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Constructing a white mask through English: the misrecognized self in Orientalism

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Abstract: By examining relationships between language and race within Bourdieu's theoretical concept of “misrecognition”, this article highlights distinctive ways in which the mental structure of a minority individual becomes Orientalized in relation to a racialized identity construction. Specifically, it examines how English becomes misrecognized as *the* key to a desired white identity in the case of one prominent Korean intellectual of the 19th century, Yun Chi-Ho (1864–1945). To this end, this article analyses the English diaries written by Yun, which began during his sojourn in the United States (1888–1893). The analysis of the diaries illustrates how Yun subjected himself to an Orientalized gaze in 19th century America, a society marked by racial and language boundaries and how his inferiority complex led him to pursue a white identity with English as a primary tool. While Self-Orientalism is regarded as both a cause and outcome of Asian participation in the construction of the Orient, this article reconceptualizes Self-Orientalism as a process of misrecognition born out of the colonial context of superior-inferior distinction characterized by the boundedness of language and race. The article concludes by broadening out from the case of Yun to illustrate the impact of misrecognition on the continued covert operation of Self-Orientalism in contemporary times.

Keywords: colonialism; English language ideologies; Korea; misrecognition; Self-Orientalism

提要: 본 논문은 부르디외의 ‘오인 (misrecognition)’ 이론에 근거해 언어와 인종 간 관계를 연구함으로써 소수 개인의 정신세계가 인종화된 정체성 구축과정에서 오리엔탈화되는 경로를 조명하고자 한다. 19세기 지식인 윤치호 (1864–1945) 를 분석대상으로 하여 영어가 백인 정체성을 갈구하는 개인에게 핵심 수단으로 오인 되는 과정을 집중적으로 연구한다. 본고는 따라서 윤치호가 미국유학시절 (1888–1893) 작성한 영문일기를 분석한다. 일기 분석을 토대로 윤치호가 인종 및 언어간 경계선이 명확했던 19세기 미국사회에서 스스로 오리엔탈화된 과정 및 영어를 통

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해 백인 정체성을 구축하는 과정에서 열등감이 주원인으로 작용한 과정을 집중조명한다. 셸프 오리엔탈리즘 이론은 ‘오리엔탈인’의 구분에 아시아인의 공모가 원인이자 결과라고 전제한다. 이에 반해 본고에서는 셸프 오리엔탈리즘을 언어와 인종간 유착으로 우월성과 열등성이 구분지어지는 식민시대에서 탄생한 오인의 과정으로 재개념화한다. 결론 부분에서는 윤치호의 사례를 통해 오인이 동시대 셸프 오리엔탈리즘의 지속적이고 은밀한 작용에 미치는 영향을 조명한다.

He [the ‘black man’] becomes whiter proportionately
in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.
(Sardar 2008: XV)

1 Introduction

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (2008) examines how the French language is appropriated in the colonized mindset of black people in the French Antilles as a means to reconstruct their racial identity. The French language represents a bridge through which to address a divided self, torn between one’s cultural ancestry and perceived superiority of the French colonizers. The larger the gap between the two worlds is, the stronger a desire to master French, which Fanon argues provides a tantalizing prospect of constructing a white mask to cover black skin. It can be argued that the colonial desire for white identification, revealed by Fanon in the French Antilles but of much wider occurrence, is strongly grounded in Orientalism, a belief system which divides the world into the superior “us” and the inferior “other” (Said 1979). Orientalism’s leading theorist, Said (1979), argues that the assumed inherent inferiority of the Orient became naturalized in dominant colonial discourses led by the powerful Occident, in which Orientals were seen as incapable of self-definition and self-representation. As he points out, “[t]he Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be ‘Oriental’ in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it *could* be—that is, submitted to being-*made* Oriental” (1979: 5–6).

It is argued that the process of creating the inferior Orient was influenced not only by the Occident but also by the Orient themselves (see Dirlik 1996; Hirose and Pih 2001; Yan and Santos 2009). Through what is known as “Self-Orientalism”, Orientals, especially Oriental intellectuals, are said to have actively participated in the process of consolidating and perpetuating the superior-inferior dichotomy between the West and the East. Much of contemporary discourse on Self-Orientalism interprets the ideology as a strategic choice or “the complicity of ‘orientals’” (Dirlik 1996: 100, quotation marks original; see also Liu 2017; Umbach

and Wishnoff 2008), which has been mediated and facilitated by nationalism (see Feighery 2012) and the marketability of exotic Otherness in specific domains such as tourism (see Yan and Santos 2009). This complicity-based view of Self-Orientalism which posits voluntary subjugation of the Others, however, risks overlooking and simplifying complex internal processes by which the Others come to accept, internalize and recursively use the superior-inferior binary embedded in the Orientalist ideas.

This issue is particularly relevant to the issue of identities, which as an integral part of Self-Orientalism, have been predominantly explored from a macro perspective (see Feighery 2012; Umbach and Wishnoff 2008; Wei et al. 2018; Yan and Santos 2009), with relatively little attention paid to the issue of individual subjectivity in relation to Self-Orientalism. Furthermore, the question of how individual identity intersects with race and language in the colonial context, in which the issue of racialized identity possibly began (Elouafi 2010), remains under-explored. This article, therefore, critically investigates processes by which a racialized identity is desired and constructed from the perspective of the Others who have been historically marginalized. It specifically focuses on the mediating role of language in delivering a racialized identity to address the key question of why language is (mis)recognized as a key to the construction of a new superior identity.

To this end, the article follows a failed attempt to construct a white identity by Yun Chi-Ho (1864–1945), a renowned intellectual of the time and the first English-Korean interpreter in Korea's history. Yun was one of the first Korean people who sojourned in the US (1888–1893); he had kept diaries in Korean before going to the US but switched to English as a linguistic medium for diary-keeping in 1889, a year after landing on the American shore. The article focuses on these English diaries from Yun's sojourning period as a key site of investigation to see how his mental structures became Orientalized through the linguistic and racial divisions that he experienced in 19th century America and how his intensified inferiority complex led Yun to pursue English as an exclusive tool for identity reconstruction. In doing so, the article attempts to reconceptualize Self-Orientalism as a process of "misrecognition" (Bourdieu 1989), which is inextricably linked to the coloniality of language and race.

2 Coloniality and modernity of language and race

In trying to understand the impact of Orientalism on beliefs about language and race, it is important to examine colonial discourse on linguistic dominance and racial othering. Coloniality is inseparable from modernity, which justified and was

justified by colonialism led by Europe during much of the second half of the previous millennium (Escobar 2007). The project of modernity was rationalized by the presupposed inferiority of indigenous populations who were stigmatized as racially and linguistically “less-than-human beings” (Veronelli 2015: 112) incapable of achieving modernity without the help of the colonizers. The superior-inferior distinction between the colonizers and the colonized and by extension, Europeaness and non-Europeaness, and whiteness and non-whiteness served to shape the co-naturalization of language and race by which language and race were constructed as naturally bounded and inseparable (Rosa 2017). As with race, languages spoken by the colonized were reduced to be able to deliver only “simple communication” which refers to “infantile, primitive meaning expression” (Veronelli 2015: 118), according to linguistic hierarchies which positioned European languages superior to any other languages (Veronelli 2015).

Through the Euro-centered colonial enterprises spanning from 16th to 20th centuries, racial and linguistic classification significantly spread, and coloniality became a global phenomenon in which power, hierarchies and status were racialized and the superior-inferior dichotomy was established as a normalcy (Quijano 2000). The relation between language and racialization was further strengthened with the development of the academic fields of philology and ethnology in Europe, through which race emerged as a subject of physiological discrimination and language as a marker of a degree of civilization (Ashcroft 2001). In the rigidity of the geographical hierarchy, there was presumably only a single legitimate way of knowing the world and all other ways were downgraded to the sphere of *doxa* (Bourdieu 1990), in which the realization of the colonial norm was so complete that the norm became unquestioned truths (see Castro-Gómez 2007). The unquestioned acceptance of the colonizers’ superiority by the colonized essentially represents the absence of recognition or “misrecognition”, which refers to “the process by which power relations come to be perceived not for what they objectively are, but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of those subject to the power” (Bourdieu, translated by Terdiman [1987: 813]; see also Bourdieu 1989). This induced misunderstanding of colonial power structures was necessary for the reproduction of macro orders in which the dominated were led to misrecognize their subordinate and inferior status as natural (Balaton-Chrimes 2017). The conspiratorial view of Self-Orientalism fails to account for this induced aspect of misrecognition which is obtained not by conspiracy but by structural means (Terdiman 1987).

In the rigid binary structures, it may not be possible to find “self” and any effort of identity formation is inevitably subject to the recognizing gaze of the dominant as models of civilization (Balaton and Chrimes 2017; see also Fanon 2008). As an important marker of civilization, language was often misrecognized

as a medium to acquire new identity by the colonized whose sense of worthlessness pushed them to attempt to construct a white mask by behaving and sounding like the dominant (see Fanon 2008). Since Fanon's ground-breaking work in 1952, however, there has been a significant lack of scholarly inquiry to grasp the complex role of language in racialized identity formation of racial Others in the contexts of coloniality. The gap is particularly notable in linguistic research in and about Asia (Rosa 2017). The proposed study which follows the racialized identity formation processes of Yun Chi-Ho, the sojourner and interpreter on whom we will now focus, is, therefore, expected to fill the lacuna by shedding light on the complicated interactions between race, language and power relations experienced and narrated from the perspective of the historically marginalized.

Before moving on to analyze the English diaries of Yun, it is important to examine the language ideologies that Yun developed with regard to English in pre-sojourning times. This will help us to account for the relationships between English and identity that he experienced later during his stay in the US. Yun's encounter with English began in 1882 at the age of eighteen while studying in Japan. As China, which had traditionally acted as Korea's protector, declined in power and the US emerged as a new Elder Brother for Korea, Yun was urged to learn English by his fellow-countryman Kim Ok-Kyun, a leader of the failed 1884 coup *Kap Shin Chung Byun*, a reform movement led by young and progressive government officials against the royal family and powerful conservative politicians. Similar to other progressive Korean elites at the turn of the 19th century, Yun was critical of the powerlessness of the Korean government and was keen to achieve modernization for his nation's future (Lee 2010). As American civilization was considered as a model for Korea's later development by progressive elites (Talley 2016), Yun was inspired to learn English for the future of Korea. After learning English from a Dutch secretary at the Dutch consulate in Japan for four months, Yun returned to Korea in 1883 and became the first English-Korean interpreter for the first American government minister to Korea, Lucius Howard Foote. As such, needs for modernity constructed in the colonial binary in which the US was established as a model of civilization significantly influenced Yun's decision to learn English.

While Yun initially saw English as an important instrument to modernize Korea, the strong connections that he had with American missionaries in Korea as one of the first Korean Christian (Methodist) converts led Yun to form positive views on the US, and he longed to study abroad there (Lee 2010). Yun's connections with American missionaries later enabled him to study in the U.S through religious sponsorship between 1888 and 1893, during which period Yun's view on English experienced a significant shift, as he struggled with the racism that was pervasive in American society. It is important to note that the clear boundaries present in American society along the racial-linguistic lines, founded on beliefs

that English belonged to the West and whiteness, misrepresented an opportunity for Yun to reconstruct a white identity by making English belong to him. We will now follow his diarized records of this identity reconstruction attempt, with a particular focus on Yun's reports of his own racialized ideologies of English. Contrary to the idea of Orientals conspiratorially conforming to Orientalist thought, the process through which Yun eventually subscribed to Orientalism was fraught with internal conflicts and even resistance to the dominant ideologies of the day. This article, therefore, approaches Self-Orientalism as a process that intersects in complex ways with racial and linguistic desires through the primary lens of misrecognition.

3 Methodology

In order to carry out the research, I collected data in 2018 from an online Korean history database (Korean History Database 2018), which stores Yun's diaries. I focus on the diary entries written during his sojourn in the US (from October 1888 to October 1893) as a key period. The period under investigation represents "contact zones" (Pratt 2007), in which the dominant and the dominated come into contact with each other in a colonial space marked by unequal power relations. Distance is a key to understanding the concept of contact zone, because the Self is not only physically away from his or her homeland but also symbolically distant from the Others, who objectify the Oriental homeland with suspicion. Focusing on the sojourning period shall, therefore, provide us with a glimpse into the processes of Orientalist thought being encountered and internalized by this minority individual, and reveal how an associated inferiority complex eventually led the individual to desire a racialized identity expressed through language.

As mentioned above, Yun's American sojourn diaries were kept in Korean only during the first year of the sojourn (from 16 October 1888 to 6 December 1889). From 7 December 1889, however, he started keeping diaries exclusively in English. While the analysis focuses on the English diaries, I also analyze the first year Korean diaries to see if there is any comparative shift in terms of his racial and language ideologies. Based on content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005), I systematically identified and classified themes through the process of coding with a focus on English and race from a chronological perspective. The data analysis identifies three distinctive patterns of racial and language ideologies mediated by the psychological distance that Yun felt from the superior others. Firstly, the initial period of sojourn (from October 1888 to December 1889) marks the beginning of an inferiority complex embedded in Orientalism, as Yun was excluded and objectified as the Other in the United States. The second period of

sojourn (from January 1890 to December 1892) sees an intensification of the inferiority complex held by Yun and his simultaneous efforts to distance himself from what he saw as the “Other” – Africans/African-Americans. The analysis of the last stage of the sojourn (from January 1893 to October 1893) highlights his attempt to construct a “white mask” by completely denying his Korean identity and replicating white prejudice against his own ethnic group. Throughout the process of distancing and distinction, English is misrecognized as a key to Yun’s identity reconstruction project. In what follows, I present the findings of the analysis in the aforementioned chronological manner.

4 Becoming the “Other” away from the homeland (1888–1889)

Yun first arrived in the US on 16 October 1888 in order to study theology at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. He later went on to Emory College in 1891, to pursue studies in humanities. As noted in Yun’s initial motivation behind English language learning, Yun was keen to achieve modernization for the future of Korea, and had a belief in its potential for transformation. Yun’s dedication to the modernization mission is expressed in his 29 December 1888 diary entry, which says “내 마음껏 내 나라를 섬기는 것이 내 직분인 것이다” [It is my calling to serve my country to the best of my ability].

The professed nation-building mission was, however, not entirely out of his own volition but was significantly influenced by American missionaries, who saw Yun as an effective tool to promote an evangelical mission in Korea (Urban 2014). The issue of race and language in the case of Christian missionaries has been complicated, due primarily to the conflict between humanistic religious principles and the missionaries’ own biases, influenced by the racial and cultural categories they knew. Although missionaries were educated to believe in the fundamental spirits of universal equality, they were, at the same time, not completely free from categorizations of people embedded in Orientalist ideas (Oddie 1994). Similar to other Western missionaries, American missionaries in Korea also worked under the influence of a superior-inferior binary worldview, and rescuing poor Oriental brothers and sisters out of the deplorable states was their key modernizing mission (Cho 2017). For colonial missionaries keen on modernization projects, Yun’s presence in America as one of very few Asian Christian students was important as a proof of the success of missionary work abroad (Urban 2014).

Thus, Yun was initially welcomed into white social circles made up of theology students and missionaries, but this form of inclusion soon proved

difficult for Yun to bear, especially because many still treated him as an inferior Oriental, rather than an equal Christian (Urban 2014). Well aware of his public role as a model Oriental convert and simultaneously feeling weary of the “distance” from the mainstream society, Yun saw a diary as a private space in which he could express his personal feelings and opinions, without needing to worry about white censorship (Urban 2014).

On 7 December 1889, about a year after his arrival in the US, Yun decided to write diaries in English only. The rationale he gave for this language choice was the richness of English vocabulary, which he believed would enable him to express himself better than in Korean:¹

Up at 5a.m. Cloudy. My Diary has hitherto been kept in Korean. But its vocabulary is not as yet rich enough to express all what I want to say. Have therefore determined to keep the Diary in English. (7 December 1889)

While the decision to write in English can be seen as part of his efforts to improve English language proficiency (Kim 2011), the expressed view of English as “richer” in its expressive resources than Korean merits attention. His belief in English being superior to Korean in terms of linguistic richness indicates his burgeoning subscription to the superior-inferior linguistic binary, in which the languages of the dominated were regarded as too simple to deliver “human communication”, an act believed to be realized only through the sophisticated languages of the dominant (Veronelli 2015). The awareness of this linguistic hierarchy was accompanied by a growing recognition of the marginalized position that Yun was experiencing at the point of the language switch, including the limitations he had started experiencing in his inclusion in white Christian society.

The analysis of his Korean diaries written up to the point of adopting English as a medium indicates a growing inferiority complex. Whereas in Korea, Yun had been regarded as a man of high intelligence from a respectable class, in America, he was suddenly reduced to an inferior Oriental from a poor country. As expressed in the 1889 Korean diary entries, Yun felt “업신여김” [despised] (25 April), “도처에서 멸시를 받으니” [belittled everywhere] (7 May) and “수치” [humiliated] (24 May) for being Korean. The low treatment to which Yun was subject led him to seriously question the worth of his ethnic origin, and he even lamented “조선 사람으로 태어나 무슨 세상 영광을 바라겠는가” [What good in the world can I expect as a Korean person] (25 April 1889).

Considering Yun’s expressed frustration at his inferior status in American society, it can be argued that the language switch from Korean to English marks the

¹ The excerpts from the diaries contain ungrammatical forms of English, which are retained in the presentation in the article.

beginning of his subjugation to the colonial linguistic hierarchy in which English was positioned as superior to any other languages. Yun's growing awareness of the relationship between the hierarchic binary structures of peoples and nations and the prevailing beliefs about language was accompanied by an increasing racial awareness as well, as Yun was exposed to the ideas of Social Darwinism in the US (i.e. ideas that accept and legitimize the relative disempowerment of certain peoples as having been biologically determined by their relative lack of racial fitness). The 19th century saw the rise of race theory as an explicit belief system or "scientific racism" (Rutledge 1995), which was used to justify and rationalize the theory of Social Darwinism. After first encountering Social Darwinism during the sojourn, Yun became an ardent believer of the ideology (Tikhonov 2012), and the degree to which he subscribed to Social Darwinism is well exemplified below:

When a nation is unfit to govern herself it is better for her to be governed and protected and taught by a more enlightened and stronger people until she is able to be independent.
(24 December 1889)

Despite the acceptance of power differences between the host society and the powerless homeland, however, the analysis indicates ambivalence felt by Yun when it came to the issue of Korea, which, as his country, was undeniably an integral part of his identity. Although Yun felt frustrated at the powerlessness of the Korean government, he tried to stay positive about the future of the nation guided by his Christian belief. As an example, in the 14 December 1889 diary entry, Yun expressed feelings of deep disappointment and even shamefulness of the reality of Korea, which was viewed as utterly incapable of self-governance and self-rule by his American friends. While he did not dispute the negative external judgment on Korea, he remained objective on the potential of the nation as exemplified below:

The government bad, people poor, houses wretched, streets filthing. Some one says "The Coreans are the champion Liars of Asia." Another says that he would rather be hanged than to ve a minister to Corea(!!!), of course, I do not blame them. But all impartial writers agrees in this; that the Coreans are physically a fierce nation, that they are intelligent they posses abilities that can be highly educated that they have good memory, that the climate is healthy and that the natural resources are great. Here is then hope! (14 December 1889)

As discussed above, the initial period of the sojourn is marked by a growing Orientalist inferiority complex and inner conflict, as his identity as an educated elite was seriously challenged by the Oriental stereotypes of the host society. Situated in the paradoxical state, in which he was symbolically included but practically excluded, Yun was keenly aware of his distance from the powerful on both racial and linguistic terms. In his attempt to distinguish himself from the

generalization of the peoples of the Orient as collectively inferior, Yun began to seek a mechanism to protect the Self. The next section describes how Yun tried to assert his individual worth by putting himself above what he saw as the most inferior race: Africans.

5 Racial distinction through racism (1890–1892)

This section examines how the burgeoning inferiority complex experienced by Yun intensified over time and how he appropriated racism against Africans as a strategy to resist the social bias against himself. With a focus on the concept of “recursiveness”, which is defined as “the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level” (Gal and Irvine 1995: 974), it investigates Yun’s recursive use of Africans and African-Americans, who were widely dismissed as a sub-human category in the late 19th century America (Rosa 2017; Tikhonov 2012), as a means to differentiate himself as a worthy individual.

As Pyke and Dang (2003: 151) noted, “resistance and compliance can be an interrelated process”, because resistance to racial discrimination can lead to the replication of another type of racism. As the dominated are subject to the constraints of racial categories and prejudice which effectively deny minority individuals the power of pursuing self-identity, individuals are forced to define themselves as recognized by racial structures established by the powerful (Pyke and Dang 2003). Racial inequality is reproduced and reinforced through recursive dichotomizing processes by which the Others create sub-categories of another racial Others according to the dominant racial norm in an attempt to resist their stigmatized status (Gal and Irvine 1995). The recursive appropriation of racial schema is well demonstrated by the inter-Othering that Yun applied to black people, whom he despised and whom he denigrated in trying to distinguish himself from the general, non-white Orient.

It is interesting to note that at the beginning of his sojourn, Yun tried to be objective on the issue of race and even questioned the apparent incompatibility between Christian values and racial prejudice exhibited by some fellow Christians. As an example, when he heard a young American man saying that he would rather pull down his church than to admit colored members to the congregation, he raised this question: “Now is this prejudice compatible with the boasted civilization, philanthropy, religion of this people?” (9 December 1889).

Over time, however, Yun’s attitudes to black people experienced a significant shift. Following the 19th century racial classificatory system, by which an individual’s racial worth was measured by the extent of deviance from the white norm (Young 1995), Yun treated Africans as the most inferior category and despised

“Negros” as a race of “meanness, rascality, and ingratitude” (18 March 1892). It can be conjectured that his expressed racial bias against black people was a response to his declining self-worth and deepening inferiority complex as a person who also deviated from the white norm. His public role as a model Christian Korean student often required Yun to deliver speeches about Korea to church congregations, who viewed the nation as barbaric and immature. Having to assume the unwanted role of representing Korea in these popular, Orientalist terms, Yun felt embarrassed and indignant of the powerlessness of the nation:

Corea is the subject I hate most to talk about. There is not a single thing, either in the past history or the present condition or the future possibility of Corea, that can warm me up with national pride – the most excusable of all prides – or enthusiastic hope. (7 February 1890)

With the aggravation of the inferiority complex tied to his ethnic and national origins, Yun simultaneously displayed growing admiration of white Americans, who he believed were pre-destined to be successful thanks to their superior ethnicity. As an example, in the 14 February 1890 entry, he acknowledged the (apparently) inextricable ties between race, nationality and power by saying: “if you want to enjoy the so-called inalienable right of man in this ‘Land of Freedom’ you must be white.” While he was frustrated at possibilities limited by his ethnic origin, a continued contemptuous treatment by his American “brothers” strongly contributed to the deepening feelings of inferiority:

He [Yun’s theology teacher] said that the answers in the examination are satisfactory, and that the fact a Corean can present such an examination paper answers the question, “Is a heathen worth educating?” A condescending comment! (6 February 1890)

None of the dozen secret fraternities has solicited my membership. This hurts me, not that I care to join any, but that the boys, in spite of their professed love and friendship for me, show their unwillingness to consider a Corean their equal – A disgrace, unutterable! (15 November 1892)

Amid increasing despair stemming from his background, Yun decided to distinguish himself from the similar others. Feelings of exasperation for being generalized as part of “that group” are well illustrated in the 19 June 1892 diary entry, which says, “I hate being called a Chinaman from the core of my heart”. In trying to seek distinction, Yun recursively resorted to mainstream racism as a strategy in which he adopted the white gaze to evaluate racial categories, and treated Africans as the most inferior racial group for being most deviant from the white norm. His diary entries from 1890 to 1892 show increasing prejudice against Africans, and the first such comment, which appeared on 14 March 1891, highlights his growing bias towards whiteness:

The beautiful sight of pretty little boys and girls kneeling touched my emotion, roused my prayers, moved my tears. Here I like to ask myself whether I would have been so moved by the sight if the boys and girls were negro children. I don't think I would. (14 March 1891)

I would argue that the racial prejudice exhibited by Yun can only be understood as an attempt to vindicate himself against the debilitating racism that he experienced in American society. As his inferiority complex stemming from his racial position intensified, Yun needed a mechanism to defend his self-worth. Similar to minority individuals whose resistance to racism eventually leads to the replication of the dominant racial prejudice (see Pyke and Dang 2003), Yun misrecognized the racial hierarchical system which provided a tantalizing prospect of overcoming his biological limitations by trying to distance himself from other minority groups. The processes whereby resistance led to compliance in the case of Yun highlight how misrecognition serves as a cause of the aspect of Self-Orientalism tied to individual desires for racial distinction. As an individual's worth is pre-determined by the dominant racial bias, those who resist the classificatory system but have little control over it eventually succumb to the same prejudice, by creating a sub-category which they can separate from themselves and look down upon. Yun's changing views indeed preceded the racist worldview held by many Korean intellectuals in the early 20th century, in which they found some solace from not being "the worst" in the global racial hierarchies (Tikhonov 2012).

Once subordinating himself to the entrenched racial ideologies, Yun's consciousness became rapidly whitewashed, and he continued to objectify Africans through the white gaze:

A white child with blue eyes, golden ringlets, and rosy cheeks irresistibly suggests the idea of an angel. But it goes beyond the utmost stretch of my fancy to imagine an angel out of a negro child or a negress. (18 March 1892)

Read several chapters in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Found it a most fascinating book. It is to be observed that the author, instead of talking a genuine negro for the principal actor, puts forward a handsome quadron and his beautiful wife. Other things being equal our sympathy is easier touched by the sufferings of the beautiful than by those of the ugly. (21 May 1892)

The binary racial view that he has internalized is evident in his expressed aversion to blacks as "the ugly" and admiration for whites as "the beautiful", but the implication of this binary was to reinforce his perception of his own "ugliness". As his consciousness became colonized, Yun therefore frequently expressed a desire to acquire a different identity, "a nationality which I may think of without shuddering with disgust and blushing with shame" (13 September 1892). The next section describes his efforts to reconstruct a racialized identity with English as a

key resource, and how Yun ended up being torn between his current and ideal selves.

6 Divided self (1893)

By 1893, Yun wrote diaries in English almost every day, and the entries written towards the end of his stay in the US show particularly agonizing experiences relating to the issue of identity. While he was keen to distinguish himself with the strategy of denigrating African-Americans, in reality, however, he was considered little different from them. The failing of his efforts to achieve racial distinction through the replication of racism is evident in the following excerpt, in which in the eyes of Americans, he belonged to the same “heathen” category:

Dr. Anderson, Suchow [i.e. a missionary to Suzhou, China], preached the morning sermon on humility and lowliness. In the course of his talk he said something like this: “You all look down on the heathen. Even the idea of regarding Chinamen or Japanese as your equals never entered into your mind.” Then he went on exhorting the people to come down to lift up the Negro, the Chinaman, the “Jap” and “what not”. A pretty way of being lowly and humble this is! Very unfair and unjust to classify the Chinese and the Japanese with Negroes. (1 January 1893)

As his inter-otering strategy failed to achieve the intended result of improving his social status, Yun became more obsessed with English language learning. English meant to him a language “so rich that a man can get up any kind of nonsense and clothes it in fine phrases and pass it for wisdom!” (24 September 1893). His infatuation with English is well demonstrated in the following excerpt, in which he tried to justify slavery with English. As seen below, Yun described English as an “invaluable gift” for Africans whose slavery was thereby sufficiently compensated:

To me a tremendous and interesting fact is that 10 millions of Africans through circumstances beyond their control, have come in possession of one of the richest and noblest languages in the world - the English. Perhaps they have been amply paid, as a race, for their servitude in this one invaluable gift. (17 February 1893)

The justification of exposure to English as the best reward for Africans who underwent the inhumane conditions of slavery obviously highlights the amount of importance that Yun attached to the language. His obsession with English needs to be understood in the context of identity crisis that he was particularly grappling with in 1893, when Yun’s inferiority complex tied to nationality had reached a crippling point, as expressed in the excerpt below:

[...] when, I, in every turn of life's way, meet with the lacerating looks and words and acts due to my national badge, I feel weary of life. I do not and shall not court or seek death, but if it were to come now in natural course I shall not regret to part with a world so unkind to any but the strong. (14 June 1893)

Amid the acceleration of hopelessness caused by the unwanted ethnicity, Yun decided to sever himself from his original identity in order to reconstruct a new “clean” identity. The analysis suggests that the new identity that he was trying to form was based on that of an English-speaking white man, and it is evident by the fact that he strived to define himself in terms of conforming to American values. For example, when he vacated a seat for a lady on a bus, he said “let me remember that this chivalrous notion of mine regarding the fair sex is not Corean but American, Christian and not Confucian” (7 October 1893). Another example that highlights a personal yearning for a white identity is the diary entry written on 5 April 1893. On that day, he had a dream in which he saw his mother for the first time in the eight years since he had left Korea. Describing her as the same “pretty, tender, sensitive and dignified” person, he then said “I asked (in English) for her pictures”. It can be argued that the very act of trying to speak to his mother in English, rather than their shared ethno-linguistic code of Korean, testifies to a huge personal desire to deny his original identity to be reconstructed/perceived as a white person. Similar to the black people in the French Antilles in Fanon's work, Yun's colonized consciousness allowed for only one destiny, which was whiteness, and all his efforts were thus likewise “aimed at achieving a white existence” (Fanon 2008: 178). In trying to reach this goal, Yun constructed a white persona, which he performed in both psychological and physical spaces with English as a key tool for differentiation.

The performative aspects of the new persona through which Yun sought to distance himself from his original ethnicity are revealed, in an extract recording his encounter with a Korean delegation at the 1893 World's Fair in Iowa. After having had hardly any contact with Koreans for five years, his immediate reaction to the delegates was that of a Western Orientalist, who objectified the Koreans on degrading Oriental terms:

Mr. An, one of the Coreans, having charge of the exhibit is a fair specimen of the degraded humanity of Corea. He is dirty, lazy, dull, filthy in mouth and in morals. Mr. Chung, the chief commissioner, is said to be stingy and bigoted. (28 Sep 1893)

The description of the fellow countrymen as a “specimen” highlights the degree to which his consciousness was Orientalized. Similar to white Americans, he degraded the Koreans as mere objects and evaluated them as low on all possible terms. Relatedly, when he visited the Korean Commission at the Fair, he saw a

group picture of the delegates, at which he was “shocked and disgusted with their looks of supreme stupidity and beastly sensuality” (14 August 1893). The recursive view of his countrymen in animalistic terms illustrates the firm entrenchment of the white gaze that Yun adopted and internalized in trying to perform a white identity; in his own consciousness, he was already a white man, speaking and writing in English and treating non-whites as a deviance from the superior white norm. The Self hidden behind the white mask was, however, delusional, as his socially-constructed value was invariably determined by his “Asian” skin that could not be covered by the imaginary white mask.

In the colonial racial-linguistic boundaries, which denied Yun an entry to the imagined community, the ethno-centric logic of English as a language that inherently falls on the West explains why he came to misrecognize English. As language served as a racial “class marker” (Ashcroft 2001: 17) in the colonial distinction of race and language, fluency in English perhaps represented the only way to transcend the seemingly uncrossable racial boundaries and was, therefore, imagined as a source of a much-needed transformative power. When his white mask could not whiten his original skin, English was the only thing that he could physically acquire in terms of what constituted whiteness. Through the daily ritual of writing and thinking in the language of the powerful, Yun internalized and conformed to their values and gradually yet consciously became white, while simultaneously denigrating non-whites including his own ethnicity.

What Yun did not realize was that the inseparability of language and race in the colonial binary structures also means that language alone could not provide legitimacy to his subordinate position, much of which was pre-determined by his non-white skin. Yun’s pursuit of English as a sole means to achieve identity transformation demonstrates not just the degree of misrecognition but also its power which could completely paralyze any sense of judgment, logic and rationality held by the marginalized individual. The case of Yun, preserved in his diaries, serves as poignant reminders of how an individual’s consciousness can be colonized by racialized language desires tied to English in the “objective” structures in which minority individuals can shape visions only through the divisions that they experienced in the colonial context of power inequality.

7 Conclusion

By following the identity reformation journey of Yun Chi-Ho, I have discussed how and why Self-Orientalism is fundamentally a process of misrecognition relating to power relations grounded in racial and linguistic hierarchies. While Self-Orientalism is regarded as deliberate Orientalist participation, this article

highlights Self-Orientalism as a process fraught with internal struggles in the context of colonial superior-inferior dichotomy.

As the analysis of Yun's diaries has demonstrated, Yun originally resisted racial hierarchies and struggled with his racial category imposed by the dominant perspective, yet eventually subscribed to the mainstream belief systems by replicating the same dichotomizing categorization. An inferiority complex serves as a key to understand how and why Yun's consciousness became Orientalized and how the Orientalized state of mind subsequently created desires for a racialized identity. In his realization of powerlessness tied to his ethnic origin, Yun decided to use the dominant racial classificatory system in his own advantage by creating a lower sub-group based on the white norm. As his inferiority complex deepened, Yun constructed another Self, a white persona severed from his original being, as a way to protect himself against the degrading and dehumanizing forces of racism. The ways in which resistance eventually leads to compliance highlight how individuals become Orientalized and how Self-Orientalism becomes strengthened and perpetuated by the binary structures of race and language.

The article also highlights how language can be misrecognized as the most powerful tool to deliver one's desired identity. Needless to say, language and identity are inextricably inter-related, which was more so in the colonial binary context. As seen in Yun's case, the more distance he felt from his desired identity, the more strongly he desired English as a means to connect him to the imagined white community. In his altered consciousness, the way in which language worked as a marker of racial class represented to Yun the only opportunity to be recognized as a worthy enough being. As any agentive efforts that he made to fit in were, however, undercut by the dominant racial classificatory system, English became further misrecognized as a key to his identity reconstruction project, in which Yun became distanced from every existing category and eventually sought refuge in a self-delusional space of diaries mediated by "his" language.

Although the case of Yun occurred in the context of colonial encounters more than a century ago, it has contemporary resonance in the current era, where racial-linguistic boundaries remain clear (Gal and Irvine 1995). The continued presence of raciolinguistic demarcating lines may relate to the misrecognition of the binary system under the influence of Orientalism, which sustains and is sustained by individual efforts to achieve a better self through the use of a superior language, which is oftentimes English, as it was for Yun. The contemporary resonance of historicity relating to English can be exemplified by "language desire" (Piller 2002) attached to English as a transformative tool for the actualization of a desirable identity among people in Asia (see also Piller and Takahashi 2006; Takahashi 2013). The misrecognition of English as a ticket to an imagined community of English-speaking Westerners has much resemblance to the distinctive ways in

which English was perceived and appropriated by Yun. This suggests that Self-Orientalism, as a process of misrecognition, has continued to influence choices that individuals make in relation to English language learning in this contemporary era.

To make such an argument is not to say that we can *only* understand the continued geography-based assumptions of power relations in terms of colonial misrecognition. What is crucial is that process-oriented approaches to Self-Orientalism can reveal the covert operation of misrecognition in which global power inequality continues to be reinforced and perpetuated by the colonized consciousness of individuals located on the margin of the symbolic boundaries of language and race. The attempt of Yun to reconstruct a white identity illustrates how English, which was misrecognized in a colonized consciousness, may continue to be misrecognized through processes of Self-Orientalism, shaping identity formation here and now.

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