

# **ABSTRACTS**

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## **AESTHETICS ACROSS CULTURES**

## Architektur und Literatur um 1900. Oder: "Wechselseitige Erhellung der Künste" (O. Walzel)

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Café Prückel, Wien

Vor etwas mehr als 100 Jahren hat der Germanist Oskar Walzel die Idee einer 'wechselseitigen Erhellung der Künste' umrissen. Mit Recht hatte er damals festgestellt, dass die Literaturwissenschaft, die sich längst schon von einer primär editionsphilologischen Orientierung zu einer stärker formanalytischen und hermeneutischen weiterentwickelte, dafür eigentlich nicht über ein dafür angemessenes methodisch-begriffliches Instrumentarium verfügte. Walzel glaubte deshalb, Hilfe von den Kunstwissenschaften bekommen zu können, insbesondere von Heinrich Wölfflins 'kunstgeschichtlichen Grundbegriffen'. Dieser Gedanke einer Komparatistik nicht nur zwischen verschiedenen Literaturen, sondern zwischen den Künsten, die sich seinerzeit bei Walzel schon abzeichnete, hat in der Folge die komparatistische Forschung nicht entscheidend geprägt, obwohl es bedeutende Forschungsbeiträge gibt (so z. B. von Erwin Koppen zu Fotografie und Literatur oder seit einiger Zeit zu Literatur und Film). Es lohnt sich aber, an sie anzuschließen. Methodisch ist dabei zu fragen: Was begreift man in der Kunst der Literatur besser, wenn man strukturell analoge ästhetische Problemstellungen in einer anderen Kunst untersucht? Welches Licht fällt dann von der einen Kunst auf die andere? Welche Parallelen zeigen sich? Der Vortrag will einen Versuch auf diesem noch immer sehr unsicheren Gelände unternehmen und dies am Beispiel von Architektur, Literatur und Malerei um 1900.

## How Franz Kafka's 'Mann vom Lande' sneaks into Thomas Bernhard's *The Dictator*

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Central to Kafka's novel *Der Proceß* (*The Trial*, written 1914) is the scene in a cathedral where a priest narrates a legend to the protagonist Joseph K.. Kafka published it a year later as an independent text with the title *Vor dem Gesetz* (*Before the Law*, 1915). Often called the *Türhüterlegende* (doorkeeper legend), it integrates motifs from the Jewish mythology like the sacred Law, the eternal wait for the Messiah and the uncultured, ignorant man from the country who does not know the Law. Half a century later Kafka's protagonist "Mann vom Lande" (Man from the Country) finds his way into a short narrative *The Dictator* (1957) by another Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard. Both characters sit outside a door. The dialectics of "before" and "behind" the door dominates both narratives. Is it just a coincidence or is there more to it? How close are the two characters and where do they part ways? How far do the Kafkaesque and the Bernhardian overlap and converge? How do they end up reflecting the conceptual worlds of the respective writers wherein the new text becomes a new discursive formation?

The moot point is that the reader's awareness of the intertextual linkages could contribute to a better understanding of the narratives.

## Kafka in SoHo: An Analysis of Martin Scorsese's film *After Hours* (1985)

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In Martin Scorsese's *After Hours*, 1985 release, we are thrust into the world of Paul Hackett, a word processor, an Everyman, who, after meeting a woman named Marcy late night in a Cafe, gets pulled into a series of unexpected and surreal encounters and situations in downtown SoHo, New York. The rest of his night is spent in trying to get back home, uptown. Interpretations of the film until now have mainly revolved around Leighton Grist's sub-genre called 'yuppie nightmare cycle' and psychoanalytic approaches ranging from elements of masochism as mentioned in Lawrence S. Friedman's book *The Cinema of Martin Scorsese* (1988) and castration-anxiety as referenced by Jim Sangster. Very little scholarship however has been directed towards the Kafkaesque elements and motifs in the film. Ranging from direct quotations from *The Trial*, similarities in the paranoid Everyman nature of Paul Hackett and Josef K., conception of reality and surroundings, the film employs motifs consistent with that of a Kafkaesque world. This paper argues that the Kafkaesque motifs in the film are central to its narrative and focuses on analysing how this intertextuality between Kafka and Scorsese unfolds.

## Adalbert Stifter and Thomas Bernhard: Intertextual Relationships in their Works

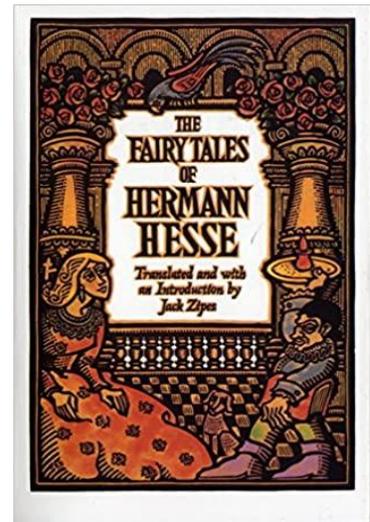
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In the aftermath of World War II, Austria considered itself “Hitler’s first victim”. The legacy of the Austrian writer Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868) was invoked to restore and promote Austria’s cultural and national identity. It was during this time that Thomas Bernhard (1931-1989) read Stifter. Some of Bernhard’s early works refer specifically to Stifter. The protagonist in Bernhard’s first novel *Frost* (1963) for example mentions that he read a lot of Stifter during his teaching career. In my paper I focus on the intertextual relationships between Bernhard’s *Frost* and Stifter’s *Das Haidedorf* (1840). In both the works, the protagonists live in isolated places in Austria. They move between city and village. Bernhard carries forth Stifter’s literary legacy to talk about the changes in the society and the surroundings caused by industrialization and modernization. However conceptually they are very different writers. Stifter’s works are located between late Romanticism and Realism whereas Bernhard is more of a post War absurdist writer, extremely critical of contemporary Austria.

## Beauty, Arts and Artists in Hermann Hesse's Fairytales

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How is the aesthetics of a text to be defined? Is it in the genre or in the use of language in a particular manner? We plan to engage with these questions based on a study of Hermann Hesse's fairytales. The 'fairytales' written by a literary author, in this case by Hesse for adults, are termed literary fairytales, because the prototype is the oral folk fairytale. So, the term already implies mixing of oral and written forms of storytelling. The authored literary fairytales vary from one author to another. Hesse's fairytales reflect him as an author and as a human being. He uses the structure, the motifs and tools of oral storytelling, and yet creates totally different stories from the folk fairytale. His stories raise the above questions, as we notice that Hesse's aesthetics and philosophy are not purely European. To this are added his worldview, ideology, his immediate reality and many other factors. We will analyze how aesthetic and non-aesthetic elements combine to create an individual sense of aesthetics. This analysis will be with reference to the conceptualization of aesthetics by philosopher Jacques Rancière, whose work derives from Friedrich Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*.

## Aesthetics of Everyday Life: The Flâneur as a Figure of Modernity in Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk*

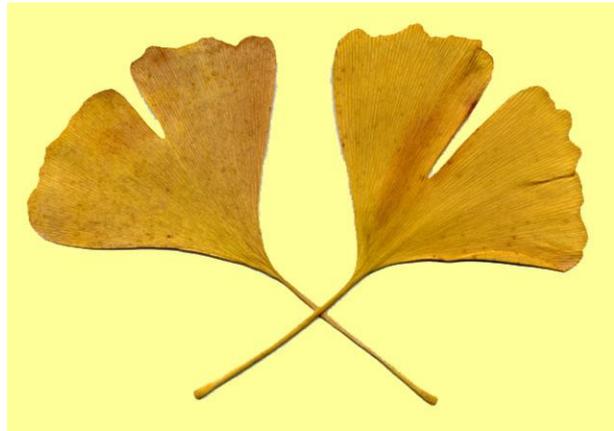
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The *flâneur* first appears in the writings of the French poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) as a figure who ambles, sometimes accompanied by a tortoise, through the streets of the 19<sup>th</sup> century metropolis Paris. He takes lazy strolls through the city, gathering artistic and historic impressions. Flâneur, according to Baudelaire, is a “passionate observer” who enjoys “taking up residence in the multitude, in the ebb and flow of movement, in the fleeting and the infinite”. The German philosopher and literary, culture critic Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) borrowed the idea of flâneur mainly from Baudelaire, but also from Edgar Allan Poe, developing and analysing it in his *Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project*, 1927-1940). This book of more than 1400 pages that remained unfinished is a collection of citations, notes and comments on a variety of historical developments and existential situations. Benjamin develops the flâneur as an emblematic figure through which he seeks to analyze Parisian modernity, a city which he aptly describes as “the promised land of the flâneur”. Benjamin evokes, adopts and extends the ideas related to the flâneur in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The city with its technological and architectural developments appears to the flâneur as a text which he tries to read while strolling through it. The flâneur becomes a semiotician who seeks to understand the city through its images. The first part of the paper deals with the chronological development of the idea of *flânerie* and the borrowing and re-working of the ideas of Charles Baudelaire and Edgar Allan Poe. The second part of the paper explores how the gaze of the flâneur transforms everyday things into aesthetic objects and what differentiates the gaze of a flâneur from that of a tourist.

## **»Offenbar Geheimniss« Mystik und Dichtung in Goethes *West-östlichem Divan***

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Das Gedicht »Offenbar Geheimniss« hat im *West-östlichen Divan* einen prominenten Stellenwert. Es legt die Lust des *Divan*-Dichters am poetischen Gespräch offen. Der Lust geht die Entdeckung des persischsprachigen Dichters Hafis, dessen Gedichte der literarischen Öffentlichkeit nur fragmentarisch aus einer Sammlung von Übersetzungen bekannt waren, voraus. Maskenspiele als elementare Kunst in Hafis' Poesie ist Goethe höchst willkommen. Das Gedicht »Offenbar Geheimniss« bedient sich doppelter Maskenspiele. Sie tragen und konstituieren Bedeutungen, die sich durch das In-Beziehung-Setzen poetischer Horizonte beider Dichter beschreiben und vielleicht auch entziffern lassen. Mit den Maskenspielen im interkulturellen Spannungsfeld möchte sich mein Vortrag befassen. Ihm geht es am Beispiel des Gedichts »Offenbar Geheimniss« um die Frage, wie Goethe an Hafis' Dichtung eine interkulturelle Schreibweise entwickelt, die nach eigenem Sinne wirken soll, nämlich »mystisch rein«. Noch im *Wiesbadener Register* trägt »Offenbar Geheimniss« den Titel »Mystische Zunge«. Ausgehend von der Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Frage möchte der Vortrag die Bedeutung dieses Gedichts im *Divan* zur Diskussion stellen. Im Hinblick auf Hafis' und Goethes Kritik an der Orthodoxie erweist sich die Auseinandersetzung beider Dichter mit dem Thema *Religion* als zentral.

## Adaption, Interpretation, Intermedialität. Hoffmanns *Sandmann* auf der Theaterbühne

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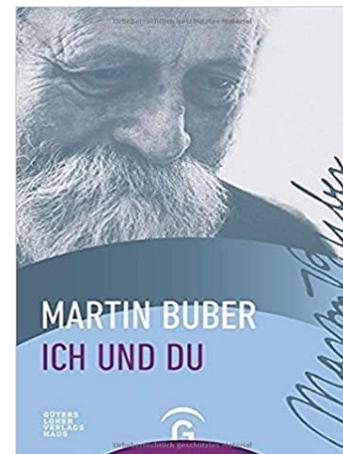


Robert Wilson gilt als einer der wichtigsten Regisseure des internationalen Gegenwartstheaters. Mit seiner Adaption von Hoffmanns *Sandmann* eröffnete er 2017 die Ruhrfestspiele in Recklinghausen. Wilson bleibt sich in dieser Inszenierung treu – und hat mit dem *Sandmann* den für seinen Regiestil fast idealen Text gefunden: Schon vor Beginn der Vorstellung dreht sich die Puppe Olympia auf der Vorbühne; ein überdimensionaler, nicht zu übersehender Schlüssel in ihrem Rücken markiert Nathanaels ‚Geliebte‘ für alle deutlich als Automaten – dass Liebe blind macht, wird damit überaus deutlich. Tatsächlich aber bewegen sich fast alle Figuren wie Puppen über die Bühne, auch Nathanael selbst. Wilson zeichnet ihn als veritablen Hysteriker: Seine flammend roten Haare stehen ihm zu Berge; das kindliche Trauma hat sich in seine Physiognomie eingebrannt, ist stets erkennbar.

Mein Vortrag wird sich der Adaption des Hoffmann'schen „Sandmanns“ durch Robert Wilsons widmen. In einem ersten Schritt wird es darum gehen, die ästhetischen und dramaturgischen Strategien des Regisseurs in den Blick zu nehmen – mithin die Frage zu stellen, wie viel ‚Wilson‘ im „Sandmann“ steckt. In einem zweiten Schritt wird es darum gehen, die Lektüre, die die Inszenierung ohne Zweifel darstellt, zu rekonstruieren und zu analysieren. Welchen „Sandmann“ präsentiert uns Wilson? Welche Aktualisierungsstrategien finden Anwendung? Welche Neuperspektivierung nimmt der Regisseur vor? Und schließlich: Liest man Hoffmanns *magnum opus* vor den Folien der theatralen Inszenierung anders?

## Indian Thought in Martin Buber's *I and Thou*

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Martin Buber's *Ich und Du* (*I and Thou*, 1923) is a monumental work. His “Philosophy of Dialogue” is largely based on this book. Different actors (persons) involved in a dialogue/ conversation are put in a perspective by Buber in this volume. What however is very fascinating to observe in this philosophical treatise is that it is actually an inter-textual work as various religions, cultures and traditions find a confluence here. Most importantly, there are several concepts, elements, and terms of Indian origin, which have been prominently mentioned by Buber in *I and Thou*; earlier he had referred to some of these in some of his essays published in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The main objective of this paper is to highlight those Indian concepts or elements that find mention in *I and Thou* and the context in which they have been situated by Buber; subsequently also the purpose these Indian concepts seem to be serving there. How these concepts contribute to the principle of “dialogicity” is another important question this paper would attempt to answer. While addressing these questions, the basic premise and structure of *I and Thou* will also be discussed. Buber facilitates in this work a dialogue among some of the cultural or religious thought systems; not to arrive at an “ultimate synthesis” as Paul Mendes-Flohr puts it, but to promote a cross-cultural conversation. So, it will be worthwhile to observe in what kind of a dialogic relationship Indian thought stands with its counterpart.

## A Secular *Panchatantram* and its Religious Journey

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The *Panchatantram* is an ancient secular text compiled between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE. The first translation of the Panchatantra tales was into the Pehlavi language. From Persia the tales travelled across all the cultures of the world. With wandering traders of Gujarat they reached the west coast of Africa and travelled through the tribes across the African continent. With the African slaves they arrived on the continent of America and from there made their way to an advertisement for an American telephone company. This ancient work has donned many a new clothes over the centuries and with every new attire, took on a new look, a new form. The translations from the Indian languages into the foreign and back, led a scholar like Johannes Hertel to conclude “Orient und Occident sind nicht zu trennen”. What is that *tertium comparationis* which enabled this work to be translated in more than 60 languages of the world. At times the translated work conforms to the strange cultures and in doing so metamorphoses completely, at other times it preserves the original to the last word, all in the same culture. What was taken from the original and what was left out? How did this secular work take religious hues? This and a lot more, like the migration of this ancient Hindu work across the globe, its unique structure and its contents make for interesting subjects of investigation. The focus of this paper though will be those translations that took a religious colour, at home, in India, as well as abroad.

## Intertextuality and Metafiction in Mauritian Women Writing

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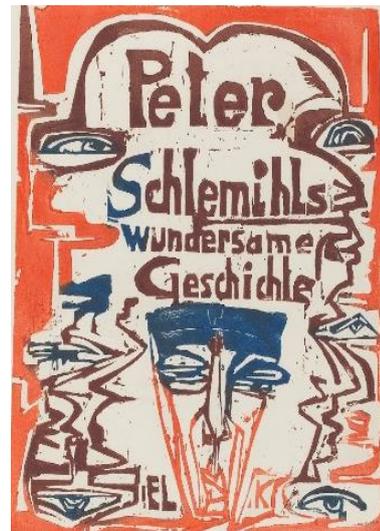
There are always other words in a word, other texts in a text. The concept of intertextuality requires, therefore, that we understand texts not as self-contained systems but as differential and historical, as traces and tracings of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures.

Maria Jesus Martinez Alfaro

Questions of writing and creation are central to several novels written by Mauritian writers such as Ananda Devi and Shenaz Patel. The narratives of novels such as *Indian Tango* and *Les hommes qui me parlent* (Men Who Talk To Me) by Ananda Devi as well as *Paradis blues* by Shenaz Patel are marked by intertextuality and metaliterary discourse. Drawing upon the theory of intertextuality, this paper will analyze how these novels are constructed with and through other texts in a way that they call into question the notion of textual autonomy, exploring texts not as closed systems or self-contained units of meaning but in relation to other texts. This paper attempts to understand how intergenericity, intertextuality and metafiction in these texts come together to help the writers to enter into dialogue with each other as well as their predecessors, while contributing enormously to the ongoing debate on women emancipation. I am particularly interested in exploring points of convergence between theories of intertextuality and narratology to understand how they inform women writing in ways that writing itself becomes a means to rewrite, react and reclaim oneself.

# The Intersection of Visual Arts and Literature: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's Woodworks of Adelbert von Chamisso's *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte*

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The intersection of visual arts and literature or the relationship between image and text has long been an interesting debate. Going back to the tradition of Gottfried Boehm's 'iconic turn' and W.J.T. Mitchell's 'pictorial turn' in the mid-'90s, where aesthetics became the central theme of discussion and the study of the image through art history and philosophy dominated the discourse, it becomes important to re-visit the influence of the two mediums on each other or to re- establish the significance of aesthetics / visual representations in the world of linguistic dominance. With this frame of reference, my paper analyses Kirchner's woodworks of the fairy-tale-like story *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte* (Peter Schlemihl's Miraculous Story, 1813) by Adelbert von Chamisso (1781–1838).

In the novella from the late Romantic period, Schlemihl exchanges his shadow for inexhaustible wealth, but soon he realises that a person without a shadow is considered an outsider in the world of humans. One day Schlemihl encounters the little grey man, the devil, to whom he once sold his shadow, but the transaction can no longer be repealed. Downcast, Schlemihl wanders the countryside and unexpectedly meets his shadow, but does not succeed in fixing it again. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's execution of the "Schlemihl" cycle and its woodwork depiction of the narrative becomes an essential work to demonstrate the relationship between the visual arts and literature.

The paper discusses how intertextuality works between the two mediums. It looks into Kirchner's interpretation of the novella and assays aspects of the narrative which Kirchner attempts to highlight.

## The Surge of Signs – Senthuran Varatharajah’s *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* and the Question of Effective Intertextuality

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Since we accept fragmentary borrowing of form and content as an essential part of the creative process, we must also accept its inherent superficiality – unless it is done effectively. Senthuran Varatharajah’s novel *Vor der Zunahme der Zeichen* (2016; Engl. trans. *Before the Surge of the Signs*, Yoda Press, New Delhi, forthcoming) will provide the basis for an analysis of how a text can employ intertextual and intercultural links not only in the construction of its narrative, but as matter for reflecting on the very nature of narrative, language, text, and culture. At its core, the book focuses on the shared experience of the world of two naturalized German university students, Senthil and Valmira. An extended conversation on Facebook develops between these two characters about their current lives, their experiences of growing up in Germany, and their families’ histories. Although this contemporary epistolary novel draws on long-established conventions of telling a story through seemingly authentic materials without the guiding figure of a narrator, its real intertextuality (and intermediality) lies in its abundant references to incidental material artifacts of popular culture from various contexts. Many of these serve as nostalgic tokens of times gone by in the novel’s exploration of childhood, migration, and trauma – but as this philosophically-minded dialogue unfolds, they also become part of outright semiotic discussions about the structures and meanings of linguistic signs (de Saussure’s signifié/signifiant). By way of conclusion, this paper will outline the personal impact this story has on the contemporary German reader, thereby testing its effectiveness.

## Rhythms of the 'Third' Across Cultures - A Study of Performance Aesthetics

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**Courtesy: Kalashetra Manipur, India**

The proposed paper wishes to engage with the conceptualization of the 'Third' with reference to the changing contours of performance aesthetics in theatre, cinema, and the allied arts produced in the different nation-states of Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas in cross-cultural modes. The 'third' space in art and culture has been subject to a host of contentions in the developing world, primarily as it emerged from the womb of political movements of the mid-twentieth century that fore-grounded the politics of anti-coloniality and decoloniality. Interestingly, despite the hegemonizing tendency of cultures in dominance, authors, auteurs, artists and performers of the postcolonial nation-states often critiqued the political establishment for diluting the *khwabnama* (Elius, Akhteruzzaman. *Khwabnama*. Noya Uddog Prokasoni, Dhaka: 1996) of independence from colonial rule by aiming to address issues pertaining to the marginalized subaltern, indigenous and ethnic cultures that often combine to construct the aspirations of the sub-national/regional, which blends into the spirit of the national. If one traces the turn of discourses since the 1960's, one encounters that for Europe and the nations of the developed world, the term 'third' often implied gestures in thought that are mired in ambivalent tendencies, whose free play makes the signifier only a potential one. The construction of the signifier itself being an approximation at best, it can only indeterminately indicate a signified, and that too, in a very transient, evanescent mode. The movement 'against interpretation', to borrow a phrase from one of the seminal essays of Susan Sontag, is after all yet another gesture of aestheticizing not art, but methodologies that celebrate the erotics of art, rendering politics to the dust-bins of history, as if it is its only rightful place. The 'archipelagic' imagination that infuses the aesthetics of intellectuals like Eugenio Barba

offers yet another rendering of the beat of the 'third' which is in sharp contrast to the praxis of a Badal Sircar or a Heisnam Kanhailal or for that matter, an Augusto Boal or a Ngugi wa' Thiongo who aimed at politicizing art as an alternative to its aestheticization, making the dialectics of mythologizing itself a historical act, that emanates from a specific material culture. Pitting the discourses of several worlds, what this paper aims to trace is the polyphonic resonance of the term 'third' in select reflections panning the decades of the '60s and '70s and its implications thereafter in shaping performance aesthetics of contemporary times.

### Nietzsche's *Ästhetisches Phänomen*

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Mephistopheles (*Gustaf Gründgens*) in *Faust*

In *Geburt der Tragödie* (The Birth of Tragedy) Nietzsche emphasises that "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified." The fusion of existence and art, as suggested here, is predicated on a synthetic individuation of the *Apollinisch* and the *Dionysisch* that Nietzsche seems to tacitly contrast with an ethical-moral phenomenon. However, the prevailing social-conventional polarisation of values – especially of good and evil – are barely repealed in an aesthetic phenomenon. Nietzsche's later

reflections in the middle phase of his philosophising point to the fact that aesthetics transcends the moral or ethical dichotomies. In my talk I try to show how Nietzsche seeks in his conception of the aesthetic phenomenon a certain substitute for the *principium individuationis* that he inherits from Schopenhauer, and how this motif unfolds in his later works into a basic idea of "mask" that "is constantly growing around every profound spirit". Mask as *principium individuationis* clearly attains the status of an aesthetic phenomenon in which – as Nietzsche puts it – the artist himself becomes a work of art. This requires an extended study of the use of masks in aesthetic contexts – both in the Occident as well as in the Orient – from medieval bacchanalian masquerades or *Theyyam* to the modern performing arts such as opera, theatre, Kathakali, etc.

## Dadaism and Contemporary Memes

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During the World War I began an art movement in Zürich called Dadaism that created avantgarde “nonsense” works of art as a reaction to the absurdity of the war. According to the

Dada poet Tristan Tzara, the movement's beginnings came not from a desire to make art but from a profound disgust with the prevailing world order. The works produced by Dada artists were initially considered low quality, offensive and confusing but hundred years later the dada art is being celebrated through exhibitions.

A similar phenomenon developed / is developing with the onset of digital communication on social media platforms through Memes and Shitposting, making provocative audio and video clips from “readymade” material giving it a new meaning with a comic and ironic twist. It also began as an expression of disgust and frustration with the world and gradually took an artistic form of being “nonsensical”. These forms of arts are generally looked down aesthetically and not considered high art. At the most they are condescendingly categorised as Pop Art.

The art is undoubtedly somewhat different, but the concept is rooted in the Dada movement with both the forms of art working with collages and readymades. This paper examines the elements of intertextuality between Shitposting, Meme creation on an online ecosystem and works of Dada artists analysing the reverberations of Dada works in the digital age.