

Roy Kiyooka / NOTES TOWARD A BOOK OF PHOTOGLYPHS

To see is to forget the name of the thing one sees.

— Paul Valéry

The sacred consists of all those forces whose dominance over man increases or seems to increase in proportion to man's efforts to master them. Tempests, forest fires and plagues . . . may be classified as sacred. Far outranking these . . . stands human violence . . . violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred. How did man succeed in positing his own violence as an independent being? and then call it politics?

— René Girard

dear Pierre, Leslie and Barry —

ever since you came by to talk about TCR #3
and my participation in it, i've been turning over in
my mind's eye, the shape of its yet-to-be reified
contents. along the way i've got into the fundamentals of
computer-literacy: ha! this is the 3rd letter i've
started; the other 2 decomposed, due no doubt to my high-
tech illiteracy. digital derelictions. bear with me:
this letter will surely compose itself within the bounds
of our solstice-timbrels as we all veer towards the
distaff end of the modern age's rabid technologies.

given the unforeseeable ascendancy of
literacy via Gutenberg's Printing Press and
the unquantifiable Babel of Text/s that
issue exponentially from the world's presses.
given the implicit ideological premises
of the whole world's (satellite) MEDIA and all

of the varied (corporate sponsored) Art/s
i've often wondered what i'm doing, treadmilling,
inside this Image-Colossoi this ubiquitous
print Vortex? nonetheless, in my ruminations i
keep returning to the notion of a petite
book of my own photoglyph/s with its own vexatious
text/s: it's surely a quest of 'how' to
lay 'em up, to, at least, startle myself, let alone
ingratiate a delinquent TCR, spring-reader...

a hitherto, un-bidden Interleaving
of Photos and Texts unfolding, page-by-page
(fan-wise) like a pleated Renga Scroll

such are my immediate thoughts; have a listen
tell me your parameters for TCR #3
bark, loudly, if you want me to do a summersault

i would daub this grey november pallor
all over these clandestine filmic faces if the
weather didn't already posit their rune

each hapless noun soaked clear through
the mind has its own corrosive agencies
coagency itself but an syntactical whiff



to be both parochial and worldly at one
and the same time seems to me to be our allotment
heading into the maelstrom of the 90s;
though i have wondered if this could be promoted in
the heart of Patagonia. agog; i'll trace
The Lineaments of My Own Polis and if grace be given,
re-affirm, my place in the intricate web-of-
divers-thing/s. ideally, the author should disappear
into the plenary convection-currents . . . this
drear november day and all the dwindling days to come
propose a heartfelt in-dwelling: the utterly-
engaged 'photoglyphic-narrative' ought to summon up
its own alembic. fair or foul: let's abide the
consummate weather: let winter utterly wither us so

that TCR #3's Spring Intrancement/s can fly up-
ended into the Hullabaloo of the 90's

Concordences in Solstice Time: the Imago-quest
hold my hand i'm a habitual two-finger logos bandit
hallow all the unaggrieved foreboding/s of our
dumbfound noun/s and their coagulate agglutination/s
begin with this runcible Letter . . . this Pacifica . . .

yours truly
indelible trace/s

•

"the unravelling universe has no linguistic limits"
(who said that and why does he sound just like me)

•

it's the essential act of getting back
into the darkroom with all its noxious fumes that
i keep putting off. am i irresponsible
sitting here empty-handed, swaddled in solstice gloom
daydreaming, unsurpassing, Pagan Skies.
anyday soon, saint nick will tumble down my chimney covered
in soot to stuff my image sock. each morning
i wake i ask myself will i begin printing today? or, have i
in fact begun with this attenuated letter?

a table of contents:
an entablature of contentlessness
breath's tracing/s

(. . . if it weren't for our counting:
counting the daily 'minutes' and bygone 'hours'
if it weren't for our calibration/s
and hence, cost-accounting and by recompense our
interminable mortgages and purloined
deficit/s: if it wasn't for all our chrono/logical-
indoctrination would we go on dreaming
up a pagan world with or without our credit card
incredulities.

counting on you, too . . .

over many decades i've had my hand in a number of
collaborations and if i'm lucky i'll have a hand foot eye
mouth in this yet-to-be-apparelled occasion i tell
myself as the 80's dwindle down and TCR begins its occular
ascent. like language/systems grounded in post-
Gutenberg print technologies and endlessly replicated 'our'
once-published/ no longer 'personal' images have to
all intents and purposes been flawlessly pre-empted by the
printed pages ideo-logical plenum. paging marshall
mcLuhan and andy warhol the prince and pundit of visual pop.

but that i tell myself shouldn't prevent us from
attending to our own mundane visual minds. after all we all
know that even a simple-minded 'image' let alone —
the hiss of a mere syllable has more alchemical layers than
you can shake a wand at. like i've said, it means re-
formatting each print with a 4 x 5 camera and all things
considered, it begins to look like, my perdurable, december
gig . . .



odd to have come to that time in one's life
when all the things one puts their hands and mind to
goes on and on within the parameters of one's
daily dalliances and in that ambient attention turns
indelibly into grist. the mundane, grounds us.

ain't november
typically grey / deliriously
sodden? ain't
the smashing of the berlin wall
and our own foetid
memories part & parcel of TCR's

S p r i n g / T r a n c e

will the 90s be among other things an insouciant
decade or will it be a continuation of all the ideological
fall-out we've had in recent times til it's finally
sunk so completely into the sedimentary layers of our bodies
it'll turn into mind, tissue, whorls of stars, blood,

and excrement . o my unpaginated pagan lattices...

this thirstless rain permeates my own midden .

•

this fog lifting its sodden drindlskirt
between hastings and prior surely has a priority on
this morning claritas that keeps us on
our toes indoors while outdoors it adds an un-sound Ping!
to all our parenthetical airs. the body's
nonetheless small consternations, a glossolallia of all
the voracious entitlement/s

a

sustaining vision of
the intricate palimpsest-of-relationships
supporting every living/dying
thing ought to inform an enlightened polis:
to imagine oneself interacting
with everything (imaginable) at a strategic
moment: pen, brush, spear to hand
is simply what it's always been about

lascaux painter/hunters haunt the precincts
of these commotions

through the open doors
of the newly refurbished Japanese Deli:
miso, sushi, and sashimi
fill many bellies. this november-gutter
swirls with our flagrant

thirst/s

•

the day after pablo picasso's painted bather
came to alexandria street to have her true complexion
replicated: richard turner was using a handspan
to gauge the distance between her blue breast and her
green one. the day after pablo's picquant
bather arrived at his studio in a yellow cab the new york
stock market dropped precipitously but her aplomb

never waived. when she settled in and he had taken note
of her measurements, he asked her if it didn't feel
a bit strange hanging out so far away from her st. tropez
haunts; but all she would say was "pablo knows best."

after all got said and done the question was truly
irrelevant. they both knew that the only consensus
that mattered had a lot to do with this, their once-in-
a-lifetime complicity plus their daily conviviality.
even the flush on her painted cheeks had to be scrupulously
replicated. a copyist's work is never dumbfound.

recognizing we'd spent a big chunk of our lives
inside a millennial dialogue about Art and all the modes
of its Valorization, we knew there were more ways to
embody the 'unutterable' than our own paltry syntax could
match wits with, let alone, conjugate. appalled, we
recognized there was no bottom-line to homo faber's appetite
for artifact/s. ideally, each one unique, certified
one-of-a-kind: yet, no more or no less than the ten million
replications of vincent van gogh's simple sunflowers.
and we had to admit that Picasso had inscribed his ledgerde-
main on our ransacked wits and that even a copyist's
handiwork bore testimonial brush marks to his vision.



ovarian stones tumble down-stream:
blunt shoulders smoothed by millenial abrasions.
scoured; this solstice prose, this
day's dismaying News from Eastern Europe: all
the toppled ideologies will surely line
the coffins and pews of tomorrow's ideological
stratagems

 this dilapidated prose
bears its own perdurable solstice endorsements...



. . . what i painted, yesterday, will
beget, tomorrow's undefiled colour-spectrum.
an unquiet gender-bed creaks beneath

us and picasso's bather. this dwindle-down
december sun, this questing nightbody . . .

'to paint is to love again' (henry miller)
proposes an end-of-a-millennium anti-historical trope;
a blush of unreason to flush out the old de-
crepitudes. in capricorn's season; all the capricious
children who speak cantonese ease my ears of
tomorrow's ideological squalor. i tell 'the round of
seasons' by their play ground ebulliences.

'gold mountain' our everyday background.

ghost-writers paid to pump platitudes into politics
can count on henry kissinger to applaud their
adenoidal ventriloquism. simple-minded syllables bite
the unbequeathed bullet lying parallel to their
intoxicated silences. i keep looking for impeccable
photo-glyphic moments, those gestural/nuances to
launch me into the mundane domain of the willing "i".

some whim in me says i want nothing more than a
counterpoint-of-sumishades to measure my outreach.



he for his part searched through old painting manuals:
spent hours mixing and matching colours til his own batch
matched the bather's earthen epidermis, and were, to all
intents and purposes, indistinguishable. "comparisons!
comparisons! will surely foreshadow whatever mirth i have
left in me," the parsimonious copyist muttered, comparing
different weaves of linen canvas imported from belgium and
france; comparing seasoned hardwoods for the stretchers
which have to be hand-mitred to the original specifications.
the sum of all these transactions compacted into an adroit
copyist's felicitous hand and eye. other-wise, it sure helps
to pay the rent.

talking, talking about the gild-edge currency
tuckt in/ among the 3rd world's inmemorial droughts and all
the lawful deficits, we came to the conclusion that
the New York Art World talks out of the side of its value-

laden, monetary mouth; and that all the multiforms
of replication/s, ad nauseam, added more than a pittance
to the lop-sided Monetary/Image Concatenation/s.

one afternoon i fell by he had four pristine
canvases propped up on either side of pablo's painted
bather. the trick consisted in intuiting where
pablo began and using a brush of the same width coupled
to the right sort of wrist-movement, complete the
copy, in a series of sustained gestures: the challenge
as he saw it was to come up with a copy so like the
original it would deceive even the collector's wife who
had come to esteem 'it' as her own self-portrait.



though: she had lost none of her decorum
she had begun to look as homely as alexandria street
itself. all sorts of his friends who fell by
remarked upon her sullied mediterranean grace. others
commended her for her adaptive 'savor-faire.'

but, what's a well-meaning copyist to do with
the old mod master's sticks & stones heiroglyphics?
or, the blunt wonder is how he kept flogging the
old cunnilingnam-factor for nine decades as if nothing
but his own furious libido empowered her presence.

one afternoon after a final tea and biscuits
pablo's painted bather and her freshly-minted replica
returned via yellow cab to their north vancouver
haunts. need i say we were riven by our rite-of-passage
into the importune realm of artifacts and their
discretionary, facsimiles. 'humble pie,' we thought, almost
simultaneously, thinking of, our own small place
inside Babel's hexagonal image-Hive . . .



young japanese couple and their two kids
dead, in the west end. the sum total of their immigrant-
lives, briefer, than mine. to have been born
and raised in modern Nippon with all its ideo-logical/

kul-tural/techno-cratic, 'homogeneity' makes it
ever so subtly difficult to re-adapt to other linguistic/
societal/ values. it's at bottom, a heart-rending,
filial, alienation; and, an unappeasable, home-sickness:
once you leave the heart's domain, it'll change
willy-nilly into a 'remote' garden in your mind
one you know you will never stroll through, let alone, name.
"never," is the name of a heart-break bed.

"against the grain" was not to be their way
in an alien land. (all the electronics, notwithstanding.)
the exiled heart, punishing itself, doesn't know,
what, drove it, to that, that, unutterable, estrangement,
with its concomittant, death-wish . . . pray that
the Tao will lend them its filial ear for the rest of their
unlived lives. all the names extinguished in our
obituary columns confound their unintended, nounless-ness.

"enochi wa namida no nagarei mon"



"the posture of her absence"

"i miss her, you know. i've had lots of women pass
through whom i go on missing and others i no longer have
time to miss, but i have to admit that pablo's dame
with her wacky hairdo got through to me and who knows what
we might have accomplished if she had hung around. ha!
but it's all tucked away in the mind's flagrant image –
repertoire, isn't it?" "and doesn't the body's inclinations
not to mention, its logomania, remain dumbfound...?"

i didn't fall by the day after she left or the day after
that i didn't want to face up to her absence, either.
full bodied; intentionally inscribed with sticks and stones;
or, simply going through all the old erotic commotions
for the sake of a well-wrought facsimile: we thought of
her vanquishment into the market place as yet another act of
un-framing the old oedipal muse: 'memories' motherlode.

sometime later; we heard that the original
had fetched an enormous sum at sotheby's whereas
her scrupulously painted facsimile had taken
its honorific place upon the floral wallpaper and
to the proprietary wife's delight, none among
their immediate friends let alone unnumbered guests
recognized the change: they all said she could
still pass for twenty-four if she had to.

deep inside the minotaur's labyrinth
picasso stood four-square, his burning eyes turning
into crystal-spheres whenever the sickle-
light silhouetted a flawless pair of fatty arbutle
knees, pendulum breasts & dimpled elbows.
even alexander street has its history of bricoleurs.

tally each and every artifact
incite, your own plenum



down on the end of ballantyne pier

the day after pablo's piebald bather left
alexandria street with her pristine aura and her shiney
replica intact: a sodden fog swallowed up one
luxury liner, several trawlers, a fishing fleet plus the
whole panchromatic slope of north vancouver:
meanwhile, the peerless gulls perched on the end of the pier
let the fog roll off their waterproof backs and
shrug their peregrine shoulders

stooped shoulders/ certified boulders
also have their backs, thoroughly scoured

this unexpected, salt clamour . . .
this, matchless, fog...



haven't inscribed a cheque with '1990' on it,
yet. neglected to make a 'new year' wish and slip it
under my midnight pillow. portentous all these
sullen winter days particularly in Eastern Europe: how

each of them and each of us hugs each perfervid
lunatic-moment, displaces the sortilege of all sorts of
ideologies. unsurmized, 'tomorrow' lies like a
sullen tiger on the far side of any capricorn's glaucous
sleep. a lot of my dream-life these winternights
comprise the soi-disant acts-and-sayings of person/s and
thing/s i've been looking intently at via prints
negs and even video-tapes: it's as if i had (inevitably)
been drawn into all their momentary fulminations
and hauntings. with rare exceptions i hardly ever remember
what 'he' or 'she' said in the talkies, but, in
galleys of the dream-world their un-repeatable gestures
quicken retinal longing . . . these thoughts comprise
one of the essential acts in the working out of the cadences
of a photo/glyphic/auto/biography.

counting; counting, the cadence/s
measuring out the number/s of face-to-face emplacements:
the succession of images, their obliquely
apprehended, (nonetheless) quotidian pagination/s. what
wants to be 'sighted' as well as 'sounded' —
is an intricacy-of-gestures that lies but a breath away
from the interlocutor's sullen eyelid.

. . . it's time to peer at more prints, negs and footage
to 'see' and 'hear' a unhidden narrative. all the
specs of darkroom alchemy and computer technology thus
engendered attending to the least visual/aural
inflection. needless to say it goes on being a vexatious
quest.

two months plus into TCR #3, i say the inquest
will have to wait. . .



brightness of this january morning
arouses the darkroom-spiritus. is it for a
light-suffused-day like this we suffer
weeks of abysmal rain? my whole basement reeks
of photoglyphic chemistry. i'm intent on
getting TCR off the ground and i know that this

luminous winter day will inflect the whole
ruminative process. pristine particles
of silver bromide monitors my response. TCR has
no name, yet; like not quite birthed.
its prosaic narrative, likewise, unbequeathed.
ease into it after a second coffee and
another dunhill: begin by reexamining the next file
filled with contact sheets and negatives:
ask yourself, do these images aid the furtherance
of a yet-to-be titled photo book. . .?



picture this thing: picture it in this exacting
light. the narrative i am questing, indeed
veering, towards, will only reveal itself after
many dumbfound hours in the darkroom. each
time i return from a long walk in the snow bound
winter light and re-enter the darkroom i re-
learn the alchemy of clandestine images. . .

each time i sit down to my IBM
i'm nonetheless at Language's behest
listen! can you hear the snow —
pelting, these slant/ january/ cadences. . .



“ ‘redress’ not withstanding”
scanning the brimfilled
cauldrons of ideological scald
in the year of the horse
the harkening proletarian-
upsurge in the baltic republics “i”
cross my fingers, touch wood
count to ten, slowly, myself
a number among this century's finger-printed
‘enemy aliens’ . . . to this day
i am nothing but my disparate
nomenclature

•

marxist/leninist
revolutionary protocol would seem to have
lost its ideological-balls during
the despicable “iron curtain” years with all its
rumpledstiltskin fears & loathing

what’s left of ‘the sacral’ after
a millenium of fratricidal wars but this plangent,
moral upsurge, this long abated fervour
to wipe ideologies face of each, their own lintel
and hearth. in lieu of all our previous
scarifications it’s surely a disquieting thought
that all ideologies, the most democratic,
notwithstanding, turn into, replenishible, millennial,
midden heaps

scare the shit out of me make my hair turn white

FEAR: as a gross instrumentality
of ideologies stomps intransigently through
the decorum of our kabalistic media

scare the shit out of me see the white of my eyes

or else —
they all smile that once
upon a time
legendary, lunatic-smile
the whole earth
needs a big dose of laughter’s cosmic
grandeloquence

•

guardian of
this swatch-of-whiteness my tall
maple/ looms/ stars
high above
my winter entrancement/s
under this
stealth of white
my life

a patch-work quilt stained
with a thatch of
colour/s
pillow my head
in the kingdom of sleep snow reigns
over etymology

•

an emerging sense of
an actual order for a long sequence of
Photo-glyph/s: 80 or more
black & white, Inflection/s: a discontinuous
narrative, comprising

ONES, TWOS, THREES
A PEAR TREE,
and a ROUND OF FOURS,
FIVES & SIXES

:

each discrete series
inflecting/
impinging/ on all the

Other
glyph/s

cliff-hangers
fragile fingernails
mincemeat
convection current
lapidarian
ladybug entrail
mug-shots

click!

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. . .

a homely silver-bromide Palimpsest,
: independent-yet-complicit
with each series of doubloomed-images

— bearing their own
foreboding chiaroscuro

memorie's breath:
beset by unimpeachable gesture/s. . .

the habitual/daily
darkroom/ ritual/s
all/ the prosaic/claptrap
the clatter of
cantankerous/
ideologie/s



nelson mandela released to millions of
enthralled blacks on television but what's Barbara
Frum doing fronting the Jubilant blacks
in faraway Soweto for all the plain folks back home?
me sitting on keefer street wondering — if
this snow is falling on Tienanmen Square tonight

my dear mao: everybody i know
has forgotten their favorite quotations from
the red book but not the poems you
composed in your heart during the long march.
cascading snow muffles my blue mule's
elongated ears. some say 'death' shouldn't be
photogenic, other savants say that its
proletarian attribute is an impeccable whiteness . . .

this snow, this long snow covets
your crypt and calligraphic thrift. this snow
silencing the pulpits and parapets
this snow, you know



title/s are difficult: they
want to be a haiku of the whole book's content/s
they want to prognosticate, but,
we both know, the best ones, simply, ring, true

i n f l e c t i o n s
— f e l i c i t o u s —
r e f l e c t i o n s

the Title/s of
each discrete series of
photo-glyph/s:
an idiosyncratic ribbon
of gnomic Text:
not to be inscribed til
the photo/s un-
cover their glossolalia
alignments

last things first



the haunted-images of the physiogomy of thing/s
one had paused long enough to look intently at,
and perhaps, photograph: haunted by their pre-
sciences, the insistence of their apparitional-
features, he paused in his scrutiny long enough
to light up a dunhill. everytime he went to benny's
to pick up a pack benny without crackin' up says,
dung-hill, sir. he could do without sleep and sex
as long as he puffed the hours away but as soon
as he butted out his last puff and turned on his side
with his thin legs drawn up he fell into uncraven

sleep. in dream-time he couldn't remember the name of
a single friend dangling a cigarette, let alone
exhale perfectly-lofted smoke rings. he had wondered
if his dreams exempted nicotine's taint 'cause it
fouled the sonnambulist's nest . . .

haunted by the notion of
'memorable moments'

he peered intently at a minute series
of granular-epiphanies . . .

numinous/gesture/s: un/concealing
neighbourhood/narrative
strategies



every moment, on television
millions-of-things have their image taken from them
without recompense. let each man's image/s
of his body be housed in its own environment. let each
man's face, be, for a moment remembered for
its unspeakable/unrepeatable grace. let each detail of
the least thing be a pre-figurement of its own
narrative in time. the next generation of photo-graphers
will be elected from among the blind.

the day onto day plummeting into
the image-vortex, barely translates into, mundane
nomenclature. the eyes are most becoming
when they're raptly dumbfound. after the big snow the
buoyant february days lengthen, any day now
my petite crocuses will tessellate my front gate



holed-up in the cellar of the house with a
hostage of acetate images: some wit on radio named imago
hibernaculum says, anybody in their present-
tense mind causes image-fractures, a teeming chiaroscuro
that extinguishes all nomenclature.

gimlet-eyed he didn't know if he had indeed
chosen and printed a particular photo, or, the photo chose
him to be its unmasked executioner. holed up
in the darkroom all the images began hallucinating spring's
felicitous ramparts . . .



"we" are the twin faces of the bromide beast
stalking a ruined garden for the utterly unbecloaked
face, the very one, that hasn't yet found its
own dumbfound frown. every face i print throws a pall
across my own apparencies; it's always solstice
night in the darkroom: "i" see my own grimace in both
highlights and surrounding shade: a faint trace
of my own fugitive smile creases their lips. every face
i print looks clear through me through its own
death mask. every silver print a bromide memento-mori . . .

these photoglyphs and this
alembic text are dedicated to my family,
and my unpreemptive friends, and
all the eastend personages plus a host of
multi-form things that graciously,
it unintendedly, lent their presences to
this salutary occasion. for the
sake of the book: even my own face is but
one of many borrowed artifacts



'silver imprimaturas
netted
pacific entitlements'

the weathering-of-things is its
essential information.

each page
its mirrored-image a
whole thing

star/stave
the least thing entire
layer on layer

laminated to
present-tense ocular
interventions



persons/places/things
in their condition
momentarily unconcealed

beginning with stonedgloves in 69
bc almanac 70 / 13 cameras 79
my japan 85 and other photo/text/works
this book furthers a capricorn's
photo/glyphic epic

parchment / epiphanies

yuki
and koto raga
each
crystal
flake
each
scintillant
note
loops
of pellucid
white
verbs
mantling
gorgon
throat