

The Pivot of Athwartedness: Roy Kiyooka's "Pacific Windows"

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Published as a full issue of *The Capilano Review* in August 1990, Roy Kiyooka's "Pacific Windows" exists on the periphery of Kiyooka's canon. Despite the various ways in which this text could be considered the culmination of what Kiyooka deems his "photo/glyphic epic" ("Notes" 94), "Pacific Windows," unlike his other photoglyphic texts *StoneDGloves* and *Wheels*, has achieved scant critical attention.⁶¹ Perhaps the relative neglect of this text is a testament to the power of a collected works in framing scholarly discourse. Understandably, at 96 pages, the length of "Pacific Windows" in its photoglyphic form was prohibitive for its inclusion in the collected works, so unlike *StoneDGloves* and *Wheels*, which appear with their photographs, "Pacific Windows" appears as text without images in *Pacific Windows: Collected Poems of Roy K. Kiyooka*.⁶² Its role in Kiyooka's photoglyphic epic is, thus, obscured.

With an excerpt of "Pacific Windows" forming the opening epigraph of *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka* and thereby providing a poignant introductory portrait of Kiyooka's mother, the poetic text of "Pacific Windows" does have its own power and provenance. Nevertheless, as Kiyooka's published poem-essay "Notes Toward a Book of Photoglyphs" attests, "Pacific Windows" is largely a narrative about the expressive potential of the visual; hence, if Kiyooka's collected works is the key means through which contemporary readers come to know his oeuvre, the inclusion of an imageless "Pacific Windows" could easily cause the importance of this text to be undervalued.

In its photoglyphic form, “Pacific Windows” splits each page in half, one photograph appearing right-side-up on the top of the page and another, most often the same photograph, appearing upside-down on the bottom of the page. A band of text, white sans-serif font on black background, separates the two images; one line of text is encountered right-side-up and one upside-down. The reading process is such that one follows the continuous poetic line until the book’s conclusion, at which time, one may rotate the book upside-down and continue reading, the end of the book now becoming its start, the same poetic narrative beginning anew. The narrative focus is itself also bifurcated, its attention split between a portrayal of a visit from the speaker’s mother and a portrait of the speaker’s city, Vancouver and all its various foibles and particularities. Framing these foci is the narrative’s overarching depiction of a man’s engagement with photography and its “bitter-sweet, past-tense, poignance” (Kiyooka, Insert n. pag.).

The textual narrative of “Pacific Windows” begins with the speaker looking at “All the photographs of windows and doors, all the lintels, ledges, / unspoke captions” that “no longer belonged to him” (n. pag.).⁶³ It continues to describe the speaker and his mother examining “all the old photos” (n. pag.), including “the casually taken / photos sandwiched between Pearl Harbour [sic] and Hiroshima that had a special / poignancy for both of them” (n. pag.). By the conclusion of the narrative, the speaker is not just a character within the narrative “Pacific Windows”; he too is somehow a reader of this text of which he is a product. The speaker is “gladful that the last snap / he had taken of [his father] got included in Pacific Windows” and “as each darkening / page reassumed its silences the book fell out of his hands” (n.pag.).

Since “Pacific Windows” depicts the speaker’s relationship with photographs and the textual self that they both reveal and create, I argue that this work is central to an understanding of Kiyooka’s theorization of the “inter-face,” a concept introduced by Kiyooka in a 1975 interview with Chris Varley for the *Roy K. Kiyooka: 25 years* exhibition catalogue and elucidated in a later article/interview by Roy Miki that is now foundational to Kiyooka scholarship, “Inter-face: Roy Kiyooka’s Writing, A Commentary/Interview.” As I will discuss, the “inter-face”

in Kiyooka's thinking is both a characterization of his approach to verbal/visual relations and an expression of his theory of cultural athwartedness. Furthermore, as a manifestation of Kiyooka's ideas regarding "inter-face," "Pacific Windows," specifically in its photoglyphic form, signifies Kiyooka's achievement of an articulation of self not immediately available to him through either visual or verbal expression alone. As Kiyooka describes in "Notes Toward a Book of Photoglyphs," "Pacific Windows" involved him in a process of "looking for impeccable / photo-glyphic moments, those gestural/nuances to / launch me into the mundane domain of the willing 'i'" (82). This search for 'i' that "Pacific Windows" represents is both a negotiation of voice—the expressive potentials of word *and* of image—and, by extension, a navigation of cultural inheritances and positionings.

Much has been made of Kiyooka's trajectory as an artist and his agile movement between visual and verbal forms. Committed more to astonishment than to any one art form,⁶⁴ Kiyooka followed his creative impulses, leaving behind a successful career in painting for various other expressive media, most significantly writing and photography. While Kiyooka's departure from painting was also informed by his dismissal of the values of the "fucken art game" (Kiyooka qtd. in O'Brian and Watson 7) and its commodification of creativity, his evolution as an artist towards writing also reflects a pursuit of a fulfilling form of self-expression.

Kiyooka's much quoted response to Roy Miki's question "Why, then did you need to write?" was simply, "I wanted to claim some kind of articulation for myself" (Miki, "Inter-face" 64). As characterized by Miki, Kiyooka, who was predominantly an abstract expressionist painter, "remained wary" ("Afterword" 305) of representing the complexity of his personal experience visually, particularly that of the exclusionary politics of World War II. Miki states, "As a painter, Kiyooka gained national and international recognition for his brilliant paintings, but as he discovered this medium did not allow him the space to explore the more personal dimensions of his family history" ("English" 5–6). As Kiyooka explains, art forms like "writing and photography and later music" could allow him "to plumb [his] unplumbed [*sic*] self'

(RK Papers)” (qtd. in Miki, “Afterword” 317) and satisfy an “urgency in Roy for testimony and witnessing” (O’Brian and Watson 9). Given language’s well-documented and -discussed role in power relations, it is no wonder that Kiyooka would equate his “survival” with “a quest for language as the modality of power” (Miki, “Inter-face” 67). “[C]ontrol over orders of discourse” may be “a powerful mechanism for [the dominant to] sustain[] power” (Fairclough 74), but to claim the right to language is to create a space for oneself amidst these discourses.

Kiyooka’s assertion that writing for him equals a pursuit of articulation, coupled with his announcement that “Painting gave [him] a face, writing a voice” (Kiyooka, “Intersections” n. pag.) may suggest that he dichotomizes visual and linguistic systems of communication, giving more power and agency to writing. And yet, for Kiyooka, writing as an art form is rarely divorced from the visual. Kiyooka’s “writing” — suggested by Miki to have “bec[o]me the most effective mode of articulating the personal, familial, and communal conditions of being Japanese Canadian” (“Inter-face” 57–58)—is not, in fact, exclusively linguistic. When defining “inter-face,” which, as I have said, is part Kiyooka’s conceptualization of visual/verbal relations and part, as I will soon elaborate upon, his description of cultural thwartedness, Kiyooka importantly does not stop with just identifying the binary between painting (face) and writing (voice). The sentence continues: “but its [*sic*] not a matter of choosing” (Kiyooka, “Intersection” n. pag.). As Kiyooka asserts in *Pacific Rim Letters*, the visual and the verbal arts “have always been twinned in [his] life. They, along with all [his] other curiosities, stem from the same pan-Pacific sources, etc.” (203). For Kiyooka, “what has to be understood is how the two inform each other” (Miki, “Inter-face” 73).

It may be easy to interpret his move to writing as a commentary on the insufficiency of visual expression, but, to Kiyooka, neither the visual nor the verbal is really satisfactory on its own. What the visual offers, and requires, is “its own language,” one that is “not transferable, in its uniqueness, its exactitude. [...]. It has its own experiential dimension, that you simply grab, and walk away with—mute” (Kiyooka, “With Roy Kiyooka” 29). In other words, the visual “can’t be accessed

through language, not really” (Kiyooka, “Inter-face” 64). The visual is beyond verbal expression because, to Kiyooka, it is about the experience; verbal expression, on the other hand, requires one to “situate oneself somewhere outside of the experience” (Kiyooka, “With” 18). Both the visual and the verbal communicate, but, as Kiyooka concludes, “[t]he one activity complements the other and both together give [him] a context for articulation more than either discipline per se (Kiyooka, “With” 18).

His gravitation towards linguistic expression, after all, did not provide a complete or easy cure for Kiyooka’s struggle to communicate. Despite his claim that writing gave him voice, his star-crossed love of language is a key theme throughout much of his writing. As Joanne Saul has noted, Kiyooka “uses the word ‘tongue’ in almost every collection, particularly in compound words like ‘tongue-tied,’ ‘tongue-twisted,’ ‘cleft-tongue,’ ‘flying-tongue,’ and ‘mother-tongue’” (89). Kiyooka’s repeated focus on the tongue signals a compromised agency over voice, his own body figured as the betrayer. As much as Kiyooka’s cultural conditions have “*left [him] with a tied tongue*” (Kiyooka, “We Asian” 116, emphasis added), the metaphors he uses—namely, “tongue-twisted” (“Kyoto Airs” 12), “tied tongue” (“We Asian” 116)/ “tongue-tied” (“Pear Tree” 208; “Wheels” 171), and “cleft tongue” (“We Asian” 117) reveal a struggle against internalizing the blame for this difficulty in speech. To be tongue-twisted is to be confronted with difficult language that tests and perhaps conquers the mouth’s agility. To have a tied or cleft tongue, however, is not to confront a difficult external opponent, but rather to possess bodily difference that renders speech difficult. In either case, the focus of Kiyooka’s choice of metaphors is on his own lack, the insufficiency of his body to complete the task at hand.

Beyond conveying self-doubt, Kiyooka understandably also expresses doubt in English as a vehicle for his self-expression and self-representation. Confronting a system of communication that would not accommodate his relationship with his mother who spoke predominantly in Japanese, Kiyooka approached English as a language “rampant with fissures” (Kamboureli 339). English too is that which named

him “enemy alien” during WWII, making “that, dumbfound, yellow kid” ([“October’s Piebald”] 23) unfindable.⁶⁵ As Tara Lee asserts, English renders Kiyooka “vulnerable” precisely because of his “belief that it was his own” (144), a belief destroyed by Canada’s WWII treatment of Japanese Canadians. In English, Kiyooka can be “nothing but [his] disparate / nomenclature” (“Notes” 87). To use the language that has rendered one “nothing” is to navigate quicksand, performing a treacherous balancing act between English’s proffered opportunities and oppressions.

As various others have assessed, unable to comfortably claim a language, Kiyooka creates one, what he deems “inglish” (Miki, “Afterword” 304). With non-conventional punctuation, phonetic spelling, and word play, Kiyooka’s aesthetic is testament to Kamau Brathwaite’s argument, albeit from a different cultural context, that experimentation with language is a key means to upend racist and colonialist ideologies. As Brathwaite asserts, it is in the “misuse of [European languages] that [one] perhaps most effectively rebel[s]” (31). Building upon Roy Miki’s observation that “It is here, in this transitional space [“between the necessities driving the artist and the necessities driving the writer” (Miki, “Inter-face” 57)], that the imagination of Kiyooka resides” (Miki, “Inter-face” 57), I argue that Kiyooka’s “misuse” of language is about more than textual experimentation.

The ‘inglish’ Kiyooka creates is not, in fact, merely a textual language; it is one that makes use of the communicative potential of the visual. As Jay MillAr cleverly describes, “As a writer [Kiyooka] would art-iculate” (66). Kiyooka’s ‘inglish’ is part text, part visual arts, the communicative insufficiencies of each expunged or made meaningful in their coming together.⁶⁶ As a photoglyphic narrative manifesting his theory of the “inter-face,” “Pacific Windows” depicts Kiyooka’s cultural thwartedness in such a way that neither the verbal nor the visual could have accomplished alone. Kiyooka may have intended “inter-face” to describe his fluid movement between visual and verbal art forms, but importantly, “inter-face” becomes also an expression of his navigation of cultural inheritance and hyphenated identity. Kiyooka describes his experience of English—the language of his daily life and

art, but a language his mother did not use—as its own kind of “inter-face.” He explains, “If you grow up in that kind of ‘inter-face,’ it’s very poignant, because not to have been able to write in Japanese is to never have been able to have demonstrated to my mother that ... well—” (in Miki, “Inter-face” 70). The incompleteness of this thought, Kiyooka’s drift into silence, reflects the crack at the root of his experience of cultural identity. To not experience an ease of belonging amidst his Japanese heritage, and yet to be excluded from his birth nation—Canada—because of it, is to be caught on multiple outsides.

This experience of life in the interstices has been described by others using multiple metaphors: Homi Bhabha’s third space, Gloria Anzaldúa’s borderland, Mary Louise Pratt’s contact zone, Dionne Brand’s Door of No Return, and Fred Wah’s hyphen or swinging door. For Kiyooka, the metaphor of choice is athwartedness. Describing his own experience of being finger-printed and named “enemy alien” by Canadian authorities during the Second World War, Kiyooka asserts that “being beholden to the white culture, its institutions, [he has] nonetheless grown up athwarted” (“Inter-face” 71). His much quoted definition of athwartedness reads, “You are of it, and you are not, and you know that very clearly” (“Inter-face” 71). Kiyooka’s choice of “athwarted” as his descriptor resonates with multiple meanings. Denotatively, “athwart” can refer to that which traverses or stretches across two spaces (“Athwart, adv. and prep.”)—for example, ‘the storm moved athwart the shores of the lake.’ As such, “athwart” figures the experience of hyphenated identities in terms of a journey between multiple sites/selves. At the same time, “athwart” denotatively signifies opposition (“Athwart, adv. and prep.”)—for example, ‘his experience ran athwart the ideal.’ This denotation thereby figures the experience of athwartedness in terms of contestation. Furthermore, beyond the denotative meaning, “athwarted” also resonates with the meaning of its segmented part, “thwarted”; to be “thwarted” is to be opposed and defeated (“thwart, v.”). Kiyooka’s choice of term in both its denotative and connotative possibilities, thus, captures a movement between positionalities, a movement ripe with conflict and risk.

Although many of Kiyooka’s texts can be seen as explorations of

this experience of athwartedness, “Pacific Windows” is vital to his development of this concept, its visual and verbal components combining to perform what I assert is the pivot of athwartedness. Miki, drawing upon Wah’s conceptualization of the hyphen, similarly classifies athwartedness in terms of the action of pivoting. Kiyooka’s athwartedness, in Miki’s words, is a “pivot between insiderness and outsiderness” (“Inter-face” 72). This conception of athwartedness as a pivot between identities recalls Wah’s use of the swinging door as a symbol for movement between and through multiple cultural identities.⁶⁷ Describing the door separating the kitchen from the café of his family’s Chinese restaurant, Wah writes: “open up with a good swift toe to the wooden slab that swings between the Occident and the Orient to break the hush of the whole café before first light the rolling gait with which I ride this silence that is a hyphen and the hyphen is the door” (*Diamond Grill* 16). It is this action of the pivot, and its subsequent complexities and discomforts, that I contend “Pacific Windows” makes manifest.

The textual narrative of “Pacific Windows” depicts a speaker—seemingly Kiyooka’s autobiographical ‘I’—negotiating various pivot points. This speaker has one foot in the past via the photographs that he is viewing and one foot in his current “polis”—Vancouver. As well, through his relationship with his mother, this speaker is shown to be pivoting between his connection to one side of the Pacific—Japan—and the other—Canada. As described in “Pacific Windows,” the mother is the pivot point around which others rotate. Although she has come to Kiyooka in Vancouver for a visit, she is the one around whom the family rotates: “all / through the summer her grandchildren and great grandchildren *came and / went*” (n. pag., emphasis added). As figured by Kiyooka, these visits are both to a respected and caring family matriarch (who “knit[s] thick woolen slippers” (n. pag.) for them) and to the Japan she represents.

In Kiyooka’s broader oeuvre, his mother—Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka, Kochi-born daughter to a samurai and first-generation Canadian—is consistently constructed as a link to Japan. For example, in “We Asian North Americanos,” Kiyooka asserts that “She and she alone reminds [him] of [his] Japanese self” (116). Beyond representing Japan, however, she too is made to symbolize for Kiyooka a less contentious

blending of cultural identities than that which he experiences. In “Pacific Windows,” she is the one who can speak of “all the / family ties they had on both sides of the pacific” (n. pag.); she is “the last link to the sad and glad tidings / of the floating world” (n. pag.). Although Mary’s real experience was likely much more complex, for the Kiyooka narrating “Pacific Windows,” Mary does not experience the unsettlement of hyphenated identity. Her occupation of space is portrayed as certain and steady. While Mary is depicted as “plac[ing] a tiny foot *firmly* on the livingroom / floor” (n. pag., emphasis added), Kiyooka, in the latter part of this text is left to wander, literally or via memory, through the “Peripatetic images [of Vancouver that] haunt his waking hours” (n. pag.).

Unlike the characterization of his own athwartedness, Kiyooka asserts that “all that had befallen [his mother] in a country too vast to imagine let alone put a / name to” has “composted an indigenous pan-pacific midden” (n. pag.). In this imagery, Kiyooka’s mother is not valued solely for her embodiment of the family’s Japanese heritage; she is, in fact, valued for her decomposition of separate identities into one. The vagueness of the wording means that the country that is “too vast to imagine let alone put a / name to” (n. pag.) can be either Japan or Canada, or in fact, be some combination of the two. Both sides of the Pacific are figured as coming together in Kiyooka’s mother to form a pan-Pacific midden—a wished-for, if not realized, fertilized ground out of which a family can grow. (But importantly, it is not the mother herself who forms the pan-Pacific midden; it is “all that had befallen her” (n. pag.) that does so, suggesting an acknowledgement that this envisioned blending of identities has involved some form of assault and trauma.)

In these constructions of the mother, she, and her experience, is the ground, but one that is dangerously ephemeral. She is the “last link” (n. pag.); she is in the midst of “dwindling years” (n. pag.); her “gestures” are “faultless but frail” (n. pag.). In Kiyooka’s characterization, she may represent the hope for a unified identity, but the space that she occupies is not available to future generations. She cannot bear their weight: her lap has grown too small to support “even the smallest grandchild” (n. pag.). She may be cast as the midden that could fertilize the generations, but the generations cannot root themselves to that centre—literally, her lap—and the stability/fulfilment of identity that it

promises. Instead Kiyooka and the future generations, coming and going, circle around her, facing the constant threat of losing the security of even that gravitational pull.

Beyond the textual narrative's depiction of this navigation of identity/ies, it is the visual qualities of "Pacific Windows" that most fully enact the unsettled circling of those athwarted. Although the images are not clearly readable in terms of place—in other words, the photographs are not recognizable as picturing specifically Japan or Canada—the fact that each page contains two images and lines of text—one set right-side-up; one set upside-down—casts the page to be the "pacific windows" of this text's title. In its visual form, the page connects two narrative spaces, much as the Pacific Ocean itself connects Japan and Kiyooka's Vancouver. Furthermore, the visual form of the text, with the page holding both an upright and an upside-down narrative, involves the reader in multiple pivot points. Not only can each individual page be rotated, but at the conclusion of the narrative, one can rotate the book and begin the same poetic narrative again, each poetic line now paired with a different photograph. The pivoting of this reading process functions to perform a relationship between the spaces of the page, and thus between the cultural spaces that render Kiyooka athwarted.

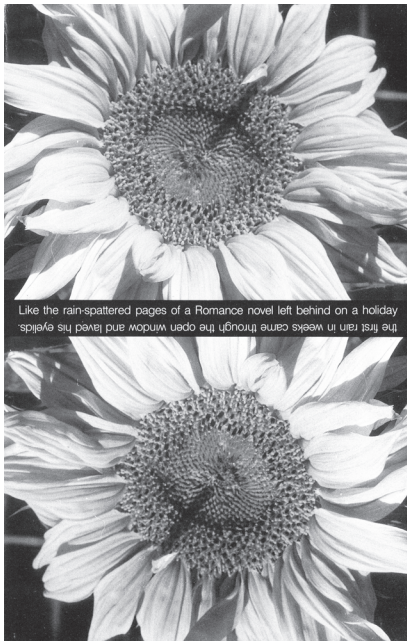
Kiyooka's vision for "Pacific Windows" may be that "each page / its mirrored-image a / whole thing" ("Notes" 93), but importantly, the two parts of each page are, in fact, not mirrors of each other. If they were, not only would the lines of the images stretch into each other, but also the same poetic line would appear for both halves of the page, one instance rendered largely illegible, appearing upside-down and backwards, as if seen through Alice's looking-glass. Instead of being reflections of each other, the two halves of the page come together dependent upon the 180 degree rotation of the image. As such, the visual aesthetic of this text foregrounds not the wholeness of a page, but rather its fragmentation. The two narrative spaces may occupy the same page, but they do not compost together to become the pan-pacific midden that the mother is constructed to represent. Instead, as a representation of Kiyooka's negotiation of multiple cultural spaces, the pages of "Pacific Windows" perform a disconnect, a mismatch between the spaces that must be navigated.

Because the page includes one image and a 180 degree rotation of the same image (with a few notable exceptions that I will soon discuss), the vectors emanating from each photograph are necessarily blocked from each other, preventing the unification of the page. As conceptualized by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, vectors are “depicted elements” within a visual plane “that form an oblique line” (57). In Kress and van Leeuwen’s development of this concept, vectors “may be formed by bodies or limbs or tools” (57), in other words by any object (even an eyeline) that creates a linear connection between elements in an image. Although their focus, which casts vectors as creating an image’s action, equates vectors particularly with diagonal lines, if one interprets vectors to be related to the Gestalt principle of continuity that assumes that one’s eyes follow where a line leads, then vectors, no matter their direction, become a key marker of how objects in an image are related to one another. Consider, for instance, the vectors created by the flower petals on the opening page of “Pacific Windows” (see Figure 1). Where the vertical lines reach up and down towards each other, they do not match. Where the diagonal lines do at times suggest they could meet each other, their meeting requires a harsh change of course. In other words, a vector heading towards the right in one image meets up with a vector heading towards the left in the other image, or vice versa, this change in directionality signifying the agility required to traverse both spaces together.

The rotation of the image also means that the vectors stretching towards the opposite half of the page are completely severed; for example, the parking meter that appears in many of the images offers a vertical vector, but the rotation of the image means that top-to-bottom, the parking meter appears on opposite sides of the page.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, more often than not, the vectors reaching through the centre of the page are just slightly askew. For instance, in the page featuring a woman —Kiyooka’s mother perhaps?—standing at a water’s shoreline, the lines created by the woman’s legs reach for each other and yet just miss (see Figure 2). While the incomplete union of the photographs on each page is sometimes jarringly apparent, it is these small, almost imperceptible, mismatches between the two spaces that reveal fissures that are perhaps all the more disruptive. After all, Kiyooka’s dilemma of

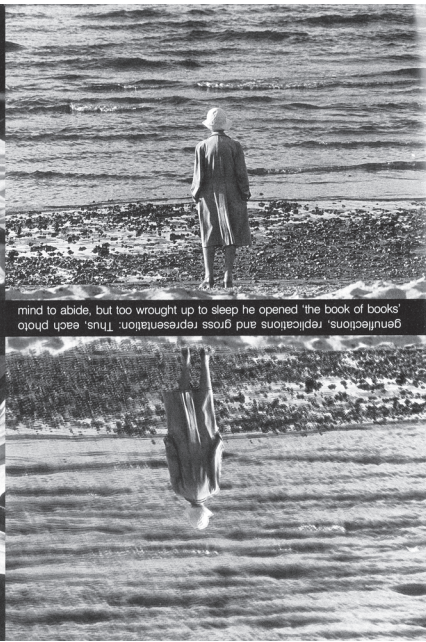
cultural identity is not simply that he encountered exclusion. The harshness of Kiyooka's thwartedness was instead that he was both "of" Canada and its "white anglo saxon protestant" ideologies and yet "not" of it ("Inter-face" 71). The pivoting of each page of "Pacific Windows" visualizes this experience, the photographs showing themselves—and hence, the differing cultural spaces they embody—to be both "of" each other and yet not capable of being at one with each other.

Figure 1



Like the rain-spattered pages of a Romance novel left behind on a holiday
the first rain in weeks came through the open window and fell on the
pages.

Figure 2



mind to abide, but too wrought up to sleep he opened 'the book of books'
gentle, 'replacations and gross representation. Thus, each photo

Similarly, the pivot enacted at the conclusion of the narrative when one can turn the book upside-down and continue reading uncovers another disconnection. The book's format promotes a reading process that allows the narrative to loop and form a continuous circle, the initial end becoming a secondary beginning, the secondary end becoming a third beginning. The syntax of this narrative, however, both promotes the possibility of continuity and yet performs its disruption. The narrative loops as follows, the period at the end of "eyelids" serving as the book's pivot point bringing together end with new beginning:

the first rain in weeks came through the open window and laved
his eyelids.

Like the rain-spattered pages of a Romance novel left behind on
a holiday

beach: All the photographs of windows and doors, all the lintels,
ledges,

unspoke captions, no longer belonged to him. (n.pag.)

The fact that there is a period between the ending “eyelids” and the beginning “Like the rain-spattered pages” suggests a full stop dividing end from beginning. And yet, the “Like” clause, in fact, floats syntactically; if it weren’t for the punctuation and capitalization, this clause can conceivably connect either to what precedes it or to what proceeds from it. The “first rain in weeks” can “lave[] his eyelids” “like the rain-spattered pages” or “[l]ike the rain-spattered pages of a Romance novel left behind on a holiday / beach” “[a]ll the photographs” may “no longer belong[] to him” (n. pag.). The syntactic floating of the “Like” clause is made all the more apparent by the unconventional use of the colon at its conclusion. The more common punctuation mark between “beach” and “All the photographs” would be a comma.

With the unconventional use of a colon and subsequent unconventional capitalization of “All,” the “Like” clause is barely more syntactically connected to what comes after it than to what preceded it. As such, this “Like” clause becomes a syntactic bridge between the end and beginning that suggests a pathway between the two but that also constructs this space-between as a possible “no-man’s land” (Wah 73) of compromised movement. In that I am envisioning this “Like” clause to be a manifestation of the space-between cultural identities, I am casting this clause to be an embodiment of Fred Wah’s theorization of the hyphen. As with the hyphen, the “Like” clause functions as a marker that both “binds and divides” (Wah 72). The “Like” clause may be a pathway between two narrative spaces, but to travel onto and off of this bridge is to confront barriers. In this way, Kiyooka’s syntax becomes a performance of his athwartedness, a condition of being wherein he inhabits two spaces that interconnect and are not entirely divorced from one another, and yet that are not fluidly unified either.

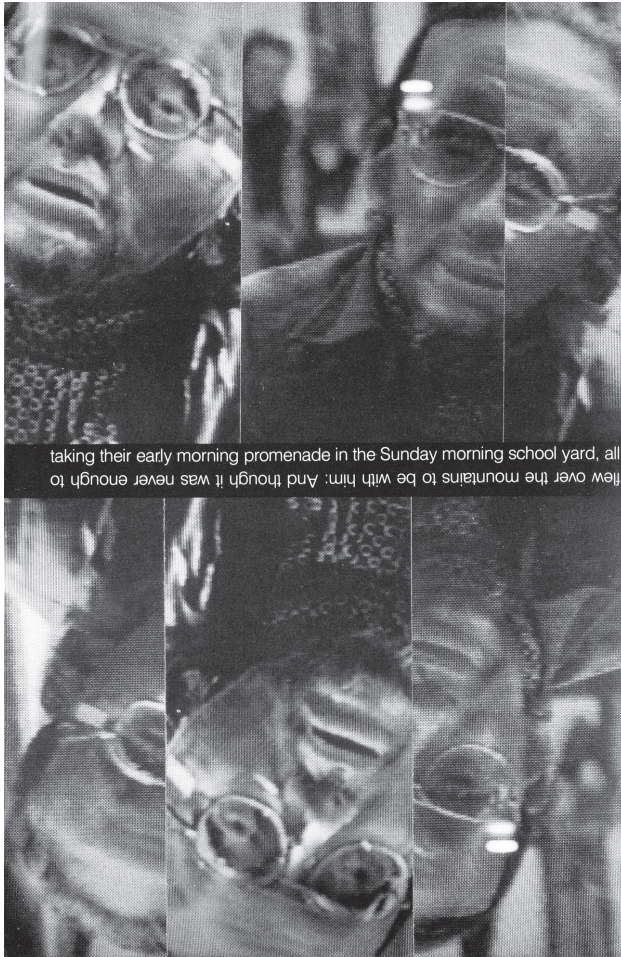
In addition to this disrupted narrative loop and to the fissures performed by the interrupted vectors between the two halves of any one page, additional formal features of this work perform Kiyooka's athwartedness and its implications. Although every page of "Pacific Windows" seems uniform in format, in fact, not every page features two of the same image; three anomalies in page layout occur. For example, one page contains an upright photograph of an urban environment—a building—on the top of the pages, while a photograph of a natural setting—a forest with corn-like stalks in the foreground—appears at the bottom. Furthermore, although the pattern of the rest of "Pacific Windows" would dictate the image of the natural environment be positioned upside-down, it is not readably placed as such.

While this particular anomaly may possess less interpretable significance than the other two anomalies that I am about to discuss, the existence of these anomalies at all speaks to the dilemma of athwartedness and the complex negotiation of (un)belonging that it entails. Each anomalous page is "of" some greater whole—namely, the larger book-length poetic narrative—and seems to follow its pattern. Nevertheless, even though the differences are obscured, they remain present, disrupting the unity of the whole. These anomalous pages, thus, become an expression of the belonging-but-not-quite of Kiyooka's existence.

One of the other anomalous pages features a triptych of portraits (See Figure 3). The upright and the inverted halves of the page include the same three parts, but these parts appear in differing orders. Left to right, the top triptych features:

- a close up of a man's face⁶⁹ with eyes, nose, mouth, and chin apparent, the top of the frame rendering his forehead incomplete;
- a slightly less close-up image of the same man's right eye, nose, and mouth, the mouth and nose slightly cropped;
- and again the same man, this time his left eye apparent but nose and mouth remain outside the frame and even the glasses covering his eye are cut-off before the nose-bridge.

Figure 3



What this initial ordering of the triptych offers is the appearance of two relatively complete faces; the centre and right frames do not quite cohere, but all the parts that go into a normalized face—two eyes, one nose, and one mouth appear. This top triptych, thus, continues the focus in “Pacific Windows” on doubling: two photographs and two lines have appeared on each page; the narrative has had two foci—Kiyooka’s mother’s visit and the city of Vancouver; Mary Kiyooka has linked two sides of the Pacific; and Kiyooka himself combines two

identities—Canadian and “enemy alien.” This triptych, in its ordering of parts, offers two renderings of the same man. The inverted triptych, however, changes the order of its parts, with the most complete portrait now appearing in the centre, severing the other two frames from each other. What had been two versions of the same man, one albeit slightly disjointed, is now one portrait that has destroyed the other. As such, the pivot of this page reveals a visual narrative wherein an attempt to privilege one identity—to bring it into the centre—is to render impossible the other.

The earlier introduced Figure 2—the image of an older woman standing on the shore and looking out at the water—also offers an anomaly to this text’s use of the same photograph for the top and bottom of the page. While both the upright and inverted image features the same content, the inverted image appears markedly out of focus. This pivot towards lost clarity functions in the context of the narrative’s broader representation of the speaker’s relationship with photographs and the memories that they manifest. In that photography represents “not a memory, an imagination, a reconstitution, [...], but reality in a past state: at once the past and the real” (Barthes 82), this pivot towards blurriness performs the ephemerality of that past moment. This “reality in a past state” cannot stay in focus, the continuity of its presence is in doubt. This photograph gone blurry reveals photography’s false promise of permanent preservation of the past.

This movement between images thus serves to illustrate the textual narrative’s construction of the speaker’s ambivalent, and somewhat troubled, relationship with photographs and the past they depict. The textual narrative begins with the lament that “All the photographs [...] / [...] no longer belonged to him” (n. pag.). As he peruses these photographs, he is confronted with his disconnection from “each passing / face” (n. pag.). Each face has “its own thatch, its half-shuttered windows and closely-guarded door” (n. pag.). These descriptions cast photographs as possible thresholds—windows, a door—that connect viewer to subject, and yet the promise of this passageway is spoiled—the windows are half-shuttered; the door guarded. And yet,

later in the narrative, the speaker conveys more confidence in the power of photography to resurrect the past: “While he was printing the / photos he found himself leafing through, he habitually revisited the site of their / initial disclosure” (n. pag.).

Photographs in this depiction have the capacity to transport the viewer to the place and time they represent. While the arc of the textual narrative suggests a growing confidence in photographs as elegiac reconstructions of the past and while the pivot of Figure 2 suggests the opposite, a doubt in the ability of photographs to render a moment immortal, the looping aesthetic of “Pacific Windows” keeps these attitudes in perpetual flux. The textual and visual narratives do not land and remain upon a validation of photography or conversely a nihilistic disbelief in its affective potential; instead these contradictory attitudes vacillate as the narrative proceeds, not to an end, but to a pivot back to a beginning. As much as the pivot towards blurriness in Figure 2 suggests the possible loss of that past moment, the page can pivot again and clarity be regained; the past can come back into focus.

The ambivalence in this speaker’s attitude towards photographs expresses in part the speaker’s contentious relationship with the past that results from the thwartedness of his experience. The ideal experience of time as conveyed in “Pacific Windows” is one of continuity. The epigraph, a passage by Henry Corbin, expresses as much: “Everything that the indifferent call the past comes forth only in direct proportion to our love, itself the source of the future” (qtd. in “Pacific Windows” n. pag.). In this phrasing, not just “our love,” but “the past” that is formed out of “our love” for it, is the “source of the future.” Similarly, in the narrative itself, when the mother eulogizes “those she knew who had recently passed away” (n. pag.), she announces “how each of them passed their presciences onto / those who were alive and kicking” (n. pag.). In this vision, the past perceives the future and thereby impacts the present; all time frames remain in contact.

This desired continuity, however, is revealed in “Pacific Windows” to be unachievable because of the trauma of the Kiyookas’ exclusion during WWII. Kiyooka writes,

..... In the end it was the casually taken photos sandwiched between Pearl Harbour and Hiroshima that had a special poignancy for both of them, though they agreed that even these couldn't foretell what the post-war years had in store for them" (n. pag.).

This phrasing identifies a biographical pivot point, the Second World War, a time that rendered Kiyooka into two incommensurable identities, Canadian and enemy alien. As described here, in the family's visual narrative, this period of photographs is a hyphen, a distinguishable marker between moments, one that bridges the time before and the time after the war, but that also represents the disruption caused by that wartime period. While "Pacific Windows" constructs time ideally as continuous, the past revealing the future, the war is described here as having disturbed this continuum. In retrospect, Kiyooka and his mother can see that the photographs and the past that they document could not predict just how changed their lives would be amidst of the legacy of WWII's exclusion and racism. One time is discontinuous with the next.

This reference to, but absence of, these photographs ultimately also conveys a reluctance, if not inability, to represent this time during WWII that led to Kiyooka's feelings of athwartedness. The textual narrative describes the perusal of these particular images and their poignance, but these images are not readably present in the visual narrative of "Pacific Windows." The textual narrative does not describe these images so readers cannot know if any images chosen for "Pacific Windows" are indeed the ones with "special poignancy" (n. pag.). Their absence, or at least their lack of clear identifiers, may in part speak to a continued difficulty in articulating that experience of exclusion or, in fact, represent a preservation of privacy. In "Notes toward a Book of Photoglyphs," Kiyooka identifies the dilemma of using autobiographical images: "'our' / once-published" photographs are "no longer 'personal'" (79). "Pacific Windows" is a narrative about the perusal of personal photographs; "Pacific Windows" is also a narrative that engages its audience in the

viewing of what Kiyooka names “Autobiographical Images” (Berger 92). Nevertheless, the narrative form of “Pacific Windows” exposes barriers to intimate revelation. Kiyooka may have found a visual/verbal medium that allows for a modicum of articulation, but even in this medium much goes unrevealed. In the end, Kiyooka’s thwartedness is both in the speaking/showing that the aesthetic form of “Pacific Windows” prompts, and in the silences that remain.

These silences and barriers to revelation are performed by the verbal/visual relationships set up by the page layout. With a textual line running beneath each upright or inverted image, the textual narrative is positioned as caption to the photographs. In this way, the page is arranged such that the text may anchor the meaning of the image or the image illustrate the meaning of the text. John Berger explains the traditional function of captions:

In the relation between a photograph and words, the photograph begs for an interpretation, and the words usually supply it. The photograph, irrefutable as evidence but weak in meaning, is given a meaning by words. And the words, which by themselves remain at a level of generalisation, are given specific authenticity by the irrefutability of the photograph. Together the two then become very powerful; an open question appears to have been fully answered. (Berger and Mohr 92)

Kiyooka, however, upturns this expectation. The words, for the most part, bear no recognizable connection to the image they accompany. They do not contextualize the photograph; they instead make overt both the lacunae of information the reader confronts when viewing these photographs and the lack of photographic evidence to “authenticate” the textual narrative. The photographs may suggest that an “authenticity” exists, but the details of the pictured events go unspoken, and hence, readers are given a window into a life, but are positioned to remain distant observers, players in a game of ‘you think you see me, but no, you don’t.’

For example, one of the most important and memorable state-

ments of the text—“they both knew she was the last link to the sad and glad tidings / of the floating world” (n. pag.)—carries across two pages and is accompanied in the upright reading with multiply exposed images that layer a foreground of people walking along a street with smaller glimpses of people at leisure in a park-like setting. While the palimpsestic nature of these images may aesthetically relate to the theme of “floating,” the content of the images does not illustrate the textual narrative. As well, the identities of neither the people nor their location are readable; Kiyooka’s possible connection to any of the people or locations goes unstated. When “Pacific Windows” is flipped upside-down to be read back to front, this significant part of the textual narrative then appears with two images of rockscapes, the first a collection of boulders and the second a pair of glasses sitting on a gravelly ground. Again, the specific context of these images remains illegible, and their connection to the textual narrative is a non-sequitur.

In juxtaposing words and images so as to suggest, yet deny, a relationship between them, Kiyooka positions his readers at a site of disjuncture. The composition of this text denies static meaning for both the images and the textual lines. Since one photograph is framed by two possible “captions” and since each “caption” frames two different images, the visual/verbal relations are shifting and unsettled. Even though the captions and photographs cannot be said to directly name nor illustrate each other, the significance of each line and photograph shifts as it is placed in a different relationship. In this way, “Pacific Windows” manifests Kiyooka’s vision of it as a “kaleidoscopic narrative” (Insert n. pag.). If one turns the kaleidoscope’s end, a somewhat slow and tentative pulling apart begins, until all of a sudden, glass particles climax, shift, and fall into a new pattern to start anew the next coming apart and recovery.

Much as the various pivots of “Pacific Windows” revealed fissures—vectors that reach for, but miss, each other; syntax that promises, but disrupts, cohesiveness; a page layout that sets up, but breaks, a pattern—this mismatch between word and image expresses further Kiyooka’s condition of athwartedness. Both the visual and the verbal narratives strive towards an articulation and both achieve this goal,

but incompleteness and silence remain. Through its photoglyphic form, “Pacific Windows” performs an experience of self wherein one’s parts, in all their fluid complexity, do not always cohere into a whole. As the text pivots and its fractures become overt, Kiyooka elucidates a navigation of multiple, and at times colliding, identities.

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