CHAPTER 5

Translated Faces
Kōbō Abe's The Face of Another

The title of Kōbō Abe's 1964 novel *The Face of Another* invokes a stranger. The titular face is at the same time seemingly attached to the interiority of the "I" and someone else's face. Or, put differently, the "I" wears the face of a stranger. The protagonist of Abe's novel is tempted by the seduction of a stable self – "No matter how many faces I have, there is no changing the fact that I am me" (FA 19) – but the text slowly puts this temptation aside. There is no facial authenticity – just a mask and, eventually, a series of masks upon masks. Initially, the tension between self and face is played out as a doubling. As we have seen repeatedly in this book, the mirror functions as a material prop for the theme of the double. The narrator stares at himself in the mirror: "A man I did not know looked coolly back at me . . . the face of a corpse" (FA 99). Although posing in a death-like mask, the stranger in the mirror is decisively not dead. Instead, he acts, forcing himself on the narrator's sense of self: "My companion raised his face too and looked back. . . . I slipped into his face. At once we fused and I became him" (FA 104). *I became him* – doubling finds its closure here. The face of the other, the face of the mask, takes over: "the mask already screened my face" (FA 107), "the mask was safely beginning to take root on my face" (FA 110). Eventually, the agency of the mask trumps the self: "The mask was apparently beginning to walk on its own and to ignore *my* plans" (FA 111). The takeaway: I am my face, which is the face of another, a stranger, and this face acts on my behalf.

This chapter asks the following interrelated questions: What happens to the form of the face after the high modernist moment? And how is the face framed in global modernism? To return to the question I posed in the Introduction: If the face is a text, what happens to it in translation? In this chapter, in an attempt to answer these questions and raise a few more, I turn to Abe's novel *The Face of Another*, in E. Dale Saunders's English translation. Engaging the novel as a comparatist, I approach it as an exemplary text of meta-modernism – a postwar novel that both uses and

retrospectively reflects on modernist themes and forms. As deployed here, the term *meta-modernism* differs from its use by David James and Urmila Seshagiri, who use it to describe contemporary texts, written by authors like J. M. Coetzee or Zadie Smith, who "reassess and remobilize narratives of modernism."[1] The vignettes closing the chapters of this book frame meta-modernist moments in James and Seshagiri's sense, witnessing the invocation of modernist forms and themes in the contemporary arts, whether literary or visual arts. This chapter expands the purview of the concept of meta-modernism through an engagement with Abe's novel as a text that remobilizes the modernist form of the face in 1960s Japan. The "narrative of modernism" that *The Face of Another* enlists is the story the chapters of this book have traced. The novel belongs in the meta-modernist archive in that it reanimates early twentieth-century literary experiments with the face. As its title announces, Abe's novel is invested in the question of the face, which it approaches through a self-reflexive twist on the figure of the mask, which in turn I read as a supplement to the modernist predicament I traced in previous chapters. While the text enlists medicine in its experimentation with the face, alluding to the possibility of a face transplant and cosmetic surgery, it remains in an intertextual relation to the history of literary experimentations with masks, especially the modernist moment in this history.

Japanese literature has produced a gallery of experiments with the trope of the mask. Prominently, Yukio Mishima's 1949 *Confessions of a Mask* constructs a social mask designed to "normalize" the narrator's homosexuality.[2] *The Face of Another* displays familiarity with such invocations of the mask, as well as the tradition of Noh masks, but remains particularly interested in global modernist intertextual precursors. In his essays and interviews, Abe has insistently invoked such figures as crucial to his formation as a writer. *The Face of Another* conjures them both thematically and formally. As a result, Abe's work has long been read in a comparative framework. In fact, as Richard F. Calichman's recent polemic suggests, methodological debates concerning the framing of Japanese literature in a global or internationalizing context often occur around Abe's oeuvre.[3] This chapter explores the question of how the Euro-Atlantic form of the face registers and is hybridized in the work of a Japanese-language author and in a historical context explicitly inviting a comparatist reading. In fact, John Frow has theorized the face as constitutive of the concept of literary character starting from a reading of *The Face of Another*.[4]

Abe's novel starts from a familiar premise in popular culture, especially in cinema: The protagonist, who doubles as the narrator, is a scientist.

He has an accident in his lab, which destroys his face.[5] Following this accident, he becomes a man without a face. "I had lost my face," he notes matter-of-factly (FA 31). A series of philosophical reflections follow, musing on the possibility of living without a face: "But where have you seen a man without a face?" (FA 27). Social life, in particular, seems to demand a face: "The expression is something like an equation by which we show our relationship with others. It's a roadway between oneself and others" (FA 27). Attuned to a theory of the face inherited from the history of emotion and reconfigured by modern psychology, the narrator considers the face the site of expression (in fact, the novel often conflates face and expression). As such, the face functions as the interface of the social.[6] Without such a "roadway," a bridge of sorts, the protagonist's life is infused with one overwhelming affect – loneliness, a central preoccupation in Abe's work.[7]

In narrative terms, how can the protagonist overcome the initial situation of the novel, the facial accident? How can he – a scientist – solve the problem of the damaged face? Within the science fiction plot, a surgeon named K., who has produced life-like prosthetic hands (proxies for faces), offers the protagonist a mask, which functions narratively like a face transplant. The scientist's agency is enlisted in deciding what *kind* of face he wants and finding a donor willing to sell him a face. Once the mask becomes the protagonist's face, he walks around the city with the face of another. The plot anticipates and prefigures the medical history of face transplants (the first full face transplant was performed in 2010), which would raise eerily similar questions about the otherness of the face.[8] In a second step, the protagonist proceeds to explore the commercial aspects of the transaction: "I would have to find some person who looked as if he might sell me the surface of his face" (FA 66).[9] One cannot just "invent" a face, as is the case with Marcel Proust's Odette; one has to pay for the transaction. Importantly, once equipped with a plastic face, Abe's protagonist undergoes a metamorphosis; he becomes both normal and a cyborg of sorts. No longer in the illusion that the body is a biological datum, he is forced to acknowledge the inhuman element within his face. This inhumanity comes across as youth, a leitmotif in this book. The development warrants the invention of a new persona: The protagonist introduces himself to his neighbors as his younger brother (FA 110).[10]

In the urban environment, the protagonist's face literalizes the predicament of the flaneur's anonymity: He scrutinizes the faces of others, but he himself is invisible, or so he thinks. "People, however, can never separate to be seen and to see," Abe declares in an interview, adding, "There is always

to see *and* to be seen together."[11] In *The Face of Another*, the author designs a plot whereby the link between seeing and being seen is severed. A number of bio-ethical challenges follow: Does someone who becomes unrecognizable as a face need to follow "the rules"? Why not steal? Why not kill? Gendered violence seems to be particularly tempting. The test for this ethical predicament is the seduction of the protagonist's estranged wife: "I had to make you fall in love with the mask" (FA 136). A triadic scene of jealousy develops, whereby the protagonist becomes jealous of "the mask" (his face post-transplant). The novel ends with the protagonist's wife acknowledging that she has seen through the mask all along, and her departure. Further emotional destitution of the protagonist ensues, as well as the possibility of a new act – possibly a crime, but perhaps a mode of action altogether new to the logic of the novel.

Genre-wise, *The Face of Another* mixes elements of science fiction, the gothic, and the philosophical novel.[12] Its structure enlists the conceit of the "notebook" (Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *Notes from the Underground* functions as an intertext). The novel consists of three notebooks of different colors, which the protagonist writes as an extended letter to his estranged wife. Narratively, the notes are addressed to "you" (estranged wife and dear reader alike). They perform a distinction between the "I" writing and "the mask" (the visual aspect of the protagonist's face): "One day I casually accompanied the mask out, as if allowing a good child out on its own . . . the mask and I were to fall into an extraordinary dilemma" (FA 144–45). The crafted literariness of the notes is acknowledged through the admission that they involve "rewriting, deleting and revising" (FA 4). Italicized comments and meta-reflections are added to the notebooks in the process of editing, providing counterpoints to the narrator's initial reflections and reminders of the multiple temporalities of the text. Importantly, the notes simultaneously function as an apology (FA 5), pseudo-confessions purporting to explain the ethical concerns raised. As in Dostoyevsky's *Notes*, the notetaker provocatively reveals ethical ambiguity, embracing his narrative status as an antihero. Diary-like, the notes constitute a platform for self-analysis – an experiment in what it means to live with the face of another. A short response from the protagonist's wife, rejecting the narrator's apology, followed by a postscript by the narrator ("a record for me alone" [FA 213]), complete the novel.

Like the other texts in the archive of this book, *The Face of Another* is intermedial. The English translation is accompanied by a series of small drawings by Robert Steele Wallace. Placed at the beginning of each chapter, each drawing consists of a face-like script: the face as a form of

writing (the addition of these drawings in the English translation functions as a reminder that the comparatist reader is faced with the translator's interpretation of the text). Within the narrative diegesis, in its attempt to describe the face of the protagonist, the novel mentions Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso, the names of the painters amplifying the arc of global modernism underlying the novel. In one episode, the protagonist, at this point in the narrative with his face bandaged, is approached by a young woman in his office, who shows him an image in an art book: "a line drawing by Paul Klee entitled *False Face* . . . expressionless to the point of cruelty . . . the picture appeared to be my very own face seen through the girl's eyes. A false face, seen but unable to look back" (FA 14–15). In order to invoke a "disfigured" face, doubling as a "false face," the text references a European painting, which it deploys as a minimalist ekphrasis. All in all, the novel dramatizing the face of the other cannot but mix the textual and the visual arts.

Finally, toward the end of the novel, the narrator recalls a film about a young woman with a facial injury, a survivor of the atomic bomb. The film, which ends with her suicide, functions as a foil for the narrative of the novel, while at the same time amplifying its intermediality.[13] In one scene, upon returning from the movies, the protagonist states: "[I]t's probably a good thing to go to the movies occasionally. The whole audience puts on the actor's face. No one needs his own. A movie's a place where you pay your money to exchange faces for a while" (FA 87–88). In other words, the protagonist knows about "the face of another" from the experience of spectatorship; suture to cinematic narrative is likened to an exchange of faces. In cutting between the narrative of the man without a face and the fiction-within-fiction woman with a damaged face, the novel draws attention to the cinematic nature of the modern face – the interchangeability, as Gilles Deleuze would have it, of face and close-up.[14] At the level of reception, the 1966 cinematic adaptation of *The Face of Another,* directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara in collaboration with Abe, has come to shadow the text such that the reader's experience of the novel is intertwined with that of the film. In Teshigahara's film, the cut between the film-within-film and narrative diegesis is barely noticeable. The blurring of this distinction returns us to the intermedial nature of Abe's literary text, written and published at a time of heightened cinematic interest in the face and its transformations.[15]

Like the texts analyzed in previous chapters, *The Face of Another* is invested in questions of gender – at multiple levels. Narratively, the protagonist's estranged wife is the reader of the text produced by the

man with the face of another. As a fictional reader, she mediates between the text and its own reader. In turn, the letter from the protagonist's estranged wife is the only section of the novel *presented* (perhaps as a ploy) as written by someone other than the protagonist, requiring a different angle of reading from the reader of the novel.[16] This letter functions narratively as an other to the rest of the text, appropriately ending in "half lines of erasures, obliterated to the point of illegibility" (FA 224). At the level of the plot, as the protagonist yearns for the recognition of his face as a face, he calls upon her, specifically, to perform this recognition. She does, but not in the terms he establishes. She leaves him at the end of the novel, refusing the gendered role as designated consoler.

At yet another level, the novel frames the question of facial authenticity in relation to gender. The protagonist's estranged wife reminds him that, historically, women have been encouraged to wear makeup and are thus familiar with masks. Authenticity is beyond the point; women's faces are always already offered up for the gaze of others: "[W]e never try to conceal the fact that it is makeup" (FA 223). As the English idiomatic expression has it, women who wear makeup "put on their face" on a daily basis. In many contexts, they are expected to present themselves in full makeup. Rebecca Copeland has traced the use of makeup in the work and life of modernist Japanese women writers, Uno Chiyo most prominently, who framed makeup as a mask – for female characters and women writers alike. Importantly, Uno wrote a novel titled *The Painted Face* (1921), in which a young woman, a waitress, is abandoned by her lover when he sees her without makeup.[17] Historically, women's "masking" through makeup included the use of powder to whiten darker complexions, with the desire for whiteness hybridizing local and global racial taxonomies.[18] What the novel refers to as the "naked face" is thus always already a gendered and racialized face, and so is the dilemma *The Face of Another* presents.

Modernity, Alienation, Self

In the Introduction to this book, I proposed that a reading of Georg Simmel's essay "The Aesthetic Significance of the Face" can function as an entry point into the question of the face in modernity.[19] Alienation is a crucial element of subjectivity in the modern world, especially its urban settings – for Simmel and, we will see, for Abe. Much as it has been imagined as a proxy for presence, the face of another is, among other things, a screen of alienation. In a meta-modernist key, the novel's engagement with the face dramatizes the intimacy of alienation in the modern

world. One is alienated from society; and one is alienated from one's sense of self, *even* from one's own face.[20]

The leitmotif of facial alienation participates in an intertextual dialogue with the work of Franz Kafka. "I was really shocked when I read him [Kafka] for the first time," Abe declares in an interview. "I felt a sense of relatedness, of someone very close to me."[21] In addition to the convention of using nameless characters or acronyms, or characters losing their names, Abe's novel shares with Kafka's oeuvre a preoccupation with metamorphosis, as well as a carefully crafted affect of doom.[22] Although Abe's protagonist is in his home city, he is very much a stranger; his very existence is questioned. Recall Kafka's *The Castle*: "You're nothing. Unfortunately, however, you are a stranger."[23] Filtered through the scientist's perception, the routine everyday of the modern city is defamiliarized to the point of grotesqueness. Appearances – the sight of a face – acquire value according to tacit rules. As in *The Castle*, the site of ethics in Abe's novel is occupied by a female character, who consents to a seduction scene into which she is tricked. In both, love is a power game. In a reference to *The Trial*, the protagonist stages a scene of confession, asking for his wife to serve as judge, only to add that a verdict has always already been passed. If we are inclined to see the connection to Kafka strictly as a matter of a gloomy mood, however, Abe is quick to remind us that, as a careful reader of Kafka, he knows how to seamlessly weave horror and laughter.[24] The monstrosity of the face is entangled in this predicament.[25]

It matters, in the context of the novel's intermedial and intertextual reflections, that the new face the protagonist receives, the face of the other, is made of plastic. At stake is, first, the conceit of technical precision tied to the novel's science fiction plot. Christopher Bolton writes: "Each stage in the mask's construction is described in painstaking technical detail, from the analysis of facial physiognomy that goes into the planning, through the casting of the metal molds and the characteristics of the different plastics that form the mask, to the details of implanting the facial hair and affixing the mask to the face."[26] Second, plasticity figures the mutability and flexibility of the modern subject. The modernist reflection on the multiplicity of the self finds its dramatization in a plastic self, which embraces its appurtenance to consumer culture: *Even* faces are made of plastic. Furthermore, a significant reference point for the history of cosmetic surgery explored in Chapter 1 is the World War I development of techniques to fix the faces of wounded soldiers. Later on facial prostheses would start using plastic and often took the form of sculpted masks.[27] Third, the plastic face functions as a reflection on "petromodernity," where

plastic is the quintessential material threating the environment.[28] That our faces would be made of plastic, that in a sense we *are* plastic, constitutes the ultimate irony of the Anthropocene – a theme of interest to Abe throughout his work.

The accident plot of the novel initially presents the face motif as exceptional, the predicament of a marginal subject. As the novel progresses, however, reflections on the protagonist's face acquire a generalizing force: "The fate of having lost my face and of being obliged to depend on a mask was in itself not exceptional, but it was rather a destiny I shared with contemporary man, wasn't it?" (FA 147). Once the protagonist acknowledges this "destiny," he begins to speculate on its future implications: "If covering our bodies with clothes represents a cultural step forward, there is no guarantee that in the future masks will not be taken equally for granted.... I wonder if a mask, being universal, enhances our relation with others more than does the naked face" (FA 14). The formulation flips the premise of the face as a roadway between self and other. Indeed, in the recent COVID-19 pandemic, wearing a mask was often read as a sign of sociality and responsibility, confirming that in some situations a mask enhances one's relations with others. Since the "naked face" is irredeemably lost, the masks we are given and the masks we produce offer the promise or illusion of a bridge to others. Eventually, the protagonist arrives at the conclusion that his current situation (having received a facial transplant) is merely an amplification of a facial predicament he inhabited before his accident: "Shouldn't I ultimately reconcile myself to the idea that my original face too was a kind of disguise and, without struggling, be content with the present state of things?" (FA 90). Moreover, he realizes that the face of his estranged wife, the so-called organic face, is also a mask: "The fact has been made clear that your face – the mobile, harmonious type – was a mask too" (FA 150). The *you* here doubles as the *you* of the reader – who becomes an other in a series of others invoked by the text. The implication is clear: Your face, dear reader, is also a mask; you too are in disguise. Unlike Abe's narrator, however, you, having read *The Face of Another*, including the note from the protagonist's wife, have the option of handling the mask as an acknowledged fiction or series of fictions.

Choose Your Own Face

We are once again circling back to Mina Loy's "Auto-Facial-Construction."[29] If given the opportunity to choose your face, what kind of face would you choose? Note that the question implies that faces come

in types, a presupposition framed and confirmed by Abe's novel. The protagonist conducts extensive research on the literature on faces, focusing his attention on one author in particular, Henri Boulan. Two of his books (invented by Abe) are relevant, one titled, in French in the Japanese text and in the English translation, *Le visage*; the other, *Les eléments d'expression.* The first describes an elaborate typology of faces; the second, based on evidentiary photography, offers a geometry of facial muscles. The first witnesses the travels of Western physiognomy to Japan; the second, the travels of pathognomy, a system of facial expression. The novel thus explicitly invokes the European physiognomic tradition in its construction of the protagonist's new face. Physiognomy, however, is not strictly a European or Euro-Atlantic affair. Chinese physiognomy was a traveling discourse in the early modern period; Xing Wang documents the presence of multiple editions of *The Compendium of Divine Physiognomy* in Japan.[30] In turn, Japanese imperialism produced its own system of facial classification, hybridizing pan-Asian and European physiognomic taxonomies. Heterogenous physiognomic traditions combine to create the typology that informs that creation of the protagonist's face in Abe's novel.

Abe's text frames questions of race at the core of this physiognomic culture. If in previous chapters we have seen Woolf invoke race in relation to her character passing for Roma, Mann construct a gallery of racialized characters in Venice, Proust draw a portrait of Odette against an Orientalist background, and Stein borrow a mask Picasso used as a bridge toward African art, Abe's awareness of how race inflects the face in the context of Japan comes from debates about migration, specifically in relation to Korea. Migration from the Korean peninsula to Japan is entangled with the history of Japanese colonialism, itself in a complex inter-imperial relation to European empires (British and Russian), other East Asian imperial formations (China), and the postwar American presence in Japan.[31] The novel references the postwar project of "repatriation" of Koreans, which targeted Koreans in Japan who had been forcibly relocated following Japan's annexation of Korea.[32] Abe's novel frames Korean migrants' interpellation in Japan in terms of race, which in turn it elaborates through a relational account of the workings of race in the United States. In one scene, the protagonist watches the news and identifies with protesters in the 1964 Harlem Riots, which were widely reported on Japanese television and became a theme in the Japanese literature of the period.[33] The Harlem protesters are, the protagonist concludes, "like me without faces" (FA 218). While the comparison has clear limits and risks, the text's reliance on a global comparative arc that sanctions some faces

while erasing others remains eloquent. Citizenship and citizenship rights are tied to the visibility of the face. In Japan, such faces are often Korean.

The Korean minor characters in Abe's novel are other in a qualitatively different way from other others. Their faces are the face of another as a posited outsider to the nation. In a consequential scene, the narrator decides to eat in a Korean restaurant, hoping that Koreans would be less likely to notice his face, thus making it easier for him to pass. He scans the restaurant and immediately reads the scene: "two of them were indistinguishable from Japanese" (FA 112). He decides the two men are not Japanese, however, because they speak Korean. In the next move in the composition of the scene, one of the men just identified as Korean through his language proceeds to insult a waitress, in Japanese, with the sentence, "You've got the face of a Korean country girl" (FA 113). Now the narrator is confused: Does the insult come from a Japanese or a Korean man? Does the woman thus interpellated speak Korean or Japanese, or both? In what relation is the protagonist, whose newly designed face, following hybridized European physiognomic models, nonetheless presumably recommends him as more Japanese, to the interpellation performed by the insult? Who is an insider and who is an outsider? The scene leaves these questions in suspense, but it succeeds in staging a racial field that, among other things, operates as a reading of faces, a semiotic system itself mapped on language use.

The episode gives pause to the narrator, who has at this point been speculating about the semiotics of the face for more than a hundred pages. Abe's protagonist, having just read the faces of those present, is overwhelmed with a feeling of shame for having assumed familiarity with what he calls "facial prejudice." Having felt pity for himself for his facial difference, he realizes that race is enlisted in the production of another kind of difference. Familiar with a Japanese discourse of types, he deplores the reading of Korean faces in a racializing key. He is forced to admit that, much as he has described his predicament following his accident as tragic, race centrally inflects his evolving sense of the face. Reflecting on his perception of the Korean woman stereotyped as a country girl, he concludes: "Even though we were both objects of prejudice there was a difference between their case and mine" (FA 114). The scene offers a critique of racial facialization, doubling as an acknowledgment of its relational pervasiveness.

Huei-Ying Kuo argues that "Japan applied a scientific taxonomy, as well as various tenets from British anthropology, American zoology, German eugenic politics and social Darwinism, among others, in order to perceive

its Asian neighbors as inferior peoples compared to the West." For Huei-Ying, the circulation of these varied discourses led to "a growing hybridization of constructions of race theories and racist policies" – a mix of Western and Asian modes of racial classification.[34] Against this historical background, Kim Hyewon has documented the development of a mode of physiognomy in early twentieth-century Japan, an "anthropology of faces" functioning as a racial technology of imperial control.[35] In contact with European physiognomy, state-sponsored Japanese physiognomy took on a life of its own. It involved, as Hyewon shows, the use of forensic photography to archive and classify the face of "ideological criminals" in occupied Korea. Such photographs circulated in Korean media, becoming objects of intense debate. A physiognomic project conducted by anthropologists at the University of Tokyo attempted to classify ethnic groups under Japanese control into types and outline the specific features of "the Japanese race."[36] "Photography," Hyewon states, "came to mark, theorize, and classify social ethnic others – a system of control concurrent with the rapid expansion of Japanese imperialism in the first half of the twentieth century."[37] An extended collection of images of Korean immigrants living in Japan was channeled into a physiognomic archive. Importantly, the imperial "physiognomic gaze" was often thwarted by Koreans who were thought to pass for Japanese. As Hyewon argues, the project had long-lasting impact, creating a body of "physiognomic readers" – in both Japan and Korea.[38] Tina M. Campt's ethical project of "listening to images" imposes itself in this context, an attempt to recover how subjects dehumanized by imperial photographic technologies reappropriate images of themselves.[39] In the context of Abe's *The Face of Another*, this history helps explain the deep sense of long-term familiarity with physiognomic facial types at work in the scene in the Korean restaurant.

A version of this physiognomic tradition found an echo in the growth of cosmetic surgery in Japan starting in the early twentieth century and with renewed force following World War II. Kim Brandt documents the layering of multiple imperial legacies (European, Japanese, US) and their intersecting racial taxonomies that produced the perceived need to alter faces.[40] Brandt writes that "the popularity of cosmetic surgery in 1950s Japan must be understood as part of the much longer, broader processes that began in the 1800s, whereby the great powers of Western Europe and later the United States established a manifold, global dominance, and societies all over the world came to associate 'the West' with progress and modernity."[41] Women's appearance, in particular, was a testing ground for Japanese modernity. Demand for cosmetic surgery amplified

in the 1950s, following an infusion of Euro-American mass culture. It was claimed to have a democratizing force, promising an emancipation from "facial destiny."[42] Brandt elaborates: "Older schemes of racial classification associated with European colonialism – and reinforced by neocolonial American power – continued to assign greatest value to features thought to be characteristic of the Nordic-style white body, such as lighter skin and hair, relatively long legs, prominent noses, and double-lidded eyes."[43] In particular, women seeking jobs in the service industries or entering the marriage market wanted to alter their faces. But the market for cosmetic surgery also targeted men. In 1950s Japan, requests for Europeanizing eyelids and for nose alterations predominated. Eyes, in particular, were thought to be key to an expressive face. Surgeons followed medical procedures developed in late nineteenth-century Europe, which were adapted and performed in Japan starting in the early twentieth century. They explicitly cited European physiognomic manuals as reference for their practice. They also claimed that the "true Japanese type" displayed features closer to white faces.[44] Developments in cosmetic surgery in Japan thus both aligned with and attempted to intervene in a complex racial field that included elements of Western and pan-Asian physiognomy.

While Abe's protagonist does not undergo cosmetic surgery, the mask he receives and his use of it function in proximity to cultural debates pertaining to cosmetic surgery. In fact, cosmetic surgery appears thematically in the novel – only to be put aside as a narrative solution. Early in the novel, the protagonist recalls a newspaper story concerning "a Korean with Japanese blood, who in order to look more like a Korean went through the trouble of undergoing plastic surgery" (FA 32). The statement echoes debates about the cosmetic industry in Korea after the war, which set out to distinguish newly defined "Korean faces" from the Japanese-imposed classification.[45] The story serves as a reminder that the protagonist could undergo cosmetic surgery, a leitmotif in popular science fiction literature. The mask he helps construct is therefore a choice adjacent to but distinct from cosmetic surgery. But in choosing a new face, he is presented with the same taxonomic choices offered by cosmetic surgery. Hyewon's study of the Japanese physiognomic system and Brandt's history of cosmetic surgery in Japan offer a background against which to understand these choices.

The Traveling Face

Trained as a scientist and working concomitantly as a playwright and photographer, Abe published *The Face of Another* in 1964. The film

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adapted from the novel, directed by Hiroshi Teshigahara, was released in 1966. E. Dale Saunders's translation into English appeared the same year (it was re-released by Penguin Classics in 2006). The novel belongs to a period after the modernist moment that Mann, Proust, Woolf, and Stein represent. And yet, although scholars of Japanese literature largely consider Abe a postwar and sometimes postmodern author, both the novel's form and its thematic engagement with the face *feel* modernist – at least to a comparatist. Among the conceptual moves it allows, as Michael D'Arcy and Mathias Nilges argue, meta-modernism "suggests a departure from the postmodern."[46] Indeed, it is on account of such a departure that recent scholarship in modernist studies has challenged us to expand the historical purview of modernism, especially a modernism understood as having always already been produced in an international frame.

Born in 1924 in Tokyo, Japan, Abe grew up in Manchuria, where his father was a physician, following Japan's seizing of Manchuria from China in 1931. He remembered his childhood as infused with the pidgin language around him, a mix of Chinese and Japanese. He would later become interested in processes of creolization.[47] Upon his return to Japan in 1946, Abe studied medicine. His first literary readings were translations; Abe retained a special sense of appreciation for translators throughout his life. On account of this background, he did not feel "at home" in either Manchuria or Japan – or, indeed, anywhere else. He later immersed himself in the study of Chinese, English, and German. Echoing other modernists invested in framing the afterlives of empire, Abe thought of himself as an exile: "Japanese readers don't understand me better or worse than anyone else. Place has no role for me. I am rootless."[48] He remained a vocal critic of nationalism, including literary varieties of nationalism (what we have come to call "methodological nationalisms"), throughout his career.[49] A member of the communist party, he expressed his solidarity with Polish workers and opposed the Soviet invasion of Hungary; he was expelled from the party in 1962.[50] His writing, however, lent itself to translations on both sides of the iron curtain (*Woman in the Dunes* [1962] was translated into more than twenty languages). According to Bolton, Abe received more critical attention outside Japan than within the country.[51]

We can, then, ask alongside Abe's *The Face of Another*: How does the face travel within global modernism?[52] Specifically, how does it travel between Europe and Japan? One answer, as we have seen, points to Abe's internationalizing biography and his eclectic readings in global modernism – Poe, Kafka, Rilke, Beckett, Lu Xun. In interviews, Abe referenced a Western Romantic tradition of thinking about social masks.[53]

Three other answers can supplement this biographical account: First, translation from European literature was central to the rise of the modern novel in Japan in the generation preceding Abe (Natsume Sōseki, Futabatei Shimei). Translation from Russian literature, in particular, was central to the development of the Japanese literary vernacular in this period.[54] The literary preoccupation with face this book has traced, including its physiognomic dimensions, traveled to Japan on this translational infrastructure. Second, James Siegel has traced the relevance of Simmel's "The Aesthetic Significance of the Face" in Japan, pointing to the globalizing travels of a system of facial expression. An anthropologist, Siegel focuses on the televised faces of baseball players in Japan, who seem to be quoting expressions learned from American players. The argument echoes the work of other anthropologists who argued, against influential universalist arguments, that exposure to global popular culture has led to the increased homogenization of expression.[55] The global circulation of cinema in the postwar period has been particularly salient to this development. Third, and most importantly for literary studies, a dialogue with Kōjin Karatani's study of the origins of Japanese literature frames the novel genre as a traveling technology of facialization. It bears repeating that not all faces in Japanese literature belong to this "traveling culture."[56] Abe's work is explicit about its internationalizing dimensions and resistance to co-optation by national literary history. But, while specific to Abe, these interrelated nodes of circulation offer a foundation for an account of the circulation of the form of the face, which would need to be revised for other Japanese texts and in other cultural geographies.

Let us pause over the third argument above: Kōjin Karatani's *Origins of Japanese Literature* (1980), one of the most influential theories of the global novel, posits as a necessary starting point in a narrative of origins the "historicity of the very term 'literature.'"[57] The concept of literature is not a universal a priori; one needs to historicize its development, alongside concepts like history ("hidden ethnocentrism of the 'history' that emerged in nineteenth century Europe"). The next step in Karatani's argument historicizes the concept of the self: "the 'inner self' was historical."[58] Importantly, for Karatani, in the Meiji period the newly "discovered" notion of self was anchored in a distinction between interiority and exteriority: "Interiority was not always there. It was what came to be expressed as the result of an inversion of a semiotic constellation. But once 'interiority' existed, the naked face was seen as 'expressing' it."[59] Setting aside the fact that there was interiority in Japanese literature before this moment, as well as cultural exchange (pre-Meiji Japan was not a closed

cultural system), Karatani's argument remains eloquent in its suggestion that, in order for this notion of interiority to be operative in the Japanese-language novel, it needed to be exteriorized as face. A function of a semiotic shift that came with a Western notion of literature, the face as surface needed to be "discovered," in time sedimenting as the very materiality of exteriority. The modern period, thus historicized in the Japanese cultural geography (other scholars have added to and qualified Karatani's account), brings the premise of thinking the face as a linchpin between the inside and outside of the subject – a familiar leitmotif in this book.[60]

For Karatani, one of the features of the novel genre that lends itself to circulation between the Euro-Atlantic world and Japan is the form of the face. In Japanese early modern theater, he emphasizes, actors wore heavy makeup: "The human face was originally a figure ... and it was only through a process of inversion that the 'face to face' came into view."[61] Of course, Japanese visual culture included representations of faces before the Meiji period. What Karatani means is that, before this modern shift, there was no face as understood in the Western semiotic system anchored in facialization. The face, in this sense, came to Japan at a particular historical junction, via literature. The Meiji era brought about a semiotic shift (what Karatani calls "an inversion of a semiotic constellation") tied to the use of the vernacular in literature. With it came the "regime of signs" called facialization, which sees the "invention" of the face, what Karatani calls the naked or the real face.[62] It also sees the invention of a particular concept of face-to-face as a mode of literary encounter.

A generation after the Meiji writers, Abe is fully aware of the historicity of the face he frames in *The Face of Another*. In fact, Abe's narrator's philosophizing at times sounds like Karatani: "Man has gone through periods of covering up the face, like the ladies in *The Tale of Genji* or veiled Arabian women, and at last we arrived at the period of the real face. Of course I do not claim that this is progress" (FA 228). What Abe calls "the real face" is the face as "discovered," in Karatani's terms, in the Meiji period. This is a quintessentially "modern face," as Brandt describes it: "The modern face, which first began to appear among intellectuals in urban Japan during the 1910s and 1920s and then spread throughout society in the postwar era, is characterized primarily by individuality and expressiveness."[63] Unlike other cultural actors, who believed in the modernity of the nation through the modernity of the face, Abe frames the development without positing a narrative of progress.

In this "period of the real face," the conviction that expression is the signboard of interiority and that without expression one does not have

access to sociality is so "natural" that Abe's novel needs to design an elaborate science fiction scheme to undermine it. As we have seen, the archive the protagonist draws on in his descriptions of his face and his decision-making about his new face is European (Klee, Picasso, Kafka, French books on facial types). Abe's use of the trope of the mask is thus not a return to a premodern Japanese mask. The Noh masks the protagonist sees in an exhibit were "rediscovered" in the Meiji period.[64] The mask belongs to a modern literary scene, a meta-commentary on the invention of the naked face. It is this modern naked face, invoked as the site of the face-to-face, that acquires a mask – a modern mask. Karatani's theory of Japanese literature offers a background against which to understand Abe's meta-modernist investment in the face as mask.[65] As we have seen in Chapter 1, the young actor who played Tadzio in *Death in Venice* in 1971, Björn Andrésen, became "the first idol from the West" in Japan on account of a traveling "perfect face" that could serve as a model for manga characters. This predicament reveals a complex and multidirectional traffic in faces facilitated, as Karatani argues, by literature.

Karatani writes about "the discovery of the face" having been concomitant with a shift in writing anchored in the use of the vernacular, a determining factor of Japanese modernity. Here is Brett de Bary's explication of Karatani's concept of facialization: "Insofar as there is an 'inner' or 'hidden' meaning which the naked face must now 'express,' Karatani sees the plain face of Meiji *kabuki* as parallel to the cipher which, in a phonetic system, is subordinated to the vocalized sound which it 'expresses.'"[66] The face – the newly discovered plain face – becomes a text and, in a second step, a metaphor for textuality more broadly. The insight resonates with a node in Abe's *The Face of Another*, when his protagonist reflects: "Everything has a face; it's not limited to actors. Even a fish, or an insect – they all have faces. Even chairs and tables have something corresponding to a face" (FA 88). In turn, in the context of this book, Abe's and Karatani's reflections on the face as text resonate with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, particularly the chapter on faciality as a semiotic system.[67] Three of Deleuze and Guattari's formulations return with renewed force: "The signifier is always facialized [*visagéifié*]";[68] "the face is not a universal";[69] and "there is a face-landscape aggregate [*ensemble visage-paysage*] proper to the novel."[70] We have already touched on the first and the third principles. It is highly consequential to pause over the second: Much as the traveling face might tempt us with the premise of universality, the face is not a universal – neither for Abe nor for Karatani. It can nevertheless travel, it can be quoted, it can be translated. And it has its own historicity.

Karatani published *Origins* in 1980, the same year as *A Thousand Plateaus*, and a year after Paul de Man's essay "Autobiography as Effacement." In his 1993 introduction to de Bary's English translation of *Origins*, titled "In the Mirror of Alternate Modernities," Fredric Jameson emphasizes that the book developed its theory of faciality independent of Deleuze and Guattari – on the basis of Japanese literature. Jameson writes: "The reader – having begun by observing Japan – now finds Japanese theory observing him, and waiting for his own drawing of the consequences . . . what 'application' this kind of thinking might have for our own (even more 'modern,' modernized, and modernist) texts. This is an excellent and healthy geopolitical reversal."[71] One need not identify with Jameson's figure of the reader to welcome the reversal whereby a Japanese theory of the novel reflects the semiotic system we call facialization back to the Euro-Atlantic modernist tradition.

The question of when such a reversal became possible remains open-ended. Let us remember that Ezra Pound's poem, "In a Station of the Metro" (1913), written as a haiku, imagined the modernist face through a Japanese detour. As Andrew Houwen argues, haikus were "reinvented" in Meiji Japan; one motivation for this reinvention was Japanese intellectuals' interest in Herbert Spenser's "unity of image" principle.[72] In a period of profound transformation, haikus were revalued (as were Noh plays), on account of a perceived approximation of an aesthetic model developed in dialogue with Western aesthetics, specifically the principle of unity. In turn, Pound became invested in "one-image" poems, which he imagined as a counterpoint to a method of overlaying two elements he observed in the painting of James McNeill Whistler, himself an admirer of Japanese prints.[73] The image that unites "In a Station of the Metro" is that of a face/petal: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd: / Petals on a wet, black bough." The quintessential "image" is a face, or rather a series of faces in an urban crowd, juxtaposed to the temporary beauty of a petal (a recurrent theme in traveling haikus of the time).[74] They appear in the metro (a modern means of transportation, as theorized by Simmel), like ghosts, for an instant.[75] Likening himself to a painter in his aesthetic struggles (much like Gertrude Stein), Pound thought the "significance" of his poem might only be understood in a Japan that, despite its accelerating modernity, he imagined as resisting modernizing forces.[76] In other words, in the "high" modernist moment, Pound looked to Japan for a renewal of formal strategies of framing the face.[77]

If the modern novel produced and the modernist novel challenged a certain notion of face, Abe's novel and Karatani's theory of the novel can

be said to have offered an eloquent handle into its globalization. In turn, facialization offers an entry point into the globalization of the novel. At the end of this book, a reading of Abe's novel functions as a reminder of a few insights into the modernist history of the face: The face is the face of an other, a stranger, and this applies to the protagonist with a face transplant and to you, dear reader; it is fully co-opted by capitalist forces (Abe's protagonist buys his new face) and by the surveilling mechanisms of the state; in its intermediality, it remains imbricated with the history of facial types and, as such, it functions as the site of both reproduction and potential resistance to racial politics; this reproduction occurs on a Euro-Atlantic arc, but one can also selectively trace its global travels; the relation between affect and face is ever more complex (Abe's protagonist constructs a new affective configuration to suit his new face); the face acts, it manifests agency.

Behind the Mask, Another Mask

In 2017, an exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery in London juxtaposed the work of contemporary visual artist Gillian Wearing and modernist writer and photographer Claude Cahun under the title *Behind the Mask, Another Mask*.[78] In the 1920s and the 1930s, Cahun and her partner Marcel Moore experimented with the genre of the photographic portrait and the device of the mask.[79] Cahun famously stated in one of her collages: "Under this mask, another mask. I will never finish removing all these faces."[80] One photograph shows a fully masked Cahun wrapped in a cloak displaying multiple masks. Another photograph frames Cahun's heavily made-up face while a mask – a look-alike of Cahun's face – is hanging in the background.

Across a century, in the 2017 exhibit, Wearing, an artist drawing an explicit line of inspiration from the modernist moment, remade Cahun's portraits.[81] There is a self-portrait of the artist wearing a mask of her own face. There is portrait titled *Me as Cahun Holding a Mask of My Face*, in which Wearing poses as Cahun – body posture, accessories, and makeup – holding a stylized mask of her own face. And there is a profile portrait of Wearing looking into a mirror, which reflects back an image of Wearing posing in a mask of an older Cahun. As D'Arcy and Nilges put it, in an effort to reimagine the relation between the modernist moment and its meta-modernist afterlives, "key aspects of modernist thought and art re-emerge under altogether contemporary conditions and to carry a specific function in the present."[82]

Wearing's images can be said to literalize the premise of Abe's novel, which, as we have seen, is itself looking back at the modernist moment from the vantage point of the 1960s: Behind the mask (the manufactured mask) another mask (the so-called organic mask). Face and mask both are one and are detachable, the mask having developed a life of its own. Eloquently, one of Wearing's projects, titled *Homage to the Woman with the Bandaged Face Who I Saw Yesterday down Walworth Street* (1995), features a woman walking down the street in a mask-like bandage – eerily similar to Teshigahara's adaptation of *The Face of Another*.[83] The image can be said to be Wearing's experiment with the premise of Abe's novel, that one's facial wounds are covered in an abstract, mask-like object that becomes an object of street spectacle.

It remains significant that Abe wrote a *science fiction* novel on the tribulations of the face, using the conventions of the genre to frame anxieties projected onto the future. Credited with having brought the genre to Japan, Abe considered science fiction to be the heart of literature and hoped for a "rehabilitation of the spirit of science fiction within literature at large."[84] Abe refers to science fiction as "the literature of hypotheses," positing Edgar Allan Poe as a predecessor.[85] One hypothesis at work in *The Face of Another* is the face as a filter of belonging. Much as Abe did not like thinking of science fiction as prophesy, the future projected by *The Face of Another* has very much arrived. It has brought with it, as Abe's novel predicted, the face transplant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it has brought the medical mask.[86] It has brought the technologization of the face through cosmetic surgery. It has brought the reality of the face as a passport, as a proof of citizenship (FA 140). It has brought the narrator's speculation that in the future celebrities might claim "facial copyright," anticipating the selling of actors' "synthetic portraits" so their biometric data can be used digitally, including after their death. And it has brought facial recognition technologies – the subject of this book's Coda.[87]

One of Wearing's recent projects deploys "digital mask" as the latest stage in the history of masking. The artist explains: "Watching me being me alienates me from me, and I don't recognize myself. That's why I placed an advert online looking for people who'd want to be me in this film.. . . They will be wearing an AI digital mask of my face. I'm wearing one now."[88] Having cast herself as other people (Julia Margaret Cameron, Claude Cahun, August Sander, Diane Arbus, Andy Warhol), members of her family (her grandmother, her mother, her brother), as well as herself at different ages (including a digitized future older self), Wearing cast other people as herself.