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# The "retinal-world" of Roy Kiyooka's *Wheels*

i'd hazard the guess that photography is
nothing if not the phenomenologist's dream-of-
the irrefutable thing-ness of thing/s: all
comprising the retinal-world. what the eye can
plainly clasp in all its rotundness posits
photography's occulate terrain. each thing visible
a permeable "text" by which we measure our own
sentience, conceit and recognition/s . . .
—Roy Kiyooka, "Notes Toward a Book of Photoglyphs"

Roy Kiyooka once stated in a 1975 interview that he was "truly bored with labels, what they pre-empt," and that he was "sick of having my origins fingered. Its as though an utterly 'Canadian' experience couldn't embrace either ocean and what lies on the far side of each. Or a Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan" (*Roy K. Kiyooka: 25 Years*). As Donald Goellnicht[1] points out, Kiyooka is here arguing "for a Canadian identity rooted in both the *local*—Moose Jaw—and the *transnational*" (76, emphasis original), or what Roy Miki describes as "a 'localism' that exceeds the 'nation'" ("Altered States" 56). Kiyooka's photoglyph *Wheels: A Trip thru Honshu's Backcountry* (1981) exemplifies this connection between the local and the transnational, and past scholarship on the collection has focused on how an imagined "Japan" figures into a Canadian text. Studies by both Susan Fisher and Judith Halebsky focus on the influence of traditional Japanese literary forms like *uta nikki* and make comparisons between Kiyooka and writers such as Edo-period poet Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694). Miki's own treatment of *Wheels*—part of a considerable body of work on Kiyooka—considers how the text, and in particular a pivotal scene in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in which Kiyooka recalls his own racialization during the internment period, "is symptomatic of the

minoritized subject who is produced through externalization as the perennial alien . . . the Asian in Canadian who is both of and not of a nation formation" ("The Difference" 24). More recently, Miki writes that the overlap of Hiroshima and the Japanese Canadian internment in this scene "binds [Kiyooka] to his parents' homeland" in an "affirmation . . . of Japan—and the Japanese language of his past—as a poetic resource for his work" ("English" 166, 163).

I would like to extend Miki's analysis of *Wheels* by revisiting the same museum scene using a framework of photography and visuality. By processing issues of racialization and the nation through different visual modes—namely, the related operations of seeing, being seen, and showing—I argue that the text posits vision as perceptual *practice*, rather than the mere faculty of sight. I first use this notion of perceptual practice to think through the "framing process" (Miki, "Asiancy" 120) of Asian Canadian literature and cultural politics, and then to consider the broader implications of Kiyooka's relationship to Japan vis-à-vis transpacific histories of imperialism, violence, and memory.

The first section of this essay explores how Kiyooka implicates the reader in the touristic consumption both of the Japanese landscape and of himself as a racialized writer and artist within the larger, whiter field of Canadian literature. Kiyooka's self-characterization as "tourist" (*Wheels* 156) expresses his alienation from Japan while ostensibly presenting a Western (camera) eye that gazes upon the non-West. However, his emphasis on photographs as mediated by train windows and car windshields undermines the camera's illusion of visual mastery. His constant references to the *act* of photography—winding up film, brushing dirt off the lens, clicking the shutter—create a mode of *seeing* that is not only filtered through the mechanical eye of the camera, but through the subjective "I" of the photographer. This mode effectively puts his own body into the viewfinder as the object of the reader's gaze.

The second part of this essay will delve more deeply into the aforementioned museum scene, discussing how Kiyooka's racialization as an artist merges with his racialization as an enemy alien. As he moves through disturbing displays of the bomb's aftermath at the museum, he becomes acutely aware of *being seen* by the reader, a process intrinsically tied to the *being seen* of racialization. In that moment, his recollection of his own racialization by the Canadian state's World War II internment order becomes overlaid with the trauma of the atomic bomb. At the same time, Kiyooka

acknowledges his complicity in the aesthetic consumption of trauma, both as a museum-goer and as a racialized artist who produces work for mainstream consumption. He attempts to displace the fetishizing gaze of the tourist by turning his camera eye away from the displays and towards his own body. Just as photography is emphasized in *Wheels* as a corporeal act, racialization is expressed phenomenologically. This underscores an understanding of race as operative at the level of perceptual practice, rather than as a characteristic we perceive through objective human sight.

The third section of this essay returns again to the museum scene, examining how "Japan" figures into Kiyooka's work in perhaps more material (as opposed to imagined) ways as a nation-state with its own national narrative. I expand further on the idea of perception as inherently interpretative, a process mirrored in the ideologically charged *showing* of museum objects in the contested spaces of both the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. Again, Kiyooka's participation in each of these spaces (as both subject and object of the gaze) reinforces the notion of complicity of the writer and reader in national narratives.

## what the "I" can plainly clasp

Kiyooka implicates his readers in their perceptual practices by undermining vision through an emphasis on mediated seeing, particularly as embodied by the figure of the tourist, with whom he identifies while in Japan despite his diasporic subjectivity. According to Dean MacCannell, sightseeing is meant to "overcome the discontinuity of modernity" (13) by creating a sense of identity, meaning, and purpose. Tourists want "to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives," yet they "are deprecated for always failing to achieve these goals" (94). As a result, the word "tourist" becomes "a derisive label for someone who seems content with his [*sic*] obviously inauthentic experiences" (94), encompassing both desire and alienation. If Japan is a space where Kiyooka might be presumed to feel at home as a diasporic subject, then his own self-identification as a "tongue-tied tourist" (*Wheels* 156) names language as a barrier to intimacy, leaving him with only his touristic gaze. The very act of *seeing*, then, becomes an expression of distance and alienation.

Similar sentiments are found in Kiyooka's first poetry collection, *Kyoto Airs* (1964), which describes an earlier trip to Japan to see his eldest sister Mariko, who had been left behind in Japan as a young child. Descriptions of "the hunger of / the lean days" (Kiyooka, *Kyoto* 20) of her wartime experience appear alongside impressions of the cityscape, in which Kiyooka felt himself a "tongue- / twisted alien" (12), at once intimately tied to and distanced from both his sister and Japan. As Miki notes, Kiyooka "weaves in and out of the historical and cultural signs of what he thought might be his lineage," and it is through "touristic eyes" ("Afterword" 307) that he views sites like Higashiyama's silhouette "humped / against the blue-black sky" (Kiyooka, *Kyoto* 19) and Ryōan-ji's rock garden, where "each stone / fills the eye / with another stone / of the inner eye" (16-17).

The notion of "touristic eyes" is key in *Wheels*, gesturing towards a similarly alienated experience of the famous landmarks that fill a "backcountry" journey. The text documents Kiyooka's travels around Japan in 1969, accompanied by his father Harry and artist friend Syuzo Fujimoto. Beginning in Kyoto, the trio travels mostly by train along the Sea of Japan, following the coast westward before looping back to the old capital via Hiroshima. Because Kiyooka's route is dictated by rather restrictive rail lines, he inevitably stops at spots already designated to be points of interest, such as an event (Hiroshima), a famous historical building (Itsukushima shrine), or a natural feature (Tottori sand dunes). Additionally, because Japan's railways are heavily implicated in imperialism and nation building, his travels might be read as following an (imperial) national narrative: during the Meiji period (1868-1912), railway development facilitated imperial expansion in colonies such as Manchuria, and enabled a domestic colonization of rural regions by the Tokyo metropolis (Wang 136-37). After their nationalization in 1906, "railway companies effectively came to realize a frightening level of vertical integration of virtually all aspects of their riders' everyday lives" (Fujii 111); capitalizing on popular hot spring, nature viewing, and religious pilgrimage sites, rail lines "transform[ed] . . . suburban and metropolitan intercity lands into extended [railway] company towns" (113). The famous efficiency and convenience of Japan's transit infrastructure, too, only hint at the heavy firebombing during World War II that necessitated its reconstruction as part of the nation's postwar (re)building efforts. In 1949, Japanese Government

Railways was reorganized into a state-owned public corporation under the directive of the US General Headquarters in Tokyo. The resulting Japanese National Railways operated the Matsukaze or “Pine/Wind” train (*Wheels* 136) taken by Kiyooka.

However, Kiyooka’s awareness of the contrived nature of such touristic hot spots is clear. Upon visiting one of Japan’s oldest and most important shrines, he remarks that “i’ll never take snapshots of Izumo like / the glossy postcards” (147), which could be read as a lament that he lacks the skill to replicate the photos, or as a refusal to imitate “official” views of the shrine offered up for touristic consumption. Either way, the statement emphasizes a discrepancy between his own way of seeing and what the nation puts forth as examples of itself, a version mediated through the limitations of “touristic eyes.”

Kiyooka further undermines the act of seeing by collapsing it with the photographic act. Landscape shots taken through train windows double the framing of his viewfinder:

> Backcountry is / an open window on a slow train / bags full of mail / boxes full of fresh veggies / Backcountry is / a slow train with open doors / obento with tea / a velour seat with a wide view / sniff the air / feel the rain / pelt of solitude / humming wheels . . . / father has his suitcase filled with Seagram’s VO: / each bottle carefully wrapped inside his change of clothing. / i’ve got my faithful Canon & 20 rolls of Fujicolor film. / nobody noddin’ off on the Pine/Wind knows our ‘family name’ / or ‘where’ we hail from . . . (*Wheels* 137)

These references to the physical *act* of taking photos emphasize that what the reader experiences of Japan is ultimately mediated *through* Kiyooka as both photographer and narrator: descriptions of “winding the film up” (138), “clicking the shutter” (147), and brushing off the “grit on a 35mm lens” (141) are paired with the emphasis on his own physical presence in the train—the feel of the velour seat, the sound of rain. Likewise, his introspective narration inflects the photos in ways that suggest that what the reader sees is not what Kiyooka sees. Shots of lakes and rice paddies are paired with Kiyooka’s ruminations on the strained silences between him and his father:

> . . . how come we have so little to say
> given all the years we’ve travelled separate ways.
> . . . how is it we seem to have spoken of all

> manner of things cast-up in familial nets.
> . . . o the assuaged tongue/s of a father & son
> riding Pine/Wind train thru Honshu's Backcountry (138)

Like the camera, the train is a technology that enables an all-consuming gaze, allowing people to see more of the landscape in less time. But the compressed space of the train car breeds what James Fujii calls "intimate alienation":

> In an impersonal compartment used for mass transit of total strangers, people are thrown together in a space that provides no excuse or framework for establishing social relations. . . . This apparent contradiction—close physical contact with people whom one does not know, or whom one knows only visually—alienation, in a word—provides a new "logic" of sensual arousal. (Fujii 127)

Even with the close quarters of the train car and the bonding experience of shared travel, the distance between Kiyooka and his father remains, again echoing his distance from Mariko in *Kyoto Airs*. This sense of alienation becomes Kiyooka's aesthetic labour, documented in the textual portions of the photoglyph which, in effect, make the reader privy to his *punctum*, Roland Barthes' term for the personal, affective "wound" (73) inflicted by photographs upon the viewer. The emphasis, then, is on the subjective "I" that reads the photo, rather than what is readable by any physical or mechanical "eye." This merging of the "eye" and the "I" is seen in a postcard written to "M": "O how I wished nihongo[2] fit me as snugly as these suede walking shoes I bought in Kawaramachi which have become my very feet. Thank goodness Syuzo is beside me to ease all the proprieties: it leaves me free to be the 'I' of my camera and not just a tongue-tied tourist" (Kiyooka, *Wheels* 156). This merging is later reinforced in the phrases "stone I's" and "an 'I' to behold" (156), echoing the stones that "[fill] the eye" in *Kyoto Airs*. Thus, the reader's experience of Japan is not only filtered through Kiyooka's (camera) eye, but through his subjective "I," which refuses to provide the caressing gaze of a more ethnographic, exoticizing account of Japan. He thus counters the view from "touristic eyes" by foregrounding the presence of the touristic "I."

In emphasizing his physical presence in the text through references to the photographic act, Kiyooka places himself squarely in the viewfinder, as the object of the reader's gaze, rather than merely doubling that gaze through his own. The notion of "touristic eyes/I," then, might be said to reflect the

marketing of Asian Canadian literature for white mainstream consumption as a kind of literary tourism. Miki's analysis of the Chinese Canadian literary anthology *Many-Mouthed Birds* (1991) illustrates this phenomenon: the cover photo of an exotic, feminized Asian male face peeking out from behind a shadowy curtain of bamboo leaves, originally taken by Chinese Canadian artist Chick Rice for the art exhibit *Yellow Peril: Reconsidered* (1990), was, as Miki argues of the book's marketing, decontextualized and reappropriated to "[evoke] the familiar western stereotype of the Asian 'othered,' secretive and mysterious, a sign of 'Chineseness'—Edward Said's 'orientalism' *à la* Canadian colonialism" ("Asiancy" 120). For Miki, the photo's intended self-reflexivity was thus transformed into a "one-dimensional Eurocentric frame of reference" that "invites the reader in to eavesdrop, to become a kind of voyeur—to listen in on the foreign, the effeminate 'Asian' of western fantasies" (120). Such texts become akin to "tours" offering novel experiences that form part of the larger "landscape" of Canada—a kind of colonialism through mainstream assimilation.

Kiyooka's posthumously published biography *Mothertalk: Life Stories of Mary Kiyoshi Kiyooka* (1997) demonstrates this assimilation. The book was edited by Canadian poet and author Daphne Marlatt, Kiyooka's former partner, who was partly forced to streamline his unchronological "free-floating succession of stories" (*Mothertalk* 5) because she could not "make sense of what Roy had done" (Egan and Helms 63). In rearranging Kiyooka's final manuscript into chronological order, she placed a heavier emphasis on "the importance of Mary's stories, Mary's place in the Issei community, and the Issei community's role in Canadian history" (64). In addition, Marlatt included translations of Japanese words and glosses for cultural context, an intervention which Susanna Egan and Gabriele Helms argue ultimately "determined that Mary's life stories find their place in the English reader's understanding of the Japanese Canadian experience" (62).

I read these interventions in two ways: first, the chronological rearrangement implies a teleological development from immigrant to citizen, which inadvertently absorbs Kiyooka's mother Mary into a Canadian national narrative. Second, the assumption of an anglophone reader reinforces the text's assimilation to mainstream audiences. Egan and Helms even claim that "the value of this book *for all Canadian readers* has been

significantly increased by the interventions that followed" (53, emphasis mine), going so far as to say that if Mary's stories had not been filtered through either Marlatt or Kiyooka himself, "the resulting work would *clearly exclude us as readers*. It would also play a more limited role in Canadian culture" (22, emphasis mine). But issues of linguistic accessibility aside, the resistance to being excluded here reveals a lack of awareness of how, as Miki suggests, "the framing process itself . . . [functions] as one aspect of the public space within which texts by writers of colour are represented, received, codified, and racialized" ("Asiancy" 120). Here we can see an imagined universal "Canadian reader" with an ostensibly universal, neutral, and objective viewpoint from which all works can and should be understood. But as Kiyooka's emphasis on mediation suggests, this visual mastery is a *méconnaissance* in which the reader misrecognizes or mis-knows the Other who serves as the object of their gaze and in the construction of their own subjectivity. Although Kiyooka's work remains largely "absent in national literary circles" (Miki, "Asiancy" 113), such interventions and readings filter "Asian Canadian" through a lens of "Canadian" which, rather than being a neutral background against which "Asian Canadian" is brought into relief, is itself a perceptual practice.

## "the phenomenologist's dream-of-the irrefutable thing-ness of thing/s"

This idea of perceptual practice is expressed visually and phenomenologically in *Wheels* through the notion of *being seen*. Kiyooka demonstrates an awareness of being "watched" by the reader as he moves through the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum. He switches abruptly from an image of a group of old men playing *go* to a photo of a *hibakusha*,[3] one charred arm awkwardly splayed out, the shadows on the face suggesting the rough texture of burnt and blistered skin. From here, he moves through the exhibits, taking note of the displays:

> tall glass cases with pallid '40s mannikins
> attired in somebody's ashen clothes
> (click)
> an alarm clock with arrested hands anointing
> that awe-filled moment when
> (click)

> the shadow of a man taking his ease on a granite
> step was all that got left of him
> (click)
> heaps of domestic utensils made in purgatory
> bicycles shaped like pretzels
> (click) (*Wheels* 168)

While Kiyooka provides a photo of the alarm clock stopped at the moment of the bomb, the other displays of detritus found in the aftermath are only *described*, followed by a "(click)" (168) to indicate a photograph was taken. However, the "missing" photographs create a gaping hole in the text: by explicitly stating that he has taken the photos but denying the reader the ability to see them, he emphasizes the photographs as visual *acts,*[4] as records of *looking*. The absent presence of the photos thus performs a purposeful *looking away* from trauma, again in an attempt to resist the impulse of the touristic gaze. While this might be read as a refusal to partake in the aestheticization of trauma, Kiyooka's attempt to avert his gaze does not absolve him of his own complicity: "which hand / pulled the trigger? / which hand / turned gangrenous?" (*Wheels* 168).

Kiyooka's frequent references to the physicality of the photographic process thus foreclose the reduction of his body to a Western eye[5] gazing upon the non-West. Additionally, the focus on his own corporeality and his denial of the photographs to the reader emphasize his physical presence in the museum, suggesting his awareness of *being looked at*—in this case, by the reader. At the same moment that he becomes aware of his complicity through the act of looking, he recalls being the object of a racializing gaze:

> i remember "JAPS SURRENDER!"
> i remember all the flagrant incarceration/s
> i remember playing dead Indian
> i remember the RCMP finger-printing me:
> i was 15 and lofting hay that cold winter day
> what did i know about treason?
> i learned to speak a good textbook English
> i seldom spoke anything else.
> i never saw the "yellow peril" in myself
> (Mackenzie King did) (170)

Again, the photos in the museum prompt a flood of memories that can only be described as Kiyooka's *punctum*, overlaying the atomic bombing of Hiroshima with the trauma of displacement in Canada during the internment period. The racialization in this passage creates a particularly stark contrast to the earlier passage, in which he says, "nobody noddin' off on the Pine/Wind knows our 'family name' / or 'where' we hail from" (137): it's only when he opens his mouth to speak Japanese like a "tongue-tied tourist" (156) that he can be identified as a foreigner. But despite being able to go unracialized in Japan, he still "feels the weight of his melanin," to use Frantz Fanon's articulation (128). The scene gives the strong sense of what Fanon called a "third person" construction of the man of colour's "body schema," undergirded by a "historical-racial schema" created by "the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" (91). Kiyooka-as-narrator, too, has clearly internalized being the object of the racializing gaze: although the reader experiences the text through Kiyooka's eyes/I, his body still remains in view, as if he sees himself as an "image in the third person" (Fanon 90).

The text thus describes a phenomenological experience of race, in which certain bodies' possibilities for action are delimited by larger hegemonic frameworks. Sara Ahmed explains Fanon's "historical-racial schema" as a lens through which the phenomenological experiences of racialized subjects must be read. Such discourses are inherited from legacies of colonialism which "make[ ] the world 'white' as a world that is inherited or already given . . . . a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects within their reach" (Ahmed 111). Racism, Ahmed writes in her reading of Fanon, "'stops' black bodies inhabiting space by extending through objects and others. . . . Racism ensures that the black gaze returns to the black body, which is not a loving return but rather follows the line of the hostile white gaze. The disorientation effected by racism diminishes capacities for action" (111). The idea of diminished capacity again recalls Miki's analysis of *Many-Mouthed Birds*, which, despite its "empowering agenda . . . to open a venue for writers of Chinese ancestry" ("Asiancy" 120), also resulted in the commodification of its contributors' otherness to cater to mainstream desires. As Larissa Lai argues,

"capitalism's gaze has been able to overtake the original intent" of minority literature, leading to

> the cumulative circulation of a particular type of text . . . [that] produces an expectation about what people of colour know and are, and does not allow us the full extent of our subjectivity, only that which confirms us as belonging to certain tropes of violence, outsiderness, and abjection.

In other words, there is no "space" for minority writers to move outside the narrow scope of representation allowed them by the mainstream, as the very category of minority literature dictates "what is and is not within reach" (Ahmed 112).

Miki's call to expose the "framing process" ("Asiancy" 120) resonates with Linda Martín Alcoff's statement that, when it comes to racial difference, "the realm of the visible, or what is taken as self-evidently visible . . . is recognized as the product of a specific form of perceptual practice, rather than the natural result of human sight" (16). Racial distinctions are generally made visually, which allows them to seem "real" insofar as they have a perceptible, material basis. However, modes of visual perception used to determine racial difference are a "learned ability" (Alcoff 20), and thus "there is no perception of the visible that is not already imbued with value" (19). Racism therefore *precedes* the human tendency to differentiate and categorize bodies, which are themselves, as Elizabeth Grosz puts it, "volatile": "It is not simply that the body is represented in a variety of ways according to historical, social and cultural exigencies while it remains basically the same; these factors actively produce the body of a determinate type" (qtd. in Alcoff 19).

Thus a particular type of body is produced by bringing it into relief against a white world, much as certain types of texts are produced through the category of "Asian Canadian," whose historical formation has often been brought into relief against a supposedly ordinary, undifferentiated background of "Canadian." But it is precisely because the world is white—that is, it is already raced and not an objective or neutral background—that Alcoff argues that race is not a *characteristic* that we perceive, but instead operates at the level of perception itself. Because race is that through and against which we perceive, perceptual practices of racialization are "tacit, almost hidden from view, and thus almost immune from critical reflection" (20).

We might then read Kiyooka-as-narrator's shifting from the foreground (as the figure who moves through the narrative of the poem) to the background (as the I/eye that sees and looks away) as a method of bringing this perceptual practice into view. Like a camera, *Wheels* employs multiple depths of field that, by turns, focus on the landscape of Japan, the poet-photographer himself, and the reader's perceptual practices. While Alcoff argues that interpretation is inseparable from perception, perceptual practices can be shifted "by the existence of multiple forms of the gaze in various cultural productions and by the challenge of contradictory perceptions" (Alcoff 21). Perceptual habits of racialization can thus be shifted through a form like the photoglyph, which emphasizes its own reading *as* perceptual practice.

For instance, another photoglyph by Kiyooka, entitled *Pacific Windows* (1990), features "an idiosyncratic ribbon / of gnomic Text" ("Notes" 91) running through the centre of each page, one line of text right-side up, and another upside down. The text is meant to be read through to the "end," flipped over and read again "backwards" to the first page, "literally turn[ing] the book upside down in a potentially endless series of unfolding circles . . . transcend[ing] the linear teleology of the typical book" (Deer 67). Glenn Deer characterizes such examples of Asian Canadian "photopoetics" as elliptical, in that we are meant to "imagine or *extrapolate* beyond the borders of what we can see and read" (68, emphasis original)—including, I would argue, the body of the reader. Typically, when readers immerse themselves into a book, the object's material reality "is still there, and at the same time it is there no longer, it is nowhere" (Poulet 54). *Pacific Windows*, however, draws the reader outside the text by foregrounding a phenomenological experience of the text: the turning of the book upside down in the reader's hands bars them from an immersive perceptual practice of reading. Perhaps this is what Kiyooka means by "the irrefutable thing-ness of thing/s" ("Notes" 89): the reader is reminded of the materiality of the book and, by extension, the irrefutable objectification of the racialized body. By dictating the direction of the reader's gaze and physical, corporeal movements, Kiyooka enacts a resistance to his own racialization: just as *looking away* functions in *Wheels*, the text's changing direction in *Pacific Windows* has the power to redirect bodies (like displaced racialized subjects) and gazes (always fixed upon racial difference).

**"comprising the retinal-world"**

As discussed earlier, the overlaying of the bombing of Hiroshima with the trauma of Japanese Canadian internment in *Wheels* attests to Kiyooka's desire for an identity encompassing both the local and the transnational, unbounded by either Japan or Canada. At the same time, the text demonstrates his acute awareness of his own participation in the narratives of these nations, namely through his experiences of exhibitions and museums. Such institutions, which function through the visual operation of *showing*, contribute to the centring, displacement, and erasure of certain aspects of memory and history.

Just prior to the travels described in *Wheels*, Kiyooka had been preparing a sculpture for the Canadian pavilion at the 1970 World Expo in Osaka. His selection as a representative artist by the Canadian government was perhaps unsurprising given Canada's push towards multiculturalism, which became official policy in 1971. This policy mobilized and managed racialized bodies in the service of projecting a tolerant, pluralistic, and progressive national image (Mackey 50). Guy Beauregard writes that "Kiyooka was well aware of . . . the ideological work performed by world's fairs and exhibitions" (41): his experience at Expo '70 resulted in his photoglyph *StoneDGloves* (1970), which "intervenes in our perceptions of the framing of national imperial space" (Beauregard 43). Likewise, Scott Toguri McFarlane argues that *StoneDGloves* questions the ethics of globalization as exemplified by projects like Expo '70, which enable an "archival act of forgetting"[6] (128).

National institutions like the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum operate in precisely the same way. Lisa Yoneyama, citing a study by historian Inoue Shōichi, notes that the Peace Memorial Park in which the museum is situated was based on a 1942 design by architect Tange Kenzō undertaken as part of a public competition for the Commemorative Building Project for the Construction of Greater East Asia (1). The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a concept created by the Japanese imperial government to promote the "unification" of Asia against Western cultural and military incursions. It was, however, little more than propaganda justifying the occupation of other Asian nations. With Japan's surrender in 1945 and the subsequent collapse of its empire, Tange's design to commemorate the Co-Prosperity Sphere never came to fruition—that is, until it was resurrected

on a smaller scale in 1949 as the Peace Memorial Park. This ironic obfuscation of imperialism in the park's original design is emblematic of Japan's national memory of the Pacific War: Japan's status as the victim of American violence enabled what Yoneyama describes as "a national victimology and phantasm of innocence" (13) in the dominant historical discourse.

This national victimology is further enabled by the fact that Japan's war crimes and colonial atrocities vis-à-vis the rest of Asia have also been largely displaced in Western collective memory, particularly by the Allies' much more limited encounters with Japan at Pearl Harbor and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Western industrialized nations' amnesia surrounding Japan's military aggression can also be attributed at least in part to their present "preoccup[ation] only with . . . widening trade imbalance between Japan and the U.S. and Western Europe" (Choi 326). While economic concerns were far from the only cause of wartime amnesia, they are foregrounded in *Wheels* in the photograph of what appears to be an unsigned letter that closes the museum scene. Directly naming the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the letter admonishes the Japanese public for their government's wrong-headed prioritization of imperial aggression over the well-being of its own citizens:

> In 1930, when your warlords had not started war on China, 10 Yen was worth:
> 1. 2 To 3 Sho of first-class rice, or
> 2. Cloth for 8 suits of summer-wear, or
> 3. 4 straw-bags of charcoal.
>
> In 1937, after the China Incident, 10 Yen was worth:
> 1. 2 To 5 Sho of inferior rice, or
> 2. Cloth for 5 suits of summer-wear, or
> 3. 2 ½ straw-bags of charcoal.
>
> Today, after waging a hopeless war for three years against the world's greatest powers, 10 Yen is worth:
> 1. 1 Sho 2 Go of first-class rice on black-market,
> 2. A small amount of charcoal (if it is purchasable at all),
> 3. No cotton cloth.
>
> These are the consequences of the Co-prosperity Sphere as advocated by your leaders. (169)

The letter is actually an English translation of one of many US propaganda leaflets dropped by plane on Japanese citizens as part of the US' psychological operations, and one of four messages printed on the reverse side of a fake 10-yen banknote (Navona Numismatics). While Kiyooka does not give context for the letter, its emphasis on economic decline and the devaluation of the yen, rather than the human toll of Japanese imperialism, is suggestive of the postwar Japanese economy's push towards free-market capitalism under American guidance. Fuelled in part by fears of a communist revolution, this economic restructuring was part of what H. D. Harootunian argues was a modernization narrative applied to postwar Japan by the Occupation. Ultimately taken up by Japanese historians and social scientists, this narrative centred on Japan's successful development from a feudal order into a progressive democracy characterized by a "commitment to peace . . . as a uniquely enlightened example for the rest of the world to follow" (Miyoshi and Harootunian 2-3). Japan's actions during the Pacific War did not fit into this image of an enlightened, peaceful nation, and were thus explained away as aberrations in which the country was "temporarily 'derailed' in the 1930s from its true democratic vocation" (Harootunian 201). While there was more willingness to see Japan as aggressor in the early postwar era, this perception was soon overshadowed by the image of Japan as victim, a shift directly "related to the Occupation's decision to turn former foe into friend after the collapse of Nationalist China" (Harootunian 212). The villainization of Japan's militarist leadership—which the letter in *Wheels* demonstrates—was set in stark contrast to the abject victimhood of the Japanese people. Furthermore, the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal gave the impression of "evils early met and early mastered," resulting in an "unusually early closure" of public memory of the war (Gluck 6). Thus, historical amnesia surrounding Japan's military aggression was only made possible through the complicity of the US Occupation.

Within the context of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, then, the *content* of the letter, while attributing responsibility to Japan, ultimately supports the narrative of Japan's victimhood. Within the context of *Wheels*, however, the *photo* of the letter emphasizes its concreteness as an object or an artifact: darkened by a shadow (perhaps Kiyooka's?), the edges of the paper are held down by tape, emphasizing that we are seeing it mediated through the lens

of Kiyooka's camera eye/I. By extension, it reminds us that the letter does not represent a transparent history of postwar Japan, but is a curated object in a museum with its own ideological aim, and that it is curated again, by Kiyooka, for another. The photo of the letter immediately follows a verse that reads:

> there's a charred-hand reaching out of my abdomen to
> inscribe my "name" in the Museum's Guest Book:
> there's an acrid taint to all the consonants & avowals
> of a hundred-thousand (faceless) Signatories . . .
> (Kiyooka, *Wheels* 169)

The image of the "charred-hand" takes us back to the blackened arm of the *hibakusha* in the photo that opens the museum scene. The original photo, catalogued in the museum's Peace Database as Code SA152-2, is part of the permanent exhibit and was taken by the Photo Union of the Army Marine Headquarters. A bland caption is given: "A badly injured schoolgirl." Kiyooka's reproduction of the photograph, like the photo of the letter, emphasizes it as an object in the museum: its skewed, off-centre framing shows the edge of the photograph, as well as that of an adjacent photo. Again, the visual act of looking is suggested, the movement of Kiyooka's body as his camera "I" begins to look away, a quick glance out of the corner of his eye, as if he cannot bear the sight. Despite his reluctance to gaze steadily at the girl, the "charred-hand reaching out of [his] abdomen" (169) suggests that she has already incorporated herself into his being, hearkening back to his father's comment:

> halfway through the Museum
> father stopped. he said, i can't stomach anymore.
> i'm going for a walk. meet me
> at the tea house when you two have had your fill (168)

The overt reference to the consumption[7] of trauma becomes particularly grotesque when paired with the tea house, where the visitors, as Kiyooka writes, "sipped our tea and bit into our sandwiches" (170) upon leaving the museum. The image of a full stomach overlaps the affective and the physical, where Kiyooka has his "fill" (168) and the *hibakusha* are literally consumed to the point where they are spilling out—or "reaching out" (169)—of his

abdomen. There is no abjecting the trauma from his being: the "charred-hand" of the *hibakusha* girl, at once disembodied and embodied, is now so thoroughly identified with him that she signs his "'name'" (169) in the museum guest book on his behalf.

The reference to hands becomes particularly significant given Kiyooka's earlier question of complicity: "which hand / pulled the trigger? / which hand / turned gangrenous?" (168). The destabilization of his identity suggested by the quotation marks around his "'name'" (169) mirrors the earlier scene on the train, in which he notes that "nobody noddin' off on the Pine/Wind knows our 'family name' / or 'where' we hail from" (137). This ability to remain incognito mirrors that of the "faceless" guest book "Signatories" (169), who also gesture towards a kind of authorship: if the US Occupation is indeed the author of the letter, then perhaps the museum-goers, including Kiyooka himself, are complicit partners in the writing of the narrative posited by the museum, their patronage becoming "avowals" of a national victimology in which the "acrid taint" (169) of imperialism goes unseen.

## Conclusion: sentience, conceit, and recognition/s

As I have argued, Kiyooka filters Japan through the *punctum* of his camera "I," emphasizing the mediated nature of *seeing*. His awareness of *being seen* in the museum by the reader is expressed as a phenomenological experience of race, underscoring an understanding of race as operative at the level of the perceptual framework rather than a characteristic we perceive through objective human sight. Vision itself is a perceptual practice that implicates not only the reader, but also Kiyooka himself: as an artist and poet who, in effect, creates representations, he is also implicated in the ethical relations of *showing*. While *Wheels* represents a marginalized subject's resistance to the nation's regulatory forces, it also demonstrates an acute awareness of its own complicity in the ideological operations of those same forces. He writes:

> perhaps the photo/glyphs i took
> of abandoned work gloves on the site of Expo 70
> will negotiate a tryst for my sense of
> an un-embittered, well-being. What's the price
> of clasping one another's hands ? (*Wheels* 171)

If his participation in the Canadian multicultural narrative at Expo '70 weighed on his conscience, his privileging of the absent-present photographs in the museum might be read as a form of mitigation in its refusal to allow the bombing of Hiroshima—and by extension, his own hybrid identity—to be represented and thus consumed.

Given Kiyooka's concern for the local and the transnational, I want to end by thinking about what *Wheels* means in the context of "global Asias," a paradigm that seems to imagine itself as somewhere between Asian Canadian Studies and Asian Studies, two fields that have historically been diametrically opposed in their aims and objects. While Asian Studies has traditionally taken an area studies approach, focusing on geographical, national, political, or cultural regions, Asian Canadian and Asian American studies have emphasized issues of race, citizenship, and diaspora in North America. Over the past twenty years, however, Asian Canadian and Asian American studies have moved increasingly away from nation-centred critique that "risks erasing histories of settler colonialism," in which Asians were hierarchized over Indigenous peoples in the Americas (Lee and Kim 7). The fields' shifts towards a transpacific model of inquiry suggest a new prioritization of "collaborations, alliances, and friendships between . . . marginalized peoples who might fashion a counter-hegemony to the hegemony of the United States, China, Japan, and other regional powers" (Nguyen and Hoskins 3). In addition, this paradigm promotes alliances between "academics on both sides of the Pacific and in the Pacific" (4) who share a goal of emphasizing how academic power and knowledge production operate.

The field of Asian Studies, too, has shown some signs that it may be moving beyond the geographical boundaries of Asia proper. In July 2020, driven by the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, Association for Asian Studies (AAS) president Christine Yano called for a reconsideration of the organization's "longstanding self-identification as a 'nonpolitical organization.'" She proposes expanding the AAS's current structure of four area councils (China and Inner Asia, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia) to include a fifth "Global Asias" council, which would act as a bridge between AAS and the Association for Asian American Studies, stressing that "it is important that we structurally acknowledge and learn from each other" (Yano).

Just as Kiyooka turns the gaze towards himself to bring his complicity into view, the acknowledgement by both fields of their ethical responsibility towards decolonization and social justice might also be understood as an acknowledgement of their complicity in the production of certain narratives. If the shift towards "global Asias" can help reveal how "academic power is a function of state power, economic power, political power, and military power" (Nguyen and Hoskins 4), then perhaps texts like *Wheels* can also help us recognize our complicity as scholars—that is, as people who *circulate* texts, rather than people who merely comment on *how* they circulate—by making apparent the perceptual practices of each field.

## NOTES

1 This article is dedicated to Donald Goellnicht, my late supervisor. Thank you for everything, Don. I still feel your guidance whenever I read your writing, which has been both an inspiration and a comfort to me in your absence.
2 *Nihongo* is the Japanese word for the Japanese language.
3 Literally, "one who was affected by the atomic bomb."
4 My reading draws on Kirsten McAllister's "Photographs of a Japanese Canadian Internment Camp: Mourning Loss and Invoking a Future."
5 I owe this insight to Atsuko Sakaki's "Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, or Photography as Violence."
6 McFarlane is referring here to the Human Genome Project, which he argues enacts violence through the collection and digitization of genetic information on the *hibakusha*. While the project's purpose was to record the effects of radiation on human cells, the transformation of human lives into genetic information results in the "forgetting" of the original context of the atomic bomb.
7 Many thanks to the anonymous reviewer for pointing this out.

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