



## UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

### Between mass and mask

*The profane media logic of anonymous imageboard culture*

de Zeeuw, D.

#### Publication date

2019

#### Document Version

Other version

#### License

Other

[Link to publication](#)

#### Citation for published version (APA):

de Zeeuw, D. (2019). *Between mass and mask: The profane media logic of anonymous imageboard culture*.

#### General rights

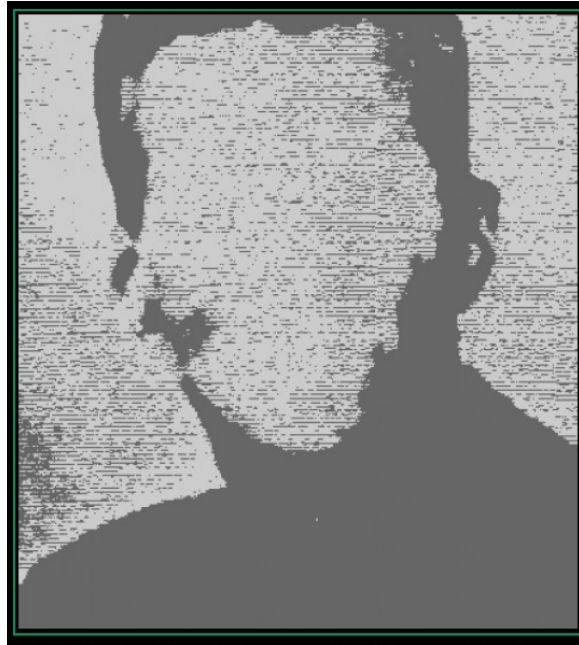
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

#### Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

# Between Mass and Mask

The Profane Media Logic of Anonymous Imageboard Culture



Daniël de Zeeuw

Ph.D. Dissertation, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis  
University of Amsterdam

**Between Mass and Mask**  
The Profane Media Logic of Anonymous Imageboard Culture

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT  
ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor  
aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam  
op gezag van de Rector Magnificus  
prof. dr. ir. K.I.J. Maex  
ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde commissie,  
in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel  
op woensdag 18 december 2019, te 12.00 uur  
door Daniël de Zeeuw  
geboren te Utrecht

Promotiecommissie:

Promotores: Prof. dr. R. Celikates, Freie Universität Berlin  
Prof. dr. E. Peeren, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Overige leden: Prof. dr. W.H.K. Chun, Simon Fraser University  
Prof. dr. ir. B.J. de Kloet, Universiteit van Amsterdam  
Prof. dr. P.P.R.W. Pisters, Universiteit van Amsterdam  
Dr. M. Deseriis, Northeastern University  
Dr. M.D. Tuters, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

*Tout ce qui ne se consume pas, pourrit.*<sup>1</sup>  
Roger Caillois, *L'homme et le sacré* (1933)

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Everything that doesn't consume itself, rots' (Caillois 1988, my translation).

# Table of Contents

Publication Acknowledgement	i
Acknowledgments	ii
List of Figures	iii
Introduction	1
<b>1. Anonymous Imageboard Culture</b>	
1.1 4chan's /b/ Random Board	7
1.2 Japanese Imageboards and Something Awful	18
1.3 Mask Versus Face Culture	24
<b>2. Existence without Identity</b>	
2.1 The Significance of Anonymity in Online Mask Culture	30
2.2 Anonymity as a Modern Condition	35
2.3 Anonymous as the Faceless Inhabitant of Everyday Life	39
2.4 In Search of Anon	44
<b>3. Profanation and Mass Media Culture</b>	
3.1 Immunity from the Image	46
3.2 The Mass Ornament: Between Alienation and Liberation	52
3.3 A Universal Prostitution: The Conflicted Legacies of Mass Modernity	55
3.4 Collective Pleasures of Anonymity: From the Public Restroom to Chatroulette	59
<b>4. The Carnavalesque Spirit of Online Mask Culture</b>	
4.1 An Incest of Forms: Modernity as Masquerade	67
4.2 An Ocean of Mouths, Noses, Eyes, and Ears: The Carnavalesque Commoning of Faces	75
4.3 Profane Laughter: Of Comedy and Pornography	82
4.4 "Teh Internet is Serious Business": Profanation as Parody and Play	89
<b>5. 4chan's Excremental Visions</b>	
5.1 Scatological Representations of 4chan as the Bottom of the Web	94
5.2 "A Brutal Barrage of Blistering Bullshit": The Human Centipede	102
5.3 4chan's Grotesque Media Body: The Naked Obese Man	108
5.4 In the Digital Flesh (I am a Beautiful Monster)	115
5.5 "Co-existence has Created a Fucking Monster"	120
Conclusion	127
Bibliography	131
Summary	155
Samenvatting	157

# Publication Acknowledgement

Parts of section 3.1 have been published in *ephemera* (de Zeeuw 2017a). Parts of section 4.2 have been published in *NECSUS* (de Zeeuw 2017b).