

# Faces as Facts of Fiction

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ABSTRACT: The essay interrogates faces as fictional realities, particular sites of artistic signification. What do such faces signify, and how? While its focus is Danish literary texts since Kierkegaard, my search for answers begins by crossing artistic and discursive boundaries—of films, architectural musings, facial prints—and concludes that impressions of real faces must be erased in order for their artistic counterparts to surface. Modern art distances itself from reality so as to approach it, makes it disappear before resurrecting it on art's own terms, disables it to enable an image of it. "Where everything coincides with its image/reality ceases to exist," says Danish poet Per Højholt. But if cessation of reality is (post)modern artistic reality's *sine qua non*, it is also what makes the given *come into being*. In the words of another Danish poet, Poul Porum: "See a non-face/behind an everything mask." The mask is everything, the face behind it nothing; yet it is this visible, significant nothing we are summoned to behold and contemplate.

RÉSUMÉ: Cet essai se penche sur les visages en tant que réalités fictives et lieux particuliers de signification artistique. Que signifient ces visages, et comment ? Alors qu'elle se concentre principalement sur des textes danois depuis Kierkegaard, ma quête de réponses débute en franchissant les frontières artistiques et discursives de films, de réflexions architecturales et d'impressions faciales, et en vient à la conclusion que les impressions de visages réels doivent être effacées afin que leur équivalent artistique puisse émerger. L'art moderne se distance de la réalité afin de mieux l'approcher, la fait disparaître avant de la ressusciter selon les règles dictées par l'art, la déconstruit afin d'en rendre possible l'image. « Là où chaque chose coïncide avec son image/ la réalité cesse d'exister » dit le poète danois Per Højholt. Mais si la cessation de la réalité est la condition *sine qua non* de la réalité artistique (post)moderne, elle constitue également ce qui permet au monde de se matérialiser. Selon le poète danois Poul Porum, le masque est tout, le visage qui est derrière n'est rien ; il est pourtant ce rien visible, signifiant, que nous sommes appelés à regarder et à contempler.

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“The real story was in the faces. All those faces on the Bush team. What you saw was the spiritual emptiness of those people. Bush has one of the emptiest faces in America. He looks to have no more depth than spit on a rock,” says Norman Mailer in an interview with his son (14). And as Mark Danner (6) followed the camera’s eye “panning across the faces of the country’s leaders” gathered in Washington to confront the nation’s “financial crisis,” one of the images he saw protruding was the remarkable “black face” of Senator Obama. “The radicalism of Barack Obama lies not in his policies but in his face. It is a radicalism not just of color, but of *emergence*, for scarcely a year ago that face was utterly unknown to the overwhelming majority of Americans.” Hence, “the radicalism of that face ... the unspoken centrality of race, the ancient fulcrum of American politics.”

For all the differences between the two portraits, the art of portraiture is much the same. In both instances the protagonist’s face is seen, or read, as an indication of a large—and largely murky—moral fabric. To Mailer, the emptiness of Bush’s face epitomizes *The Big Empty* (his book’s title): the moral void at America’s centre, a site of Corporate Capitalism surrounded by political wrongs on both the Left and the Right (xv). To Danner, meanwhile, Obama’s face fills such a big emptiness as it “speaks” to the unspeakable moral void left behind by America’s racial history.

I believe it behooves us to approach faces even outside political culture as fields of signification, and to read especially faces of aesthetic import as signs—aesthetic search engines, if you will—from which a variety of impulses emerge and toward which interpretations from various angles converge. My chief concern is faces as facts of fiction, more specifically in a selection of Danish aesthetic texts since Kierkegaard. But to set the stage for my musings on this primary material, let me begin with a sketchy historical backdrop and some graphics from other artistic domains.

Already in Moth’s 300-year old dictionary, the word “face” is contextualized in the phrase “Ansigtet er hiertets speil” [The face is the mirror of the heart] (ODS 690)—a parallel to the adage “øjet er sjælens spejl” [the eye is the mirror of the soul]. But even if faces can be read as reflections of larger spiritual schemes, the question remains how to read them. The rationalist physiognomists tried (chiefly in vain) to classify facial expressions, while Darwin argues in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) that “facial expressions of man, which are now important as social symbols, were originally *functionally* important.” More recently, “Desmond Morris and others have shown” that facial expressions, even if innate (as held by Darwin), “are modified by social interaction.”<sup>1</sup> Such interaction looms large to this day in encodings—and decodings—of facial expressions proposed by practitioners of the arts.

In his autobiography *Breaking Ground*, the architect Daniel Libeskind devotes a whole chapter to “Faces” (103-130) and asks us to

[t]hink of your own face. You look at something, and even if it’s inanimate, it looks back at you—and in that moment, there is some kind of communication in space, and your face responds to it and changes. So it is with buildings. They don’t just have facades, but faces that turn either toward us or away.  
(106 f.)

Accordingly, Libeskind designed his first completed commission, the Felix Nussbaum Museum in Osnabrück, to capture the face of an artist who himself painted faces in the cramped quarters where he hid from the Gestapo. Visitors to the museum are as deprived of space and perspective as Nussbaum was when he practiced his craft (119-20). Conversely, yet by the same token, Libeskind’s recent addition to the Denver Art Museum, the Hamilton Building, “was inspired by many things ... but most of all by the wide-open faces of the people of Denver ... Part of their exuberant glow must come from the way their eyes reflect that clear, high-above-sea-level light” (109).

Whether it be in tortuous absence (Nussbaum’s lack of perspective) or overwhelming presence (the openly reflecting faces in Denver), Libeskind identifies an indispensable artistic hallmark whose significance otherwise defies signification. Even the glaring absence of the final act in Schönberg’s unfinished opera *Moses and Aron* becomes a source of inspiration for one of the architect’s structured voids: the Jewish Museum in Berlin (92 f.).

Moving now to the art of film, Ingmar Bergman’s obsession with faces is indisputable. In *Ansiktet* (1958) [*The Magician*, or literally *The Face*] a single still of Mrs. Vogler standing between her husband Albert and Dr. Vergerus speaks volumes (*Bergman on Bergman* 124-25). Out of the magician’s speechless mouth cries emotion and desire, metaphysics and mysticism, irrationality and chaos, while the examining doctor with tellingly rational and objectivistic composure dissects his fellow human as if he were a mere thing. Mrs. Vogler has rightly been called “the only sensible presence in [the film’s entire] gallery of posturing idiots and hypocrites” (Cowie 177). Yet while each of her two male counterparts falls victim to his respective one-sidedness, they both prove ambiguous in relation to their own dispositions and are thus not simply each other’s opposite.

Altogether, Bergman’s fixation with faces, no less than Libeskind’s, has an inner, spiritual reality as its point of fixation, a human dimension: “that little dot, the human being; that is what I try to dissect and penetrate more and more deeply, in order to trace his secrets,” Bergman told a Danish newspaper in 1972 (Cowie 300). Thus Mrs. Vogler adds an ever so transitory self-realization to the male dichotomies around her. Its focal point, her face, mirrors the film’s heart and the soul, but does it so artfully that only the ambiguity itself sticks. This double

exposure is the Swedish film-maker's equivalent to the Polish-American architect's designs.

In pictorial art since the Renaissance, such complex visions have supplanted impulses from reality to increasingly individual degrees.<sup>2</sup> In the twentieth century Matisse has elaborated, both in his 1955 book *Portraits* and in his actual execution of portraits, the art of being true to nature without seeking photographic precision. In fact, the painter employed endless sittings and refined sketches in order to contrast the countenance of his models with other humans, exposing the formers' asymmetrical facial rhythm and style, or the emotions these traits evoked in the observer. As the artistic strategy involved a gradual secretion of individual characteristics from their context, it meant to reconnect them as "liberated" facial components and to integrate them into a total vision of what once was—without obscuring their indebtedness to the individuality of the facial features here, now, and later.

Matisse's strategy and visionary prowess form a striking counterpoint to the artistic experience of such contemporaries as the Danish-Jewish playwright and novelist Henri Nathansen, whose keen awareness of anti-Semitic signs around 1900 repeatedly translates into an uneasiness among his Jewish characters about their faces and identities within the majority culture. But as I have tended to this matter elsewhere, suffice it here to say that Matisse's artistic key to integrating facial individuality into a transindividual sense of human presence was out of reach for Nathansen. To him, as to generations of writers before him, the notion of the individual as *the one and only* was sustainable only at great cost and loss. I hypothesize that we are facing both a trope and a prototype—and I want to spend the rest of my essay to test this hypothesis on samples of Danish literature from the last century and a half.<sup>3</sup>

## II

I turn first to Kierkegaard's "Skyggerids" [Silhouettes] from *Enten—Eller, Første Del* (1843; 1962) [*Either/Or, Part I*, 1987], in which not only spirituality—"Sorg" [sorrow]—but two-faced ambiguity is engraved in the physical face under observation:

Naar man længe og opmærksomt betragter et Ansigt, da opdager man stundom ligesom et andet Ansigt inden i det man ser. Dette er i Almindelighed et umiskjendeligt Tegn paa, at Sjælen skjuler en Emigrant, der har trukket sig tilbage fra det Udvortes for at vaage over en forborgten Skat.

(162)

[When one looks long and attentively at a face, sometimes another face, as it were, is discovered within the face one sees. Ordinarily this is an unmistakable sign that the soul is hiding an emigrant who has withdrawn from the exterior face in order to watch over a buried treasure.]

(174)

Still, Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author, so skeptical of art, admonishes the reader that

Ansigtet, der ellers er Sjælens Speil, antager her en Tvetydighed, som ikke lader sig kunstnerisk fremstille, og som i Almindelighed ogsaa kun bevarer sig et flygtigt Moment. Der hører et eget Øie til for at see det, et eget Blik for at forfølge dette usvigelige Indicium paa hemmelig Sorg.

(162)

[The face, which usually is the mirror of the soul, here takes on an ambiguity that cannot be artistically portrayed and that usually lasts only for a fleeting moment. It takes a special eye to see it, a special vision to pursue this unerring indication of secret sorrow.]

(175)

Such a privileged vision was precisely what Matisse possessed, and *his* artistic exposure of faces corresponds well to what must be labeled Kierkegaard's non-artistic employment of repetition.

As for the latter, Villy Sørensen calls it a loss of eternity to be healed in and by the fullness of time (cf. 103, 117, 120, 215). "Tilværelsen, ..." [Life, ...]—a face, if you will—"... som har været til, bliver til nu" [... as it has been, comes into being now] (123). Subsequently, Sørensen finds that "kunsten bekræfter den Kierkegaardske filosofi, men forsoner netop derved det æstetiske med det væsentlige. Og denne forsoning er et andet navn for 'gentagelse'" [art affirms the Kierkegaardian philosophy, but in doing so reconciles precisely the aesthetic with the essential. And this reconciliation is another name for "repetition"] (126). Or another name for the Kierkegaardian unification of soul and body in "spirit" (cf. 140).

Save for the injection of art, Sørensen cites Kierkegaard approvingly and synthesizes his words to mean that when a simple soul's spontaneity is reclaimed unharmed, wisdom is obtained; and no spontaneity is lost because a person knows s/he is spontaneous (cf. 64, 96). This reading of Kierkegaard brings his repetition on a par with Matisse's art. In both modes the past is reconciled with the future, and the most hidden spiritual dimension—sorrow—is brought to reveal itself as a stimulant for the observer's dormant passion. It is an unmistakably ambiguous dimension—at once external and profoundly concealed. And if Kierkegaard is

doubtful of art's capacity to preserve its volatility, then modernistic art is all the more grounded in such skepticism as it sees volatility as its sole foundation.

Karen Blixen/Isak Dinesen's familiar take on this ambiguity was modernistic, but not whole-heartedly so. Show me your mask, she asked, which tells me who you can become, rather than your face, which tells me only who you are. The preference is modernistic; not so the wholesale rejection of the face, which reduces the ambiguity. Still, Blixen's resolution of the irresolvable modernistic dictum is far from unprecedented in Danish letters. Georg Brandes, for example, ends his entire book about Disraeli/Lord Beaconsfield's dramatic life with a straight look into Disraeli's "blege, fortærede Ansigt" [pale and haggard face] (314; 238). What he sees here turns all the ambiguities of the famous politician's unsettling life into a visage with which his critical observer can finally settle—and settle the score with his subject—on a positive note: "halvt imod min Villie en Følelse af levende Sympathi bemægtigede sig min Sjæl" [almost against my will, a feeling of sympathy took possession of my mind] (315; 238) reads the book's last line.

In Harald Kidde's little-known parable "Faders Ansigt" [Father's Face], it is the female protagonist whose face is at issue—as a tragically ambiguous site of identity. The dying spinster has inherited her father's gigantic snout: an apt match for his mighty self-esteem but a humiliating blemish on his daughter's face. Its significance is no more uplifting for her doctor, who turns out to be her uncle. Had he had his way, he would have fathered the woman and saved her from her nasal handicap. But instead his powerful brother wooed her mother, leaving both uncle and niece to miss out on life. Thus, the struggle for life is written in facial letters as an epochal—1890s—sign of fitness or incapacity for life, victory or its polar opposite. At all events, one generation's hope is pitted against another's lack thereof.

For the faces also tell of a father's—and a mother's—actual love of the child who is dead set on returning the favour with a vengeance. Only humility before the law of life—and its capricious dispersion of the good *things* in life—will assuage the apparent conflict. In fact, the singular *value* of life—and the verdict against its losers—mark the high point on which conflictual facial expressions converge and yield one symbolic meaning. "[Kafka's] 'Before the Law' is the law," writes Derrida (cf. Gossman 32); and so is Kidde's "before the law"—the law!

In 1968, the year when many established societal norms and much conventional public wisdom came undone in much of Europe, Tove Ditlevsen published a short but major novel, *Ansigtene* [The Faces], in which the stage of unsettlement is the individual psyche. Noted psychiatrist Erling Jacobsen calls it "en af de frygteligste bøger, der er skrevet" [one of the most horrendous novels ever written] (134) and goes on to explain what he means by this apparent hyperbole (134-38). As normal childhood's unconditional emotions of anxiety, love, and hate mature, they generally turn inseparable, ambivalent, and quite unbearable unless compromised and negotiated for comfort—into so-called adult

indifference and normalcy. This solution, preferred by the social majority, comes at the price of emasculating original human authenticity; and other escape routes, such as schizophrenia or psychopathic megalomania, obviously are no less costly. Only a selected few, artists like Tove Ditlevsen, insist on confronting their inner ambivalences and stand out as truth-tellers, although the price they pay for their integrity is no trifle either. *Ansigterne's* protagonist and Ditlevsen's autobiographical alter ego, Lise Mundus, goes insane, though she comes to realize it; her story provides much insight, but little utopian hope of a better world.<sup>4</sup>

Lise's road to insanity (97-98, 108) is lined with faces that bespeak the psychological equivalence of society's crisis anno 1968 (112). These faces are frightening in their mutability (5-6, 32); don't fit their owners but come apart (41) and are put on like evil fates (7, 9, 12, 32, 82); take on lives of their own at odds with both conscious and subconscious strata of the psyche behind them (32, 41, 97); get voided of human substance or evolve into animal shapes (12, 28, 51); triangulate or mutate into brittle (55), tortured two- or many-faced visages (12, 64, 75, 78), round or square (87), lavishly creviced (83), obtrusive or obtuse (99, 100), wilted or indistinguishable from copies (71, 111). Left behind like abandoned houses (77), they relativize (72), if not disrupt, received ideas of the face as a gateway to essence and personhood (82); and they reflect cores to be mined and explored but never truly enriched (61), loci of sanity permanently at risk (108, 110, 112) and prone to transgressions (82).

Ditlevsen's art is certainly instrumental for the movement beyond the lawful, if merely symbolic, resolution of existential gaps that opened in Kiddle's (and Kafka's) scenarios. But as she realistically allows her Lise to cast off all normalcy and go to where the chips may fall, without undue authorial interference, the many fallen chips, and faces, along the way are merely road signs leading nowhere. No path, even after Lise's return to "normal," takes her normalcy out of its inverted commas. It will take a full-blown modernistic breakthrough to do justice to this kind of realism without succumbing to its premises, and not until denormalization has become the law of the land will that occur. Moreover, the occurrence will require that art move away from the role of psychology's handmaiden into the role of a sovereign creator, albeit one that remains beholden to psychologically durable insights.

Jens Smærup Sørensen's short story "Ansigter" [Faces], from *Det menneskelige princip* [The Human Principle] (1985), is but one text in which this unsettling modernism has settled down. The protagonist is a mentally institutionalized man who has been entrusted to the care of a farmer and his wife. The man has been losing his face to its mirror image but now finds it juxtaposed—in the mirror—to the real face of the farmer's wife. Only a mirror image of his self has the same reality as the real image of the desired "other"; she is his life and hope—as opposed to the farmer and "ham på knallerten" [the one on the scooter] (107), who both epitomize his humiliation and exclusion. His dreams of mating with her become

inseparable from his urge to dispense with them. Just as he crashes the farmer's combine into two different *reflections*—his mental image of the farmer's wife and a mirror image of himself—he *literally* runs down his enemy on the scooter, whose reflection he incidentally watches in the co-op's window pane.

In this synthetic manner he reaches his conflict-ridden goal, yet the narrative preserves the conflict as an ambiguity within the fulfillment he arrived at. The last sentence reads, "så kunne han dø" [now he could die] (107), without specifying "his" identity. Obviously "he" is the man on the scooter, but "he" is also—on the subconscious level—the handicapped man self-destructively riding the combine. In the course of the narrative, his deranged perception—of facial expressions of self—gets severed from the confines of quotidian reality, though not from the consequences of this perception going its own way. As a face drops out of reality, "as in a mirror" (to quote the title of Ingmar Bergman's film *Såsom i en spegel*), the autonomy that ensues appears a valid replacement of the given reality. In fact, Smærup Sørensen's story about loss of face and artistic substitution for reality also accounts for the expenses involved in the conversion and tells us about their connection to the ambiguity of language.

As a code for transfer of meaning, this modernistic trope begins to crystallize in Danish lyric poetry around 1960. Per Højholt's 1963 poem, "Ansigt til ansigt til ansigt" [Face to face to face], can be read as an underpinning of Smærup Sørensen's story. It concludes Højholt's principal collection *Poetens hoved* [The Poet's Head], which even has the face in question on its front cover. The poem's basic concern—how reality is lost (now in cosmic reflection) when distinctions between it and its image recede—pulsates through its lines from its very beginning until it all comes to a head toward the end of the text:

Hvor alt sammenfalder med sit billede  
     hører virkeligheden op.  
 Ingen forveksling er mulig thi  
     Ingen forveksling er mulig.  
 Men der skal et stort spejl til. Eller to.  
     En mængde spejle  
 skal til så sandt jorden er rund.

...

    ... Står  
     denne mand Malewitch  
 malende et kvadrat  
     med sine øjnes selvmord.

...

Hvor alting mødes med sit billede  
     Hører virkeligheden op.  
 Hvor længe endnu kan vi leve  
     I denne gyngende boble?

...  
(45-46)

[Where everything coincides with its image  
reality ceases to exist.  
No confusion is possible for  
no confusion is possible.  
But a large mirror is needed. Or two.  
A multitude of mirrors  
is needed as sure as the Earth is round.

...  
... Stands  
this man Malewitch  
painting a square  
with the suicide of his eyes.

...  
Where everything encounters its image  
reality ceases to exist.  
How long can we still live  
in this swinging bubble?]<sup>5</sup>

Højholt's blurring of distinctions reaches dizzily repetitive, well-nigh murderous, and inarguably tautological proportions. From the title concept stuck in its groove to the clearly confusing lines insisting that "No confusion is possible for/no confusion is possible" to the final lines about existence within a perilously "swinging bubble," the poem is an instance of the art of the impossible. In a different manner of speaking, Poul Borum in his 1985 poem "Ansigt" [Face] puts the same manifest dilemma of grasping an elusive reality into title terms of his own when his poetic "I" ultimately calls upon the reader to "Se et ikke-ansigt/bag en alting-maske" [See a non-face/behind an everything-mask] (100). Here, too, the punch lines come at the end (as the entire poem almost concludes the collection of sixty-one poems to which it belongs). But what the two preceding stanzas make clear was merely intimated in Højholt's text: the absent reality ("ikke-ansigt") underlying the omnipresent illusion ("alting-maske"), though incorporeal, is not only the one reality "vi" [we] have; it is one that is at once mortal *and* invigorating.

Pia Tafdrup's 1986 poem "Dit ansigt" [Your face] stresses the latter point. The poem's "other" is absent, but its language engenders a reader response that makes the "other" present and gives life to the poetic "I" itself. In place of absence, art creates presence: an otherness that is "ingenting/andet" [nothing/other], yet is "alt hvad jeg har" [all that I have] (131). This is a shining *repetition*, in Kierkegaardian terms: a mere vision reclaiming real *temps perdu*.

It all comes full circle as Marianne Larsen exits her 1996 *I en venten hvid som sne* [In a waiting white as snow]—a volume whose white cover with title and byline in white letters inevitably harks back to Højholt’s *Malewitch*. But the full circle comes even fuller. Not only do Ditlevsen & Co.’s many faces and facial ambiguities not come home to roost in Larsen’s finale (86–87), they actually get liberated from their nature- (and psyche-) given fetters before they disappear into the great whiteness of a Harald Kidde-like symbolism. A symbolic act of liberation indeed, since this very whiteness is the topos of both death, within an empty transcendence, and life (or persistence), within a deeply soothing sensibility not of this world either. In the final analysis the act even borders on the kind of post-symbolism to which *Malewitch* tended with his suprematism, cf. also Per Højholt’s deconstructive incantation about “face to face to face.”

### III

It is a sound philological creed to “resist the pleasure of modernizing” old texts precisely in order to “make them more powerfully present” (Gossman 29). In like manner, I hope to have suggested how Danish art, roughly since the inception of Danish modernity, has made faces present by deconstructing their familiarity and re-collecting their unique otherness on a visionary scale. Overall, we might label the process, as it pivots on turn-of-the-nineteenth-century idioms, a self-contradicting essentialism. To cite the philologist Gossman, whom I have already enlisted as a reference twice: while the hub of our journey has been “the modernist artwork [that] is about itself and seeks redemption from history through form,” its final excursion brushed on deconstruction’s removal of “the fulfilled presence of the pure work” and caught sight of a “locus of absence rather than presence, of endless scrutinizing rather than revelation” (Gossman 32). In my own and simpler jargon, I believe my examples have been about losing face—be it definitively or over and over again—and about this loss of face being a true artistic gain. For what the loss ushers in is the end of modernistic art’s beginning rather than the beginning of its end.<sup>6</sup>

#### NOTES

1. For the latter quotes and points, see *The Oxford Companion to the Mind* (253).
2. See, e.g., Ole Nørlyng’s article about the 2008 exhibition of *The Renaissance Portrait* at the National Gallery in London.
3. For a fuller account of the Nathansen case, see my article “Et ansigt i mængden”; see also the title essay in Aage Henriksen’s collection *Den eneste ene og andre essays* [The one and only and other essays] (31–58). In my causerie “Om kunsten (ikke) at tabe ansigt” [On the art of (not) losing face] in *The Royal Library* in Copenhagen on January

5, 2009, I dealt with but some of the Danish examples treated in the present essay; conversely, this oral discussion included a fuller treatment of the Libeskind, Bergman, and Matisse materials and had an added section about facial representation/recreation in American literature from Walt Whitman to Joyce Carol Oates.

4. This modernistic topos is articulated most eloquently in Gottfried Benn's seminal 1951 Marburg lecture, "Probleme der Lyrik" [Problems of Lyric Poetry].
5. Translation here, as elsewhere in the text unless otherwise noted, is mine.
6. This concluding remark is to suggest that so-called high modernism may be more recalcitrant than commonly acknowledged. Admittedly, my claim seems to fly in the face of several anti-modernistic movements in both literature and the arts. Still, while the issue is too complicated to be fully explored here, just a brief look at the pictorial arts in America, say, around the time of Matisse's modernistic *Portraits*, appears to confirm the endurance of modernism. Its embattled American incarnation in the 1950s, the Abstract Expressionism of Pollock or de Kooning, which for so long was struggling for full recognition, is losing ground within a very short time span to such emerging Pop artists as Warhol and Lichtenstein; even such transitional artists as Johns and Rauschenberg show little apparent allegiance to preceding modernistic doctrines. "Now, suddenly, heroism and high art were out of style," writes Calvin Tomkins in his *Off the Wall: A Portrait of Robert Rauschenberg* about the situation around 1960 (169). That said, Rauschenberg, for one, "had found his way out of the Abstract Expressionist stockade ... but he did not hesitate to apply paint in the de Kooning manner ... most of the Pop artists, on the other hand, rejected Abstract Expressionist techniques in favor of the slick, impersonal surfaces of commercial art" (166). At the same time, while Rauschenberg didn't care if what he was doing was art, so long as he could be doing it, Pop artists "were all pretty sure that what they were doing was making art" (166-67); and while Rauschenberg situates his action "in the gap between" art and life (not between Art and Life!), Johns' "'gap' was the ambiguity between reality and illusion" (167). Altogether, any number of "post-modernistic" positions, as it were, are, each in its own way, more indebted to modernistic topoi than they appear at first glance. Thus the lingering modernism discerned in my Danish examples of recent "facial" prose and poetry is by no means without counterparts in other walks of artistic life.

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