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[content/uploads/2016/11/Melissa_Grey_credit_Marc_Fiaux.png](#))



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[content/uploads/2016/11/David_Morneau_credit_Marc_Fiaux.jpg](#))

LANGUAGE: German

POET: Hugo Ball

TRANSLATORS: Melissa Grey and David Morneau

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Voilà: lacks a toe. Voilà: sing this hymn.

A poem by Hugo Ball in a false translation by Melissa Grey & David Morneau

When we were invited to participate in a concert celebrating the 100th anniversary of Dada, produced by Hans Tammen, we knew quickly that we wanted to incorporate an Oulipian technique in our composition process. Oulipo (short for *Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle*) was founded in 1960 by the French author Raymond Queneau with a group of authors interested in exploring the potential of literature by applying constraints to the creative process, often rooted in mathematics. We are both attracted to the tight conceptual constraints of their



techniques, and are deeply interested in translating their ideas to the process of music composition. This shared interest has fueled many conversations and has indelibly shaped our budding collaboration.

Gadget Berry Dimple uses the Oulipian technique of homophonic (or false) translation. The idea is to translate words from one language to another based on sound rather than meaning. For example:

Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui
becomes
“Levy urge, levy vassal, hale bell!” assured we.

We began the process by taking Hugo Ball’s *Gadji beri bimba* (1916) and breaking it out into an alphabetical list of every word within. Then we created false translations for each word in the list, so that *affalo* became “a fellow”, *brussala* became “bruised salad”, *katalominai* became “cat and lonely mice”, and so on. Once finished, we reassembled Ball’s poem using our translations. The result (which is published here) was immediately captivating. We are planning to explore it further, using it as the basis for more music by applying additional Oulipian transformations to it.

For our performance on the 100th anniversary of Dada concert, we created a live sonic texture using a Benjolin synthesizer, a vintage Merlin toy, and a drum machine. Over that we read through our list of translated words as a glossary of false translation: Melissa recited



the Ball's original words and David recited our translations. A video of this performance can be seen here: <http://artisteordinaire.org/gadget-berry-dimple-a-glossary-of-false-translation/> (<http://artisteordinaire.org/gadget-berry-dimple-a-glossary-of-false-translation/>)

—Melissa Grey & David Morneau (2016) Gadji beri bimba

Sources: *Oulipo Compendium* (Harry Mathews & Alastair Brotchie), *l'Artiste ordinaire* (artisteordinaire.org) (<http://artisteordinaire.org/>)

Photo credits: Marc Fiaux

gadji beri bimba glandridi laula lonni cadori

gadjama gramma berida bimbala glandri galassassa laulitalomini

gadji beri bin blassa glassala laula lonni cadorsu sassala bim

gadjama tuffin i zimzalla binban gligla wowolimai bin beri ban

o katalominai rhinozerossola hopsamen laulitalomini hoooo

gadjama rhinozerossola hopsamen

bluku terullala blaulala loooo

zimzim urullala zimzim urullala zimzim zanzibar zimzalla zam

elifantolim brussala bulomen brussala bulomen tromtata

velo da bang band affalo purzamai affalo purzamai lengado tor

gadjama bimbalo glandridi glassala zingtata pimpalo ögrögöööö

viola laxato viola zimbrabim viola uli paluji malooo

tuffin im zimbrabim negramai bumbalo negramai bumbalo tuffin i zim

gadjama bimbala oo beri gadjama gaga di gadjama affalo pinx

gaga di bumbalo bumbalo gadjamen

gaga di bling blong

gaga blung

Gadget Berry Dimple

Gadget berry dimple; grand treaty. Louder, lonely tandoori.

Pajama gamma, buried home, timbales, grand tree. Melis-iss-sa: “Lolita longs for me.”

Gadget berry (gin blossom glossary). Louder, lonely cats or you, sad salad? Bim:

“Pajama toughen!” I, some olive, been banned. Glee club? Wow! only me (gin berry) banned.

O cat and lonely mice. [rhinoceros solo] Hans Tammen: “Lolita longs for me.” Who?

Pajama Rhinoceros. [solo: Hans Tammen]

Blue queue tarantula; blue lager low.

Chin, chin, you rule a lot. Chin, chin, you rule a lot. Chin, chin, sandwich bar. (Some olive sham!)

Elephant totem, bruised salad. Pillow men: “Bruised salad.” Pillow men: “drum louder.”

Hell, no! Ha! Pang bland. A fellow purse of mine, a fellow purse of mine. [legato: tire]

Pajama bee’s halo. Grand treaty glossary. Zinc starter, pimp! Alone ogre grow.

Voilà: lacks a toe. Voilà: sing this hymn. Voilà: Oulipo Fallujah Morneau.

Toughen, ein sing this hymn? No, not mine. Bungalow? No, not mine. Bungalow toughen—I shim.

Pajama timbales. Oh, berry pajama. “Dada the pajama,” a fellow pins.

“Dada the bungalow, bungalow,” god of men.

Dada the bring blonde?

Dada brung!



HUGO BALL was born in Pirmasens, German Empire, and was raised in a middle-class Catholic family. He studied sociology and philosophy at the universities of Munich and Heidelberg (1906–1907). In 1910, he moved to Berlin in order to become an actor and collaborated with Max Reinhardt. After witnessing the invasion of Belgium, he was disillusioned saying: “The war is founded on a glaring mistake, men have been confused with machines”. Considered a traitor in his country, he crossed the frontier with the cabaret performer and poet Emmy Hennings, whom he would marry in 1920, and settled in Zürich.

In 1916, Hugo Ball created the Dada Manifesto, making a political statement about his views on the terrible state of society and acknowledging his dislike for philosophies in the past claiming to possess the ultimate Truth. Some of his best known works include the poem collection *7 schizophrene Sonette*, the drama *Die Nase des Michelangelo*, a memoir of the Zürich period *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*, and a biography of Hermann Hesse, entitled *Hermann Hesse. Sein Leben und sein Werk* (1927).

His involvement with the Dada movement lasted approximately two years. He then worked for a short period as a journalist, for *Freie Zeitung* in Bern. After returning to Catholicism in July 1920, Ball retired to the canton of Ticino where he lived a religious and relatively poor life. He contributed to the journal “Hochland” during this time. He died in Sant’Abbondio, Switzerland of stomach cancer on September 14, 1927.

Composer **MELISSA GREY**’s works have been described as “elegantly diabolical...strikingly eerie and captivating” (furtherfield.org (<http://circumferencemag.org/furtherfield.org>)). Her recent projects include **blur (after blue hour)**, a kinetic score based on Renaissance combinatorial memory wheels, created for Payton MacDonald’s *Sonic Divide* project. She is currently developing a soundscape that will broadcast in the gallery space for the exhibition curated by artist Angela Grauerholz, *Michèle Lemieux | The Whole and Its Parts, From drawing to animated films*, to be shown at the Centre de design, Université du Québec à Montréal in September 2016. With artist and animator Nicole Antebi, she has ongoing animation-sound projects that include live performance and processing with Grey performing a vintage Merlin music machine: **Procrustean Bed**, composed for violinist Lynn Bechtold, premiered at the New West Electronic Arts and Music Organization Festival in San Diego; and **Magic Square**, a triple collaborative effort with Antebi and synthpop pioneer, Vince Clarke, premiered at the Morbid Anatomy Museum in Brooklyn, New York. Grey is an Associate Director of Composers Concordance and a Member of the Board of Directors for Miolina, the violin duo of Lynn Bechtold and Mioi Takeda. She teaches Sound

DAVID MORNEAU is a composer of an entirely undecided genre. Described by Molly Sheridan as a “shining beacon” of inspiration, his diverse work illuminates ideas about our culture, issues concerning creativity, and even the very nature of music itself. His eclectic output has been described variously as “elegantly rendered”, “happily prissy”, “impressive”, “unusual, esoteric, and offbeat”. His chiptune album, **Broken Memory**, “absolutely wrecks shop.... For that, David Morneau wins.” His current projects include **Not Less Than the Good**, a secularized morning prayer service based on Henry Thoreau’s *Walden*, which is being composed for New Thread Quartet (a New York based saxophone ensemble) and will include field recordings made at Walden Pond and read excerpts from Thoreau’s book; and **Vintage Machines**, a series of pieces utilizing vintage video game systems to make music. Morneau is composer-in-residence with Immigrant Breast Nest, a New York City netlabel. <http://sof4.com> (<http://sof4.com/>)

Established in January 2016, **L’ARTISTE ORDINAIRE (L’AO)** is a collaborative partnership between composer-performers Melissa Grey and David Morneau that has launched electronic performances and **Soft Series**, a concert series dedicated to presenting soft premieres. Live electronic performances include **7^3 [M]** (Benjolin synthesizer, Game Boy), **Gadget Berry Dimple: A Glossary of False Translation** (Benjolin, Merlin, Spoken Word) for Hans Tammen’s *Rakete bee bee? Rakete bee zee!* 100th Anniversary of Dada at Spectrum NYC, and **Hyperlocal 2.0** for Thomas Piercy (Bass Clarinet, Sine Waves, Beats). L’Ao is developing **Photon Ecstasy**, a concert-length performance project that engages music, sound, and science fiction to address the hubris of certainty, which will premiere at the University of Pennsylvania Special Collections Library in conjunction with the exhibition of artist Dan Rose’s *DNA-Photon Project* (October 2016). <http://artisteordinaire.org> (<http://artisteordinaire.org/>)



[\(https://circumferencemag.com/my-mistake-must-have-been-wanting-to-communicate/\)](https://circumferencemag.com/my-mistake-must-have-been-wanting-to-communicate/).

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🕒 July 14, 2021



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A wild tiger's excesses. Or an ocelot.
[\(https://circumferencemag.com/a-wild-tigers-excesses-or-an-ocelot/\)](https://circumferencemag.com/a-wild-tigers-excesses-or-an-ocelot/).

🕒 January 13, 2015



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🕒 October 25, 2022