NOTES ON ‘RACE’:

DECOLONIALITY IN PRAXIS

이혜지

HYE JI (ERICA) LEE

B. A.(HONS), DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Taking cue from Mignolo and Walsh's[1] concept of decoloniality, this paper presents an experiment and exploration in Korean Thought to think 'race'. It is a snapshot of an ongoing project of thinking/living decolonially to contribute to the growing literature that challenge the imperial status of Western Thought. The aim is not to call for cancellation nor indict a sense of morality to those who engage with what is conventionally offered in Western academic institutions. Instead, the goal is to participate in an exercise of epistemological considerations through the use of thought paradigms considered 'Subaltern'[2], of the global South,[3] indigenous[4], of the 'margins'[5]; namely that of 'Other' to the Western intellectual tradition. It effect, Western thought is displaced from the pedestal of the 'universal' and laid amongst a constellation of many thought systems. There are three expositions presented in this paper. First, the concept 'race' under Western episteme is examined. 'Race' is defined as the imposition of subject-object relation through the colonial power matrix. The ways in which this relation manifest is traced on structural and phenomenological levels using the particular example of 'Asians' coded under the ideology of Yellow Peril in Aotearoa and more broadly, the West. The second and third chapters offer 'decolonial alternatives' through which the subject-object relation can be transcended. Korean concepts of 인 (仁), '*in'*, is used to rethink ontology, and 'habitus of 한 **(**韓);(恨), "*han'*" , for exposition of decoloniality that is already in praxis. In sum, the paper calls for those who are racialised to locate ourselves in the spheres of liberation and sovereignty, one which can be done through tracing the thoughts of ancestors particular to one's *whakapapa*

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[1] Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*

[2] Spivak and Riach, *Can The Subaltern Speak?*

[3] Connell, *Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science.*; de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*.

[4] Henry and Pene, "Kaupapa Maori: Locating indigenous ontology, epistemology and methodology in the academy"; Kim and Berry, *Indigenous psychologies: Research and experience in cultural context.*

[5] Narayan and Harding, *Decentering the center: Philosophy for a multicultural, postcolonial, and feminist world.*; Ruti, *Distillations: Theory, ethics, affect.*

(cultural lineage)[6]. Through claiming this thinking/doing/living, the capacity to hold multiplicities, differences, and orientation towards expansion can be accessed.

Key words: Race; Decoloniality; Epistemology; Ontology; Relationality; Embodiment; Phenomenology; Racial Trauma; Korean Thought; Asian; Korean diaspora; 인; 仁; 한; 韓; 恨; Liberation; Sovereignty; Agency; Psychoanalysis; Critical Theory; Praxis

[6] There are various academic debates and discussions around the term *whakapapa.* Refer to the works of Anne Salmond, beginning with "Tears of Rangi: Water, power and people in New Zealand" in *Journal of Ethnographic Theory 4, no.3 (2014); 285-309*

DEDICATION

To us,

in the spaces of ongoing conversations on decoloniality worldwide

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Besides the work of typing, what ends up being on paper for any given body of written work obscures the insurmountable variations of other invisible labours. Here, I attempt to make note of rituals, conversations and relationships that have been crucial in giving form to this thesis.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that this thesis is made up mostly of tears. Happy ones, mournful ones, tears of catharsis, frustration, joy, spite, jealousy, hate, love, disappointment, so to name a few. As someone who largely cries alone in private, this has been an essential part in learning how to cry with others, in presence of others, to bond and commiserate together with those who I have shared my path with. Though inconvenient at most of times, I now see this as unavoidable and necessary part of digesting intellectual thoughts. This is something I wish someone had told me and held space for when I was grappling with ideas that have been difficult to accept in my earlier years as a student.

I first thank the most important people in my life, my grandmother (송영숙), grandfather (김연수), my mother (김희연), my father (이호택) and my uncle (김용건). Please note the order in which I have listed your names are not indicative of any favouritism. My grandmother, a woman truly ahead of her time, a philosopher, writer, poet, artist, and mother, her tenacity, humour and brilliance are acknowledged here. My grandfather, my most steadfast anchor to my existence, there are not enough words to express my love. My mother, my best friend, and the most capable and well-rounded woman I know, thank you for taking all my calls, at all times of the day (and night). My dad, the master of adaptability and excellence, your reminders of our ‘royal’ blood has brought me much laughter at my lowest moments. My 삼촌 (uncle), you are an irreplaceable figure in my life, my best friend, and I am so grateful that you exist.

I thank Justine Sachs and Cam Lawrence who have been my comrades in my honours year. Both, with their warmth and frankness have brought some of my most cherished moments of laughter and relief, as well as exquisitely ecstatic intellectual conversations. They embody and practice allyship in ways I have not encountered often. I am grateful for our ongoing friendship anchored in shared generosity of the heart.

I thank my supervisor Ciara Cremin, who demonstrates in her own works, and in encouragement to me, the fearlessness in taking risks with theory. She lives the theories she teaches without dogmatic prescriptions. Her humility as an academic inspires me and sustains my hope that not all academics are self-serving serpents in ivory towers.

I thank Lucy Wong-Kam, Caity Page and Diana Priggen, my longest companions in life who have continuously stepped in as my family when mine have not been able. I look forward to many more decades of our friendship.

I thank Rachel Simon-Kumar, who reminded me to take walks and drink water during writing. Extensive pacing punctuated by hydration has served me well in the final hours of this thesis.

I thank Aaron Cole, who continues to attribute my academic success to himself. An endearing delusion to say the least, but nevertheless, your ongoing self-awareness of your fragile masculinity makes up for it.

For the reason that I am now running out of space, I resolve to listing further notable relationships I have been fortunate enough to enjoy. Bruce Cohen, Inhwa Jung (정인화), Gene Paul Kiely, Janaki Somaiya, Joanna Tindling, Aimee Simpson, Cushla Donaldson and all those who I have taught, taught with, and learned from, thank you for your nurture, respect and radiance.

Lastly, I would like to thank my butcher, who, in the last few weeks of writing this thesis has always asked how I am doing with a smile. Whether she truly cares, one will never know but these minute encounters always made me feel at home in my neighbourhood after being in isolation at my desk for days on end.

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restlessness, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

Paulo Freire (1974, p.58), Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

The first time I read Fanon, I wept for days. I had avoided reading his work for several years. There was an enigma to his body of work that made me feel afraid, like I would have to answer to something that I was not ready for. And true to my intuition, the fear I felt was substantiated in manifold when I read *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967)[7]. Curled up into a ball, I hurled and heaved night after night. It was an uncontrollable release that I could not see the end of, I just had to ride it out. Fanon's visceral articulation of the racialised body's lived experience was a violent awakening, and at the same time, an intoxicating validation of my lived experience. The same rage and despair he emoted roared through my body and awakened my own rage and despair. It was not sadness. It was a rupture.

This written project, taking form in a research Master's thesis, is in short, a culmination of the past two years' worth of having followed works, relationships and community movements that have evoked similar intensities as Fanon did for me. The terrains I ended up traversing were tumultuous, devastating and even life-threatening to an extent that at the time of writing this, 8 months into the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is almost comical, with little for one to do but laugh at the impossible probabilities of the various events that has happened since starting my thesis in January 2019. If it has taught me anything, it is not to take life so seriously and to allow joy to be felt and embraced despite whatever may be going on.

To name a few, as there are simply too many, situated in Aotearoa were the terrorist attack on the Muslim community in Christchurch, 2019; subsequent surge of white supremacist movements nationwide[8], in particular, on the very campus from which I work,

[7] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.*

[8] Spoonley, "Far-right extremists still threaten New Zealand, a year on from the Christchurch attacks".

study and teach, at the University of Auckland[9]; the ensuing institutional failures to adequately provide and respond to threats of safety for students of colour[10]; senses of betrayal and shock at fellow organising 'allies' in anti-racist endeavours, whom fell through in the most crucial of moments; and the intensifying sense of mortality and nihilism amidst the broader global insurgency of right-wing nationalist violence and climate crises. For the full list, a web search of 'all the shit things that happened in 2019/2020' will provide a comprehensive capture of the gob-smacking reality that is the current moment.

What I present here is a moment in a constantly evolving thinking-being-living process. It does not represent the totality of my thoughts nor is that my goal. This work is *praxis in decoloniality/decoloniality in praxis*[11], which I aim to engage through the work of linguistic articulation, one that in my view, is on the more limited end of various ways we can signify the *Real*[12]. In particular, academic writing, in comparison to signification modes like art, music, dance and creative writing, is particularly restricted in grasping what we experience. It is pertinent that I preface such limitation early on so as to avoid any misconceptions that 'knowledge', thinking and 'truths' are exclusive to the sphere of academia. In fact, it is a very flawed medium which I nevertheless find fruitful simply because it is one I personally find the easiest to articulate, process and make sense of my own existence in.

If asked to pinpoint the works that have been most influential in shaping my thinking presented here, they would be Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonising Methodologies*[13]*;* Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh's *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*[14]*;* and my grandfather's insistence throughout my life that '사람은 뿌리가 깊어야한다, 어딜가도 넌 한국사람이다'. The impact of the first two are evident throughout the thesis in my engagement with their conceptual tools. The latter, which translates to *'One's roots must be*

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[9] Franks, "Auckland University white supremacy row sparked 'major' crisis incident".

[10] Scotcher, "Open letter denounces white supremacy at Auckland University".

[11] Mignolo and Walsh, "Introduction", 1-12.

[12] For exposition of Lacan's *Real,* and the three registers of the *Imaginary, Symbolic and the Real,* refer to Lacan, "The dream of Irma's injection (conclusion)", 161-174, 1998.

[13] Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*.

[14] Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis.*

deep. Wherever you go, you are/will be Korean', is something that irritated and haunted me for majority of my migrant life in Aotearoa. Just prior to migrating, at the age of ten, I had not received any extracurricular tutoring in English because my grandfather saw it more important that as a Korean, I master 한자 *hanja*[15] rather than English. Not only did this mean that I was barely scraping the ability to recite the alphabet whilst my peers were reading *Harry Potter* in English, it also threw my mother in absolute panic when it was made clear to her by my classmate's parents that my future was rather grim with such a late start in learning a language considered an absolute must in being a 'successful' global citizen. As for how I turned out, well, I'm still yet to read a single book by J.K. Rowling.

My grandfather's counsel had irritated me, whether that be through our weekly phone calls when he was in Korea, or everyday afterschool when my grandparents lived with us in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) for a few months a year. Year after year, the only thing I wanted to be was 'Kiwi' and since I could not erase my 'Korean-ness' from my face, I endeavoured to erase the culture and language of my ancestors. Hearing him tell me to remain tethered and grounded to my roots, the very thing that had me bullied, ostracised and humiliated in this foreign land, it was an utter betrayal by someone who was always on my side. I would increasingly speak with more and more broken Korean with a tinge of pride that I was now somewhat beyond where he could reach me.

His counsel haunted me because, resonated in a phrase commonly heard in Sociology, *race haunts ethnicity.* No matter how I dressed, spoke, gestured or lived, I could not escape my corporeality. Under the Western gaze, I was always Other, one bringing perils, one who was yellow, one of *Yellow Peril*. In fact, later when I made attempts to claim being Korean, it was just as pointless as claiming to be Kiwi, for I was just *Asian*, a word I came to consider dirty. I would have much preferred being called whatever derogative term there was in the English language but the 'A' word. This haunting was the similar affect to that of the low hum I knew I would eventually have to address throughout the years I avoided reading Fanon.

[15] *Hanja* is the set of traditional Chinese scripts associated with phonic units of Korean. The relationship between *Hanja* and written scripts of Korean, *Hangeul*, will be further elaborated in the discussion of methodology later in this chapter.

It no longer became possible for me to avoid this as a point of discussion in my academic work when I caught myself in a horror-ridden realisation about myself a few months back. Like the countless many under nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of COVID-19, I went for a run in my neighbourhood for my one-outdoor-walk-a-day. Taking up the call to be a responsible citizen, I would socially distance from oncoming pedestrians by moving onto the road where cars were driving by. I would scan constantly to make sure I would weave away from people. It didn't take long for me to notice I was frantically running zigzag across the road and that what drove me to do so wasn't a moral adherence to social distancing but the fear of being called out as something akin to 'China Virus'[16]. Led by our prime minister Jacinda Ardern, amidst a growing national discourse on a new sense of community focused on kindness during the lockdown, I found myself running away from people, avoiding eye-contact, and being afraid for my life. When I turned around at the end of the long stretch of the road, there was no one in sight on the pedestrian paths. Who was I running away from? I was running away from myself. Because *I* was the virus. *I* feared catching the 'dirties' from myself, and one thing was for sure, I could never outrun myself.

Despite the relatively few reports of violence against the 'Asian' community in Aotearoa, it was hard not to take notice of the surge in reports of hate crimes in countries like the United States and Australia in the wake of COVID-19[17]. Even more so, I could never un-notice my own colonised psyche that riddled me with self-loathing and disgust. It was even more morose to notice this so far into my studies and teaching that champion anti-colonial efforts to find agency through theories of liberation. It was a moment that made crystal clear the limits of intellectually making sense of the social phenomena like racialisation. I could not heal and embody what I preach merely on the plane of intellectual interrogation.

Thus, in a way, this work is my response to the call that Catherine Walsh[18] makes in asking, 'how does decoloniality challenge, interrogate, and/or interpolate you?'. The task I take up is to theorise my racialised existence under Western coloniality, situated on the

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[16] Moynihan and Porumbescu, ""Trump's 'Chinese virus' slur makes some people blame Chinese Americans. But others blame Trump".

[17] Wang, ""The recent rise in Asian American hate crimes could have impacts beyond the pandemic".

[18] Walsh, "Sowing and growing decoloniality in/as praxis" in *On Decoloniality,* 102.

colonised land of Aotearoa as well as in the broader transnational context of the global 한민교포 *Gyopo* community (the Korean diaspora). By theorising, I mean more than its conventional practice. Theorising is mapping, diagnosing, and analysing; it is also bearing witness, archiving, recovering, sensing, feeling, embodying, doing, being and becoming, which are all inextricably linked with one another. Of particular importance here is the embodied aspects of theorising; allowing time and space, and to actively hold space as an integral part of academic work, to digest and process, to accept, grieve and reckon with the cathartic release which we come to viscerally experience in engagements the vocabulary that give form to unspoken experiences tucked away deep in the corners of our hearts. We theorise to make sense of our experiences, the world around us and to be able to live with a sense of sovereignty over ourselves. This is my interpretation of *decoloniality in praxis/praxis in decoloniality*.

Theorising in this way is one that is also inherently collective. This is not a radical statement to make outside the Western tradition. For instance, the Eastern Thought named 'Confucianism' was one labelled by Jesuit missionaries in the sixteenth century based on the convention of naming thoughts after its 'founder'[19]. As Baggini notes, 'In China, Confucianism is still known as [儒家] *Ruija*, or the school of the [儒] *ru* ([儒] *ru* meaning 'scholar' or 'learned man', and [家] *jia* is literally 'house' or 'family'). It is not tied to any one person. It would be more in keeping with the Chinese way to talk not of Confucianism but of Ruism.'[20] 'Theory' is *living the values*, propagated through the *many*, transmitted through generations, which become intrinsic parts of a culture.

If there is anything I am uniquely contributing here, it is the particular way I have brought certain thoughts in conversation with one another. There are many ways to make sense of things, and this is one of those many ways, taking caution not to make totalising abstractions that attempt to solve global let alone local issues. The theoretical tools brought together are reflective of my training in Sociology, namely, on the side of Western 'critical theory', as well as in my engagement with a wide range of literatures; oral and written, spoken and embodied, academic, and personal. These are tools I have found helpful in

[19] Baggini, "No self", 184.

[20] Ibid. For further on Confucianism, refer to Sheng, *"Chenyang Li, The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony"*, 18.

meditating on the ever-evolving coloniality of 'race', ones that have aided me in engaging in the 'interrelated processes of healing colonial wounds that originate in each of us'[21]. On a personal level, this is my active claim of the responsibility I have for my own decolonial liberation. There is agency in all of us, albeit in varying capacities. Keeping in mind the collective nature that is the project of liberation, we are capable of holding in tandem that 'no one should expect that someone else will decolonise him or her or decolonise X or Z, and it means that none of us, living-thinking-being-doing decolonially should expect to decolonise someone else'[22]. It is an option we consciously choose to take up, a hand we choose to grab in the despair of victimhood we often find ourselves in.

There isn't a particular methodology that I systematically follow in this paper. This is a choice I've made for one, because I failed to find one that would give me the freedom and flexibility I needed, and two, because the spirit of decoloniality calls for disruption, rebellion, and unsettling of the imperial status of Western intellectual conventions. In saying so, because this work is carried out within and under a Western institution, there is requirement for me to adhere to at least some of the conventions of social 'sciences', to tick the boxes, to be recognised as 'legitimate' and make possible further intellectual pursuits in the future. Thus, I hope the reader proceeds with an open mind.

Despite my best efforts however, I will not be able to 'disrupt' at every turn. In the words of Andulzía, there is a constant dilemma in 'how to write (produce) without being inscribed (reproduced) in the dominant white structure and how to write without reinscribing and reproducing what we rebel against'[23]. To this, I align with Walsh's response; 'Recognising this dilemma and continually struggling with it (not expecting that I will ever be able to totally surmount it) are central not only to my pedagogy-method, but also to the ways I conceive, consciously address, and give praxis to my locus or place of enunciation'[24]. The humility in acknowledging such limits, in contrast to the more common, master-figurehead position many academics take up, will be the anchor I constantly aspire to. I hope

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[21] Mignolo and Walsh, "Introduction", 10.

[22] Ibid., 10-11.

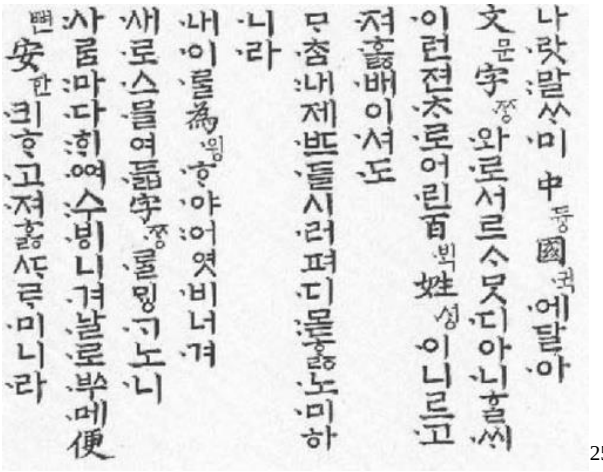
[23] Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark, Luz en lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, 7–8.

[24] Walsh, "The decolonial *for:* resurgences, shifts, and movements", in *On Decoloniality*, 21.

that where there are shortcomings, they are used as nodes to branch out and nourish further conversations in the relevant fields.

On the note of disruptive methodologies, one of the ways in which I can formalise this as a consistent practice in this paper is on the use of various non-English vocabulary. I will prioritise the written form of a concept at use in its original language, then offer a Romanised English pronunciation when the form does use the Latin alphabet. At times, I will offer etymological deconstructions/morphological analyses to flesh out the more nuanced terrains the word attempts to signify. This is not merely an excavatory tracing of the signifier, but as language often reflects the worldview of a culture, the act affords a moment to reconceptualise and reorient one's relationship and understanding of a particular concept that may be different to what one may be familiar with in English.

한글 *Hangeul*, the written system of the Korean language, is a particularly potent disruption because of the spirit in which it was conceived and used throughout its history. Invented in 1443 by the fourth king of the 조선 *Joseon* dynasty, 세종대왕/世宗大王 *Sejongdaewang* (King Sejong the Great), it was his intention to create an alphabet for the spoken language of Korean that could easily be learned and used by laymen, so as to increase literacy of the voiceless in society.한자/ 漢字 *hanja* (Classical Chinese characters) were the formally used written form till then, one that was difficult to master and limited to the realms of elites and scholars. Recorded in the foreword of 훈민정음/ 訓民正音 *Hunminjeongeum* (The Correct Sounds for Instructions of the People), 세종대왕 (King Sejong the Great) in 1446 proclaims;


나랏말ᄉᆞ미 中ᄃᆞᆼ國ᄀᆞᆨ에 달아
文ᄆᆞᆫ字ᄌᆞᆼ와 로서ᄅᆞ ᄉᆞᄆᆞᆺ디 아니ᄒᆞᆯ ᄊᆡ
이런 젼ᄎᆞ로 어린 百ᄇᆡᆨ姓ᄉᆡᆼ이 니르고
져 ᄒᆞᆯ ᄇᆡ이 셔도
ᄆᆞᄎᆞᆷ내 제 ᄠᅳ들 시러 펴디 못ᄒᆞᄂᆞᆫ 이ᄒᆞ
니라
내 이ᄅᆞᆯ 爲ᄋᆡᆼ ᄒᆞ야 어엿비 너겨
새로 스믈여ᄃᆞᆫ字ᄌᆞᆼ ᄅᆞᆯ 밍ᄀᆞ노니
사ᄅᆞᆷ마다 ᄒᆡᆼ여 수비 니겨 날로 ᄡᅳ메 便ᄇᆞᆫ
安ᄋᆞᆫ ᄒᆡᆨ고 져 ᄒᆞᆯᄯᆞᄅᆞ미니라

25

나라의 말이 중국과 달라 한문·한자와 서로 통하지 아니하므로 이런 까닭으로 어리석은 백성들이 말하고자 하는 바가 있어도 끝내 제 뜻을 펴지 못하는 사람이 많다. 내가 이를 불쌍히 여겨 새로 스물여덟 글자를 만드니 사람마다 하여금 쉽게 익혀 날마다 씀에 편하게 하고자 할 따름이다[26].

Because the speech of this country is different from that of China, it [the spoken language] does not match the [Chinese] letters. Therefore, even if the ignorant want to communicate, many of them in the end cannot state their concerns. Saddened by this, I have [had] 28 letters newly made. It is my wish that all the people may easily learn these letters and that [they]be convenient for daily use.

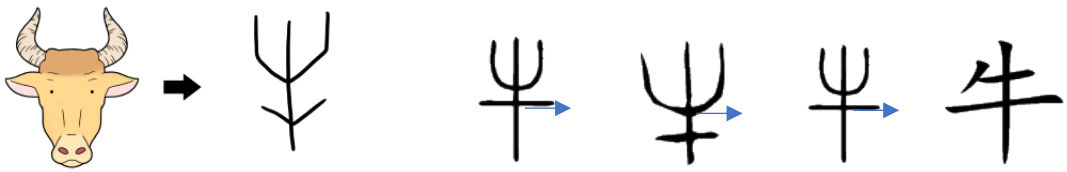
The Korean alphabet becomes a revolutionary symbol used by those without power to express themselves, to organise, and to call out the unjust actions of those in power. During the 1440s, 최만리/ 崔萬理 *Choe Man Ri* and various Korean Confucian scholars oppose the use of 한글 *Hangeul* as it is seen as a threat to the 양반 *Yangban* aristocracy and their social status. 한글 *Hangeul* is relegated to a second class form of writing for slaves, peasants, and women and referred to as 언문 *Eonmum,* translated as 'vulgar script'. Its usage continues to be a site of contestation with ebbs and flows; flourishes through poetry by women in the 16th and 17th centuries and formal banning and abolishment by succeeding kings like

[25] *Namuwiki,* "훈민정음".

[26] Ibid.

연산군/燕山君 *King Yeonsangun* and 중종/中宗 *King Jungjong*. Under Japanese colonial rule from 1910-1945 as part of forcible assimilation, teaching and publication of the Korean language become banned.한글 *Hangeul* is used as a pivotal tool by independence movements domestically and in the Korean diaspora around the world[27].

Besides its historical weight, 한글 *Hangeul* is disruptive also because, whilst it is a phonetic written system, it still holds ties to the morphemic system of Classical Chinese characters. Phonetic systems, like English, record the sound of the spoken word. This allows flexibility in being able to import and incorporate foreign words into the language system. Commonly used terms like *faux pas, déjà vu, quid pro quo,* and in Aotearoa, Māori terms like *aroha, kai* and *koha* are such examples. Expressions of concepts not articulated in the sociocultural terrains of English-speaking countries are therefore made possible. Morphemic systems, on the other hand, originate in ancient hieroglyphics that attempt to visually represent the thing it is trying to signify rather than the sound. For example, the Chinese character for 'cow', 牛, traces back to the inscriptions found on animal bones as far back as 1300 – 1100 BC called 甲骨文 (oracle bone scripts). The character 牛's morphological evolution over time is as follows;



[28]

Oracle bone script | The Bronze Age | Qin Dynasty | Sui Dynasty

牛 also does not solely mean 'cow'. It signifies meanings that are related to the sociocultural context it was conceived, as well as how it has been historically used since then. For the agricultural society that was China, cattle played a central role in survival of its peoples. They were noted for their slow but heavy, steady power and endurance. They were held to a sacred status, often used as sacrifices to gods. Thus, depending on the characters

[27] Lee and Ramsey, *A history of the Korean language.*
[28] Naver Dictionary, "牛 소 우".

that are combined in use with 牛, the meanings are multiple and vary ranging from, sacrificial, stubborn, disobedient, daring, or denoting farm work. The meanings are relational in morphemic written systems and the way in which one can decipher and grasp the scope of its inter-related nuances is to trace the 자원/字源 or 'principle of construction'.

The practicalities of putting to use both the phonetic written form and its ties to morphemic Classical Chinese characters of 한글 *Hangeul* for the academic purpose of epistemic exploration is one that may seem garishly unsophisticated. This is a methodology that has come about as rather hodgepodge baby steps towards recovering the language, knowledge, and history of my own ancestors, as well as the landscape of Korean academia. It has very much been a ground-up approach of feeling things as I go and thus there will be limits, flaws and plenty of room to improve in the future.

The methodology I speak of here is very simple; the use of Korean search engine 네이버 *Naver*. *Naver* offers the flexibility to search terms in both English and Korean, and with every search, there is an option to expand on the content through 어학사전 (linguistic dictionary). Under that umbrella, one has the options for the encyclopaedia, dictionaries in Korean, English, Spanish and so on, and most importantly, for 한자 *Hanja.* Under 한자 *Hanja*, a comprehensive 뜻풀이 *tteuspul-i*, what I have translated as 'etymological deconstruction' is offered. Under it are the various definitions followed by notes on 상형문자 *sanghyeongmunja* (hieroglyphs) and 자원/字源 *jawon* (principles of construction). This is followed by what would be the English equivalent of a thesaurus, offering characters with similar meanings, the various ways the character can be used and how to write the character itself. All the content is of course written in Korean (*Hangeul*), which is when interchanging between the various dictionaries and looking at the meanings in both in Korean and English have been useful in grasping the associated signified meaning.

One further important note needs to be made on the relationship between phonetic *Hangeul* and morphemic *Hanja*. Because Koreans used Classical Chinese characters prior to the invention of *Hangeul*, for a lot of phonetic units, the meaning cannot be deciphered unless the associated Chinese character is known. If we continue with the example of the signifier for cow, the Korean phonetic unit and word for it is 소 *so.* 소 *so*, however, does not have an

associated *Hanja* and is considered to be a purely Korean word. But there is a related Chinese character that depicts the same meaning which is 牛 /소 우, pronounced *oo.* To make matters a bit more complex, the sound 우 *oo* can mean multiple things; 右 오른쪽 우 *oo* (right-hand side), 雨 비 우 (rain), 友 벗 우 (friend) and so on. In spoken Chinese, these would be distinguished through different 'tones', but in Korean, it requires knowledge of the written *Hanja* characters, which are taught in schools, in order to decipher the various meanings on a phonetic unit.

Although complex, the dual tethering of Korean language to phonetic and morphemic systems mean that there can be a lot uncovered with each word, each character, and the relationships between these characters. These can act as windows to the syncretic culture that is Korea, one that melds various different philosophies, religions and worldviews, reflective of the many outside influences it had throughout its 5000-year-old history. This forms a distinct, hybridised culture unique to 'Korea'. Rather than tracing what may be considered 'original' or purely 'indigenous' of Korean Thought, I use the language itself as a site of accessing Korean epistemology. Language is *living* or *alive*, particularly those with phonetic systems, for it is constantly adapting and evolving in its interconnectedness with the world. For this reason, epistemic explorations in addition to Korean Thought, such as that of Latin America as considered in the works of Mignolo and Walsh[29], and of Te Ao Māori, one that is indigenous to the land I stand on, unpacking of language will be my main entry-point to their worldviews. Thus, what is to come, if it hasn't been made obvious already, will traverse multiple socio-linguistic terrains; a conscious choice that has been made to disrupt conventions of academia and of the English language.

If I am to associate the particular methodology described above to methodology 'proper', it would most likely fit in with the 'Critical Theory' paradigm. I borrow Shaun Wilson's words in describing that such paradigm carries out research to '…have a more informed consciousness, with the final goal of seeing how to change and improve this fluid reality…promoting change to improve society is a key to…the research…knowledge itself is not seen as the ultimate goal…[it follows] the axiology that research is not seen as worthy or

[29] Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis.*

ethical if it does not help to improve the reality of the research participants'[30,31]. The 'critical' attitude towards change, or liberation more specifically, is resonant with my endeavours but I nevertheless opt the word 'decolonial' to align my praxis. 'Critical' is not enough when concerned with the 'habits that modernity/coloniality implanted in all of us; with how modernity/coloniality has worked and continues to work to negate, disavow, distort and deny knowledges, subjectivities, world senses, and life visions… [decolonial] liberations with respect to thinking, being, knowing, understanding and living [instead] encourage venues of re-existence, and build connections among regions, territories, struggles and peoples.'[32]

Thus, in thinking 'race', it has been crucial for me to turn to Korean Thought in particular, for I needed to be able to think from a position where I was the default subject and not an 'Other'[33]. A form of re-existence was needed on an axis of worldview that does not locate me in the margins. Of course, I am Other in different ways; I am a woman, and one who is away from her motherland living as part of the Korean diaspora in Aotearoa. And perhaps this is why I find solace in the way that *Hangeul* has been used throughout its history, that through the use of this medium, I, too, can articulate my experience of being in my own particular margin within the Western multicultural, settler colonial state.

Having discussed my methodologies, this thesis will now progress through three chapters. The first chapter titled, *'Race' Under Western Episteme,* offers an exposition of 'race' literatures in the field of social sciences, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. The descriptive depth of what each discipline offers will vary depending on how fruitful their conceptual vocabularies are in explaining the experience of 'race'. I begin with the public discourse around 'race' formalised as *ordinary conception of race* and present and explanation for the persistence of 'race-thinking'. Using Elias and Feagin's extensive literature review of how 'race' is conceived in the social sciences, I offer a summary of their research. Though they attempt to centre theorisations of postcolonial scholarship and

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[30] Wilson, *Research is ceremony: indigenous research methods.*

[31] Guba and Lincoln, "Competing paradigms in qualitative research" as Wilson, 36-37.

[32] Mignolo and Walsh, "Introduction", *On Decoloniality,* 4.

[33] In the Lacanian sense, existing in language *is* alienation thus existence *is* Otherness lived. This will be discussed in later chapters.

thoughts of academics of colour in various other societal margins, what they establish as a critique falls short of their ambitions. I identify limits of their framework, *Systemic Race Theory*, mainly that these are two white male scholars whose 'critical' endeavours of surveying academic scholarship are largely what Charles Wright Mills articulated as *sociological imagination.* They do, however, offer vocabularies that demarcate the tendencies of dominant Western episteme[34]. These are *White Racial Frame* and *Counter Frames.*

I look to four thematic discussions of 'race' in philosophy through the book, *What Is Race?* Spencer's biological realist perspective, Jeffers' on social constructionism, Haslanger's socio-political stance, and Glawgow's realist contemplations. These, I argue, do little in offering deployable tools to make sense of racialized experiences. In contrast, Emily S. Lee's phenomenological approach gives primacy to the materiality of the body. Her identification of metaphysical dualism is useful in explaining why, despite the obvious embodied aspect of 'race', much of race literature continues to separate the body and mind, rendering their conceptual labour ineffective in addressing race as a phenomenon. Such insight, I argue, arises out of her own racialized experiences, highlighting the importance of who is doing the theorising, and for whom.

The potency of psychoanalytic vocabulary is noted in Eng and Han's *Racial Melancholia, Racial Dissociation: On the Social and Psychic Lives of Asian Americans.* Capturing, once again, the enduring theme of dualism in the West and its implications for those racialized outside the White/Black dyad. Adding a structural perspective to identify the source that imposes racialisation, I draw on Mignolo and Walsh's concept of *colonial matrix of power (CMP).* Incorporating insights from the surveyed disciplines, I define 'race' as *the embodied experience of the subject-object relation imposed by the colonial matrix of power*.

Looking at how the subject-object relation manifests on a structural level, sociohistorical racialisation of the 'Asian' figure in Aotearoa is presented. I explore why the Orientalist ideology of 'Yellow Peril' is shrouded with signifiers of fear using Lacanian psychoanalysis. This sees the emergence of the term '*objet a*lien Asian'. Moving onto the various psychosomatic phenomena experienced collectively by 'Asians', I posit 'minor feelings' as one that captures the consequences of interpersonal, and social imposition of the

[34] The use of the terms 'Western Thought/ 'Western Episteme' pinpoints specifically to the Cartesian philosophical strand dominant in the works of Enlightenment. Collapsing this strand to the all-encompassing term, 'Western capitalism', has its limits in lacking precision.

object-subject relation. This chapter closes with an assessment of how ‘race’ is taught in the department of sociology at my own institution, the University of Auckland.

Chapter II titled, *Decolonial Alternative I: Rethinking Ontology Through 인(仁) ‘in’*, takes up the task of using Korean Thought to think ‘race’. I begin by explaining the value of exploring epistemologies that are particular to one’s *whakapapa* and offer two ways to conceptualise the ‘self’. This maps the key differences in dualistic thinking dominant in Western episteme, and relational thinking observed in cultures deemed Other to the West. 인 **(**仁) *‘in’* is identified as the Korean epistemological equivalent to ‘relationality’ and its meanings are derived from an etymological deconstruction of the script 仁. Drawing on traditional Korean Medicine, formalised by 허준(許浚)*‘Heo Jun’,* the primacy of the body-mind unity is identified. Here I introduce 기 ‘*gi*’ (life force) and parallel it to Freud’s concept of *Eros*. I make the argument that the body is the site of the unconscious, thus, one of the key ways in which psychic repression can be relieved is through somatic practices. I draw insights from this chapter to offer the concept of *embodied psychic expansion* and visualise the location of liberation and agency through diagrams.

Chapter III titled, *Decolonial Alternative II: Bearing Witness To Habitus of 한(韓);(恨), ‘han’ and Other Actionable Possibilities*, presents theorisation of embodiment as liberation that is particular to 한민교포(韓民僑胞) *hammingyopo/* Korean diaspora. In a similar fashion to Chapter II, the concept 한 **(**韓);(恨)*‘han’* is etymologically deconstructed to flesh out the nuances of its meanings. This is then contextualised in the Korean cosmology of 음양설 (陰陽說) *yeum yang* to identify how the tradition of Korean medicine proposed to relieve psychic repression. A short literature review of Trauma Studies is presented as a parallel to somatosensory practices found in Korean Medicine. Bringing together Korean Thought and Trauma Studies, I inflict the term *habitus of 한(韓);(恨) han* to describe the ways in which those of the Korean diaspora are engaged in praxis of decoloniality. Grassroots examples from various cultural texts are presented and the chapter closes with pedagogical implications for teaching ‘race’ in the university setting.

In the concluding chapter titled *Postlude,* I mention some of the limitations of this thesis. Heralding, once again, the salience of decoloniality in thinking liberation, I close with a photograph that captures the myriad of themes, nuances and insights drawn in this research.

This is offered as my non-linguistic equivalent of a ‘conclusion’, a woman smoking through a 곰방대 *gombangdae* (pipe), in the southwestern city of 광주 *Gwangju*, Korea. This is part of a photography series titled ‘The Highway Besides the Table’ by retired scholar 한정식 *Han Jeong Sik*. It accounts the disappearing and extinct fragments of the Korean culture in the ‘incipient stages of urbanisation and in transition between the pre-modern and modern eras’[35]. Now with this in mind, let us proceed.

[35] Kang, “Korea’s disappearing culture captured in photography”.

CHAPTER I

‘RACE’ UNDER WESTERN EPISTEME

One day I woke up
And realised I was different.
I looked in the mirror and to my surprise,
I saw a round face with slanted Asian eyes.

From Andy A. Nguyen’s *The day I woke up different*[36]

There are countless ways ‘race’ is theorised, and as done by many, I write the word between quotation marks to denote its socially constructed character, to make clear that baseless essentialist claims made by the legacies of race sciences[37] are *not* what I am referring to here and throughout the thesis. Yet, as a student being instructed in sociology lectures at the University of Auckland, never once by an academic of colour, being told that race was a social construct rubbed me in all the wrong ways. ‘Race’ was very much real to my everyday lived experience ever since, unbeknownst to me before, I was tyrannised with the label ‘Asian’ upon first migrating to Aotearoa. It only takes to ask one person of colour that ‘race’ is an emotionally loaded ‘trigger word’[38], justifiably so, given its usage throughout history to rationalise slavery, colonialism and genocides. Sociological concepts have been powerful tools for me to articulate and make sense of confounding social phenomena I experienced throughout my life and ‘race as a social construct’ didn’t quite measure up to that bar. It further frustrated me as a graduate teaching assistant in the following years to see this phrase be used over and over again to new batches of students year after year. Making matters worse, ‘ethnicity’ was hailed as *the* neologism to replace ‘race’ but as Jeffers notes, ‘dress[ing] essentialist ideas in talk of ‘culture’ rather than ‘race’ only extends the power of such [racial] thinking’[39].

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[36] Nguyen, *The day I woke up different.*

[37] Taylor. *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, 50.

[38] Montagu, "The Concept of Race, 24.

[39] Jeffers, “Cultural constructionism”, 44.

Before offering any academic definitions, it is worthwhile to somewhat concretise the 'ordinary conception of race'. In our common-sense understanding, in our everyday talk of 'race', what is it referring to, why is it important and why is it so persistent? What is it that 'people as a matter of sociohistorical contingency widely accept…[and] determine [as race]?'[40] In naming it 'modern racialism', Taylor defines it as the classification system of thought and practice that 'relies mainly on skin colour, facial features, and hair texture to divide humankind into four or five colour-coded groups – black, brown, red, white, yellow.'[41] Though, 'red' is more commonly replaced with indigenous/native/aboriginal depending on the parlance of a particular geopolitical context, and 'yellow', with 'Asians'. One study carried out with 449 United States adults showed it was largely the perception of these visible phenotypic features that were associated with assigning particular character traits to particular 'racial' groups.[42] But as the study notes, what participants deduced from what they saw was prone to subjective fallibility, meaning that they made inconsistent judgements even when using their own standards for racial classification. Such fallibility highlights the arbitrary nature of the ways in which particular meanings come to be inscribed on particular bodies.

The reason why ordinary conceptions of race is important is because how it is understood on the ground is largely what shapes material consequences of racial thinking. By material, I not only mean socioeconomic stratification as a result of institutional racial thinking, but also the various ways it impacts the embodied and lived experience of those who are racialised. No matter how much, or how radically academics conceptualise and reconceptualise 'race', it hardly makes a dent in the lived consequences if it does not reach into public discourse. There is an absolute need to stay tethered to how ideas take form 'out there' so as to keep our theorising relevant and praxical in addressing issues defined from ground up. This must take precedence over philosophical ponderings that define problems from above and prescribe 'solutions' to the void. Such act is a luxury I, myself, cannot afford and I am rather certain I am not alone in claiming so. My axiological commitment to always

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[40] Ibid., 45.

[41] Taylor, *Race: A Philosophical Introduction*, 16-18.

[42] Glasgow and Covarrubias. "The Ordinary Conception of Race in the United States and Its Relation to Racial Attitudes: A New Approach".

relate theory back to the material, thinking to doing (not that these are mutually exclusive), is one I draw from my alignment with Marxist thought.

As for why this ordinary perception of race is so persistent, Alcoff offers a convincing argument[43]. Race-thinking and the actions that come out of it involve our 'perceptual habits'. These are our tendencies to take certain visual cues to mean a particular thing based on the most dominant ideology we have been socialised into. So much so that it becomes unconscious and part of our reflexes. Perceptual habits are part of what make up the greater set of 'habits that modernity/coloniality implanted in all of us'[44]. 'Race', after all, is 'one of the most profoundly "naturalised" of existing ideologies'.[45] Putting it neatly, '"race" is the social meaning of the geographically marked body'[46]. These social meanings are mistaken to be 'natural' and our bodies become saturated with these significations. Whilst meanings change over time, legacies of previous significations do not magically get replaced. Rather, historical variations in signification are sedimented on top of each other. The visuality of our bodies, ones we cannot change, are one of these sites of sedimented significations. The bodies, or more aptly, our embodied selves, go through the motions of interpersonal encounters and are interpellated as any of those sediments, most of the times, which are governed by habituated unconscious 'phrenological impulses'[47].

Shifting now to how 'race' is conceptualised in academic literatures, the most comprehensive survey of it within the social sciences is perhaps offered by Elias and Feagin[48]. In what they label 'Systemic Racism Theory', a summary framework is offered outlining the various aspects that need to be considered for a critical and socially meaning analysis of 'race'. Key insights from Western critical theory and decolonial/postcolonial scholars' critiques of Eurocentric Thought are taken into consideration. Broadly speaking, it presents as a rigorous and self-aware application of Mill's concept of 'sociological

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[43] Alcoff , "Is Latina/o Identity a Racial Identity?", 23-44.

[44] Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis,* 4.

[45] Hall, "The whites of their eyes; racist ideioglogies and the media", 90.

[46] Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique,* 236.

[47] Lee, *Living alterities: Phenomenology, embodiment, and race,* 7

[48] Elias and Feagin, *Racial theories in social science. A systemic critique.*

imagination'[49]. It demands analysis of 'race' to be historically contextualised, empirically backed and critical of the epistemological roots of the theoretical tools[50]. This is not anything new, as these are central tenets of scholars who have engaged in Marxist and decolonial analysis. Though in the context of United States and other liberal spheres, discussion on 'race' has moved to feel-good talk of post-race ideology where claims such as 'we are all the same', 'we all bleed red', 'let us see beyond colour' render towards 'the rather amazing conclusion that *race does not exist in any sense!'*[51]. So in that sense, perhaps a return to what Mills already theorised in 1959 is useful after all.

Whilst Systemic Racism Theory falls short on the ambitious promise of delivering a robust theoretical framework centering on marginalised scholarship, it nevertheless offers some useful concepts. 'White Racial Frame' is used to describe the tendencies observed in the Western epistemic approaches to 'race'. 'Counter-Frames' are offered as a remedy to the prior, denoting to the works of traditionally under looked scholars who are Black, Indigenous and/or People of Colour (BIPOC). These include the works of Franz Fanon, W.E.B. Dubois, Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Homi Bhabha, Philomena Essed, Patricia Hill Collins, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and so forth. In offering a chronological tracing of both 'White Racial Frames' and 'Counter-Frames', it lays bare the field's dire deficiencies in thoughts that can help validate the experiences of the racialised, as well as those that can aid in imagining how to *live* liberation, rather than just dream it.

If we cross disciplinary boundaries to philosophy, discussions on 'race' become a little more fruitful. Rigorous, and at times more in the sphere of logics rather than implications on material reality, *What is Race? Four Philosophical Views* offers four different approaches to understanding 'race'[52]. Spencer posits a careful biological realist account of 'race', that racial groups are those that share genomic ancestry but one that does not justify imposition of social hierarchy on this basis[53]. Jeffers argues 'racial groups' are

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[49] Mills, *The sociological imagination.*

[50] Ibid., 257.

[51] Lee, "Introduction: Race and the relevance of embodiment".

[52] Glasgow, Haslanger, Jeffers, and Spencer. *What is Race?: Four Philosophical Views*.

[53] Ibid., 73-110.

constructed culturally, that each group is distinguished by distinctive ways of life, whilst keeping in view that these have come about as results of racial identity imposition[54]. Haslanger asserts a similar stance from a social constructionist view but gives more importance to the socio-political rather than cultural aspects of 'racial grouping'. She argues that 'races' are 'socio-political groups, marked by bodily features', suspended in relations of hierarchy, one of subordination and privilege[55]. Dissatisfied by the three prior scholars' rationale for persistence of 'race', Glasgow argues that 'race is neither social nor biological'.[56] Though in doing so, his conclusions on whether 'race' is 'real' or not is cloudy, to say the least, and that the term 'race' is 'semantically indeterminate'.[57] Out of the four accounts, Glasgow's is one with the least to offer in concepts that can be operationalised in our day to day lives. Each of the four have their strengths and weaknesses and it is the job of the person taking on a particular enquiry to choose the approach that fits best with their intended aim.

The most affirming of my lived experience of 'race' has been in Emily S. Lee's work on phenomenology of 'race'[58]. She puts primary importance to the materiality of race. She explains that the under-theorisation of the role of the body is due to Western philosophy's 'dualistic theoretical history of dividing ideas and matter…', that the body is an unthinking matter that has little significance[59]. This, of course, is not unaddressed in Western philosophy for there is the philosophical tradition of metaphysical monism, which opts towards blurring of boundaries between thinking beings and non-thinking beings'[60]. But the field of 'race' theory mostly remains within the realms of 'metaphysical dualism and prioritisation of

[54] Ibid., 38-72.

[55] Ibid., 2.

[56] Ibid., 143.

[57] Ibid., 144.

[58] Lee, *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment and Race.*

[59] Ibid., 2.

[60] Ibid., 2.

consciousness'[61], with the exceptions of previously mentioned scholars like Fanon[62], Alcoff[63] and Yancy[64].

The salience of Lee's work is further accented when one looks at who is doing the theorising and for whom. Though I cannot make definitive claims here, I posit that the shortfalls of Elias and Feagin's theorisation of 'race' is because they are theorising experiences of others. Both are white academics, who in fact, do make note of their positionality as White scholars theorising in the space of 'race' theory[65]. Lee, on the other hand, a Korean American scholar based in the United States, theorises as someone who is racialised, for the racialised. It is a painfully ironic thing to be talked about and to be taught on, regarding something one has lived and continues to live, by another whose engagement with 'race' can only ever be an intellectual exercise, or by being in proximity to those who experience it. It indeed matters a whole lot who is doing the theorising.

'Race', for Lee, is 'the lived reality of carrying forth every day in a body with its associated subjectivity'[66]. Embodiment conditions our subjectivity, and the socio-politico-historicity conditions embodiment. Resonant with Fanon's theme of overdetermination, it is the external visibility of difference that shape encounters with others, rather than internally determined subjectivity built independent of our phenotypic features[67]. The repetitive encounters driven by overdetermination, over time, shape a particular subjectivity specific to those encounters. This is captured in Dubois' notion of 'double consciousness'[68]. These experiences end up shaping the way we live our lives. Lee describes, 'Every day, in the banal, minute interactions with members of society, one's body sets the parameters for what constitutes the reasonable response from others. One's body informs the rationale for the

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[61] Ibid., 3.

[62] Fanon .*Black skins white masks*.

[63] Alcoff, *Visible identities: race, gender and the self.*

[64] Yancy, *Black bodies, white gazes, the continuing significance of race.*

[65] Elias and Feagin, *Racial theories in social sciences*, 11.

[66] Ibid., 2.

[67] Fanon, *Black skin white masks*.

[68] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk.*

person who refused to enter the same elevator. One's body conveys one's professional position when dressed in a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. One's body displays one's likelihood for punctuality. These intimate moments give rise to distinct experience that accumulate into a particular life.'[69] Lee's discussion brings together the cultural component of Jeffers, socio-political component of Haslanger and the corporeal elements discussed by Spencer, all the while, theorising as an expert of her own lived experience of 'race'.

Yet another alternative, but in consolidation with what Lee argues, I offer Eng and Han's psychoanalytic conception of 'race'[70]. They argue 'race' is a subject-object relation, leaving open for the reader to decide whether that be through the lens of Freud, Lacan or Klein. 'Psychoanalysis begins with the premise that we enter the world through objects- '; for Freud's classical drive theories, it is the father's penis; Lacan's language-based analysis, the mirror image of one's body; and for relational approaches of Klein, the partial object of the mother's breast[71]. Psychic suffering arises when we refuse to recognise objects as subjects, resulting in an impasse that traps the individual in didactic structures of 'subject-object, master-slave, you-me polarities'[72] The remedy? To mitigate the deadlock through triangulation, through the use of a third figure to symbolically process a relation outside of dualism. But what if you *are* the third figure, the bouncing board, the trampoline upon which the White subject turns to, in order to further justify objectification of the Black subject, *or*, the Black subject used to further solidify objectification of the third figure?[73] These will be explored in depth in the approaching sections.

Zooming out to the level of the social/structural, I propose that *coloniality* and *coloniality of power* are the macro-level manifestation of the subject-object relation imposed by those who hold hegemonic power. Using the term 'patrón colonial de poder' translated as

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[69] Ibid., 2.

[70] Eng and Han, *Racial melancholia, racial dissociation: on the social and psychic lives of Asian Americans.*

[71] Ibid., 17.

[72] Ibid., 18.

[73] Though not psychoanalytic, Claire Jean Kim's mapping of 'racial triangulation' adds further dimension to this discussion. "The racial triangulation of Asian Americans." *Politics & Society* 27, no.1 (1999): 105-138

‘colonial matrix of power’(CMP), Mignolo specifies European Modernity as the creator of the illusion of reality[74]. The illusion is akin to the movie, *The Matrix*, where humans are suspended in womb-like capsules by cyborg machines, extracting energy from human bodies, all the while the ‘sleeping’ humans live as if nothing is amiss in the illusion of the cyberworld. Thus, Modernity created the illusion that is the heteropatriarchal-racial-capitalist social order that the masses take as *natural.* All of us are in the matrix, the colonial matrix of power. And ‘decoloniality is the exercise of power within the colonial matrix to undermine the mechanism that keeps it in place requiring obeisance. Such a mechanism is epistemic and so decolonial liberation implies epistemic disobedience’[75]. It requires all of us to partake in this endeavour to delink from colonial matrix of power.

Colonial matrix of power is subject-object relation imposed, one of its axes being ‘race’. ‘Race’ is the embodied experience of the subject-object relation imposed by the colonial matrix of power. The struggle and experience of ‘race’ as phenomenon is interdependent with other axes in which the subject-object relation are enacted. Everyone is at stake, thus we all must take up the call for decolonial action. It is an inexhaustible task to capture all possible conceptions of ‘race’ and what I have presented thus far is an attempt at outlining the some of the relevant contours of the literature landscape discussing ‘race’. If there is anything I have missed, it is only reflective of my ongoing learning journey. The next section looks at a structural manifestation of the subject-object relation, using the example of the land I write from, Aotearoa. An account of sociohistorical racialisation of ‘yellow-ethnics’, the falsely essentialist category more commonly referred to as ‘Asians’ is offered as a close, material tracing of the ways in which ‘race’ has been enacted through CMP.

Subject-object relation in the Structural: Sociohistorical racialisation of ‘Asians’ in Aotearoa

> *During level four lockdown, I was out walking near our apartment in Wellington with my partner, a New Zealander with Japanese heritage, when a passing stranger shouted ‘Wuhan!’ at us. Only a week later, when walking to the supermarket, a stranger told my partner to ‘fuck off’.*

[74] Mignolo and Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis,* 114.

[75] Ibid., 114.

Liang Cui, The Spinoff[76]

Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud, is reigned as one that paints a picture of a clean, green, utopian haven by those who live outside of it. Particularly with the advent of COVID-19, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's quick acting approach that saw our borders close as a way to control its spread, New Zealand has long garnered a reputation of progressive politics. In such a utopia, this relatively 'New World', has the incessant drive of the colonial matrix of power usurped its ways into yet another version of the illusory 'cyberworld' as in *The Matrix?* Is New Zealand racist? What are the dominant public discourses around 'race'? How are 'Asians' in particular, positioned in its history and in the current moment around discussions of 'race'?

To start, and as a prelude to any discussion of racialisation of 'Asians', it is pertinent to note the violent history of settler colonialism in Aotearoa. Through a Marxist lens, Wynyard documents the systemic dispossession of Māori land in the nineteenth to early twentieth century[77]. 'The colonisation of Aotearoa was all about achieving, extending and maintaining settler dominance over the indigenous Māori population. The alienation of Māori land was one central mechanism of colonisation along with "wholesale destruction and killing", summary execution, and the suppression of language, culture and spirituality'. [78] Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) was signed on 6 February 1840 between select groups of Māori signatories and the British Crown, one that ended up facilitating land dispossession due to translational errors rising out of two fundamentally different world views; that of Te Ao Māori and CMP[79].

Alongside this history, and a surprise even to many New Zealanders today, migration of the first 'Asiatics' were as early as the 1860s. Dunedin Chamber of Commerce invited Chinese workers to work in abandoned goldmines, who later worked as laundrymen, market

[76] Cui, "Why being 'kind' is not enough: NZ needs to front up to its anti-Asian problem".

[77] Wynyard, "Plunder in the promised land".

[78] Ibid., no page number.

[79] See further, Walker, "Rangatiratanga, Kāwanantanga, and the constitution".

gardeners and fruit pickers[80]. As Ip and Pang recall, 'Under the unwritten White New Zealand policy, Chinese were designated as "undesirable aliens". They were the only people subjected to a poll tax. Introduced in 1881 at 10 pounds, it was raised to 100 pounds by 1896', and later abolished in 1944[81]. This would be equivalent to $1728 and $20,042 in 2020, not a small amount of money for physical labour workers[82]. They were also the only group that required tonnage ratios, literacy tests and thumb printing[83]. The Chinese were the only ethnic group denied citizenship despite being born in Aotearoa up until 1952 and when they could apply, they were under strict screening process by the Ministry of Internal Affairs[84]. Criterion included denouncing Chinese citizenship, proficiency in English and demonstrating 'good behaviour', the latter often requiring payment of 'good behaviour bond' of 200 pounds for refugee Chinese women and an additional 500 pound bond to ensure compliance[85].

In context of conflict that was largely between Māori and Pākehā (White settlers), the advent of Chinese migration saw 'Asiatics' be triangulated in the Māori-Pākehā dyad, similarly to that of Asian Americans in the discourse of 'race' governed by the White-Black binary in the United States. As Lowe notes, 'in contrast to the degenerate Chinese who were feminised as weak and primitive, the indigenous Māori were perceived as more virile, masculine, progressive, adaptable to European ways, and worthy for citizenship in a modern democracy'[86]. Here, imposition of the subject-object relation on Māori peoples by Pākehā are mediated through the third figure of the 'Asiatics', establishing a racial hierarchy of worthiness towards the false universal of the 'human' subject constructed as the man of European descent. Māori are still objectified, with partial elevation of status towards being 'human', rationalised through the newly inscribed, more inferior grouping of 'Chinese', easily distinguishable from both Māori and Pākehā. Māori hostility towards 'Asiatics' were

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[80] Lowe, "Sociohistorical racialisation of Asians in New Zealand".

[81] Ip and Pang, "New Zealand Chinese Identity: Sojourners, Model Minority and Multiple Identities".

[82] Reserve Bank of New Zealand, "Inflation calculator".

[83] Murphy, *A guide to laws and policies relating to the Chinese in New Zealand, 1871-1996.*

[84] Lowe, "Sociohistorical racialisation of Asians in New Zealand", 236.

[85] Ibid., 237-238.

[86] Ibid., 239.

predominantly based on the threat they presented on the bicultural contract of Te Tiriti[87]. This is not to generalise the attitude of all Māori as there exist plenty evidence of relationship building in Māori-Chinese encounters[88].

Fast forward to 1950s- 1970s, what Ip and Pang call the 'Model Minority Phase', the dynamic pursing of communism by the Chinese State results in its people being seen as an international pariah in the global geopolitical landscape[89]. Partial to the shame associated with China's image, local Chinese settlers and descendants of the first migrants mostly kept low-key, working towards upward socioeconomic mobility in silence[90]. Ip and Pang explain, 'The Chinese always "knew their place" in New Zealand. By willingly taking a step backwards so as not to arouse jealousy or attract unwanted attention, they were allowed to have a small share of the New Zealand dream'[91]. They abided by the 'unspoken contract' of behaving in 'exactly the ways that mainstream [Pākehā dominant, Māori minority] society expected of them'[92]. This can be interpreted as an act of 'strategic essentialism', where the minority in question claims the imposed racial identity as an attempt to acknowledge difference[93]. In accepting the development and maintenance of the imposed subservient image, as the memory of more punitive measures of discrimination were well within grasp of either those who experienced it first-hand, or through tales of who lived it, they would avoid scrutiny that would impede their day-to-day survival. The resignation is perhaps more apt to label as working within an oppressive matrix, a strategy in survival, aiming for the least possible discriminatory traumas.

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[87] Ibid., 233.

[88] Ip, "Maori-Chinese Encounters: Indigene-Immigrant Interaction in New Zealand", 227–251.

[89] Ip and Pang, "New Zealand Chinese Identity: Sojourners, Model Minority and Multiple Identities", 345-346.

[90] Ibid., 348.

[91] Ibid., 349.

[92] Ibid., 349.

[93] Lowe, "Sociohistorical racialisation of Asians in New Zealand", 477. On 'strategic essentialism' see Spivak, "Scattered speculations on the subaltern and the popular".

This quiet and subdued image begins to shift in the 1980s with the reform of immigration policy in 1986, opening up merit-based, 'colour-blind' opportunities into New Zealand, in place of the preferential treatment towards those of Western European descent. Influx of 'New Asians' are visibly noted throughout Aotearoa, what one Māori Minister, Winston Peters, called 'Asian Invasion'[94]. 'New Asians', unlike the earlier working class Chinese settlers, were highly educated, urban, middle-class migrants coming in under the neoliberal agenda of the New Zealand government at the time. These were mostly East Asian migrants arriving from places like Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore[95]. A revival of anti-Asian sentiments motioned across the country, homogenising the diverse cultural backgrounds into the blanket term 'Asian' and pejoratives such as 'Fresh Off the Boats' (FOBs). Coinciding with the rampant rollout of neoliberal policies of the Fourth Labour government (1984-1990) post-financial crisis, 'Asiatics/Asians' swing upwards in racial hierarchy in Aotearoa. The nuances of the epithet 'Model Minority' shifts, now used by the majority Pākehā to disparage the 'brown' population, a racial category homogenising the indigenous Māori and Pasifika migrants, who entered New Zealand through a targeted scheme to address low-skill labour shortage in the 1960s[96]. This further intensifies resentment towards the new wave of 'Asian' immigration by Māori, and this time, along with working class Pākehā. 'Asians' are put in yet another ambiguous position, not being able to escape racial persecution despite changing social contexts.

What is evident here is that so long as the racial categorisation is one that removes the ontological luxury of being 'human', there is little room to manoeuvre a sense of sovereignty and liberation for the racially oppressed. One can move up and down the very limited and complex web of racial objugation (subjugation that renders a subject as an object), but nevertheless, they remain non-human, never quite capable of 'Modernisation' as the European man is[97]. Under the colonial matrix of power, the oppressed reach an impasse. Unless an alternative is imagined, we remain caged. Anti-Asian sentiments are transient in its

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[94] Daly, "How to explain Winston Peters – overseas reporting on the New Zealand election"

[95] Friesen and Ip, "New Chinese New Zealanders: profile of a transnational community in Auckland".

[96] Ongley, "Immigration, employment and ethnic relations".

[97] Lewis Gordon offers a different use of ontology in discussing the subject/object status of the racialised. See Gordon, "Black existence in philosophy of culture".

varying intensities but its core endures. So long as we are in the matrix, this is something we cannot escape. The hegemonic social inscriptions on racialised bodies persist, they only compound on top of each other as we invent more 'progressive' signifiers in attempts to abolish outdated ones. We see this in recent scapegoating of 'Asians' for the housing crisis in New Zealand, and in the current times of COVID-19[98].

There are many other axes in which being 'Asian' intersects with. Being a woman, being a man, being trans, being queer, being poor, being rich, being non-able-bodied, being old, being young and so forth. But do not fear, there are racial tropes for it all. Stratified on a horizon of various derogative stereotypes, it is a pointless exercise to compare who is more oppressed, to catapult ourselves in what is commonly referred to in activist circles as 'Oppression Olympics'. Largely, the tropes are a combination of fear-based ideology of the unknowable peril with either signifiers of femininity or masculinity. Take the Asian woman for instance. Wrapped up in the idea of mystique, feminised Asian signifiers denote an 'exotic' woman who is submissive and sexually subservient. This is typified in figures like the 'geisha girl', 'lotus blossom' and 'mail-order brides'. Or there are figures like the 'dragon lady' or the 'tiger mum' who are career-driven and display virile virtues of neoliberal ideology, ones that are deemed 'masculine' under the colonial matrix of power. These 'women' are over-bearing, deviant, sinister and treacherous, but never more than the White man, and always in the palm of his hand. 'Asian' men, on the other hand, are emasculated and denied the ultimate phallic status of being the hegemonic White man, the hegemonic ideal being whatever may be in vogue in a particular sociocultural moment[99]. Endowed with femininity are the sexually impotent, the perverted predators, or the extreme misogynists, reminiscent of the growing online community of Incels (involuntarily celibate) where 'Asian' men are frequently present. We live swept up in the whirling chaos of these malignant signifiers, each of which have their origins in unspeakable crimes of humanity[100].

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[98] Welle, "Asian communities become scapegoats in New Zealand's housing crisis".

[99] On discussion of masculinity and femininity under colonial matrix or power, see Cremin, *The future is feminine: capitalism and the masculine disorder*.

[100] For historical origins of Orientalist signifiers of Asian women, see Uchida, "The Orientalization of Asian Women in America."

If not already obvious, a clear theme of 'fear' emerges in the discourse of the 'Asian' Other. 'Asians' are perpetual foreigners, despite a history of 'Asiatic' migrants that compare closely to the arrival of European settler colonisers in Aotearoa[101]. As briefly mentioned before, I attribute this to the psychoanalytic mapping of 'Asian' as the transitory 'third' object for those stuck in the dyadic relational thinking of me-Other, Black-White, Pākeha-Māori. In binary racial thinking, as exemplified through the sociohistorical tracing of 'Asian' racialisation in Aotearoa, the third object is not used to transcend the paralysing effects of ambivalence towards the freer psychic state of ambiguity, but rather, co-opted to recreate multiple forms of the subject-object relation. Drawing on Bhabha, Merleau-Ponty and Klein, Lee explains, ambivalence is the debilitating state of 'vacillating from one belief to the other, unable to resolve the contradictions'[102]. This is a stage of childhood development when the infant reductively consign what is familiar as good and the unknown as bad[103].

Ambiguity, on the other hand, 'is an adult phenomenon, a phenomenon of maturity…It consists in admitting that the same being who is good and generous can also be annoying and imperfect. Ambiguity is ambivalence that dares to look at face to face'[104]. The White subject is unable to see whoever it objectifies as a *subject* who holds complexities beyond inscribed racial meanings. The introduction of the 'Asian' Other offers an opportunity to symbolically process that there is the possibility of a relation other than the subject-object relation, that of subject-subject relation. But this is not taken up. Instead, the third figure is seen as an unknowable, unfamiliar threat that could rupture the safe and familiar entrapment of the subject-object relation. It is akin to an infant attached to their mother's breast, who refuses to take the consoling teddy bear out of the fear that the breast may have other needs, or that it might be attached to a subject whose sole task in life may not be providing milk. The infant, increasingly growing in size, say, now 6 or 7 years old, still commits to dying on the hill that is their mother's breast. They know this can't go on forever, but refuses to succumb to reality. In rejecting the teddy bear, a bottle, a babysitter, or to look

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[101] Similar is observed in the notion of 'Hindoo Peril' and its various manifestation of anti-muslim, anti-arabic sentiments. See Said, *Orientalism.*

[102] Lee, "Postcolonial ambivalence and phenomenological ambiguity. Towards recognising Asian American Women's agency", 58.

[103] Ibid., 59.

[104] Merleau-Ponty as cited in ibid., 66.

up and see a whole person attached to the breast, whatever the third figure may be, the giant baby's only existing relationship is now with a breast.

To live in avoidance of the reality that there may be subjects other than one's self is a lonesome, heavy and difficult existence. Surely in the current climate of information saturation and our addiction to devices that propagate them, a racist (or one who occupies the master figure in CMP) knows what looms in the shadows they dare not look at. In Freud's parlance, '*Dass das Kind an Seinem Bette steht, ihn am Arme fasst, und ihm vorwurfsvoll zuraunt: Vater, siehst du den nicht dass ich verbrenne?',* roughly translated, 'the child is near his bed, takes him by the arm and whispers to him reproachfully, Father, can't you see that I am burning?'[105]. The psychic suffering of ambivalence is one I wish on no one. Thus, I reiterate, the praxis of decoloniality is one that should be taken up by *everyone*, even its masters. The last section of this chapter proceeds to discuss the phenomenological manifestation of the subject-object relation as articulated by, and from, the racialised experience of 'Asians' in the West.

Subject-object relation in the Phenomenological: 'Minor Feelings'

> *It was my mind threatening mutiny. I was turning paranoid, obsessive. I wanted someone to unscrew my head and screw on a less neurotic head…To try to fall asleep, I ingested whiskey, the whiskey with Ambien, then with whiskey with Ambien, Xanax, and weed, but nothing could make me sleep. When I could not sleep, I could not think. When I could not think, I could not write nor could I socialise and carry on a conversation. I was the child again. The child who could not speak English*
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> - Cathy Park Hong, *Minor Feelings*[106]

I offer my own account of what I will shortly characterise as the 'Asian' phenomenon of 'minor feelings'. In 2019, I found myself in a small room full of White scholars, specked with one pigment of yellow, myself, one Black, and one Brown. It was a break-out session on 'Anti-Fascism' during the annual conference held by Sociological Association of Aotearoa

[105] Freud as cited in Lacan, *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, book II: the ego in Freud's theory and in the technique of psychoanalysis*, 58.

[106] Hong, *Minor feelings: An Asian American Reckoning*, 5.

New Zealand. Following a presentation by Byron Williams on 'Redefining the language of hate', we found ourselves discussing the pedagogical conundrums in teaching 'race'. It was as if the spotlights had been put on the three coloured people. White women were crying. They extended their sympathies. They were twiddling their thumbs, and they looked to us for 'answers'. I had no answers, only complaints. It ended up being another tiresome sharing of our biographies as 'coloured people' of the various interpersonal encounters of racism. There were gasps and jaw-drops. The White audience thrives on this kind of stuff. It felt like we had allowed them to relieve their White guilt in festishistically consuming our tales. Weren't we the ones that had the shitty experiences? Why weren't *we* crying? We didn't say much in response to the tears. I politely smiled as they came to thank me for 'sharing' and 'doing what we do'.

Why *didn't* I cry? Why didn't I express my frustration that even at an academic conference, let alone in a session dedicated to conversations on 'race' and related ideas, that all we ever got to were accounts of microaggressions that one can read about in a million different op-Ed pieces in hundreds, if not thousands of both local and international journalism? The whole experience felt 'racist' but these days, 'racist' is a swear word worse than *asshole* and alike. I felt dismissed, like my reality as a person beyond 'Asian' was not recognised. I felt ashamed for not saying how I felt. I felt cheap, disposable, trapped and back in a déjà vu that I am all too familiar with, I felt resigned. I came home, slept and woke up the next day. I took my daily anti-depressants and just got on with the week.

'Minor feelings' is what Hong uses to envelope the state of being that is her 'Asian American psyche'[107]. In her poetic prose, she offers an insight into her consciousness as a daughter of Korean immigrants. Here, I flesh out some of the textured contours of the phenomenon of being 'Asian'. Borrowing her term 'minor feelings', the phenomenon captures three key components that I have observed in the literature of the 'Asian' diaspora in the West. These are shame, racial dissociation and racial melancholia. I have decided to describe 'minor feelings' as a state of being because what is experienced is not a succession of easily discernible moments but rather, what lies *between* the spaces of moments that *are* easy to neatly articulate. The phenomenon of 'minor feelings' is what is felt in the backdrop of our lives, a fabric that has been weaved with what we have been conditioned to think are

[107] Ibid.

insignificant, banal and of the everyday. 'Minor feelings' arise out of encounters with a world that makes us aware of a racial subjectivity we did not know we embodied and the myriad of ways in which we try to contend, negotiate and survive these encounters.

Describing and giving form to the 'Asian' experience is important because this is the first task we must take on towards a journey of liberation. Lee explains that this is 'doing phenomenology', telling our stories 'as the world bombards, coerces, and shapes [us], and as [we] react, respond and make meaning of our embodied lives…first capturing one's state of being-in-the-world before making epistemic claims…'[108]. Epistemological critiques of the colonial matrix of power cannot be carried out if we ourselves are not clear about what it is that we collectively experience. Without a collective diagnosis, there is no substance upon which we can anchor the interrogation of what drowns us in the matrix. In the words of Linda Tuhiwai Smith, it is part in process of the decolonising project to explain and theorise our own existence to ourselves because there isn't anyone who will do that for us, nor is there anyone who is more of an expert in what is experience than ourselves[109].

First of the three, is 'shame'. Shame involves the 'painful apprehension of the self or its attributes as diminished, lowered, or lessened', arising out of the reign of a punitive, demanding voice of authority in the psyche, referred to as the Superego or the *imago* in psychoanalysis[110]. For the 'universal human' defined by Modernity, *imago* is the internalisation of one's parent figure who introduces the 'rules' of the society a child is socialised into. It confronts one with what Freud calls the 'reality principle', one that shapes how our polymorphous drive is channelled and vented in 'socially acceptable' ways. For the subject found on the object end of the subject-object relation, there is a second *imago.* This is the internalisation of the overarching ideology of one's residing society. In the instance of the racialised 'Asian' subject, these are the previously discussed myriad of pejorative floating signifiers that get ascribed to the 'Asian' body. Kim outlines three significant forms of anti-Asian stigma that bear heavy in the 'Asian' psyche; '(1) aesthetic devaluation of Asian faces and bodies; (2) the derogation of alleged Asian personality traits, especially in terms of

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[108] Lee, *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment and Race,* 10.

[109] Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* ,29.

[110] Kim, "Shame and self-revision in Asian American Assimilation", 115-116.

passivity, nonindividuality, or social ineptness [those that are deemed non-phallic/feminine by the colonial power matrix]; and (3) the derogation of alleged Asian foreignness, alienness, or being a FOB (Fresh Off the Boat)'[111].

When there are two, if not more, contradicting superegos in the psyche, there is a psychic cleaving and subsequent ejection into the 'psychic nowhere'. Dubois described this phenomenon as double consciousness, the experience of internal conflict in which oppressed subjects perceive themselves through the lens of the oppressor as well as their own, resulting in 'two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals' dwelling in one's psyche[112]. This is both a curse and a gift in that the prior riddles us with 'cognitive crippling' regarding one's own existence, and the latter, in that in launches us in a somewhat forced process towards the 'ambiguity' as described before[113]. In discussing the political use of double consciousness, Holt remarks that alienation experienced within one's own psyche as a result of internalised racial oppression has a 'revolutionary potential' when 'raised to a conscious level, cultivated and directed'[114]. Being launched into ambiguity means that we are forced to reckon with our 'extimate' relationship to language, that particular subjectivities we come to identify with are on the level of the discursive and that there is also a self that exists outside of linguistic articulation, in the *Real*[115]. This 'second sight', as Edwards calls it, from the position of the psychic nowhere, opens up possibilities to transcend and imagine otherwise ways of being beyond the colonial power matrix[116].

Kim adds further nuances to the experience of shame by discussing self-contempt[117]. Self-contempt is 'what is felt toward one's own perceived inferior nature or qualities along

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[111] Ibid., 119.

[112] Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk,* 8.

[113] Myrdal, *An American dilemma: the Negro problem and modern democracy,* 809.

[114] Holt, "The political use of alienation: W. E. B. Du Bois on politics, race, and culture, 1903-1940", 306.

[115] For 'extimacy of self' refer to Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacque Lacan, Book VIII: Transference*

[116] On 'second sight' see further – Edwards, "Introduction", xiv.

[117] Kim, *Imperial citizens: Koreans and race from Seoul to LA.*

with a sense of vertical detachment, perhaps tinged with pleasure, from one's own [racialised] self. Depending on one's situation, history, and personality structures, this could be felt in a cool or hot way, experienced episodically or pervasively, mingled with pity or with anger, followed by shame or by defensive other-contempt, accompanied with chiding of oneself or with violence toward oneself'[118]. I, along with Kim, posit that this is one of the consequences of the cleaving into double consciousness. But self-contempt is when one vacillates between either of the two selves, the racialised-self and the non-racialised-self, and in identification with the latter, it projects and blames the racialised-self for the affects experienced. It deems the racialised-self as '"unworthy" or "sullying" and targets it as the scapegoat-object in which transmuted and repressed affects are sublimated[119]. It is experienced as intrapsychic mutiny, self-infliction of harm towards one's self, veiled behind the opaque masquerade of the body.

This is not to totalise that this is universal to all those who are racialised as 'Asian' experience, but that it is a common experience witnessed among the demographic. Because encounters in society necessarily occurs through the embodied-self, with interpersonal imposition of racial identity unpredictable and random, it results in a 'distinctive vulnerability to being shamed or undergoing self-contempt'[120]. In the backdrop of 'Orientalist liberalism' that insists on civic-cultural practices towards assimilation to the colonial power matrix (witnessed in the emergence, maintenance and negotiation with the model minority trope), 'Asians' experience a 'cultural schizophrenia' in the process of acculturation[121]. This leaves 'Asians' to devise psychic strategies of contending with their heightened vulnerability to *shameability and self-contemptability,* so as to 'develop efficacious normative structures of esteem or stigma management'[122]. Such strategies are observed in historical collectivisation of the pan-Asian identity to garner a sense of pride, as well as in demonstration of political solidarity with other oppressed groups' organising towards social justice. For instance, 'Yellow Peril supports Black Power' movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s United

[118] Ibid., 117.

[119] Ibid., 117.

[120] Ibid., 120.

[121] Ibid., 103, 107.

[122] Ibid., 120.

States, and more locally, 'Asians Supporting Tino Rangatiratanga (ASTR)' in Aotearoa, are such examples to name a few[123].

In this sense, what is often cruelly criticised by scholars of 'critical theory', identity politics and identitarian endeavours are strategies of survival. Celebration of cultural heritage and representation are not the end-alls, be-alls of greater liberation, but an important step towards destabilising the colonial power matrix. Especially when arising out of grass-roots movements, rather than top-down, box-ticking, fetishistic commodification of diversity, those critical of identity politics should take a step back before offering a critique. Representation is particularly important to the 'Asian' collective because we exist in the concurrent state of sociocultural and political invisibility alongside excruciatingly inescapable visibility of our bodies[124]. When we don't see ourselves reflected, on the screens, in politics, we deem ourselves invisible, perhaps introducing a third objectified subjectivity in the psyche, one reminiscent of a Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man;* 'I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me'[125]. To offer some statistics in context of Aotearoa, in comparison to the 15.1% that makes up self-identified 'Asian' population in New Zealand, NZ On Air reports in 2020 that those who identify as 'Asian' constituted 5% of producers, 5% of directors and 9% of local media content creators[126]. Underrepresentation is similarly observed in politics with Statistics New Zealand reporting self-identified 'Asians' making up 4% of parliament in 2014[127].

Kim advises an important reminder on shame and self-contempt of 'Asians'. 'This sort of shame is not the result of failed agency but the *inward resonance of a suppressive*

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[123] For 'Yellow power supports black power' see Ogbar, "Yellow Power: the formation of Asian-American Nationalism in the age of Black Power 1966-1975". For ASTR see Rata and Al-Asaad, "Whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to indigenous-settler of colour relationship building."

[124] Kim, *Imperial citizens: Koreans and race from Seoul to LA,* 18.

[125] Ellison, *Invisible man.*

[126] NZ On Air, *Diversity Report 2020: gender and ethnic diversity in content funded by NZ On Air*.

[127] Statistics New Zealand, "Representation of ethnic groups in government".

social order'[128]. The pejorative racial signifiers do not randomly float around in our psyche and did not get there randomly, they are politically organised and used to oppress us. Shame is the result of coming into a world that is flawed, and thus constructs us as 'flawed beings'[129]. This is not the sum of what or who we are, it is part of a constellation of what we *can* be. 'Corporeal malediction', in Fanonian terms, may overdetermine the subjectivity we end up spending the most of time occupying, but that doesn't have to be the only way of existing.

Moving onto the second and third themes in 'minor feelings', Eng and Han articulate racial dissociation and racial melancholia as key psychic conditions of the 'Asian' subject[130]. Without naming it as such, racial dissociation has already been partially described in the discussion of shame and self-contempt. The cleaving away to give form to a 'racial self', identifying with it, and thus in the stance to see one's self as Other is what I denote as racial dissociation. Eng and Han eclipse my mapping in that 'racial dissociation can result in either healthy or pathological forms of psychic survival or self-annihilation'[131]. When we look in the mirror, there is only one body with the illusion of a 'unified me-ness' which presents in contradiction to the many 'selves', including the 'racial self' that resides in the psyche[132]. Thus, the ability to creatively play with these various selves, despite the illusion of the mirror, is crucial not only at the level of our historical and cultural literacy to navigate a world that Others us, but also to be able to eventually thrive.

In discussion of '(gay) panic attacks' experienced by 'Christopher' in Eng and Han's clinical notes, they bring attention to the splitting of the mind from the body as one of the symptoms of racial dissociation[133]. What Winnicott posits as the 'true self', and what I iterate as an embodied and lived sense of liberation, sovereignty and agency over one's life, is

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[128] Kim, "Shame and self-revision in Asian American Assimilation", 116.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Eng and Han, *Racial melancholia, racial dissociation: on the social and psychic lives of Asian Americans.*

[131] Ibid., 130.

[132] Ibid., 137.

[133] Ibid., 141-173.

observed when 'being' is embraced as psycho-somatic[134]. Eng and Han diagnose Christopher's panic attacks as '*internal* psychic assaults experienced by gay millennials as a form of self-discipline' within the context of phallic striving towards 'neoliberal regulation'[135]. In context of the United States, riddled with discourse of colourblindness and celebration of various 'diversities', Christopher's internalised voice of anti-gay, anti-Asian sentiments 'attacked' his body. He overcame these panic attacks by learning 'how to breathe, stretch, meditate, and be present to himself'[136] What I posit, however, is not that the body and mind are separate things that need to be brought together through methods like the ones Christopher practiced, but that the mind and body are one of the same. The unconscious *is* the body and the body *is* the mind. Our psyche emanates through the somatic, and the somatic on the psyche. This is a proposal that directly challenges the mind-body dyad present in the 'Cartesian mind' thesis.

In Lacanian terms, I postulate that the psychosomatic 'Asian' being (or *not* being) experiences such dissociation because, in the encounters of racial objectification as a perilous figure, they come to discursively take on the symbol of *objet a* and subsequently, embody *objet a. Objet (petit) a* symbolises the 'central lack expressed in the phenomenon of castration'[137]. For Lacan, castration is when humans come into linguistic existence, forced to articulate subjectivity through the 'I', which is only ever a partial and lacking expression of what cannot be symbolised, the *Real. Object a,* then, is the name given to what represents the fleeting, evanescence that there is something beyond what can be signified in language. It is what causes *drive*, and it can never be captured. It threatens the ego self as it acts as a clue that the linguistic 'I' is a false attribution of where 'subjectivity/agency' may lie. In the sphere of race relations, occurring in the register of the *Symbolic*, the 'unknowability' of 'Yellow Peril' functions as the symbolic *objet a* that threatens the illusion that the White man is the 'universal human', that they are the only 'subject' whilst all Others are 'objects'. Thus in this particular context, we can playfully ascribe *objet a* as '*object a*lien', *object a*sian, or

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[134]Winnicott, "Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self", 144.

[135] Ibid., 158.

[136] Ibid., 155.

[137] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis. The seminars of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, 77.

*object a*lien Asian. This is perhaps why race relations are so fraught with tension, because it reminds us of our castrated human condition of existing in language.

Last of the theme in 'minor feelings' is racial melancholia. Drawing on Freud's theorisation of melancholia as unresolve grief, Eng and Han describes *racial* melancholia as patterns of emotions emerging as result of racialisation as 'Asian'. These patterns include 'an eerie feeling of contamination'[138], the feeling of being haunted, being a 'dead subject', being 'wounded', 'indepted', 'paralysed' and other sentiments that overlap with racial dissociation[139]. Racial melancholia results from losses associated with social exclusions in immigration, assimilation and racialisation[140]. What is lost is difficult to identify and resolve even when one feels the symptoms and is able to name it. It is akin to when 'you lift the rock of repression and you discover something underneath – a lost object, one demanding to be analysed and interpreted…', yet the subject in question does not want to know the thing they found[141]. This continues well with the theorisation of the 'Asian' subject as the '*object a*lien Asian' embodied and discursively constructed. Picking up what is found under the rock involves reckoning with one's own self-objectification as 'Asian', as well as society's objectification. It involves owning it, articulating it, making sense of it and once again, swallowing the bitter medicine of the human condition that is linguistic castration. Only this brings foreclosure to the limbo of melancholia and if call to this action is rejected, the subject in question needs to strenuously and continuously assert repression upon themselves. In this sense, identification with an imposed identity is an act of courage, a political act, to take responsibility for the situation one find themselves in, though they may not have intended nor wanted to be in that particular situation. Paraphrasing the words of Angela Davis, 'Identity emerges from politics rather than politics emerging from identity'[142]

Suffering is thus optional. The 'Asian' subject's phenomenological condition of 'minor feelings' is not a pathology but a milieu in which one can claim liberation. Lee hones

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[138] Eng and Han, *Racial melancholia, racial dissociation: on the social and psychic lives of Asian Americans,* 38.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Ibid., 170.

[141] Ibid., 170.

[142] Angela Davis as paraphrased by ibid., 170.

in on this point; freedom is when one takes responsibility for the situatedness and its accompanying constraints and possibilities, all the while acknowledging the ambiguities of being an embodied *subject*[143]. And as mentioned in the openings of this section, this starts with articulating what it is that we experience so that we can analyse and claim ownership of it. This involves enriching our literacy in critical vocabulary relevant to our particular sociocultural histories and the encounters we experience[144]. Eng and Han affirms, 'the addressing and redressing of racial melancholia and racial dissociation requires a public language. It requires a public space in which these conflicts can be acknowledged, analysed and negotiated'[145]. Academic institutions are one of the places in which the luxury of grasping these conceptual tools is afforded, though bearing in mind the increasingly neoliberal, privatised nature of academic institutions, thus accessible to only those who can materially afford it.

Closing Thoughts

Ideally, there are programs, courses, lectures, if not, in the least, a tutorial in which space is held for thinking the various 'social, psychic, intellectual, affective, political, economic, religious and cultural' aspects of 'race'[146]. At the University of Auckland's Sociology department (or Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau as it sometimes likes to refer to itself, a façade masking its failures in addressing institutional racism), where I am based in, there are no such programs or courses. Shamelessly beating its own drum in proclaiming they are an 'internationally-recognised' institution offering 'world-class teaching and research facilities', it is difficult to see past the irony of the institution's marketing slogans.

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[143] Lee, *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment and Race,* 8-10.

[144] Eng and Han, *Racial melancholia, racial dissociation: on the social and psychic lives of Asian Americans,* 137.

[145] Ibid., 173.

[146] Ibid., 178.

In 2021, out of the fifteen undergraduate courses and four postgraduate courses that will be offered, not a single course title contains the word 'race'[147]. The closest it gets to is a second year paper, 'Ethnicity and Identity'. I have taken this course as a student and taught it as a tutor. It is painfully limited in its scope and asks students to write autoethnographical analyses of their own racial, ethnic and national identity. When I worked on this assignment as a student, I was so traumatised in reckoning with my repressed memories that I could not get out of bed for weeks and spoke about it with my therapist for the next two years. In the ten years I have been at this university, I have never witnessed this course be instructed by an academic of colour.

In the four first-year courses, for which I have each taught on as a tutor, there is usually one lecture out of twenty-four in a semester that is dedicated to discussing 'race'. It's usually as an expanded exposition of the acronym we teach students in the first week, CAGES, a short-hand for remembering the major axes in which societies are stratified; Class, Age/Ability, Gender, Ethnicity, and Sexuality. 'Race' is briefly mentioned when it is turn to talk ethnicity. But as I have mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, ethnicity is hailed as the preferred neologism for 'race', all the while still talking about 'race'. In fact, social media accounts led by grass-roots initiatives on creating spaces to talk 'race' often offer more in-depth, accessible, not to mention, free sources of theoretical concepts than what is offered at the 'low, low prices' of $780.30 (undergraduate sociology course) and $2,141.70 (postgraduate sociology course)[148]. Two out of the four first-year courses assess through autoethnographical analyses. Semester after semester, I see students of colour traumatised, just as I was, as they 'critically think' their way through their experiences. A big portion of them fall off the radar during the assessment periods, few reaching out for help in despair of what they have attempted to make sense of. Some don't even make it to the assessments because the way that 'race' is talked about is very much *at* and *about*, rather than *with,* the students of colour. It reiterates what is already so familiar to us, 'how does it feel to be a problem?'[149].

[147] University of Auckland, "Courses in sociology".

[148] University of Auckland, "Tuition fees 2020 – domestic students: Arts".

[149] Du bois, *Souls of black folk.*

Perhaps the most productive space I found myself in was in a second-year course on 'Critical Theory and Society'. This is where I grappled with Marxist thought and psychoanalytic theories and it revolutionised my life. I finished the course jacked on the ecstasy of 'critical thinking' and wondered, surely this can't be the first and only time similar ideas have been conceived, and that 'Theory Giants' can also bear the image other than of a Modern White Man. Despite myself not bearing the image of a Modern White Man, I applied to tutor on this course every semester I have been employed in the department, totalling in seven attempts over three years. I have never been allocated to teach this course and though repetitive, in the ten years I have been at this university I have never witnessed a woman, or a person of colour be a tutor on this course. It did however, make me question my academic capabilities, perhaps that the White, male tutors who got the contracts were just better academics than I. I wouldn't have minded even being picked as the diversity token to add a pigment to the Whiteness of the teaching team. But perhaps these are just my 'minor feelings'.

As for epistemological critiques of Western Thought and scholarship by any Other to the Modern White Man, I encountered these in the material written and taught by two academics I'd like to especially mention. Both at the University of Auckland, first is Ngāi Tūhoe Professor of Indigenous Studies, Tracey McIntosh, and second, Associate Professor of Criminology, Tamasailau Suaalii. Tracey draws on Tikanga Māori and Sailau, on Samoan epistemologies. In addition to conventional sociological theories, they draw on knowledge indigenous to their *whakapapa*. Their presence exude enigmatic charisma. Their steadfast generosity in time and nurture for students (including myself) has shown me there are Otherwise ways of being an academic, a theorist, a researcher and a teacher. I can definitively say that what has sustained in my pursuit of an academic trajectory is the humility and warmth experienced in my encounters with these two giants.

COVID-19 has meant that our department's funding has been ruthlessly cut. But lack of funding is not a good enough excuse, at least to me, in the department's failure to address the elephant in the room. 'Race' is one of the most fundamental axes that sociologists must interrogate. How can the university be the critic and conscience of society if it does not make space to discuss the saliency of 'race', particularly in the face of the current socio-political climate? I hope that my exposition of calling out that *the Emperor has no clothes!*, has been a sobering moment for the reader. And I ask, *what will you do about it?*

CHAPTER 2
DECOLONIAL ALTERNATIVE I: RETHINKING ONTOLOGY THROUGH 인 (仁)

미운 놈 떡 하나 더 준다 [mi'un nom ttwok ha'na deo jun'da]

Give an extra rice cake to the person you hate

Used to express that the more you hate someone, the better you should treat them. You may even realise that they're not so detestable. But if you blatantly show your hatred, people would reciprocate your feelings and may even hurt you in the future.

- Korean proverb as presented and explained by *@Fluentkorean*[150]

Questions of subject formation and ideology led me down the path of Lacanian psychoanalysis, an analytical tool with a powerful vocabulary to articulate psychic conditions under capitalism. This remains, as demonstrated in Chapter I, amongst the many tools I like to keep in my 'toolbox of theories'. But as Audre Lorde's famed quote rings again and again, 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change' (1984/2007, p. 112).

Mignolo and Walsh posit Lewis Gordan and Jane Anna Gordan's alternative perspective to Lorde.

> Slaves have historically done something more provocative with such tools than attempt to dismantle the Big House. There are those who used those tools, developed additional ones, and built houses of their own on more or less generous soil. It is our view that the proper response is to follow their lead, transcending rather than dismantling Western ideas through building our own houses of thought. When enough

[150] Instagram, "Fluent Korean" *a*.

houses are built, the hegemony of the master's house—in fact, mastery itself—will cease to maintain its imperial status. [151]

And such is my approach to decoloniality. Borrowing Narayan and Harding's (2000) book title, what I aim to do in Chapter II and III is to consciously take up the option that is '*Decentering the Center'.* I use the Master's tools, build on those tools, look for tools in places unseen, devalued and silenced. I go in search for tools from the land I come from, for surely there resides wisdom in its 5000-year-old history. The exploration of 한국사상 韓國思想 [*hangooksasang]* (Korean Thought) is one of the many arms of my commitment to decoloniality. Not only is it pertinent for me to stand in solidarity with the indigenous people of Aotearoa for *Tino Rangatiratanga* (roughly translating to sovereignty and self-determination[152]), I see it just as important of a task that I dedicate a similar commitment, if not more, to the processes of recovery, development, healing, decolonisation, mobilisation and transformation that are particular to those who *whakapapa* back to 대한민국 大韓民國 *Dehanmingook* (Korea). She is a country that has endured her own history of colonisation and imperial violence at the hand of various 'masters'. I offer the thoughts of my people in faith of expanding the constellation of thought systems, so that we may experience liberation from those that have been forcibly imposed on us.

Exploring epistemologies that are particular to one's *whakapapa* is valuable not merely because it offers an alternative view. The potency of such endeavour lies in being able to see the world as a *human subject.* What I mean by this is that when trying to articulate our experience through the thoughts of imperial powers, we can only really see ourselves as Other to ourselves. Through 'their' view, we are 'ethnic', 'woman', 'different', 'less than', 'alien' and so forth. When we step into the language of our own people, there is possibility we can *just be* human. Here we can dream, create, and thrive[153].

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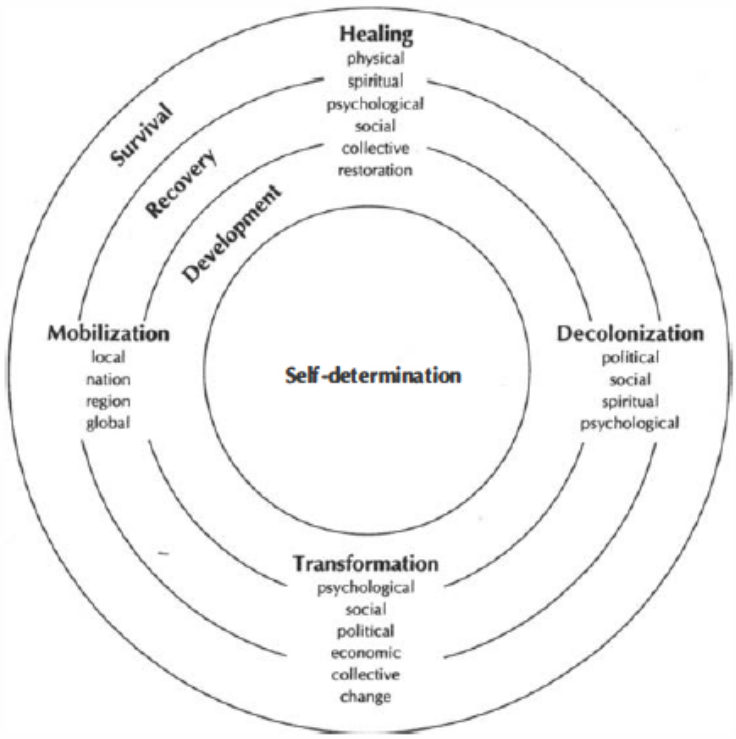
[151] as cited in Mignolo and Walsh, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis,* 7.

[152] For etymological unpacking see Walker, "Rangatiratanga, Kawanantanga, and the constitution".

[153] Keeping in sight that dominant forms of Confucianism throughout Korean history has 'Othered' women and those of the peasant class.

To exist in such ontological moments, ontology being a construction of a particular epistemology, I invoke Tuhiwai Smith's representation of the indigenous research agenda[154]. Modelled after the metaphor of the ocean tides, decolonisation, healing, transformation, and mobilisation are imagined as ongoing, interconnected processes that depict notions of constant change, movement, flows of ideas, reflections, and actions[155]. These are not goals, nor ends, but anchors that 'connect, inform and clarify' various relationships. These are further intertwined with four 'states of being through which indigenous communities are moving'; the four tides of survival, recovery, development, and self-determination[156]. In paying close attention, we can catch a glimpse of a different conception of ontology to the one that colonial matrix of power constructs, that being is one which is moved *through.* It summons being in the sense of transience and temporality, one that is in dynamic, interrelated flow with various forms of *doing and becoming.* 'Relationality' is the closest term in capturing this.



[154] Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peopl*Decolonising methodologies, 117.

[155] Ibid., 116.

[156] Ibid., 116.

Representation of the Indigenous Research Agenda, Tuhiwai Smith (2008)[157]

The theme of relationality is observed as central to various epistemologies 'alternative' to the colonial matrix of power. In Te Ao Māori, this manifests in values like *whakawhanaungatanga* and *manaakitanga*[158] . In Pasifika worldviews, *vā* is invoked[159]. Turning more 'East', Hinduism speaks of *samadhi, mokshya* and *chit,* and Buddhism, of *parmartha satya* and *samvriti satya*[160]. As Kafle notes, the 'East' gives primacy to ethics bound to relationships, where 'Western Thought' gives primacy to 'being'[161]. I am careful here in not using the term 'collectivist' to describe cultures of thought systems that centre relationality. Baggini explains regarding East Asia, '"collectivism" seems the wrong term to describe this pro-social culture…it's better understood by examining the very way in which selves are conceived of in the region,'[162]. Before exploring the differences in how the self is conceived, I note some Western scholars that centre the concept of 'relationality', namely, that of the existential strand of phenomenology. These include Blaise Pascal (1623-62), Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55), Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), whose common ground is the rejection of the Cartesian mind[163].

In his survey of philosophies around the world, Baggini offers a useful diagram in visualising the key differences in what he calls 'relational-selves' and 'atomistic-selves'[164]. Borrowing the words of 'intimacy' and 'integrity' of Tom Kasulis, the relational-self does not distinguish between the 'self and other, objective and subjective, rational and emotional, mental and physical: these are not discrete opposites but parts of the same whole. For that reason, it is best not to even think of them as having solid edges'[165]. The relational self *is* the

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[157] Ibid., 117.

[158] Rata and Al-Asaad, "Whakawhanaungatanga as a Māori approach to indigenous-settler of colour relationship building".

[159] Anae, "Teu le va: Samoan relational ethics", 117-130.

[160] Valle and Eckartsberg, *Metaphors of consciousness*.

[161] Kafle, "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified".

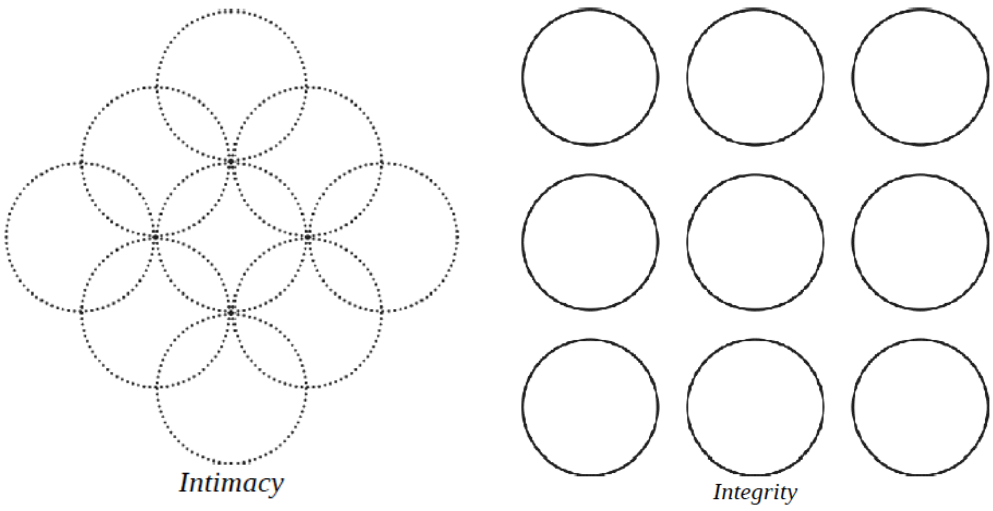
[162] Baggini, *How the world thinks: a global history of philosophy*, 192.

[163] Kafle, "Hermeneutic phenomenological research method simplified", 187-188..

[164] Baggini, *How the world thinks: a global history of philosophy*, 189-209.

[165] Ibid., 210.

land, the culture, the language, and the society it exists in. When the overlapping components are lost, the self also loses parts of itself. There is an ontologically transformative (whether that be of loss, gain or just change) effect[166]. The atomistic-self, on the other hand, is of 'non-overlapping circles with solid edges. Everything is clearly distinguished from everything else. Each item does of course stand in relation to other things, but their individual identity and essence is primary', in other words, there is primacy on perceiving the self as a discrete, whole, integrity[167]. When there is an overlap, for instance, in a long-term relationship between two people, the end of the relationship still sees each self remain whole and unchanged. This is the same for when one enters a relationship, their essence is not changed by it.



Visualisation of the relational-self (intimacy) and the atomistic-self (integrity)[168]

Turning to 한국사상 (Korean Thought), the nuances of the relational-self can be found in 인/仁 '*in*', the fundamental basis in the teachings of 공자/孔子 (Confucius)[169]. Elaborating from a Chinese perspective, Liu and Pringle offer the same idea in the

[166] Ibid., 212.

[167] Ibid., P210.

[168] Ibid., 211.

[169] 한덕웅. "서문", 21.

romanisation *ren* (仁) of the Mandarin pronunciation. They describe 인 *in* as 'co-humanity', 'co-human' or the verb 'to co-humanise', depicting values of benevolence, goodness, altruism, love and sympathy[170]. They contrast Descartes' aphorism 'I think, therefore I am' with Kelinjan's , 'I relate, therefore I constantly become' to further demonstrate the component of relationality in 인 *in*[171]. Liu and Pringle also bring to light that relationality manifests in the Western theoretical sphere of 'new-materialism', evoking scholars like Barad, Deleuze and Guattari, Fox and Alldred, Latour, and Newman[172]. For new-materialists, interconnections are articulated as *assemblages* and *assembling processes*[173]. Thus, they make the claim that the 'new' in 'new-materialism' is not new at all, and in doing so, they challenge the imperial status of Western intellectual thought.

Deconstructing 인 (仁) 'in'

The following section may be a bit difficult to read as I have opted to input *Hangeul* and *Hanja* along with the English romanisation of the Korean word. This format will be repeated in Chapter III in describing 한 **(**韓);(恨), *'han'.* Though it may be laborious to follow the flow of sentences truncated by various 'unfamiliar' languages (assuming the reader operates primarily in English), I challenge the reader to take up the provocation to wade through the prose that may render one feeling 'Othered'. Afterall, the many works of Western scholars requires one to reckon with German, French, Spanish and alike. In the case of Lacan, working through his complex deployment of algebraic symbols has not impeded the reception of his work. Deleuze and Guattari's eccentric use of horticulture metaphors like 'rhizomes' is another example, which I have rendered almost useless because of the difficulty in understanding anything they are saying other than through a reader's guide by Ian Buchanan[174]. Nevertheless, I offer assistance by attempting to keep the paragraphs short so that conceptual comprehension is more digestible.

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[170] Liu and Pringle, "Mid-life Chinese women's understandings of sporting pain and injury: A non-Western cultural analysis via the Confucian concept of 'ren', 6.

[171] Ibid., 7.

[172] Refer further to ibid., 7.

[173] Ibid., 7

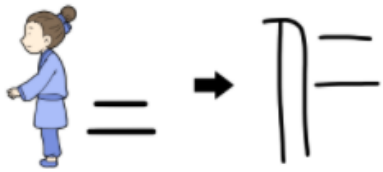
[174] Buchanan, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Oedipus : A Reader's Guide*.

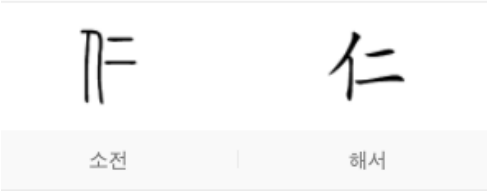
Translated using Google Translate, the various meanings associated with the signifier 인 **(**仁) *'in'* are as follows; benevolent 어질다, 자애롭다, 인자하다(仁慈--), sensitive 감각(感覺)이 있다, 민감하다(敏感--), to love 사랑하다, to take pity 불쌍히 여기다, wise 어진 이, 현자(賢者), fraternity 인, 어진 마음, 박애(博愛), and the formal/polite referential word for 'you' 자네[175]. Naver further describes *인* ***(****仁) 'in'* as the 'blessing of self-denial'(克己復禮), philanthropy and love. It denotes the idea that an equilibrium of harmony will be secured if we engage in transcendental/relationally with one another[176].

Upon etymological deconstruction 뜻풀이 *tteuspul-I, 인* ***(****仁) 'in'* comprises of 亻(=人) and 二. 人 denotes humanity and 二, duality. In tandem, it represents the space between two human agents suspended in a relationship with one another in a sphere of family-like intimacy. In context of Confucian teachings, *인* ***(****仁) 'in'* refers to the ethical injunction of being firm with one's self but generous with others. When we look at the 자원/字源 *jawon* (principles of construction), what I will call 'scriptural evolution', it originates in the illustration of an standing person alongside the symbol for 'two' (二). In sum, *인* ***(****仁) 'in'* demands the commitment of ethics towards maintaining harmony in relational spheres.

[175] Naver Dictionary. "仁 어질 인".

[176] Ibid.





Qin Dynasty script | Sui Dynasty script[177]

Somatics and embodiment in the works of 허준 (許浚)'Heo Jun' (1529-1615)

His biography spanning the period between 1529-1615, 허준(許浚)'*Heo Jun'* is one of the key thinkers in formalising the tradition of Korean medicine during the Joseon Dynasty. A product of his time, his seminal contribution 동의보감 (東醫寶鑑) *Donguibogam* published in 1610, theorises well-being around the concept of *인* **(**仁) 'in'. Wellness is understood as maintaining and preserving harmony of the various symptomatic axes of the human experience[178]. He asserted that each person was of a particular tendency, one that is later formalised by his successor 이제마 [李濟馬] *Lee Je Ma* (1837 ~ 1899) in 음양설 (陰陽說) 'yeum yang cosmology'. The tendencies are categorised in four general types; 태양 (太陽) *Taeyang*, tendency towards great yang energy; 소양 (小陽) *Soyang*, tendency towards less yang energy; 태음 (太陰) *Tae-eum*, tendency towards greater yeum energy; and 소음 (小陰) *So-eum*, tendency towards less yeum energy. Yeum and Yang are co-dependent energy forms, yeum characterised as activeness, and yin as receptive/passive/grounding[179].

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[177] Ibid.

[178]한덕웅, *한국유학의 심리학설과 유교문화에 관한 심리학적 접근,* 383

[179] Ibid.

허준(許浚)‘*Heo Jun’* postulated that the axes in which disturbance of harmony manifested were experienced through the mind and the body, both conceptualised as one of the same, in resonance with the principle of 인 **(**仁) ‘in’. In order to address the imbalance, one would first assess the tendency of the person, figure out what energy is in excess or deficit and prescribe herbal and physical suggestions. Of the physical, practices would involve acupuncture and moxibustion to parts of the body affiliated with certain somatic symptoms. It was assumed that 기 ‘*gi*’ (life force or *yang* energy) would be blocked or compacted at a certain meridian and that application of heat or needle would relieve that obstruction. Other prescriptions would be directions regarding the relational sphere to aid the imbalance. For instance, taking part in activities with others that would help in increasing or reducing particular energy. When a person was ‘out of balance’, so, too were their family, their village, and their surroundings. This is consistent with the figure provided earlier in illustrating the relational-self.

What I am getting at here, in describing the rather rudimentary crux of the Korean medicine tradition, is that because wellness or disturbance of it was theorised around the idea of 인 **(**仁) ‘in’, the way in which one was advised to deal with the manifestation of imbalance was that of an embodied and relational approach. Thus, parts of nature like an ancient trees, mountains, rivers and the ocean were deemed sacred and for the ‘human’ to be guardians of these figures because an injury to any one of those environmental spheres would be an injury to all. This is similarly observed in the epistemologies of Tikanga Māori, where the term, *Tangata Whenua,* loosely translated as ‘guardians of the land’, is used to refer to the indigenous peoples of. Aotearoa. Displacement from land is not just about the land. The land is something that cannot be owned, for ownership would infer objectification. When the self is conceived through the relational-self, the people *are* the land, the land *is* the people. And of course, land just being one, out of the countless examples that have been usurped into the violent logics of capitalism and its mechanism of primitive accumulation.

This is why a term like ‘murder’ is more than adequate in describing the consequences of the colonial matrix of power. Imposition of the of the subject-object relation is one that can only be imagined when the subject is understood as the atomised-self. In this worldview, ‘murder’ is only murder if there is blood shed. But ask any human (perhaps excluding those of psychopathic tendencies), we are more connected than we are told to

believe, and loss of loved ones take away parts of us. When we lose a loved one, it doesn't just impact the dead. The effects ripple throughout the many involved in the relational sphere of the person. For those who view the world through the ontology of the relational self (a demographic that I am beginning to think is a bigger portion of the world than once thought), death of the material body is a loss, but not one that renders the passed ones erased from the world[180].

Passed ones live through memories of the living. They are only truly dead if forgotten by those who they were in relations with. Thus, their spiritual selves go on to live so long as the relations remain alive. This kind of thinking, 인 **(**仁) 'in', is observed in many cultural practices like the Korean ritual of 차례 *cha-rye,* a tradition of ancestral remembrance during harvest seasons. Photos of passed ancestors are placed at the head of a table served with foods in abundance, as a gesture of honour and gratitude. Ancestral spirits are thought to come join the families in this tradition. Similar is witnessed in *Día de Muertos* (Day of the Dead) in Mexico.

Baggini notes that the epistemologies like that of 인 **(**仁) '*in'* are not so much found in written theories or philosophies but they are *lived,* deeply rooted in culture and language of the people[181]. They are passed down through proverbs, aphorisms and wisdoms shared by our grandparents. With the advent of Modernisation and its spread, many parts of the world anchored in relational-thinking also took on the thoughts of the European Empires. But new thoughts only sediment on top of what already exists, and what has existed for thousands of years prior to encounters with European Others have lasting power. What ends up manifesting is a syncretic culture, present with concurrent contradictions of world views that are lived in our time under the colonial matrix of power, resulting in difficult experiential phenomena like those outlined in Chapter I.

Under the colonial matrix of power, capitalism in particular, we are conditioned to channel our *Eros* (the polymorphous drive in Freudian terms) or 기 *gi* (in Korean epistemology) into production that maintains the capitalist structure. We work, our exploited labour masked

[180] Here seems to be a contradiction in the unified self of the body and mind.

[181] Baggini, *How the world thinks: a global history of philosophy,* 192- 194.

over the moralistic façade of ‘productivity’. What we earn in capital, we throw it back into its circuit by purchasing fetishized commodities for fleeting *jouissance* and subsequent discontents. What may be an ‘out’ of this limbo is what 허준(許浚)‘*Heo Jun’* formalised. The meridians of 기 *gi,* I postulate, is the somatic mapping of ways in which *Eros* can be channelled through our bodies; a way in which we release compactions/repressions. The body is our unconscious and the highway it lives through. The remedies of ‘rebalancing’ 기 *gi*, now interchangeably used with *Eros,* can be ways of catharsis that reminds what we have forgotten by living in the world of atomistic ontology; that agency is in our own hands, both metaphorically and materially. An example of this will be discussed in detail in Chapter III.

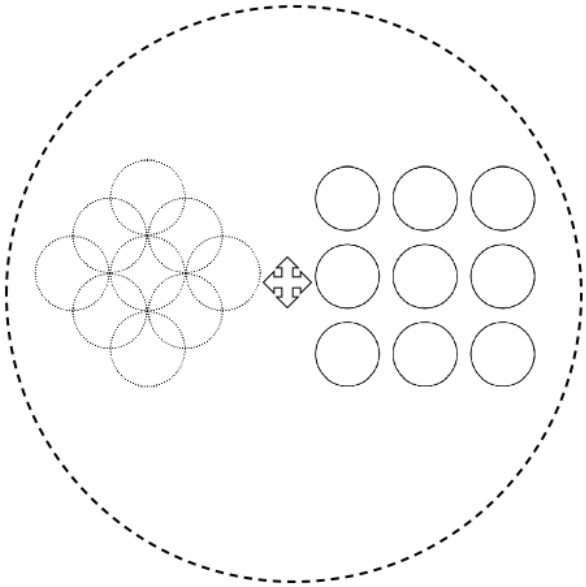
Implications for the racially-atomised

So, what does this all mean for subjects who have been racially atomised in the colonial matrix of power? In engagement with 인 **(**仁) ‘*in’,* it offers us conceptual room to theorise tangible liberation for the ashamed, self-abasing, racially-dissociated and melancholic; the embodied *objet a*lien Asian. The racially-atomised lives through both the atomistic-self and the relational-self. But rather than the negatively connotated term ‘psychic nowhere’ of the Lacanian *Real*, I propose *embodied psychic expansion.* Others may call this transcendence.

If you recall, I sought out my therapist to resolve my ‘minor feelings’ as a result of engaging in academic analysis of ‘race’ that did not cater space to acknowledge my ‘minor’ affects. I recount one of our recent conversations. I was caught up in some conflict with my housemates. Being cooped up in a relatively small house during the several COVID-19 lockdowns, tensions were high. In extremely stressful situations, I relegated between submerging in a sleep coma, only waking up to binge-eat foods deemed ‘bad’, and manically cleaning up the house. The conflict arose when I was in a manic episode and I kept snapping at my housemates for not tidying up after themselves. Emotions erupted and I was ganged up on, and though they never said as much, I was labelled the ‘up-tight bitch’. In my session with my therapist, I was devastated. I didn’t want to be a bitch and hated it when people would tell me that I came across like one, a *cold bitch,* to be more precise, like that of the *Tiger mum* trope.

After listening to me rant in despair, my therapist replied, ‘but you *can* be a bitch!’. I was immediately pissed. I defended myself, ‘but I am also nice. I am really nurturing. I just didn’t have it in me to look after other people. I was exhausted. I wanted things to be as I left them’. He smiled and asked if I heard what I had just said. I *could* be a bitch, but *also* nice, nurturing and exhausted. I could be all of those things, and being called one thing didn’t mean that that was all I was. What moment of rapture. He was right. I knew I could be a stone-cold bitch when I was in a mood. But I could also be other things at the same time. He said that I could expand to hold all of the various versions of ‘me’, especially given now that I agreed that I could be quite hostile.

Thus, I offer the diagram below. Feeling falsely accused and trapped under imposed labels by others is akin to the racial-objectification of a subject into an atomised racial trope. Unbeknownst to many, we are relational beings, forced to interact as atomistic identities. The dotted circle encapsulating both the figures representative of relational-being and atomistic-being is where I theorise one can come into *re-existence.* It is not nowhere, the abyss of unsignifiable. It is transcendent and *everywhere.* It is everywhere because when we challenge the illusion of the atomistic-self through comprehension of alternative ways of conceiving the self, the illusion is shattered and we can think of otherwise ways of being. But if we were to say, let us abolish thinking atomistically and think exclusively through the relational, then we miss the point entirely. If we call for denouncement of the existing in place for another, we reinstate the coloniality onto what we once considered ‘alternative’. We need to, and are able to, hold more than one way of thinking ontology. The multidirectional arrow in centre represents the ongoing possibilities of expansion. The more we engage with different epistemologies, the more options we give ourselves to play with. We exist through signifiers and if our objectified body is one that makes that aware to us, then we include that as one of the options we can identify with.



Embodied psychic expansion

When we identify with our racialised bodies, it affords us a chance to show solidarity with others who are racialised. Our body becomes the medium through which, just by existing in it, we can symbolise resistance to the colonial matrix of power. This is what I take it to mean of Akwugo Emejulu and Francesca Sobande's book on Black feminism in Europe, *to exist is to resist*[182]. Let us preserve what already exists, and channel our 기 *gi* on co-creating spaces to recover, reclaim and re-learn otherwise ways of being. What we are afraid of isn't that we are *nothing* or that we are *objects*, but the limitless possibilities of what we *can* be and that, is up to us to create.

[182] Emejulu and Sobande, *To Exist Is to Resist: Black Feminism in Europe*.

CHAPTER 3

DECOLONIAL ALTERNATIVE II: BEARING WITNESS TO HABITUS OF 한 (韓),(恨) '*han*' AND OTHER ACTIONABLE POSSIBILITIES

> *one night, in yet another serious bout of panic downward spiral of self hate, i became possessed with a determination to do something different. to go TOWARDS my most despised self peering from the depth of rejected sadness in my eyes. gazing into the mirror, this was the first time i truly let myself SEE ME. and not run away, hate, push away. gazing into my soul through the mirror, i stayed present to the internal battle. this was me for the first time i understood working with my own primordial dragon energy to tame, allow and ally with the dark terrifying force. i recognized that underneath hate is hurt. and in allowing myself to access the feeling underneath, this experience opened a portal of tenderness and compassion for the part of me that was terrified of being seen. of being ugly… this turnaround propelled an ongoing series of CATHARSIS. each cathartic activation was a deeper awakening, excavation and inversion in my relationship to shadow.*
>
> 'About Her', *Kwonyin*[183]

Kwyonyin describes herself, a 'Korean-American artist, emotional alchemy guide, & teacher of yin'[184]. I came across *Kwonyin's* Instagram account when I was indulging in yet another dive into what the algorithm was suggesting to me[185]. This is something I enjoy doing, and one I wish to formalise as a research methodology as it is quite fruitful in what

[183] Kwonyin, "About her". Spelling and grammar have been kept in its original form by the author as it appears on website.

[184] Ibid.

[185] Instagram, "kwonyin".

one can find when exploring the endless suggestions Instagram makes. When you 'follow' an account, a sidebar pops down with a list of similar accounts to the one you've just followed. I have found an abundance of brilliant grassroots initiatives through this way, where spaces were being created to talk critically about politically salient matters in accessible languages. Visuals are powerful. Punchy, to-the-point graphics with critical vocabularies offered, if this is not decoloniality in praxis, I don't know what is. It showed me that it is possible to translate the opaque pomposity of academic language into public discourse in a way that is witty, aesthetic, engaging and not barred by a paywall. Of course, we can make critiques of social media through the lens of Frankfurt School and others alike, but I will leave that for another time.

In Chapter I, I offered an exposition of how the field of social sciences and Western philosophy discuss 'race'. Using terms from phenomenology and Mignolo and Walsh's reconfiguration of Modern Western coloniality, I defined 'race' as *embodied experience of the subject-object relation imposed by the colonial matrix of power.* Contextualised in Aotearoa, a sociohistorical racialisation of 'yellow ethnics' was traced, observing the emergence of the falsely essentialist figure 'Asian'. 'Asian' was found to be loaded with signifiers associated with fear, as similarly traced in Edward Said's *Orientalism*[186]. Deploying psychoanalytic vocabulary, I identified 'Asian' as the transitory racial third in triangulating the Pākehā/Māori dyad. The psychic suffering of ambivalence was then discussed as a collective condition experienced by all who exist through language, implicating that the project of decoloniality is one that is beneficial not just for those deemed as 'object' under the colonial matrix of power, but of everyone who is castrated through language.

Shifting perspectives, the phenomenon of being 'Asian' was articulated through various accounts of those in the Western diaspora. I have named the overall condition as 'minor feelings', fleshing out three themes of symptoms; shame, racial dissociation and racial melancholia. Lacan's term, *objet a* was refashioned as '*objet a*lien Asian' to depict the embodied experience of being used as a failed transitory subject for the Pākehā/Māori, White/Black relation, as well as having internalised the imposed racial objectification.

[186] Said, *Orientalism.*

Concept of ambiguity was introduced as a possibility out of the impasse of ambivalence, one that is made within reach through the process of re-signification of one's self-image.

I closed the chapter with a survey of the current state of affairs in what is offered at the University of Auckland's sociology department to learn, discuss and talk 'race'. My experience as an early career, migrant, 'Asian' woman academic navigating my studies and teaching laid bare the institution's missed opportunities in providing students with theoretical tools not only to empower themselves with, but ones that would aid in articulating what they experience as racialised figures.

In Chapter II, decoloniality was further discussed in providing justifications for looking at epistemologies indigenous to my own *whakapapa* and posited that theorising using Korean Thought was an act of decoloniality. I offered the concept of 인 **(**仁) *'in'*, roughly translated as 'relationality' and presented the difference between ontology conceived as the atomised-self versus the relational-self. Drawing on a rather rudimentary exposition of traditional Korean medicine, 기 '*gi*' was briefly paralleled to Freud's *Eros*, the polymorphic drive of humans. The integration of the psychic and the somatic in the works of 허준(許浚)'*Heo Jun'* was explored, explaining that conceiving the world through a relational ontology offered practical ways to channel *Eros*, to means other to what maintains the capitalist structure, as well as thwart symptoms of psychic repression. The concept of *embodied psychic expansion* was offered as a more liberation-oriented alternative to the 'psychic nowhere' of Lacan's *Real.*

In this final chapter, I partake in a second act of decoloniality, one that will bear witness to a praxis of decoloniality that is already in action, one that is particular to the 'Asian' experience. In this instance, I deconstruct and put to use the concept of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'*. I characterise 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'* as a manifestation of 기 '*gi*'/*Eros* that is particular to those of the Korean 교포(僑胞) *gyopo/*diaspora. I extend this further to conceive 'habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han''*, drawing on Mignolo and Walsh's mention of *cimarron habitus.*

Hailing as a legacy of insurgency against Western coloniality in Latin America, *Cimarronaje* is explained as;

> An embodied standpoint and practice that disobeys the reign and rule of coloniality and its axes of dehumanisation, racialisation, negation, and condemnation. It affirms collective being, memory, and knowledge; generates theory; and denotes, as Edizon León argues, a radical option, decolonial action, and political project of existence, thought, knowledge and life. [187]

Adding on Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, *cimarron habitus* is not a mechanistically performed way of life, but an embodied, active and creative relational subjectivity with the world, one developing out of a long history of strategizing survival, collectivisation and resistance[188]. Habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han',* eclipses *cimarronaje*, but is one that will be particular to Korea and it's 교포(僑胞) *gyopo's* own long, ongoing history. Let us now deconstruct the scriptural meanings of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'.*

Deconstructing 한 (韓),(恨) 'han'

It is important to note there are two *hanja* scripts I have tethered to the notion of 한 *han.* The first is 한국/나라 한 (韓) '*nation han'*, and second, 한 한 (恨) *'han han'.*

The script for 한국/나라 한 (韓) '*nation han'* translates to a collection of relatively similar meanings; a name of a country; abbreviation for 대한민국 (大韓民國) *daehanmingug,* The Republic of Korea in *Hangeul*; and abbreviation for 대한제국(大韓帝國) *daehanjegug*, the *Hangeul* name for The Korean Empire denoting to that of the first 4th century BC[189].

Etymological deconstruction sees 韓 'nation han' be divided into 햇빛 간 (倉) *hetbit gan* meaning 'sunlight' and 가죽 위 韋 *gajug wi* meaning 'on leather'. 倉 *gan* depicts the bright sunlight shining on earth in the morning. 韋 *ja* is the image of surrounding borders of a

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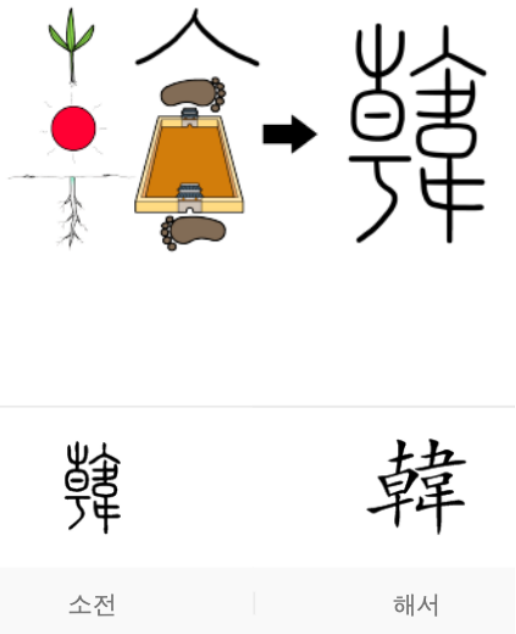
[187] Mignolo and Walsh, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*, 43.

[188] Ibid., 42.

[189] Google translation of definitions offered on Naver Dictionary, " 韓 한국 한/나라 한".

castle. In combination, the script 韓 ‘nation han’ is interpreted as the sunlight illuminating the castle. This is the source in which Korea is often called the Land of the Morning Calm[190].



Qin Dynasty script | *Sui Dynasty script*[191]

The second script for 한 한 (恨) *‘han han’* translates to following meanings; to lament 한탄(恨歎・恨嘆); regret 유감(遺憾); to feel wronged 억울; resentful 원통하다 (冤痛--)/원망하다; and spiteful 미워하다[192].

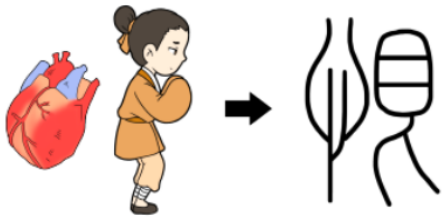
Etymological deconstruction sees 한 한 (恨) *‘han han’* be comprised of first, 마음 심 忄(=心, 小) ‘heart shim’, depicting the image of an atrial valve. Second is 그칠 간 (艮) ‘imposition *gan’*, which symbolises 음(音) ‘being in the shadows’, being shoved into the roots of the ground. It is derived from hieroglyphic script that depicts the image of a peasant whose waist is tightly bound with a rope. In ancient times, there was an astringent maintenance of class hierarchies, making the lives of those in the lowest class unbearably

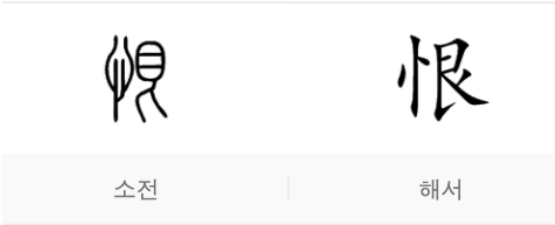
[190] Google translation of notes under 자원/字源 *jawon* (principles of construction) at ibid.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Google translate of definitions on Naver Dictionary, “恨한 한”.

painful. Thus in combining 忄 and 艮, what is represented is the discontented heart of those in the bottom of the social hierarchy[193].





Qin Dynasty script | *Sui Dynasty script*[194]

I have decided to use both of the scripts for 한 *han*, so that the sentiments of the second script can be anchored in the particular history of 한민교포(韓民僑胞)*hammingyopo/*Korean diaspora. I have also opted to localise the concept in the transnational space of the Korean diaspora rather than Korean peoples who remain indigenous to their land. This is because the people's history of the 'Land of the Morning Calm' is fraught with displacement, colonisation and imperial invasions. In anchoring in the transnational space, it affords us to track the various ways in which decolonial praxis is carried out beyond geographical boundaries, but nevertheless unique to its ties to the motherland.

As Walsh puts it, decolonial insurgency are urges that manifest in a myriad of spheres like the 'erotic, sacred, and spiritual; in ancestral memory, art, performance, music, literature,

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid.

and the word, to name just some'[195]. These life forces/기 *gi/ Eros/* drive take particular form in particular histories like that of *cimarronaje* of Latin America and 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'* of the Korean diaspora. Habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han',* to summarise, is the collectively embodied condition of a discontented heart that thirsts for liberation and transcendence of its situatedness but are yet to know how to claim responsibility for its own catharsis.

Channelling 한 'han' into the motion of 음양설 (陰陽說) yeum yang cosmology

We have already touched on the cosmology of *yeum yang 음양설 (陰陽說)* under discussion of 허준(許浚) *Heo Jun's* psychosomatic mapping of Korean Thought in traditional Korean medicine. Recall that the goal in the principle of 인 **(**仁) *'in'* is not a 'release' as nuanced in the word 'catharsis', but one that strives towards balance, a harmony of the grounding energy of *yeum* and activating energy of *yang.* Excess of *yang* is lack of *yeum,* and excess *yeum* is result of lack of *yang.* These are not two distinct and diametrically opposing forces, but more like partners who depend on one another for its existence. Without one, the other cannot exist. Thus, it can be said that *yang* and *yeum* are relational manifestations of 기 *gi,* and to more specifically define it, *yeum yang* cosmology is the channelling of habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'* towards a constant motion of relationality, towards *harmonised* relationality. There is no finite moment of harmony to be reached. Liberation comes through being in constant oscillation, one that reminds us that we are alive, one that keeps *Eros* flowing, rather than congealed as repression that manifest in suffering like melancholia.

Cosmology is a deliberate choice of word here, rather than philosophy or epistemology, because it evokes a sense of transcendence beyond the local 'self/selves'. It puts into perspective that subjects are merely in part of a much larger cosmos. Ongoing attempts to grasp a 'universe' that can never quite be comprehended is an orientation towards liberation. For what can never be grasped infers there are limitless possibilities. 'Cosmos' and 'universe', I posit, are one of the same that Lacan articulates as the *Real,* one I rephrased as *possibilities of embodied psychic expansion,* rather than the term 'psychic nowhere'. This means that the limitless possibilities *are* us, for we are our bodies. We *are* the unknowable,

[195] Mignolo and Walsh, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis* , 44.

inarticulatable unconscious. Thus, the things we choose to *do* with our bodies is precisely what will allow us to align our flow of *Eros* with the everlasting and ever-flowing tap of possibilities. Possibilities of being, becoming, whether atomistic or relational, and most wonderfully so, the option of being all of it at the same time. We are striving towards plurality, rather than countable multiplicities. Our agency is in the gaps between the dotted lines of the greater circle of expansion in the figure of the *embodied psychic expansion.* Identification of our agency anywhere else is agency misidentified.

Trauma Studies

Changing gears a little bit, a field of literature that articulates similar notions in much more accessible, and less opaque conceptual vocabulary is Trauma Studies. Bessel van der Kolk's *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* offers a comprehensive account of the links between the physiological, neurological, psychological and psychical [196]. He defines trauma as the problem of not being fully alive in 'the present'. Symptoms are described as the resigned compliance to one's inner dialogue eating away at the sense of self, identity and purpose. What needs to be attended is the need for confirmation of one's reality, that the psychiatric problems began as self-protection strategies rather than as a failure, or a disability. These coping strategies, however, take their toll over time and invoking the autobiography of Helen Keller, the undigested 'stuck' memories demand to be born into language.

Two forms of self-awareness are outlined as precursors to be able to feel joy in engagement with people and one's self-determined pursuits. First is the autobiographical self that keeps track of the various lived experiences. The second, is in the fleeting moments of self-awareness as represented by the capitalised *Self.* Neuroscience presumably has linked this Self with the limbic brain, the part that is seen as the driving source of emotions. I akin this Self to the *psychic everywhere.* As for the needs of the autobiographical self, the public stories told to others of one's experience need closer matching to what is going on in the inner dialogues. One must feel safe enough within both the inner dialogues and in encounters with others to muster the 'courage to tolerate, face and process the reality of what has

[196] Kolk, *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma*.

happened and what *can* happen'[197]. Without this safety, self-management of terror manifests in 'dissociation, despair, addictions, chronic sense of panic, and relationships marked by alienation, disconnection and explosions'[198]. This maps almost one-to-one with what I have described as 'minor feelings'. There is even a clinical term for the sense of resignation I recounted from my time at 2019 SAANZ conference, as well as in sharing how I cope in extremely stressful situations. *Alexithymia syndrome* is the name for it.

Kolk outlines there are three broad approaches to addressing trauma; 1) the top-down approach of the 'talking cure' rooted in psychoanalysis where the conscious cognitive brain is utilised through speaking/language to create shifts in post-trauma responses; 2) the medication approach that dampens the physiological post-trauma responses; and 3) the bottom-up approach where the body is addressed as non-linguistic, and embodied methods are deployed to create shifts in the unconscious mind[199]. Though all are considered possible options, body-based approaches are extensively discussed in the book. I suspect this is because the first approach is often impeded by whether one can afford time and finances to commit to 'therapy', and the second, by the stigma around medication and that this cannot ever get to the cause of trauma, but merely offer temporary relief of its symptoms.

Among the vast range of body-based approaches Kolk describes, two sensorimotor regulation methods stand out in relevance to decoloniality; *qi gong* and yoga. *Qi gong* is an ancient traditional Chinese medicine practice of moving the body with synchronised breathing so as to achieve better circulation of *qi* (기 *gi/Eros)* in the body. Similar to traditional Korean medicine, the goal is to harmonise energy in the movement of yin and yang cosmology (*yeum* and *yang* in Korean). Yoga's goals have similar principles. In Vedic traditions, one's ultimate goal is to reach *brahman,* the dissolution of the ego to achieve a state of selflessness and attain *moksa* (liberation)[200]. Yoga is the disciplined practice of the body as the means to *moksa.* Backed by neuroscience, what is deemed by trauma scholars as legitimate and evidence-based approaches to resolving trauma are found in the ancient cultural practices of the 'Orient'. This is more reason that decolonial endeavours to seek

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[197] Ibid., 436.

[198] Ibid., 437.

[199] Ibid., 419-712

[200] Baggini, *How the world thinks: a global history of philosophy* , 177.

epistemologies of one's own *whakapapa* are valid. There is 'value' to the culture of our indigenous motherlands. It is time for us to recover and reclaim what we once rejected in the wilderness of survival and assimilation to the colonial matrix of power. These 'knowledges' are often ones we already embody but have forgotten.

My only issue with the discourse of trauma is that despite its insistence on depathologizing its effects, it is still very much shrouded in signifiers of pathology. It invokes victims of rape, domestic abuse, childhood neglect, physical assault, and wars, tracing the source of trauma as a definable moment of inescapable adversity. Arising out of when one is first made aware of their racialized body (like the first time I 'found out' I was Asian shortly after I arrived in Aotearoa), the moment of racial consciousness doesn't seem comparable to those who are invoked when trauma is discussed. Racial interpellation seems too benign, banal and not worthy to be alongside conventional 'trauma victims'. But perhaps this is just yet another manifestation of my 'minor feelings'. Afterall, I have discussed violence and murder as understood in the worldviews of the relational self, that it doesn't necessarily always need to involve physical assault. And once I reckon with that a bit more, 'racial trauma' might become a word I feel more at ease incorporating in my vocabulary.

Habitus of 한 'han' in praxis I: Kwonyin and Catharsis Self Study

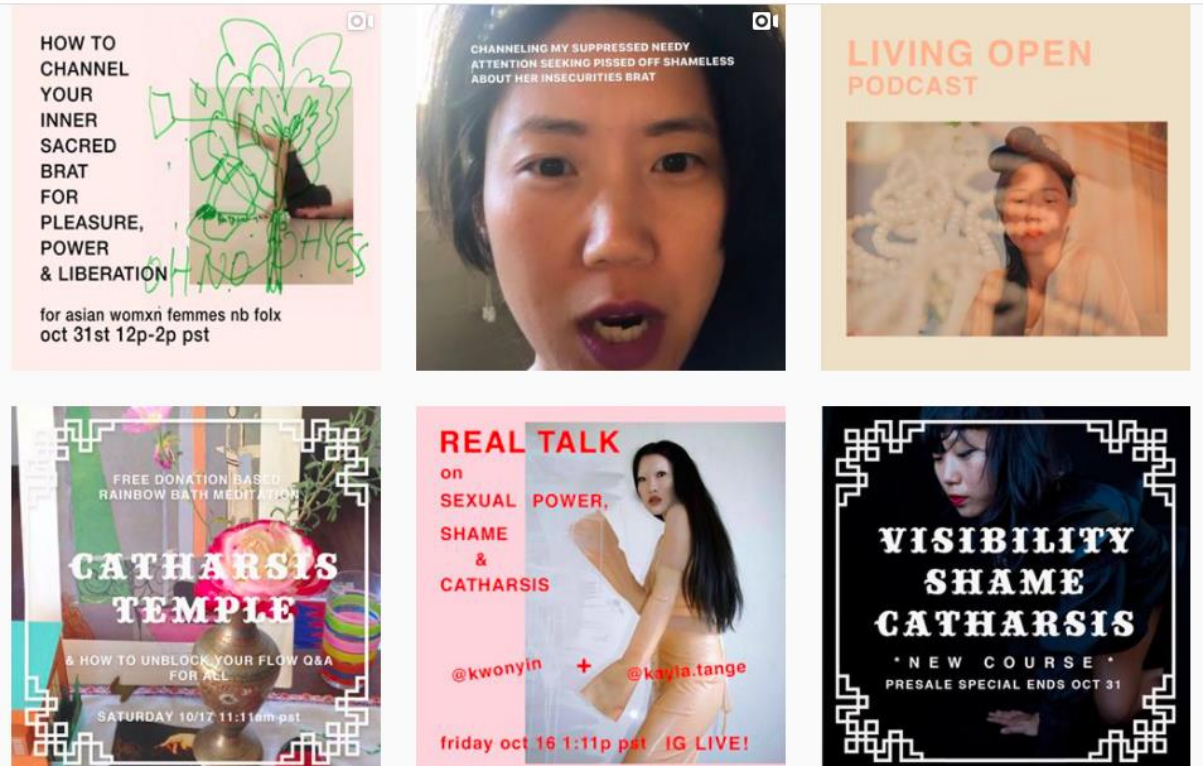
Another body-based approach Trauma Studies illuminate us with is what Ogden and Levine call *processes of pendulation*. These are found in the spheres of art, music and dance; gentle, nonverbal expressions that allow us to move in and out of accessing repressed 'traumas'[201]. One instance in which such practice is formalised in the particular context of being racialised 'Asian', and more specifically, for those of Korean *whakapapa,* is what Kwyonyin offers as *Catharsis Self Study.* Drawing on Korean shamanistic rituals and other 'witch-y', 'woo-woo' spiritual practices, *Catharsis Self Study* is a self-paced program for 'learning how to do deep shadow healing inner work'[202].

[201] As cited in Kolk, *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma,* 450.

[202] Kwonyin, " Catharsis Self Study".

The program is offered at $135 USD (around $200 NZD), which I have purchased as an invaluable resource for my personal use. There are six sessions; 1) It is ok not to be ok; 2) don't shoot the messenger; 3) irritants create the iridescent pearl; 4) pick up the baby; 5) how do I treat what is ugly in me; and 6) from inner fascism to inner democracy[203]. Each session is guided through a video recording of Kwonyin who talks through the various aspects of 'racial trauma', and offers actionable prompts to practice discussed ideas. I have yet to complete even the first session, because in the first five minutes of the video, the dread I felt in avoiding reading Fanon came back. It is incredibly confronting, yet validating, one I have left to work through once my commitments ease, when I have ample time to cry.

There is not much more to say about this program other than that I see this as Kwonyin's own praxis of habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han',* one that is shared online, and thus offering the possibility of access from anywhere around the world where there is Internet. This is an instance of praxis of habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'* in the geographically-transcendent sphere of the 한민교포(韓民僑胞)*hammingyopo/*Korean diaspora.



Snapshot of kwyonyin's most recent Instagram grid[204]

[203] Ibid.
[204] Instagram, "kwonyin".

Habitus of 한 'han' in praxis II: Social media, Music and the Wisdoms of my mother

There are more sites of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'* habitus in praxis that are accessible for free. I mention those that are available on the social media platform *Instagram.* Kwonyin is active on her account @kwonyin, where she shares information for free live-workshops, snippets of her various programs, and projects co-created with other 'Azn femmes'. The grid is visually striking, challenging conventional images of the 'Asian' women tropes under Western imaginations.

There are also reclamation projects like *Fluent Korean.* Described as 'self-discovery in connecting with my roots. One who learns language without learning culture ends up being fluentfools', the account shares explanations of commonly used Korean proverbs and draws attention to various historical moments that are salient in grounding the experiences of 한민교포(韓民僑胞) *hammingyopo/* Korean diaspora [205]. This is where I first came across information on the history of *Hanguel* and I have also cited the account for the Korean proverb quoted at the beginning of Chapter II. She uses the hashtag #globalkoreandiaspora to open possibilities with connecting with others in similar endeavours. On her 'highlight reels' found below the account description, there are 'stories' (clips of photos and videos shared live on one's constantly updated 'status'), that are dedicated to sharing her hobbies (취미생활), podcasts, and books she consumes.

[205] Instagram, "Fluent Korean".

Snapshot of @fluentkorean Instagram grid[206]

Gyopo is another example, described as 'a coalition of diasportic Korean artists, curators, writers, cultural producers, and art professionals based in LA'[207]. It is largely U.S.-centric, touching on issues like how one can build solidarity with *Black Lives Matter* movements, voting guides for the upcoming 2020 U.S. elections, guides to grapple with past presidential debates, and championing racism as a public health issue. It also shares salient moments in Korean history that demonstrate grassroots struggles on feminism, class divides and colonial violence.

A slightly more comical take on the praxis of habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) '*han'*, is Canadian-Korean based in Los Angeles, Youngqim[208]. Having amassed followers from another social media platform *Tik Tok*, he shares one-minute video clips that touch on historical issues and current events relevant to the Korean diaspora in the West, as well as for the 'Asian' diaspora more broadly. In one video titled, '*yOu'Re sO eXoTic',* he narrates;

[206] Instagram, "kwonyin".

[207] Instagram, "Gyopo.us"

[208] Instagram, "Youngqim" *a*.

> I think it's so funny when people tell Asian people, 'Oh my god you are so exotic'. There is *more* of us than you. We make up sixty percent of the world's population. YOU'RE exotic, endangered species lookin' ass. [209]

There are more comical clips where he lip-syncs to trending pop songs sharing instances of interaction with 'Asian parents'[210], how mental health is viewed in the theses communities[211], and shared fandom of Korean-American Hollywood stars like Daniel Dae Kim[212]. As an avid follower of @youngqim, his account has been a more light-hearted way of participating in spaces of story-telling particular to the Korean diaspora.

More locally, Aotearoa filmmaker Nahyeon Lee's account has recently been posting on what it means to identify herself with 'Asian' feminism. On a photo posted on 28 September 2020, it reads,

> I am / Nahyeon / female / Asian / filmmaker / storyteller / friend / sister / daughter / Korean / INTJ / Libra / anxious / director / writer / wearer of too many hats / adverse to phone calls / adverse to emails / unfocused / driven / too busy / keeps busy / sensitive / a unique culmination of experiences, moments, traumas and strengths / which undeniably make up the totality of who I am / which will always be unique to me. [213]

This can be understood as Nahyeon's attempt in re-signification process of her atomised racial identity. In listing multiple signifiers associated with her 'I', she participates in the psychic aspect of *embodied psychic expansion.* This post is made as part of her participation in *The Asian Feminist Project (AFPA).* AFPA has its own Instagram account and it describes its endeavours as 'a community-based research project from Aotearoa aiming to create feminist conversations with Asian women in digital spaces'[214]. The project is carried out by Helen Yeung as part of her Master's degree at the Auckland University of Technology

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[209] Instagram, "Youngqim" *b*.

[210] Instagram, "Youngqim" *c*.

[211] Ibid.

[212] Instagram, "Youngqim" *d*.

[213] Instagram, "Nahyeonleee".

[214] Instagram, "Asian Feminist Project".

(AUT). She states, 'this project incorporates the knowledge I have built while organising with other activist groups and community organisations to address critical issues such as anti-racism, feminism, decolonisation and systemic inequalities which are specific to Aotearoa'[215]. It 'explores the potential of creating feminist conversations with Asian women in Aotearoa (New Zealand) on Instagram, through utilising digital tools in everyday spaces. AFPA encourages adapting feminist thought in our everyday lives, and challenging normative understandings of how gender, along with intersections of race, ethnicity and class, affects us within our communities and wider structures'[216]. AFPA is an example of academic decolonial praxis that materialises possibilities for building public spaces. It is praxis that makes common knowledges that are often tucked away in exclusively academic literatures.

Nahyeon's Instagram post on 28 September 2020[217]

In the sphere of music, I observe further examples of decoloniality in praxis. A synth-pop album released with Universal Music Korea, artist Lim Kim 김예림 (金藝琳)'s *Generasian* marks a shocking departure from mass-produced conventional K-Pop. Sampling

[215] Ibid.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Instagram, "Nahyeonleee".

sounds of from Korean shaman rituals and traditional folksongs, the tracks '*Yellow', 'Mong', and 'Digital Khan'* instruments haunting yet bold audioscapes that explore her identity as 'Asian'. Much of the theme surrounds Orientalist tropes of 'Asian' women and in a subversive turn, she claims a defiant voice of resistance. Her song 'Sal-ki'살기 (殺氣), roughly translating to 'murderous spirit' has her articulate the following in her lyrics;

> [Intro] I keep hustling, hustling, hustling harder. We crossing the, crossing the, crossing the hurdle
>
> [Hook] Speak out, word up (word up, yeah!) Load a gun with a ball, time to start off a new role. Speak out, word up (word up, yeah!) Fight back in full stride, off to start a new goal
>
> [Verse 1] No longer silenced, we stand up brave.You can't block or control it. I need to change up this game. Don't identify self in male gaze. I'm raising my voice to be heard, building my world on me. Take dirty hands off of me. Bigger the fights, bigger rewards. Fire, trigger go bang
>
> [Pre-Chorus] Get up strong, make your own, it's in our hands. Shake up strong, crack the form, this is our age.
>
> [Verse 2] Count on my absence. It contains a message. No, I don't compromise, can't get me sabotaged. I'm talking real representation. Knocking down walls, struggle and take over seats. Stop asking me wrong. I execute, carrying out mission. Reorient, redefinition.
>
> [Outro] Head down when I pull up. Strike hard when it's cooled off. I'm unfuckable creature. Not a young average schoolgirl. Decolonize from weakness. Overpower their system. Staying raw is my wisdom. Wilderness into kingdom. Ching[218]

To further drive home the potency of her cultural production, I offer an excerpt from her interview with Billboard;

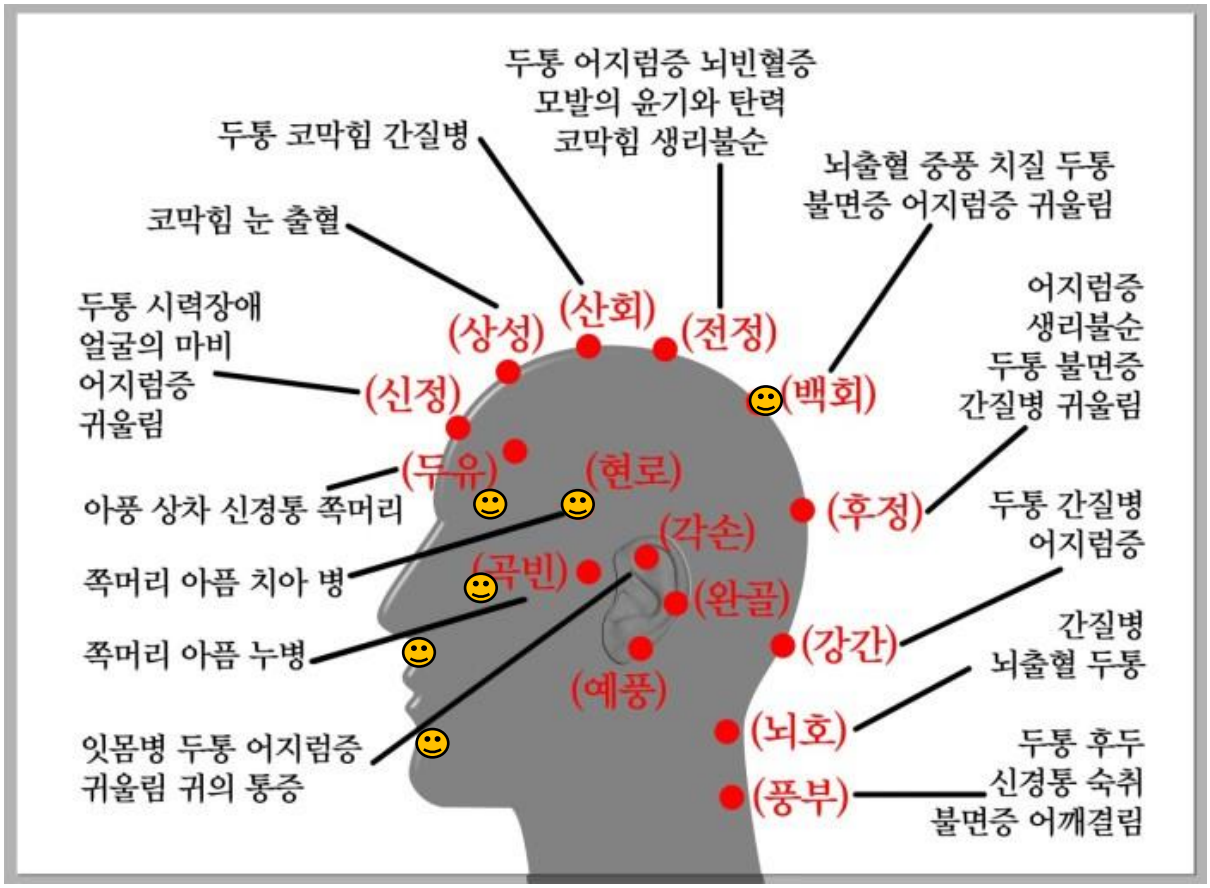
> "Yellow" is an ode to pan-Asian cultures, and fittingly the music video draws on - and her lyrics reference - a variety of identities and languages, looking to reclaim

[218] Genius, *"Sal-ki".*

them for Asian people and nobody else. The word "kawaii," typically associated with a distinct brand of Japanese ideals of cuteness, is featured early on in the song, explicitly to create a parallel to how many western musicians have been accused of appropriating Asian fashion, including the likes of Gwen Stefani and Katy Perry. "So many pop stars actually use Asian concepts with their music or visuals but we don't actually use that in our own way. So I was really curious about that actually. They love Japanese culture, Japanese looks, and K-pop and everything. So I just wanted to make fun of those perspectives, and I wanted to use that in our way too." During the interview, she learns about the recent incident of Kacey Musgraves being criticized for donning and sexualizing an áo dài and sighs.[219]

But as someone who identifies with 태양 (太陽) *Taeyang* tendencies (tendency towards great yang (activating) energy), sometimes listening to music that are filled with rage can be excessive and leaves me feeling depleted. One thing that I have begun to practice is listening to my mother, who is trained in both Western and Korean medicine, as well as psychotherapy. In a recent call, she advised me to apply finger pressure to various meridian points for mental clarity where there are likely to stagnations of 기 *gi*/*Eros*. If you recall, somatosensory methods are given primacy for self-management of overwhelm by Trauma Studies scholars. My mother's advice has served me well as a source of *yeum* energies, bringing more harmony and grounding in my own body during times I have had to be at my desk for hours at end. I offer a basic diagram depicting various meridian points my mother recommended, depicted with smiley face figures in yellow.

[219] Herman, "Lim Kim is ready to take on the world with empowering 'Generasian" after leaving the K-pop box"



Location of meridian points for mental clarity as depicted by smiley faces, and recommended by my mother[220]

Zooming out a bit, Kolk advises several ways in which the insights of Trauma Studies can be translated into organisational practices, like schools and university teaching settings[221]. The most important thing in a group setting is to develop personal connections to establish a sense of collaborative safety[222]. These can be practiced in smaller class settings, like tutorials. In my own teaching, I try to do this by opening the semester with a *pepeha* accompanied by slides of photos of my family and friends. Sometimes the students and I sit around in a circle on the ground and whoever catches the ball I bring with me shares something trivial (but relatable) about themselves, like what their guilty pleasure TV show is. We do this until everyone has had a turn. When this is not feasible, I make sure to bring paper

[220] Naver blog, "하이컨셉".

[221] Kolk, *The body keeps the score: Mind, brain and body in the transformation of trauma*, 722-728.

[222] Ibid., 318 – 357.

and markers for them to create name cards to put in front of them, giving them an opportunity to share their pronouns, preferred name, and others to address each person with that name. This is brought to the tutorial with me every week and around the fourth- or fifth-week mark, we no longer need them because we have gotten to learn everyone's names. Kolk offers similar exercises, like doing improv exercises where the game only continues if individuals listen and adapt to others in the group. Another proposition by Kolk I may try to incorporate in future teaching posts is trying to keep a balloon in the air as a class. I'm not sure for how long or whether we can get any work done with this exercise, but it is a fun idea.

In the context of teaching 'race', further insights can be drawn. Throughout his book, Kolk reminds us of the importance of language and storytelling, to be able to articulate our stories, in addition to somatic approaches. One significant role we can play as instructors in courses that talk 'race' is to challenge 'rote narratives'. These are narratives of painful experiences that are told over and over again[223]. A rote narrative of being 'Asian' for instance, being humiliated during school lunch time when one takes out their 'Asian' lunch in front of peers who deem it 'smelly' and 'gross'. There is also the classic question Koreans get in an interpersonal manifestation of ethnoracial reduction; *are you from North or South?* Or how about, *do you eat dogs? What about cats? Can you see out of those eyes? You speak great English! China Virus!* And the best of all, *where are you from? No, where are you REALLY from?*

Retelling rote narratives as the basis for autoethnographic analysis using concepts like 'microaggressions' or 'everyday racism' do little, as Kolk says, to build a sense of community. Same goes for the absurdity in asking students to use the concept 'primitivism', (taught thoughtlessly in tandem with 'authenticity) to articulate their racialized experiences, to a cohort full of Māori and Pasifika students who end up identifying with 'being primitive' and its associated tropes for 'sociological analysis'[224]. Worst of all, expositions of these painful narratives are graded, leaving students to feel like they are being given a score on their life experiences. This pedagogical approach causes more harm than good. It asks students of colour to identify their traumatic encounters of being racialized, being left with no

[223] Ibid., 504.

[224] Canvas, "SOCIOL 213: Ethnicity and Identity". See week 2 reading list on primitivism and authenticity of the syllabus.

support for the consequences of naming those experiences. It is no good for White students either, as one is essentially asking them to tell a story of when they found out the one of the worst things you can be these days, *a racist*. What I have observed is that everyone leaves traumatised.

The concept of 'conviviality' is often used as a closer to a semester of learning concepts that traumatise students. Being 'nice' and 'friendly' as a solution to everyday racism. There is so much potential in what theory can offer to foster self-sovereignty, hope and collective liberation, as I have attempted to offer a glimpse of it in this thesis. The problem, I argue, is that a lot of the times course on 'race' are not designed *by*, nor *for* those who live racialization. How could one know what concepts to use to articulate and address the nuances of all the 'minor feelings' and the toll it takes? In the least, it could be a collaborative endeavour to put a syllabus together, but most of the time, it is not.

In closing this rather long section, I propose what teaching 'race' could be, as my final praxis of decoloniality in this thesis. I invoke the pedagogical spirit of Paulo Freire in orientating education as the collaborative projects of the oppressed. Borrowing the title of his two books, pedagogy of the oppressed uses education for critical consciousness[225]. Critical consciousness is an instrument for liberation and liberation continues to be the north star that guides the various facets of my roles in academia. Liberation is not a given but a collective achievement. It is 'dialogical', characterised by 'cooperation, unity, organisation and cultural synthesis', rather than 'conquest, divide and rule, manipulation, and cultural invasion'[226]. Liberation involves the comprehension of a limitless horizon from which we stand together and grapple with 'generative themes' that will give rise to new ways of thinking, being, doing, becoming, and in Deleuzian terms, new 'lines of flight'.

If we take 'education as the practice of freedom', it necessarily challenges the neoliberal university's conventions[227]. What I offer here is one of the many possibilities. The first week of a course can function as the collaborative posing of problems related to 'race'. Doing away with the teacher-student, top-down knowledge distribution model, a *kōrero* on what it is we want to learn about 'race' and the problems we want to address within its sphere

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[225] Freire, *Education for critical consciousness*; Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed.*

[226] Freire, *Pedagogy of oppressed*, 125.

[227] Ibid., v.

can take place. The instructor, now taking on more of the role of an organiser, is ideally someone with lived experience of ‘race’ and one who can participate as one of the many that are here to co-create and co-conspire. They can take on the role of guiding exercises that facilitate an atmosphere of safety and relationship building such as the ones proposed by Kolk. Guidance can be provided by those with more experience in the field of literature and public discourses around ‘race’ and prepare prompts for conversations and generation of ideas.

Sociological training of the organiser should enable pointing out of the necessary need to understanding the socio-historico-political context of the land they are based on, as well as key terms that will aid in grasping of the imperial status of particular forms of knowledge. Such term would be akin to ‘epistemology’, ‘worldviews’ and ‘decoloniality’.

Working on the assumption of an evolving syllabus, dates can be drafted in as anchoring checkpoints for the collective to assess and reassess during the semester on whether the direction is in alignment with the initial *kōrero*. Goals that can be materially achieved can be decided on, whether that be an academic research essay, op-ed pieces to be published, art works and so on. The end-products would contribute to a broader generation of materials that can be used by others in the future. Completion of the set projects would be treated as collective commitment to be able to walk away with a more enriched toolbox of ideas to think, be and act towards liberation.

The organiser should be able to phrase this kind of pedagogical approach in the language of the neoliberal university to meet the various criteria of a conventional course. Strategic use of resources and relations with the department, faculty and various administrates should be their key role in being able to hold space for fostering critical consciousness.

Summary

This chapter has presented how decoloniality is practiced and lived by tracing various examples of grassroots works carried out in the public sphere. The idea of ‘Habitus of 한 (韓),(恨) *han’*, contextualised in 음양설 (陰陽說) *yeum yang* cosmology, formalised how different members of the Korean and ‘Asian’ diaspora participated in such living. There were parallels with literatures of Trauma Studies, which served as further affirmation that the

ancient somatic practices of the ‘Orient’, centered on relational ontology, are valuable knowledges to reclaim in traversing affects of racialised traumas. The next chapter brings this thesis to a close through a reflection of key moments that drastically shaped the final direction of this research. I highlight a number of limitations and potential nodes for further refinement and exploration.

POSTLUDE

경희도 사람이다. 그 다음에는 여자다. 그러면 여자라는 것보다 먼저 사람이다. 또 조선 사회의 여자보다 먼저 우주 안 전인류의 여성이다...

경희의 앞에는 지금 두 길이 있다. 그 길은 희미하지도 않고 또렷한 두 길이다. 한 길은 쌀이 곳간에 쌓이고 돈이 많고 귀염도 받고 사랑도 받고 밟기도 쉬운 고운 흙길이요, 가기도 쉽고 찾기도 어렵지 않은 탄탄대로이다.

그러나 한 길에는 제팔이 저리도록 보리방아를 찧어야 겨우 얻어먹게 되고 종일 땀을 흘리고 남의 일을 해주어야 겨우 돈 몇푼이라도 얻어보게 된다. 사랑의 맛은 꿈에도 맛보지 못할 터이다.

Kyunghee is also a person. After that, she is a woman. Thus, she is a person before a woman. Further, before a woman in Joseon society, she is a woman of all humanity in the universe…

There are now two paths in front of Kyunghee. The two paths are not faint, they are two distinct paths. One road is a fine dirt road where rice is piled up high in barns, wealth overflows, one can be adored, loved, it is an easy path to walk, one that is easy to find.

On the other road, barley mills must be beaten till one's arms become numb, and only a few cents of wealth is earned despite sweating all day and doing other's work. You will never taste love, not even in your dreams.

In 경희 Kyunghee (1918) by 나혜석 Hye Seok Na[228]

나혜석 (Hye Seok Na), a pioneering feminist writer and painter of Korea, tells the tale of Kyunghee and her dilemma. She is at a crossroads between one that will be easy but requires submission to what already exists, the other is a tumultuous terrain that guarantees no conventional satisfaction. In the final few weeks of this thesis, I was at a similar crossroads. I had mapped out an outline that would delve into discussing 'race' using mostly

[228] Naver blog, "수요일의 책 05. 나혜석 – 경희".

the works of psychoanalysis. It was something I had done before and I knew I could do it well. It would deploy material I have been utilising the past few years. It was also my supervisor Ciara Cremin's area of expertise. It would still be 'radical', I thought. Psychoanalysis used in context of sociology still falls under 'critical theory' after all. There was not much time left till submission and staying on course with my plan was the most sensible thing to do.

Then in a random encounter whilst referencing Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonising Methodologies,* an ad for a book popped up. It was Mignolo and Walsh's *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis.* Surprised at how precise and onto it Google Ad's algorithm was, I clicked on it. I had come across 'decolonisation' and 'decolonising this', 'decolonising that' so many times in our department that I didn't think it would add much more to what I already knew. I was wrong. Just a simple conjugation to 'decoloniality' gave it a whole new twist. I don't know why I hadn't come across it before or thought to tweak decolonisation and decolonising into decoloniality. Decoloniality was the ultimate essence of 'generative' in the way that Freire evokes it. It opened so many possibilities and for the first time, I thought about what decoloniality would mean for *me,* a perpetual foreigner in Aotearoa, despite having lived here for almost twenty years.

Shortly after my encounter with 'decoloniality', I was having recurrent dreams. I would wake up to multiple women sitting on both sides of my bed. They were dressed in white *hanbok,* traditional Korean gowns worn as daily clothes in the times of my great grandparents. I didn't recognise them, but they were looking down at me, surrounding me like I was some sweet baby they came to see. I'd see them, then go back to sleep feeling safe and warm. Then I'd *actually* wake up, and realise it was a dream. It was always around 2am. By the time I had the same dream about five nights in a row, I was haunted. Why were they here? Who were they? How could I make them go away? Despite the help of melatonin pills and various sedatives, I would continue to wake up at 2am.

As I waded through writing this thesis according to plan, whilst trying to repress whatever the hell this dream was trying to tell me, I felt myself going cachexic. Observed in cancer patients where they waste away, rapidly losing extreme amounts of weight, I, too, felt myself wasting away. It wasn't the weight I gained during lockdown that I was losing. I was losing my sanity. I opened up *Decoloniality* again and scripted an entirely new plan. The dreams finally stopped.

In the opening introduction of this thesis, I offered a brief history of 한글 *Hangeul* as justification to the use of 'disruptive methodologies'. Though rudimentary in my approach, I have attempted to outline the particularities of how both *Hangeul*, thus 한국사상 韓國思想 *hangooksasang* (Korean Thought) can be reclaimed and deployed as a theory to think 'race'. Specifically, the two values central to Korean Thought were located; 인 **(**仁) *'in'* and 한 **(**韓);(恨) *'han'.*

Chapter I, *'Race' Under Western Episteme,* summarised how 'race' is thought in Western academic literature of social science, philosophy, and psychoanalysis. The first was through an exposition and critique of Systemic Racism Theory and the second, in engaging with philosophy scholars who think 'race', including Emily S. Lee's phenomenological analyses. Here, the salience of embodiment was noted. Eng and Han's deployment of Critical Race Theory drawn from legal studies and clinical psychoanalysis saw a conception of 'race' specific to Asian Americans. And to input a structural perspective, Colonial Matrix of Power (CMP) was further added. Blending these theories, I defined 'race' *as the embodied experience of the subject-object relation imposed by the colonial matrix of power*.

The two following subsections provided a material tracing of how imposition of 'race' has manifested structurally and in the collective experience of 'Asians'. On the structural level, sociohistorical racialisation of 'Asians' in Aotearoa was inspected. This saw the 'Asian' figure emerge as the psychic 'third' triangulating the Māori/Pākehā racial dyad and thus why Orientalist figures that disrupt other racial dyads like White/Black was loaded with signifiers of fear. On explaining the experiential aspects of being 'Asian' under the Western gaze, 'minor feelings' was used to capture the various symptomatic phenomena. These were shame, racial dissociation and racial melancholia. I used Lacan's concept of *objet a* to incorporate the insights of these two subsections, offering a playful reconfiguration *objet a*lien Asian. I closed the chapter with an elucidation of how 'race' is taught in the department of sociology at the University of Auckland.

Chapter II and III took up the task of offering alternative epistemologies as a move towards displacing the imperial status of Western Thought. Chapter II, *Decolonial Alternative I: Rethinking Ontology Through 인 (仁) 'in',* operationalised the Korean epistemological manifestation of 'relationality'. Making use of the interrelated relationship between *Hangeul* and traditional Chinese characters *Hanja,* 인 **(**仁) *'in'* was etymologically

deconstructed to flesh out its meanings. The significance of embodiment in Korean Thought was explained in mapping out the difference between the relational-self and the atomistic-self. The work of 허준(許浚)'*Heo Jun'* was used to introduce the idea of 기 '*gi*' (life force). I have paralleled this concept to Freud's *Eros* and posited that *the body is the site of the unconscious* making somatic practices a prime way to relieve repression in the psyche. I ultimately proposed the concept of *embodied psychic expansion* to identify the site in which we can experience liberation.

Chapter III, *Decolonial Alternative II: Bearing Witness To Habitus of 한(韓);(恨), 'han' and Other Actionable Possibilities* posited 한 **(**韓);(恨)*'han'* as *embodied psychic expansion* particular to 한민교포(韓民僑胞)*hammingyopo/*Korean diaspora. 한 **(**韓);(恨)*'han'* was etymologically deconstructed and contextualised in the Korean cosmology of 음양설 (陰陽說) *yeum yang*. A brief exposition of Trauma Studies was provided to map where ideas similar to 음양설 (陰陽說) *yeum yang* cosmology could be found in Western literature. This was decidedly useful because of the field's accessible vocabulary that showed the possibility of translating dense theorisations in academia to public discourse. In reformulating '한 **(**韓);(恨)*'han'* as embodied psychic expansion' to *habitus of 한* ***(****韓);(恨) han*, various examples were described. In an arc back to the term decoloniality, these were deemed grassroots decoloniality in praxis/praxis in decoloniality. Lastly, pedagogical implications for teaching 'race' were considered, offering an alternative to what is currently (not) offered.

What I have aimed to do overall is not to universalise Korean conceptions of what has been theorised elsewhere, but to put in motion what each of us can do; to theorise for ourselves, about ourselves, using worldviews we have been conditioned to render unwelcomed and unworthy under the Western gaze. Clumsy at times, grappling with ideas I have not worked with before, it has been nothing less than humbling to practice decolonial exercises in this thesis. If comprehending my writing has been a difficult endeavour, it is more likely a fault of my linguistic precision rather than the capabilities of the reader. After all, I have told my students over and over again that theories that are difficult to understand are not emblematic of their intellectual lack but of poor writing.

Consistency in translation, sourcing and romanisation of *Hangeul* have been difficult to maintain due to the experimental nature of this paper. I hope these can be partially pardoned in lieu of the creative risk I have decided to take. I am also aware that at times I have been repetitive of the same point through the chapters and this has been somewhat intentional as to really drive home the 'north star' of my academic endeavours. I have given primacy to 'making visible subjectivities, views, voices and thoughts' of those who have been Othered, including myself, and just as importantly, to place these narratives in themes of abundance rather than neuroses of lack and victimhood[229].

Mignolo and Walsh anchor relationality in *vincularidad*, a concept drawn from their *whakapapa*[230]. Andean Indigenous thinkers refer to this as 'the awareness of the integral relation and interdependence amongst all living organisms (in which humans are only a part) with territory or land and the cosmos. It is a relation and interdependence in search of balance and harmony of life in the planet'[231]. Such idea is the foundation on which Mignolo and Walsh propose to destabilise the great Western intellectual fiction; the short-sighted, totalising claim of a singular, universal 'truth'. More specifically, the objective of destabilisation extends beyond Eurocentrism to include incarnations of Eurocentric legacies in U.S.-centrism[232]. Even further, there are ongoing mutations to this colonial matrix of power. As time passes, a new world order will emerge, shifting the current imperial status of Modernity. A new pivot will be established, perhaps multiple pivots, giving rise to a multipolar, multidirectional axes of domination. And to this, we must remain vigilant.

Decoloniality is not a cancellation, villainization, nor rejection of Western Thought. It is also not a blind return to what once was, an endeavour that often involves fetishizing and romanticisation of traditions. Rather, decoloniality is, once again, a project of '*re-existence*, understood as "the redefining and re-signifying of life in conditions of dignity'[233]. It is an

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[229] Mignolo and Walsh, *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*, 6.

[230] Ibid., 1.

[231] Ibid., 1.

[232] Ibid., 2.

[233] Ibid., 3.

exercise in epistemological considerations to situate 'The One' amongst a constellation of many, to garner the capacity for multiplicities, difference and expansion.

The ultimate form this thesis takes is one that emerges out of a strenuous terrain. At my crossroads, I took a risk. Barley mills were beat, my arms became numb. Only a few cents to show for my labour, traces of love scant. I have never felt more alive.

Sourced from Korea Times[234]

[234] Kang, "Korea's disappearing culture captured in photography".

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