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Un/Masking

Reflections on a Transformative Process

Neofelis

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Introduction

When, in the summer of 2019, we held a conference on masks and un/masking, we could not have imagined that only a year later wearing a mask would have become a habitual part of our daily lives.[1] We were in the process of working on this conference volume when the COVID-19 pandemic broke out. Among the many consequences of the pandemic, there was one unexpected effect for us: not only had the topic of masks gained new relevance, but the widespread concerns, conversations, and political diatribes surrounding protective face masks confirmed that the subject area we had approached through the field of culture was highly meaningful to society in a broader sense. What had attracted us to the topic of masks in the first place was their peculiar power to transform and to break the boundaries between human and nonhuman, life and death, presence and absence. The power to destabilize supposedly fixed categories and to imitate while also creating something new – new identities, a new status for the wearer – presents structural similarities to the workings of mimesis, a central theme in our conference. This volume focuses on the process of un/masking rather than on the object of the mask. It therefore highlights its performative aspects, in which masking and unmasking are inextricably bound to each other.

1 The interdisciplinary conference "Un/Masking. On a Mimetic Form" was conceived by Sebastian Althoff, Anna Baccanti, Johanna Spangenberg, and Antonia Stichnoth. It took place from July 4–6, 2019 in Munich at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte and the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität as the sixth conference of the International Doctoral Program MIMESIS. This volume collects some of the papers presented on that occasion.

Before discussing the conceptual framework of the volume and the articles it comprises, we introduce the topic of un/masking from the perspective of the current pandemic, which has deeply influenced the public discourse surrounding masks and provided a new way of looking at their functions. While we can draw on well-documented research on the history of anti-epidemic masks, the observations about the novel coronavirus pandemic provide a snapshot of a specific moment in the summer and fall of 2020. Waiting for more rigorous studies to follow,[2] for now we hope to offer some insight into masks as powerful objects of transformation that have become part of our daily lives in unexpected ways.

What Is a Mask?
Modern Anti-Epidemic Masks and Their Cultural Dimension

While we commonly refer to medical equipment that covers mouth and nose as a 'mask,' face coverings worn to prevent the spread of infections are not always considered masks in a strict sense of the word. Richard Weihe, for instance, excludes masks worn for protective reasons from his analysis, arguing that he is interested in masks as a mode of communication – that is, in masks that *mean* something in a specific social or cultural context.[3] While preparing the 2019 conference, we took a similar approach. But as protective masks have become an object of heated political debate during the COVID-19 pandemic, it should be clear that protective masks, too, can be endowed with meaning that goes beyond their concrete medical function. It can be more difficult to recognize them as masks, since – unlike masks used, for example, during Carnival, a ritual, or a theatrical performance – medical masks 'spill out' into people's daily lives and appear in unmarked contexts and situations. We hope that this book will provide a valuable and timely contribution to the study of masks against the backdrop of a pandemic that has changed attitudes toward face covering. In a sense, the fact that a form of the mask that has been frequently ignored gained new significance confirms our thesis that the concept of the mask is inherently unstable and ever-shifting, according to different historical-cultural contexts and symbolic systems.

2 The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin has begun to collect multidisciplinary projects on face masks in the context of COVID-19 on a blog. See https://themaskarrayed.net/home.html (accessed: October 31, 2020).

3 Cf. Richard Weihe: *Die Paradoxie der Maske. Geschichte einer Form*. Munich: Fink 2004, p. 18.

Political usages of 'modern' medical masks can be dated to at least the beginning of the 20th century. Christos Lynteris, a medical anthropologist, analyzes how the invention of anti-epidemic face masks in Manchuria in 1910 not only helped curb the spread of a deadly pneumonic plague, but also became a marker of medical modernity and of China's scientific supremacy.[4] Like Weihe, Lynteris starts from an understanding of the mask that goes beyond that of just any object covering the face. Coherent with the anthropological tradition dedicated to studying how masks operate in human cultures and societies, Lynteris sees masks as "objects and technologies that relate to identity, or more broadly personhood, and its transformation"[5] – highlighting precisely the transformative aspect of masks central to this publication. The question is, then, whether protective medical equipment can fit this definition of the mask. Lynteris argues that it does and shows how the anti-epidemic masks in early 20th-century Manchuria became "mediums of a categorical transformation of their wearers into 'reasoned' subjects of hygienic modernity."[6] Not only did these protective masks block contagion, they also represented the passage from supposed 'backwardness' to 'modernity,' as they symbolically "transformed the public from a superstitious and ignorant mass into an enlightened hygienic-minded population: a population that accepted the contagious nature of the disease and corresponding, often brutal, quarantine and isolation measures."[7]

Visually, the plain white gauze masks worn during the Manchurian plague epidemic are strikingly different from most other types of masks, such as ritual or theatrical masks, which often mimic human or animal features. Still, Lynteris argues, "if anti-epidemic face-worn devices are non-representational, they are still implicated, like masks studied by anthropologists, in the invocation, embodiment, and manipulation of a force: in this case, *reason*."[8] The visual appearance of protective masks also takes on a meaning of its own. In the black and white photographs presented as evidence of the Chinese handling

4 Cf. Christos Lynteris: Plague Masks. The Visual Emergence of Anti-Epidemic Personal Protection Equipment. In: *Medical Anthropology* 37,6 (2018), pp. 442–457.

5 Ibid., p. 443.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., p. 451.

8 Ibid., p. 448 (emphasis in original). The ambition of the medical and political elite to invoke reason seems somewhat at odds with practices that were common at the time, such as stamping the masks with temple seals, which nonetheless confirm the masks' function as talismans as well as hygienic devices.

of the epidemic, the whiteness of the masks powerfully stands out against the dark background. These photographs appropriate a racialized colonial visual trope that juxtaposes 'white' civilizational forces of purification and 'dark' disease and backwardness. They make the point that China is 'civilized' and 'modern' enough to rule Manchuria itself: the white masks here represent scientific, rather than racial superiority, and support China's claim for political power.[9]

When, in 1918, the world was hit by the influenza pandemic that became known as the Spanish Flu, protective masks for the general population were quickly and widely adopted, despite some doubts about their effectiveness and despite isolated cases of anti-mask resistance. While in Western countries such devices soon fell into disuse, they have remained more common in many East Asian countries, especially during public health crises, but also as protection against common colds and high levels of air pollution.[10] Peter Baehr argues that wearing a protective mask became a "social ritual" during the 2002–2003 SARS epidemic in Hong Kong, again highlighting their function *as masks*:

> [...] the mask was the emblematic means by which people communicated their responsibilities to the social group of which they were members. Through mimicry and synchronization – key mechanisms of emotional contagion [...] – mask-wearing amounted to a joint action, normatively embodied, the entrainment and attunement of the society as a whole. By disguising an individual's face, it gave greater salience to collective identity. By blurring social distinctions, it produced social resemblance.[11]

In Western countries, by contrast, wearing a surgical mask was perceived, until very recently, as a sign of otherness. This perception started to change with the outbreak of COVID-19 and the adoption of masks by the general population

9 Lynteris compares the photographic album presented by Dr. Wu, the main proponent of the gauze mask, at the 1911 International Plague Conference in Mukden with photos taken by David Knox Griffith of the Shropshire Regiment's "Whitewash Brigade" during an epidemic in Hong Kong in 1894, showing British soldiers in white uniforms "as a source of purification" (Lynteris: Plague Masks, p. 447).

10 Cf. Christos Lynteris: Why Do People Really Wear Face Masks During an Epidemic? In: *The New York Times*, February 13, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/13/opinion/coronavirus-face-mask-effective.html (accessed: October 20, 2020).

11 Peter Baehr: City Under Siege. Authoritarian Toleration, Mask Culture, and the SARS Crisis in Hong Kong. In: S. Harris Ali / Roger Keil (eds): *Networked Disease.* Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2008, pp. 138–151, here p. 150.

in most countries in the world – often mandated by law and enforced through severe fines. In Europe, protective masks quickly went from being perceived as markers of sickness to inducing a sense of security: now it is the *unmasked* person who seems (and is, indeed) dangerous. Writing in 2018, Lynteris concludes that personal protective devices are "constantly reinvented *as masks*: as apparatuses of categorical transformation aimed at allowing humanity to persist at the brink of the end of the world as this is embodied by the specter of the 'next pandemic.'"[12]

Towards the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, much public debate focused on whether masks were really an effective prophylactic against the novel coronavirus. Since it was too early for conclusice research, confusing and contradictory statements werde released. The World Health Organization only started advising the use of masks by the general population months after they had become compulsory in some countries.[13] In terms of the significance of protective masks *as masks*, it is interesting to observe how the inherent caution and uncertainty of ongoing scientific research was met with much more assertive political positions: from severely enforcing mask-wearing orders to claiming that they were completely useless. Quickly masks became politicized, transcending their function as purely medical devices. As a journalist aptly

12 Lynteris: Plague Masks, p. 452 (emphasis in original).

13 On April 6, the official World Health Organization (WHO) guidance insisted that "[m]edical masks should be reserved for health care workers" ('community' or non-medical masks were not even considered) and that "[t]he use of medical masks in the community may create a false sense of security, with neglect of other essential measures [...]" (WHO: Advice on the Use of Masks in the Context of COVID-19. Interim Guidance, 6 April 2020. In: *WHO. Institutional Repository for Information Sharing*. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331693 (accessed: September 26, 2020)). The WHO updated its guidance on June 5. While continuing to emphasize other preventive measures, such as physical distancing, the new document carefully states that "governments should encourage the general public to wear masks in specific situations and settings as part of a comprehensive approach to suppress SARS-CoV-2 transmission." A table provides guidelines on who should wear medical or non-medical masks in different situations. Of particular interest is the fact that the WHO names some social and psychological advantages to mask-wearing, such as "reminding people to be compliant with other measures," "reduced potential stigmatization of individuals wearing masks to prevent infecting others," and "making people feel they can play a role in contributing to stopping spread of the virus" – thus confirming that the significance of masks go beyond their medical purpose (WHO: Advice on the Use of Masks in the Context of COVID-19. Interim Guidance, 5 June 2020. In: *WHO*, June 5, 2020. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak (accessed: September 26, 2020)).

put it, "how does a little square of cloth become a culture war?"[14] It seems like masks – *as masks* – tend to become peculiarly invested with meaning and easily attract strong political and emotional reactions.

During the spring and summer of 2020, anti-epidemic masks became catalysts for debates centered around core ideological issues such as personal freedom and the appropriate role of the state in governing people's health and behaviors. Rules about mask-wearing in public spaces also exposed some contradictions in the laws regarding face coverings. France, for example, banned the Muslim niqab and burqa in public spaces about a decade ago, arguing that covering one's face posed a security threat and expressed a refusal to communicate with and be part of the French national community.[15] In the wake of the pandemic, covering one's mouth and nose has become mandatory in many places in France. The fact that now the same behavior – although invested with a completely different meaning – that is banned is also explicitly mandated in some public spaces clearly exposes the fact that the niqab ban was never about the act of covering the face per se, but about the supposed cultural otherness symbolized by Islamic dress. Depending on the significance it is invested with, a piece of cloth can be construed as a threat to national values or as a sign of civic responsibility.[16] Conversely, the perception of Islamic dress in Western countries seems to be changing, as some Muslim women who wear a niqab have reported lower levels of hostility since face coverings have become a more common sight.[17]

14 Podcast by Ed Pilkington / Mythili Rao: How Did President Trump Get His Pandemic Response So Wrong? In: *The Guardian*, August 6, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/news/audio/2020/aug/06/how-did-president-trump-get-his-pandemic-response-so-wrong (accessed: October 20, 2020), 00:24:28 min.

15 Cf. Projet de loi interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public. Etude d'impact. In: *Assemblée Nationale*, May 2010. http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/projets/pl2520-ei.asp (accessed: October 20, 2020).

16 A similar argument was made in James McAuley: France Mandates Masks to Control the Coronavirus. Burqas Remain Banned. In: *The Washington Post*, May 10, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/france-face-masks-coronavirus/2020/05/09/6fbd50fc-8ae6-11ea-80df-d24b35a568ae_story.html (accessed: September 28, 2020). See also Katherine Bullock: We Are All Niqabis Now. Coronavirus Masks Reveal Hypocrisy of Face Covering Bans. In: *The Conversation*, April 27, 2020. https://theconversation.com/we-are-all-niqabis-now-coronavirus-masks-reveal-hypocrisy-of-face-covering-bans-136030 (accessed: September 28, 2020).

17 Cf. Shuiab Khan: Muslim Women. How Coronavirus Face-Mask Ruling Has Changed Attitudes Towards the Veil. In: *Lancashire Telegraph*, September 12, 2020. https://lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/18716232.blackburn-muslim-women-say-covid-face-mask-rule-changed-attitudes-towards-wearing-veil/ (accessed: September 28, 2020).

From the arguments used *against* them comes one of the best indications that protective face coverings function *as masks*: mask-refusers often oppose regulations mandating face coverings not on medical or scientific grounds (or, at least, not on *solid* scientific grounds),[18] but rather on ideological ones, for instance by invoking personal freedom. A video on YouTube, for example, shows a man in a completely air-permeable face covering originally intended as protective sports equipment – clearly useless against viral transmission. The fact that he could enter a store where masks are mandatory without being reprimanded proves, in his argumentation, that regulations implemented in the face of the pandemic are not about public health at all, but about control over the population.[19] Here, the broad meaning of the word 'mask' is intentionally misunderstood and used to undermine public health efforts. Perhaps because of the flexibility of the term *mask*, German authorities have tended to avoid it, preferring the more functional and less ideologically evocative term "mouth and nose covering."[20] In fact, this term is no less ambiguous than 'mask' (the sports protection gear also covers the man's mouth and nose in the video), but it is probably less likely to inspire the sort of intense emotional reactions that accompany the world of masks.

The rejection of masks on pseudo-scientific as well as explicitly political grounds highlights some parallels to similar instances during the Spanish Flu. In particular, the San Francisco Anti-Mask league, founded in 1919, has attracted the attention of both historians and journalists. One of the most interesting aspects of this highly structured organization – which had its president, vice presidents, treasurer, etc. – is that its founders and leaders were all women. Historian Brian Dolan notes that most of these women had considerable experience in political activism from their engagement for civil rights and,

18 Genuine medical concerns about masks inducing a false sense of security and leading people to disattend other hygienic precautions, or indications that many people are not wearing masks correctly have also emerged, but these tend to be expressed in much less absolutistic terms than the politically laden arguments.

19 Cf. Daily Bits: Man Wears a Mesh Face Mask to Prove Mandatory Masks in Florida is Not About Protection. In: *YouTube*, June 26, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7eQlaL7_wWQ (accessed: September 30, 2020).

20 The Robert Koch Institute, Germany's public health institute, uses "Mund-Nasen-Bedeckung" as an umbrella term for different types of protective masks. (Was ist beim Tragen einer Mund-Nasen-Bedeckung in der Öffentlichkeit zu beachten? In: *Robert Koch Institut*, September 7, 2020. https://www.rki.de/SharedDocs/FAQ/NCOV2019/FAQ_Mund_Nasen_Schutz.html (accessed: September 29, 2020).)

in particular, for female suffrage.[21] As they protested against anti-flu masks to the cries of "freedom and liberty," did these women see masks less in their medical and more in their most symbolic aspect as 'muffles,' covering their mouths when they had just started to gain a voice in the public sphere?

If a century ago suffragettes might have opposed masks for fear of being silenced, it was young men that were perceived as less attentive to hygiene and public health. Posters and cartoons warning of the risks of contagion mostly depicted this category of 'mask slackers.'[22] While this can partially be explained by the wartime context of the Spanish Flu, in which soldiers were an important vehicle for the virus, there are also deeper cultural reasons why young men were targeted by these ads: masks were perceived as a threat to masculinity, as concern for hygiene was associated with feminine figures like mothers and Sunday school teachers. For this reason, the public health messaging aimed at educating men on the importance of hygiene measures such as masks by insisting on patriotism, discipline, and personal responsibility[23] – a type of rhetoric particularly effective in wartimes. Wearing masks was thus presented as a form of civic duty.

Similar strategies can be observed today. Masks have come to embody responsibility and solidarity, a perception highlighted by the popularity of the term 'community masks,' which refers to homemade cloth masks aimed at offering some protection while reserving medical-grade masks for health care workers. Just like a century ago, some public health campaigns explicitly target young adults by adopting specific visual languages and cultural references. One common strategy has utilized the association of masks with superheroes in the attempt to appeal to teenagers while emphasizing personal responsibility.[24]

21 Cf. Brian Dolan: Unmasking History. Who Was Behind the Anti-Mask League Protests During the 1918 Influenza Epidemic in San Francisco? In: *Perspectives in Medical Humanities* 5,19 (2020), pp. 1–23.

22 "Although women as well as men made up the Progressive-era 'masses,' the public health villains blamed for careless coughing, spitting, and sneezing during the influenza pandemic were frequently represented, at least visually, as men behaving badly" (Nancy Tomes: 'Destroyer and Teacher.' Managing the Masses During the 1918–1919 Influenza Pandemic. In: *Public Health Reports* 125,3 suppl. (2010), pp. 48–62, here p. 57).

23 Cf. ibid., p. 58.

24 The German campaign #keinheldohnemaske (no hero without a mask), for instance, reminds its young target audience that "grandma and grandpa" belong to a risk group (https://keinheldohnemaske.com/ (accessed: September 29, 2020)). The posters of the Missouri Hospital Association also use superhero and comics aesthetics (cf. BAM! Student

The aspects of community and solidarity are especially emphasized since the consensus of medical experts is that masks are more effective in protecting others from the potentially infected wearers than in protecting the wearers themselves. Hence, the mask is not a sign of egoistical self-protection. Rather, the medical protective mask came to fulfill a function similar to that of many other types of masks that humans have been wearing for millennia: it is a community builder, a symbol of social cohesion. At the same time, the stark opposition of some groups to wearing masks highlights social and political polarizations and – again, just like other masks – tends to divide the world in terms of 'us' versus 'them.'

On This Volume

The current debates surrounding protective masks give a small insight into the variety of meanings that masks can assume and into the role they can play in shaping social norms. A common trope of thinking associates the mask with deceit and dissimulation, pinning it against the face as the site of truth – the 'true face.' This understanding of the mask, prevalent in Western culture, plays on dichotomies such as depth and surface, truth and illusion, authenticity and deception, and has also spurred a vast field of metaphorical usages of the term. 'Mask' came to indicate any form of hiding a 'true' self under a superficial façade. In this context, the dualism between face and mask corresponds to the dualism between reality and appearance.

It is important to note that this understanding of the mask is by no means universal, but rather historically and culturally relative. The Greek and Latin words for 'mask' hint at a different model for the relationship between face and mask: *prósopon* indicates both the face and the mask that actors would have worn in Greek theater, while the Latin word for mask, *persona*, similarly indicates the mask as well as the theatrical and social role.[25] It appears then that ancient European cultures did not think of masks in opposition to the wearer; they considered them a unity. Many African languages, similarly, do not have a word that can be directly translated as 'mask.' Rather, the words indicating the concrete object that in English would be called mask refer to a

Superheroes Can Clobber COVID-19 in the Classroom. In: *MHA*, August 20, 2020. https://web.mhanet.com/media-library/bam-student-superheroes-can-clobber-covid-19-in-the-classroom/ (accessed: September 29, 2020)).

25 Cf. Weihe: *Die Paradoxie der Maske*, pp. 27–28.

spiritual connection – something that differs fundamentally from the superficiality that is usually associated with the words for 'mask' in most European languages.[26]

Such linguistic insights serve to remind us of how specific our contemporary Western idea of the mask is. Coming from both a *white*[27] and a Western perspective, we consider it of utmost importance to interrogate the limited canonical understanding of the mask as an art object and broaden it to allow for more extensive and diverse contextualization. Masks as objects have been stolen, expropriated, and presented to a wider public in museum exhibitions as 'exotic' artifacts, deprived of authorship, context, and their original significance.[28] Too often, the mask has been used as a simple but effective representation and signifier of so-called 'primitive' cultures and constructed in opposition to the idea of 'civilized' Western society. Within the academic context especially, there is a strong need for reflection and accountability towards the studies of masks in various disciplines that have reproduced colonialist thinking and hierarchies and in part continue to do so. While the dichotomies that characterize Christian and Western thinking about masks do play an important role in this volume, the contributions tend to question the notion of the 'authentic' face as opposed to the 'superficial' mask, exploring cases where it is only through a mask that one can become someone else – or vanish altogether. To match the incredible variety of contexts and historical and cultural settings that masks play a crucial role in – from antique theatrical practices to digital

26 Cf. Weihe: *Die Paradoxie der Maske*, pp. 29–30.

27 We set "*white*" in italics when referring to the social category of race, although this is not a common spelling outside German-language media – unlike the capitalization of "Black," which is now standard practice and taken for granted by the Diversity Style Guide (cf. White, white. In: *The Diversity Style Guide*, n. d. https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/white-white/ (accessed: March 14, 2021)). Our decision arises from our wish to avoid any association with racist and *white* supremacist groups who favor the spelling with a capital letter ("White"); at the same time, we want to call attention to the artificiality and historicity of the category of *whiteness*, since, as Kwame Anthony Appiah has argued, simply lowercasing "white" runs the risks of framing *whiteness* as "neutral and the standard" (Kwame Anthony Appiah: The Case for Capitalizing the *B* in Black. In: *The Atlantic*, June 18, 2020. https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/ (accessed: March 14, 2021)).

28 Melanie Ulz, for example, analyzes how "[...] masks play a key role in the economy of Western misappropriation, homogenization, and the determination of African art up to the present as masks became one of the strongest signifiers for the African continent in the twentieth century." (Melanie Ulz: Masking the White Gaze. Towards a Postcolonial Art History of Masks. In: Jana Gohrisch / Ellen Grünkemeier (eds): *Postcolonial Studies Across the Disciplines*. Amsterdam: Brill 2013, pp. 51–68, here p. 52.)

technologies, to ritual as well as artistic and literary activities throughout the world – this volume takes a decidedly interdisciplinary approach. It encompasses disciplines in which masks are central, such as theater studies, art history, and anthropology, but also literature and musicology. The contributions bring together studies from different epochs and art forms, thus enriching the volume through a variety of theoretical approaches. This allows the reader to gain a deeper understanding of specific aspects, while offering links and connections not readily visible in the confined area of one field alone. Because masks are both so diversified and heterogenous in their specificities and also, on some level, universal – as much as cultural artifacts and technologies can ever be – we asked ourselves what unites the different approaches collected in this volume. Our theoretical understanding of masks focuses on the performative aspect that renders them catalysts of transition and transformation: between outside and inside, between the self and the other, the visible and the invisible, and – as in many ritual practices – between life and death. In this sense, masks are inherently ambiguous and liminal objects that mark the condition of being 'in-between.' Like all boundaries, masks are both a point of separation and a line of contact.

For these reasons, we depart from a static understanding of the mask as an object and instead focus on its processual aspect. We are fascinated by the instability that the process of un/masking creates, by the oscillation between identities and the sense of precariousness it can cause. This interest is reflected in the title of our volume: in the process of un/masking, the two aspects – masking and unmasking – cannot be neatly separated, as they constantly reach into each other. Hence, they cannot be fully understood within static binary categories. As is explored in several contributions to this volume, often more is 'revealed' by masking and 'hidden' by unmasking than the other way around; the two are not only intertwined, they can become indistinguishable. Through this faculty to simultaneously hide and reveal – or, more precisely, to reveal by hiding – the process of un/masking can destabilize supposedly fixed identities and polarities. The transformational power of masks entails a real metamorphosis that can endow wearers with powers and change their ontological status. While masks can derive their power precisely from the promise and the expectation of unmasking – the potential for unmasking often seems intrinsic to the workings of the mask – such expectation is mostly disappointed. Similarly, our readers will be disappointed if they expect this volume to 'unmask' a single truth about masks. Instead, we offer an exploration of the intrinsic ambiguity of various processes of un/masking, as unstable and complex as the topic requires.

We have divided this volume in three chapters, according to core thematic areas. The articles comprising the first chapter explore fields ranging from ritual to theatrical masks to computer-generated imagery. They highlight masks' ability to alter the status of the wearer and open alternative dimensions of reality. In the subsequent chapter, questions of surface and depth take center stage. The complex relationship between mask and face is investigated in conjunction with the notions of authenticity and truth, and the question of what is behind the mask is approached from the perspective of the mask's spectator, as well as of its wearer. In the third and last chapter, the contributions focus on artistic uses of both literal and metaphorical masks as means of constructing (artistic) identities while also questioning and destabilizing the very concept of identity. Here, the full political dimension of the process of un/masking and its potential as an agent both of artistic expression and social change becomes evident. The following introduction to the contributions highlights some key insights, interconnections, and further perspectives.

Inside Out. The Liminal Space of Un/Masking

The issues addressed in this first chapter – particularly the different traditions of theatrical masks and their relation to death, corporeality, and artificiality – bring to mind the recent work of theater director Susanne Kennedy. On contemporary German stages, Kennedy's work is strongly associated with her innovative and sophisticated use of masks: mannequin-like masks covering the entire head, black veils concealing the face, or silicone masks with realistic facial features.[29] Additionally, Kennedy has the performers lip-synch to recordings of the dramatic text instead of speaking live.[30] This practice has been associated with Judith Schäfer's idea of "acoustic masks"[31] and shares certain traits with the concept of the "vocal mask" introduced by W. Anthony Sheppard in this volume. Judith Schäfer claims that the voice itself can become a mask, evoking a juxtaposition of actor and persona, voice

29 Cf. Anton Chekhov: *Drei Schwestern* (Premiere: April 27, 2019, Münchner Kammerspiele, D: Susanne Kennedy; visited on June 1, 2019); Susanne Kennedy: *Women in Trouble* (World Premiere: November 30, 2017, Volksbühne Berlin, D: Susanne Kennedy).

30 Cf. A. J. Goldmann: Masks On in a Near-Empty Hall. Germany's Theaters Return. In: *New York Times*, July 2, 2020. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/02/theater/germany-theater-coronavirus.html (accessed: October 7, 2020).

31 Cf. Judith Schäfer's article in a volume dedicated to acoustic masks: Sprache, Körper, Raum. Szenische Konstellationen bei Laurent Chétouane und Susanne Kennedy. In: Heinz Georg Held / Donatella Mazza / Laura Strack (eds): *Akustische Masken auf dem Theater. Text – Sprache – Performanz*. Stuttgart: Steiner 2020, pp. 213–221.

and text.[32] With the actor's body seeming "almost passive" and as if made from "artificial material" behind the mask, it can be perceived as "already-dead": conserving the "fleeting voice" exposes it as one that has already died away.[33]
The relation between (facial and acoustic) masks and death seems especially present in Kennedy's *Die Selbstmord-Schwestern*,[34] an adaptation of Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *The Virgin Suicides*. This production features five performers in white night gowns, their heads hidden in masks that resemble the depiction of girls in mangas, with childish features and enlarged eyes. It is easy to associate these figures with the teenage sisters whose consecutive suicides are recounted in the novel. However, the masked performers move their mouths to excerpts from the book, which is narrated from the perspective of a group of boys from the sisters' neighborhood. The masked figures' disturbing corporeality adds to their irritating presence. With their big, wide eyes, they look artificial, until suddenly one of them begins to vomit. At one point, blood starts to stream down from the breasts of one of the performers, which is what the boys assume happens when women menstruate. "Obviously, Doctor, [...] you've never been a thirteen-year-old girl," the youngest sister tells a male doctor when he dismisses her reasons for her first suicide attempt.[35] Kennedy's adaptation seems to revolve around the question of what it means to be a girl, while the masks used in it destabilize any notion of identity. The masked performers shift from representing actual girls to embodying the boys' assumptions and fantasies to being mediums in a conjuration. These shifts in status continue until after the curtain falls, when the performers return on stage for the applause and it becomes evident that they are in fact all grown men.
Kennedy's work as a director seems to be the exception to the rule of the lack of masks in contemporary performance that Laurette Burgholzer observes in her article "Facing Trouble. On Conjunctures of Theatrical Masking and Unmasking." Starting with a short account of the role of the mask as "an archaic means of coming into contact with the worlds of the deities, of the deceased, or of animals," Burgholzer describes the reimagination of masks in theater by the European avant-gardes at the beginning of the 20th century.[36] Burgholzer's article highlights the role of masks in actor's training, especially

32 Cf. ibid., p. 219.

33 Ibid. (transl. A. S.).

34 Jeffrey Eugenides: *Die Selbstmord-Schwestern* (Premiere: March 30, 2017, Münchner Kammerspiele, D: Susanne Kennedy; visited on February 2, 2018).

35 Jeffrey Eugenides: *The Virgin Suicides*. London: Fourth Estate 2013, p. 5.

36 Laurette Burgholzer: Facing Trouble. On Conjunctures of Theatrical Masking and Unmasking, in this volume, pp. 33–48, here p. 34.

that of the so-called "neutral mask" in Jacques Lecoq's influential school. In the tradition of this school, wearing a mask "demands a reorganization of the body in space, of posture, gestures, placing one's voice, visual orientation."[37] "Concerning acting, the mask requires humility," Burgholzer summarizes its effect, which implies a shift away from what is commonly considered 'theatrical expression.'[38] This shift has been ardently criticized in connection with Kennedy's work, as when a critic complained that "great artists" would be "robbed" of their voices and "hidden" behind "silly masks" in the *Virgin Suicides* adaptation.[39]

While the masked beings in Kennedy's *Die Selbstmord-Schwestern* seem to oscillate between different states – dead girls or their idealization, their ghosts and their bodies – Bernhard Siegert's contribution "Switching Perspectives. The Operative Ontology of the Transformation Masks of the American Northwest Coast" takes on masks that enable a transformation between humans and nonhumans. Siegert's article deals with the function and design of masks and other artifacts created by the Kwakwaka'wakw, Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest Coast. These masks, that can often be opened and closed to reveal another mask, function as "*circulating body forms*," Siegert explains.[40] According to Kwakwaka'wakw ontology, opening and closing, putting on and taking off these masks amounts to a transformation between humans and animals or objects. Siegert relates artifacts used in rituals to Kwakwaka'wakw myths, underlining how the inherent animist ontology challenges modern Western concepts of the object. "The instability of animist ontology," Siegert writes, "is due to the fact that the difference between body form and mask is only a difference of perspective."[41] Depending on the perspective, masks can transform humans into animals, animals into objects, and vice versa, thereby questioning a clear distinction between different ontological states.

Analyzing the work of the British visual artist Ed Atkins, Bethan Hughes' article "Corpsing. CGI as Grotesque Realism in the Work of Ed Atkins"

37 Burgholzer: Facing Trouble, p. 42.

38 Ibid.

39 Bernd Noack: Hoffnungslosigkeit von außen. In: *Spiegel*, March 31, 2017. https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/die-selbstmord-schwestern-premiere-kammerspiele-muenchen-a-1141295.html (accessed: October 7, 2020).

40 Bernhard Siegert: Switching Perspectives. The Operative Ontology of the Transformation Masks of the American Northwest Coast, in this volume, pp. 49–67, here p. 53 (emphasis in original).

41 Ibid., p. 66.

deals with artworks that avoid the existence of an actor behind the mask altogether. Atkins' works make use of computer-generated imagery (CGI) and motion capture whose functioning Hughes describes as a form of masking. While immaculate, hyper-realistic CG bodies are well known in the context of commercial images, Atkins' work emphasizes corporeal fragility, even decay. Hughes introduces the notion of the grotesque in order to describe the vivid corporeality of Atkins' 'surrogates.' Although immaterial, Hughes states, the seeming materiality of Atkins' CG images appears to be "insisting on a corporeal reengagement with the messy, material origins and realities."[42] In that sense, CG bodies are capable of transcending an absence: the animated bodies in Atkins' art, Hughes argues, function as "virtual proxies for physical bodies which remain 'elsewhere.'"[43] Linking CGI to the practice of death masks, Hughes points out another fundamental similarity between CG bodies and masks: "each initially appears to be a solid mass but, upon closer inspection, is revealed to be hollow."[44]

Expressive Sur/Face. Looking Beyond the Mask

The relation between the surface of the mask and what lies behind it is further explored in the second chapter. In doubling the face, the mask indicates its absence and therefore highlights it.[45] The mask conveys the promise of something that lies beyond its surface. However, in an act of masking, it is not only the face that becomes invisible. Looking at a person wearing a witch mask, one is invited to look beyond the mask, to see neither the person nor the mask but the witch. And yet, the mask remains ambiguous: in the eyes of the spectator, it can be two things at once.

This ambiguity of seeing and not seeing bears a structural similarity to the photograph. In his well-known essay *La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie* (*Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*), Roland Barthes states the following: "Quoi qu'elle donne à voir et quelle que soit sa manière, une photo est toujours invisible: ce n'est pas elle qu'on voit."[46] A photograph, just like the

42 Bethan Hughes: Corpsing. CGI as Grotesque Realism in the Work of Ed Atkins, in this volume, pp. 69–88, here p. 86.

43 Ibid., p. 69.

44 Ibid., p. 77.

45 Cf. Weihe: *Die Paradoxie der Maske*, p. 14.

46 Roland Barthes: La Chambre Claire. Note sur la photographie. In: Idem: *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3: 1974–1980, ed. by Éric Marty. Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1995, pp. 1105–1197, here p. 1113. / "Whatever it grants to vision and whatever its manner, a photograph is always invisible: it is not it that we see." (Roland Barthes: *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, transl. from the French by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang 1981, p. 6.)

mask, appears to combine visibility with invisibility as they both attract the gaze and almost simultaneously direct it to a point beyond themselves. As a simulacrum, portrait photography depicts only the illusion of unaltered reality: "Somit stellt es keine Identität dar, sondern ein Spiel der Identität, eine Maske, die als Bedeutung eine Identität suggeriert, während sie die Singularität einer Identität verdeckt."[47] Various artists have made use of this ostensible discrepancy in their work. For his series *Mask*, which originated in the 1980s, John Stezaker, for instance, uses techniques of the collage to present photographs as masks, partially covering portraits of 1950s film stars with clippings of postcards of landscapes. In "obscuring points of visual reference that allow for human recognition,"[48] an alienation of the face takes place. At the same time, the collages develop an eerie effect of depth, directing the gaze towards the focal point of the landscape motifs that serve as masks. Like this, Stezaker's collages imply that "there is a suggestion of seeing through the centre of the paired images, or even the face itself, to a space beyond, even when elements of the picture on the postcard simulate parts of a face."[49] As a consequence, the dichotomy of mask and face seems to collapse.

Anja Wächter's contribution "Creative Incognito. Stefan Moses' *Künstler hinter Masken*" discusses another version of the face portrait. Each photograph of this series on which Moses worked for more than 40 years shows an artist wearing an improvised mask. The masks comprise everyday objects, appear ephemeral, and sometimes do not even cover the face. Their sole raison d'être, it seems, is the idea of art itself as an act of un/masking. Here, the act of masking appears to indicate truth rather than deceit, as the artists are supposedly able to show their 'real' faces only through the creative activity that defines them – in this case by inventing a mask. Moses' masked artists have the opportunity to disrupt the essentialist idea of the fixed self. The mask allows for a parallel reality, a second mode of existence *as artist*. The mask is doubled in the photograph, highlighting the artificiality of portrait photography, and effectively un/masking the photographic setting. Barthes underlines

47 Judith Kasper: *Sprachen des Vergessens. Proust, Perec und Barthes zwischen Verlust und Eingedenken*. Munich: Fink 2003, p. 285. "Thus it does not represent an identity, but a play with identity, a mask that suggests an identity as meaning, while concealing the singularity of an identity." (transl. J. S.)

48 Anne Blood: John Stezaker. London, Luxembourg and Saint Louis. In: *The Burlington Magazine* 153,1298 (2011), pp. 344–345, here p. 344.

49 Ibid., pp. 344–345.

the fact that being photographed means watching oneself being transformed into an image.[50] It can be argued that in Moses' photographs, wearing a mask means being a spectator of the process of being turned into a mask. The contingent nature of photography and its promise of telling the truth[51] are used to present questions concerning art, artificiality, and identity. The promise of an unmasking, however, does not come true, as Barthes must admit:

> [...] je vis dans l'illusion qu'il suffit de nettoyer la surface de l'image, pour accéder à *ce qu'il y a derrière*: scruter veut dire retourner la photo, entrer dans la profondeur du papier, atteindre sa face inverse (ce qui est caché est pour nous, Occidentaux, plus 'vrai' que ce qui est visible). Hélas, j'ai beau scruter, je ne découvre rien: si j'agrandis, ce n'est rien d'autre que le grain du papier [...].[52]

While it is possible to look at the back of the photograph, just as it is possible to look at the back of the mask, this does not lead to the 'truth' longed for by Western expectations.

In her contribution "Style as Mask. Toward a Surrealist Theory of Expression," Joyce Cheng links Susan Sontag's notion of stylization to Surrealist theories of style.[53] Common opinions tend to see style as a phenomenon of the surface, while simultaneously linking the surface to artificiality. At the same time, it is assumed that the truth about the artist can be extracted from style. "The

50 Cf. Barthes: *La Chambre Claire*, p. 1115. See also Kasper: *Sprachen des Vergessens*, p. 284.

51 "La Photographie justifie ce désir, même si elle ne le comble pas: je ne puis avoir l'espoir fou de découvrir la vérité, que parce que le noème de la Photo, c'est précisément que *cela a été*" (Barthes: *La Chambre Claire*, p. 1178, emphasis in original). / "The Photograph justifies this desire, even if it does not satisfy it: I can have the fond hope of discovering truth only because Photography's *noeme* is precisely *that-has-been*" (Barthes: *Camera Lucida*, pp. 99–100).

52 Barthes: *La Chambre Claire*, p. 1115 (emphasis in original). / "I live in the illusion that it suffices to clean the surface of the image in order to accede to *what is behind*: to scrutinize means to turn the photograph over, to enter into the paper's depth, to reach its other side (what is hidden is for us Westerners more 'true' than what is visible). Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper [...]" (Barthes: *Camera Lucida*, p. 100).

53 In her essay *Melancholy Objects*, Susan Sontag also links Surrealism to photography: "Surrealism lies at the heart of the photographic enterprise: in the very creation of a duplicate world, of a reality in the second degree, narrower but more dramatic than the one perceived by natural vision." (Susan Sontag: Melancholy Objects. In: Idem: *On Photography*. New York: Picador 1977, pp. 49–82, here p. 52.) Sontag's analysis of the Surrealist style as duplicate, a second added layer, not only points towards photography as a key medium of the 20th century, but also touches upon a general question concerning style.

mask is the face,"[54] writes Susan Sontag in her essay *On Style*, thus pointing out that the supposed distance between style as appearance and the self as an underlying "'true' being"[55] is oftentimes illusionary. Within Susan Sontag's concept of style, she distinguishes stylization as a description of movements in art "which do more than simply have 'a style'. [...] They seem to be preoccupied with stylistic questions."[56] While mask and face appear as one in Sontag's analogy for style, stylization entails "a special distance from the subject."[57] Cheng's analysis conceptualizes and historicizes style, considering the 19th-century approach to style as unconscious or involuntary, as well as ideas of style as intentional expression. In distinguishing between a "*constitutionalist* style" ("covert and awaiting disclosure") and a "*phenomenal* style" (a style that "shows its face / façade as a mask"),[58] the idea of a true self waiting to be uncovered is questioned. Departing from an extensive reading of Lacan and by analyzing photographs, collages, and drawings from the Surrealist magazine *Minotaure*, Cheng argues that style is no simple linear matter of self-expression. Rather, there can be an automatic element to style, drawing on preexisting stylistic traits. In adopting these traits, style becomes a masquerade, a performance that rethinks subjectivity as "non-hegemonic,"[59] as a "being-as-mask."[60]

Christiane Lewe discusses how new technologies lead to the conflation of mask and face in the social media sphere. In her contribution "Surface and Depth. The Revival of Physiognomy in Deep Learning," she presents technological developments in deep learning, whose algorithms lean on physiognomic principles to categorize pictures of faces from dating sites. Physiognomy as a scientific concept was first introduced in the 18th century by Johann Caspar Lavater (earlier, less systematic approaches can even be traced back to Aristotle). In the 19th century, it was further developed by criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso, physician Max Nordau, and psychiatrist Ernst Kretschmer, and quickly became a tool in justifying racist and antisemitic ideologies and

54 Susan Sontag: On Style. In: Idem: *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. London: Penguin 2009, pp. 15–36, here pp. 17–18.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid., p. 19.

57 Ibid., p. 20.

58 Joyce Cheng: Style as Mask. Toward a Surrealist Theory of Expression, in this volume, pp. 107–133, here p. 114 (emphasis in original).

59 Ibid., p. 132.

60 Ibid., p. 131.

enforcing discriminatory policies. Pseudo-scientific approaches dedicated to using facial or even bodily traits to determine supposed characteristics or temperamental attributes still persist today. The deep learning technologies discussed by Lewe lean on this idea of the face as an epistemological source. The algorithms, however, evaluate glasses, hats, or beards as well as camera angles and poses as attributes of the face. Image-based deep learning can only consider the face as surface. Contemporary physiognomic practices assume that algorithms can gain insight from the face, while in fact they are distilling information from grooming and the setup of a photograph: from style.

A Multitude of Selves. Artistic Personae, Identity, and Representation

Acts of un/masking often comprise a political component that can be highlighted by playing with masks and markers of identities. The medieval practice of Carnival, whose origins can be located in proto-dramatic ceremonials,[61] is probably one of the most pertinent contexts for this. During the carnival, not only is it customary to mock the ruling class, the transgression extends to the concept of identity. By putting on a mask, both literally and metaphorically, the carnivalesque experience allows one to step outside of oneself and to gain distance from the constraining social masks of everyday life.[62]

In her contribution "Thoughts Becoming Persons. Fernando Pessoa's Existential Carnival," Eleonore Zapf characterizes Carnival as a multiplication of masks throughout the city. Many of Pessoa's poems deal with the topic of Carnival. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes apparent that the carnivalesque masking is not only represented through his poems but forms an integral part of his poetics. Pessoa famously created numerous heteronyms, imaginary men and women of various nationalities and backgrounds, each with their own writing style and personality who are named as the authors of the various texts that comprise Pessoa's oeuvre. He extended the principle of Carnival to the concept of authorship, thereby blurring the otherwise clearly marked carnivalesque space: his masks, as Eleonore Zapf argues, are "thoughts becoming concrete persons."[63] Pessoa's play with multiple identities manifests itself in the use of different languages and styles, crossing boundaries created

61 Cf. Rosemary Barrow / Ingo Gildenhard / Michael Silk: *The Classical Tradition. Art, Literature, Thought*. Hoboken: Wiley & Sons 2014, p. 121.

62 Cf. Ansgar Michael Hüls: *Maske und Identität. Das Maskenmotiv in Literatur, Philosophie und Kunst um 1900*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2013, p. 161.

63 Eleonore Zapf: Thoughts Becoming Persons. Fernando Pessoa's Existential Carnival, in this volume, pp. 159–178, here p. 177.

by class, sexual identity, and gender. His heteronyms can be understood as "*internal* masks."[64] Even when writing under his own name, Pessoa's 'orthonym' becomes another mask.

The preoccupation with masks, evident in the work of Pessoa and of other artists and writers of his time, had already reached a height at the turn of the 20th century. Fin-de-siècle Vienna saw an increasing use of literal as well as figurative masks both on stage and in the public sphere. Visible masks appeared next to invisible or internal masks in the form of pseudonyms and altered identities, public images or other manifestations of the self. While the metaphorical social masks were perceived as limiting one's possibilities of expression, literal masks offered a form of personal freedom relieving the participants of masked balls of the pressures imposed by social roles and moral norms.

The famous Austrian writer Richard Engländer, alias Peter Altenberg, makes use of multiple 'masks' to create his public artistic persona, as Judith Kemp discusses in her contribution "'Wüstes Farbengetändel.' Peter Altenberg's *Masken* in Cabaret Fledermaus." His eccentric appearance as well as the persistence with which he incessantly changed his autobiographical recollections show the refusal to settle on a single identity. His need for several identities can be linked to the search for a self whose expressions are otherwise restrained by social norms. The conflict between society's expectations and the self is a central topic in Altenberg's short melodrama *Masken* [Masks]. In accordance with the requirements of the genre, the play presents nine types of elaborately masked women voicing their distress with society – and thus performing a powerful un/masking. Being a woman, they argue, means having to wear a mask, having to present a beautiful face with no means of showing what lies behind: "Without the masks, we are only masks! Distorted to simplicity and exaggeratedly comprehensible to the common mind!"[65] The language with which they could express themselves does not yet exist; an ultimate unmasking therefore proves impossible. The play transforms women into spectators of the very ideal they are expected to perform in society. Just like, for Barthes, the photographed subject is aware of being turned into an image, the figures in Altenberg's melodrama are aware of the fact that they are being

64 Zapf: Thoughts Becoming Persons, p. 168 (emphasis in original).

65 Judith Kemp: "Wüstes Farbengetändel." Peter Altenberg's *Masken* in Cabaret Fledermaus, in this volume, pp. 179–205, here p. 190.

transformed into stereotypes of femininity. It appears fitting that Altenberg presents the actresses on stage wearing literal masks while voicing their disapproval of the roles they are being forced into. This volume also contains the first edition of the full score by Richard Weinhöppel, edited by Judith Kemp. Analyzing this original material, she highlights how Weinhöppel's use of different musical styles mirrors Altenberg's text and can be interpreted as a form of masking.

Masking in music and its potential to create and destabilize identities is also the topic of W. Anthony Sheppard's contribution "Morality and Meaning in Lady Gaga's Vocal Masking." Pop music superstar and queer icon Lady Gaga is one of many contemporary performers who use alternate identities and alter egos to voice their critique of traditional notions of femininity.[66] Her extravagant costumes and not least her various masks make clear that identity, in the case of Lady Gaga, functions as "an additive construct,"[67] as a means to continuously produce new personae which do not overlap but coexist, thus establishing a fluid constellation. The perception of the self as a collection of masks is also true for the multiple timbral and tonal masks Lady Gaga intentionally takes on either simultaneously or in succession. As vocal masking is a powerful means to influence perceptions of a singer's identity, it can create a sound strongly associated with a specific artist, or it can create a manifold identity comprising different musical styles. The possibility of working with timbre and tone, as well as of digitally altering the voice, touches on ideas of (in)authenticity and identity. What Sheppard describes as Lady Gaga's "masked musical mimesis"[68] is indeed another take on understanding the mask as a means to multiply the self and therefore disavowing or destabilizing a singular identity. Lady Gaga's identities not only come to life in her masquerade – the masks also help establish and manifest the relationship with her fan community.[69] The fact that Lady Gaga in her many configurations is merely a persona created for the everlasting stage suggests that unmasking the artist is ultimately impossible.

66 Cf. Ashanka Kumari: 'Yoü and I.' Identity and the Performance of Self in Lady Gaga and Beyoncé. In: *The Journal of Popular Culture* 49,2 (2016), pp. 403–416, here p. 403.

67 Ibid., p. 411.

68 W. Anthony Sheppard: Morality and Meaning in Lady Gaga's Vocal Masking, in this volume, pp. 207–237, here p. 219.

69 Cf. Melissa A. Click / Holly Willson Holladay / Hyunji Lee: Making Monsters. Lady Gaga, Fan Identification, and Social Media. In: *Popular Music and Society* 26,3 (2013), pp. 360–379.

While the mask as object predominantly relies on the visual, there is a component that exceeds appearance, as the essays comprising this chapter show. Language can become a mask as Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks*: "To speak a language is to appropriate its world and culture."[70] It also means: to hear people speak accounts for their identity. Speech operates as a prominent factor in defining and recognizing one another. As Fanon's analysis pointedly shows, language marks oppression, discrimination, and inequality. Fanon presents the following example: "The fact is that the European has a set idea of the black man, and there is nothing more exasperating than to hear: 'How long have you lived in France? You speak such good French.'"[71] Structures of racialization and *white* hegemony can turn language into a mask of its own. In a system where language is implicated with racial and patriarchal ideology, it becomes necessary to find new ways of expression that reach beyond speech. In this publication's final contribution, "Redressing History in South Africa. Sethembile Msezane and Mary Sibande and Their Masking of the Black Body," Sarah Hegenbart discusses how South African artists expand the idea of the mask from an object covering the face to a process that pertains to the whole (Black) body. In her work, Sibande exposes the intertwining of race and class in South African society by designing Victorian dresses that simultaneously mirror colonial fashion and incorporate color schemes utilized in contemporary working uniforms of domestic workers. Msezane's performance *Chapungu. The Day Rhodes Fell,* on the other hand, accompanied the fall of John Cecil Rhodes' statue in Cape Town in 2015, a pivotal moment during the movement for the removal of monuments celebrating colonial history. In her performance, Msezane positioned herself in front of the statue with wings attached to her arms and a mask covering her face. In mirroring the statue, Msezane allows for the Black body to be represented in the public sphere, Hegenbart argues. While frozen at first, Msezane spreads her wings as the statue of the British imperialist is removed. Msezane remains silent for the entire duration of her performance, thus enhancing her statuelike appearance. While erasing individuality, her mask and wings create an ephemeral monument to Black South African identity,[72] referencing traditional craftmanship

70 Frantz Fanon: *Black Skin, White Masks*, transl. from the French by Richard Philcox. New York: Grove 2008, p. 21.

71 Ibid., p. 18.

72 Identity as a political category was first emphatically mentioned by the Combahee River Collective, who used the term "Identity Politics" in their 1977 text *A Black Feminist Statement* to explain their political stance. Since then, though historically of most relevance to

and mythologies. If, as Fanon argues, language is an element of preexistent power structures, masking can serve as a way to question such structures by circumventing speech.

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the North America Civil Rights Movement, the term has been incorporated into the global political vocabulary and dominates discourses in many Western democracies. Today, it has become a key concept for political participation (see Asad Haider: *Mistaken Identity. Race and Class in the Age of Trump*. London: Verso 2018, pp. 7–10).

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