



ONE AND THREE FACES

‘With regard to a certain exchange–value; it is also, no doubt the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of *someone* as other. And of *someone* as *someone other* that we will not hasten to determine as self, subject, person, consciousness, spirit and so forth. This already suffices to distinguish the specter not only from the icon or the idol, but also from the image of the image... more than one feature.’ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, (Routledge:1994)6

A narrative of decomposition, reconciliation and ghostliness haunts *One and Three Faces*. Raymond’s borrowing of Joseph Kosuth’s logic is particular to the set of conversational rules governing objects as subjects, where this privileging allows and promotes a certain conversational order. In featuring the face, here Raymond illustrates the most basic and shared device functioning as an enunciation of his own photographic narratology. Here, the logic of One and Three in Raymond’s photography follows a curious exile across these four Pacific sites titled: *Elegy, Nevermore, Fallen and Strange Leaves*.

Elegy is weighted with a specific task of narrativising Raymond’s own family connections through the imagery of his mother and the haunting of the visible images of his grandfather’s photography. Equally as relevant is the inherited act of imaging as the presence of the frontality of these images, held up, covering and omitting faces in the red room series. In a similar confronting fashion, each of the male portraits emphasise an aesthetic of touch by appearing very central and ‘up close’, inducing a sense of haptic touching where the eye meets the image on paper. The effect illuminates the fleeting nature of portrait photography as a drawing out of the subject and a positioning: a ‘push and pull’ effect which renders them sitting uncomfortably within the frame. They are at once familiar, and too close for comfort. Such a presence of family ties is felt in *Elegy*. A literal mourning which Raymond sets out to narrativise, results in viewing himself through the mimesis of male imagery, and the descendance of his own capabilities as a photographer through his mother and grandfather (mother’s father.) This lineage is carefully juxtapositioned to illustrate the cartography Raymond sets at work throughout.

The following three sections: *Nevermore, Fallen and Strange Leaves* are set in Tokyo, Bali and Vanuatu and construct a lineage in each of these ‘homelands’ as extensions of Raymond’s position in his own. These locations in the Asia-Pacific settle together here as instances of local sentiment. Raymond’s status as an Australian photographer is expressed in the Balinese and Japanese series’ where the observer is the subject of tension in the portraits. The city becomes the subject of portraiture, a living, growing landscape where trees are refracted upon the glassy exterior of skyscrapers and the featured decay of cosmopolitan life. There is a strong sense of voyeurism, the Japanese women are caught gazing skyward, literally as both

subjects of their own image aware of the photographic process, and as objects out of focus, distant and observing. The image of a young Japanese girl, her portrait, itself framed, marked by the ghostly figure of the crouching photographer. The title of this section *Nevermore* is reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven* ('Quoth the Raven, Nevermore') as a borrowing of darkness and light illustrated by the image itself (the contrasting image of the bird against the sky) and the literary criticism which responds to the hauntology of Poe's gothic allegory.

Fallen, the Balinese series, continues Raymond's concern of disenfranchised figures and their positioning as 'closed figures' facing away from the camera. It is as though the heads of these figures appear as an *objet petit a*, a small repeating visual figuration as a signifier of hauntology at work. The figures which turn away articulate for Raymond, 'the terror of attraction'. This abjection activates the *objet petit a*; the turning away as a conscious activity. In Bali, Raymond feels a curious disembodiment. The compositional space of the statue of the diety is dissected by the vertical (power) lines, and the figures of four Muslim women on the beach are still and spectral, again, faces turned away. The shots on the Balinese beach look south towards Australia, as a statement of Raymond positioning himself within these images as observer.

In *Strange Leaves*, Raymond's Vanuatu portraiture is an experiment of departing from the nature of ethnographic photography. The series featuring Ni-Vanuatu children illustrate the camera as an active participant exposing, exoticising and elegising the subject(s). The exotic, or the native is a position held by the observer, and an uneasy form of reference for European settlers. This exotic point of view is captured by the young boys posing (deliberately or casually) for the viewer, functions as something distinct that happens afterwards; a realising of a pose, just as the documentation of people and land by ethnographers stands as an effect of looking. Raymond's positioning of his subjects as specters in *One and Three Faces* is itself at stake in this fragile state where nothing is beyond decomposition.

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