UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Collective Pleasures of Anonymity

From Public Restrooms to 4chan and Chatroulette

de Zeeuw, D.

DOI
10.21983/P3.0315.1.00
10.2307/j.ctv1jf2c5t

Publication date
2021

Document Version
Final published version

Published in
Book of Anonymity

License
CC BY-NC-SA

Link to publication

Citation for published version (APA):
de Zeeuw, D. (2021). Collective Pleasures of Anonymity: From Public Restrooms to 4chan and Chatroulette. In *Book of Anonymity: An edited collection* (pp. 356-378). Punctum Books. https://doi.org/10.21983/P3.0315.1.00, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1jf2c5t

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.

UvA-DARE is a service provided by the library of the University of Amsterdam (https://dare.uva.nl)

Download date:11 Nov 2022

BOOK OF ANONYMITY

An edited collection

punctumbooks

Keywords
Anonymity, Data Security, Surveillance, Personhood,
Privacy, Art-Science Collaboration, Digital Cultures

Subject Codes
COM079010 COMPUTERS / Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)
COM079000 COMPUTERS / Social Aspects
SOC000000 SOCIAL SCIENCE / General
SOC010000 SOCIAL SCIENCE / Feminism & Feminist Theory
SOC071000 SOCIAL SCIENCE / Technology Studies

Edited by Anon Collective

All contributions to this volume are published pseudo-anonymously. Aiming to highlight tensions between authorship and anonymity while still allowing attribution, we provide an overview of contributors and a citation how-to for each contribution in the back of this book (page 481).

Book of Anonymity. Copyright © 2020 by the editors and authors. This work carries a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0 International license, which means that you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, and you may also remix, transform and build upon the material, as long as you clearly attribute the work to the authors (but not in a way that suggests the authors or punctum books endorses you and your work), you do not use this work for commercial gain in any form whatsoever, and that for any remixing and transformation, you distribute your rebuild under the same license. http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/. Normal citations in academic and other forms of literature, are, of course, possible in any case.

This book has been made possible with the generous support of the Volkswagen Foundation (project number VW89490).

VolkswagenStiftung

First published in 2021 by punctum books,
Earth, Milky Way. www.punctumbooks.com

ISBN 978-1-953035-30-1 (print)
ISBN 978-1-953035-31-8 (ePDF)
DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.21983/P3.0315.1.00
LCCN 2020951163

Book design: Dicey Studios

Collective Pleasures of Anonymity

From Public Restrooms to 4chan and Chatroulette

Introduction

In current debates on online anonymity and its normative status, anonymity is often understood in either of the following ways. First, the technical or informatic sense of anonymity refers to a (statistical) degree of unidentifiability or untraceability.[1] Here, anonymity is seen to ideally

1 For a general conceptual overview of the concept of anonymity in current debates, see Ian Kerr, Valerie Steeves, and Carole Lucock, *Lessons from the Identity Trail: Anonymity, Privacy, and Identity in a Networked Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009);

enable private communication over the internet, for example, by using encryption or the TOR network. In these cases, the value of anonymity is sought in its instrumental capacity to safeguard citizens' right to a private sphere of conduct and communication, that is, the right to some measure of personal privacy.[2] Additionally, in its capacity to sever the ties that normally persist between an author and her speech (or in the case of digital communication, between sender, message, and receiver), anonymity is also thought to protect and facilitate citizens' right to freedom of expression and political assembly.[3] Second, debates on online anonymity often focus on its nefarious effects in terms of (national) security, as facilitating various forms of criminal behavior or terrorism.[4] From the perspective of the potentially conflicting interests of privacy and security in liberal democratic societies, anonymity thus represents a double-edged sword, as it is seen as beneficial to privacy while being potentially detrimental to societal safety.[5] Additionally, anonymity is connected to "antisocial" or "immoral" behavior supposedly caused by its "disinhibition" effects.[6] Here, anonymity is seen to enable or amplify online hate speech and harassment, thus contributing to a "toxic technoculture."[7]

and Gary Marx, "Identity and Anonymity: Some Conceptual Distinctions and Issues for Research," in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. J. Caplan and J. Torpey (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 311–27.

2 Julie E. Cohen, "A Right to Read Anonymously: A Closer Look at 'Copyright Management' in Cyberspace," *Connecticut Law Review* 28 (1996): 981–1039; and Steve Matthews, "Anonymity and the Social Self," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2010): 351–63.

3 For the significance of anonymity in new forms of hacktivism and whistleblowing, for example, in Anonymous and Wikileaks, see Cole Stryker, *Hacking the Future: Privacy, Identity, and Anonymity on the Web* (New York: Duckworth Overlook, 2013); and Wendy H. Wong and Peter A. Brown, "E-bandits in Global Activism: Wikileaks, Anonymous, and the Politics of No One," *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (2013): 1015–33.
On the significance of anonymity for political and social mobilization, see Yaman Akdeniz, "Anonymity, Democracy and Cyberspace." *Social Research* 69, no. 1 (2002): 223–37; and Patrick C. Underwood, "New Directions in Networked Activism and Online Social Movement Mobilization: The Case of Anonymous and Project Chanology" (master's thesis, Ohio University, 2009), 46.
For a discussion of the legal status of anonymity as a right on its own, see A. Michael Froomkin, "Anonymity and Its Enmities." *Journal of Online Law* 1, (1995) art. 4. In the American constitutional tradition, for example, anonymous publication has been included in First Amendment protections of freedom of speech; see "The Constitutional Right to Anonymity: Free Speech, Disclosure and the Devil," *Yale Law Journal* 70, no. 7 (1961): 1084–128; Evgeni Moyakine, "Online Anonymity in the Modern Digital Age: Quest for a Legal Right," *Journal of Information Rights, Policy and Practice* 1, no. 1 (2016); Robert G. Natelson, "Does 'the Freedom of the Press' Include a Right to Anonymity? The Original Understanding," SSRN, October 12, 2013; Thomas F. Cotter and Lyrissa Barnett Lidsky, "Authorship, Audiences, and Anonymous Speech." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, August 22, 2006; and Michael H. Spencer, "Anonymous Internet Communication and the First Amendment: A Crack in the Dam of National Sovereignty." *Virginia Journal of Law and Technology* 3, no. 1 (1998). In the case of *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission*, for example, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote, "Under our Constitution, anonymous pamphleteering is not a pernicious, fraudulent practice, but an honorable tradition of advocacy and dissent." Cited in Smith Ekstrand, "The Many Masks of Anon: Anonymity as Cultural Practice and Reflections in Case Law," *Journal of Technology Law Policy* 18 (2013): 4.

4 Alex Kozinski, "Essay: The Two Faces of Anonymity," *Capital University Law Review* 1 (2015): 1–19.

5 Mohamed Chawki, "Anonymity in Cyberspace: Finding the Balance between Privacy and Security," *International Journal of Technology Transfer and Commercialisation* 9, no. 3 (2010): 183.

Whereas the first sense of anonymity outlined above is *technical* and modeled after the traditional understanding of anonymity as a form of unknown authorship, the second sense in debates on its "antisocial" effects engages more with the *sociocultural* dimension of anonymity, meaning that it concerns situations when users are unknown *to each other*, while still being potentially identifiable to a third-party actor that does not participate directly in the communicative interaction (the NSA or Facebook, for example).[8] Referring to both these dimensions, various representatives of social media companies have made the plea for online anonymity to "go away," as Randy Zuckerberg once said in her capacity as Facebook's marketing director.[9] Similarly, then Google CEO Erik Schmidt claimed in 2010 that online anonymity is dangerous, and that "no anonymity is the future of the web."[10] Although valuable contributions in their own right, what these accounts do not explicitly engage with are the deeper historical and sociological dimensions to anonymity as a uniquely and symptomatically mass modern *social form*—the sense in which we might refer to urban passersby or even the city street itself as "anonymous," where the term acquires the connotation of "impersonal."

In an attempt to fill this omission in current debates regarding online anonymity, this chapter explores the idea of anonymity as an impersonal social form by looking at what I consider various radical and exemplary instances thereof: the anonymous image board 4chan, the public restroom, and the random video-chat portal Chatroulette. These offline and online practices of anonymity, I argue, all in their own way sidestep both the privative logic of privacy as well as the exploitative publicness of the new platform economy (from which privacy is supposed to offer at least some relief). They do so by engaging in various nonexploitative forms of "private publicness," whose material figure is that of the fold. Building on my earlier critical genealogy of the right to privacy as a response to the democratization of

6 Rebecca Chui, "A Multi-Faceted Approach to Anonymity Online: Examining the Relations between Anonymity and Antisocial Behavior," *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research* 7, no. 2 (2014): 1–13;
John Suler, "The Online Disinhibition Effect," *Cyber-Psychology and Behavior* 7, no. 3 (2004): 321–26;
and Noam Lapidot-Lefler and Azy Barak, "Effects of Anonymity, Invisibility, and Lack of Eye-Contact on Toxic Online Disinhibition," *Computers in Human Behavior* 28, no. 2 (2012): 434–43.
For a challenge to the perceived link between anonymity and antisocial behavior, see Rodmonga Potapova and Denis Gordeev, "Determination of the Internet Anonymity Influence on the Level of Aggression and Usage of Obscene Lexis," *arXiv*, e-print 1510.00240 (2015).

7 Adrienne Massanari, "#Gamergate and the Fappening: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures," *New Media and Society* 19, no. 3 (2017): 329–47.
On anonymity as facilitating hate speech, cyberbullying, and online harassment, see Joseph Reagle, *Reading the Comments: Likers, Haters, and Manipulators at the Bottom of the Web* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015);
of women and minorities in particular, see Jacqueline Vickery and Tracy Everbach, *Mediating Misogyny: Gender, Technology and Harassment* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); in relation to trolling, see Whitney Phillips and Ryan Milner, *The Ambivalent Internet* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2017).

8 Anne Ferry, "Anonymity: The Literary History of a Word," *New Literary History* 33, no. 2 (2002): 193–214.

the public sphere enabled by mass-media technologies, I aim to show that, whereas privacy attempts to establish some measure of immunity from the pervasive and promiscuous forms of mass publicness that undergird anonymity as a social form, the practices that I discuss in this chapter represent an attempt to progressively inhabit those strange new forms of "impersonal intimacy."[11]

As such, they also act as an alternative to the current emphasis on privacy as the preferred antidote to the data-devouring imperatives of new forms of platform and surveillance capitalism.[12] These modes of anonymous sociality and culture, I argue, escape these apparatuses not by finding refuge in the private, as privacy proposes (through control of access to personal data), but precisely by radically inhabiting and accelerating the logic of mass-mediated publicness that social media platforms themselves rely on and exploit. Here, anonymity comes to enable an escape from the personalized self that these platforms promote and monetize, toward an identity without the person, creating pockets of public privateness in the deep folds of the digital mass that undermine the "facializing" logic of the new platform economy.

Case 1: 4chan (Anons)

Described as "a discordant bricolage of humor, geek cultures, fierce debates, pornography, in-jokes, hyperbolic opinions and general offensiveness," 4chan (www.4chan.org) was set up in October 2003 by then-fifteen-year-old American high school student Christopher "moot" Poole with the aim of providing a simple, low-cost, and easily accessible way to exchange and discuss Japanese anime among English-speaking fans.[13] Totaling over 1 billion posts, and drawing 703 million monthly page views and 22 million unique visitors per month, 4chan is one of the most popular websites in internet history.[14] It resembles only Wikipedia in terms of the absence of any financial profit gained from the contents and metadata its

For the distinction between social and technical anonymity, see Thomas Thiel, "Anonymity and Its Prospects in the Digital World" (PRIF Working Paper no. 37, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany, 2016).

9 Bianca Bosker, "Randi Zuckerberg: Anonymity Online 'Has to Go Away,'" *Huffington Post*, June 27, 2011.

10 M. Smith, "Google CEO Schmidt: No Anonymity Is the Future of Web," *CSO*, August 9, 2010.

11 Daniel de Zeeuw, "Immunity from the Image: The Right to Privacy as an Antidote to Anonymous Modernity," *ephemera* 17, no. 2 (2017): 259–81.

12 Nick Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2017); and Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019).

13 Lee Knuttila, "User Unknown: 4Chan, Anonymity and Contingency," *First Monday* 16, no. 10 (2011), https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v16i10.3665; and Michael Bernstein, Andrés Monroy-Hernández, Drew Harry, Paul André, Katrina Panovich and Greg Vargas, "4chan and /b/: An Analysis of Anonymity and Ephemerality in a Large Online Community," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media* (Menlo Park, CA: AAAI Press, 2011), 50–57.

14 Craig Smith, "Interesting 4chan Statistics and Facts (2019): By the Numbers," *DMR*, May 11, 2019.

contributors so generously and abundantly generate. Whereas other sites have turned into billion-dollar platforms whose stocks surged way beyond that of the giants of the industrial age, 4chan still has difficulties paying its relatively modest server bills. Compared to more well-known sites, 4chan is also unique in terms of its affordances, as well as its quaint subcultural sensibilities — quaint in the sense of "attractively unusual" and "old-fashioned." Geared toward ephemeral and random encounters with anonymous others, with little or no moderation, 4chan's /b/ board gave rise to a vibrant male youth subculture steeped in Japanese anime, video games, warez, hacking, porn, gore, trolling, comics, and memes.[15]

From 2003 onward, 4chan established itself as the most popular of English-language image boards. In the following years, its unique subculture came to cultivate a festive and mock-affirmative relation to online anonymity, understood as an anti- and impersonal mode of sociality and culture that is collective, ephemeral, and authorless — and in that sense, "nameless" and "faceless." Whereas "today, the most ubiquitous online communities are social networks where our identities are mostly known and mostly persistent," image boards like 4chan hinge on "the intentional disconnect between one's real life and one's online persona."[16] Offering "a space for playing with unrestricted notions of identity and affiliation," 4chan's ethos of dissimulative identity play partakes in a tradition of what David Auerbach calls "anonymity as culture" where "masquerade is an integral part of social interaction."[17] The kind of anonymity at stake here is thus clearly a social interuser one, rather than an informatic one, where you would be actually untraceable by third-party actors. In fact, 4chan retains the IP addresses of its users and aims to prevent the use of anonymizing VPNs.

The anonymous and playful sense of identity that 4chan gave rise to is reflected in its subcultural iconography

15 Gabriella Coleman, "Our Weirdness Is Free: The Logic of Anonymous — Online Army, Agent of Chaos, and Seeker of Justice," *Triple Canopy*, January 13, 2012; Whitney Phillips, "The House that Fox Built: Anonymous, Spectacle and Cycles of Amplification," *Television and New Media* 14, no. 6 (2013): 494–509; and Luke Simcoe, "The Internet Is Serious Business: 4chan's /b/ Board and the Lulz as Alternative Political Discourse on the Internet" (MA major research paper, Ryerson University and York University, Toronto, Ontario, 2012).

16 David Auerbach, "Anonymity as Culture: Treatise," *Triple Canopy* 15 (2012).

17 Ibid.

and vernacular self-understanding, which includes the Anon/Anonymous pseudonym, the Guy Fawkes mask, and the stock avatar.[18] In 2006, users active on 4chan's /b/ Random board started to refer to themselves individually as "Anons" and collectively as "Anonymous." What initially started as an in-joke among /b/ users quickly became the basis for a new collective identity built around the users' mutual anonymity. These tropes can thus be thought of as collaborative enactments of the impersonal forms of engagement that image boards potentialize. Beyond its obvious opposition to "real name" identities on platforms like Facebook, what I refer to as

18 Gabriella. Coleman, *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous* (New York: Verso, 2014).

Fig. 57 Cropped screenshot of a 4chan thread with (supposedly different) users posting under the same Anonymous pseudonym, June 11, 2016. Author's collection.

4chan's *radical anonymity* must be differentiated from anonymity as *pseudonymity*. The latter can be considered anonymous in the sense that it severs the online persona from the person's real identity, but it continues to function as a name by providing authorial coherence to multiple individual speech acts. Instead, radical anonymity also breaks authorial coherence across speech acts that is functionally retained by the pseudonym. The only pseudonym that retains radical anonymity is the kind that is open to, and used by, anyone, because in this case speech acts can no longer be aggregated in terms of a single

identifiable author. The Anon/Anonymous moniker is such a pseudonym: the Anon of this post can be the same as this or that post, but it can also be another.[19]

Positively, this detachment from the individual user has the effect of relegating each post to the total body of posts, conferring a form of authorless authorship to this totality. This is one of the reasons 4chan came to be understood by its contributors as a single cacophonous voice, which converses with itself through millions of speech acts and can thus be "read like a schizophrenic soliloquy, where a single user named Anonymous carries on multiple conversations with himself."[20] The disambiguation of the speech act from individual profiles and personal identities, by which it comes to be inscribed in the larger and impersonal social text, is acknowledged by 4chan's FAQ page, which states that "Anonymous is not a single person, but rather, represents the collective whole of 4chan."[21] Moreover, discussions on 4chan quickly disappear, leaving no trace save for the embodied cultural memory of Anons. Regarding this ephemerality, we may indeed "think of 4chan as a big roll of butcher paper on a conveyor belt that users scrawl things on as fast as they can before it goes into an incinerator."[22]

As an anonymous and ephemeral communication system that acts as a vehicle for vernacular creativity and expression, 4chan can be seen to partake in a more encompassing tradition of plebeian "mass publicness," a tradition that includes toilet graffiti — or what urban folklorist Alan Dundes has called "latrinalia."[23] Both writing toilet graffiti and posting on 4chan involve communicating with others anonymously through the inscription of signs on a surface/screen acting as a medium.[24] In a collection about the internet as an emerging folkloric medium, folklorist Simon J. Bronner compares the act of posting a message to an online message board to leaving messages in public toilets, as the surfaces of the restroom are turned into "an open, uncensored discussion board and canvas on which creative messages and drawings can

19 For Marco Deseriis, collective pseudonyms, or what he calls "multiple use names," like Anonymous serve as "improper names" that institute modes of sociality beyond the individual and, as such, are conducive to "condividual" forms of existence. Marco Deseriis, *Improper Names: Collective Pseudonyms from the Luddites to Anonymous* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

20 Simcoe, "The Internet Is Serious Business," 28.

21 "Who is 'Anonymous'?" 4chan FAQ.

22 Mike Pearl, "4chan Apparently Got a User to Chop Off Part of a Toe over the Weekend," *Vice*, August 31, 2015.

23 Robert Howard, "The Vernacular Web of Participatory Media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25 (2008): 490–513; and Alan Dundes, *The Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007).

24 George Gonos, Virginia Mulkern and Nicholas Poushinsky, "Anonymous Expression: A Structural View of Graffiti," *Journal of American Folklore* 89, no. 351 (1976): 40–48; and Michael Adams, *In Praise of Profanity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

be sequenced, similar to the heralded form and function of many blogs."[25] By contrast, perhaps precisely because it does *not* involve digital media in any shape or form, the forms of stranger interaction enabled by the public restroom may offer an opportunity to better understand the anonymous forms of mass publicness that image boards like 4chan empower.

Case 2: The Public Restroom (Folds)

Located at highway parking lots, airports, and shopping malls, public restrooms typically reside in what Marc Augé defines as "nonplaces": the transitory and impersonal spaces of global capitalism.[26] It is this strange entanglement between publicness and privateness that the public restroom partakes in and that pervades modern urban space more generally. As a "defining attribute of urbanity," anonymity is seen as inherent to "the being together of strangers."[27] Public restrooms thus weave a peculiar time-space in which the intermingling of private and public parts stands out as an exemplary response to the form-problem of modern sociality: a palimpsest of the history of urban hygiene, regulating the flow of labor and consumer waste.[28]

Straddling the line between the public and the private, the personal and the impersonal, historically the public restroom has been a source of great anxiety and ambivalence.[29] On the one hand, what people do there is deemed strictly private; hence the seemingly endless variety of euphemisms used to talk about "it." On the other hand, a public restroom is what its name suggests: it provides a public service, in that anyone may in principle enter, and belongs to no one—a claim that is obviously complicated by the fact that these places are still highly gendered and that they are increasingly operated by private corporations. The public restroom is also public in the sense that, despite attempts to individualize and privatize "it"—blocking the flows of sight,

25 Simon J. Bronner, "Digitizing and Virtualizing Folklore," in *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*, ed. T. J. Blank (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009), 58.

26 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (New York: Verso, 1992).

27 Judith Garber, "'Not Named or Identified': Politics and the Search for Anonymity in the City," in *Gendering the City*, ed. Kristine Miranne and Alma Young (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 19; Iris Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 237. Starting with Georg Simmel's "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950), David A. Karp, in "Hiding in Pornographic Bookstores," *Urban Life and Culture* 1, no. 4 (1973): 428, notes, "the thoroughgoing anonymity of the city is a theme that runs through most discussions of the social psychology of city life," so that "anonymity… seems to be inextricably tied to the particularly modern experience of the industrial metropolis." William Egginton, "Intimacy and Anonymity, or, How the Audience Became a Crowd," in *Crowds*, ed. J. T. Schnapp and M. Tiews (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 99. In *A World of Strangers*, urban sociologist Lyn Lofland similarly notes that "to experience the city is, among many other things, to experience anonymity." Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), ix.

smell, and sound through lockable doors, air fresheners, and hand soap dispensers—there still takes place an inherently public communion of bacteria, human DNA, bodily sounds, and other "stuff."

Apart from using the public toilet to relieve themselves of their bodily wastes, the unknown writers and readers of toilet scribblings appropriate the public restroom for their own creative ends, that of an illicit and anonymous communication system (figure 58). There exists a "long and ignoble history" to the practice of inscribing messages and signs in public bathrooms, tracing back at least two thousand years to ancient Greek and Roman times.[30] As Robert Reisner once put it in the satirical magazine the *Realist*: "Having relieved himself physically the scrawler may as well relieve the *excretia* of his mind in the same place."[31] Exploring this analogy between the excretions of the body and those of the mind, Dundes, in his "Theses on Feces," claimed that engaging in toilet

Fig. 58 Restroom graffiti, People's Cafe, San Francisco. Wikipedia, uploaded February 1, 2009, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latrinalia#/media/File:Peoples_cafe.jpg.

28 Dominique Laporte, *History of Shit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000).

29 Bronner, "Digitizing and Virtualizing Folklore," 57.

30 Nick Haslam, *Psychology in the Bathroom* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 115–16.

31 Robert Reisner, "Final Solutions to the Latrinalia Question," *Realist* 80 (1968): 1.

graffiti actually represents a sublimated kind of fecal smearing known as coprophilia (typically observed in young children or elderly people suffering from dementia).[32] In this psychoanalytic reading, "dirty words on bathroom walls are symbolically equivalent to excrement."[33]

Besides an opportunity for anonymous communication, the public restroom has also been used as a meeting place for fleeting homosexual encounters, known as the "tearoom trade" in the United States during the 1970s (figure 59). American anthropologist Laud Humphreys went undercover in this clandestine scene, where "men of all racial, social, educational and physical characteristics meet … for sexual union," and where, as he found, "there exists a sort of democracy endemic to impersonal sex."[34] Rather than establishing a new community outside the existing one that discriminated against and excluded them because of their sexual preference, the public homosexual subculture, in Michael Warner's account, sought anonymity: "Even those who consider themselves gay may be seeking in such venues a world less defined by identity and community than by *the negation of identity through anonymous contact*; they may be seeking something very different from 'community' in a venue where men from very different worlds meet, often silently, for sex."[35]

In the case of latrinalia and the tearoom trade, then, the public restroom, through its anonymity, offers an escape from normative ideas of identity and community that happen to prevail in society. It also provides a place of seclusion against the violent transparency of modern publicness, while remaining radically open to this publicness from all sides, drawing its energy from an outside that is continuously reabsorbed into it by the circulation of strangers. Rather than constituting itself through the exclusion of the mass public by seeking shelter in the bourgeois private sphere, the restroom thus composes a fold of impersonal intimacy made of the

32 Alan Dundes, "Theses on Feces: Scatological Analysis," in *Meaning of Folklore*, 352–81.

33 Haslam, *Psychology in the Bathroom*, 133.

34 Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (New York: Aldine, 1975), 13.

35 Michael Warner, "Zones of Privacy," in *What's Left of Theory? New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory*, ed. J. Butler, J. Guillory, and K. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2002), 87–88, emphasis added.

Fig. 59 + 60 + 61 Stills from the documentary film *Tearoom* (2008). The material is filmed by the Police Department in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1962, in the public restroom underneath the park in the center of town. It led to the arrest of a large number of men (varying from 38 to 69 years old). "Tearoom (excerpt)," video, 9:35, uploaded by la llorona, YouTube, May 26, 2012, https://youtu.be/npAVR5lsj8s.

same fabric as the urban environment it will ultimately dissolve back into.[36] The fold creates a shielding or pocketing that uses the very stuff of which publicness is made to create ephemeral forms of "stranger-intimacy."[37] Defying the distinction between a public and a private sphere, the public restroom generates small pockets of centripetal sociality that are momentarily shielded from — but never immune to — the larger centrifugal forces that lend it vitality, where "the outside is not a

36 Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005).

37 Mark Seltzer, "Serial Killers (II): The Pathological Public Sphere," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 1 (1995): 125.

fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside *of the* outside."[38]

The Deleuzian figure of the "fold" can be contrasted with the Deleuze-Guattarian figure of the face ("faciality," *visageité*), which they argue stands apart from the body and its fleshy folds: "The face is part of a surface-holes, holey surface, system. This system should under no circumstances be confused with the volume-cavity system proper to the (proprioceptive) body.... The face is produced only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body, when it ceases to have a multidimensional polyvocal corporal code—when the body, head included, has been decoded and has to be *overcoded* by something we shall call the Face."[39]

This notion of the face is connected to surveillance, as the attempt to straighten out the body's folds: faciality is a process in which volumes and cavities become subject to a grid-surface, become something to draw out, look at, recognize, identify, screen, project.[40] Instead, the fold consists of a single surface, and in that sense, it is radically public. But it is not flat, as it weaves "volumes" and "cavities," meaning it cannot be appropriated by an external observer in a single glance. In order to "know" anything about it, such an observer would have to travel and descend into it, but by doing so, would become entangled with it to the point where it can no longer be apprehended. In the documentary film *Tearoom* (2008), we see the police officers descending into the cavity folded into the pavement that is the public toilet suspected of doubling as a homosexual meeting place, scrupulously taking pictures, writing notes, and collecting evidence. Were a passerby to enter the restroom at that moment, he would probably find this kind of behavior to be quite inappropriate indeed.

38 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* trans. Séan Hand(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 96–97.

39 Gilles Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 170. For Deleuze's Foucault-inspired notion of the fold, see the chapter "Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivations)," in Deleuze, *Foucault*, and Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Continuum, 2006).

40 For this notion of faciality as connected to the logic of surveillance, I am indebted to Rogier van Reekum (private correspondence).

Case 3: Chatroulette (Metamorphoses)

The clandestine use of the public restroom for anonymous intercourse of various kinds shows a longer history to the promiscuous and ephemeral modes of sociality prevalent on image boards like 4chan. In the case of latrinalia and the tearoom trade, the very social institution (the public toilet) designed to cleanse society in a physical, moral, and political sense from unwanted elements was appropriated as a space for impersonal encounters of various kinds. The random video-chat portal Chatroulette equally revolves around interactions between strangers, in what is perhaps its simplest but thereby visible form.

The site was set up as a personal pet project in 2009 by a Russian teenager named Andrey Ternovskiy but quickly acquired notoriety for its "genital exhibitionism," which, as one participant joked, would ideally implement some kind of penis- rather than face-recognition software.[41] Like 4chan, Chatroulette requires no sign-up or login; it "functions purely on instant, random, switching and automated chat connections between people."[42] The simple interface contains two empty boxes, one labeled "Stranger" and the other labeled "You." On pressing the "play" button, the user's webcam is activated, and the message "Looking for a random stranger" appears on the screen, shortly after which "you're suddenly staring at another human on your screen and they are staring back at you, at which point you can either choose to chat (via text or voice) or just click 'next,' instantly calling up someone else."[43]

By deliberately establishing random connections between people, the participant is exposed to a constant stream of unknown thrill seekers. Such an aleatory way of establishing connections undermines the logic of homophily that social media platforms can be said to amplify by creating so-called "filter bubbles" or "echo chambers." Homophily describes the tendency of people to seek out others who are or think like them.[44]

41 Brad Stone, "Chatroulette's Creator, 17, Introduces Himself," *New York Times*, February 13, 2010.

42 Anna Munster, *An Aesthesia of Networks: Conjunctive Experience in Art and Technology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 99.

43 Sam Anderson, "The Human Shuffle," *New York Magazine*, February 5, 2010.

44 Miller McPherson, Lynn Smith-Lovin and James Cook, "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 415–44; and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), 14–15.

Fig. 62 + 63 Two instances of online masquerading on Chatroulette. Screenshot on Pinterest UK, https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/797840890208313899/; and Fred Wilson, "What to Make of Chatroulette?," *Business Insider*, February 11, 2010, https://www.businessinsider.com/what-to-make-of-chatroulette-2010-2.

Countering the tendency of homophily by randomly connecting people, Chatroulette instead invites users to interact on the basis of heterophily, or rather, xenophily: a love of the strange, the ephemeral, the chance encounter.[45] As shown by the other Chatroulette examples (figures 62 and 63), heterophilic interaction often mobilizes the powers of masking and disguise, making the platform into a theater of interspecies role playing and gender transformation, where dogs can talk, and men impersonate female celebrities. Together, these examples

45 Armina Dinescu, "Negotiating Identities in a Randomized Video-Chat," *Ethnographic Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2012); Nick Bilton, "The Surreal World of Chatroulette," *New York Times*, February 20, 2010.

of dissimulative role play on Chatroulette provide an answer to the question of "how to re-imagine anonymity not as an attainable categorical state, but as a way to recoup an energy of metamorphosis, the desire to become someone else."[46] Here, anonymity acts as an enabling condition for playful noncoincidence with one's self, to become other, something that is shared by all the cases I have discussed so far.

The notion of anonymity as providing an escape from the self and as an invitation to transformation has been a recurrent theme in Michel Foucault's work.[47] For him, such an escape is imperative as an ethical practice, insofar as this "self" refers to an oppressive subject forma-

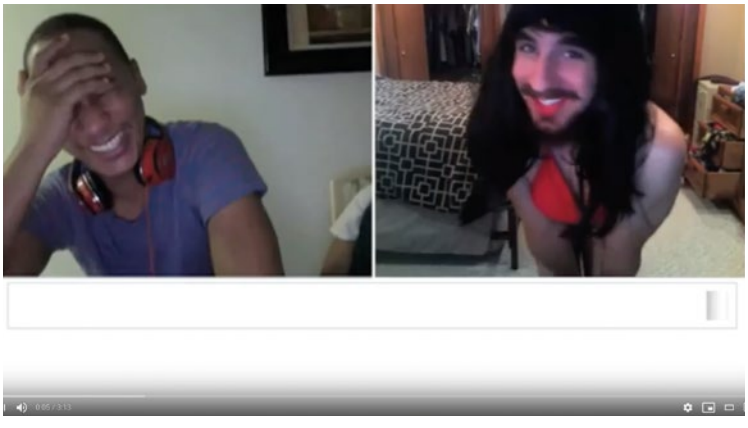

Fig.64 Example of gender-bending role-playing global celebrities on a random video-chat site. "Miley Cyrus — Wrecking Ball (Chatroulette FeVer Club Version)," video, 2:46, uploaded by Willy Christmas, December 23, 2013, YouTube, https://youtu.be/YnJzUH2nbDs.

tion historically rooted in discipline and punishment.[48] In Deleuze's book on Foucault, he frames this escape from the self as part of a larger struggle for subjectivity that "passes through a resistance to the two present forms of subjection, the one consisting of individualizing ourselves on the basis of constraints of power, the other of attracting each individual to a known and recognized identity, fixed once and for all. The struggle for subjectivity presents itself, therefore, as the right to difference, variation and metamorphosis."[49]

46 Geert Lovink, *Networks without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2011), 46.

47 For a discussion of Foucault on anonymity, see Érik Bordeleau, *Foucault Anonymat: Essai* (Montreal, QC: Le Quartanier, 2012). For a feminist critique, see Perry Zurn, "The Politics of Anonymity: Foucault, Feminism, and Gender Non-Conforming Prisoners," *philoSOPHIA: A Journal of Continental Feminism* 6, no. 1 (2016): 27–42. Both of these authors emphasize Foucault's understanding of anonymity as a "practice of the self" that provides an alternative to prevailing identity formations. Zurn, "Politics of Anonymity," 28.

48 Nicholas. de Villiers, "Confessions of a Masked Philosopher: Anonymity and Identification in Foucault and Guibert," *symploke* 16, no. 1–2 (2009): 75–91.

49 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 105–6.

What the examples of 4chan, the public restroom, and Chatroulette show is that such a flight away *from* the self is often accompanied and even enabled by a flight *to* an anonymous other. Although the "right to difference" Deleuze speaks of has been largely recuperated by postmodern consumer culture, this fact does not altogether mute the radical demand at its core. The dark rooms Foucault visited while exploring San Francisco's underground gay scene in the 1970s, for example, harbored the radical experience of another mode of existence beyond the person, where "you stop being imprisoned inside your own face, your own past, your own identity."[50] In a short essay called "Identity without the Person," Giorgio Agamben traces this desire for the impersonal, "to be freed from the weight of the person, from the moral as much as the juridical responsibility that it carries along with it."[51] It is also here that Foucault's take on writing can be situated, where—contrary to the cult of the author in modern print culture—he urges "to write oneself into a thick sense of anonymity, out of a name, a persona, a psyche, and a face."[52] In this passage, the name and the face come to represent the main anchoring points of an affective attachment to one's own personality, just as the loss of one's name and face opens up a line of flight away from the confines of the modern subject.

Conclusion

Contrary to concerns over personal privacy, the forms of anonymous mass publicness discussed so far embody an ethos of risk and openness toward the stranger that is oriented toward a pleasurable "loss of self." Whereas to deliver oneself over to a collective anonymity is to relinquish what Elias Canetti claimed is the fear of strangers that accompanies each person throughout her life, privacy instead aims to neutralize this movement away from identity, cementing its opposition to the stranger as a dangerous intruder.[53] It is in this alternative relationship

50 Cited in David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (New York: Vintage, 1995), xv.

51 Giorgio Agamben, "Identity without the Person," in *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 53.

52 Michel Foucault, *Speech Begins after Death* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 55.

53 Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* (New York: Continuum, 1981).

to mass publicness that an ethics of anonymity can be distinguished from that of privacy. It is such an ethics of anonymity that, as I have tried to show, 4chan, the public restroom, and Chatroulette each in their own way embody and experiment with. They also provide a sense of the largely invisible history of anonymity as a mode of impersonal sociality and a "practice of the self" that—as an escape from the self toward an unknown other—is pleasurable in and of itself, rather than an extraneous means to maintain some measure of privacy. Rather than offering privacy, in these cases, anonymity is generative of the liberty to engage in the collective and impersonal modes of sociality that public restrooms, image boards, and video-chat portals provide for.

Looking at the present digital conjuncture, however, these promiscuous folds of mass publicness are increasingly flattened out by new forms of mass surveillance as well as by personal data–hungry platforms. The anonymous modes of sociality that I discuss in this chapter offer a markedly different approach to this expropriation of social and creative wealth by platforms than do current privacy regimes. Where the latter confer personal ownership on, and thus individualize and privatize, these forms of social excess, the former inhabits this exposure in a way that resists its recuperation, by folding into a form of opaque publicness. Rather than a negative and dangerous side effect of urban environments, anonymity—which here does not function to keep things private and contained, but rather initiates a centrifugal publicness—can actually establish new forms of agency and postcitizenship ("post," because citizenship implies a certain visibility that anonymity instead defies), as it tends to suspend stratifications of identity along existing private-public boundaries. Whereas, as Mark Zuckerberg observed in a recent speech, "privacy gives us the freedom to be ourselves," anonymity gives us the freedom to be another—to enter and disappear into a fold.[54]

54 Nick Statt, "Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Says the 'Future Is Private,'" *Verge*, April 30, 2019.

Bibliography

Adams, Michael. *In Praise of Profanity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Agamben, Giorgio. "Identity without the Person." In *Nudities*, translated by David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, 46–54. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Akdeniz, Yaman. "Anonymity, Democracy and Cyberspace." *Social Research* 69, no. 1 (2002): 223–37.

Anderson, Sam. "The Human Shuffle." *New York Magazine*, February 5, 2010. http://nymag.com/news/media/63663.

Auerbach, David. "Anonymity as Culture: Treatise." *Triple Canopy* 15 (2012). https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/anonymity_as_culture__treatise.

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. New York: Verso, 1992.

Bernstein, Michael, Andrés Monroy-Hernández, Drew Harry, Paul André, Katrina Panovich, and Greg. Vargas. "4chan and /b/: An Analysis of Anonymity and Ephemerality in a Large Online Community." In *Proceedings of the Fifth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 50–57. Menlo Park, CA: AAAI Press, 2011.

Bilton, Nick. "The Surreal World of Chatroulette." *New York Times*, February 20, 2010. https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/weekinreview/21bilton.html.

Bordeleau, Érik. *Foucault Anonymat: Essai*. Montreal, QC: Le Quartanier, 2012.

Bosker, Bianca. "Randi Zuckerberg: Anonymity Online 'Has to Go Away.'" *Huffington Post*, June 27, 2011. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/randi-zuckerberg-anonymity-online_n_910892.

Bronner, Simon J. "Digitizing and Virtualizing Folklore." In *Folklore and the Internet: Vernacular Expression in a Digital World*, edited by T. J. Blank, 21–66. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2009.

Canetti, Elias. *Crowds and Power*. New York: Continuum, 1981.

Chawki, Mohamed. "Anonymity in Cyberspace: Finding the Balance between Privacy and Security." *International Journal of Technology Transfer and Commercialisation* 9, no. 3 (2010): 183–99.

Chui, Rebekka. "A Multi-Faceted Approach to Anonymity Online:

Examining the Relations between Anonymity and Antisocial Behavior." *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research* 7, no. 2 (2014): 1–13.

Chun, Wendy H. K. *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016.

Cohen, Julie E. "A Right to Read Anonymously: A Closer Look at 'Copyright Management' in Cyberspace." *Connecticut Law Review* 28 (1996): 981–1039.

Coleman, E. Gabriella. *Hacker, Hoaxer, Whistleblower, Spy: The Many Faces of Anonymous*. New York: Verso, 2014.

Coleman, E. Gabriella. "Our Weirdness Is Free: The Logic of Anonymous—Online Army, Agent of Chaos, and Seeker of Justice." *Triple Canopy* 15 (2012). https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/issues/15/contents/our_weirdness_is_free.

Yale Law Journal "The Constitutional Right to Anonymity: Free Speech, Disclosure and the Devil." *Yale Law Journal* 70, no. 7 (1961): 1084–128.

Cotter, Thomas F., and Lyrissa Barnett Lidsky. "Authorship, Audiences, and Anonymous Speech." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, August 22, 2006. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=925736.

Deleuze, Gilles. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Translated by Tom Conley. New York: Continuum, 2006.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Foucault*. Translated by Séan Hand. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

Deseriis, Marco. *Improper Names: Collective Pseudonyms from the Luddites to Anonymous*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

de Villiers, Nicholas. "Confessions of a Masked Philosopher: Anonymity and Identification in Foucault and Guibert." *symploke* 16, no. 1–2 (2009): 75–91.

de Zeeuw, Daniel. "Immunity from the Image: The Right to Privacy as an Antidote to Anonymous Modernity." *ephemera* 17, no. 2 (2017): 259–81.

Dinescu, Armina. "Negotiating Identities in a Randomized Video-Chat." *Ethnographic Encounters* 1, no. 1 (2012). https://ojs.st-andrews.ac.uk/index.php/SAEE/issue/view/45.

Dundes, Alan. *The Meaning of Folklore: The Analytical Essays of Alan Dundes*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2007.

Egginton, William. "Intimacy and Anonymity, or, How the Audience Became a Crowd." In *Crowds*, edited by J. T. Schnapp and M. Tiews, 97–103. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006.

Ferry, Anne. “Anonymity: The Literary History of a Word.” *New Literary History* 33, no. 2 (2002): 193–214.

Foucault, Michel. *Speech Begins after Death*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013.

Froomkin, A. Michael. “Anonymity and Its Enmities.” *Journal of Online Law* 1 (1995), art. 4 .

Garber, Judith A. “‘Not Named or Identified’: Politics and the Search for Anonymity in the City.” In *Gendering the City*, edited by K. B. Miranne and A. H. Young, 19–40. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

Gonos, George, Virginia Mulkern, and Nicholas Poushinsky. “Anonymous Expression: A Structural View of Graffiti.” *Journal of American Folklore* 89, no. 351 (1976): 40–48.

Haslam, Nick. *Psychology in the Bathroom*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012.

Howard, Robert G. “The Vernacular Web of Participatory Media.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25 (2008): 490–513.

Humphreys, Laud. *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*. New York: Aldine, 1975.

Karp, David A. “Hiding in Pornographic Bookstores.” *Urban Life and Culture* 1, no. 4 (1973): 427–51.

Kerr, Ian, Valerie Steeves, and Carole Lucock, ed. *Lessons from the Identity Trail: Anonymity, Privacy, and Identity in a Networked Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Knuttila, Lee. “User Unknown: 4Chan, Anonymity and Contingency.” *First Monday* 16, no. 10 (2011). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v16i10.3665.

Kozinski, Alex. “Essay: The Two Faces of Anonymity.” *Capital University Law Review* 1 (2015): 1–19.

Lapidot-Lefler, Noam, and Azy Barak. “Effects of Anonymity, Invisibility, and Lack of Eye-Contact on Toxic Online Disinhibition.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 28, no. 2 (2012): 434–43.

Laporte, Dominique. *History of Shit*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000.

Lofland, Lyn H. *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Lovink, Geert. *Networks without a Cause: A Critique of Social Media*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2011.

Macey, David. *The Lives of Michel Foucault*. New York: Vintage, 1995.

Marx, Gary. “Identity and Anonymity: Some Conceptual Distinctions and Issues for Research.” In *Documenting Individual Identity*, edited by J. Caplan, and J. Torpey, 311–327. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Massanari, Adrienne. "#Gamergate and the Fappening: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures." *New Media and Society* 19, no. 3 (2017): 329–47.

Matthews, Steve. "Anonymity and the Social Self." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2010): 351–63.

McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James Cook. "Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27, no. 1 (2001): 415–44.

Moyakine, Evgeni. "Online Anonymity in the Modern Digital Age: Quest for a Legal Right." *Journal of Information Rights, Policy and Practice* 1, no. 1 (2016). http://hdl.handle.net/11370/2b65970a-3c3f-4237-85df-f5b1b82c5e5b.

Munster, Anna. *An Aesthesia of Networks: Conjunctive Experience in Art and Technology*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013.

Natelson, Robert G. "Does 'the Freedom of the Press' Include a Right to Anonymity? The Original Understanding." SSRN, October 12, 2013. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2333612.

Pearl, Mike. "4chan Apparently Got a User to Chop Off Part of a Toe over the Weekend." *Vice*, August 31, 2015. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/5gjy3k/4chan-wants-to-see-you-mutilate-yourself-but-why-682.

Phillips, Whitney. "The House that Fox Built: Anonymous, Spectacle and Cycles of Amplification." *Television and New Media* 14, no. 6 (2013): 494–509.

Phillips, Whitney, and Ryan Milner. *The Ambivalent Internet*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2017.

Potapova, Rodmonga, and Denis Gordeev. "Determination of the Internet Anonymity Influence on the Level of Aggression and Usage of Obscene Lexis." *arXiv*, e-print 1510.00240 (2015). https://arxiv.org/abs/1510.00240.

Reagle, Joseph. *Reading the Comments: Likers, Haters, and Manipulators at the Bottom of the Web*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015.

Reisner, Robert. "Final Solutions to the Latrinalia Question." *Realist* 80 (1968): 1. http://www.ep.tc/realist/pdf/TheRealist080.pdf.

Seltzer, Mark. "Serial Killers (II): The Pathological Public Sphere." *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 1 (1995): 122–49.

Simcoe, Luke "The Internet Is Serious Business: 4chan's /b/ Board and the Lulz as Alternative Political Discourse on the Internet." MA major research paper, Ryerson University and York University, Toronto, Ontario, 2012.

Simmel, Georg, ed. Kurt H. Wolff. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1950.

Smith, Craig. "Interesting 4chan Statistics and Facts (2019): By the Numbers." *DMR*, May 11, 2019. https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/4chan-statistics-facts/.

Smith, M. "Google CEO Schmidt: No Anonymity Is the Future of Web." *CSO*, August 9, 2010. https://www.csoonline.com/article/2231573/google-ceo-schmidt--no-anonymity-is-the-future-of-web.html.

Smith, Ekstrand. "The Many Masks of Anon: Anonymity as Cultural Practice and Reflections in Case Law." *Journal of Technology Law Policy* 18 (2013): 4.

Spencer, Michael H. "Anonymous Internet Communication and the First Amendment: A Crack in the Dam of National Sovereignty." *Virginia Journal of Law and Technology* 3, no. 1 (1998). http://vjolt.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/Articles/vol3/issue/vol3_art1.pdf.

Srnicek, Nick. *Platform Capitalism*. Malden, MA: Polity, 2017.

Statt, Nick. "Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg Says the 'Future Is Private.'" *Verge*, April 30, 2019. https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/30/18524188/facebook-f8-keynote-mark-zuckerberg-privacy-future-2019.

Stone, Brad. "Chatroulette's Creator, 17, Introduces Himself." *New York Times*, February 13, 2010. https://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/02/13/chatroulettes-founder-17-introduces-himself/.

Stryker, Cole. *Hacking the Future: Privacy, Identity, and Anonymity on the Web*. New York: Duckworth Overlook, 2013.

Suler, John. "The Online Disinhibition Effect." *CyberPsychology and Behavior* 7, no. 3 (2004): 321–26.

Thiel, Thorsten. "Anonymity and Its Prospects in the Digital World." PRIF Working Paper no. 37, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, Frankfurt, Germany, 2016.

Underwood, Patrick C. "New Directions in Networked Activism and Online Social Movement Mobilization: The Case of Anonymous and Project Chanology." Master's thesis, Ohio University, 2009. http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ohiou1244228183.

Vickery, Jacqueline, and Tracy Everbach. *Mediating Misogyny: Gender, Technology and Harassment*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2005.

Warner, Michael. "Zones of Privacy." In *What's Left of Theory? New Work on the Politics of Literary Theory*, edited by J. Butler, J. Guillory, and K. Thomas, 1–305. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Wong, Wendy H., and Peter A. Brown. "E-bandits in Global Activism: Wikileaks, Anonymous, and the Politics of No One." *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (2013): 1015–33.

Young, Iris. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2019.

Zurn, Perry. "The Politics of Anonymity: Foucault, Feminism, and Gender Non-Conforming Prisoners." *philoSOPHIA: A Journal of Continental Feminism* 6, no. 1 (2016): 27–42.

Fig. 57 Cropped screenshot of a 4chan thread with (supposedly different) users posting under the same Anonymous pseudonym, June 11, 2016. Author's collection • Image: the author

Fig. 58 Restroom graffiti, People's Cafe, San Francisco. Wikipedia, uploaded February 1, 2009, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latrinalia#/media/File:Peoples_cafe.jpg • Photo: the author

Fig. 59–61 Stills from the documentary film Tearoom (2008). The material is filmed by the Police Department in Mansfield, Ohio, in 1962, in the public restroom underneath the park in the center of town. It led to the arrest of a large number of men (varying from 38 to 69 years old). "Tearoom (excerpt)," video, 9:35, uploaded by la llorona, YouTube, May 26, 2012, https://youtu.be/npAVR5lsj8s • Images: William E. Jones

Fig. 62 + 63 Two instances of online masquerading on Chatroulette. Screenshot on Pinterest UK, https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/797840890208313899/; and Fred Wilson, "What to Make of Chatroulette?," Business Insider, February 11, 2010, https://www.businessinsider.com/whattomakeofchatroulette20102 • Screenshots: the author

Fig. 64 Example of gender-bending roleplaying global celebrities on a random videochat site. "Miley Cyrus—Wrecking Ball (Chatroulette FeVer

Collective Pleasures of Anonymity: From Public Restrooms to 4chan and Chatroulette
p. 356–378

Club Version),” video, 2:46, uploaded by Willy Christmas, December 23, 2013, YouTube, https://youtu.be/YnJzUH2nbDs • Screenshot: the author

Daniël de Zeeuw is a Ph.D. candidate at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis and Lecturer New Media at the University of Amsterdam. He is also a member of the Open Intelligence Lab, editor at Krisis, Journal for Contemporary Philosophy, and affiliated researcher at the Institute of Network Cultures. Working at the intersection of media and cultural studies, his current research focuses on fringe digital subcultures on 4chan and Reddit as post-truth laboratories of conspiracy theories, junk news, political extremism and memes that have become increasingly influential in recent years, and that cast a critical light on the vicissitudes of our hyper-mediatized, global digital condition.

p. 356 Collective Pleasures of Anonymity

Citation Guide

All contributions to this volume — with the exception of Longing for a Selfless Self and other Ambivalences of Anonymity, whose author opted to publish anonymously — are published pseudo-anonymously to highlight tensions between authorship and anonymity while still allowing attribution. Please cite contributions as follows:

Anon Collective. Book of Anonymity. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books, 2021.

CHAPTERS, IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Bachmann, Götz, Julien McHardy, Michi Knecht and Nils Zurawski
"Toward a Kaleidoscopic Understanding of Anonymity".
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 16–34.

Daniela Silvestrin and Broeckmann, Andreas.
"Artistic Research on Anonymity".
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 35–67.

Copeman, Jacob and Dwaipayan Banerjee.
"Anonymity and Transgression".
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 70–87.

Thiel, Thorsten.
"Anonymity: The Politicisation of a Concept".
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 88–109.

Bunting, Heath.
"USAE".
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 110–115.

Barocas, Solon and Helen Nissenbaum.
“Big Data’s End Run around Anonymity and Consent”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 116–141.

Farid, Simon.
“A List of Famous Artists Who Used to Be Invigilators”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 142–150.

Koch, Gertraud.
“Anonymity as Everyday Phenomenon and as a Topic of Research”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 151–166.

RYBN.ORG.
“Anonymity on Demand: The Great Offshore”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 167–185.

Baumann, Amelie.
“DNA Works! Merging Genetics and the Digital Realm”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 188–209.

Bureau d’études.
“Sanitary Policy and the Policy of Anonymity: Notes about a Game on Endocrine Disruptors”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 210–225.

Heinrichs, Randi.
“Where Do the Data Live?”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 226–254.

Curlew, Abigail.
“Fraught Platform Governmentality: Anonymity, Content Moderation and Regulatory Strategies over Yik Yak”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 255–274.

Bartholl, Aram.
“Anonymity: Obsolescence and Desire”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 275–285.

Zurawski, Nils.
“Policing Normality: Police Work, Anonymity and a Sociology of the Mundane”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 286–290.

Knowbotiq and Nina Bandi.
“Amazonian Flesh: How to Hang in Trees during Strike?”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 294–305.

Zurawski, Nils.
“Proximity, Distance and State Powers: Policing Practices and the Regulation of Anonymity”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 306–325.

Bialski, Paula and Simon Farid.
“Dual Reality: (Un)Observed Magic in the Workplace”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 326–335.

Farid, Simon.
“A Provisional Manifesto for Invigilator-Friendly Artworks, or Your Artwork Is an Invigilator’s Labor Conditions”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 336–339.

Zurawski, Nils.
“Care or control? Police, Youth and Mutual Anonymity”.
In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 340–345.

Forouhar, Parastou.

“She Remembers”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 346–353.

de Zeeuw, Daniël.

“Collective Pleasures of Anonymity: From Public Restrooms to 4chan and Chatroulette”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 356–378.

Transformella Malor Ikeae (cared for by JP Raether).

“Transformella Malor Ikeae: InnerCity Ikeality [4.4.6.11]”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 379–393.

Baumann, Amelie.

“Authenticity”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 394–400.

Anon.

“Longing for a Selfless Self and other Ambivalences of Anonymity”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 401–423.

Raunig, Gerald.

“Speak their Endless Names”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 424–432.

Henke, Anna.

“Bitcoin Anonymous? Of Trust in Code and Paper”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 433–446.

Degoutin, Stephane, Vadim Bernard and Martin de Bie.

“Anonymity Workshop”.

In Book of Anonymity, edited by Anon Collective. Milky Way, Earth: punctum books (2021): 447–462.