MARK BEASLEY

Motherfist and her five glossaries: Notes towards the insertion of Black Dada

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Black Dada is a way to talk about the future while talking about the past. It is our present moment. The Black Dada must use irrational language. The Black Dada must exploit the logic of identity. Black Dada is neither madness, nor wisdom, nor irony, nor naiveté. Black Dada: we are successive. Black Dada: we are not exclusive. Black Dada: we abhor simpletons and are perfectly capable of an intelligent discussion. The Black Dada's manifesto is both form and life. Black Dada your history of art.

ADAM PENDLETON, 'BLACK DADA MANIFESTO', 2008

By removing all semantic and normative functions of the word the Dada poets released language from its obligation to merely communicate. That is to say, through the rupture of speech, they reordered the code: they made the familiar strange. To what end? Corresponding with the outbreak of the First World War, it was an attempt on the part of the few—Hugo Ball, Emmy Hennings, Tristan Tzara, Jean Arp, Marcel Janco, Richard Huelsenbeck, and Sophie Täuber—to address the acts of the many. Deploring the 'common sense' [1] that had led Europe into blood-shed, Dada was for contrary action and contradiction. It was a gibbering, critical response to the brutality of the Somme and Verdun. As such, nonsense became a home for sagacity in the face of senselessness. Choosing the heterogeneous, the frustrating and disruptive above clarity, they created new glossaries and new dialects. In short, there is always a point to be made in nonsense—a point thoroughly explored by Kant—it too has its logic. But as Tzara might have it, my wandering mind keeps on jumping in like a pair of boots. This is not what we are here to discuss.

'Nostalgia' it was once said by that arbiter of chaotic cultural change Malcolm McLaren 'is dead tissue.' We shall then extend the courtesy to Black Dada, refer-ring to it as a future-thinking-nostalgia-of-the-present. Somewhat of a baloney contradiction, I give you, yet a clear recognition of the irrational nature of this intended and becoming form. Non-sense is linked with originality. Something is misunderstood because it is unprecedented: a fact that many should consider, when railing against the new and unknown. For Pendleton, Black Dada is an act of conception. Through the deconstruction of rhetoric and the re-assemblage of fracture, its proposes to storm the barricades of 'Dada's white European weak-ness.' [2] For have no doubt, Dada is uniquely turn-of-the-twentieth-century Europe, it comes from the despairing agitated throats of pressured lives and convoluted histories. How does Black Dada recode, rewrite, and insert itself into the body of general discourse? How does one go about such an historic insurrection? A new glossary is required.

Let us think of Black Dada as a hidden, unreadable and unknowable language. Unless, that is, you are privy to its mechanisms of mirroring and concealment. Just as the painter Paul Gauguin refreshed his eyes to colour by gazing into a specially prepared black mirror, Black Dada seeks to filter language through severance and disjuncture. Words are familiar yet somehow lacking. It is the new cant for the twenty-first century, a secret language just as that devised by rogues and vagabonds in Elizabethan England. It is a new cryptolect that asserts itself through careful camouflage and subtle co-option. It is exclusive and irrational in the sense that it wishes to be understood by all, yet conceals meaning from those simpletons unable to look beyond the didactic self-serving spirit of the age.

Let us look to past glossaries, dialects and cants that share Black Dada's desire to reconstruct. To think again about the logic of identity, to think beyond the speech-ifying stilted rhetoric spoken in liberation's name: a curse upon you, for it is you that profit from the status quo! These are satiric, shattered, poignant, toothy and poetic forms of the word viruses, mutated and self-organized. Here follows five glossaries, some known, others barely understood. All have in their own direct and subtle ways created shelter from the dominant language. The greatest act of detournement is to experience language both familiar yet strange. To savor the twist in the mouth they should be read aloud. The act of speaking is all that is required for the first steps toward understanding Black Dada. We are calling for the revelation of another subculture. Is this possible? The oft-heard rhetoric, 'it's happening somewhere far from here and in a language unknown to you or I,' can be ignored. This then is Black Dada. The 'da' in the shadow of 'da'.

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A partial glossary of Victorian Back Slang from A to Y

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elpp—**apple**; dab—**bad**; war-rab—**barrow**; deb—**bed**; reeb—**beer**; zeb—**best**; tib—**bit**; Kcalb Adad—**Black Dada**; stoobs—**boots**; mottab—**bottom**; yob or yobbo—**boy**; da-erb—**bread**; edgabac—**cabbage**; pac—**cap**; storracs—**carrots**; sir–etch—**cherries**; yad—**day**; theg—**eight**; nevele, or levem—**eleven**; nitraf—**farthing**; taff—**fat**; shif—**fish**; evif—**five**; rouf—**four**; nig—**gin**; elrig—**girl**; dlog—**gold**; doog—**good**; neergs—**greens**; flatch—**half**; flatch yennep—**ha'penny**; tatch—**hat**; vatch—**have**; dee-aitch—**head**; esrotch—**horse**; totch—**hot**; birk—**house**; efink—**knife**; cool—**look**; miad—**maid**; nam (men-nems)—**man**; tekram—**market**; noom—**moon**; enin—**nine**; on—**no**; stuns—**nuts**; dillo—**old**; eno—**one**; nosrap—**parson**; yarpoo—**pay up**; rape—**pear**; yennep—**penny**; tinep—**pint**; esclop—**police (1)**; slop—**police (2)**; namesclop—**policeman**; rutats—**potatoes**; top yob—**pot boy**; dunop—**pound**; track or trag—**quart**; nire—**rain**; seeo—**shoe**; exis—**six**; spinsrap—**parsnips**; elbat—**table**; klat—**talk**; lawt—**tall**; earth—**three**; occabot—**tobacco**; reswort—**trousers**; evlenet—**twelve**; oat—**two**; stunlaws—**walnuts**; kew—**week**; new—**when**; namus/namer—**woman**; namers—**women**; say—**yes**

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Note:

Back slang was invented in the 1800s by costermongers—market traders or barrow boys. The first reference to it is in Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* in 1851. Eight years later, John Hotten published the first back slang diction-ary, *A Dictionary of Modern Slang, Cant and Vulgar Words*. The basic premise is that all words were spoken backwards, essentially mirrored language. The most frequently used example in common parlance is the word 'yob' from the reverse of 'boy'. The costers vocabulary was small, mainly verbs, nouns, cardinal num-bers, and the occasional adjective. The many words for policeman recognize the initial impetus for the invention. With the advent of the police force in the United Kingdom the costers, who had always been self-governing, were for the first time under scrutiny.

One of the most striking things about back slang is how much it relies upon the written word. How a word is spelt matters more than how it sounds. Throughout the twentieth century is was entirely a butcher's language. At first secrecy was one of the main attractions. Using back slang, the butcher and his assistant could agree between them how much they could charge individual customers. If the butcher particularly disliked a certain customer, he'd call to his assistant: 'tuck the dillo woc a tib of dillo woc' translated as 'cut the old cow a bit of old cow'.

An aside:

In 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg of New York City announced plans to license 500 costermonger Green Carts to sell fresh fruits and vegetables. The announce-ment spurred hopes for a revival of costermongering.

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Black Country dialect from A to C

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ackidock—aqueduct; **agen**—again; **airk**—as in belly ache; **ait**—eat; **aks(axe)**—ask; **anunst**—against; **ar**—yes; **ay or a**—haven't or isn't; **babby**—baby; **backerds**—backwards; **barly**—a truce; **bai or bay**—am not; **bally**—belly, stomach; **bamboozle**—puzzle, bemuse; **barmpot**—an idiotic person; **barmy**—daft, silly; **bawk**—hinder or confuse; **bay or baynt**—am not; **beezum**—a broom of birch; **bibble**—a pebble; **bin**—been, have been; **bist**—are; **bisn't**—aren't; **blaberen**—to talk idly; **Black Dada**—Black Ahrahr; **blart**—cry; **blether**—to talk nonsense or talk incessantly; **blobmouth**—blabbermouth; **boffle**—hinder; **bonk**—bank; **bost**—broken or burst; **bostin**—very good indeed; **(on the) box**—off work, sick; **breffus**—breakfast; **bunny-fire**—bonfire; **caggy or caghanded**—left-handed; **cag-mag**—bad or rotting meat; **camplin**—gossiping; **cant(in)**—gossip(ing); **catlick**—hasty wash; **cor**—cannot; **chawl**—pork; **chops**—mouth or cheeks; **chuffed**—pleased; **chuck**—throw; **chunter**—grumble under one's breath; **clarnet**—idiot, fool; **clemmed or clammed**—starved or hungry; **clobber**—clothes or possibly to hit someone; **cocka/cocker**—mate, friend; **codge**—a poor job; **coddin**—joking, kidding; **cor or cort**—can't; **crack**—fun, entertainment; **craw**—crop of a bird; **croddle**—huddle together; **cut**—canal

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Note:

The Black Country is a loosely defined area of the English West Midlands conurbation, to the north and west of Birmingham, and to the south and east of Wolverhampton. The Black Country dialect preserves many archaic traits of Early Modern English and even Middle English and is the oldest English dialect recorded in the Domesday book of 1086. 'Thee', 'thy' and 'thou' are still in use, as is the case in parts of Yorkshire and Lancashire. With a combined population of one million the Black Country got its name because of pollution from heavy industries that covered the area in black soot. There is an anecdote about Queen Victoria ordering the blinds lowered on her carriage as the royal train passed through. 'One does not wish to see this Black Country.' The primary concerns of the dialect were the deflation of those who felt superior to others or who lacked a sense of humor. To Queen Victoria one might say 'Ers a balmpot who needs chuckin in the cut.'

An aside:

The Black Country was home to seminal heavy metal musicians from Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and Napalm Death. Napalm Death invented a style of singing and genre of music titled 'grindcore' that reduced language and vocals to a high scream called the death grunt.

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A Gullah dictionary from A to partial B

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annudduh—another; **ansuh**—answer, answers, answered; **aruh**—each, either; **ashish**—ashes; **attacktid**—attacked (see "'tack'" and "'tacktid"); **attuh**—after; **atthr'um**—after him, her, it, them; **attuhw'ile**—after a while; **augus'**—august; **axil**—axle, axles; **ax'me**—ask, asks, asked, asking me; **ax'um**—ask or asked him, her, it, them; **bactize**—baptize, baptizes, baptized, baptizing; **bad mout'**—bad mouth; **baig**—beg, begs, begged, begging; **baig'um**—beg, begs, begged, begging him, her; **bait'um**—bait, baits, baited, baiting him, her; **bandun**—abandon, abandons, abandoned, abandoning; **barruh**—barrow, a bacon hog; **bawn**—born; **bay're**—bare, bares, bared, baring; **beabuh**—beaver, beavers; **b'dout**—without, unless, except; **beehibe**—beehive, beehives; **b'fo' day**—before day (see "crackuhday," and "'fo' day"); **b'habe**—behave, behaves, behaved, behaving; **b'hin**—behind; **b'kause**—because; **behol'**—behold, beholds, beheld, beholding; **belluh**—bellow, bellows, bellowed, bellowing; **bemean**—to be mean to any one, to slander, or abuse; **berry**—very; **bet**—best; **bettuh**—better; **bex vex**—vexes, vexing; **bighouse**—the Master's house; **bile**—boil, boils, boiled, boiling; **bumbye**—bye and bye; **bin**—been, was; **bittle**—victuals, food; **blackbu'd**—blackbird, blackbirds; Black Dada—Black Yaasyaas; **b'long**—belong, belongs, belonged, belonging; **b'leew**—believe, believes, believed, believing; **'bleege**—oblige, obliges, obliged, obliging; **bline**—blind, blinds, blinded, blinding; **b'long**—belong, belongs, belonged, belonging; **boa'd**—board, boards, boarded, boarding; **boddun**—bother, bothers, bothered, bothering; **brustle**—bustle, bustles; **bubbuh**—brother; **buckruh**—a white person or persons; the white people; **buckruhbittle**—white man's food; **bu'd**—bird, birds; **bu'dcage**—birdeage, birdcages; **buhhime**—behind; **bu'n**—burn, burns, burned, burning; **burruh**—burrow, burrows, burrowed, burrowing; **bus'**—burst, bursts, bursting

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Note:

The Gullah language (Sea Island Creole English, Geechee) is a Creole language spoken by the Gullah people (also called Geechees), an African American population living on the Sea Islands and the coastal region of the U.S. states of South Carolina and Georgia. Gullah is based on English, with strong influences from West and Central African languages such as Mandinka, Wolof, Bambara, Fula, Mende, Vai, Akan, Ewe, Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, Kongo, Umbundu, and Kimbundu.

An aside:

For generations outsiders stigmatized Gullah speakers regarding their language as a mark of ignorance and low social status. As a result, Gullah people developed the habit of speaking their language only within the confines of their own homes and local communities and avoided the possibility of being seen speaking it in public outside the safety of their home areas. Ironically, the prejudice of outsiders was probably a factor in helping preserve the language. Many films and books have been written in Gullah.

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Slim Gaillard's Vout–O–Reenie dictionary from C to E

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Vout Yackra—Black Dada; **caba**—calf; **ca-cam-e-lo**—thirst; **capa**—swallow; **care-less-a**—well; **caresser**—arm; **carosponee**—letter; **carpet shredder**—jitterbug; **car-vee-o-roo**—pork; **cheap gold**—copper; **cee**—light; **cee-met-o**—day; **cement**—block; **chainz**—kin; **chesta**—round; **chicken feed**—corn; **chopper**—mouth; **cirk-ee**—lobby; **clam stalk**—celery; **cly-ee**—plate; **color-vee-tee**—butterfly; **copper hat**—lieutant; **cor-to**—lawyer; **cot-o-ee**—down; **cover-up**—paint; **cray-a**—lipstick; **cre-o-chee**—winter; **cross-a-ta**—bridge; **cross-up**—ladder; **cut**—go; **cut-ee-nee**—join; **david**—beard; **devil-dinner**—fire; **digess-vooty**—book; **dig**—think/understand; **dig you**—see you later; **dip-dip**—ink; **dip-dip-re-fill**—inkstand; **drug-o-re-nee**—sad; **dry-dus**—morning; **ee-nah**—child; **egg-sup**—hen; **eye-ezee**—admire

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Note:

Slim Gaillard was a jazz Renaissance Man who doubled as its court jester. He played, to one degree or another, nearly all of the most common instruments of jazz, including guitar, piano, organ, drums, vibraphone, and various saxophones; he also composed music and tap danced. As Bob Horne wrote in *Down Beat*, 'His mellow baritone would have more than sufficed for a career as a ballad singer, had his sense of humour not intervened.' It is for his humor that he is most widely remembered and loved. It is immortalized in masterpieces such as *Flat Foot Floogie*, *Yproc Heresy*, *Chicken Rhythm*, *Serenade To A Poodle*, and *Laughin' in Rhythm*, all of which are saturated with a Dadaist sense of absurdity. Like early dada music, Gaillard sang and composed songs in his own private language, 'vout.' 'Slim Gaillard was a surrealist,' Bruce Crowther wrote in *Singing Jazz*, 'who, had he been in almost any other branch of the arts, would have been hailed as a great innovator.' This master musician, who had once worked as a professional cook and merchant seaman, turned to acting later in life, appearing in numerous television shows and movies.

An aside:

Gaillard spoke seven languages and was a chief inspiration for the early beats, mentioned in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* (1957) and latterly appeared in *Absolute Beginners* (1986) alongside David Bowie.

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Polari from A to W

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ajax—nearby; **basket**—the bulge of male genitals through clothes; **batts**—shoes; **bijou**—small; **Blonde Bonbon**—Black Dada; **bod**—body; **bold**—daring; **bona**—good; **butch**—masculine; **masculine**—lesbian; **camp**—effeminate (origin: KAMP = Known As Male Prostitute); **capello**—hat; **carts/cartso**—penis; **carsey**—toilet, (also spelt "khazi"); **chicken**—young boy; **charper**—search; **cod**—naff, vile; **cottage**—public toilet; **cottaging**—having or looking for sex in a toilet; **crimper**—hairdresser; **dish**—an attractive male; **dizzy**—scatterbrained; **dolly**—pretty, nice, pleasant; **drag**—clothes, esp. women's clothes; **ecaf**—face (backslang); **eek**—face (abbreviation of ecaf); **ends**—hair; **esong**—nose; **fantabulosa**—wonderful; **feele**—child; **fruit**—queen; **gelt**—money; **glossies**—magazines; **handbag**—money; **hoofer**—dancer; **jarry**—food, also mangarie; **kaffies**—trousers; **khazi**—toilet, also spelt carsey; **lallies**—legs; **latty**—room, house or flat; **lills**—hands; **lilly**—police (Lilly Law); **luppers**—fingers; **mangarie**—food, also jarry; **measures**—money; **meese**—plain, ugly (from Yiddish); **meshigener**—nutty, crazy, mental; metzas—money; **mince**—walk (affectedly); **naff**—bad, drab (from Not Available For Fucking); **nanti**—not, no; **national handbag**—dole; **nishta**—nothing, no; **oglefakes**—glasses; **ogles**—eyes; **omi**—man; **omi-polone**—effeminate man, or homosexual; **onk**—nose; **orbs**—eyes; **palare pipe**—telephone; **park**—give; **polari**—chat, talk; **polone**—woman; **pots**—teeth; **riah/riha**—hair; **riah shusher**—hairdresser; **scarper**—to run off (from Italian *scappare*, to escape); **scotch**—leg; **sharpy**—policeman; **shush**—steal; **shush bag**—holdall; **shyker/shyckle**—wig; **slap**—makeup; **strollers**—piano; **thews**—thighs; **trade**—sex; **troll**—to walk about (esp. looking for trade); **vada/varda**—see; **willets**—breasts

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Note:

Also known as lavender linguistics or gay slang Polari was more common amongst men in the 1960s when there was more need of a private language due to the criminalization of homosexuality. In the 1960s it became of favorite of housewives—it is imagined specific nuances would have been lost—throughout Britain through the 'Julian and Sandy' sketches on the BBC radio program *Round the Horn*, the 1960s vehicle of gibberish genius and comic actor Kenneth Williams. A few words like 'bona' can still be seen in gay publications, used for camp effect. There are even hairdressers in London and Brighton called 'Bona Riah'. Polari itself was never clearly defined. The closest summation would be a continually evolving collection of slang from various sources including Italian, English (backwards slang, rhyming slang), circus slang, canal–speak, Yiddish and Gypsy languages.

An aside:

Of all our cants, Polari has ceded many words to the mainstream. Take the word 'naff' for example. There are a number of folk etymologies of the term 'naff', many based around acronyms—Not Available For Fucking, Normal As Fuck. Its later use in the 1980s refers dismissively to heterosexual people. 'Zhoosh' has entered English more recently, especially through the TV series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*. 'Cottaging' (anonymous sex in a public lavatory) has also entered mainstream English, thanks to some high profile cases. 'Balonie', this term for rubbish has not only become common in the United Kingdom, but also used to be very common in America (where it is almost always spelled 'baloney'), in both cultures it is a euphemism for bullshit. For example, 'That guy's full of baloney!'

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Black Dada is neither an ism nor a situation. It is pieced together like a tapestry, stitched in the margins of expressed language and compiled through lived relations. It possesses, as does all great writing, the uneven consistency of language on the run.

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Ades, Dawn, ed., *The DADA Reader: A Critical Anthology*, University of Chicago Press, 2006

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Pendleton, Adam, *Black Dada Manifesto*, 2008