
Citizenship, Diaspora and the Bonds of Affect: The Passport Photograph

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Abstract

The foreclosure of emotion in a passport photograph, the identity document that ties a person to a nation, illuminates a contradiction between feeling and citizenship. On the one hand, as these instructions for the passport photographs suggest, emotion obscures the identity of the citizen. On the other, as I will discuss in further detail, emotion, or the capacity for it, is very much a part of the conception of the modern citizen. My paper will take up this contradiction in order to examine the relationship between diaspora and citizenship. Through an exploration of the passport photograph, I argue diasporic subjects lay bare the problem of emotion at the heart of contemporary citizenship.

Keywords: diaspora, citizenship, passport photographs, feeling

If you have recently had your passport photo taken in Canada, the United Kingdom or the United States, you may recall a curious injunction against emotional expression. For a photograph to be acceptable for use on a passport, it must, in addition to following many specifications for lighting, composition and background, portray its subject as an

emotionally empty one. Passport Canada, the federal department overseeing the issuing of passports in Canada specifies: "Applicant must show a neutral facial expression (no smiling, mouth closed) and look straight at the camera." The United Kingdom's Identity and Passport Service asks that the subject of a passport photograph must have a "neutral facial expression" with the "mouth closed (no grinning, frowning or raised eyebrows)." Similarly, the US Department of State's guidelines for acceptable passport photos insist: "The subject's expression should be natural, with both eyes open. Please refer to the photographs found on this website for acceptable facial expressions." The "acceptable" facial expressions reveal no emotion. They are natural only insofar as they are completely emotionally neutral. That is, they are not natural at all. They expose a citizen-subject caught and composed for identification purposes. This subject is neither angry, happy, sad, disgusted, nor even particularly present.

The foreclosure of emotion in a passport photograph, the identity document that ties a person to a nation, illuminates a contradiction between feeling and citizenship. On the one hand, as these instructions for the passport photographs suggest, emotion obscures the identity of the citizen. On the other, as I will discuss in further detail, emotion, or the capacity for it, is very much a part of the conception of the modern citizen. My paper will take up this contradiction in order to examine the relationship between diaspora and citizenship. Through an exploration of the passport photograph, I argue diasporic subjects lay bare the problem of emotion at the heart of contemporary citizenship.

One might argue that the instructions for the passport photo are about security and biometrics and the urgency of the task of recognition. That might be the case even though almost everyone I know has, at one time or another, disparaged the lack of resemblance between their passport photos and the way they normally look. And it is doubtful that, in that fraught moment of the encounter with a border patrol officer, any one of us looks as neutral or as natural as our passport photos make us out to be. Whether or not these acceptably neutral and natural facial expressions allow for easier identification, they do indicate not only what a citizen is supposed to look like, but also what being a citizen should feel like. The injunction against emotion in the passport photograph projects the way in which the ideal citizen, in the eyes of the state, is an emotionally neutral one. Let me suggest that the photographs that identify us as citizens must be without emotion because they are themselves a vestigial reminder of the fraught relationship between emotion and citizenship.

The relationship between emotion and citizenship is predicated by the question of the humanity of the citizen subject. Examining the pre-history of modern citizenship, Susan Maslan argues that modern citizenship attempts to resolve a foundational divide between the "human" and the "citizen" upon which the early modern models of citizenship depend:

If we think that "human" and "citizen" are or *should be* corresponding and harmoniously continuous categories it is because we think in the wake of the 1789 Declaration. In the early modern political imagination, to be a citizen meant to cease

to be human. This is the legacy that the Declaration tries to overcome and that it conceals ... and so the new Republic turned to, or better yet, invented—the language of universalism to repress and resolve the tensions it can neither dissipate nor acknowledge. (Maslan 2004: 372)

Maslan's argument breaks the familiar Greek to Roman to French to American narrative of citizenship's progression as a concept. Her examination of pre-modern citizenship in relation to the legacy of the French Revolution, an event closely connected to modern conceptions of citizenship, reveals a deeply uneasy relationship between the universal claims of citizenship and the exclusions of its practice. As Giorgio Agamben notes, the discontinuity of the human and the citizen

is implicit, after all, in the ambiguity of the very title of the 1789 *Déclaration de droits de l'homme et du citoyen*, in which it is unclear whether the two terms are to name two distinct realities or whether they are to form, instead, a hendiadys in which the first term is actually always already contained in the second. (Agamben 2000: 19)

In her reading of Agamben, Ariella Azoulay observes a much more significant tension between the rights of Man set against that of the community of citizens: "When [Agamben] identifies the man of the declaration as a trace of *homo sacer*, whose invention preceded that of political man, as the basis of political sovereignty, he misses the direct threat that man poses to the citizen" (Azoulay 2008: 61). It is a threat

which turns on the problem of recognition and misrecognition.

Suggesting a strong relationship between photography and citizenship, Azoulay outlines the problem of recognition and misrecognition in her argument for a civil contract of photography. She proposes that there is a "civil contract" in photography which functions analogously to the civil contract of citizenship:

The conceptual valences between photography and citizenship are in fact two fold. Because ... photographs are constructed like statements (*énoncés*), the photographic image gains its meaning through mutual (mis)recognition, and this meaning (even if not the object itself) cannot be possessed by its addressor and/or addressee. Citizenship likewise is gained through recognition, and like photography, is not something that can simply be possessed. (Azoulay 2008: 25)

Azoulay's argument suggests that photography and citizenship are intimately bound by the work of recognition and the perils of misrecognition. The need for the former and the dangers of the latter are a reminder of the formal demands (plain background, impassive facial expression, head framed at the centre of the photograph) of identification photographs themselves. Even though Azoulay's analysis focuses largely on journalistic images of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the genre of identification photographs attend precisely to her argument. The necessity of recognition gives rise to the stark formalism of identification photographs for passports.

Of course, the insistence upon the passport itself suggests a certain faith in the

notion that people are who their documents declare them to be. "With the widespread use of a similar passport," Mark Salter notes, "the examination at the border came to be centered on whether *documents*—rather than the traveler herself—were in order" (Salter 2003: 28). The introduction of the passport photo was one attempt at maintaining the fidelity between the traveler and her passport. According to John Torpey's *The Invention of the Passport*, a man named Richebourg claimed in an article in the July 22, 1854 edition of *La Lumière* to have introduced the idea of the passport photograph (Torpey 2000: 172, n.62). Salter's investigations into the archives of the British Passport Office reveal that passport photographs became a standard requirement for British passports as of 1916 when Form A was revised and "we see the first issuance of a passport in a recognizable form: a folded sheet of cardboard, not paper; that included the coat of arms of the country, a photography of the bearer; and an official standardized message from the secretary of state for foreign affairs" (Salter 2003: 28). Azoulay poses that "the camera modified the way in which individuals are governed and the extent of their participation in the forms of governance" (Azoulay 2008: 89). With the introduction of the photo requirement on passports, the camera modified the governance of individual movement along the lines of identification invented not for tracking the traveler; but rather the criminal.

The protocols of the passport photograph share something with those of another set of identification photos, the mugshot. Recalling her assertion of a civil contract of photography where the photograph constitutes a "statement,"

Azoulay's (2008) suggestion of photography's construction as an "*énoncé*" evokes the notorious *portrait parlé* (spoken portrait) developed by Alphonse Bertillon in the nineteenth century. With his development of anthropometry, where the human body could be measured and broken down into a series of written codes, Bertillon standardized the identification photographs of criminals and denoted them to be *portraits parlés*, portraits that spoke so that they could "be read in many cities, provinces, across jurisdictions" (Cole 2001: 43). The passport photograph does not communicate "an electric body of speed, transmitted telegraphically" the way that Bertillon's mugshots did (Matsuda quoted in Cole 2001: 43). It was never broken down with such precision. Nevertheless, it calls to mind the burden of identification photos to speak, to announce and respond to the question posed but not asked regarding the truth of one's identity, the fidelity of one's appearance with that of image on the document, to declare *prima facie* that one is who one claims to be.

As the history of the passport reveals, it is a document of suspicion rather than recognition. The introduction of identification photos in passports only further posed the question of the tenuousness of the connection between the person and the document that purports to identify that person. Torpey (2000) observes that in 1791, with the victories of the revolution still fresh, the French National Assembly voted to abolish passport controls in favor of cosmopolitanism and freedom of movement. Only a year later, passport controls were reinstated and increasingly refined, thus laying the foundation for the

contemporary passport. Torpey argues that the invention of the passport emerged as a response by an increasingly suspicious state to control and identify the enemies that it saw everywhere but could not easily identify. After 1792, “the revolutionary governments, beset by enemies domestic and foreign, real and imagined, sought to use passport controls and other documentary means ... to regulate the movements of émigrés, counterrevolutionary brigands, refractory priests, itinerant mendicants, conscripted soldiers, and the foreign-born, among others” (Torpey 2000: 55–6). Well into the twentieth century, the passport was understood to be a punitive document. “The 1921 conference of the International Parliamentary Union in Stockholm expressed its condemnation of the passport system and called for greater freedom of movement” (Torpey 2000: 27). While the passport may seem relatively benign, indeed desirable, in the contemporary period, the consolidation of its usage attests to a long history of state suspicion leveled with particular acuity upon anyone who does not want to stay put.

In a historical moment when more people move around more than ever before, these claims in these moments have become more frequent and more fraught. As Simon Cole notes of the crisis engendered by the urbanization movements in nineteenth-century Europe,

People in modern cities might not be who they claimed to be. They could be anyone; they could come from anywhere. Nineteenth century society shifted from a closely hierarchical society of ranks and orders, in which everyone knew his or her place and the place of others, into what

... Michael Ignatieff has called a “society of strangers.” (Cole 2001: 9)

The status of the stranger; the foreigner; stands in tension with that of a community whose integrity is, as Benedict Anderson famously suggests, imaginary. The diasporic subject’s difference challenges the homogenizing stipulations of national citizenship and illuminates the contradictions of citizenship. These are contradictions that turn on feeling. Citizenship is both bonded by affect and, in the instance of its visual manifestation through the passport photograph, hindered by it. The injunction against emotion in passport photos projects a fantasy of a passive, transparent, and readable national subject.

The figure of the foreigner poses a distinct challenge to this fantasy in that the foreigner’s subjectivity cannot be easily assimilated into this discourse of citizenship. Torpey’s recognition, through the work of Gérard Noiriel, of the problem of the “foreigner” suggests a strong connection between the idea of Man and the notion of the foreigner located within the founding of the 1789 Declaration itself:

Noiriel has written that the modern conception of the “foreigner” came into being with the French Revolution as a result of the elimination of feudal privileges on 4 August 1789, which formally created a national community of French citizens. This Act was, however, in inherent and insoluble tension with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, which proclaimed equality of all *individuals* and thus tended to promote the rights of foreigners as such. (Torpey 2000: 28)

This tension between the rights of Man and that of the community of citizens does not simply lie in that classic liberal problem of individual desire set against that of communal need. Rather, this tension can be located in the problem of the rights of the foreigner, coded as individual Man, which poses a threat to the rights of the citizen.

Arguing for a sharper understanding of the chasm between the figure of man and the figure of the citizen in contemporary understandings of citizenship, Maslan also draws attention to the foreignness of the figure of Man and suggests how this figure is indeed racialized. As she observes, the very title of the 1789 *Déclaration des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* indicates the continuity between the figure of the human and that of the citizen cannot be taken for granted.

The authors of the Declaration understood that they were in the process of elaborating two distinct kinds of rights: rights proper to an individual *outside* of any constituted political body—that is, in the language of the eighteenth century, natural rights—and rights proper to a member of an organized political body or state. It would appear, then, that natural rights are those that belong to man and political and civil rights are those at the disposal of the citizen. Asian and Africans, both favorite French examples of oppressed peoples, would be recognized by the Declaration not as citizens of France, of course, but rather in their capacity as *men*—a title which confers upon them a body of rights that must be acknowledged and recognized by all other human beings. (Maslan 2004: 360)

This split in the declaration allowed for the recognition of the humanity of oppressed racial others such as Asians and Africans, but it also explicitly denied them any kind of obvious access to the rights and privileges of citizenship. Moreover, this division of human from citizen was delineated along the lines of feeling in opposition to reason: “For, despite commonplace assumptions about the Enlightenment, the primary qualification for inclusion within the category of the human was the capacity to feel, not the capacity to reason” (Maslan 2004: 358). Thus a duality is established where humans feel but citizens must reason.

As the need to mediate that divide between man and citizen became more pressing, it was feeling and emotion that were pressed into service. As Maslan observes, the Marquis de Lafayette, argued that the declaration should “*dire ce que tout le monde sait, ce que tout le monde sent*” (Maslan 2004: 358). The world should not only know but also feel these foundations of contemporary citizenship. The capacity to feel thus became just as, perhaps even more, indicative of humanity as the capacity to reason. The physical fact of being human came to matter less in the *ancien régime* than emotional aspects of human existence. “Sentimentalizing the ‘human’ of human rights implied a shift from bodies and their sufferings, to persons and their unhappinesses, from biology to the mental and emotional cognates of physical suffering” (Maslan 2006: 80). Emotion and affect could negotiate the chasm between the human and the citizen.

However, the reliance upon emotion and feeling to humanize the figure of the citizen depends upon the idea that

emotions are an indication of human subjectivity. With reference to subjectivity in general, Rei Terada notes the fallacy of what she calls the “expressive hypothesis” where “[t]he claim that emotion requires a subject—thus we can see we’re subjects, since we have emotions—creates the illusion of subjectivity rather than showing evidence of it” (Terada 2001: 11). It has become conventional, as Terada notes, to think of emotion as something “lifted from a depth to a surface” through the mechanism of expression (Terada 2001: 11). Expression “serves as the distracting white handkerchief” which naturalizes the logic of the expressive hypothesis (Terada 2001: 11). This white handkerchief also distracts from the role of representation in feeling. “We are not ourselves without representations that mediate us, and it is through these representations emotions get felt” (Terada 2001: 21). For Terada, the death of the subject ascribed to contemporary postmodern theory does not mean the death of feeling. On the contrary, the death of the subject inaugurates feeling.

The dream of a feeling citizen cannot hide the monstrous anti-human heart of the original citizen subject. Terada shows us that that feeling is not a guarantee of subjectivity. On the contrary, emotions can indicate the death of the subject and real subjectivity can be an indication of monstrosity. As she wryly observes of the monsters in George Romero’s zombie films, they seem to “emblemize postmodern subjectivity” because “everyone knows that if there’s one thing dead subjects don’t have, it’s emotion” (Terada 2001: 156). However, she points out that the opposite is the actual case: “Romero’s living dead are notably undivided

about their desires, or rather, because their desires are undivided” (Terada 2001: 156). As a “well-known counterillustration,” she offers the case of the replicants in Philip K. Dick’s *Bladerunner*:

In the film ... the explicitly sentimental moment for the replicant played by Sean Young—the one time she cries—is the moment when she discovers that she’s a replicant, whose memories are not her own. We assume she had feelings before, but reserving the sight of her tears for this occasion dramatizes the fact that destroying the illusion of subjectivity does not destroy emotion, that on the contrary, emotion is the sign of the absence of that illusion. (Terada 2001: 157)

“Unlike replicants,” Terada argues, “zombies don’t experience themselves as though they were someone else” (Terada 2001: 157).

Terada’s deeply provocative description of the feeling dead subject, the replicant who experiences herself as though she were someone else, reveals the alienation of the unfeeling photographed citizen and, specifically, the problem of the diasporic citizen. Insofar as diaspora is a state of dislocation where one becomes located through a process of experiencing one’s home—the site of one’s identity—as though it were someone else’s, there is some resonance between the replicant of Terada’s example and that of the person in diaspora. In diaspora, the notion of identity as something that might be grounded in an idea of home is highly mediated through representation and narrative. As Vijay Mishra understands,

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the narrative of the damaged home ... takes

its exemplary form in what may be called diasporas, and especially in diasporas of colour, those migrant communities that do not quite fit into the nation-state's barely concealed preference for the narrative of assimilation. (Mishra 2005: 112)

It has become something of a convention in diaspora studies to talk about the ways in which "home" does not exist except in memory, as a representation, and a problematically misremembered one at that. And part of that convention involves the tragic moment of recognizing that the diasporic person's home is not what they thought it was, that it exists as a fantasy or unreality which can be shattered and which renders the diasporic home experienced only as though it belonged to someone else.

Indeed, not only does the diasporic share something with the replicant, but the figure of man-citizen promoted by the *ancien régime* recalls the living dead in their unwavering and undivided desires. Through the work of Elisabeth G. Sledziewski, Maslan points out that "the desire to create the unified man-citizen, a subject who would *feel* his ties and obligations of citizenship as a part of his interiority just as he would understand his familial and amical bonds as part of his civic participation, was a central motive force in the creation of revolutionary legislation" (Maslan 2006: 75). The citizen is expected to feel unwaveringly bound to home and country in ways where the idea of home does not contradict the idea of national belonging. In contrast, the person in diaspora becomes a citizen knowing that they become one at the expense of distancing themselves from themselves. They must experience their home as though it was someone else's, and

themselves as though they were someone else, as though there were no contradictions between being diasporic and being a citizen.

Feeling does not mediate the divide between man and citizen. It exposes it. Diasporas take up the dream of the feeling citizen not as a way of burying or resolving the divide between humanity and citizenship, but rather as a way of engaging it. What will save citizenship from the monstrosity of real subjectivity will be a recognition of the distance between the person in diaspora and the citizen—a recognition of the mediation necessary for the diasporic person to become a citizen. The moment of the breaking of the illusion of some kind of naturalized continuity between diaspora and citizenship is not so dissimilar from the moment in which the replicant recognizes the death of her subjectivity. It is what makes her less, and not more, monstrous.

Given the explicit references to racialized others such as Asian and Africans that Maslan (2004) points to, racism constitutes at least one source of the divide between man and citizen in the French declaration. It made clear that one could be human in the eyes of the declaration, but not a citizen. The case of the Haitian revolution and Toussaint L'Ouverture's mistaken belief in his own access to citizenship makes this exclusion clear. Recognizing the divide between the person in diaspora and that of the citizen is an acknowledgment of the racism embedded within the concept of citizenship. To become a citizen, one must let go of one's particularity, suspend it, so as to become part of something more general, more universal. The moment when a diasporic subject must choose to side with the generalizing principles of citizenship and to let go of the

specificity of diaspora is an uneasy one. It is also one in which he or she can see the racism attendant upon citizenship.

The work of Shelly Low, to which I now turn, helps reveal the ways that diasporic citizens deploy emotion to mediate the contradiction between the diasporic person and that of citizen. You could say that they

are engaging in a version of the dream of the feeling citizen even as they highlight the contradictions of diasporic citizenship. Shelly Low's work does precisely this. Low's "Self-Serve" consists of a series of three digital prints. They are self-portraits with objects such as plastic Chinoiserie soup spoons and bowls (see Figure 1).



(a)



(b)



(b)

Fig 1 Shelly Low, *Self-Serve*, 2006. 58 in. × 58 in. Digital Prints.

In each print, the objects obscure parts of her face. In their form, these portraits recall the stark impassivity of the passport photo or the mugshot. She faces the camera. Her head and shoulders are centered and fill the frame. The background is completely neutral and plain. She is lit so that there are no shadows on her face. Similarly, the background is devoid of shadows. The setting is stripped of anything that might mark the place she occupies when the photos are taken. While her face remains without emotion in these images, the parts of her face that are obscured suggest the possibility of affects and feelings embedded within these portraits. Low smuggles emotion into these images even as she captures its evacuation.

These “self-portraits” are part of a larger project called *Self-Serve at La Pagode Royale* that deals specifically with questions of cultural identity through the locus of the Chinese restaurant. Her questions about the function of the Chinese restaurant as a space of negotiation for cultural difference point directly to the contradictions of diasporic citizenship. She notes in her artist’s statement:

I am interested by the conundrum within cultural identity and ethnicity: whereby the desire of the immigrant to assimilate into the economy eventually compromises their own cultural identity ... Chinese restaurants ... ‘serve up’ notions of an ethnic or exotic ‘other’ according to what they feel their clientele wants or expects ... what are the things that become cultural signifiers? What are the experiences we hold on to and perpetuate? (Low nd)

Low marks the difficulty of negotiating the specificity of diasporic difference where economic assimilation relies upon a performance of that difference which risks exaggerating and stereotyping it. Difference must be objectified in order for it to slide seamlessly into a larger cultural whole. In asking what it is that the diasporic subject holds onto, Low also implicitly asks what it is that the diasporic subject must let go of too.

Using objects that are almost excessively Chinese in their decorative plasticity, Low’s portraits illustrate how diasporic difference carves emotion out of the picture and, at the same time, insists upon it through the stark fact of its absence. Emotion may seem to be lost, but it is actually palpably present in its very obscurity. In obscuring the face, and parts of it, Low’s images draw a connection between emotion, self-identity and facial expression. As Silvan Tomkins notes, “the self lives in the face, and within the face the self burns brightest in the eyes” (Tomkins 1995: 136). Notably, two out of three of these portraits obscure Low’s eyes. Tomkins’s work drew on Charles Darwin’s (1998 [1889]) studies of emotion and facial expression. As Paul Ekman reports in his afterword to Darwin’s *The Expression of Emotion in Man and Animals*, “Tomkins’ ideas about expression were consistent with what Darwin had written” (Ekman 1998: 374). Setting aside the longstanding debate about whether or not the facial expression of emotion is innate and universal across cultures, both Darwin (1998 [1889]) and Tomkins (1995) anchored their study on the face and the connection between facial expression and emotion. Let me bring the work of Darwin and Tomkins into dialogue with that of Terada by considering this implication: if emotion

lies in its representation, then the face must be one of the most powerful mediums of emotional expression. The passport photograph and Low's portraits suggest that there is indeed a strong possibility for the expressive potentiality of the face to expose the contradictions of citizenship.

Not only is Darwin's study (1998 [1889]) of the face so resonant for thinking about emotion and expression, the process by which he arrived at the visual evidence for his thesis also recalls the fine line between humanity and monstrosity for emotional expression. It is a process that in and of itself is richly suggestive of the contradictions of citizenship. Darwin's study relied upon a number of photographs of various facial expressions taken by Oscar Rejlander, James Crichton Browne, Guillaume-Benjamin Duchenne de Boulogne, Adolph Diedrich Kindermann and George Charles Wallich. As Philip Prodger notes in his essay, "Photography and *The Expression of Emotions*," Darwin's book "was one of the first scientific books ever published with photographic illustrations" and it thus "played a major role in bringing photographic evidence to the scientific world" (Prodger 1998: 400–401). For Darwin, photography would allow people to see emotions that were otherwise too fleeting. Prodger points out that Darwin was particularly interested in capturing "the ephemeral movements of facial muscles for analysis" (Prodger 1998: 403). Darwin partly solved this problem by using a series of plates taken by Duchenne of a patient at La Salpêtrière hospital upon whom a number of electrical experiments were being carried out. The patient "suffered from an anaesthetic condition of the face, which made it possible to stimulate individual

groups of his facial muscles without causing involuntary response among others. It was as if, as Duchenne chillingly remarked, he were 'working with a still irritable cadaver'" (Prodger 1998: 405). Because photographic processes had not accelerated enough to capture the emotions Darwin wanted to reveal, Duchenne's plates froze "the activity of his subjects long enough to accommodate the lengthy exposure times necessitated by photographic technology" (Prodger 1998: 405). That is, in order to illustrate emotion, Darwin had to turn to images of a man who had completely lost the capacity to express emotion, who was a cadaver-like zombie requiring electrical stimulation to show emotion. That some of the most exemplary images of emotional expression in Darwin's work relied upon a figure whose face had lost feeling recalls that other ideally emotional void figure, the contemporary citizen. There is a perverse irony in the contemporary demand by the state for images of its citizens that are devoid of emotion. Now that photographic technology has accelerated to the point where a whole range of nuances of expression could be captured, there is no small contradiction in the demand for an image of citizenship that must hold any of those emotions at bay long enough for the citizen to adopt the expression of Duchenne's patient.

The demand for emotional neutrality in the passport photograph encapsulates the contradiction of citizenship even as Low's self-portraits illuminate them. As I have been arguing, the contradiction of citizenship lies in being both diasporic and a citizen where the diasporic subject's divided feelings for "home" challenges citizenship's demand for a subject whose feelings are undivided. This

contradiction emerges from the demand for the capacity to feel despite the injunction against emotion in the very document that identifies one as a citizen.

Azoulay's civil contract of photography plays out in very literal ways in the passport photo and in Shelly Low's subversion of the conventions of the identification photograph. Stripping away anything that might obscure identity, anything that might distract from the task of recognition, the passport photo announces its engagement with the civil contract in its open claim for recognition. Low's self-portraits expose the ways in which race always already frustrates recognition. The overtly Chinese objects she uses to obscure parts of her face highlight race as something that can be over-identified, so overt that it can frustrate recognition. As Katherine Biber notes of her examination of race and photography in the case of crime scene photos that were used to accuse an Australian aboriginal man of a bank robbery, there is a "fantasy that permits law to imagine that decades of criminological, historical and cultural inquiries into race and representations, dispossession and deviance had not intercepted its capacity for vision" (Biber 2007: 5). The representation of the racialized subject in an identification photograph calls attention to the dangers of misrecognition and the instability of the connection between the photograph and its subject. For the viewer, any identification photograph poses the silent question: Is that you? The request for an identification photograph is a question of one's identity. It is a demand for proof even before the question has been asked.

Shelly Low's "Self-Serve" portraits are a response to the demand for unfeeling

subjectivity made by the state in the name of citizenship. In echoing the visual protocols of the passport photo, albeit with a difference, they highlight the complicated relationship between feeling and citizenship. As Terada's work emphasizes, feeling alone will not make human subjects more human and thus feeling alone cannot mediate the contradictions between citizenship and humanity embedded within the origins of contemporary citizenship. Perhaps only when the distance between the human and the citizen can be recognized in that alienating moment of experiencing oneself as though one were somebody else, and one's home as though it were somebody else's, will citizenship come close to fully embracing the bonds of affect.

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