56. See Theo van Doesburg, "Karakteristiek van het dadaïsme," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 13; van Doesburg, *Wat is Dada?*, 3; Schwitters,

"Dadaïsmus in Holland." 5.

57. Citation in Den Boef and van Faassen, "Een vriendschap van concurrenten?," 44.

58. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 124-25.

59. See Helma Heijerman-Ton, "Gino Severini en *De Stijl*," *Jong Holland* 1, no. 4 (1985): 28-47; H. J. Vink, "Ruimte en tijd in de geschriften van Severini, Vantongerloo, Mondriaan en Van Doesburg," *Jong Holland* 6, no. 2 (1990), 2-13 and no. 3, 2-19.

60. See Den Boef and van Faassen, "Een vriendschap tussen concurrenten?" 41.

61. See *ibid.*

62. Tzara, "Eye-cover."

63. See I. K. Bonset, "Tot een constructieve dichtkunst;" Schwitters, "Dadaïsmus in Holland," 3.

64. Kurt Schwitters, "De Zelfoverwinning van Dada," *Haagsche Post* (January 20, 1923): 88.

65. See Schippers, *Holland Dada*, 106; H. R. Heite et al, "Dada in Drachten," *Trotwaer*, no. 9-10 (1971): 7-12.

66. Citation in Entrop, "Vive l'esprit mécanique," 160.

67. Bonset, "Het andere gezicht," 85.

68. Piet Mondriaan, "Natuurlijke en abstracte realiteit," *De Stijl* 3, no. 10 (1920): 84.

69. Theo van Doesburg, "Inleiding," *De Stijl* 4, no. 5 (1921): 65.

70. Aldo Camini, "Caminoscopia. 'N antiphylosophische levensbeschouwing zonder draad of systeem," *De Stijl* 4, no. 5 (1921): 65-71.

71. Aldo Camini, "Caminoscopia. 'N antiphylosophische levensbeschouwing zonder draad of systeem.VIII. De natuur van den geest (Mentose) en de temperatuur van Dada," *De Stijl* 4, no. 7 (1921): 98.

72. See Theo van Doesburg, "Dadaïsme," *Het Vaderland* (February 3, 1923).

73. Van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 44-45.

74. See John Elderfield, "On the Dada-Constructivist Axis," *Dada/Surrealism*, no. 13 (1984): 5-16.

75. See on Nieuwe Beelding and Calvinism; cf. Hans Ludwig Jaffé, *De Stijl 1917-1931. The Dutch Contribution to Modern Art* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1956), 83-88.

76. Ball, *Die Flucht aus der Zeit*, 106.

77. See Bonset, "Over het nieuwe vers en het aanegeknoppte touw," 70.

78. See Theo van Doesburg, "De zwarte vlek. Simultaneïstische schets," *Het Getij* 5 (1920): 698-704.

79. See Theo van Doesburg, "De nieuwe woordbeelding," *Het Getij* 6, no. 1 (1921): 83-89, and no. 2, 120-28; Theo van Doesburg, "La Littérature d'Avant-Garde en Hollande," *Ça Ira!*, no. 12 (1921): 241-44.

80. See I. K. Bonset, "La matière dénaturisée. Destruction 2," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 6.

81. For a collection of Bonset's prose; see Theo van Doesburg, *Het andere gezicht van I. K. Bonset. Literaire geschriften van Theo van Doesburg, I. K. Bonset en Aldo Camini*, ed. Laurens Vancrevel (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1983); for a comprehensive collection of van Doesburg's/Bonset's poetry; cf. I. K. Bonset, *Nieuwe Woordbeeldingen. De gedichten van Theo van Doesburg* ed. K. Schippers (Amsterdam: Querido, 1975).

82. See Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," 39.

83. Citation in *ibid.*, 38.

84. Brandt Corstius, "The international context of Dutch literary modernism 1915-1930," 14.

85. Citation in *ibid.*, 21.

86. Citation in Jaffè, *De Stijl 1917-1931*, 55.

87. In *De Stijl*, the word *beelding* tends not only to replace Dutch words like *afbeelding*, *verbeelding*, *uitbeelding*, *inbeelding* etc., but to substitute for and specify the Dutch word *kunst* (art), as well. In this respect, *Nieuwe Beelding* equals *nieuwe kunst*. Since *beelding* also refers to "culture" (via the German *Bildung*), the word simultaneously draws the attention to the final objective of a reunification of art and life. On the impossibility of giving an accurate translation of *Nieuwe Beelding*; cf. Ina Rike, *Piet Mondrian's Nieuwe Beelding in English. Translation Data 7* (Amsterdam: Instituut voor Vertaalwetenschap, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1991). Since the term *Nieuwe Beelding* "contains more nuances than can be adequately conveyed by a single English word" (*ibid.*, 76), *Nieuwe Beelding* and related terms, *Nieuwe Versbeelding*, *Nieuwe Woordbeelding*, *Nieuwe Wereldbeelding* are not translated here.

88. Citation in Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," 40.

89. I. K. Bonset, "X-beelden," *De Stijl* 3, no. 7 (1920): 57.

90. I. K. Bonset, "X-beelden," *De Stijl* 3, no. 9 (1920): 77.

91. *Ibid.*

92. I. K. Bonset, "Chronique scandaleuse des Pays-Plats," *Mécano*, no. 3 (1922). The "Chronique" was written in 1920 for Tzara's *Dadaglobe*.

93. Bonset, "X-beelden," *De Stijl* 3, no. 7 (1920): 57.

94. For van Doesburg's early literary activity; see Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," 15-19; van Doesburg, *Nieuwe Woordbeeldingen*.

95. See Agnita Feis, *Oorlog. Verzen in staccato*, ed. W. de Graaf (Woubrugge: Avalon, 1981).

96. For Antony Kok; cf. Marc Entrop, "Antony Kok, de dichter van 'Nachtkroeg,'" *Het Oog in 't Zeil* 1, no. 5 (1984), 25-29; Marc Entrop, "Antony Kok, de spoorwegbeamte als dichter," *Het Oog in 't Zeil* 5, no. 5 (1988), 32-34; Antony Kok, *Met weinig woorden: de experimentele gedichten 1915-1923*, ed. W. de Graaf (Woubrugge: Avalon Pers, 1984); Will Tromp and J.A. Dautzenberg, eds., *Kok van De Stijl. Spoorwegbeamte te Tilburg* (Oosterbeek: Bosbespers, 1989).

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97. See van Straaten, *Theo van Doesburg*, 41.
98. See Theo van Doesburg, "Expressionistisch-literaire komposities," *Het Getij* 4, no. 2 (1919): 37-39; Theo van Doesburg, "De Vrijwilliger," *Het Getij* 4, no. 6 (1919): 201-05.
99. I. K. Bonset, "Grondslagen tot een nieuwe versbeelding," *De Stijl* 4, no. 7 (1921): 99.
100. See van Doesburg, "Littérature d'Avant-Garde en Hollande," 243-44.
101. See Til Brugman, "R/," *De Stijl* 6, no. 3-4 (1923): 54; Til Brugman, "I weg," *Merz*, no. 6 (1923): 61; Til Brugman, *5 Klankgedichten*, ed. W. de Graaf (Heemstede: Lojen Deur Pers, 1981); Mineke Bosch and Myriam Everard, "Til Brugman / Hannah Höch," *Lust & Gratie*, no. 18 (1988); Myriam Everard, "'Man lebt nur einmal in Patchamatac'. Die groteske Welt von Til Brugman, Lebensgefährtin von Hannah Höch," in *Da-da zwischen Reden zu Hannah Höch*, ed. Jula Dech and Ellen Maurer (Berlin: Orlando Frauenverlag, 1991), 82-97; Marleen Slob, "De mensen willen niet rijpen, vandaar." *Leven en werk van Til Brugman* (Amsterdam: Vita, 1994).
102. Bonset, "Anthologie-Bonset," 172-73.
103. Van Doesburg, Mondrian, Kok, "Manifest II van 'De Stijl,'" 49-50.
104. I. K. Bonset, "Over het nieuwe vers en het aaneengeknoopte touw," *De Stijl* 3, no. 6 (1920): 70-71.
105. Bonset, "Grondslagen tot een nieuwe versbeelding," 99-100.
106. *Ibid.*, 101.
107. I. K. Bonset, "Inleiding tot de nieuwe verskunst," *De Stijl* 4, no. 1 (1921): 4.
108. Citation in van Straaten, *Theo van Doesburg*, 46.
109. Bonset quoted in Theo van Doesburg, "Rondblik," *De Stijl* 4, no. 1 (1921): 12.
110. I. K. Bonset, "Over het nieuwe vers en het aaneengeknoopte touw," *De Stijl* 3, no. 6 (1920): 70-72; I. K. Bonset, "Inleiding tot de nieuwe verskunst," *De Stijl* 4, no. 1 (1921): 1-5, and no. 2, 24-26; I. K. Bonset, "Grondslagen tot een nieuwe versbeelding," *De Stijl* 4, no. 7 (1921): 99-102; I. K. Bonset, "Beeldende verskunst en hare verhouding tot de andere kunsten," *De Stijl* 5, no. 6 (1922): 88-91; I. K. Bonset, "Symptomen eener réconstructie der dichtkunst in Holland. Populaire inleiding tot inpopulaire poëzie," *De Stijl* 6, no. 3-4 (1923): 44-56; I. K. Bonset "Tot een constructieve dichtkunst," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 7. A note to Bonset, "Symptomen eener réconstructie," announces a book publication entitled "S.N.P. (School der Nieuwe Poëzie)" ("S.N.P. [School of the New Poetry]), in which these essays had to be collected.
111. See van Doesburg, *Qu'est-ce que c'est Dada?*, 35.
112. For an extensive discussion of *Mécano*; see Entrop, "Vive l'esprit mécanique."
113. Theo van Doesburg, "Paris-New-York-Dada," *De Stijl* 4, no. 6 (1921): 92; see on van Doesburg/Bonset and "Dadaglobe": Marc

Entrop, "'Je suis contre tout et tous'. I. K. Bonset en Tristan Tzara's Dadaglobe," *Jong Holland* 4, no. 3 (1988): 23-32.

vi. "Plasgaert" refers to Plasschaert, an influential art critic, but can be read also as *plasserd-* in Dutch infant speech. *plassertje* or *plasser* means "willie," or as *plasgaard*, is translatable as "pool garden," "puddle garden," or "pee garden."

114. Reproduced in Marc Entrop, "'Je suis contre tout et tous,'" 29.

115. Reproduced in Marc Entrop, "'Je suis contre tout et tous,'" 32.

116. See for example Blotkamp, *Mondriaan. Destructie als kunst*, 116-19.

117. Marc Entrop, "'Je suis contre tout et tous,'" 32.

118. See Blotkamp, *Mondriaan. Destructie als kunst*, 123-27.

119. I. K. Bonset, "Chronique scandaleuse des Pays-Plats," *Mécano*, no. 3 (1922).

120. Bonset, "Tot een constructieve dichtkunst."

121. I. K. Bonset, "Manifeste 0,96013," *Mécano*, no. 2 (1922).

122. See *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923): 2.

123. See Entrop, 140, 144-47; Bonset, "Het andere gezicht," *De Stijl* 3, no. 11 (1920): 90-91.

vii. I. K. Bonset, "Chronique scandaleuse des Pays-Plats," *Mécano*, no. 3 (1922).

124. Theo van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian, C. van Eesteren, "Bilanz des staatlichen Bauhauses Weimar," *Mécano*, no. 4-5 (1923). See Sjarel Ex, "De blik naar het oosten: De Stijl in Duitsland en Oost-Europa," in *De vervolqjaren van De Stijl*, ed. Carel Blotkamp, 67-112.

125. *Mécano*, no. 2 (1922); for the "serious" subtitling of this remark; cf. Theo van Doesburg, "Beeldende Kunst. 'Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung' - Glaspalast. Berlin. Mei - September 1921," *Het Getij* 6, Second series (1921): 51.

126. Bonset, "Tot een constructieve dichtkunst," 7.

127. I. K. Bonset, "Hypostrodon der Dramade," in Theo van Doesburg, *Wat is Dada?* (Den Haag: De Stijl, 1923), 13.

128. *Ibid.*

129. Piet Mondrian, "Les tentatives [...]," *Mécano*, no. 2 (1922).