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# Faces of the Self

Vanita Seth
*University of California*

**Abstract:** This paper traces the centrality of the human face in the construction of modern individuality. It argues that the face of individuality no less than that of typology, is mired in and born of historical and political conditions that are subsequently disavowed in order that the individual (and the face she bears) is rendered a product of nature, an instantiation of the universal. Attempting to denaturalize and defamiliarize the authority invested in the face, this paper maps out three interrelated arguments: that the human face is historically produced; that its history is closely tethered to the production of modern subjectivity, and that its status as a purveyor of meaning relies upon the reiteration of preexisting norms through which it can be "read." And yet, while this paper turns to the nineteenth century to trace the novel privileging of the face as an extension of selfhood, interwoven through this history is the figure of the "effaced" Muslim woman and the Muslim terrorist type.

**Keywords:** face, individuality, subjectivity, Muslim veil, Boston Bombers, typology, physiognomy, terrorist.

> The human face. . .is for us the most interesting in the universe. All the libraries in the world would not suffice to hold the thoughts and feelings which the human face has awakened. . .Religion has made it a temple of prejudices and of adoration; there justice has sought the trace of crimes; thence love has gathered its sweetest pleasures; finally, science has found there the origin of races, the expression of diseases and of passions, and has there measured the energy of thought. . .Art has represented it in all its infinite variety and mobility of expression. . .. The universal cult of the human face is fully justified (Paolo Mantegazza quoted in Cowling 1989, 7).

In a short article published in the *Lancashire Telegraph* (2006), Jack Straw, the former British Foreign Secretary, admitted to feeling "uncomfortable

Address correspondence and reprint requests to: Vanita Seth, Politics, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA, 95064. E-mail: vseth@ucsc.edu



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about talking to someone 'face-to-face' who I could not see." Straw defended his practice of requesting burqa-clad constituents to remove their full veils when meeting with him as their Minister of Parliament. "[T]he conversation would be of greater value" if the veil were removed; "[i]ndeed, the value of a meeting, as opposed to a letter or phone call, is so that you can—almost literally—see what the other person means, and not just hear what they say." To wear the veil "was such a visible statement of separation and of difference" (October 6, 2006).

What began as a request by Jack Straw that the veil be removed upon entering his office became an ultimatum in the hands of Philip Hollobone, the Conservative MP for Kettering in England. Four years after the Straw controversy, Hollobone informed *The Independent* newspaper that he would refuse to meet with constituents who refused to remove their veil. Such an uncompromising stance was necessary because, the British way of life, Hollobone argued, includes "walking down the street, smiling at people and saying hello" (quoted in Bunting 2010).

> I just take what I regard as a common sense view. If you want to engage in normal, daily, interactive dialogue with your fellow human beings, you can only really do this properly by seeing each other's face.
>
> God gave us faces to be expressive. It is not just the words we utter but whether we are smiling, sad, angry, or frustrated. You don't get any of that if your face is covered. (Hollobone quoted in Grice 2010).

Echoes of Hollobone and Straw's arguments could be heard across the Channel. In an opinion piece for the *New York Times*, the then majority leader in the French National Assembly, Jean-François Copé (2010), defended the banning of the veil on the grounds that it goes contrary to building a unified political community for "[h]ow can you establish a relationship with a person who, by hiding a smile or a glance, those universal signs of our common humanity—refuses to exist in the eyes of others?" She who wears a veil "is no longer identifiable; she is a shadow among others, lacking individuality, avoiding responsibility" (2010).

Opposition to the public wearing of the veil on the grounds that it obstructs sociality is no defense in a court of law for, as one legal commentator wryly observed, "fortunately, in a democratic, pluralistic society there is no legal duty to be social" (Sokol 2010). The more politically and legally charged arguments for the banning of the veil lie in the defense of women's equality and in concerns for public security. But even these

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arguments are revealing, for in both instances the presumption is that a naked face is a transparent face: politically transparent, for a face uncovered is a subject unrestrained, unencumbered, free and equal where the signatures of power are presumably erased once the face is unmasked; and judicially transparent, for the thief, the murderer, the terrorist seeks to conceal, whereas to reveal one's face is to incur recognition—identity is presumed to reside in the face.

The agitated opposition to the Muslim veil found expression in the presumed correlation between an uncovered face and an individuated Self.[1] In the absence of words, or indeed, in exposing their deceit, the face promises transparency, authenticity, and the recognition of an inner life. Except when it doesn't.

If the opposition to the veil privileged the face as the demonstrative locus of individuality, the faces of the so-called "Boston Bombers" offered a radically different interpretation. On April 15 2013, two brothers, later identified as Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, exploded pressure cooker bombs during the Boston Marathon, killing three people and injuring scores more.

On April 18, the FBI released photographs of the two as yet unnamed suspects. Within days the public was saturated with images of Tsarnaev brothers. Among them was a photo the surviving suspect, Dzhokhar "Jahar" Tsarnaev, had taken of himself prior to the events of April 15. The photo appeared on the front page of *The New York Times* and circulated on the internet. It then featured in the August 1 2013 issue of *Rolling Stone* magazine. The magazine was immediately embroiled in controversy. Politicians, various media commentators and members of the public denounced the magazine for insensitivity and romanticizing terrorists, while chains such as CVS and Walmart announced they would not be stocking the issue. Sales of the magazine soared.

The featured article on Dzhokhar "Jahar" Tsarnaev that appeared in *Rolling Stone*, has generated little commentary, let alone controversy (Reitman 2013).[1] The provocation for the public outburst lay not in the content of the magazine but its cover. The self-portrait of Dzhokar Tsarnaev that stares out from the glossy cover, depicts a good-looking youth with disheveled hair, a slight mustache and beard, dark brown eyes, and "white" skin. Herein lay the source of public outrage. Unlike a previously published cartoon depiction of the suspects on the cover of the *Week* which provoked little controversy despite its racialized overtones (as one commentator put it, the caricature made "them 'darker' and 'Arabized'" presumably to accentuate their criminal monstrosity [Kumar

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2013]), *Rolling Stone's* preferred choice of imagery defied the desired expectation that the face of a terrorist conform to a predetermined type—one that better corresponds with the popular imagination. Among those who denounced the cover was Sgt. Sean Murphy, a photographer with the Massachusetts State Police who had been present at the time of Tamerlan's death and Dzhokar's arrest. Murphy released hitherto unpublished crime scene photos to the *Boston Magazine*. Introductory comments to the photo essay (an essay titled, "The Real Face of Terror: Behind the Scenes Photos of the Dzhokhar Tsarnaev Manhunt") informs readers that:

> Murphy wants the world to know that the Tsarnaev in the photos he took that night—defeated and barely alive, with the red dots of sniper rifles lightening up his forehead—is the real face of terrorism, not the handsome, confident young man shown on the magazine cover (2013).

Despite facing possible disciplinary action, Murphy defended his release of the images as a corrective to what he saw as *Rolling Stone's* "glamorizing [of] the face of terror…What *Rolling Stone* did was wrong. This guy is evil. This is the real Boston Bomber. Not someone fluffed and buffed for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine" (Murphy 2013).

The respective controversies that introduce this paper appeal to the face for seemingly contradictory evidence—as the custodian of individuality (opponents of the Muslim veil) and as the harbinger of a collective morphology (the critics of the *Rolling Stone*-Jahar cover). Perhaps less apparent because it is so thoroughly naturalized is the very fact that the human face is accorded such an elevated status. It is not the differing appeal to the face but that the face is appealed to at all that warrants our attention. To put it simply: Why is the face presumed to exhibit such telegraphic authority, such revelatory possibilities? Why is it assumed that the face can be "read"; that it can convey an unique individuality or betray a collective type?

Attempting to denaturalize and defamiliarize the authority invested in the face, this paper maps out three interrelated arguments: that the human face is historically produced; that its history is closely tethered to the production of modern subjectivity, and that its status as a purveyor of meaning relies upon the reiteration of preexisting norms through which it can be "read." And yet, while this paper turns to the nineteenth century to trace the novel privileging of the face as an extension of selfhood, interwoven through this history is the figure of the "effaced"

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Muslim woman and the Muslim terrorist type. Thus, the very history I narrate—the nineteenth century privileging of the face as the conduit to the self -informs the contemporary politics I critique: that whether abjectly veiled, typographically identified or normatively individualized, the face is revealing of the self.

## THE FACE OF THE SELF

Take a moment to reflect on the face. The fluid moods and inner emotions we so readily read as happy, sad, or angry; the glance of another we regard as furtive; the rolled eyes that signify disdain; the unguarded expression that reveals more than is spoken; the willful neutrality of the poker-faced; the inherent dishonesty inferred by eyes that refuse to meet our own; the sincerity we ascribe to those who look us "straight in the eye"; the arrogance of the nose from which we look down; the withering look that compels us to avert our gaze; the racial halo of the blush that unceremoniously exposes our discomfort, but also confers beauty and modesty upon its wearer. It is precisely this rendering of the face as a reflective mirror of our inner selves that offers sustenance to critics of the veil. To hide the face is to all but deny individuality itself. And yet, for all the blustering rhetoric that informs the political attacks against the Muslim veil, ambivalence is not far away.

In the modern west the face carries the onerous task of communicating an array of emotions, of conveying our inner thoughts and feelings, yet it also teases our certainty, it plays with our doubts and it provokes our anxieties. If the face promises transparency it is also promiscuously unfaithful; if we can read it like a book, it also has the capacity to deceive, to dissimulate, to fain sincerity, to mask and shield from view the "real", authentic self. Indeed, the attractive, youthful, "white" face captured in Jahar's selfie and reproduced on the *Rolling Stone* cover is for Murphy and other critics, nothing short of a deceit, a subterfuge that masks the "real face of terrorism."

Obligingly transparent or deliberately obfuscating. It is little wonder, given the confusing and conflicting appeals to the face in contemporary political discourse that the human visage should provoke the attention of scholars across the disciplines.

Within philosophy Emmanuel Levinas' reflections on the face, most notably in *Totality and Infinity*, are justly famous. It is in reference to the face, the face of the other in all its radical alterity and irreducible

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difference, through which Levinas weaves his ethical philosophy. The appeal of the face in this context is not something to be seen, observed, explained or understood, but an imperative, a summons, a call that demands that the face of the other be responded to. It is not what the face says but the pre-linguistic, precognitive expression of the face of the other that demands an ethical response. Thus, for Levinas the ethical foundation of intersubjective relations resides not in my knowledge of the other—thereby bridging the difference that distinguishes the other from myself, but in the primordial encounter with the other who, in our face to face existence, manifests his or her distinctiveness and separation. As Levinas argues, "It is my responsibility before a face looking at me as absolutely foreign ... that constitutes the original fact of fraternity" (Lévinas 1969; also see Hoy, 2004).

If in Levinas's first principle philosophy the face signifies the integrity of otherness, in the work of psycho-biologist Paul Ekman it offers a compelling case for the universality of the same. Ekman's innumerable studies and prolific writings not to mention his cross-cultural research, ensures that his work is both widely cited and deeply controversial (Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990; Lutz and White 1986). The contentious nature of Ekman's work resides largely in his efforts to posit certain facial expressions (corresponding to certain emotional states) as universal. The conclusion Ekman draws is that there exist "[d]istinctive universal expressions...for anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and enjoyment," to which can be added (though the evidence is less conclusive) contempt, surprise, and interest (Ekman 1993, 397). In short, the human face for Ekman, is the site *par excellence* not only of human expressiveness but also the evolutionary, psychobiological foundation of "our" most basic human emotions.

Given Levinas is tediously evasive in defining the nature of the face he so provocatively evokes, while Paul Ekman reduces the face to a blank screen across which emotional images flicker with universal meaning, it is to the art historian, James Elkin we must turn to pursue the obvious question: what is a face?

Traveling through a dense terrain of explanatory possibilities, Elkin finally settles on what he sees as the analogous world of faces and artworks. As Elkin explains, "We need to assume that a face or an artwork is the product of a single imagination or a single mind in order to comprehend it as a face or as an artwork" (Elkin 1996, 193). In other words, as with art and architecture where we seek an intentionality behind a piece of art in order that it be comprehensible, so too Elkin argues, the face is that which promises a unifying psychology, an expressive mirror of an individual's

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mental state wherein we intuitively and instinctively transpose a singular, subjective mind. As Elkin puts it, "to read a face, to get a message from it, to see it *as a face*, we need to posit that it exists with a whole mind" (192). The face is only recognizable as such if we can accord it a personality, a distinctive set of psychological attributes, a promise of coherence, the visual assurance of a knowable, unified subject.

Finally, whereas Elkin offers a compelling definition of the face, the question is somewhat tweaked in the work of Deleuze and Guattari who are less concerned with what the face is than what it does.[2] Moreover, for Deleuze and Guattari, the face is not the harbinger of our common humanity, it is not accorded the primordial significance that marks Levinas' work. Dispensing also, with the comforting notion that the face is a bearer of individuality, Deleuze and Guattari render the face into a form of language, a signifying machine. If it appears that in reducing the face to a machine "a white wall/black hole system" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 167) they are denying the face its exalted status, then that is exactly the point.

> Concrete faces cannot be assumed to come ready-made. They are engendered by an *abstract machine of faciality (visagétté)*, which produces them at the same time as it gives the signifier its white wall and subjectivity its black hole. Thus the black hole/white wall system is, to begin with, not a face but the abstract machine that produces faces… (168)

The face in short, is a system of signification and it is thus also a politics enabling knowledge, classification and power. Not everyone has a face, "[t] he face is not universal" (176) rather "at every moment the machine rejects faces that do not conform, or seem suspicious" (177)—the faces of the not-white, the not-Christian, the not-sane; the faces of abnormality.

This brief literature review is by no means exhaustive, but it does alert us to one simple fact: despite the significant differences that distinguish these literatures they all accord the human face a uniquely privileged status. Alongside popular discourse these scholarly writings imbue the face with a reverence not shared by other body parts. We may attribute meaning to breasts or genitals or legs or arms but they are not purveyors of meaning, they are not, in themselves, mediums of expressiveness. But this provokes an immediate question: Has the face always been a privileged site of identity, emotion, and selfhood in what we retrospectively refer to as "western thought"?

While scholars who have sought to theorize the face have tended to be neglectful of its history, the much larger body of historical and theoretical

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literature on individuality has largely ignored the significance of the human face as a prolific site in the very production of individualized selfhood.

Individuality conjures up a rich configuration of associated characteristics —judicial accountability, free will, rights, and property relations, but one of its defining modern attributes is the presumption of interiority. Interiority itself is an umbrella category encapsulating an equally rich assemblage of parts—consciousness, sincerity, psychological and emotional depth, uniqueness, and originality. For many scholars—Susan Bordo, Richard Rorty, and Charles Taylor among them, interiority in its early modern guise finds its first philosophical articulation in the work of Descartes. As Rorty argues, we move from epistemologies that posit the "mind-as reason" to one that foregrounds the "mind-as-consciousness" (Rorty 1979, 53). In Descartes privileging of the mind as the locus of human subjectivity and the grounds of human knowledge, we witness, Bordo argues, the interiorization of mental life and "the construction of experience as occurring deeply *within* and bounded by a self" (Bordo 1987, 24).

But as crucial as Cartesian philosophy is to modern articulations of subjectivity, interiority is not reducible to it. Robert Miles argues that interiority is "something akin to, but not quite the same as, 'subjectivity'—it refers to an 'inner space'" that is "not . . .a universal, but . . .a creation and extension of the self's emotional terrain rooted in history" (quoted in Steedman 1995, 4). In other words, interiority came to signify not only consciousness as bounded within the self, but also the narrativization of an inner self produced over time. "The modern self," Carolyn Steedman argues, "is imagined as being *inside*, and it is this spatial sense that the term 'interiority' seeks to describe: the self *within*, treated by the laying down and accretion of our own childhood experiences, our own history, in a place inside" (Steedman 1995, 12). For Steedman and Taylor the *narration* of Self as an uniquely individuated unfolding of a life lived, was a crucial nineteenth century addition to our modern understanding of interiority. But while Steedman traces the history of interiority through the figure of the child in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Taylor locates discourses on childhood within a larger cultural and philosophical shift—namely, the emergence of expressive individuation, the "notion of inner depths [which] is. . .intrinsically linked to our understanding of ourselves as expressive, as articulating an inner source" (Taylor 2001, 390).

Though neglected by the historians cited above, it is through this presumed interiority possessed by the Romantic Self that the fortunes of the face come to be inextricably tied to modern subjectivity. The face

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in the nineteenth century was productive of, and presumed upon, this newly fashioned subjectivity; the face both authorized and reflected individuality. This inner depth that fashions and grounds the individuality we call our own is precisely what the face is presumed to jealously guard, reluctantly betray or openly reveal. The face of modernity offers the tantalizing if fleeting promise of access to the ineffable, intangible, interiorized subject. The face secures the fact of our individuality by bearing witness to its expression.

## PRODUCING THE FACE

If individuality is recognized as a modern instantiation of human subjectivity, for some contemporary scholars the significance accorded the modern face traces its history back to an earlier ancient and premodern past (Cowling 1989; Hartley 2001; Synnott 1989; 1990; Tytler 1982). In my reference to the face of modernity or the modern face I question this narrative. I am not only locating the object of my study in the nineteenth century but self-consciously distinguishing it, indeed detaching it from earlier—most notably ancient, medieval, and Renaissance—ruminations on the face.

As a rich body of scholarship has documented, there exists an extensive commentary on the face in ancient and premodern writings on physiognomy (Friedman 1981; Grafton 1999; Hallett 2005; Magli 1989; Squatriti 1988), Christian theological debates on iconoclasm (Cameron 1998; James 2004; Kessler 2000), and in late Medieval and Renaissance art—most notably portraiture (Perkinson 2009; Pope-Hennessey 1979; Sauerländer 2006). And yet, in all the ancient and premodern musings on the face, what is absent is the ontological privileging of the individual. In other words, what is absent is precisely what many scholars have recognized as defining of modern subjectivity, namely, that the self is constituted from within, a physic space internal to the subject. In contrast, the ancient and premodern face was accorded a significance precisely because its meaning exceeded that of the individual appealing instead to a larger moral canvas organized by community, status, gendered norms, astrology, and a Divinely ordained, meaning-secreting universe. For the men and women of the medieval and Renaissance, the face was a clutter of revelatory signs wherein the eyes, the nose, the brow offered a teeming abundance of signatures that revealed our affinity with the Heavens. The entangled meanings that danced upon the face tied

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the destiny of pre-modern man to a larger moral universe. Indeed, in reference to the European Middle Ages, Holger Pausch argues that:

> The mental patterns of the medieval imagination did not yet accommodate an understanding of the verbal sign "face" as an optically transmitted unit of meaning, or thus, as an image. The cognitive leap had not yet been completed whereby facial expressions as later seen by the physiognomists provided clues to internal characteristics (2007, 349).

The face cannot be detached from its epistemological context. "[E]ven though it appears as such, [the face] is not a visual constant or image that is perceived the same way throughout history" (Pausch 2007, 347); it is not a natural surface upon which history "happens" but rather, the face is both produced by, at the same time as it conditions and place limits upon, historically specific ways of "seeing." It is necessary then, to resist the temptation to posit the face as a site of shifting historical representations wherein the face itself remains the constant that makes such history possible. The cohesiveness of such a history relies upon being able to presume upon the "naturalness" of the face and thus its translatability as an object of study over both historical and cultural spaces. But "the face at different times in history changes according to structures and arrangements of knowledge" (Pausch 2007, 347) and it is within the context of a specific set of temporal and cultural meanings that the face and the viewer are made legible.

Thus when ancient Greek philosophers acknowledged the benefits of the mirror as a surface that reflected the community's collective and corrective gaze (Bartsch 2006; Melchoir-Bonnet 2001), when late Medieval and Renaissance identity found expression through a coat of arms, gendered norms, and physiognomic signs (Berger 1994; Perkinson 2009; Randolph 2003; Simons 1988; 1995) and when John Belot wove the face into the threads of the cosmos and the movement of the stars (Magli 1989, 111), they were producing a face that could only be rendered legible when tethered to a preexisting order that both preceded and enveloped man. The face was both produced by a historically situated viewer at the same time as it framed the cultural expectations of what *is* a face. And the faces of the premodern were multiple: a corporeal social ledger, a cosmological, spiritual map, a physiognomic reflection of the heavens, and a mirror to the soul.

What we encounter in the modern face is not a representational shift with its attendant historical alterations, but an altogether different object—

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one tethered to the organizing logic of individuation. For individuality to find its expressive anchor in the face, the face itself must be produced as singular, as intimately tied to the individuated self.

Not surprisingly, the cultural peculiarity and particularity of privileging the face as the medium for access to an interiorized individuated self has not been lost on scholars engaged with histories outside of Europe. The radical cultural break that such a novelty represented in nineteenth and early twentieth century Japan and Korea is well captured in the work of Karatani Kojin and Gyewon Kim.

Tracing the cultural dissonance that appeals to the modern face initially produced in Meji Japan, Karatani's work denaturalizes the self-evidentiary privileging of the face as the visual instantiation of the inner self. In his discussion of Kabuki theatre for example, Karatani maps the transformation of a theatrical form that had traditionally relied upon the heavily made up faces and exaggerated bodily and facial movements of its actors, to a criticism of such performances even by some of its practitioners. It was the "natural," "realistic," "naked" face that was gradually embraced. No longer immersed in the vital forces of a unifying, meaning-oriented cosmos, the "discovery of the naked face" draws its modern significance through its identification with an individuated, interiorized self:

> [I]t was the familiar naked ("realistic") face that emerged at this time as something that conveyed meaning, and that meaning—to be precise—was "interiority." Interiority was not something that had always existed…No sooner had it appeared than it was seen as expressed by the naked face (Karatani 1993, 57).

And yet this "naked face" as Gyewon (2016) argues in reference to portrait photography in early twentieth century Korea, actually demanded an affective transformation on the part of the citizenry. Circumscribed in the eighteenth century, "[t]he act of communal looking," Gyewon argues, continued to have negative connotations "in the early twentieth century since looking itself was entrenched in ideas of class and gender."

> Common people and females were restricted from looking at the face of a privileged male elite, since it hugely challenged or even blasphemed social norms and authority. In contrast, for lower-class people, being looked at or inspected by male authority evoked a sense of fear because it was often accompanied by physical punishment. Due to the rigid rules that governed the gaze, even painters had to draw portraits without making any eye contact with their models (2016, 143).

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The social hierarchies and regulations that had formerly governed the gaze in Korea now required, with the introduction of portrait photography, a new constellation of techniques of the self that had to be learnt, practiced, studied, performed. Initially the purview of the police in their efforts at disciplining and surveillance, the art of reading faces was gradually extended beyond these walls with Korean citizens called upon to witness and master the act of "looking."

> To recognize, identify, and classify another's face, one should learn the new social uses of eyes—such as the frontal stare, quick screening, instant observation, stealing a glance, and peeping. One should learn how to deal with contexts of communal watching and witnessing, which shaped an important part of the visual experience of the urban public sphere (143).

In different ways, both Karatani and Gyewon have sought to dethrone the privileged status of the modern face as a transcultural, transhistorical object. As their work intimates, the art of looking, of "seeing" a face as a means of access to an inner self, requires constant reiteration, it is a performative act that only through repetition comes gradually to be naturalized. This naturalization in turn, as Judith Butler argues, rests upon a prior economy of norms that produce, circumscribe and police what constitutes the normative and deviant subject (Butler 1990; 1993). Reading a face, Butler argues, requires "a framework for seeing and judging who I am…If my face is readable at all, it becomes so only by entering into a visual frame that conditions its readability" (Butler 2005, 29). These norms do not exist in a condition of exteriority in relation to the subject, rather it is through the very operation of norms that exist in advance of the subject, that subjectivity is constituted.

The face of individuality is not a natural surface upon which interiority finds expression, but rather a highly regulated, prescriptive, and normative site that is accorded legibility, can be "read," only through appeal to culturally familiar norms the very repetition of which confers upon them the status of nature, as common sense, as self-evident.

## TWO FACES OF INDIVIDUALITY

It is in the nineteenth century novel that the repertoire of the face is permitted its most animated and dramatic expression precisely because the nineteenth century novel is one of the key sites wherein an interiorized individuality is crafted. The novel both presumes upon a readership that

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identifies a correlation between the face and an individualized interiority, while also reiterating, fashioning, and naturalizing the norms that make such a reading possible. By the close of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, European novelists were increasingly confident that appealing to the face as expressive of a character's inner depth was commensurate with a broader and popular sensibility. Indeed, the relationship between an outer countenance and an inner self became so self-evident through the course of the nineteenth century that many authors employed the face as a literary device in the service of furthering the plot.

Dickens offers us a face that reveals the intricacies of individual interiority when, in *Our Mutual Friend*, we encounter, through the character John, another aspect of Bella's personality momentarily crossing the surface of her face when "he saw a certain ambitious triumph in her face which no assumed coldness could conceal" (Dickens 1997, 123). Dispensing with extensive description, Austen alerts her readers, through the medium of the face, of the moment when Darcy first falls in love with Elizabeth. Though by no means a face of perfect symmetry, there is an intelligence and liveliness to Elizabeth's eyes that Darcy's critical observation cannot deny (2012, 19). And again when Fontane (2000) describes Effi Briest's "laughing brown eyes [which] revealed much good sense, a great zest for life and kindness of heart" (2000, 6). Such detail functions as a prelude to the tragic loss of innocence, sterile domesticity, adultery, and social banishment that will mark Effi's life and lead to her untimely death. But this literary conceit was by no means confined to the literature. In 1851, the prolific essayist and artist, Elizabeth Eastlake could confidently assert that there exists, "no single object presented to our senses which engrosses so large a share of our thought, emotions, and associations as that small portion of flesh and blood a hand may cover, which constitutes the human face" (Eastlake 1851, 62).

What was once historically novel gradually acquired the timeless authority of nature. A corporeal signature attesting to individuality, this face of nineteenth century origin has a productive capacity that has not diminished in present times but been recalibrated to secure contemporary constellations of power and politics. Returning to the controversy that introduced this paper, it is this "natural" face that, for the critics of the veil, is privileged for its banal universality. Having earlier quoted, from the *New York Times*, Jean-François Copé's associative correlation between the human face and a "common humanity," "individuality," and "identity"—all of which, he argues, the veil aggressively denies—consider a similar argument offered in another broadsheet—the *Sydney*

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*Morning Herald*. In defense of gender equality the Australian columnist Elizabeth Farrelly (2010) expresses her admiration of "[b]rave little Belgium['s]" banning of the public wearing of the burqa and niqab. For Farrelly "losing modesty is a small problem compared to losing face." Wearing the veil corresponds to the loss of face because, as Farrelly proceeds to explain:

> Democracy pivots on universal franchise; the presumption for each individual of a public identity, as well as a private one. To cover someone's face, to reduce them to a walking tent, is to declare them lacking such identity, destroying any possibility of their meaningful public existence. It is, literally, to efface them (2010).

What is effaced in Farrelly's commentary and those of other like-minded critics of the veil, is the normative work that has to be performed (and constantly reiterated) to sustain the regulatory power of the face to authorize individual subjectivity. Farrelly's conflation of "democracy" with the individual, the public/private distinction, identity, agency, and the face relies, for its conceptual and political integrity, on its opposition to the Muslim veil. Against freedom, "universal franchise," we confront coercion and the absence of agency: "To cover someone's face, to reduce them..."; while the antithesis of the individual we are to understand, is the non-human, the inanimate (and abject) figure of the "walking tent."

The presumptive "naturalness" and a priori status of the individual, the face it bears and the unmediated humanity it is presumed to represent is precisely what Butler calls into question. To recognize a face as human, writes Butler, "there must first be a frame for the human":

> The possibility of an ethical response to the face thus requires a normativity of the visual field: there is already not only an epistemological frame within which the face appears, but an operation of power as well, since only by virtue of certain kinds of anthropocentric dispositions and cultural frames will a given face seem to be a human face to any one of us (2005, 29–30).

But because the face of modern individuality relies, for its self-evidentiary status, upon historically and socially inscribed norms—norms that necessitate constant reiteration—there is space for apprehension, diffidence, anxious moments of uncertainty. In the same broadsheet newspaper that published Farrelly's opinion piece, there appeared a letter to the

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editor that, in its support for the banning of the Muslim veil, inadvertently exposed the authors own disquiet. "In Western society, covering a face is deemed to be sinister. Bank robbers and the Ku Klux Klan come to mind. Seeing a face allows us to make an instant decision as the friendliness or otherwise of a person—*granted, often mistakenly*" (Sweeny, Jan 2010 [my emphasis]).

*Granted, often mistakenly*. The comforting assurance that faces would unfailingly betray their inner thoughts and feelings was always tempered with an uneasy sense of doubt—is this promise a conceit? The tension is there in no less a figure than Nietzsche (2002). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche argued that "Lies come through our mouths—but the face that accompanies them tells the truth" (2002, 72) but then, only moments later, he expresses doubt:

> In the middle of a lively conversation I will often see the other person's face expressing his thoughts (or the thoughts I attribute to him) with a degree of clarity and detail that far exceeds the power of my visual ability:—such subtlety of muscle movement and ocular expression *must* have come from my own imagination. In all likelihood the person has an entirely different expression or not at all (82).

The face that reveals nothing at all, that in its emotional neutrality conceals an inner turbulence of passions, of desires, of joys and hatred, is nowhere more brilliantly captured than in Émile Zola's *Thérése Raquin* (Zola 2004). In developing the character of his heroine, Zola provides a constant and detailed commentary on Thérése's face. It is not a face that is either innocently transparent, nor one that actively deceives through a parade of insincere expressions. Rather, it is a face that is immobile, that is unreadable, that carries in Zola's words, an "air of contemptuous indifference" (12). Throughout the novel, Zola continually returns our attention to Thérése's face, her "immense capacity for coolness and an appearance of calm" (16). It is the face of a woman, Zola tells us, who "kept all her natural impulses concealed deep inside…[a face] that hid violent fits of passion" (16). It is this facial armor of placid, calm indifference that Thérése carries in the presence of her dull, frail cousin cum husband, in the midst of her aunt's oppressive attentions toward her sickly son, and in the torturous company of her family's friends whose stupidity she can barely suffer. In the face of all of this her face reveals nothing. Indeed, so supremely impassive is Thérése's countenance that her lover, Laurent, is unnerved by the transformation he incites in her during

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their moments of passion. Having seduced her more out of boredom than attraction:

> Laurent was amazed at finding his mistress beautiful…This lover's face seemed transfigured; she had a look at once mad and tender; she was radiant, with moist lips and gleaming eyes… It was as though her face had been lit from inside and flames were leaping from her flesh (35).

The only other instance where Thérése's face dissolves into a mirror of her inner self is when, at the close of the novel, in the presence of her aunt, and having murdered her cousin/husband, Thérése descends into guilt inspired madness and takes her own life.

In Zola's *Thérése Raquin* we encounter a different rendering of modern subjectivity than that which we have hitherto engaged: one where the face refuses to reveal the interiority of its bearer. And yet, I would argue, it is in this very refusal that we witness again the productive power of the face in the formation of the self.

If, as we have seen, the face is productive of an individuality that harmonizes the inner and outer self, in Zola's rendering it is equally tethered to a uniqueness that, in its solitary singularity, refuses transparency, indeed actively cultivates a dissonance between a public persona and an inner life. After all, it is this asymmetry between Thérése's placid countenance and the turbulent passions it so effectively conceals, that together produce her as a distinctive character of fiction. Far from obfuscating, Thérése's immobile face is the medium through which her inner life is bought into relief. The unreadable face is itself a text—a narrative device that was legible to a nineteenth century (and indeed, twenty-first century) audience.

But Thérése's face is central to her character formation for a second reason. Thérése's individuality presumes upon a collective anxiety, it is nurtured by both its opposition to and conformity with a wide range of social norms. The central conceit that underwrites Zola's *Thérése Raquin* is the distinction he draws between Thérése's carefully cultivated facial demeanor—crafted within the gendered and class norms of nineteenth century French society—and the "real," "natural," "true" self that her facial mask both obscures and enables. This latter, authentic self, is singular, free of collective restraints, faithful to nature or, as Zola would have it, "temperament." That this is a conceit, that it is not only Thérése's face but her inner being that is fashioned from, and beholden to, collective norms is revealed in the text itself. The significance of

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Thérése's mixed racial parentage—a child of an African (Algerian) mother and French colonial father—is the crucial backdrop that accounts for her unbridled passion: "Her mother's blood, that African blood burning in her veins, began to flow and pound furiously in her thin, still almost virginal body. She opened up and offered herself with a sovereign lack of shame." (36) Thérése echoes the sentiments of her narrator: "I have a ravenous hunger for fresh air, even when I was small, I dreamed of wandering the roads, barefoot in the dust, begging and living like a gypsy. They told me my mother was the daughter of a tribal chief in Africa… I realize that I belong to her in my blood and my instincts, I used to wish I had never left her, but was crossing the deserts, slung on her back…" (37).

Thérése's individuality is not born from within, but from without, she is fashioned out of a racially eroticized colonial imaginary. For the protagonists in the novel, Thérése's face masks the self within; for Zola's reading public, this very opacity disavows the social forces that produced that Self. But as we have seen, if Thérése's face conforms to the social expectations of bourgeoise feminine passivity, her inner life is equally the product of gendered, racial, and colonial norms.

## TYPES OF FACES

Thérése may be a character of fiction but the individual subjectivity Zola fashions for her is a fiction that we continue to live with. Let us return again to the vitriolic condemnation that followed the reproduction of the Boston Bomber, Dzhokar "Jahar" Tsarnaev's selfie on the cover of August 1 copy to *Rolling Stone* magazine—condemnation that was fueled by the belief that a photographic self-portrait of a handsome male youth did not do justice to the terrorist who's violent actions maimed and killed. Where Thérése's face conceals a dangerous sexuality, Jahar's selfie masks the violent fanatic within. Where Thérése's descent into madness dissolves the forced disjuncture between her face and her inner being, Murphy's crime scene photos of Jahar "defeated and barely alive" reveal the "real face of terrorism." Whereas Thérése's character captured a collective anxiety toward an errant gendered and racialized sexuality, Jahar's very being was fashioned out of fear toward the Muslim-as-terrorist. Finally, neither Thérése nor Jahar are figures of redemption but rather subjects of a retributive justice—Thérése take's her own life; Jahar awaits execution.

But if the condemnation of the *Rolling Stone* cover shares in Zola's anxious rendering of modern individuality, it is equally indebted to

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another historical strain of subject-production—one also born of the nineteenth century. Thus far we have followed the fortunes of the modern face as tethered to the production of individuality. Whether it figures as a transparent medium of interiority or a deceptive mask that works to conceal the inner life of its bearer, the modern face comes into being as an essential appendage to the production of modern individuality. But the vitriol that followed in the wake of the *Rolling Stone* cover reminds us of another form of subject formation that appeals, not to individuality but a collective morphology. If Jahar's selfie as reproduced by *Rolling Stone* magazine seemed to defy the facial profile of a racialized terrorist, this did not deter popular expectations that such a generic profile existed. Recall again the darkened and "Arabized" cartoon depiction of Jahar on the cover of *Week* magazine. Here there is no pretense to individualizing—the task is to collectivize through typology.

A "type" as Nott and Gliddons defined it in their 1854 work *Types of Mankind*, speaks to "those primitive original forms which are independent of Climatic or Physical influences" (Nott and Gliddons 1854, 81). In other words, where individuality conferred free will, singularity and a self-referential subjectivity, typology denoted fixity, pre-determinacy, and the immutable essence of a collective morphology. Within the folds of this difference however, what remained constant was the revelatory authority accorded the face.

The anger unleashed against *Rolling Stone* was fueled by the fact that Jahar's photographic self-portrait failed to adhere to the generic Muslim terrorist. As Mark Stern argued in the online magazine *Slate*, what was incendiary about the *Rolling Stone* cover of Jahar was its failure to "reconfirm to us that psychopaths are crazed, nutty, creepy recluses whom we can easily identify and thus avoid" (Stern 2013). This desire to recognize the deviant, aberrant, pathological other as a facial type traces, like the face of individuality itself, its history back to the nineteenth century.

Through the sciences of physiognomy, anthropometry, anthropology, and medico-psychological theories, and their subsequent popularization in art, drama, and literature, the generic faces of the insane, the Negro, the prostitute, the Jew are rendered transparent. Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero's work on criminality (2004; Pick 1993), Hugh Diamond's photography of the insane (Gilman 1976), and Samuel George Morton's study of African and indigenous Americans (Gould 1993, 84–115), are some of the more well documented examples of physiognomy's reach in the nineteenth century. As Allan Sekula (1986) argues:

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> Physiognomy analytically isolated the profile of the head and various anatomic feature of the head and face, assigning a characterological significance to each element: forehead, eyes, ears, nose, chin, etc. Individual character was judged through the loose concatenation of readings. In both its analytic and synthetic stages, this interpretive process required that distinctive individual features be read in conformity to type. (1986, 11)

Thus, in the face could be read the telltale signs of sexual proclivity, of criminality, of racial degeneracy. Work in this field proceeded in two (often overlapping) directions—quantitative, statistically-grounded measurements, and medico-psychological studies. Examples of the former can be seen in the work of Lombroso and Ferrero where anthropometrical data and facial observations were central to their diagnosing of female criminality (2004). Lombroso's student and St Petersburg physician Pauline Tarnowsky, published a series of photographic portraits of Russian prostitutes to demonstrate, by reference to facial characteristics, their physical degeneration from a pre-determined classic female type (Gilman 1985, 95–98). Dr. Hugh Welch Diamond, resident superintendent of the Female Department of the Surrey County Lunatic Asylum similarly expounded on the importance of individual photographs of the insane which, when coupled with phrenology and physiognomy, would reveal the generic characteristics of madness (Gilman 1976). But it is Francis Galton's efforts to produce composite photographs of population types that captures the generic logic. Ian Hacking describes the process:

> By a rather original technique a sequence of individuals was successively exposed on a photographic plate. Then you could actually see the slightly blurred "type" before your eyes. Thus fundamentally different types could be displayed: army officers, private soldiers, criminals convicted of murder or crimes of violence, non-violent felons, and Jews (Hacking 2001, 183; also see Kelves 1985).

Alongside these quantitative sciences was an emerging discourse grounded in psychological studies. In his essay "Sex and the Emergence of Sexuality," Arnold Davidson argues that discourses on sexuality speak to a conceptual apparatus that is indebted to the nineteenth century and a new form of reasoning born of psychology (Davidson 2001, 30–65). Prior to the nineteenth century one may speak of illicit sex or monstrous bodies, but not sexuality. The emergence of this new form of reasoning corresponded with a new emphasis on the face. Whereas earlier discourse on sex would emphasize the body and more specifically, the

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genitalia, by the latter nineteenth century "the iconographical representation of sexuality is given by the depiction of personality, and its most usually takes the form of the face and its expression" (Davidson 2001, 41). A case in point is the oft-reproduced illustration of a habitual female masturbator—the front-piece of D. M. Rozier's work on masturbation. There is no genitalia to be seen, only a face—that of a poor woman seemingly on the verge of death with her eyes rolled backward, her lips slightly parted, her cheeks gaunt. Upon her face are the signs of her sexual disorder (Davidson 2001, 54–56). That sexual pathology spoke to an inner psychology divorced from genitalia but revealed in the face, was also the premise of James Shaw's late nineteenth century work, "Facial Expressions as One of the means of Diagnosis and Prognosis in Mental Disease." In the course of conversing with a patient Shaw advised, it is important to observe "facial reaction[s]" as a means of diagnosing the nature of the mental illness (quoted in Davidson 2001, 48). Again the psychological self—in this instance one tortured by "mental disease"—cannot conceal her internal affliction: the face bears witness to the struggles of the mind.

Whether grounded in statistical or psychological methods, facial physiognomy provided the means by which pathology, deviancy, and abnormality could be organized into discrete typologies. The face, and the collective morphologies it helped to produce, offered the promise of a calculable, measurable, unambiguous fixity that a uniquely interiorized individuality presumable denied.

Herein lies the distinction accorded the face of individuality and that of typology. Whereas the face of individuality was accorded mobility, capturing the complex inner life of the autonomous, expressive self (thus also providing for the capacity to conceal and dissimulate), the face of typology promised predictability, an uncomplicated reflection of an immutable inner essence. It is this difference that has led many contemporary scholars to regard individuality as a source of celebration and typology as the object of denunciation.

Through the course of the twentieth century and into our own, the human typologies produced by nineteenth century science have increasingly come into disrepute. This can only be regarded as a positive development. And yet there exists an inverted correlation that informs some of the contemporary scholarly and political critiques of typology: if typology produces subjectivity through the filters of historically and socially marked bodies, a self-referential, self-producing individuality promises the absence of such restraints. For liberal scholars and journalists, liberal activists and

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politicians, physiognomic theories of character are a relic of a pseudo-scientific past whose continued presence must be countered through an assertion of individuality—the socially unencumbered, unique singularity, and complex interiority that is presumed foundational to our "human-ness."

Again, the reproduction of Jahar's selfie on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine is a case in point. Paul Waldman in *American Prospect* criticizes the expectation that:

> [a]rticles should be written about the victims but not the perpetrators because we want the victims to be full human beings, individuals, while we'd rather if the perpetrators were just types to which we don't have to give much thought.

It is for this reason, Waldman explains, that the *Rolling Stone* cover incited such controversy: "because the photo is just [Tsarnaev's] face, it presents him as an individual and a human being." But this is exactly what is needed Waldman concludes, for

> [i]f a picture of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev's face reminds us that he was indeed a human being…that brings us a little closer to understanding what can make someone do something so monstrous… (Waldman 2013).

The oscillation between individuality and humanity, the privileging of individuality as absent of social signifiers, the unreflecting faith in selfhood as singular and thus independent of and prior to history and culture, in short, the elevation of the individual as an autonomous, free, agential subject is an imaginary that is by no means limited to the short-lived polemics that enveloped *Rolling Stone* magazine.

In a recently edited work in psychology, *Humanness and Dehumanization*, the authors repeatedly assert and defend the correlation between recognizing a person's individuality and acknowledging their humanity. "[T]he individuation process involves perceiving a person as more fully human than a nonindividuated target," writes contributing authors, Swencionis and Fiske, because "individuation involves considering another person's intentions, beliefs and preference" (Swencionis and Fiske 2014, 276–7). It is a similar critique of "dehumanization" that animates the work of sociologists Zamudio and Rios, who argue that the politics of color blindness operates through typologies which "serve to erase individuality and ultimately dehumanize its victims." (Zamudio and Rios 2006, 491).

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Such well-intentioned interventions—by journalists, activists and scholars—seeks to confront and challenge the disabling effects of typologies that disempower and stigmatize already marginalized populations. They do so by offering in opposition to typology (identified as immutable, collective, and dehumanizing) a defense of individual subjectivity that is singular, agential, fluid, and possessed of a complex and unique interiority that is co-extensive with a universal humanity.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has sought to challenge this common liberal defense of individual subjectivity as existing outside of and thus free from the social, political, and historical norms that worked to produce it. It has sought to do so by tracing the production of individuality through the production of the face. It is not that we have faces that reveal individuality, or that we have individual faces, but that the face comes into being through its alignment with the collective. When insulated through appeals to nature and exalted through appeals to the universal and human, the generative work the face of individuality performs is disavowed. By tracing the fortunes of the face not as an ahistorical surface upon which history happens, but as that which is produced through history, a history it intimately shares with the production of modern subjectivity, the presumptive "naturalness" and a priori status of the individual, the face it bears and the unmediated humanity it is presumed to represent is called into question.

Well intentioned scholars and activists are right to challenge the popular expectation that faces should reveal types. But the corollary to this repudiation should not be a reassertion of the face as the locus of our individuality. If the face is the site of our individuality and individuality is the condition of our humanity, then the refusal to expose the face in public can only be interpreted as the loss of self. Our political sympathies are now barely distinguishable from the political rhetoric that introduced this paper—the political rhetoric that fuels the popular opposition to the veil.

The subject of individuality and that of typology may be born of differing (albeit intertwining) histories but what they share is the ontological privileging of the face through which the self is bought into being. Thus, if progressives are cognizant of the racial and gendered histories and relations of power that mire the typing of marginalized subjects, we need also to recognize that individual subjectivity is equally entrenched within, and the offspring of, social political and historical conditions. It

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is the conflation of the face and the subject which this paper has sought to trace, that authorizes the confused political constellations we are witnessing today: veiled Muslim women demonized for covering their face and thus "refusing" their individuality and Muslim men denied individuality because their individuated faces signify a generic terrorist type. Individuality should not be construed as the real self that precedes typology where typology is rendered an ancient prejudice, a malevolent, perverted or distorted caricature and individuality that self-determining space outside of power, ensconced in nature and synonymous with the similarly transparent category of the "human." Rather, the productive power of the modern face resides in its capacity to constitute subjectivity: it functions to authorize and sustain the normative, uniquely individuated Self *and* its collective nemesis.

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## NOTES

1. As my discussion on the veil is a point of entry for unsettling the authority accorded the face, this paper does not engage the rich scholarship that has critically engaged with and contributed to our cultural understanding of the veil, burqa, and niqab. For more on this subject see Valdez (2016); Fernando (2014, esp. ch. 4); Thomassen (2011); Scott (2007); Abu-Lughod (2006).
2. I borrow this phrasing from Richard Rushton's reading of Deleuze and Guattari's work on the face (2002).

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