

THE FACE OF ANXIETY IN THE AGE OF BIOMETRICS

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Who knows what a face is, and is our notion thereof not mere prejudice, a limitation of the staggering number of forms that could constitute a face in their inexhaustible combinations? It never occurred to me before how many faces there are. There are multitudes of people, but there are so many more faces, because each person has several of them. There are people who wear the same face for years; naturally it wears out, gets dirty, splits at the seams, stretches like gloves worn during a long journey. They are thrifty, uncomplicated people; they never change it, never even have it cleaned. It's good enough, they say, and who can convince them of the contrary? Of course, since they have several faces, you might wonder what they do with the other ones. They keep them in storage. Their children wear them. But sometimes it also happens that their dogs go out wearing them. And why not? A face is a face.

Rilke, 'Faces'¹

O why was I born with a different face?
 Why was I not born like the rest of my race?
 When I look, each one starts! When I speak, I offend
 Blake, 'Letter to Thomas Butts' (16 August 1803)²

Watching me watching you

It is a truth, universally acknowledged, that we live in a surveillance society, imprisoned in what US critic Christian Parenti dubbed a 'soft cage' of pervasive observation.³ That observation is supposedly unprecedented and increasingly sophisticated. It involves a remote Big Brother (a threatening, unresponsive state) and/or Big Sister (the commercial 'surveillance-industrial complex' that parses every activity as the basis for risk management and marketing) in a world where justice is faceless rather than merely blind.⁴

It is faceless, because although we can often discern closed circuit cameras or other devices in public and private landscapes, we have little sense of who is engaging in 'the panoptic sort', how and why.⁵ It is face-based, or merely perceived to be so, because faces are being conceptualised as the new signature, the indelible unique identifier that can be deployed on passports, credit cards, drivers licences, social network service profiles (such as Facebook) and other mechanisms for inclusion or exclusion.

¹ Rainer Maria Rilke, 'Faces', 5 *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1965) 271, translation courtesy of Richard Soames.

² Geoffrey Keynes [ed], *The Letters of William Blake with Related Documents* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1980) 312. Blake's *Mary* reworks the line as "O, why was I born with a different face | Why was I not born like this envious race?"

³ Christian Parenti, *The Soft Cage: Surveillance in America* (New York: Basic Books 2003).

⁴ Judith Resnik & Dennis E. Curtis, 'Representing Justice: From Renaissance Iconography to Twenty-First-Century Courthouses', 151(2) *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (2007) 139, 160-64 (discussing the meaning of the blindfold on the image of Justice from a historical perspective); see also Judith Resnik, 'Reconstructing Equality: Of Justice, Justitia, and the Gender of Jurisdiction', 14(2) *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* (2002) 393, 396, 419 (discussing the "irony of the longstanding association of the female body with Justice," given historic forms of sex inequality and contemporary failures to prevent violence against women). For a Critical Race Theory perspective, see Bennett Capers, 'On Justitia, Race, Gender, and Blindness', 12 *Michigan Journal of Race & Law* (2006) 203, 206-07 (questioning the blindness of Justice when race plays such an important role in society).

⁵ Oscar Gandy, *The Panoptic Sort: A Political Economy of Personal Information* (Boulder: Westview 1992).

This seminar paper questions that truth, offering a sceptical view of both anxieties about facial recognition technologies and technocratic dreams that biometrics will solve disparate, intractable technical or social problems.⁶ More broadly, it considers how faces have been a focus of anxieties about modernity. Those anxieties have a broader scope than fears about surveillance technologies, extending from ‘racial science’ in Nazi Germany through to contemporary disquiet about cosmetic surgery and the reconstruction project known as Michael Jackson. Faces are both signatures and screens onto which we, along with our predecessors, project our hopes and fears. They are fundamental they are the first images that we recognise as babies and, for many of us, will probably be the last images that we see from a bed in the aged care facility.

Your face is a signature

Previous epochs memorialised heroes – or the legible attributes of heroism and greatness – through lifemasks, deathmasks and portrait busts.⁷ Those epochs also sought to identify citizens and criminals through mechanisms such as silhouettes and hand-drawn or photographic mugshots,⁸ images that captured an impression of the subject’s face and that could be reproduced with varying degrees of difficulty and accuracy in official registers, passports, ration cards, corporate identity cards, books of bad credit risks or scam artists,⁹ and the sort of ‘wanted, dead or alive’ poster pinned to a cactus or a hitching post in B-grade Hollywood Westerns and rhetoric about the War on Terror.¹⁰

⁶ As a light-hearted – and in parts ironic – cross-disciplinary work it eschews the theoretical baggage proudly displayed at many seminars, where what is inside the suitcase or tote-bag is less important than the owner’s possession of the magic labels – LMVH, Chanel, Derrida, Zizek, Lacan, Burberry, Nasty Pig ...

⁷ Among other works see David Meschutt, Mark Taff & Lauren Boglioli, ‘Life Masks and Death Masks’, 13(4) *American Journal of Forensic Medicine* (1992) 315-319; Ernst Benkard & Margaret Green, *Undying Faces: A Collection of Death Masks* (New York: Norton 1927); Iris Gibson, ‘Death masks unlimited’, 291 *British Medical Journal* (1985) 1785-1787; and Harriet Flower, *Ancestor Masks and aristocratic power in Roman culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996).

⁸ Jonathan Finn, *Capturing the Criminal Image: From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2009); James Hugunin, *A Survey of the Representation of Prisoners in the United States Discipline and Photographs – The Prison Experience* (Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press 1999); Peter Doyle, *Crooks Like Us* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of NSW 2009) and *City of Shadows: Sydney Police Photographs 1912-1948* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of NSW 2009); and Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing The Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1996). The latter notes, at 222, that –

Mug shots generally and physiognomy books particularly proffer answers to questions apparently asked over and over again: “what is the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity? Between mind and body? What is normal? What is deviant? How shall we guard the limits to deviation?” The recurrence of the same questions (marked by the proliferation of physiognomy books, detective guides and mug shot collections) is not evidence that photography failed to provide satisfactory answers. Rather, there was something extraordinarily reassuring about photography’s repeated affirmation that difference is quantifiable ...

Two perspectives are provided by David Chandler, *Voices from S-21: terror and history in Pol Pot’s secret prison* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1999), 27, 105 and 166 and Giacomo Papi, *Booked: The Last 150 Years told through 366 Mug Shots* (New York: Seven Stories Press 2006).

⁹ Rachel Hall, *Wanted: The Outlaw in American Visual Culture* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press 2009).

¹⁰ For use by GW Bush of the ‘wanted poster’ meme see Michael Sherry, ‘Dead or alive: American vengeance goes global’, 31 *Review of International Studies* (2005) 245-263; and Kelly Gates, ‘Wanted Dead or Digitized: Facial Recognition Technology and Privacy’, 3(2) *Television and New Media* (2002) 235-238. The latter notes at 238 that –

In the days following September 11, President George W Bush invoked an image of Osama bin Laden’s face on an old-west-style ‘Wanted Dead or Alive’ poster. This relic of the wild west gives metaphoric leverage to the mythic face of twenty-first-century terrorism. More than the crimes he committed, the outlaw was created in the transfer of his image to the wanted poster.

Contrary to some of the more strident polemic about the Australia Card, that image-making and dissemination was often quite popular in pre-1980s Australia and other liberal democratic states.¹¹ Acceptance, even demand for bureaucratic face capturing may have been because people had a low awareness of privacy issues, an awareness that recent activists have sought to change. Alternately it may have been because many people had both a greater faith in the state's good will and a sense that the state would substantiate that good will by effectively protecting them from the perceived dangers of the particular period ... the Wobblies, Suffragettes, urban Razor Gangs, Fenians, Communists, Mods & Rockers, Mafiosi or fans of Juliette Greco and Elvis Presley.¹²

The advent of low-cost and reliable digital still/video cameras over the past two decades in conjunction with dramatic increases in computation and improvements in network performance have destabilised that consensus. Anxieties are evident across the left and right regarding data collection, aggregation and manipulation by public and private sector entities. (Those anxieties are often accompanied by a digital quietism, reflected in acceptance – evident in the uninhibited disclosure of private lives in MySpace, Facebook and other online fora – of the notion espoused by Scott McNealy that 'your privacy has already gone, so get over it'.)¹³

A focus of anxieties has been the emergence of networked digital biometrics, in particular facial biometrics.¹⁴ Computer recognition of faces, it seems, is more threatening – arguably because we are less habituated than recognition of palm/thumb prints or because faces have deep psychological associations, some of which are touched on below.

Facial recognition systems are best known in relation to passports and driver licenses, ie the two tacit national identity documents for the everyday life of most Australians (eg when renting a video, opening a bank account, gaining access to a nightclub or otherwise

Gates does not note that bin Laden images feature on posters in the bedrooms and schoolrooms of his fans in the Middle East, Europe and other locations.

¹¹ In considering expectations regarding official registration of individuals, ubiquitous personal identity cards and privacy it is useful to acknowledge that other liberal democratic states, including nations such as The Netherlands that by some measures are more liberal than Australia, have actively embraced national identity cards and that citizens in those states are comfortable in carrying/displaying those cards in a range of settings. A card is not necessarily antithetical to a confident and tolerant civil society.

¹² Scott Poynting & George Morgan [ed], *Outrageous! Moral Panics in Australia* (Hobart: ACYS Publishing 2007); Stanley Cohen, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (London: MacGibbon & Kee 1972); and Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1998).

¹³ Polly Sprenger, 'Sun on Privacy: 'Get Over It'', 7(1) *Wired* (January 2009).

¹⁴ Biometric systems are predicated on the notion that each individual can be reliably and cheaply identified on the basis of stable physiological or behavioural characteristics that are unique to that individual, that can be recorded in a standard manner in an easily searchable register (particularly a large-scale electronic database) and that can be subsequently recognised and compared with data that appears in the register. That register can be tied to other registers/databases. Characteristics typically include the configuration of blood vessels in a person's palm or retina, the patterns on the skin of one or more of the person's fingers (the classic fingerprint, a biometric in use for the past 110 years), or the proportions of the individual's face (eg the ratio of space between the eyes relative to that between the eyes and chin relative to that between the chin and ears). The information gained from 'scanning' of those characteristics is converted to a mathematical expression representing unique numerical values; 'searching' of the database thus involves matching mathematical expressions rather than a direct comparison of one image against another). An introduction to technological and social issues (eg fears that scanners used for 'reading' retinas will cause blindness) is provided by Anil Jain et al [ed], *Biometrics: Personal Identification in Networked Society* (New York: Kluwer 1999) and Ruud Bolle, *Guide to Biometrics* (Berlin: Springer 2004).

verifying who you are). Those systems aspire to provide robust, comprehensive and authoritative mechanisms for identification without the stigma of fingerprints (messy and associated with criminal justice agencies) or the unreliability of official documents, increasingly unviable in the era of Photoshop and laser printers.

Fears that people will be tracked, with or without their knowledge and consent, have been exacerbated by convergence of biometrics with traditional surveillance technologies such as closed circuit television (CCTV) systems, consumer uptake of digital cameras and scanners, and the proliferation of user-friendly web-authoring tools (including very large scale social network services such as Facebook that encourage people to publish images of themselves and their associates). The over-enthusiasm with which some people have promoted combinations of the technologies (eg as the foundation of 'the seamless electronic border') has been matched by fears that 'they' (select the *bugaboo du jour*) will covertly and thus unrestrainedly integrate disparate information from a vast range of public/private sector databases and camera networks to comprehensively identify every visitor to an ATM, a service station, a school, a hospital, a café, a bank and government office.

That dystopian vision of pervasive surveillance and social sorting on the basis of facial recognition is currently not credible, despite alarmist claims, current affairs exposes and expressions of concern in works such as Norris' *The Maximum Surveillance Society*,¹⁵ Rosen's *The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age*¹⁶ or Whitaker's more hyperbolic *The End of Privacy: How Total Surveillance Is Becoming A Reality*¹⁷ and responses such as the use of masks in the cyber-anarchist thriller *V For Vendetta*¹⁸ or in the 2008 Anonymous/Chanology Project demonstrations against Scientology.¹⁹ Yes, there are several million CCTV cameras in Australian streets and buildings, but many do not actually work, few are monitored in real time, recording is scarce and there is little information sharing. Not many people are doing much with your face.

Julian Ashbourn, in *Practical Biometrics: From Aspiration to Implementation* offered some sensible cautions about undue anxiety or enthusiasm regarding 'face capture' –

We must be especially wary of attaching too much significance to the word 'biometrics'. ... Biometrics do not prove that you are who you say you are. Biometrics will not defeat terrorism. Biometrics do not enhance privacy. Biometrics will not rid the world of organised crime. Biometrics will not prevent identity theft. Biometrics will not solve the issue of large scale economic migration.

Biometrics will do none of these things. Intelligently conceived policies and good government will go a long way to achieving such worthy goals, but it is the intelligently conceived policies and good government which will make the difference – not the biometrics. A biometric is simply a useful aid with which to facilitate personal identity

¹⁵ Clive Norris, *The Maximum Surveillance Society: The Rise of CCTV* (Oxford: Berg 1999).

¹⁶ Jeffrey Rosen, *The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age* (New York: Random House 2004).

¹⁷ Reg Whitaker, *The End of Privacy: How Total Surveillance Is Becoming A Reality* (New York: New Press 1999).

¹⁸ *V for Vendetta* (Warner Bros, 2005) d. James McTeigue. See also Andrew Taslitz, 'Privacy As Struggle', 44(3) *San Diego Law Review* (2007) 501-516.

¹⁹ Alex Bair, 'We Are Legion: An Anthropological Perspective on Anonymous', in *The Impact of Technology on Culture (Proceedings of the 2008 Senior Symposium in Anthropology, Department of Anthropology, Idaho State University)* (Pocatello: Idaho State University 2008) 41-48; and Patrick Underwood, *New Directions in Networked Activism and Online Social Movement Mobilization: The Case of Anonymous and Project Chanology* (MA dissertation, Ohio University: 2009).

verification, itself a small component of a larger raft of measures and processes which, together, form an intelligent security, border control and provision of social services policy. Any single initiative must stand on its own merits, without using the word 'biometrics' as a crutch.²⁰

Seeing the inner you

That common sense is useful when considering hopes or fears that technologies will allow people to read character, guilt or aptitudes by reading faces.

East and West have a long history of assumptions – and profitable publishing founded on those assumptions – that the ‘inner you’ can be discerned by looking at someone’s visage and that therefore it was possible to engage in social sorting to exclude the mad, bad or ethnically undesirable.²¹

Barthelemy Cocles' 1533 *Physiognomonia* thus warned that people with snub noses are vain, untruthful, unstable and seducers; large and outstanding ears indicate a tendency to chatter; sharp-tipped noses belong to the irascible - those easily provoked (like dogs).²² Johann Lavater's 1775 *Physiognomische Fragmente*, a bold attempt at science in a previous age of new technologies, claimed that 'moral character' could be reliably discerned by observation of involuntary facial features, with a close and unalterable correspondence between the geography of the face – ears, eyes, nose, brow, distance between lips and chin, and so forth – and that individual's appetites, self-control, diligence and honesty.²³ It is echoed in contemporary works such as Carré & McCormick's 'In your face: facial metrics predict aggressive behaviour'.²⁴

Lavater's scientism underlies some of the values that we place on faces in 2009 and is reflected in fears that are independent of whether a face is being captured by a camera or displayed on a flat screen. Technologies change faster than human perceptions.

The Face of Fear

The face of fear – the image that embodies anxieties, disgust, hatred and violence – used to appear on posters, wall-sized, A4 or in between. It depicted folk devils such as Stalin, Hitler or 'the Eternal Jew'. Alternately it offered an image and description of the 'Most Wanted', on occasion wanted dead or alive. That tradition lives on in vigilante posting on lamp posts and via letter boxes of images of the 'neighbourhood child molester', with or without an exhortation to clear that person out of town.²⁵

²⁰ Julian Ashbourn, *Practical Biometrics: From Aspiration to Implementation* (Berlin: Springer Verlag 2004).

²¹ A historical perspective is provided by John Thearle, 'The Rise and Fall of Phrenology in Australia', 27(3) *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, (1993) 518-525; and Nicole Rafter, 'The murderous Dutch fiddler: Criminology, history and the problem of phrenology', 9(1) *Theoretical Criminology* (2005) 65-96.

²² Richard Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press 2004). See also the discussion at www.caslon.com.au/physiognomynote.htm.

²³ Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1993).

²⁴ Justin Carré & Cheryl McCormick, 'In your face: facial metrics predict aggressive behaviour in the laboratory and in varsity and professional hockey players', 275(1651) *Proceedings of the Royal Society* (2008) 2651-2656

²⁵ The flip-side, in terms of anxiety, is the delivery via letterbox drops, posters and milk cartons of images of the faces of missing kids, often suspected of having been abducted by the very same monsters whose images appear on the lamp posts.

Such posting is an expression of anxiety that is inconsistent with the grim reality that most molestation by adults who look just like us (uncles, grandpas, fathers, elder brothers) rather than the figures of 'stranger danger' in popular culture and that most prosecutions for child sex offences relate to offenders who are under 18. Anxieties about faces are sometimes simply misplaced, providing a false comfort that danger can be effectively quarantined and involves 'others' rather than intimates.

In the age of the internet and cable television – the world of CNN, Foxtel and Wikipedia – the face onto which we project our anxieties is more often that which appears on a screen. It is the face of Osama bin Laden, George Bush, Radovan Karadzic or Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, looking sinister, endowed with a power that we do not comprehend, talking a language that few of us understand and representing a worldview that we find quite dissonant.

It is threatening because it is human and yet not human. It is threatening because, like the 'perfect blankness' in final shots of Greta Garbo in *Queen Christina*,²⁶ it is enigmatic. It is a screen on which plays out our inner life, something that we invest with personal values and cultural expectations.²⁷ It is thus subtly different to a text that forces us to pause and reflect.

It is also threatening because it is everywhere yet transient, with all the volatility of the internet and broadcast television – encountered recurrently and unexpectedly yet evanescent, impossible to pin down because it appears for a moment and is then gone, appearing in intimate places such as your bedroom and living room but distant because the face is just an image (a simulacrum of a person) rather than someone with whom you can have a conversation or share a pizza.

The face, or other features, may instead have been captured in the bedroom or on the beach, an image of the person with whom you have just had pizza or with whom you play football. Contemporary anxieties about 'cyberdanger', bullying and adolescent sexuality have been reflected in calls to criminalise 'sexting',²⁸ including characterisation of teenage stupidity, exploration and bad taste as child pornography.²⁹

²⁶ *Queen Christina* (MGM, 1936) d. Rouben Mamoulian.

²⁷ Mamoulian famously told Garbo "I want your face to be a blank piece of paper. I want the writing to be done by everyone in the audience". For the film see Marcia Landy & Amy Villarejo, *Queen Christina (BFI Film Classics)* (London: BFI Publishing 1995). See also Roland Barthes, 'The Face of Garbo', in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill & Wang 1972) 56 –

Garbo still belongs to that moment in cinema when capturing the human face still plunged audiences into the deepest ecstasy, when one literally lost oneself in a human image as one would in a philtre, when the face represented a kind of absolute state of the flesh, which could be neither reached nor renounced.

– and Therese Davis, *The Face on the Screen: Death, Recognition and Spectatorship* (Bristol: Intellect 2004).

²⁸ Amparo Lasén & Edgar Gómez-Cruz, 'Digital Photography and Picture Sharing: Redefining the Public/Private Divide', 22(3) *Knowledge, Technology & Policy* (2009) 205; and Sharon Shafron-Perez, 'Average Teenager or Sex Offender: Solutions to the Legal Dilemma Caused by Sexting', 26(3) *John Marshall Journal of Computer & Information Law* (2009) 431.

²⁹ For two level headed and cautionary responses see Peter Cumming, 'Children's Rights, Children's Voices, Children's Technology, Children's Sexuality' (Roundtable on Youth, Sexuality, Technology, Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences 2009) (Ottawa: Carleton University 2009); and Suzanne Ost, *Child Pornography and Sexual Grooming: Legal and Societal Responses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009).

The face of anxiety may thus be the look on the face of a parent who has discovered that a child is breaking rules – or naively exposing himself/herself to harm through release of intimate happy snaps into the undying repository known as the web – or the look of distress on a minor's face when confronted with heavy-handed enforcement by an Australian policeman.

All That Is Solid Melts Into Air

Marshall Berman famously echoed Marx in characterising modernity as an experience in which all that is solid melts into air.³⁰ We might recall that description in considering the face and the age of anxiety. W H Auden – author of *The Age of Anxiety*, famously endowed by god and nicotine with a face like a melted wedding cake – noted that private faces in public places are wiser and nicer than public faces in private places, whether the latter is the Führer's portrait on a family wall or the 'unblinking eye' of the secret policeman in a bedroom, bathroom or academic's study.³¹

Although we live in an age of anxiety, we are thereby no different to our predecessors. Every epoch is an age of anxiety, although some are gaudier than others. Each has its own public faces, with one mark of anxiety being the way in which the boundaries between public and private melt into air.

That melting results in the physical or merely psychological dissolution of personal space, the space in which people could have private faces, faces that do not need to be adjusted. Adjustment was necessary to persuade observers that the face's owner was experiencing the requisite joy, sorrow, concentration or other expression of community solidarity and political correctness in cultures where 'face crime' (a theme of Orwell's *1984*)³² could see the unwary being awarded a one-way trip to Kolyma, Dachau, a rural re-education camp in Mao's China or the killing fields of the Khmer Rouge. Laugh on cue and the whole Volk laughs with you, cry and you die alone.

The face of anxiety for much of the last century was the face of your peers: the faces of the people sharing communal housing in the communist states (overcrowding and the dissolution of personal space being as much a matter of public policy as of state incapacity) or peering from behind burgerlich lace curtains in Nazi towns and villages to monitor whether you had contributed to the *Winterhilfe* collection or were consorting with a race enemy. Delation rather than wiretapping was the dominant mechanism for identifying incorrectness in that age of anxiety, a mechanism explored in Fitzpatrick & Gellately's *Accusatory Practices*³³ and reflected in the proliferation of Australian national security, crimestopper or reckless truckdriver hotlines.³⁴ In the Australia of 2010 denunciation is just a fridge-magnet away,³⁵ and the faceless call centre at the AFP or ATO is happy to take

³⁰ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso 1983).

³¹ Wystan Hugh Auden (1977), 'Preface to *The Orators*', in Edward Mendelson [ed], *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings, 1927-1939* (New York: Random House), 59.

³² Ian Hayward, 'Facecrime: George Orwell and the physiognomy of politics', 2(3) *Textual Practice* (1988) 345-366.

³³ Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately [ed], *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1997).

³⁴ Janet Chan, 'The new lateral surveillance and a culture of suspicion', 10 *Sociology of Crime, Law & Deviance (Surveillance and Governance: Crime Control and Beyond)* (2008) 223-239.

³⁵ For fridge magnets and hotlines see Diana Bossio, 'Be Alert, Not Alarmed: Governmental communication of risk in an era of insecurity' (Annual Meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Communication Association, Christchurch, New Zealand, 4-7 July 2005) 7.

your call.³⁶ Another faceless call centre, in an example of contemporary cyber populism, may be taking calls from the television viewers who vote by SMS to exclude the willingly surveilled from the next round of *Big Brother*.³⁷

Public faces were also instrumental in the dissolution of private space and control of private faces in the era of Hitler, Stalin, Ceaucescu, Mao, Petain, Assad and Kim Il Sung. The public face of the Leader – the iconic official portrait rather than the informal, unposed and un-airbrushed happy snap made by intimates, discussed for example by Schmölders in *Hitler's Face*³⁸ and by Schrift on the Mao Badge³⁹ – appeared on most office/factory walls and (more importantly) on many domestic walls and jackets. The Leader, like God, was always watching, encouraging self-discipline among those his image surveilled.

That face – we might appropriately refer to it as *The Face* – was at once an assertion of control (you belong to me) and a reminder of social solidarity through exclusion (a biopolitics in which rejection or non-membership of the national family could have grave consequences). Those consequences could literally involve the grave for those who chose to turn their face away from the Father of the Soviet Peoples or whose face failed to meet the criteria of the Nazi racial health specialists, illustrated in works such as Steinweis' *Studying the Jew*.⁴⁰ You are with us or against us, defined as 'us' because your face is not one of 'them'.⁴¹

Appropriately, distaste for the Leader's face was sometimes signalled by turning the portrait's face to the wall. A change of regime was ritually marked by stripping the portraits from the walls, often by defenestrating them from an office or home.⁴²

One theme in 20th century photojournalism is thus the shot of liberated citizens posing alongside the smashed glass, broken frames and ripped canvas or paper of what used to be the portraits of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Saddam Hussein or Nicolae and Elena

³⁶ For synopticism – the inverse of Bentham's one-watching-many panopticism – see Roy Boyne, 'Post-Panopticism', 29(2) *Economy and Society* (2000) 285-307; Thomas Mathiesen, 'The Viewer Society: Michel Foucault's 'Panopticon' Revisited', 1(2) *Theoretical Criminology* (1997) 215-234.

³⁷ For Big Brother, see Janet Jones, 'Show Your Real Face: A Fan Study of the UK Big Brother Transmissions – Investigating the Boundaries between Notions of Consumers and Producers of Factual Television', 5(3) *New Media and Society* (2003) 400-421; Jane Roscoe, 'Big Brother Australia: Performing the 'real' twenty-four-seven', 4(4) *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (2001) 473-488; and Nick Couldry, 'Playing for Celebrity: Big Brother as Ritual Event', 3(3) *Television and New Media* (2002) 283-294.

³⁸ Claudia Schmölders, *Hitler's Face: The Biography of an Image* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 2005).

³⁹ Melissa Schrift, *Biography of a Chairman Mao Badge: The Creation and Mass Consumption of a Personality Cult* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2001).

⁴⁰ Alan Steinweis, *Studying the Jew: Scholarly Antisemitism in Nazi Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press 2008).

⁴¹ Michael Burleigh & Wolfgang Wippermann, *The Racial State: Germany, 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991) notes that few of the founders of Nazism would meet their own facial criteria; neither Hitler nor Goebbels for example were fine examples of tall, blond, blue-eyed Aryan manhood with the requisite skull shape. In 2009 the face of Barack Obama is simultaneously 'The Face of Hope' and the face that attracts denialist rage that he is not a US citizen, not a Christian and not even African American. The values assigned to faces and the cognitive dissonance with which we view them may be preposterous but that does not make the belief any less heartfelt.

⁴² See for example Tony Kemp-Welch, 'Dethroning Stalin: Poland 1956 and its legacy', 58(8) *Europe-Asia Studies* (2006) 1261-1284; Lesa Major & David Perlmutter, 'The Fall of a Pseudo-Icon: The Topping of Saddam Hussein's Statue as Image Management', 12(1/2) *Visual Communication Quarterly* (2005) 38-45; Nancy Wingfield, 'Conflicting Constructions of Memory: Attacks on Statues of Joseph II in the Bohemian Lands after the Great War', 28 *Austrian History Yearbook* (2009) 147-181.

Ceausescu. Another theme is photographs of soldiers casually seated on the toppled statues of yesterday's supremo, now become powerless and faceless: Saddam Hussein, Feliks Dzerzhinsky, Idi Amin, Enver Hoxha, Josef Stalin⁴³

Those photographs are far more resonant than clinical images of the discarded *Collected Works* of Stalin, piled in the gutter after revolutions in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, of hundreds of metres of files shredded by the Stasi (or by the US Embassy in Teheran as Khomeini's zealots swarmed over the wall), or of unked phonographic disks that featured the rantings of Joseph Goebbels. A face is worth a thousand words.

One reason that images matter is because images are magic. To destroy the face (or to airbrush it from official and personal memory) is to destroy the person, deny the power. The very term 'defacement' has an aura. It is evident in descriptions of pre-modern iconoclasm, with contemporaries describing the mixture of shock, awe, horror, wildness and exultation experienced during the iconoclasm of the English Reformation, the French Revolution, the religious frenzies of the Byzantine Empire discussed in Besancon's *The Forbidden Image*⁴⁴ or the twists and turns of Soviet and Maoist politics.⁴⁵ To deface an icon or behead a statue was an affront to the deity and to reason or instead a path to true religion, justice and salvation. It was also a manifestation of another age of anxiety, given that the 'world turned upside down' necessarily involves fear, mess, uncertainty and suffering – a world where, as Eric Reinders points out, 'monkey madness' starts with defacement of images and ends with defacement of people.⁴⁶

Australians have not valorised faces by placing political icons on domestic walls. I suspect that there are more posters of Gary Ablett, Elvis, Jimi Hendrix, Madonna or Jim Morrison in Australia's bedrooms and living rooms than there are framed photographs of Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard or Elizabeth Windsor. It is now possible to visit a school or post office without seeing a framed image of The Queen (Annigoni, Snowdon or Beaton),⁴⁷ a location where the iconic face you encounter is more likely to be that of Harry Potter or Che Guevara on a teenager's t-shirt.⁴⁸

We are however forced to incorporate some public faces into our domestic lives, albeit so pervasively that in the age of mechanical reproduction, to use the words of Walter Benjamin,⁴⁹ they are no longer numinous and indeed often just not noticed.

⁴³ Dario Gamboni, *The destruction of art: iconoclasm and vandalism since the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion 1997) and Sergiusz Michalski, *Public monuments: art in political bondage, 1870-1997* (London: Reaktion 1998) 49 and 149. See also Adrian Forty & Susanne Kuchler, *The art of forgetting* (Oxford: Berg 2002) and Madeline Caviness, 'Iconoclasm and Iconophobia: Four Historical Case Studies', 50(3) *Diogenes* (2003) 99-114.

⁴⁴ Alain Besancon, *The Forbidden Image: An Intellectual History of Iconoclasm* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2001).

⁴⁵ David King, *The Commissar Vanishes: the Falsification of Photographs & Art in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Holt 1997).

⁴⁶ Eric Reinders, 'Monkey kings make havoc: iconoclasm and murder in the Chinese Cultural Revolution', 34(3) *Religion* (2004) 191-209.

⁴⁷ Alexis Schwarzenbach, 'Royal Photographs: Emotions for the People', 13 *Contemporary European History* (2004) 255-280.

⁴⁸ Bruce Arnold & Margalit Levin, 'Ambient Anomie in the Virtualised Landscape? Autonomy, Surveillance and Flows in the 2020 Streetscape', 13(1) *M/C: A Journal of Media & Communication* (2010).

⁴⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility', in Marcus Bullock & Michael Jennings [ed], *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings 1938-1940* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2003) 251-282.

The official faces that you see every day are the faces on coins, banknotes and stamps – the last shadows of Queen Victoria’s hegemony, inescapable unless you are someone who only pays with plastic, does not feed the parking meter with small change and eschews snailmail.⁵⁰ Anxiety for some is the stamped envelope with the gift of anthrax in the age of bioterrorism. For others it is the ‘window face’ letter with a demand from a financial institution or the Australian Taxation Office.

Tear off the masks!

Sheila Fitzpatrick, one of the most perceptive historians of Stalinism, examined Soviet anxieties about inauthenticity, justice and authority in *Tear Off The Masks*.⁵¹ As Rilke pointed out in the quotation at the beginning of this paper, people wear masks. Some degree of dissimulation (including the politeness that conceals boredom) is probably necessary in a civilised and civil society. A life of Kierkegaardian authenticity – no dissimulation, no marks, no distance – is spiritually bracing but beyond the emotional resources of most people and deeply inconvenient for a modern economy where everyone except a hermit is constantly abraded by others, compromises and points of friction.

That social intercourse has resulted in what critics damn as a widespread *anomie* or *angoisse*, supposedly the defining characteristics of modern life and contrasted to life back on the farm or in a hut at Todtnauberg communing with the ancestral spirits.⁵² Dissatisfaction with existence (or just with the ‘inauthentic ‘rat race’ facing binary proletariat and professionals alike) is supposedly evident in the face of many Australians: frowns, wrinkles, looks of sadness or looks of fear. It has provoked several responses.

One is for the owner of the face to strip off the mask: acknowledge inauthenticity and expose their inner child, being liberated through both the process of self-recognition and through the ‘self-actualisation’ or other action that takes place after that revelation.⁵³ Think *American Beauty*⁵⁴ and Tony Robbins, *The Graduate*⁵⁵ and Reich (Wilhelm or Charles)⁵⁶ rather than Marcuse. The face of anxiety is the face of the ‘personal growth and spiritual enlightenment’ industry,⁵⁷ the latest iteration of thinking that gave us Jaeger underwear,⁵⁸ Unabomber-style retreats to the placid safety of Walden Pond,⁵⁹ Birkenstock sandals, muesli-based cures for masturbation⁶⁰ and the artfully ‘simple life’.⁶¹ Change your

⁵⁰ For an overseas perspective on liberation from the official face see Karen Strassler, ‘Currency and Fingerprints: Authentic Reproductions and Political Communication in Indonesia’s “Reform Era”’, 70 *Indonesia* (2000) 71-82.

⁵¹ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off The Masks: Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005).

⁵² Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1987).

⁵³ Micki McGee, *Self-Help Inc: Makeover Culture in American Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005)

⁵⁴ *American Beauty* (Dreamworks, 1999) d. Sam Mendes.

⁵⁵ *The Graduate* (United Artists, 1967) d. Mike Nichols.

⁵⁶ Charles Reich, *The Greening of America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1970).

⁵⁷ Barbara Ehrenreich, *Smile or Die: How the relentless promotion of positive thinking has undermined America* (London: Granta 2009).

⁵⁸ Patricia Cunningham, *Reforming Women’s Fashion, 1850-1920* (Kent: Kent State University Press 2003) 97-98; Gabriele Mentges, ‘Cold, Coldness, Coolness: Remarks on the Relationship of Dress, Body and Technology’, 4(1) *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* (2000) 27-47.

⁵⁹ James Oleson, ‘Evil the Natural Way: The chimerical utopias of Henry David Thoreau and Theodore John Kaczynski’, 8(2) *Contemporary Justice Review* (2005) 211-228.

⁶⁰ Arthur Gilbert, ‘Doctor, Patient and Onanist Diseases in the Nineteenth Century’, XXX(3) *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* (1975) 217-234; Elizabeth Meyer-Renschhausen and Albert Wirz, ‘Dietetics, Health Reform and Social Order: Vegetarianism as a Moral Physiology: The Example of

consumption, change your face, and the anxieties will disappear along with the iron cage of bureaucratic rationality.

Another response is to provide a new mask.

Social critics Vance Packard, William Whyte and C Wright Mills – writing in an age when many Americans (and quite a few Australians) feared that a nuclear Armageddon was just around the corner – characterised Madison Avenue as the anxiety makers, faceless front men rather than mad men, committed to ensuring consumption by stimulating insecurities and promoting an ideal of psychological wellbeing.⁶² Not much has changed.

Much pharmaceutical marketing remains predicated on the notion that although your job as an employee or busy mum makes you unsatisfied, stressed or angry you owe it to yourself and those around you to appear relaxed, content and positive. Psychic wellness is all, and wellness is signalled by how you *look* rather than merely by how you feel (a social attribute rather than an inner, private attribute). As Herzberg illustrated in *Happy Pills in America*,⁶³ that appearance of virtue has been promoted as a state readily achievable with the help of just a pill or two. Banish those depressing thoughts, achieve equanimity and prevent distressing wrinkles by masking your alienation with a chemical cosh in a culture where ‘choosing’ to be depressed is a disorder and an offence to your peers.

A corollary is that anxiety properly relates to faces: the elasticity of the skin, the glow of health, the absence of crows’ feet, the glitter of a full set of teeth or the glossiness of a full head of hair. ‘Faces’, on television and in consumer magazines such as *Who Weekly*, are about improvement and correction.⁶⁴ botox,⁶⁵ whiter than white toothpaste, dental bleaching,⁶⁶ makeup for less than perfect skin, artificial lashes or ‘circle lenses’ for more lustrous eyes,⁶⁷ aging cricket heroes spruiking remedies for pattern baldness or placebos for ‘lifeless hair’.⁶⁸ The anxiety is about aging and imperfection, with the ideal face being the one on the television commercial, in *Vogue* or in your head, not the one in your mirror.

That anxiety is timeless: most people want to look better and are prepared to pay for hope in a bottle, particularly a high-priced bottle from a company whose corporate face is a film star.

Maximilian Bircher-Brenner’, 43 *Medical History* (1999) 323-341; Ruth Engs, *Clean Living Movements: American Cycles of Health Reform* (Westport: Praeger 2000).

⁶¹ David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1985).

⁶² Daniel Horowitz, *Vance Packard & American Social Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1994).

⁶³ David Herzberg, *Happy Pills in America: From Miltown to Prozac* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press 2009).

⁶⁴ Virginia Blum, *Flesh Wounds: The Culture of Cosmetic Surgery* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2003); Debra Gimlin, ‘Cosmetic Surgery: Beauty as a Commodity’, 23(1) *Qualitative Sociology* (2000) 77-98; and Victoria Pitts-Taylor, *Surgery Junkies: Wellness and pathology in Cosmetic Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2007).

⁶⁵ Peta Cook & Angela Dwyer, ‘Small Pricks at Lunchtime: Some Notes on Botox’ (Australian Sociological Association Conference Papers 2009).

⁶⁶ Laurence Walsh, ‘Dental Bleaching and beauty salons: a case of ‘little white lies’?’, *Australasian Dental Practice* (July/August 2008) 46-50.

⁶⁷ Catherine Saint Louis, ‘What Big Eyes You Have, Dear, But Are Those Contacts Risky’, *New York Times* 3 July 2010.

⁶⁸ Julia Szymczak & Peter Conrad, ‘Medicalizing the Aging Male Body: Andropause and Baldness’, in Dana Rosenfeld & Christopher Faircloth [ed], *Medicalized Masculinities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2006) 89-111.

Past marketers thus appealed to fear of unattractiveness or the imminent arrival of the grim reaper by peddling concoctions of arsenic, white lead, elderberries, belladonna, stinging nettles, sheep placenta or other nasties to improve faces.⁶⁹ In recent years we have seen debate about the 'ideal face' inside Michael Jackson's head, which seems to have impelled him to resort to a decade of increasingly drastic bleaching, dermabrasion, ear-tucks, facelifts and nose reshaping until his face came to resemble a mask. That self-construction has been seen as demonstrating a lack of authenticity, indeed as emblematic of his denial and criminality regarding a transgressive sexuality.⁷⁰

Jackson's love affair with the knife was well publicised but is not exceptional; another egregious example is that of cosmetic surgery fan Jocelyn Wildenstein, dubbed 'The Bride of Wildenstein' after reportedly spending £2 million on 'face fixing' that resulted in a visage more frightening than the Bride of Frankenstein.⁷¹ There has been less attention in Australia to facial modification among some Asian communities, particularly young affluent people in Japan and the US, who have had their eyes and noses reshaped⁷² to conform to a 'western' ideal of beauty.⁷³

The same anxiety is also pointed in an era where some people, particular a new generation of gay men, negotiate their erotic activity on the basis of whether a potential partner 'looks good'.⁷⁴ A healthy-looking face dispels anxiety about HIV, Hepatitis C or other ills. Eyes or tongues may lie and a tan may come in a can but the face, if not a window to the soul, supposedly functions as a surrogate for the pathologist's slides, swabs and test tubes. Would that it were actually so.

Putting on a new face – and the menace associated with acquiring a snarl, buzzcut, braces and Doc Martens – may be magic in offsetting a visceral sense of alienation and inadequacy. The face of anxiety for some people is the face of the skinhead,⁷⁵ the urban

⁶⁹ Nina Jablonski, *Skin: A Natural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2008). See also Geoffrey Jones, *Imagining Beauty: The History of the Global Beauty Business* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010) and Victoria Sherrow, *For Appearance' Sake: The Historical Encyclopedia of Good Looks, Beauty and Grooming* (Westport: Oryx 2001).

⁷⁰ Debbie Epstein & Deborah Lynn Steinberg, 'The Face of Ruin: Evidentiary Spectacle and the Trial of Michael Jackson', 17(4) *Social Semiotics* (2007) 441-458, 446. See also Kathy Davis, 'Pygmalions in Plastic Surgery', 2(1) *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine* (1998) 23-40.

⁷¹ Grant McCracken, *Transformations: Identity Construction in Contemporary Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2008) 25; and Eric Konigsberg, 'What Money Can't Buy', 50(48) *New York Magazine* (1997) 31-116.

⁷² Eugenia Kaw, 'Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery', 7(1) *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* (1993) 74-89; Kathleen Zane, 'Reflections on a Yellow Eye', in Amelia Jones [ed], *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (London: Routledge 2003) 354-372; Sara Goering, 'Conformity Through Cosmetic Surgery: The Medical Erasure of Race and Disability', in Robert Figueroa & Sandra Harding [ed] *Science and other cultures: issues in philosophies of science and technology* (London: Routledge 2003) 172-189; and Cressida Hayes, 'All Cosmetic Surgery is 'Ethnic': Asian Eyelids, Feminist Indignation and the Politics of Whiteness', in Cressida Hayes & Meredith Jones [ed], *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2009) 191-208.

⁷³ Jonathan Carey, 'The Quasimodo Complex: Deformity Reconsidered', in Carol Donley & Sheryl Buckley [ed], *The Tyranny of the Normal: An Anthology* (Kent: Kent State University Press) 27-52.

⁷⁴ See for example Murray Drummond, 'Men's Bodies: Listening to the voices of young gay men', 7(3) *Men and Masculinities* (2005) 270-290.

⁷⁵ Jack Moore, *Skinheads Shaved For Battle: A Cultural History of American Skinheads* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1993); Katrine Fangen, 'A Death Mask of Masculinity: The Brotherhood of Norwegian Right-wing Skinheads', in Søren Ervø & Thomas Johansson [ed], *Among Men: Moulding Masculinities* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2003) 184-211; Judith Bessant, 'Hanging around the street: Australian

romper-stomper with a disregard for the law, with a hatred of groups such as refugees or gay people, and with notions of integrity or honour through a visible performance – in particular transgressive performance – in public space.⁷⁶ It is a magic that may be desired, appropriated and subverted, with for example disagreements about the ‘authenticity’ of queerskins, overachieving or parodying the hypermasculinity of their straight peers.⁷⁷

Are faces happiness? Sadly, at least fifty years of social science have suggested that ‘good looking’ people are more likely to gain and retain jobs and positions of power (irrespective of technical proficiency and experience). Bruce & Young’s *In the Eye of the Beholder: The Science of Face Perception*⁷⁸ noted that ‘facial excellence’ is a ticket to success, despite growing awareness of cultural bias, personal subjectivity, and advocacy of, for example, ‘fat rights’⁷⁹ as a response to ‘faceism’, the ‘soft fascism’ embraced by devotees of *Sex in the City*,⁸⁰ *Nip/Tuck*,⁸¹ *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, *DNA*, *Attitude* a⁸² and *GQ*.⁸³ It drives the growing market for ‘manceuticals’⁸⁴ and for services that promise to put ‘a better-looking you’ on your Facebook page, the latter being important because recruitment services increasingly rely on social network profiles to filter job applicants.⁸⁵

rockers, sharpies and skinheads of the 1960s and early 1970s’, 19(45) *Journal of Australian Studies* (1995) 15-31; and Murray Forman, ‘Betrayal and Fear: Press Coverage of Canadian Skinheads’, 17(2) *Canadian Journal of Communication* (1992). John Clarke, ‘Skinheads and the Magical Recovery of Community’, in Stuart Hall [ed] *Resistance Through Rituals* (London: Hutchinson 1976) 99-112 strikes this author as unpersuasively nostalgic.

⁷⁶ For notions of masculine honour through action (or merely an expression of identity, *vis* display of skin) see David Gilmore, *Manhood in the making: cultural concepts of masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1990).

⁷⁷ Murray Healy, *Gay Skins: Class, Masculinity and Queer Appropriation* (London: Cassell 1996); and David Bell, Jon Binie, Julia Cream & Gill Valentine, ‘All hyped up and nowhere to go’, 1(1) *Gender, Place and Culture* (1994) 31-47.

⁷⁸ Vicki Bruce & Andrew Young, *In the Eye of the Beholder: The Science of Face Perception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998).

⁷⁹ Anna Kirkland, *Fat Rights: dilemmas of difference and personhood* (New York: New York University Press 2008) and Kathleen LeBesco, *Revolting Bodies: The Struggle to Redefine Fat Identity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press 2004). See also Jason Whitesel, ‘Fatvertising: Refiguring Fat Gay Men in Cyberspace’, 13 *Limina* (2007) 92-102 and Lee Monaghan, ‘Big Handsome Men, Bears and Others: Virtual Constructions of ‘Fat Male Embodiment’, 11(2) *Body and Society* (2005) 81-111.

⁸⁰ Kim Akass & Janet McCabe [ed], *Reading Sex and the City* (London: I B Tauris 2004).

⁸¹ Sue Tait, ‘Television and the Domestication of Cosmetic Surgery’, 7(2) *Feminist Media Studies* (2007) 119-135.

⁸² See for example Brian Pronger, *Body Fascism: Salvation in the technology of physical fitness* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 2002); Bill Hughes, ‘The Constitution of Impairment: Modernity and the Aesthetic of Oppression’, 14(2) *Disability and Society* (1999) 155-172; and Gilad Padva, ‘Heavenly Monsters: The Politics of the Male Body in the Naked Issue of Attitude Magazine’, 7(4) *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies* (2002) 282

⁸³ Anthony Synnott, ‘Truth and Goodness, Mirrors and Masks – Pt I: A Sociology of Beauty and the Face’, 40(4) *British Journal of Sociology* (1989) 607-636; Richard Lansdowne, Nichola Rumsey & Eileen Bradbury, *Visibly Different: Coping With Disfigurement* (London: Butterworth-Heinemann 1997).

⁸⁴ Claire Harrison, ‘Real Men do wear mascara: advertising discourse and masculine identity’, 5(1) *Critical Discourse Studies* (2008) 55-74; Deborah Carr, ‘Body Work’, 6(1) *Contexts* (2007) 58-74; and Diego Rinallo, ‘Metro/Fashion/Tribes of men: negotiating the boundaries of men’s legitimate consumption’, in Bernard Cova & Robert Kozinets [ed], *Consumer Tribes* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann 2007) 76-92.

⁸⁵ See for example Ian Byrnside, ‘Six Clicks of Separation: The Legal Ramifications of Employers Using Social Networking Sites to Research Applicants’, 10(2) *Vanderbilt Journal of Entertainment and Technology Law* (2008) 458-477 and www.caslon.com.au/socialspacessprofile14.htm

Faceism has implications in the amelioration of stigma and discrimination.⁸⁶ Those implications have been largely ignored by populists outraged by notions that our society will actively inhibit prison rape or will provide each inmate with a flush toilet. One measure to assist reintegration of ex-prisoners in the community might be the provision of a decent pre-release haircut, access to good dental work and even some corrective surgery to align faces that conflict with the community's residual adherence to physiognomy, where outer shapeliness signals inner virtue and beady eyes indicate innate ineradicable dishonesty. Lose the cauliflower ears and squint, unless you're looking for a job with physiognomy fan and billionaire Ross Perot.

A skeptic might argue that the responses are largely beside the point, given that happiness appears to be independent of economic well-being, a proposition for example explored in *Culture & Subjective Well Being*⁸⁷ and *Economics & Happiness: Framing the Analysis*⁸⁸ Relativities count for more than absolute deprivation.

LP Hartley, better known for coming of age novel *The Go-Between*, grasped that in penning *Facial Justice*.⁸⁹ His 1960 dystopian fantasy, set after an apocalyptic Third World War, centres on a society where the anxieties attributable to different genetic endowment are eliminated through surgery that establishes a facial norm. Women whose faces are beautiful (alpha) or ugly (gamma) undergo plastic surgery to make them unexceptional (beta, aka pretty ugly). The scalpel banishes envy and creates equality, albeit through replacement of the natural face with a synthetic one. Tear off the face and achieve justice by applying a mask.⁹⁰ Given the history of discrimination based on appearance,⁹¹ justice might less radically involve cosmetic surgery to remove deformities or address facial injuries, with increasing interest in for example face transplants.⁹²

Public faces can, of course, be tyrannical. Helen Pringle, discussing the mix of hysteria and populist resentment evident in public 'mourning' of Princess Diana,⁹³ commented that:

⁸⁶ Chris Warhurst, Diane van den Broek, Richard Hall & Dennis Nickson, 'Lookism: The New Frontier of Industrial Discrimination?', 51(1) *Journal of Industrial Relations* (2009) 131-136.

⁸⁷ Ed Diener, *Culture & Subjective Well Being* (Cambridge: MIT Press 2003).

⁸⁸ Luigino Bruni & Pier Luigi Porta [ed], *Economics & Happiness: Framing the Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005).

⁸⁹ Leslie Poles Hartley, *Facial Justice* (London: Hamish Hamilton 1960).

⁹⁰ The theme of masked judicial entrepreneurs (an ironic bow to the blindfolded and sword-bearing *Justitia* or *Themis*) is apparent in popular culture in iconic works such as *The Mask of Zorro* and *V for Vendetta*, noted above.

⁹¹ See for example Deborah Rhode, *The Beauty Bias: The Injustice of Appearance in Life and Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010); Susan Schweik, *The Ugly Laws: Disability in Public* (New York: New York University Press 2010); William Corbett, 'The Ugly Truth about Appearance Discrimination and the Beauty of our Employment Discrimination Law', 14 *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy* (2007) 153-178; and Robert Post, 'Prejudicial Appearances: The Logic of American Antidiscrimination Law', 88(1) *California Law Review* (2000) 1-40. Exclusion from opportunities and, more egregiously, genocide, has been based on skin colour or facial geometry, with medical practitioners and biologists in Nazi Europe consigning people to forced sterilisation, euthanasia or the death camps on the basis of skin and eye colour, nose and ear shape, and facial proportions that were construed as denoting idiocy, insanity or a non-Aryan identity.

⁹² Tia Powell, 'Face Transplant: Real and Imagined Ethical Challenges', 34(1) *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* (2006) 111-115; John Barker, Niki Stamos, Allen Furr, Sean McGuire, Michael Cunningham, Osborne Wiggins, Charles Brown, Brian Gander, Claudio Maldonado & Joseph Banis, 'Research and events leading to Facial Transplantation', 34(2) *Clinics in Plastic Surgery* (2007) 233-250. For an analysis of notions of acceptable and unacceptable possessive individualism see Tony Bogdanoski, 'Every Body is Different: Regulating the Use (and Non-Use) of Cosmetic Surgery, Body Modification and Reproductive Genetic Testing', 18(2) *Griffith Law Review* (2009) 503-528.

⁹³ William Merrin, 'Crash, bang, wallop! What a picture! The death of Diana and the media', 4(1) *Mortality* (1999) 41-62; James Thomas, 'From People Power to Mass Hysteria: Media and Popular Reactions to the

Queen Elizabeth, it is often said, never shows her private face in a public place. And she has been much maligned for this. In fact, her critics often go as far as to imply that she doesn't have a private face to show: that she is, to put it bluntly, an emotional wasteland, cold and arid and barren ... Gauging the emotional temperature of people like the Queen by how readily they emote in public seems to me to be a case of sheer emotional bullying. Public faces in private places may not be very nice, but I don't think that private faces in public places are necessarily very wise at all.⁹⁴

Take me to the mother ship?

Past ages have worried that witches and demons were abroad at night, that the royalists were about to arrive and slaughter all pure-hearted French peasants as they slept, that reds were hiding under the beds in the US and Australia (or at the local reservoir, busy fluoridating the water), that Fenians and anarchists would dynamite the buildings of state, that the Illuminati or Masons controlled Wall Street and the Post Office, or that Jews somehow pulled the strings in the Vatican, the major banks and the mass media.⁹⁵

Those anxieties, however nonsensical when seen in retrospect in works such as Lefebvre's *The Great Fear of 1789*,⁹⁶ Cohn's *Europe's Inner Demons*⁹⁷ and Merriman's *The Dynamite Club*,⁹⁸ were given an edge by the very ordinariness of those onto whom people projected their fears. Those 'Others', to use a term popularised by Judith Butler in *Bodies That Matter*,⁹⁹ are particularly scary because they often look just like us or, with an economic downturn, could be us.¹⁰⁰ They have our faces.

The communist in the B-grade thriller *My Son John* (1952)¹⁰¹ thus appeared indistinguishable from his peers in Middle America and thereby more fiendish. There is no

death of Princess Diana', 11(3) *International Journal of Cultural Studies* (2008) 362-376; and Tony Walter [ed], *The Mourning For Diana* (Oxford: Berg 1999).

⁹⁴ Helen Pringle, 'Private Faces and Public Places', *Perspective*, ABC Radio National, 29 May 2003, at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/perspective/stories/s867543.htm>.

⁹⁵ In 2010 some people, such as Columbia academic Joseph Massad (*Desiring Arabs*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007) and Duke academic Jasbir Puar (*Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Durham: Duke University Press 2007), appear to have blithely replaced anxieties about the Comintern with those regarding the liberal democratic Homintern or homonationalism. Massad's anxieties about gay conspiracies – gay faces in powerful places – are evident in his 'Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World' in 14(2) *Public Culture* (2002) 361-385, an Orientalist critique of human rights advocacy which indicates that "the Gay International" is engaged in a global campaign directed at the Muslim world by the secular/Christian West. One reason for human rights advocacy is, of course, a recognition that the face of anxiety in much of the Middle East is the television image of the face of a gay man who has been publicly hung for breaching heteronormativity or a woman who is being stoned to death. See for example Darius Rejali, 'Studying a practice: an inquiry into lapidation', 10(18) *Middle East Critique* (2001) 67-100; Abdel Sidahmed, 'Problems in Contemporary Applications of Islamic Criminal Sanctions: The Penalty for Adultery in Relation to Women', 28(2) *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* (2001) 187-204; Brian Whitaker, *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2006) 123-126 and 192; and Richard Kim, 'Witnesses to an execution', *The Nation* (7 August 2005).

⁹⁶ Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789: Rural Panic in Revolutionary France* (London: NLB 1973).

⁹⁷ Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witchhunt* (London: Chatto & Windus 1975).

⁹⁸ John Merriman, *The Dynamite Club: How a Bombing in Fin-de-Siecle Paris Ignited the Age of Modern Terror* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009)

⁹⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge 1993).

¹⁰⁰ Tony Birch, 'These children have been born in an abyss', 35(123) *Australian Historical Studies* (2004) 1-15.

¹⁰¹ *My Son John* (Rainbow Productions, 1952) d. Leo McCarey. See Robin Wood, 'From Ruggles to Rally; or, America, America! The strange career of Leo McCarey', 5(3) *Film International* (2007) 30-34; and

scarlet mark of Cain on the foreheads of 'them' or their dupes. The aliens in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956, 1978)¹⁰² inhabit their human hosts, without alteration of each victim's face. The master criminal played by John Travolta in *Face/Off* (1997) goes one stage further, literally swapping faces with the hero.¹⁰³

Contemporary conspiracist David Icke in *The Biggest Secret*¹⁰⁴ worries about what lies behind the faces of the people next door, in the Reserve Bank or in Buckingham Palace. He claims that most royal families, US presidents and sundry other notables are actually tall green lizards from another planet, cunningly disguised to look just like you or I.¹⁰⁵ Faces it seems are deceiving and we should be vigilant in seeking to foil the relentless alien takeover. The comfort zone of some Australians is disturbed by perceptions that the faces of some Indigenous people do not 'look Black', unsettling ethnic stereotypes and promoting populist debate about the authenticity – and thereby authority – of the person with whom the racist disagrees.¹⁰⁶ If Indigenous people are not construed as different, and thus inferior, but are rather recognised as people, some groups will experience discomfort – anxiety – in seeking to reconcile denial of respect or rights on the basis that those people are the Other ... not like us.

Veils of Ignorance

Similar anxieties and resentments are evident in Australian debate about 'veil politics' and ethno-religious profiling. Overseas there is continuing disagreement about the legal or philosophical basis and about the practical effect of restrictions on clothing that indicates – whether to the community at large or to the wearer – a person's religious belief and/or cultural affinity.¹⁰⁷ Locally that disagreement has been reflected in legal literature,¹⁰⁸ in

Michael Rogin, 'Kiss Me Deadly: Communism, Motherhood and Cold War Movies', 6 *Representations* (1984) 1-36.

¹⁰² *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Allied Artists, 1956) d. Don Siegel; *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (United Artists, 1978) d. Philip Kaufman. See Barry Grant, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (London: BFI Publishing 2010); Katrina Mann, 'You're Next! Postwar Hegemony Besieged in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*', 44(1) *Cinema Journal* (2004) 49-68; and the cautionary Steven Sanders, 'Picturing Paranoia', in Steven Sanders [ed], *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky 2008) 55-72.

¹⁰³ *Face/Off* (Touchstone Pictures, 1997) d. John Woo. See Tony Williams, 'Face/off: Cultural and institutional violence within the American dream', 18(1) *Quarterly Review of Film & Video* (2001) 31-38.

¹⁰⁴ David Icke, *The Biggest Secret: The Book that will change the world* (Scottsdale: Bridge of Love 1999).

¹⁰⁵ For Icke see Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2006); Mark Fenster, *Conspiracy Theories: Secrecy and Power in American Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2008); and Tyson Lewis & Richard Kahn, 'The Reptoid Hypothesis: Utopian and Dystopian Representation Motifs in David Icke's Alien Conspiracy Theory', 16(1) *Utopian Studies* (2005) 45-74

¹⁰⁶ See for example Andrew Bolt, 'White is the new black', *Herald Sun* (15 April 2009) and Ann Curthoys, Ann Genovese & Alexander Reilly, *Rights and Redemption: History, Law and Indigenous People* (Sydney: UNSW Press 2008) 191-218.

¹⁰⁷ Joan Wallach Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007); Anita Allen, 'Undressing Difference: The Hijab in the West', 33 *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* (2008) 208-224; Dominic McGoldrick, *Human Rights & Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe* (Oxford: Hart 2007); Norma Moruzzi, 'Trying to Look Different: Hijab as the Self-Presentation of Social Distinctions', 28 *Comparative Studies of South Asia Africa and the Middle East* (2008) 225-234; and John Bowen, *Why the French don't like Headscarves: Islam, the State and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Anne Hewitt, 'It's not because you wear a hijab, it's because you're Muslim: Inconsistencies in South Australia's discrimination laws', 7(1) *QUT Law & Justice Journal* (2007) 57-70.

calls by politicians such as Fred Nile for 'burqa bans', and in agitation by shock-jocks or advocacy groups¹⁰⁹ that is perceived by some targets as ethno-religious vilification. Some of those anxieties are apparent on the screen (of the cinema or LCD variety), with a succession of films over the past 50 years exhibiting disquiet about what lies underneath a mask¹¹⁰ or indeed whether the 'other' actually has a face.¹¹¹

Anxiety about who is under the veil, and more broadly about veils as a symbol of a supposed rejection of 'Australian values', resonate in a political culture where there is little effective engagement with a hegemony founded on problematical claims about border protection,¹¹² national security, the virtue of de- or co-regulation and myths about what is 'Un/Australian'.¹¹³

The same anxieties are evident in references – or by implication in wariness about non-reference – to criminal suspects of 'middle eastern appearance' or 'aboriginal appearance'. Pugliese comments

Seemingly bound by definable geopolitical borders, this fault-line is global in its topological reach, encompassing a heterogeneity of bodies, identities, locations and subjects. Of Middle Eastern appearance signs my face. ... The racial fault-line that runs along this chiasmic articulation shapes both the corporeal contours of this body and the textual corpus of this essay. It is a fault-line that enunciates the conditions of possibility of the post-foundational subject – conditions that mark the impossibility of securing for oneself an identity indissociably tied to place, origin or nation. ...

As an ethnic descriptor mobilised and deployed by juridico-governmental-media apparatuses, the figure of Middle Eastern appearance has now become synonymous

¹⁰⁹ In 2009 for example a Brisbane radio announcer called on Australian governments to fine women who wear a hijab or burqa, or impose an outright ban. The rationale was that covering posed a security risk by obscuring the person's face and thereby making it difficult to identify the wearer when a crime occurs. Wearing a burqa in shopping centres was supposedly offensive and 'scared little children' -

Kids cry and get the fright of their lives with Santa Claus so you can imagine what it's like to see this just black, not really human shape, just this full-on black covering with a slit at the eyes ... There are places where it causes such a shock that a reasonable person would be entitled to feel offence.

The Queensland Retailers Association endorsed the call, arguing that "long accepted practice" requires customers to remove helmets, 'hoodies' and other 'identity obscuring headwear' when entering a shop or bank.

Retailers should not have to fear any form of retribution or backlash for requiring the removal of any obscuring headwear, including hijabs, as a condition of entry. This is about ensuring a more safe and secure retail environment for all and being able to readily identify any and all perpetrators of armed hold-ups or shop theft. (Petrina Berry & Gabrielle Dunlevy, 'Retailers back bid to ban hijab', *Brisbane Times* (15 January 2009)

The national retailers association disagreed, characterising the call as "a bit of a dog whistle".

¹¹⁰ *Phantom of the Opera* (Universal, 1943) d. Arthur Lubin and (Odyssey Entertainment, 2004) d. Joel Schumacher; *Phantom of the Paradise* (20th Century Fox, 1974) d. Brian de Palma; *Friday the 13th* (Georgetown, 1980), d. Sean Cunningham; *House of Wax* (Foy, 1953) d. Andre de Toth and (Warner Bros, 2005) d. Jaume Collet-Serra; *Maschera di cera* (Cinecittà, 1997) d. Sergi Stivaletti; *Death Mask* (Lions, 1998) d. Steve Latshaw; *Silence of the Lambs* (Orion, 1991) d. Jonathan Demme.

¹¹¹ *The Invisible Man* (Universal, 1933) d. James Whale; *Star Wars VI (Return of the Jedi)* (20th Century Fox, 1983) d. George Lucas.

¹¹² The dominant political parties, rather than acknowledging that most "illegal migrants" are citizens of affluent countries and arrive by air rather than refugees who have endured a difficult trip across the Indian Ocean, have ignored Australia's significant intake of 'boat people' under the Fraser conservative government and instead seek to outdo each other with promises of a managerialism that will deter refugees, exclude the undeserving and 'handle' refugee claims efficiently.

¹¹³ Philip Smith & Tim Phillips, 'Popular understandings of 'UnAustralian': an investigation of the national', 37(4) *Journal of Sociology* (2001) 323-339.

with criminality ... This figure has assumed a new and urgently topical role, post 9/11, in the context of the biometrics of racial profiling and the global search for terrorists.¹¹⁴

That Camera Stole My Kids

Most anxieties are not that exotic, although a trawl of internet newsgroups and websites populated by lcke fans is a chastening experience. The anxieties of some Australians instead centre on ownership of faces, more particularly in image or personality rights.¹¹⁵ That anxiety is a function of atavism, of a generation's misplaced fears about 'stranger danger' and of conflicted engagement with 'celebrity culture'.

Fin de siecle anthropologists noted the reluctance of Indigenous people in Asia, Africa, South America and elsewhere to be recorded through photography, a reluctance attributed to an atavistic belief that the camera would capture the subject's soul or otherwise reduce the person's *mana*.¹¹⁶ Over the past twenty years there have been outcries in Australia over photography of children and others in public places such as streets and beaches, panics that occur alongside incidents such as denunciation of an exhibition by photographer Bill Henson¹¹⁷ and extraordinary legislation such as the *Lex Ferguson* in New South Wales.

Irrespective of the vehemence with which claims are made, non-commercial photography in most public places is legal. There is no statutory requirement to obtain parental permission and no comprehensive national or state/territory law that prevents the photographer – or for that matter a sketch artist – from 'capturing' a child's face on film, flash card, canvas or paper. It is similarly not illegal for parents to take photographs or video their children, irrespective of whether those minors are toddlers or are clothed. Would we want all such photography to be illegal? Would the harms from criminalising photography by minors of minors – ie treating sexting as production, distribution and consumption of child pornography – be appropriate?

Judging by television ratings and gossip magazine sales, Australians love to watch or read about celebrities or the merely notorious. There is an expectation that celebrities will surrender their privacy, disrobe for the public gaze, as the price of being powerful. Consumers are complicit in stripping by the mass media of a privacy that those people would expect to enjoy themselves. That dichotomy is evident in representation of public faces captured by the paparazzi in both public and private places.

For a viable civil society in the age of Facebook and Gawker.com we need to consider the transformative effects of technology in breaking down walls and capturing faces, something that arguably needs to be addressed through both stronger privacy law, through European-style personality rights (offering celebrities and non-celebrities alike ownership of their faces) and a heightened respect for individuals on the part of journalists and publishers. The internet, like the box brownie wielded by a Malinowski or Radcliffe-Brown, does not capture an individual's soul. It may however erode the autonomy of that

¹¹⁴ Joseph Pugliese, 'The Locus of the Non: the racial fault-line of "of Middle-Eastern appearance"', 2(3) *Borderlands* (2003).

¹¹⁵ As a point of entry to the literature see Huw Beverly-Smith, *The Commercial Appropriation of Personality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002)

¹¹⁶ For a traditional view see Lucy Lippard, *Partial Recall* (New York: New Press 1992). A critique of such claims is provided in Janet Hoskins, 'The Camera as Global Vampire: The Distorted Mirror of Photography in Remote Indonesia and Elsewhere', in Mike Robinson & David Picard [ed], *The Framed World: Tourism, Tourists and Photography* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2009) 151-167; and Alex Golub, 'Copyright and Taboo', 77(3) *Anthropological Quarterly* (2004) 521-530.

¹¹⁷ David Marr, *The Henson Case* (Melbourne: Text 2008).

individual, transforming the face – and thereby the person – into a mere object for categorisation, entertainment and control. In that sense it is no different to the mugshots of the 1890s: we are all now potential images shuffled in a global panoptic sort.

The face of Armageddon

Every age has its own apocalypse, real or imagined.

Nicholas Shakespeare, in reviewing Murray Bail's biography of the great Ian Fairweather,¹¹⁸ notes that when the artist was

six months old, his father was recalled to India as medical adviser to the maharaja of Kapurthala. With reluctance, his parents left Ian in the care of two pious, alcoholic spinster aunts. He would not clap eyes again on his mother until he was nine.

The aunts took him to live in Brechin, Sydenham and Jersey. It is likely that he experienced the same traumatic incident as his siblings. One morning ... the aunts thought that the world was coming to an end and dressed the children in Sunday clothes. "The blinds were drawn and they had to wait for the end of the world, and it didn't come."

One can imagine the scene as the minutes ticked away, nothing stirred, the lace curtains were *not* ruffled by the trumpet of The Lord, the shrieks of the unrighteous as they were dragged off to the fiery pit did *not* disturb the laburnums, the sun set and eventually it was time for a consoling pot of tea or an urgent visit to the bathroom. Was there rejoicing at God's mercy or disappointment at the deferral – yet again – of Armageddon? Hope, like delusion, springs eternal. End Times enthusiast Katherine Albrecht has gained attention regarding fears that RFID tags will be used by the AntiChrist,¹¹⁹ the latter apparently having moved on from using Tax File Numbers or barcoding the foreheads of righteous and unrighteous alike. (A skeptic might wonder whether the Prince of Darkness needs to bother with crude technological fixes but, like *fin de siècle* chiliasts, let us not allow coherence to spoil a good horror story.)

The face of Armageddon, and of anxiety, for many people is more prosaic. No sulphur, no celestial trumpets, no Stanley Spencer-style *Parents Resurrecting* in Cookham, Camberwell, Carlton or Canberra. The face is instead that of the chicken, the duck, the pig and the mask on the face of a person worried about Avian Influenza.¹²⁰ Contemporary visions of the apocalypse have expanded from the 'rednecks, radioactive cinders and cannibalism' meme apparent in works such as *The Road*¹²¹ – a reiteration of *On The*

¹¹⁸ Nicholas Shakespeare, 'Fairweather and foul: art as driftwood', *Australian Literary Review* (7 July 2010) and Murray Bail, *Fairweather* 2 ed (Sydney: Murdoch Books 2009).

¹¹⁹ See Katherine Albrecht & Liz McIntyre, *The Spychips Threat: Why Christians Should Resist RFID and Electronic Surveillance* (New York: Nelson 2006). See also Rodney Ip, Katina Michael & M Michael, 'The Social Implications of Humancentric Chip Implants: A Scenario – Thy Chipdom Come, Thy Will Be Done' (Faculty of Informatics Paper 2008) (University of Wollongong); Kenneth Foster & Jan Jaeger, 'Ethical Implications of Implantable Radiofrequency Identification (RFID) Tags in Humans', 8(8) *American Journal of Bioethics* (2008) 44; and 'RFIDs' (2009) at www.caslon.com.au/rfidprofile.htm.

¹²⁰ Mike Davis, *The Monster At Our Door: The Global Threat of Avian Flu* (New York: Holt 2006). Davis' secular chiliasm is apparent in works such as *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the imagination of disaster* (New York: Vintage 1999) and *Dead Cities* (New York: New Press 2003). For a more tempered presentation see Laurie Garrett, *Betrayal of Trust: The Collapse of Global Public Health* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2003) and Philipp Sarasin, *Anthrax: Bioterror as fact and fantasy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2006).

¹²¹ Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (New York: Knopf 2006); *The Road* (2929 Productions, 2009) d. John Hillcoat.

*Beach*¹²² but without Fred Astaire and Ava Gardiner – to encompass pandemics, in which we all die with a cough and a whimper rather than a bang.

They are visions in which we are ambivalent about official faces behind glass:¹²³ the faces of the scientists in masks or biohazard bodysuits featured in *The Andromeda Strain* (bugs from space, courtesy of the Pentagon),¹²⁴ *Outbreak* (bugs from Central Africa, courtesy of the Pentagon),¹²⁵ *12 Monkeys* (homegrown nasties, courtesy of the Pentagon)¹²⁶ or sundry zombie movies.

What is reflected in that glass is timeless and existential,¹²⁷ fears the air we breathe, the water we drink or the people we touch will be invisibly enchanted ... the same enchantment that worried James I of England and several generations of learned magistrates or ecclesiastics who discerned that witches or demons were at play. Contagion and danger were/are everywhere, more frightening because invisible. Fear hides behind the white gauze facemask that is an icon of the age of bioinsecurity.¹²⁸

Reading the legible face

Anxiety may instead relate to what is not hidden: the ‘marked’ face that symbolises a defiance of authority, embodies a disregard for the person’s future wellbeing, or signals that the person is dangerous. Viewers can read or misread that face, drawing conclusions about a legibility that is founded on facial tattooing, piercing, scarification or merely the face-paint of the soccer thug and drunken AFL football fan.

Advanced societies no longer demarcate convicted criminals and slaves from the ‘respectable’ by cropping ears and noses or by use of a facial tattoo or brand (ie a scar), typically on the person’s forehead or cheek.¹²⁹ Incidents of coerced facial tattooing are rare.¹³⁰ People instead engage in ‘body modification’ of varying permanence or severity for a range of reasons, potentially increasing the anxiety – or ire – of those whom they encounter. The ‘beautiful’ (or merely convenient) face may be one that has undergone prosthetic or cosmetic tattooing, a term referring to the enhancement of lips or eyebrows

¹²² Neville Shute, *On The Beach* (London: Heinemann 1957); *On The Beach* (United Artists, 1959) d. Stanley Kramer. Participants at this seminar may recall that Kramer’s end of the world is set just a short tram ride away from our venue. See also Andrew Milner, ‘On the Beach: Apocalyptic Hedonism and the Origins of Postmodernism’, in Ian Craven [ed], *Australian Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994) 190-204.

¹²³ Mike Mitka, ‘Face Masks, Respirators Might Help During Pandemic Flu Outbreak’, 297(21) *Journal of the American Medical Association* (2007) 2338

¹²⁴ Michael Crichton, *The Andromeda Strain* (New York: Knopf 1969); *The Andromeda Strain* (Universal Pictures, 1971) d. Robert Wise. See also Georgios Pappas, Savvas Seitaridis, Nikolaeos Akritidis & Epaminondas Tsianos, ‘Infectious Diseases in Cinema: Virus Hunters and Killer Microbes’, 37(7) *Clinical Infectious Diseases* (2003) 939-942.

¹²⁵ *Outbreak* (Punch Productions, 1995) d. Wolfgang Peterson. See also Iliana Semmler, ‘Ebola Goes Pop: The Filovirus from Literature to Film’, 17(1) *Literature and Medicine* (1998) 149-174.

¹²⁶ *Twelve Monkeys* (Universal, 1995) d. Terry Gilliam.

¹²⁷ Robert Wuthnow, *Be Very Afraid: The Cultural Response to Terror, Pandemics, Environmental Devastation, Nuclear Annihilation and Other Threats* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010)

¹²⁸ Lynn Klotz & Edward Sylvester, *Breeding Bio Insecurity: How US Biodefense is Exporting Fear, Globalizing Risk and Making Us All Less Secure* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2009); and Jim Davis & Barry Schneider, *The Gathering Biological Warfare Storm* (Westport: Praeger 2004).

¹²⁹ CP Jones, ‘Stigma and tattoo’, in Jane Caplan [ed] *Written on the Body* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2000) 1-16

¹³⁰ For an example in popular culture see *Ghosts of the Civil Dead* (Correctional Services, 1988) d. John Hillcoat; set in a local supermax prison and in the same station through which some of us passed in travelling to today’s seminar venue.

rather than to the 'beauty spots' or 'eye catchers' used by elite European women during the reign of Victoria.¹³¹ Others, challenging expectations about facial normativity, have embraced facial tattooing as an assertion of modern primitivism¹³² or cultural affinity, for example contemporary revival of Moko¹³³ in New Zealand, albeit an assertion that – like practice in some S/M groups – is “so far outside the norm, so unacceptable to a wide range of different audiences, that [it] elicits extremely strong negative reactions”.¹³⁴

Those strongly negative reactions might be exploited by people who enhance their scariness, whether by signalling that they are members of criminal gangs and threatening affinity groups or that they are 'crazies, through disfigurement with a full-face spiderweb tattoo or the 'blooded' gang member teardrop under the eye tattoo.¹³⁵ Anxiety reflects the person's affiliation and personality, and the person's willingness to *write* the legible face, with Palermo for example commenting that –

It is on the skin that tattooing may express basic conflicts between a person's body and the body of society, conflicts between his or her philosophy and that of the surrounding world, but it may also express deep interests and wishes and even, at times, visionary ideas. Indeed, because the skin belongs to the body intimately and defines the self, any kind of tattoo expresses intimate feelings about the tattooed person's self, the person's relationship with others and with society. This is often present in symbolic forms observed in tattoos. A tattoo may represent rebellion, spiritual meaning or individuality. It becomes, then, an indelible statement that no one can take away, a statement that has been willingly inscribed on the skin by the same “self,” at times a counterreaction to what can be seen as social branding. It is a permanent statement of facts or feelings, conscious or unconscious, that should be viewed as intrinsic to the personality of the bearer, who, knowing the great difficulty of removing it, has to be very convinced about what he will inscribe. In other words, a tattoo often it is not a passing fancy, especially in those people who have exhibited criminal tendencies.¹³⁶

Idelibility – or questions about whether a 'modification' can be reversed – is a basis for anxiety among parents and guardians whose children are engaging in face piercing or seeking an implant ... eyebrow, lip and ear rings, tongue and cheek studs, and other implants that one acquaintance describes as 'face cutlery'.

Aside from questions about infection, remedial surgery if a piercing goes wrong, and diminished employment prospects, anxiety may relate to the symbolic value of piercings. 'Getting cut', like getting 'inked', demonstrates the bearer's autonomy, even independence (important given Australian law's restriction of piercing that has not been authorised by a parent/guardian). It also potentially signifies rebellion, a rebellion that can be seen by any viewer and that marks the bearer's adherence to – or desire for acceptance by – a 'tribe' that is independent of the parent. The ring through the nose or cheek signals to the parental cohort that time is passing ... and that soon the face viewed by the parent will be the face of death.

¹³¹ Margo DeMello, *Bodies of inscription: a cultural history of the modern tattoo community* (Durham: Duke University Press 2000); Patricia MacCormack, 'The Great Ephemeral Tattooed Skin', 12(2) *Body and Society* (2006) 57-82

¹³² Mary Kosut, 'Extreme Bodies/Extreme Culture', in Lisa Jean Moore & Mary Kosut [ed], *The Body Reader: Essential Social and Cultural Readings* (New York: New York University Press 2010) 184-200.

¹³³ Linda Nikora, Mohi Rua & Ngahua Te Awekotuku, 'Renewal and resistance: moko in contemporary New Zealand', 17(6) *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology* (2007) 477-489; and Nikora, Rua & Te Awekotuku, 'Wearing moko: Maori facial marking in today's world', in Thomas, Cole & Douglas [ed], *Tattoo: Bodies, Art and Exchange in the Pacific and the West* (London: Reaktion 2004) 191-203

¹³⁴ Erich Goode & Angus Vaile, *Extreme Deviance* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press 2008) xi

¹³⁵ George Palermo, 'Tattooing and Tattooed Criminals', 4(1) *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice* (2004) 1-26

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 8

About Face

This paper began by challenging notions that we live in a new age of anxiety – historians and sociologists such as Bourke,¹³⁷ Glassner¹³⁸ and Parish¹³⁹ demonstrate continuities rather than fundamental transformations in panics and paranoias – and that new technologies such as facial biometrics are particularly special.

We should question universal truths and look for the skull beneath the skin, the realities rather than the cosmetics or the airbrush. That involves recognition of faces as a screen on which we project cultural values and personal aspirations or anxieties. The valorisation of the face in the age of the internet – as in the age of print or broadcast television – reflects both deep-seated psychological mechanisms and expressions of power, expressions that exclude people, allow social sorting and reinforce the legitimacy of bureaucratic structures that themselves are often ‘two-faced’ or ‘faceless’.

¹³⁷ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago 2005).

¹³⁸ Barry Glassner, *The Culture Of Fear: Why Americans Are Afraid Of The Wrong Thing* (New York: Perseus 2000).

¹³⁹ Jane Parish [ed], *The Age of Anxiety: Conspiracy Theory & the Human Sciences* (Oxford: Blackwell 2001).

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