

**A CRITIQUE OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY:
A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE 'MR. GAIJIN' MASK**

by

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Abstract

The thesis suggests the toy-like mask of a white man, 'Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*,' as a site of analysis where the culture of racisms is (re)produced in the specific context of contemporary Japan. Sold as a gag gift in Japan, the mask, consisting of two stickers for blue-eyes and a prominent plastic nose, embodies the popularized image of whiteness in Japan, and presents it as a source of fascination as well as ridicule and mockery. Approaching this mask as an analytical text, I ask: How is race manifested in the Japanese culture? C. W. Mills (1997) suggests that there exists a global system that privileges whites and normalizes their beneficial racial position. This trend is certainly omnipresent in contemporary Japan, where one observes the sense of superiority being affixed to the white body in the frequent use of white models in the media (Creighton, 1997). Yet, how is this theory of white supremacy significantly complicated by the particular representations of whiteness seen in the 'Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*' mask? Through mimicry, the power of whiteness is mocked and commodified into a sleazy toy mask. Critically engaging with these primary questions, the thesis situates the analysis of the 'Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*' mask within the particular history of racialization developed in Japan where the culture of whiteness holds its unique complexity and significance in the society. Drawing largely on the idea of 'the culture of racisms' that Goldberg (1993) suggests, the thesis argues that the seemingly contradictory sentiment towards whiteness embodied in the mask presents the key to the holistic understanding of Japan's particular culture of racisms. Specifically, it analyzes three levels of transformation that the mask presents in embodying the particular culture of racisms: the discursive transformation of whites into *gaijin*; the temporal physical transformation of the user into Mr. *Gaijin*; the visual and material transformation of whites into the toy-mask.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

'Hello, Mr. Gaijin'

A few years ago at a local department store in Japan, I came across a toy-like mask named 'Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*¹' (Figure 1). The mask is composed of paper stickers for blue eyes and a disproportionately large nose made of a rubbery plastic material, and was displayed among with many other kinds of toys and baubles. It is priced at 399 yen, which approximately converts to 4 Canadian dollars. On its package right next to the product title, there is a cartoonish drawing of a man with blonde hair, blue eyes and a prominent nose, wearing a pink suit with a blue bow tie, smiling with both hands up to his ear-level. The reason this mask instantly caught my eyes at the store was that it evidently embodied the popularized image of a man of European descent that is prevalent in contemporary Japan. As a Master's student, I was interested in exploring racial issues in contemporary Japan, especially in popular cultural materials such as toys, movies, and cartoons. Whiteness theory is one of the approaches that I have taken a great interest in so as to understand the tensions among different racialized groups, for it sheds light on "the processes through which whites acquire and deploy social dominance" (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p. 2) The mask, however, did not seem to conform to this idea of white supremacy that the theory indicates. Instead, it appeared to me that the power of whiteness is being mocked or even ridiculed in this product. How can this mockery be explained by the white supremacy theory? Or more importantly, how can the theory of whiteness be significantly complicated by the particular representation of whites manifested in the mask of 'Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*'?

¹ 'Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*' is also referred to as 'the *Gaijin* nose' on an English-based online forum, Japan Probe, because of the product's obvious stress on the nose (Japan Probe, <<http://www.japanprobe.com/2010/11/26/no-complaints-received-about-hello-gaijin-san-nose/>>). Throughout my thesis, however, I will refer to it as a mask in order to imply my analytical focus on the transformative effect that the mask is designed to generate for the user.

The factor that ultimately determines Mr. *Gaijin* as a white man lies in the combination of the drawn figure and the title of this mask. The Japanese word ‘*gaijin*’ is made up of two Chinese characters (‘*gai*’ and ‘*jin*’) that signify ‘outside’ and ‘person,’ and it predominantly refers to whites². This partial face mask, being designed to help the user transform into the ‘Mr. *Gaijin*’ character, indeed realizes the particular culture of racisms in Japan; the culture that cannot be understood by simply reducing it to an example of the global white supremacy theory. My master’s thesis, therefore, suggests this mask of a white man ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ as a site of analysis where the culture of racisms is (re)constructed in the specific context of Japan. What one can suggest out of this mask is certainly unlimited, but, it signifies that the culture of racisms is present within Japanese popular culture. Race is, indeed, significantly intertwined with people’s everyday life in the Japanese contemporary society. Goldberg (1993) explains the culture of racisms as the culture where one perceives oneself foremost in racial terms. He argues that since the early 17th century social subjects have come to establish and naturalize this process of racial categorization. Similarly, Garner (2007) shows that the racial signifiers such as ‘black’ and ‘white’ were simply one of many categories that were used to describe individuals along with terms signifying one’s religious and class elements. In this sense, the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ mask is an embodiment of this culture of racisms that continues to construct race as an innate element of humans. The character of Mr. *Gaijin* is clearly defined by his (white) race. As Goldberg (1993) poignantly insists, race is not a natural, intrinsic element of humans but it is a culture that has been constructed under the specific historical and political circumstances of the time and place. Then, I ask: How has the culture of racisms been constructed in Japan? Or more importantly, how is the culture of racisms realized in the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ mask?

² The word ‘*gaijin*’ is predominantly used to refer to white people in Japan especially after the WWII ended. On rare occasions when it is used for African and Asian descendants, it often refers to their European or North American cultural traits such as speaking English (Sakata, 2009).

Mills (1997) suggests that racism is a global system. He insists that there exists a global system that privileges whites and normalizes their beneficial position. This trend is certainly omnipresent in contemporary Japan, where one observes the sense of superiority being affixed to the white body in the frequent use of white models in the media (Creighton, 1997). Yet, how is this theory of white supremacy significantly complicated by the particular representations of whiteness seen in the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ mask? The mask not only embodies the popularized image of whiteness but more importantly it also presents it as a source of fascination as well as ridicule and mockery. Through mimicry of whites, the power of whiteness is mocked and commodified into a sleazy toy mask. In fact, the reason the mask of Mr. *Gaijin* is so central to my analysis is this seemingly contradictory sentiment towards whiteness. In this way, my analysis of ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ aims to provide a unique opportunity to contest the Western-centric understanding of the culture of racisms by demonstrating the complicated nature of racial power dynamics in Japan.

(Re)Construction of Whiteness

The complex nature of whiteness can be identified in the mixed reactions against this mask of ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’. In fact, after receiving several complaints about the product being ‘racist’ and ‘offensive³,’ the company that produced this mask renamed it as ‘Hi, I am Gaikokujin’ in August, 2011 (JiG, 2011). The word ‘*Gaijin*’ has been considered to be one of the words that are not recommended to be used on official statements like governmental websites, television and radio⁴, and it is usually substituted with the word *gaikokujin*, which literally means ‘a person

³ Several online forums and blogs discussed the mask of ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ as a representation of Japanese racist behavior against white residents. For instance, a blog-based forum Japan Probe has a post on the mask suggesting people send complaints to the producer if they agree this should be banned. Also, seekjapan.jp concludes that this product is offensive. Japan Probe <<http://www.japanprobe.com/2010/11/26/no-complaints-received-about-hello-gaijin-san-nose/>>. Seekjapan.jp <<http://www.seekjapan.jp/article/jz/3031/Harro+Gaijin-san:+Joke+or+Racism>>

⁴ There is no official list of words that are considered to be inappropriate by any television or radio companies available to the public, but I have encountered events on TV where the word ‘*gaijin*’ used by an actor is switched with ‘*gaikokujin*’ in the caption displayed on the screen. The debate over the use of words ‘*gaijin*’ and ‘*gaikokujin*’ is omnipresent especially in online forums such as debito.org and Japan Times.

from a foreign country.’ The political issue around these words is explored in depth in a later chapter, but what is salient here is that this mask was perceived to be racist by a sufficient number of people to cause a change in its title, and yet it is still on the market, although with a ‘less offensive’ title. This affirms that the product is indeed in demand. The fact that the company did not withdraw its production all together might be interpreted to mean that there are as many positive reactions to this mask as negative ones. Then, what about this mask makes it so fascinating to some people and pejorative to others? Why does it generate such complex reactions? Approaching these primary questions, the thesis explores the racial implications of the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ mask by focusing on this perpetual and persistent representation of whites that has survived even after dozens of complaints.

‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*,’ of course, is not the first and only toy-product that has received criticisms for being racist in Japan. The relatively recent example similar to the mask is the one called ‘Tree-Climbing Winky,’ more popularly known as ‘*Dakko* Baby Doll.’ The Japanese word *Dakko* means ‘to hug’ or ‘to hold’ and the name comes from the way the baby doll is designed to hug the user’s arm and hang there. It was produced in Japan in 1960 and became a national-wide hit particularly among young girls by selling over 2.4 million dolls at year (TakaraTOMY, 2012). This doll, after being around for over 20 years, was accused of having racist implications because the baby doll was black. The doll, being made of black vinyl material, had round thick lips and curly hair, wearing nothing but a skirt that looks like it was made out of palm tree strips. In the 1980s when the American influence of the civil rights movement hit Japan, there was an array of political actions against racisms observable in many Japanese cities, and ‘*Dakko* Baby Doll’ was one of the cultural forms among books and toys that were seen to be racist and inappropriate. The company restricted their production of the dolls during this period, and now the dolls are only available second hand among people on the internet.

How can this example of a black doll be compared with the *Gaijin* mask? They are both toys that were criticized for portraying racisms against certain groups of people, although at different times. The crucial fact that differentiates the two cases might be that the *Dakko* baby doll did not survive the human rights scrutiny while ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ did. As the political action against racisms in the 80s Japan was strongly influenced by the civil rights movement in the United States, which centered around the affirmation of human rights of African Americans, cultural forms that, whether intentionally or not, visualize and symbolize black people or culture were scrutinized. The *Gaijin* mask, on the other hand, is still up for sale meeting consumer demand after a slight alteration of the title. Both of the products are ‘racist,’ but one ends up being abolished and the other continues to reproduce its representation in a more ‘appropriate’ way. With the occasional criticisms, representations of whites are preserved and continue to be (re)produced. The thesis aims to critically engage this continuous representation of whiteness and better understand the particular culture of racisms that is manifested in the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*.’

Racist Culture

What does it mean to call something ‘racist’ in the first place? Only one example of the baby doll might not be enough to explain the persistent (re)production of whiteness representation, but there seem to be a number of incidents where representations of non-white culture and people were problematized. There was an incident in 2011 at the Universite de Montreal where several business school students painted their skin black for a frosh-week event, and the university officials who were in charge of the event were questioned and called racist (The Huffington Post, 2011). Another example is the Sinterklaas feast in the Netherlands. Every year on December 5th, many people in the Netherlands celebrate the birthday of Sinterklaas (St. Nicholas) with big parades and performances in the streets, and one character called Black Peter who helps Sinterklaas has been pointed out as racist because he is often performed by white people with blackface makeup (The Record, 2011). In both of the incidents, the officials explain there is no

‘racist’ intention in performing either a Jamaican Olympic sprinter⁵ or a companion of Sinterklaas, but such ‘innocent’ attitudes do not necessarily change people’s interpretations of the events as racist. Then, what does it entail to call someone or something ‘racist’? What is the logic of racisms? And who decides what is racist and not? That is, what is the fundamental factor that determines something/someone is racist if it is not the intention of utterances?

Reading the examples of university students in Montreal and the Sinterklaas feast leaves me wondering if there was any non-white student dressing up as a white Olympic athlete or joining the Sinterklaas parade performing as a character who is supposed to be white. The news articles do not cover any stories regarding this and the racist focus seems to be often on whites mimicking the black or non-white characteristics. Indeed, there appears to be a fundamental power difference among racial groups, and the situations change dramatically depending on the relations of the subject and the object of such racial performances. This essential tension among racial groups, in fact, is a crucial point in understanding the culture of racisms that has developed in the West⁶. The following second chapter reviews the theoretical development on the culture of racisms, illuminating the historical construction of the racial hierarchy in the Western context. The chapter is designed to approach the primary questions I posed earlier: what is the logic of racial thinking proposed by the Western scholars? What does it mean when something is ‘racist’?

The literature review on the historical construction of racist culture also demonstrates the ways in which racism has become a global culture and what it can suggest for my analysis of the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ mask. Invented as a modern concept in the West, this culture of racisms has traveled the world with white explorers since the 17th century (Goldberg, 1993). As Mills (1997) insists, the culture of white supremacy is now a global system. Yet more importantly, this

⁵ The frosh-week event at the Universite de Montreal was themed after Olympics and students were encouraged to dress up as members of teams that participated in Olympics (The Huffington Post, 2011).

⁶ Conforming to the definition that Goldberg (1993) uses, I use this general category of ‘the West’ and ‘the Europe’ to refer to the Western European countries and the North American continent.

literature review leads me to realize the disconnection of the Western understanding of the culture of racisms and what the *Gaijin* mask embodies. Theorists such as Goldberg and Mills repeatedly suggest that the culture of racisms has been established and normalized by continually imagining a difference; a difference that is measured from the European eye and self. Goldberg (ibid) writes, “(f)rom its inception, then, race has referred to those perceived, indeed, constituted as other” (62). In this logic, the culture of racisms always constitutes the European as the self by means of rendering others racialized and this racializing process is in nature the process of imagining Other. This theoretically fundamental point yet brings me back to the question that has remained in my mind since the day I saw the mask of ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ at the department store in Japan: How are whites being racialized in this mask? The mask obviously depicts the white man as very different from, indeed strange to the Japanese eye and self, reducing his identity into ‘gaijin’; an estranged person⁷. In exploring these questions, the thesis challenges the Western-centric understanding of the culture of racisms and further explains the significant need for studies that deconstruct the Western concept of ‘race’ and complicate the nature of the global racist culture.

In this way, the analysis of the *Gaijin* critically disarticulates the (re)construction of the culture of racisms in the specific context of Japan. Specifically, Chapter 3 is dedicated to contextualizing the mask by unpacking Japan’s historical encounters with ‘the West’ since the late 16th century. ‘The West’ in Japan had been used to signify many different areas of the world including Spain, Portugal, and the United States of America in different time periods. Their cultural and political influences on Japan have always been significant, but the specific ways in which they have been depicted in literal and visual texts suggest an extremely fluid and complex history. The chapter offers a brief genealogical study of the dynamic relations between Japan and the West, particularly focusing on the ways in which racial thinking manifests itself in different forms in different periods of Japan. Finally, the analysis part of my thesis focuses on three

⁷ The Japanese dictionary, Koujien (1998), defines ‘*gaijin*’ as ‘an estranged person’ as well as ‘enemies’ and ‘foreigners’.

essential components of the mask. What this mask embodies is not simply the superiority affixed to whites but also the persistent stereotyping and othering of whites, and this is investigated in three interrelated aspects of the mask: the discursive representations of whites such as the word ‘gaijin’ used in the title, the performative function of the mask, and the visualization/materialization of whites seen in the drawing of Mr. Gaijin on the package as well as the objectified facial parts of the mask itself. Through these three stages of analyses, the thesis suggests the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ as a site of analysis where the culture of racisms is (re)constructed in the specific context of Japan.



Figure 1. The Mask of “Hello Mr. Gaijin.”⁸

⁸ Photo taken by Fumi Sakata (author) on August 14th 2012.

Chapter 2

The Culture of Racisms

The package of the *Gaijin* mask is filled with racial significations. Every part of it is carefully designed to signify explicitly that the mask portrays a racialized man as its subject. The pink-suited man drawn on the package becomes a significant—also entertaining—character because of his white racialized features. The title of the mask, the eye stickers, and the plastic nose all work together to realize the specific racial discourse in the mask. Analysis of the mask in my thesis, as I will later demonstrate, unfolds the precise racial significations that are coded through the discursive and material parts of the mask. However, in order to begin the analyses of the mask as a racial embodiment, it first needs to be clarified how race came to have such significance in our everyday life. As the examples of racist accusations against the university frosh event and the holiday celebration in the Netherlands show, the *Gaijin* mask itself also signifies the prevalent nature of racial discourses in Japanese culture. To speak specifically of the *Gaijin* mask, it is easily conceived that '(white) race' as the subject of the entertainment receives positive responses in Japan judging from the fact that this product has been on the market for years in spite of criticisms⁹. The disseminative nature of the mask can be assessed from its low price—it is sold for 399 yen (about 4 dollars)—and the cheap materials that allow a mass production. Of all the subjects that could have possibly been chosen, it was (white) race that was deliberately thought to have the best quality to turn itself into an entertainment. But why? When I first saw the mask of Mr. *Gaijin* in Japan, my immediate thought was; why a white man? A more important question would be: how has race come to have such significance? Throughout this

⁹ JiG, the company that produced the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin,' does not disclose the information on when the product began its sale. Although, when I contacted the office in Japan hoping to get more background information on the product, they mentioned it being on the market for 'years.'

chapter, I will explore the literature on race and interpret the historical construction of the culture of racisms that the Japanese now live in.

This chapter is specifically devoted to investigating the particular ways in which the culture of racisms is historically developed. Goldberg (1993) explains the culture of racisms as a modern culture where social subjects have come to establish and naturalize the process of conceiving oneself foremost in racial terms. By seeing race as a historically and contextually constructed culture, Goldberg deliberately opposes the way of approaching racial groupings and exclusions as an essential human nature. In fact, he argues that racist reasoning was invented in the sixteenth century as a central element of modernity in the West¹⁰ and has been normalized through centuries. Approaching racial thinking as a culture in this way allows one to recognize the globally normalized reality of racial reasoning to be something that is particular to certain times and social contexts. The concept of racist culture leads one to question one's personal and societal tendency to attach significance in identifying, inspecting, and separating one's racial category. The critical questions the thesis explores are: what kind of historical invention was racist culture? Exactly how does the culture influence our way of understanding human relations today? In response to these questions that are critical to my analysis of the *Gaijin* mask, the chapter explores the literatures on race that delineate the Western historical establishment of the culture of racisms.

What exactly is the culture of racisms? Speaking about the discursive development of the notion of race in the West, Goldberg (1993) argues that the racialization of social subjects began under what he calls "the modern project" (3) of the 16th century. Under this project, the conception of race was invented, rationalized, and normalized. The underlying feature of this project, Goldberg suggests, was its obsessive concern with coherency and order. He argues, that

¹⁰ Goldberg (1993) suggests that the area now called 'the West' has been historically constructed under the modern project, where the Europeans discovered the non-European Other. Strictly speaking, this general category of 'the West' refers to the Western European countries and the North American continent.

the categorization of social subjects based on racial grouping was strategically employed to provide otherwise abstract and arbitrary subjects with a cohesive identity. In a sense, race worked to give them a coherent sense of (racialized) self that differentiates themselves from other (racialized) groups. And the relationship among these racially grouped individuals was set in a hierarchical order that assumes the white race to be the most superior of all. Modernity of the 16th century brought a shift in the conceptions of social subject. In this regard, Garner's study (2007) of self-relational terms also shows the transition from the pre-modern to the modern racist conception of social subjects. He claims that the racial signifiers such as 'black' and 'white' used to be one of many categories that primarily informed and constituted individuals' understanding of social self. The religious and class elements of their self-conceptions, in fact, had far more significance in the social world until the early 16th century, but by the beginning of the 17th century, race had taken over the other elements and became the dominant social category to be recognized among people (Garner, 2007).

Another crucial point that Goldberg makes in his analysis of the modern culture of racisms is the fact that the notion of race has been constructed through exclusions and by constituting differences. Since its emergence in the late 15th century, the term 'race' has reflected "the discovery and experience of groups of beings very different from, indeed strange to the European eye and self" (62). By giving a detailed genealogical analysis of the term's transition from its original forms, "the Italian *razza* and the Spanish *raza*" (62), Goldberg shows how the term was initially used to classify the root(s) of different groups of people in a similar way that people used to classify plants and animals in the early 16th century. The number of these newly discovered groups of people would increase as the Europeans explored various regions of the world. The crucial point made here is that race has always accompanied the imagining of the European self, consequently excluded those who were seen as different, and placed them as inferior racialized Other. Moreover, it shows that only through the imagining and construction of

racial Other could the Europeans see themselves as the coherent, superior self. In other words, race was invented as a yardstick which not only classifies individuals into the different racial groups, but more importantly, it simultaneously produces a hierarchical relationship among them in which white race is given supremacy, normalizing its position as the only racial self. By the 19th century, racial differences were deliberately brought into empirical scientific studies which were set to explain the cultural, political and economical inequalities of specific racial groups and helped perpetuate the idea of white racial superiority (Garner, 2007). Such studies were known as ‘scientific racism,’ which is a kind of philosophical discipline that was most prevalent in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Scientific racism greatly helped establish the culture of racisms by providing the scientific explanations of almost all parts of the body—literally from the skull and foot—in racial terms and creating a hierarchy among racialized bodies (Rattansi, 1995).

Consequently, race relies for its existence upon imagining a difference; a difference that furnishes the self with a coherent and stable identity. Whether biological or sociological, the culture of racisms continues to rationalize its artificial racial categorization of social subjects. This constructive nature of the culture of racisms also suggests the connotational emptiness of the term ‘race.’ As Goldberg (1993) writes, race is “able to signify not so much in itself but by adopting and extending naturalized form to prevailing conceptions of social group formation at different times” (80). The point made here is that racial issues crucially require an investigation that is deeply embedded in the specified context. In fact, what Goldberg and others have elaborated is the different uses and implications of the term ‘race’ at different periods and in different places, and how the notion of race played a significant role in constructing one’s identity under modernity of the Western contexts. How can race be studied in the Japanese context? My thesis proposes a primary focus that is to closely analyze the contemporary embodiment of the culture of racisms through the mask ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin.’ But can the racial issues in the Japanese context be examined using the West-born concept of race? Or would they suggest a re-

theorization of the concept of race? Throughout the thesis, I will explore these questions by deliberately contextualizing the *Gaijin* mask.

Then, is the mask ‘racist’? And if so, how is it ‘racist’? The literature on the historical development of the notion of race demonstrates that the culture of racisms always assumes the European/white self that sits at the top of the racial hierarchy. The white self is constructed and normalized through the constant imagination of non-white racialized Other who are essentialized as ‘different’. Such essentialized differences judged by the point of view of the white self generate exclusive racial classifications. When something is called ‘racist’ in the Western context, it conceivably refers to this power imbalance between white race and other non-white races. What is problematized in such criticisms, then, is the enduring mechanism where the imagination of the racial hierarchy is being uncritically re-affirmed and maintained. In cases of the black-faced students at Universite de Montreal for the frosh-week event and the Sinterklaas parade in the Netherlands, they were both incidences where white subjects played black characters and, here, black race was turned into the object of such ‘playful’ performances. Regardless of the intentions of these performances, they were both criticized to be racist, for they consequently conformed to the racist production of the white subject position, leaving the non-white Other objectified. The same critical observations can be applied to the instance of the Japanese *Dakko* baby doll that created a character out of black racial stereotypes.

What about the mask of ‘Hello Mr. *Gaijin*’? Is it ‘racist’? Similarly, the mask received complaints about its racist implications. Its title was especially the target of such criticisms. However, what differentiates the *Gaijin* mask from all the other ‘racist’ examples above is the fact that it is white race that is objectified and overtly stereotyped in the mask. And this is exactly why I suggest the analysis of the *Gaijin* mask to be unique and critical. The mask of ‘Hello Mr. *Gaijin*’ was condemned to be racist not because it portrayed non-white race, but it portrayed white race and created a character ‘Mr. *Gaijin*’ out of their racial stereotypes. In fact, what is

represented in the use of 'gaijin' in its title is that whites are seen as 'outsiders' in today's Japan as the Chinese characters of 'gaijin' would signify¹¹. In this mask, white race is given the exterior position that defines the difference of Other from the Japanese self. That is to say, the white racial stereotypes projected on the *Gaijin* mask are seen to be the sign of Otherness in Japan. What is opposite to 'gaijin' is indeed 'the Japanese' who are collectively imagined to reside inside the boundary that divides the self and Other in Japan¹². This point crucially differentiates the example of the Gaijin mask from other 'racist' occasions, for it posits a kind of racial embodiment that does not conform to the notion of race that is developed and theorized in the Western context. What the Western theorists including Goldberg and Mills have explained was that the culture of racisms necessarily assumes the European/white self in relation to the non-white (racialized) Other(s). The mask, however, objectifies the popularized image of whites in Japan and depicts them as 'outsiders'. The racial characterization of 'Mr. Gaijin' is presented as a source of fascination as well as ridicule and mockery. And through mimicry, the power of whiteness is mocked and commodified into a sleazy toy mask. Then, can the mask still be considered as an embodiment of the culture of racisms? Or is it something that is completely different from what Goldberg has called 'the culture of racisms'? Probing into these questions, the thesis presents the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' as the crucial site of analysis where the Western racial thinking is to be challenged and thoroughly re-examined.

The mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' was condemned to be racist by its customers. However, as I have shown in the above discussion, this particular complaint does not conform to the 'racist' logic developed in the West. The mask does not portray the white race as a race that is superior to others, but on the contrary, it depicts white race as a satirical character that is posited as an outsider and a source of ridicule. Then, what is really meant by such complaints towards the

¹¹ The Japanese word '*gaijin*' is made up of two Chinese characters that signifies 'outside (gai-)' and 'person (-jin).'

¹² The discussion of the word 'gaijin' as opposed to 'the Japanese' is explored in depth in the analysis chapter.

mask? If ‘racist’ is not the right word to accurately explain the exclusiveness and the essentialistic differentiation toward the white race that the mask represents, how else can it be expressed? In my thesis, therefore, for the purpose of highlighting this slight—but theoretically significant—shift in the power relations between the white self and non-white Other(s), I distinguish the ‘racist’ complaints toward the *Gaijin* mask from those made toward other ‘conventional’ racist examples including the *Dakko* baby doll and the Sinterklaas event. This distinction invites a critical reflection on the Western dominated theorization of the culture of racisms as well as a further theoretical development and elaboration of global racial matters, for it points to the desperate need for studies that deconstruct the Western-centric understanding of the culture of racisms. Moreover, this distinction of the *Gaijin* mask sheds light on the “forgotten or marginalized” (Bonnett 1998: 1036) forms of racial thinking that has historically been concealed by the Western claim of racial invention. Critically examining the way the Europeans ‘invented’ the fluid concept of whiteness to be a racial component only and exclusively found in the white race, Bonnet (1998) writes;

It follows that the history of the Europeanization of whiteness is not a history of a European seizure of a pre-formed identity but, rather, a narrative of the ability to marginalize and forget other forms of white identity and to create, assert and disseminate a particular vision of human difference (1031).

Regardless of its origin, the impact of the culture of racisms is unquestionably global. As Mills (1997) writes, since the late 15th century, Europeans have extensively explored the world and have expanded Western world hegemony through ways that include the institution of slavery and colonies, and as a result, they claim to have built a global system where society is structured in a way that privileges whites and continues to normalize their beneficial position. He continues to stress that “we live in a world which has been foundationally shaped for the past five hundred years by the realities of European domination and the gradual consolidation of global white supremacy” (20). Through the forcible process of military and cultural expansion of the West, the

notion of race was one of the European (scientific) knowledge that was adopted and legitimized in various parts of the world. Certainly, as the critical responses to the *Gaijin* mask indicate, the sensitivity around the discourse on race is omnipresent in today's Japan. What this pervasive nature of the culture of racisms denotes is the urgent need for the body of research that grounds its analyses on the specific contextual significations and further sheds light on the process of cultural transformations. My analysis of the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin,' therefore, deliberately traces the historical migration and the transformation of the notion of race in the specific context of post-WWII. Such careful analyses both challenge the current establishment of the theory of race and bring in the unique perspective that could further advance the critical understanding of racist culture in the globalized world. In the following chapter, the thesis explores the specific context in which the culture of racisms made its way into Japan.

Chapter 3

The Historical Context in Japan

As Goldberg (1993) and others have shown, the European global hegemony greatly expanded through various ways including colonies and the institution of slavery. Mills (1997) also discussed the global system that has been developed for the past five hundred years to privilege and normalize the beneficial position of the whites. If the racial contract is indeed a global contract, exactly how is it manifested in other non-Western geographical contexts such as Japan? How has the concept of race been constructed and understood in the history of Japan's encounter with 'others'? And how could the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' be critically approached in the particular historical context? In this chapter, I will briefly review the historical account of Japan's encounter with the West since the late 16th century. In so doing, the chapter aims to capture the unique and dynamic nature of the historical construction of Japan's unique race thinking and its relation to the Western (re)invention of the culture of racisms.

The previous chapter on the Western construction of the culture of racisms closely looked at the Western view on the concept of race. This approach explicitly states that race is a concept that was invented in the 16th century and has become key to the process of modernization in the West since then. Furthermore, it indicated that this culture of racisms is of Western origin and has now grown to become a global phenomenon. The process of globalization of the racist culture was achieved by the extensive and forcible expeditions of the world by the Europeans. According to this logic, there was no existence of the culture of racisms globally until the Europeans started to invade the various parts of the world in the 16th century, and moreover, the racial issues prevalent around today's world can all be traced back to the Western racial thinking as its single origin. The thesis problematizes this claim, for it leads to the uncritical encouragement of a body of research that investigates racial issues and conflicts by simply

utilizing Western racial discourse. This chapter is concerned with the particular ways in which racial thinking manifests itself in different forms in the specific context of Japan's encounter with the West. In so doing, it explores the marginalized history of Japanese unique racial thinking that cannot be reduced to the Western mode of racial thinking. In this sense, the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' provides a site of analysis where the position of the absolute white (supreme) self becomes unstable and an alternate way of racialization emerges. This is the site where whites are 'discovered' as Other in Japan just as the way whites claimed to 'discover' the world during their expedition in the 16th century.

The mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' is not the only example to indicate that race is an issue to be analyzed in Japan. The mask is a way to see the current reality that there is a culture around the issue of race. This should not imply, however, that the culture of racisms in Japan is the exact replication of the Western culture of racisms. It should not suggest that the culture of racisms invented in the West was simply exported to the other parts of the world where the European explorers landed their ships, preserving ways of racist thinking as constituted in the West. In fact, approaching globally dispersed racial issues as continuous of Western thought can become quite problematic. Sarawati (2010) examines the way today's prevailing desire for white skin among Indonesian women is often interpreted as the desire for Caucasian whiteness even though the Indonesian value on whiteness can be traced back as further as to the late 9th century. By simply reducing the locally specific issues to the dominant Western racial discourse, the alternative local accounts of whiteness become marginalized. The theoretical undermining of such discourse is itself operated under the power of whiteness in privileging a certain history. Reflecting this point of analysis, the purpose of the chapter is to carefully contextualize the ways in which specific racial thinking emerged in Japan. This process entails a critical analysis on both the continuity and the discontinuity of the Western culture of racisms in the specific way of representing the racial Self and Other in Japan. As Goldberg (1993) writes, "the prevailing meaning of race at any

intersection of time and place is embedded in and influenced by the prevailing conditions within the social milieu in question” (80).

Still, this is not to completely refute Western scholars’ claim of the culture of racisms as a uniquely Western idea invented throughout the modern era, for it is evident that the modern subject in the West was constructed basing its coherency and stability on the racial hierarchy as explained by Goldberg (1993). The point made here is to show the complex nature of the global racisms rather than to suggest a single origin of it. Seeing race as an *a priori* and sedimented concept precludes us from recognizing the crucial fact that there are other ways of theorizing race and that the concept of race is a historically specific fluid entity that constructs its meaning by responding to different contexts and times. In fact, in the same way the Europeans discovered new kinds of people across the oceans, the Europeans were also ‘discovered’ as a different species by the local people. Moreover, the West was not only discovered; it was also perceived as barbarous. Simply understanding race from the Western point of view fails to accommodate space for such reversed perspectives on race. What is important here is to investigate the way the white race was perceived as Other by the non-Western local selves. As Bonnet (2002) insists, Western ideas were never imposed upon the world, but it was employed and deployed “as a political tool that has been put together and put to work in a number of different ways around the globe” (166). The purpose of the thesis, therefore, is to shed light on the historical mutual construction of the culture of racisms between the West and Japan. Such a study leads to a deeper understanding of race as a fluid and complex concept, and demonstrates the unique construction of the culture of racisms that is particular to the Japanese context.

The history of Japan’s encounter with ‘the West’ goes back to roughly the late 16th to early 17th centuries when the Portuguese and Spanish traders and Jesuits began to appear regularly on the port of Southern Japan. Throughout the past five centuries till the present day, the referent to ‘the West’ has gone through dynamic changes, reflecting the different historical moments in

Japan. In approaching the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ as a cultural artifact that embodies the contemporary representation of the white race, the chapter briefly reviews the ways in which this changing image of ‘the West’—the culture that has almost always been represented by the white race—has historically been depicted by the Japanese. By doing so, it aims to delineate the particularity of the post-war cultural context in which the mask was produced. Looking at the history of the Japanese encounter with the West from the 16th century onward is necessary, for it disarticulates and destabilizes the naturalized discourse of what Mills (1997) and others have called the global white supremacy. The particularity of the culture of racisms manifested in the Gaijin mask becomes tangible only through this process of contextualization.

Contrary to the idea of global white supremacy, the white race was not always seen as the noble and superior race in Japan’s history. In fact, it was only in the 19th century when ‘the West’—imagined through the encounter with the white race—began to assume its hegemony. Until then, they were the target of the local people’s curiosity, and then often found to be barbaric, as explicitly observed from the dynamic transition of the Japanese label used to refer to ‘the West’ or the white race. As mentioned earlier, the first group of the Europeans arrived in Japan through the South Sea, so they were called ‘*nanban*’ which translates into the savage people (*-ban*) from the South (*nan-*). *Nanban* was used to refer dominantly to the Spanish and the Portuguese who reached Japan mostly for the purpose of trade and Christian missions, and because of this, the word ‘*nanban*’ also referred to one’s religious belief in Christianity (Koujien, 1998). Then, during the 18th century, there was the label ‘*koumoujin*,’ literally translated as the people (*-jin*) with red hair (*koumou-*), which was used widely to refer to the Dutch through the Edo period when the shogunate officially gave the exclusive trading contract with the Dutch traders¹³. Though it first appeared as a generic derogative label for the Europeans, *koumoujin* assumed rather positive

¹³ The word ‘*koumoujin*’ was a term to refer to the Dutch. All white residents seen on the streets of Japan at this historical time were assumed to be Dutch and in fact they were all officially registered as foreigners of Dutch origin although there were some doctors and intellectuals who were from other parts of the Europe such as Britain (Screech, 1995).

connotations throughout the later 18th century (Screech, 2002), the first period in the history of Japan when a large number of people had a chance to see the actual Europeans with their own eyes (Screech, 1995). Every European who arrived in Japan was annually required to march all the way to pay a visit to the Edo shogunate, which made it unavoidable for the Europeans to become the target of the people's persistent gaze. The thickness and the redness of the Europeans' hair—and not the whiteness of their skin—were the exotic and barbaric elements that strongly characterized them in Japanese eyes.

The word '*i-jin*' that can be translated as 'different/strange-person' replaced '*koumoujin*' in the 19th century Meiji period until the word '*gaijin*' was introduced soon after World War II ended in 1945 (De Mente, 1995). These two terms have a less explicit negative connotation than the others that existed before them as it is seen in their literal translations. As it has been discussed by many critics, the 19th century marks a significant shift in Japan's perceptions towards the Western knowledge and culture (see Bonnet, 2002; Screech, 2002; Lie, 2003). Strictly speaking, from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 to the following century was the pivotal period that the Western body of knowledge and cultural values were massively and systematically introduced and institutionalized in many parts—though mostly in the central cities—of the country. Ideas such as 'egalitarian society' and 'cultural capital' were translated into Japanese and greatly influenced the then philosophical discourse within the Japanese intellectuals (Lie, 2003). Throughout the late 19th to the early 20th century, the Europeans such as British and German predominantly represented 'the West' as the progressive model to emulate, but around the time Japan lost World War II in 1945, the prominence of American political and cultural significance superseded that of the Europeans. Lie (2003) explains the nation-wide excessive fever of the consumption of American culture which reconfigured the mainstream lifestyle in postwar Japan. There was a great shift in the books people read, the clothes they wore, and the food they ate.

Chocolate, for example, was one of many things that were first introduced to Japan by the American soldiers who occupied the postwar Japan¹⁴ (Dower, 1999).

Interestingly, while the first two labels ‘*nanban*’ and ‘*koumoujin*’ are constructed with the physical characteristics that are observable of the Europeans, the latter two, ‘*ijin*’ and ‘*gaijin*,’ refer more to the social status of the referent to white in Japan. For instance, the Chinese characters for the word ‘*ijin*’ insinuate the differences (*i-*) of the Europeans, which do not restrict its reference to their physicality as the older labels like ‘*koumoujin*’ does but they also leave room for a variety of interpretations in what such differences (*i-*) might mean. Social differences such as their culture, languages, and philosophies are a few of the elements that were recognized to differentiate the Europeans from the Japanese in the 19th century. The last label, ‘*gaijin*,’ appears in the mask of the ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ as the focus of my thesis. This label will be dealt with in detail in Chapter 5, where I thoroughly analyze the mask; it is the term that is most frequently used in contemporary Japan to refer generally to whites. ‘The whites’ similarly to the historical generic use of ‘the West’ does not refer to any specific differences such as nationalities among people who are imagined to belong to the category of the white race in Japan, and in that sense, it still maintains the kind of mentality that was prevalent in the 18th century when all of the Europeans were instantly assumed to be Dutch. It reflects Japan’s persistent understanding of ‘the West’ as a whole as well as its (sometimes official) neglect of internal differences. On the whole, the Japanese labels that appeared in the context of Japan’s encounter with the West—whichever parts of ‘the West’ were meaningful to them in each historical context—capture the dynamic social shifts in the Japanese interpretation of the West.

It was also around the period when the perceptive shift towards the West gradually took place that racial thinking, among other Western perspectives, began to be familiarized in Japan.

¹⁴ Japan’s defeat in the Second World War in 1945 was followed by the ‘allied’ occupation for the purpose of rebuilding the nation as a democratic one, although the occupation and reconstruction of post-war Japan was in fact led by the United States alone under the leadership of Supreme Commander, Douglas MacArthur, who left Japan completing his mission in 1952 (Dower, 1999).

From the late 19th century to the turn of the century, books and theories on ‘scientific racism’ were translated into Japanese, and many Japanese intellectuals and academics eagerly learned the scientific explanation of racial difference and hierarchy (Weiner, 1997). Rattansi (1995) explains two enduring characteristics of the mode of racist thinking called ‘scientific racism’ as biological and hierarchical. Scientific racism devoted its analysis to the (imaginative though claimed to be ‘scientific’) construction of specific biological features that transform all humans into static racial categories. Furthermore, this mode of racist thinking bases its logic on the construction of the white race to be the most superior race of all. All the individuals categorized into the non-white racial groups automatically become inferior to the whites. As the white body came to signify their superiority, the frequent use of the white models became normalized in the billboards and advertisements in Japanese cities (Creighton, 1997). Conducting a series of interviews with female participants inquiring their interpretations of the media representation of female aesthetics seen in contemporary Japan, Darling-Wolf (2004) recognizes the influence of an essentialized Western notion of beauty as a result of the global Western hegemony. This influence was reinforced under the temporary American occupation that lasted seven years after Japan’s loss in the Second World War.

The point to be made here is that the Western framework of racist thinking encouraged the Japanese to find themselves racially ‘Othered.’ That is, the Japanese intellectuals who eagerly sought the logical (scientific) explanations of the reality in the Western body of knowledge found themselves trapped in the dilemma of not being able to identify themselves as the (white racial) self. The Japanese were explicitly excluded from the superior race in such writings that elaborated scientific racial hierarchy. Goldberg (1993) indicates that ‘race’ provides social subjects with cohesive (racial) identity that differentiates the self from Other(s). Yet the only subjects who are enabled to construct oneself as ‘the self’ with this form of racist thinking are clearly the white race. So, the encounter with ‘scientific racism’ for the majority of Japanese led

to a discovery of themselves as ‘the inferior race’ positioned at the lower level of the racial hierarchy in the global context.

Creighton (1997) writes that over the century after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Japan’s modernization has evolved around envisioning the West as “the model to emulate, the standard by which to gauge Japan’s progress and modernization” (216). The racist thinking proposed by the West also played a role in confirming their superiority. Yet, this popularized understanding of the West also played a role in confirming their superiority. Yet, this popularized understanding of modern Japan’s striving for the West requires a careful critical reflection. What it has done is to turn the attention away from the complicated relations of Japan with other parts of Asia (or the East) by imposing the dualistic division of the world into the West and the East. The discourse of Japan’s modernization has often omitted the internal power dynamics of the East from the picture. Similarly, the generalized theorization of the world through the framework of absolute global supremacy as Mills (1997) suggests fails to recognize that “(t)he West’ is, rather, a site of conflict between different political currents” (Bonnett, 2002: 168). Specifically in approaching the subject of ‘the West’ in Japan from the 20th century on, the critical relations Japan had with the neighboring Asian countries as well as with the U.S. after their occupation hold a significance. Bonnett (2002) acutely points out the fact that Japan’s imagining of the West always accompanied the deployment of a form of Orientalism towards Asia. Japan was not part of either the primitive Asia or the external West, and this mentality was precisely embodied by imperial Japan in colonizing its neighbouring countries, including Korea and Manchuria, up until the end of World War II. In this sense, the idea of ‘the West’ in Japan needs to be carefully approached in this intricate relations with ‘Asia’ from which Japan excludes itself.

My thesis critically engages with the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ against the background of these historical encounters with the West and the involvement with the East, and probes into the ways in which the mask embodies the contemporary way of Japan’s encounter with the West. What does the Gaijin mask embody? And why is the white man depicted in the mask in this

particular manner? What the analysis of the mask will suggest is the alternative way of racist thinking: the mode of thinking about the self and Other around race that the Western theory fails to adequately explain. The Gaijin mask indicates the manifestation of the culture of racisms in Japan, but the way it manifests itself indeed casts doubt on the global dissemination of the Western culture of racisms. The idea of global white supremacy, in this sense, comes under close scrutiny. The mask becomes the crucial site of analysis, for it explicitly realizes the particular culture of racisms that reflects the Japanese historical context. Whites are reduced into the figure of the white man that embodies the popularized image of whiteness in Japan being packaged as a sleazy toy-mask. Simply stated, this mask is the site of analysis where the 16th century's discovery of the whites as 'the barbarians from the South sea' vividly re-appears. Approaching the racial issues purely as invention and dissemination by the West precludes one from envisaging alternative racist thinking. By capturing the historical accounts of the different ways of imagining the West from the 16th century on, this chapter attempted to delineate the particularities of each of those accounts. The mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' is to be analyzed against the historical background for such unique analyses do not completely subvert the Western dominated framework of global white supremacy but further complicate the theory of race.

Chapter 4

Methodological Approach

The culture of racisms is explicitly explained by American theorists such as Goldberg (1993) and Mills (1997) to be a global construction that bases itself on the firm belief that the white race is the most superior amongst all kinds of race. However, what I see in the mask of ‘Hello Mr. *Gaijin*’ seems to present a site of analysis where the theory of global white supremacy is significantly challenged and complicated. As Goldberg indicated, the culture of racisms established itself by constantly imagining a difference: a difference that is constituted from the European eye and self. And in this logic the Europeans are always already constructed as the self by means of rendering others ‘racialized.’ This racializing process is by nature the process of imagining the ‘Other.’ But, a significant contradiction is posited in the *Gaijin* mask, for it presents a racial articulation that does not conform to the logic of global white supremacy. In the mask, the white man named Mr. *Gaijin* is not only racialized in the sense that his character is completely made up of racial stereotypes but also is depicted as ‘Other.’ The mask explicitly portrays the white man as very different from, indeed strange to the Japanese eye and self, reducing his identity into ‘*gaijin*’: an estranged person. This particular representation of whiteness in the mask leads the theory of global white supremacy to a further necessary complication and refinement so as to reflect the ambiguous nature of racial power relations.

It is repeatedly pointed out in the field of Cultural Studies that “the relations of power are present in the most innocent places—schools or forms of entertainment, for instance, including the film and television texts” (Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, and Tincknell 2004 :170). As discussed above, the mask of ‘Hello Mr. *Gaijin*’ is one of such innocent places where the dynamic construction of the culture of racisms is observed. In fact, the way I encountered the mask was very informal and innocent in the sense that I found it in a place I did not expect to see

such a complicated aspect of race. It was in a local general store in the shopping arcade of the remote city of Miyazaki in Japan that I found this mask. In the section of the store that has a variety of party goods and costumes, the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' was displayed amongst Dracula masks, sexy bunny outfits, and others. It was almost as though the mask was carefully camouflaged by joining the other 'innocent' entertainment goods in the store so that nobody would see the political nature of this particular mask. The mask does not inform us about the foreign policies or the current international politics in Japan, but the analyses of such everyday products are as important as those involved with the more 'formal' politics, for it critically sheds light on the fact that power relations operate on a daily basis. They do not necessarily look wrong or inappropriate, but in fact they might appear ordinary and sometimes even entertaining just as the example of the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' indicates. As Foucault (1980) writes, "power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (39). His idea of approaching power as capillary enables one to problematize the most trivial and innocent forms of power politics and to further engage with the critical notion of power not simply in its negativity but also in its positivity, for the thesis aims to understand the ways in which the Gaijin mask's pleasurable and entertaining aspect comes into play in projecting a particular visualization of whiteness.

Visual Culture

My analyses of the mask are methodologically informed by the emerging field of visual culture. Throughout the postmodern era, our everyday life has increasingly been circulated around visual images and visualized way of living. Mirzoeff (1998) sees this postmodern visual culture as a culture best imagined and understood visually, comparing to the nineteenth century where human experience revolved predominantly around the print culture consisting of textual/linguistic media including newspapers and novels. He clarifies that this

modern/postmodern transition is not intended to indicate that each period is purely textual or visual, but it points to the reality where “human experience is now more visual and visualized than ever before” (4). In this sense, approaching the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ as a postmodern visual culture is vital, for it allows a more inclusive and precise interpretation of the mask. The mask is, indeed, consisted of both textual—as is seen in the title and caption—and visual—in the mask itself as well as the cartoonish drawing of a white man on the package. The mask in this sense is a perfect example of this postmodern visual culture. The analysis, therefore, is concerned with both the textual (literal) and the visual construction of meanings manifested in the Gaijin mask. In so doing, the thesis probes into the ways in which the mask entices its user to engage in a particular visualization of whites.

Particularly, I identify three inter-related modes of operation in realizing the culture of racisms in the ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*’ mask following the concept of ‘visuality’ theorized by Mirzoeff (2011). The three analytical modes are: the discursive transformation of whites into gaijin; the temporal physical transformation of the user into Mr. *Gaijin*; and the visual/material transformation of whites into the toy-mask. Visuality is a key term in understanding the studies of visual culture. Mirzoeff (ibid) describes visuality as an attribute of authority. Since the 18th century, visualizing has been extensively deployed as a governing tactic by the European exploiters in many global slave plantation and colonial areas. Visualizing images and ideas about the local people and their vastly extensive lands through maps and ethnography helped the Europeans control and monitor them effectively¹⁵. Visualization, then, is a way to imagine Other in a way that makes sense to the self who holds the authority to visualize. Visuality is achieved by three operational stages: classifying, separating, and aestheticizing. Classification is operated by naming, categorizing, and defining of the visible and the sayable. Separation is done by socially organizing those classified. It gives specific social meanings to each categorized group and

¹⁵ As is indicated, ‘visuality’ does not only refer to visual images such as pictures and paintings, but it also refers to textual/discursive materials such as writings.

prevents them from cohering with one another. Finally, this separated classification is legitimized and becomes aesthetic by being repeatedly experienced and thus normalized. The three analytical modes I identified with the case of the Gaijin mask closely conform to these three operational stages of visibility.

The Discursive Transformation of Whites into Gaijin (Classification)

In the first part of the analysis which focuses on the discursive transformation of whites into 'gaijin' manifested in the mask, I explore the ways in which the label 'gaijin' embodies the complex nature of whiteness in post-war Japan. Why is the mask named 'Hello, Mr. Gaijin'? What is the politics behind this persistent labeling of whites? These probing questions correspond with the visibility's first operation which is classification. In what way does the particular naming of whites define them? The product was recently renamed as 'Hi, I am Gai-koku-jin (foreigner)' after receiving several complaints about the use of supposedly politically incorrect word 'gaijin,' but what kind of changes does this re-naming of the mask bring to the particular classification of whites in the Japanese society? The analysis investigates the discursive representation of whites as 'outsider' seen in the title of the mask, situating the issue within the context of the post-war Japan.

The Temporal Physical Transformation of the User into Mr. Gaijin (Separation)

The second section of my analyses examines the ways in which the mask categorizes whites/'gaijin' as a joke or a source of ridicule. The thesis suggests that the particular function and the performativity of the mask cause a separation of the self who wears the mask from what the mask transforms the self into (which is 'Mr. Gaijin'). The package of the mask explicitly categorizes itself by reading 'Party Joke' above the title. Classified as a joke, the mask transforms the user into the character 'Mr. Gaijin' which is carefully depicted in the drawing on the package. The analysis probes the ways in which the mask is designed to generate a parodical effect through the process of transformation/separation.

The Visual/Material Transformation of Whites into the Toy-Mask (Aestheticization)

Finally, the third section of the analyses deals with both the visual and material components of the mask. First, the visualization of the popularized image of whiteness is seen in the drawing of a man with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a prominent nose on the package. This mask is not the first to visualize whiteness in this way; in comic books, cartoons and TV shows this is often found. When did this particular visualization of whites begin? The thesis analyzes a few visual representations of whites found in the public media such as newspaper and early 20th century paintings. Then, the analysis continues onto looking at the material realization of this mask. Mr. *Gaijin*'s blue-eyes are made of paper stickers, and the nose rubbery plastic. The fact that these materials lower the cost of producing this merchandise enables/encourages the mass production. Both the visual and material representations of whiteness manifested in the mask work to repeat the existing visuality. What this mask visualizes is a citation of the already existing image of whites, and the mass production of the mask encourages its repetition. The thesis claims that this process results in aestheticizing the popularized image of whiteness in post-war Japan.

Chapter 5

The Discursive Transformation of Whites into Gaijin

Focusing on the label ‘gaijin’, the first part of the analysis of ‘Hello Mr. *Gaijin*’ explores the ways in which it embodies the complex nature of whiteness in post-war Japan. The label ‘gaijin’ is used in the title of the mask. Why is the product named ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin* (‘*Hello, Gaijin san*’ in Japanese)’ in the first place? What is the politics behind this persistent labeling of whites? The product was recently renamed as ‘Hi, I am Gaikokujin (‘*Hi, gaikokujin desu*’ in Japanese)’ after receiving several complaints about the use of what is claimed to be the politically incorrect word ‘gaijin,’ but even after the complaints the mask remained in the market continuing to entertain some people and leaving others uncomfortable to this day. How can we understand this particular representation of whites in Japan that does not seem to yield to the criticism? With the slightly modified title, the Gaijin mask manages to perpetuate the kind of whiteness that it is designed to portray. The first section of the analysis critically engages with the discursive representation of whites manifested in the mask through the analysis of both the original and the renewed title.

Barthes (1984) explains that there are two levels of meanings to be assessed in analyzing what is called the linguistic message: what the message conveys and the way it is conveyed. The linguistic message is usually in the form of the title and the labels of products and the captions that appear in cartoons. In the case of the *Gaijin* mask, this linguistic message is predominantly made of the title ‘Hello, Mr. *Gaijin*.’ Although there are other parts of the mask that contain linguistic significations including the ‘Party Joke’ line written on top of the title, the address and the phone number of the producer company, and the instructions as to how to use the mask written in Japanese, the title ‘Hello, Mr. Gaijin’ clearly plays the most significant role in defining the character and the nature of the product. As Mirzoeff (2011) indicates, the authorized operation

of visualization starts with classification that entails naming, categorizing and defining of the visualized object. The title of the mask indeed names, categorizes and defines what is represented in the mask. This chapter explores both the specific meanings that the title of the mask conveys and the specific ways in which the messages are carried in the title. It provides the context in which the word ‘gaijin’ came to refer almost exclusively to whites in contemporary Japan. In so doing, the analysis explores the complex power dynamics between the West and Japan in the climate of global white supremacy, which has greatly influenced the Japanese understanding of the self and Other since the late 19th.

How can we better understand the definition and the implications of the word ‘gaijin’? It can easily be assumed that the word ‘gaijin’ refers to the popularized characteristics of whites in Japan by simply looking at the mask. The combination of the title and the cartoonish drawing of a white man makes it explicit. This becomes a focal point to start my analysis of the mask, for the word ‘gaijin’ does not literally signify ‘whites’ but its literal translation is ‘outside person.’ The direct translation of ‘whites’ is ‘*haku-jin*’ which is literally ‘white-person.’ Why is there a need to call whites ‘gaijin’ instead of ‘*haku-jin*’ or anything else? Or more importantly, where does the word ‘gaijin’ come from in the first place? The Japanese dictionary Koujien (1998) gives three closely-related sets of meanings: people who are out of a circle; people who should be made enemies; foreigners. These definitions might suggest that the meaning of the word has been constructed to point to the boundaries that divide people into two relational categories: friends and foes, or home and foreign. Interestingly enough, the third definition that Koujien indicates differentiates itself from the first two in the sense that its boundaries are based on the notion of ‘nation’ while others allude to a rather ambiguous grouping like insider/outsider. The distinction of the first two from the third definition is indeed significant in interpreting the oldest example of the use of ‘gaijin,’ which is identified in *The Tale of the Heike* written in the 13th centuries. The sentence from this classic book, “arranging the army where there is no gaijin...” does not

necessarily imply this *gaijin* is a person from a foreign country as we might understand now. To the contrary, the *gaijin* here could highly be of a Japanese origin. In fact, ‘*gaijin*’ was used in this example to refer to the person or a group of people whom the narrator of the sentence was supposed to be fighting in the immediate battle, and nothing more. These battles in the 13th century were not the ones among what we now call ‘nations’ but more informal groups which can be characterized as ‘people outside their circle’ or ‘people from another village.’ This explains why the first two meanings of *gaijin* in the dictionary do not necessarily connote nationality or country of origin. It is only when the third meaning ‘foreigners’ comes in that the word *gaijin* refers to the national distinction.

As the example from *The Tale of the Heike* shows, it is clear that the word *gaijin* cannot simply be reduced to, or be replaced with, the word ‘foreigners (*gaikokujin*).’ The word ‘*gaijin*’ does not only refer to the fact that someone is from a foreign country, but more importantly—and originally—it connotes the binary distinction of the Self from Other. Put it another way, its meaning goes beyond the simple recognition of the difference in nationalities and further constructs a more fundamental difference; the difference that is crucial in constructing the boundary that constitutes ‘the inside’ and ‘the outside,’ or the Self and Other. ‘*Gaijin*,’ in the original sense, meant that people outside the boundary are different, therefore incompatible with those of us inside. This recognition of ‘the outside’ simultaneously works for ‘those inside’ to acquire the sense of the stable Self and belongingness. Speaking of this binary opposition of the Self and Other, Oshima (1990) explains that in Japan the construction of Other has been built around the physical features that are perceived to be markedly different from the Japanese self since the late 19th century. Furthermore, it is noted that the idea of seeing the West as Other has emerged in Japan around the Meiji Restoration in the late 19th century when the Japanese government began to invest exceedingly in the systematic importation of the Western knowledge and technologies (Seisen Kokugo Jiten, 1998).

As I mentioned in the earlier discussion, the word 'gaijin' is almost always used to refer to whites in contemporary Japan but is not limited to whites. This means that 'gaijin' does not completely mean the same as 'whites,' for there are occasions that the word is used to refer to non-whites. For example, regardless of the person's race, if he or she has some Western cultural attributes such as speaking English, they could be called 'gaijin,' but in such cases the word 'gaijin' refers to the person's Westernized nature (Sakata, 2009). Now, it makes more sense to understand the referent of the word 'gaijin' as a concept that signifies the nature of whiteness rather than whites as a biological race. We might even be able to say that this particular concept projected by the word 'gaijin' signifies the concept of whiteness. Then, does 'gaijin' simply refer to the superiority of whites? Or does it connote more than white supremacy? The reason why these questions can be negated is well represented in the negative reactions of whites, who saw the Gaijin mask as racist. The complaints the producer received were the ones about the use of 'gaijin' in the title. Being criticized to be racist for using the term, they ended up replacing the word with 'gaikokujin' in the title. Another example is from the interview I conducted for my master's thesis in Japan in 2009. One of my interview participants who was a white female having lived in Japan for more than 20 years talked to me about her experience of being white in Japan. She said, "At first, you just simply hate being called 'gaijin,' but after a while you realize, no matter what I do, even if I dye my blonde hair and have plastic surgery on my face, I will always be a 'gaijin': the eternal outsider." These two examples indicate the exclusive nature of the word 'gaijin.' It connotes the binary distinction of the Japanese as the Self from the foreign Other. Being called 'gaijin' is not quite the same as being called 'white,' for it goes beyond the simple racial categorization and it singles out the person for being the outsider. If 'gaijin' can be simply explained as a manifestation of global whiteness, those who are labeled as such should be desired and admired instead of being excluded as the outsiders who can never cross the binary border to become one of the insiders, the Japanese.

Having said that, a clarification is vital here as to the implications of white supremacy or whiteness the word ‘gaijin’ simultaneously carries. What I have attempted to demonstrate in the above discussion is not to say that all white experiences in Japan can be reduced to those of the disadvantaged minority group because of the Othering label. In fact, there are a number of sociological studies that show the significant manifestation of whiteness in the Japanese society. For instance, Lie (2003) explains that the evidential tendency of many Japanese companies using Caucasian models for their advertisements shows the shared sense of superiority being affixed to the white body in Japan. As long as the word ‘gaijin’ refers predominantly to whites in Japan, it necessarily bears the nature of whiteness. With that in mind, the discussion above attempted to further complicate the nature of whiteness manifested in Japan. In other words, the purpose of my thesis is not simply to demonstrate the examples of global white supremacy in the Japanese context, but it is to investigate the seemingly contradictory nature of whiteness represented in the mask of ‘Hello, Mr. Gaijin.’ In this sense, the Gaijin mask is a site of analysis where the power of whiteness is being negotiated and greatly complicated.

This dynamic negotiation of whiteness can be observed in the consistent use of *katakana* forms in both the original and the modified title. As Barthes (1984) indicated, the analysis also needs to look at the way in which the message is carried. Here, the *katakana* form, persistently used in the title(s), holds the significance to the meaning the mask project. *Katakana* is a form of Japanese writing that has been in use since the Heian era, and it is made out of simplified ancient Chinese characters (*kanji*). It was initially used for the purpose of simplifying the detailed Chinese writing, but in the contemporary Japanese society it is mainly used to symbolize the words borrowed from outside Japan (Koujien 1998). Now, these words written in *katakana* are mostly the ones borrowed from the Western European languages such as English for which there was no appropriate Japanese translation, i.e., computers, televisions and shampoos. Over time, *katakana* words themselves even began to carry the Western connotations. For example, in his

book “*Chijin no Ai*,” translated and published as “*Naomi*” in English, Tanizaki (1964) notes that, in order to reflect her ‘Western’ appearance and personalities, the heroine’s name needs be written in the *katakana* form. What Tanizaki meant by her ‘Western-ness’ is in fact the whiteness of her skin, her long straight legs and the bold round eyes, in addition to her sexually forward personality. Tanizaki consciously used the *katakana* form for her name in order to bring out the non-Japanese, Western elements of Naomi. Moreover, the *katakana* words are also used to vividly contrast the difference of Other with the Self. For instance, the English word ‘Asia’ was originally translated as ‘*ajia*’ in the Chinese characters in pre-war Japan. However, in the post-war political climate the same word began to be used in the *katakana* form. Lie (2003) points out that this shift reflects Japan’s political consciousness to detach oneself from the ‘inferior/defeated Asia’ by adapting the Western gaze towards Asia. The use of the *katakana* form enables Japan to imagine Asia as Other where Japan is not part of.

Then, how is the *katakana* form used in the mask of ‘Hello, Mr. Gaijin’? In the original title, it is used in the part ‘Hello.’ In the modified title, it is used in the part ‘Hi’ and ‘*desu*’ which I have translated as ‘I am’ in English. Since ‘Hello’ and ‘Hi’ are both English words, it could be that the *katakana* form is employed to demonstrate that Mr. *Gaijin* speaks English. What is intriguing here is that in the modified title, it is all written in the *katakana* form except for the word ‘gaikokujin’ in the Chinese characters, while in the original title ‘Hello’ is the only part in *katakana*. Why was there a need to change the form of the words in the title, instead of simply replacing the word ‘gaijin’ with the word ‘gaikokujin’? The company could have renamed it as ‘Hello, Mr. Gaikokujin’ since the complaints were about the use of the word ‘gaijin’ in the mask. One reason for their not doing so could be that ‘Mr. Gaikokujin’ does not carry the same implications that the original title did. As I demonstrated earlier, *gaikokujin* is not necessarily white but *gaijin* almost always is. In order for the mask’s title to represent the general idea of the mask, which is that it is a mask of a white man, the title needed to convey his whiteness somehow.

In this sense, the katakana writings do this by not only bringing in the Western feel to the revised title but also assuming the overtone of Otherness of 'gaijin'. With the use of katakana writings, the newly revised title resumes the thread of the particular representation of whites in Japan as the original title did. Even after the complaints on the word 'gaijin,' the mask manages to negotiate its way into (appropriately) constructing whites as Other/'gaijin.'

What is the significance in suggesting the gaijin mask as the medium that constructs whites as Other in the climate of global white supremacy? I have claimed that the particular representation of whites seen in the Gaijin mask sheds light on the dynamic negotiation of power between the West and Japan. If what Mills (1997) suggests about the global white supremacy applies to the post-war Japanese society, how can the othering of whites manifested in the mask be fully explained? The mask persistently depicts whiteness in a certain way; in fact, it works to (re)produce a discursive space of 'gaijin' that confines whites to a single identity of eternal outsiders. What I will demonstrate in the following discussion suggests the discursive space of 'gaijin' as a manifestation of identity politics exercised by the post-war Japanese society. The discussion captures post-war Japan's negotiation and reconstruction of their identity as 'Japanese' through the process of constructing whites as Other. In so doing, it provides an alternative perspective to the Western development of whiteness theory by significantly complicating the binary view of the white oppressor and the non-white oppressed.

The study of 'identity' is an ambiguous subject in the field of social science and it needs to be clarified as to how I am approaching this concept. The concept of 'identity' that I am talking about here needs to be understood in close relation to the politics of identity. The politics of identity refers specifically to the political movement in which the socially disadvantaged group of individuals work together to actively associate positive overtone with their formerly stigmatized identity (Oda, 2002). This means that the idea of identity is strategically employed by the individuals as a discursive platform for resisting and challenging their oppressions.

In the case of the Gaijin mask, I am suggesting a reading of the mask as a manifestation of the politics of identity by the Japanese¹⁶. That is, the identity of ‘Japanese’ is (re)constructed through the production of whites as Other, or ‘gaijin.’ In fact, Morean (1989) explains effectively this process of Othering of whites in Japan. He writes:

What makes Japan different from other parts of the Orient is that it appears to have developed in *nihonjinron*, or ‘discussions of the Japanese,’ a means whereby it can practice on the West precisely that kind of orientalism from which it has had to suffer, and to some extent still suffers, at the hands of Westerners (183-4).

What he is referring to as discussions of the Japanese is the popular discourse performed largely by the Japanese intellectuals about the Japanese as a reformed nation. During about 30 years from the end of WWII to the period called the first economic growth around the 70’s in Japan, there were over 700 publications regarding the reformation/rediscovery of Japan’s national identity (Lie, 2003). Those books eagerly talked about the way the rapid economic growth had equipped Japan with a newly reformed identity as a developed nation, providing it with the opportunity to actively engage in the construction of a positive national identity. In such writings, the discussions always stressed how effectively Japan had succeeded in emulating Western culture and technologies in comparison to other Asian countries (Lie, 2003; Dower, 2004).

What is most intriguing to analyze in the discussion of Japanese-ness is the way it fervently employed the idea of ‘*minzoku*.’ *Minzoku*, often translated as ‘ethnicity,’ is almost always used in association with the ethnic homogeneity and superiority. Pointing out the

¹⁶ I am aware that talking of the general grouping of ‘the Japanese’ could be problematic, for the politics of identity that I refer to here are mostly dominated by the Japanese intellectuals who had the authoritative space to vocalize and publish their voices on the issue. Also, as I mention in the later discussion, there are groups of ethnic/racial minorities in Japan who are forcibly reduced to the identity of ‘the Japanese’ without the recognition of their differences. Here, my conscious choice of selecting the word ‘the Japanese’ reflects the essentialist nature of the politics of identity. The politics of identity necessitates the uncritical grouping of social subjects into a single identity, discarding the differences among them in order to attain the powerful voice to resist an oppressive structure in the society. A classic example of this is the first wave feminist movement that was criticized for being racist and classist. Furthermore, the massive dissemination of the word ‘gaijin’ through multiple cultural forms including the mask indeed shows that the politics of identity manifested in the Gaijin mask do not stay within the small circle of intellectuals but has a powerful impact on the individuals in Japan regardless of their position.

nationalistic overtone of the word, Weiner (1994) explains that the myth of homogeneity was strategically employed in the process of identity politics disregarding the existence of cultural and ethnic minorities in Japan. This word *Minzoku* can also be translated as ‘race’ (Koujien, 1998) but it is not exactly the same as the direct translation of the Western concept, *jinshu* (race). Morean (ibid) goes on to explain how the word *jinshu* was first introduced as a translation of race, but through the process of Japan’s identity politics, *minzoku* took a far more important role. That is to say, the concept *minzoku* appropriates the mechanism of the concept ‘race,’ and works to further advance the theories of Japan’s reformed national nature. As I demonstrated in the second chapter, the Western notion of race logically assumes the White self. Goldberg (1993) also succinctly writes that the culture of racisms was invented as a way of furnishing white subjects with a coherent, superior racial identity. The racial categorization here builds up its hierarchy according to the whiteness of race. So, the reason why *minzoku*, rather than *jinshu*, was repeatedly utilized in the discussion of the Japanese is more than obvious. That is, *minzoku* appropriates the Western invention of the culture of racisms and constructs its own form of hierarchy that is based on racial purity instead of racial whiteness. In the hierarchy of *minzoku*, Japanese is constructed as the most pure, therefore superior, race, while *jinshu* inevitably constructs non-white Japanese as an inferior race.

Dower (2004) concludes that Japan found its way to affirm its reformed national identity by stressing its ethnic purity and homogeneity. However, the idea of Japan as an ethnically and racially pure country has been repeatedly discounted by a number of studies that prove Japan’s multicultural-ness (Morean, 1989; Aoki, 1990; Siddle, 1994; Ryang, 2002; Lie 2003; Iwabuchi, 2004; Kim, 2004). Then, one might wonder where the idea derives from. Morean (1989) explains that the idea that Japan is a homogeneous country did not originate in Japan, but in fact it was brought by and reflected in the European and American understanding of Japan. He writes that “the ideals put forward by contemporary Japanese about their society and culture are firmly

founded in Western, rather than in purely Japanese, images of Japan” (183). Similarly, Lie (2003) indicates that what Ruth Benedict wrote in her book “*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*” in 1948 about the Japanese culture had a remarkable impact on what Japanese intellectuals understood to be the nature of Japanese culture. What were constructed as inherent Japanese characteristics by those who participated in the discussion of the Japanese was actually a reflection of the Western understanding of Japan. The idea of the Japanese ‘rediscovered’ by the Japanese intellectuals did not derive from their own perception of the self, but it was the idea that was envisioned by the West in comparison to their own culture. The difference that was perceived by the West, in the end, was internalized as natural and intrinsic by the Japanese through discussions of what is Japanese. Consequently, post-war Japan’s understanding of the self necessitates the imagining of the West as Other; that is, the West is constructed as something that Japan is not; something that fundamentally differentiates Japan.

The binary imagination of the Self and Other manifested in the discourse of Japanese-ness simultaneously constructs the West as non-Japanese, or Other, while the establishment of the Self as Japanese becomes stable and complete. What is inside the boundary of ‘the Japanese’ becomes clearer when the outside of the boundary is well-defined. What Morean (1989) explained about the difference between *jinshu* and *minzoku* is pertinent to this binary of the Self and Other. *Jinshu* or race, as Goldberg (1993) also indicated, worked to imagine the white Self by creating the non-white Other(s), while the concept of *Minzoku* allowed the Japanese to imagine the (racial) Self by transforming ‘whites’ into ‘gaijin (outside person)’; someone who is outside (gai) the boundary that defines the Japanese self. However, this is not to say that whites are the only ones who are Othered because of their different body and culture. Indeed, the white body and the Western culture has been set up as the marker of their Otherness. As a white female participant in my interview resented, no matter how long she lives in Japan and how much she learned to speak Japanese, her physicality as white invites people to perceive her as ‘gaijin.’ Yet,

under the development of the kind of nationalistic discourse on Japan being the homogeneous country, a number of cultural/ethnic minorities were rendered invisible in Japan because of the seemingly less significant differences in their body and culture than those of whites. Referring to the resident Koreans¹⁷, Iwabuchi (2004) points out the problematic situation where they are thought to be the ‘privileged’ minority in Japan due to their ‘passable’ physical characteristics. Not to mention the deliberate legal and everyday discriminations¹⁸ they have faced that lie hidden because of the uncritical assumption of them being ‘privileged,’ the myth of Japan’s homogeneity works to render it all the more difficult for the resident Koreans to assert their differences. Kim (2004) keenly adds that the myth of homogeneous Japan fails to ensure the rights of ethnic and language education for the cultural/ethnic/racial minorities.

The binary distinction of the Japanese Self and non-white Other resulted in bringing in the particular culture of racisms in post-war Japan that confines whites to the space of eternal outsider while rendering the internal Others including the resident Koreans invisible and marginalized. Creighton (1997) describes this complex relation of two different types of Otherness as *soto* (outside) Others and *uchi* (inside) Others. She explains that *uchi* Others—the minority groups including the resident Koreans and Ainu people who live inside Japan—are placed in a contradictory living situation where the myth of national homogeneity forces them to either assimilate or become marginalized. On the other hand, *soto* Others—the Western ideals and individuals for which the modern Japanese society strives—provide the fundamental difference that Japan differentiates itself from, ultimately rendering the reflective construction of

¹⁷ In this paper I use the term “the resident Koreans” as the translation of the Japanese word *Zainichi Kankokujin*, which is claimed to be the appropriate label to denote the politics and the crucial history of Japan’s colonization of Korea in 1910 as well as the assimilation policies imposed on those who were forced to live in Japan even after the colonization period officially ended in 1945 because of the political and economical reasons (Kim, 2004).

¹⁸ As to the legal situations of the resident Koreans in Japan since the annexation of Korea by the imperial Japan in 1910, De Vos and Lee (1981) explains the governments’ unequal treatments of them as second class citizens. Even though all the citizens of the imperial Japan were proposed to be the equal children of the emperor, it was not until 1925 that it became legal for Korean males to vote in elections, and even then most of them were not able to pass the strict qualification standards.

homogeneous Japan possible. As the notion of *minzoku* that Morean (1989) suggested, Creighton's idea of *soto* Others also coincides with what the word '*gaijin*' represents. It is the particular kind of whiteness that is desired and aspired while simultaneously being placed on the outside (*gai*) of what constitutes 'the Japanese.' As the example of the frequent use of white models in the media shows, the white body and its cultural traits are clearly the desired object in post-war Japan. Yet, what the Gaijin mask implicates is the kind of whiteness that is mocked and ridiculed. It is this critical complexity of whiteness that the mask presents that needs to be thoroughly investigated. In this sense, the analysis focusing on the title of the Gaijin mask verified the crucial necessity in complicating the Western-centric theory of whiteness, for it explicitly demonstrates the kind of whiteness representations in Japan that cannot be fully explained within the conventional framework of global white supremacy.

Chapter 6

The Temporal Physical Transformation of the User into Mr. Gaijin

Critically responding to the Western theorists' suggestion that today's global culture of racisms is the continuum of their modern invention¹⁹, the thesis proposes a careful reexamination of this claim. Specifically, the particular development of the culture of racisms in Japan is explored through the analysis of the mask of 'Hello Mr. *Gaijin*.' The analysis posits the crucial possibility that the culture of racisms had also existed in Japan separately from the Western invention in the modern era and that the Japanese racist culture did not necessarily assume whites were the most superior race as Western theories insist. In this sense, the thesis proposes an alternate approach to the studies of race that reflects the particularities of the racial thinking in Japan, and the *Gaijin* mask provides a significant site of analysis that the culture of racisms is manifested in a way that contradicts the Western racial thinking. The analysis conducted in the thesis focuses on three kinds of transformations: the discursive transformation of whites into gaijin; the temporal physical transformation of the user into Mr. Gaijin; and the visual and material transformation of whites into the toy-mask. The first part of the analysis specifically discussed the historical and political background of the word 'gaijin' which is used in the title. Here, the second part of the analysis looks at the technical way the mask equips the user with the blue-eye stickers and the rubber nose, and how this 'attempted' transformation or mimicry is set up to be a joke and a source of ridicule. In so doing, the chapter details the technical mechanism of the mask and how it may restrict the user's physical engagement with the mask.

In comparison to other delicate entertainment products such as the Dracula masks, the Gaijin mask I found at the store was inexpensive; the Dracula mask was priced at 2,000 yen while

¹⁹ By 'Western theorists' I am referring to theorists I mainly dealt with in the second chapter such as Goldberg (1993), Garner (2007) and Mills (1997) who developed their theoretical understanding of the global racist culture by limiting their focus to the history of Western racial experiences.

the Gaijin mask was 399 yen²⁰. Not being sure what to think of this strange mask of a white man, I ended up purchasing it mostly out of curiosity. It was not simply the concept of the mask that attracted me and eventually convinced me into buying it, but it was rather the visuality and the materiality of the mask. Of course, the low price also did not stop me from being curious. I wanted to actually touch the plastic nose with my own hands, try putting the eye-stickers and the nose on my face, and see what it will look like on me. Mirzoeff (1998) explains the postmodern visual culture is a culture that “is concerned with visual events in which information, meaning or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology” (3) I was indeed what Mirzoeff depicted: the consumer who sought pleasure in the interaction with the mask that, through its visual and material technology, transforms my face into that of Mr. Gaijin. Judging from the persistence of the product’s presence in the market and the strategic (slight) adjustment of its title, it is more than likely that I am a rare example. In the visual culture, the visual events are made easily accessible to the public. The mask indeed is the manifestation of this culture that invites the mass to participate in various forms of visual events. This chapter critically explores the implication of one’s—often pleasurable—participation in such visual cultural experiences through the analysis of the Gaijin mask.

How is the mask envisioned to be used? What kind of particular interaction does the mask expect from the user? On the mask’s package just underneath the facial parts, there is a short line of warning to the user. It says, ‘This product should not be used by those who have sensitive skin (It might cause some irritation).’ And on the space around the blue-eye stickers, it has a very simple instruction on how to use the stickers: ‘Please close your eyes and place the stickers on your eyelids.’ As it is clear from these instructions, the mask is designed to not only directly stick to the user’s skin but also to temporarily blind the user. By having the blue-eye stickers on his/her own eyes, the user loses his/her sight for as long as the mask is on. As for the

²⁰ One Japanese yen roughly equals 79 Canadian cents according to the exchange rate on May 8th, 2012. (Information retrieved on May 8th, 2012, from <http://ja.exchange-rates.org/>)

nose part, the hole is sufficiently large to enable the user to breathe. It is not so much the nose but the blue-eye stickers that greatly restrict the kind of behaviors the user can engage in with the mask on. Since the user is temporarily unable to see, s/he would feel less willing and comfortable to move around. This can also lead the mask to control the amount of time it stays on the user. As well, the user is prohibited from witnessing the reactions of his/her audience because of the stickers on the eyes. Both the adhesive tapes used for the inside of the nose and the eye stickers limit the number of times that the user can use the product as the adhesion wears away after a few uses.

These material/structural restrictions greatly contribute to the conformity in the ways in which the mask can be used. Then the next question is: what exactly does the user do once s/he has the mask on? What kind of performance(s) does s/he engage in²¹? In approaching these questions, it helps to analyze the way the mask is packaged and designed. Bonnett (2006), in his analysis of Grey Owl's racial imitation of 'Indian' through the employment of facial expressions, suggests that facial features work as a reliable symbol to signify a certain race when one observes them in combination with other parts of his act such as costumes and gestures. Likewise, in order for the Gaijin mask to work properly—as in it works to give the user the sense of transformation into Mr. Gaijin, it requires to be used in combination with other 'gaijin-like' behaviors. And such 'gaijin-like' behaviors are certainly inscribed onto the mask's package. The first and the most obvious (and probably most effective) one is the illustration of Mr. Gaijin. The drawing captures his chest above, and his gesture and costume along with his facial features significantly characterize Mr. Gaijin. Specifically, his pink suit with the blue bow-tie almost reminds one of

²¹ Asking these questions do not imply that the mask has the absolute control over the user's ways of interacting with the mask. As Hayles (1999) suggests, in using the concept of 'post-human' or interface, I understand subjectivity to be found in the interface where the multiple complex components including the user's body parts, the technological systems, and the visual imagery meet. She writes "(t)he posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). With the limited time and space, the thesis, however, was unable to conduct a more systematic research that also looks at the ways in which the mask's interface is continually negotiated by the user's dynamic engagements.

either a comedian or a Master of Ceremonies for a TV show. The vivid colours of his costume distinguish the character from being seen as that of a businessman. His hands being raised up to his ear level even encourages this assumption as it seems that he is attempting to attract the audience's attention. The facial expression with his widely grinning mouth accentuates his character as an entertainer. The head line 'PARTY JOKE' above the illustration works well to associate the character with the fun and joyful image. Then, the other significant part of the mask that can influence the user's performance is what is written in the title. The title 'Hello, Mr. Gaijin (*Haro, gaijin-san* in the Japanese original title)' indicates that Mr. Gaijin speaks English. The first thing that the user might say is more likely to be something like a simple 'hello!'

These possible performances can be interpreted as mimicry of whites, but, the thesis goes further to suggest that the Mr. Gaijin character is an American. Whites, specifically referring to men, have traditionally been depicted in a way that resembles the facial features of Mr. Gaijin in Japan. As I will explore in detail in Chapter 7, the depiction of whites seen in the mid-Edo period (the 18th century) also show the prominent nose and the animated gesture. In fact, Screech (1995) conducts a series of analyses on drawings from the 18th century when there was a rapid growth in the number of Europeans coming into Japan for trades and missions, and examines how such Europeans were seen and imagined. Contrary to the characteristics that conform to those of the mask, there is one significant factor that differentiates the mask from such older illustrations of whites; it is the costume of Mr. Gaijin. As I mentioned earlier, the colours and the design of his costume along with the facial features and gestures invite one to characterize him as some sort of an entertainer. And this is the element that differentiates Mr. Gaijin from a general category of 'whites' and distinguishes him as an American. Yoshimi (2007) indicates that around the 1920s in Japan, the American influence shifted from the political to the cultural. The consumption of American culture such as theaters, movies, and music grew even more rapidly during the American occupation after WWII. Different from the particular encounters with the Europeans

visualized in the Edo era, the representation and imagination of whites now strongly rely on their cultural and entertaining aspects. While the 18th century drawings depict whites in the European style clothes (a white blouse, a long dark-coloured jacket, and white stockings)—which made Europeans look more exotic at the time (Screech, 1995)—the mask exoticizes him with the showy costume. As the encounters with whites/Americans in Japan since the early 20th century have mostly taken place either at theaters or through TV, whites became increasingly to be imagined and visualized as a source of entertainment.

If we can assume the Mr. Gaijin character to be American, then, what can be interpreted from the mask? The mask invites the imitation of the American image. What does it mean to mimic an American man in Japan? And furthermore, how does wearing this mask become a joke? These questions require a careful examination as Japanese relations with the U.S. have become crucial and complex especially since their seven years of occupation in Japan. The unique nature of American occupation in Japan is often symbolized with their post-war treatment of the Japanese emperor. On this, referring to the famous photo of General MacArthur and the emperor Hirohito taken right after Japan's defeat in 1945, Dower (1999) explains that the photo is symbolic of the critical relationship the American force initiated with Japan. In the photo, General MacArthur casually stands by the emperor who appears very proper with his formal clothes and posture. Dower notes that it indicates the U. S. force's strategic employment of the emperor as their partner and that they are there not as a threat that controls and dictates the defeated nation but as a valuable support to its post-war recovery and reformation. And as Yoshimi (2007) further suggests, post-war Japan's (economic and material) recovery was in great part brought by the massive consumption of American cultural products in addition to the complete obliteration of Japan's colonial history with the neighboring Asian countries. The capitalistic relationship put forth by the American force was constructed upon the premise of forgetting Japan's intra-Asian colonial conducts and keeping its imperial structure alive. Through this systematically operated

obliteration of certain history, America became the object of Japan's capitalistic desire. America is now the desirable Other that is to be actively internalized and consumed in 20th century Japan.

The fact that the mask is made to be a joke also brings an interesting insight to the idea of America as the consumable Other. As the obvious examples of imported American cultural products such as Hollywood movies and hip hop music might indicate, the image of America is transformed into a form that is pleasurable and enjoyable in Japan. Consumption of American culture does not need enforcement or coercion; it is the pleasurable experience that is desired and sought after. The music notes that are added to the both ends of the head line 'PARTY JOKE' on the mask's package also suggest the product to be seen in a fun and delightful—and also non-political—manner. Furthermore, the crucial point is that this consumption of the mask as a joke is fulfilled only when the user becomes temporarily blinded. In using the mask, the user has no choice but closing ones' own eyes and placing the blue-eye stickers over them. His/her own eyes stop functioning for a short while the mask is being consumed and the user's performance as Mr. Gaijin takes place. In this sense, the consumption of the Gaijin mask demands of the user a temporal erasure of his/her own persona.

This temporality of loss, as opposed to a loss that can be eternal, could be theorized as one of the sources that render the mask an innocent, enjoyable joke. Because of the mask's structural design, the user would only be wearing the facial parts for a couple of minutes. The user's transformation into Mr. Gaijin is only a temporal matter, and this may be the cause of the mask's parodic effect that differentiates it from other forms of white imitations such as cosmetic surgery. Gilman (1999) illustrates a story of a Japanese woman named Mariko who spent 1.5 million dollars on a surgery to widen her eyes and modify her facial structure. The mask, on the other hand, can be removed at any point by the user and the transformation does not leave any physical trace/scar. It creates an instant 'mis-transformation.' In fact, the mask can be understood to be parodying such physical desire to transform one's own body to simulate whiteness. Dentith

(2000) conceptualizes parody to be the act of implicit criticism and indicates that such criticisms are directed to the imitated social text. What the Gaijin mask is imitating is not simply an American man, but it is also implicitly imitating the ambivalence of such racial transgression. Bhabha (1984) writes about the ambivalence of mimicry as “almost but not quite” and explains that “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (126). In other words, mimicry does not precisely re-produce the mimicked object but it repeats it by producing a difference. In this sense, what the user is transformed into with the Gaijin mask is neither Mr. Gaijin nor a white person; what is left after the ‘attempted’ transformation is the user who *failed* to reproduce Mr. Gaijin. And this failure, or the ambivalent effect of transformation, is indeed what generates laughter and pleasure.

As Yoshimi (2007) proposed, American cultural influence has held significance in post-war Japan and its process of reformation. America is now the object of desire and consumption. And what is analyzed in the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ is the white body that is exoticized for Japanese consumption. The image of America is repeatedly imagined to be consumed, and such repetitive—and pleasurable—consumption perpetuates a certain imagination of whites and continues to render them the racialized object of capitalistic desire. This ambiguous nature of whiteness in the post-war Japan suggested by Yoshimi explicates well the contradictory sentiment towards whites that is manifested in the Gaijin mask. What the character Mr. Gaijin symbolizes is the humorously transformed white body to be consumed; the white body is transformed into the source of consumable entertainment as well as racial mockery. His white race is indeed what makes his body desirable to be consumed. And furthermore, this capitalization of American is made possible through the obliteration of Japan’s colonial relationships within Asia. In focusing on the unique context of post-war Japan, this chapter explored the social implications of the mask’s material structure and its transformative effect. The analysis of racial thinking through the

specific example of the Gaijin mask sheds critical light on this ambiguous nature of whiteness for which the theories on race led by the exclusive focus on the Western racial history may fail to account.

Chapter 7

The Visual and Material Transformation of Whites into the Toy-Mask

In explaining the concept of ‘visuality,’ Mirzoeff (2011) explicates that the term signifies an ability of authority to assemble a particular visual reality that is imagined—and not perceived—from acquired information, images, and ideas. Such a visualized reality represents an authorized point of view that carefully arranges and regulates the relations of the visible. The mask of the ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin,’ in a similar way, manifests a visualized reality that is designed to make sense to those who are in authority in Japan. What is represented in the mask is the specific way that whites are imagined to be in Japan, and it certainly reflects the historical representation/imagination of whites in Japan. Mirzoeff (2011) explains the operational process of the visuality and its final stage is the aestheticization of what is imagined and visualized. Certain visualization is repeated over and over through a long period of time, and it finally comes to be regarded as ‘right’ and ‘aesthetic.’ What is seen in the visual image of the Gaijin mask is in fact this process of aestheticization; whites have been repeatedly visualized in this way for centuries since the first ‘discovery’ of whites by the Japanese in the late 16th century. This chapter looks at the particular ways in which whites are visually imagined by investigating various images of whites from different time periods. Furthermore, the chapter probes into the particular ways in which the mask is materially realized and how these material aspects enable—or reinforce—the dissemination of the visualized image of whites.

When I saw the Gaijin mask in Japan for the first time, I immediately recognized the popularized representation of whites that was used in the mask. I remembered seeing the image somewhere else before, perhaps in some comic books I read a while ago or in cartoons I watched on TV as a child. The familiarity of this ‘gaijin’ image made me wonder where I have seen it last time but could never remember it exactly, but I recognized that whites have always been depicted

with certain characteristics: blonde hair, prominent nose and the blue eyes. And they were always called 'gaijin.' The sense of familiarity I felt with this image might be somehow close to the sense of aesthetics in Mirzoeff's term for I did not find the image inappropriate or wrong until I read its reviews indicating the racist nature of the mask. The political nature of the mask could easily be overlooked because of its familiarity. As an attempt to verify the uniformity of whites' representation in Japan, I searched visual images of 'gaijin' on the Google Image website. I typed in 'gaijin, illustrations' in Japanese and looked at the first five images that came up on the screen (Figure 2). Except for the third image that is a comedic drawing of Johnny Depp, all the images have at least one of the characteristics manifested in the mask. The first image is a guy in a suit with brown hair and an exaggerated nose saying 'hello' with his both hands up, which precisely resembles the posture of the pink-suited Mr. Gaijin of the mask. The exception is, his formal tie indicates that he is a business man or an English teacher while Mr. *Gaijin*'s bow tie makes him look more like a Master of Ceremonies or a comedian performing on a TV show. The other three images depict characters with blonde hair; two of them have blue-eyed male/female characters. The titles of these images also signify that they are Americans. For instance, the name of the first two images are 'Steve, the American (*Amerika jin no Steve*),' and 'young American man (*Amerika no niisan*).' As these Google images show, the word 'gaijin' almost always accompanies a certain visualization of whites that is repeatedly and ubiquitously manifested in contemporary Japan, which normalizes the particular way of imagining Other/'gaijin.' That is to say, the visual image of Whites, in a similar way the linguistic form 'gaijin' did, works as an apparatus that transforms Whites into the signs of Otherness.

As Mirzoeff (2011) demonstrated, visualizing was used as a way of imagining, interpreting, and controlling Other(s) by the European colonizers. How has visualizing acquired such importance? What is the significant element of the visual that differentiates itself from other forms of representation such as the linguistic? In explaining the field of visual culture as an

intellectual discipline, Mirzoeff (1998) writes that it critically investigates “the modern tendency to picture or visualize existence” (6). Indeed, there appears to be the recent tendency of visualizing cultural forms that have been originally developed through print media. Best-seller books are often turned into movies and DVDs, and one’s process of memory-making is no longer dependent only on writing diaries but relies largely on pictures and photos. The mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ is designed in a way that assists users to visualize exactly what Mr. Gaijin looks like by occupying half of the package with a drawing of the white man. It is almost as though the literal title ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ is not enough to communicate the product’s intention. Mirzoeff (2011) also writes that “visualizing does not replace linguistic discourse but makes it more comprehensible, quicker and more effective” (7). Surely, if the mask does not have the drawing of the man, it would not characterize the plastic nose and blue-eye stickers as effectively as the mask with the drawing, but how is this so? In the next part of the analysis, the thesis specifically investigates the crucial significance that this visual image of the white man has to the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ in producing a particular representation of whiteness in Japan.

W. J. T. Mitchell (1996) posited the imperative question for the field of visual study: “what do pictures really want?” What is problematized in this question is the easily assumed position of the observer vis-à-vis the observed/the object. Pictures and drawings have traditionally and uncritically been assigned the position of the silent object. Mitchell sees the correlation in this with the earlier trend in anthropological studies on marginalized cultural groups, where researchers conduct the fieldwork and ‘discover’ various rituals and social rules within local tribes. The question he posed does not ask what the marginalized groups ‘do,’ but instead it asks what they ‘want.’ By looking at the relation of the observer-the observed in this term, Mitchell proposes not only to find the sense of subjectivity in the conduct of the objects, but also to diminish the autonomy of the observer. What a person gets out of a certain object is not simply the subjective interpretation of the person, but it is now the collaborative work of the object and

the observer. This does not imply that any kind of interpretations are always already determined by the objects, but it certainly questions the significance of human autonomy in interpretation. Furthermore, it promotes a way of looking at visual images beyond simple duplication of the original subject and captures the visual as a holistic entity that could communicate something to us. Being informed by the approach W. J. T. Mitchell suggested, the thesis critically analyzes the visual parts of the Gaijin mask in the following discussion.

What do the mask's visual parts really want from us, then? The Gaijin mask is mainly composed of the title, the drawing of Mr. Gaijin, and the actual mask (the nose and eyes). When I talk about the visual parts of the mask in this discussion, I am talking about the drawing of Mr. Gaijin which takes more than a quarter of the whole package. In fact, the drawing was one of the first few things that caught my eyes when I first saw this product. It was this cartoonish figure and not the actual mask parts that stopped me right in front of it. The visual message(s) is incredibly significant to the mask in this sense. How is it significant? First, along with the title 'Hello Mr. Gaijin'—in which the word 'gaijin' is stressed in red while other letters are printed in dark purple, the figure of Mr. Gaijin works to give you the instant effective explanation as to what the product is all about. The visual image of 'Mr. Gaijin' explains to the audience that what the mask contains in its plastic bag are the eyes and the nose of the character drawn on the package. In fact, nowhere does this package explicitly state that the product is a partial face mask, but instead, the drawing of Mr. Gaijin has two arrows each pointing to his eye and nose specifying 'eye' and 'nose' in Japanese. As Barthes (1984) demonstrates in his analysis of a Panzani²² advertisement, the label 'Panzani' printed on the packages of pasta and canned sauce in the ad becomes the sign of what the ad wants from the audience: simply, it wants the audience to go buy Panzani products. In the case of the Gaijin mask, it is the drawing of the white man that

²²Panzani is a British company that sells produces such as pasta and pasta sauces.

tells the audience what this mask wants them to do. The arrows pointing at his eye and nose tell its user to situate the actual parts (blue-eye stickers and rubbery nose) within the drawn white man, and insinuate that these facial parts are supposed to work as a mask with which the user can transform into the Mr. Gaijin character. The visual image of Mr. Gaijin leads its user to vividly imagine the character that s/he is transforming into. In this sense, the drawing holds its significance in shaping how the user interacts with the mask.

Secondly, the visual image of Mr. Gaijin significantly shapes the meaning of the title and the certain representation of whites in Japan. As I discussed in Chapter 5-1, the word 'gaijin' is not equivalent to the word 'whites' even though it is used predominantly for whites in Japan. What the word 'gaijin' has traditionally meant is the fundamental binary distinction of the Self and Other(s). By juxtaposing the visual image of the white man with the word 'gaijin,' the mask perpetuates the kind of representation of whites that the word indicates. With the drawing being placed side by side with the title, space for other interpretation of what the word refers to is extremely limited. Simultaneously, whites are encouraged to be seen as 'gaijin' as the image suggests itself to be understood in a close relation with the title. In essence, both the drawing of the white man and the title work together to reinforce each other's correlated meaning. Has the word 'gaijin' always accompanied the kind of visual image that the drawing presents? And similarly, have whites been always depicted as 'gaijin'? As the Google images I collected show, it seems quite plausible to say that the word 'gaijin' elicits visualized figures that have similar characteristics to that of the Mr. Gaijin character of the mask. Also, I demonstrated in Chapter 5 that the word 'gaijin' almost always signifies whites. In addition, in it I also discussed that the word 'gaijin' is not the only word that had historically implicitly signified whites. There were at least '*nanban*,' '*koumou*,' and '*ijin*' that had been used to refer to whites since the 16th century. Were those terms also accompanied with visual images like the contemporary term 'gaijin' does? If so, do they resemble the characteristics of the Mr. Gaijin drawing? In answering these

questions, the next section attempts to trace back the origin of the particular representation of whites manifested in the ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ mask. In so doing, the thesis suggests a reading of the visualization of whites that is specific to the historical context of Japan in which Japan had developed a particular relationship with the West since the encounter in the 16th century.

When did the visualization of whites begin in the first place? And how does it resemble the particular representation realized in the mask of Hello Mr. Gaijin? In looking into these questions, the thesis explores the origin(s) of the contemporary ‘gaijin’ image and explains the historical background of the particular ‘gaijin’ representation that is omnipresent in today’s Japan. As I mentioned earlier, the 18th century was the period where Japan’s encounter with the West became prevalent in Japan. Even though there were visitors and residents from the West—mostly from Portugal and Spain—in Japan as early as the 16th centuries, any form of the record of them such as writing and drawing is significantly scarce when compared with the materials found from the 18th century onward. Within the available sources, this section of the thesis deals specifically with two drawings: one of a German doctor, Philipp Franz von Siebold (Figure 3), and the other of Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry from the United States (Figure 4). Both of the drawings are of persons who were considered to be socially important and influential at the times of their visits, and therefore, visualizing them in a way that can be distributed to a wider audience could also hold significance. Such visualization was conducted mostly through drawings of figures.

The first image is the illustration of the German doctor Siebold. Siebold is said to be one of the most famous Westerners in Japan during the Edo period. The drawing is accompanied by a brief explanation of what he was wearing at the time this picture was drawn on the left side of the figure. On the right side, the painter’s account of Siebold’s profile is written: his name and his age, in addition to his country of origin²³. His legs are casually spread and each of his arms is

²³ Interestingly, the drawing introduces Siebold as ‘a Dutch doctor’ although he is a German doctor. This description significantly reflects the Edo period’s popularized understanding of any (European) foreigners being Dutch. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, the Edo period had an exclusive trade contract with the Dutch

resting on both sides of his hip. The most interesting part of the drawing is in the space above the description of his clothes, there is a drawing of an eye. The eye is drawn almost three times as big as the eyes of Siebold, and it is wide open, looking directly at the audience. While the figure of Siebold himself is drawn from his left side, ending up making it look like Siebold is looking away from the audience, the eye drawn on the side of the paper is directly gazing into the audience. Screech (1995) analyzes this single eye in the portrait of Siebold and suggests that the eye of the Europeans is depicted as a symbol of their ‘Otherness.’ He writes “this eye was seen to be the strangest part of the Europeans and therefore the symbol of their physical Otherness. It was their strange eyes that constructed the epistemological foundation which renders the Europeans ‘Other’ to the Japanese²⁴” (74). Likewise, Screech (ibid) points out that, along with the stressed Otherness of Siebold’s eyes, his posture implicitly signifies his foreignness, indicating that paintings of the Europeans during the 18th century vividly capture their difference in mannerisms and gestures from Japanese. The foreignness of Siebold’s body is characterized through the lively use of his arms and legs. An 18th-century Japanese painting of a Dutch sitting on a chair, cited in Screech (ibid), also exaggerates the dynamic way the figure moves his arms and legs around. The figure in the painting has his one arm holding his pipe and the other one widely spread to the side as if he is explaining something emphatically.

These two points that the thesis takes from the drawing of Siebold, in fact, coincide with the drawing of Mr. Gaijin on the mask. First of all, the significance attached to his eyes can easily be identified when one sees the mask’s facial parts, the blue-eye stickers that are designed to stick to the user’s eyes. The blue eyes of the mask, along with the rubbery nose, strongly define the character of the mask. Because of the blue eyes, the user can mistakenly transfer him or herself

throughout the 18th century and because of that people assumed that any Europeans they saw were the Dutch. Likewise, the word ‘*koumoujin* (red haired people)’ almost always referred to the Dutch.

²⁴The translation from Japanese was done by the author.

into a white man. As the Siebold's portrait explicitly indicates, the eyes are the sign of their difference and the sign of their 'Otherness.' Secondly, the bodily composition of Mr. Gaijin resembles the 18th-century painting of the Dutch man sitting on a chair. Both of their hands are separated from their torsos, placed in the air (or holding a pipe), and being slightly bent at the elbows. This (foreign) movement shown through the arms can also be seen in the portrait of Siebold as his arms are bent with his wrists resting at his hip-bones. Both of these bodily features—the eyes and the gesture—work to connote his foreignness. Likewise, the drawing of the white man that appears in the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' carries over the sense of Otherness by borrowing the specific characteristics that these 18th-century paintings have. Even when the mask's package was renewed, these two parts—the eyes and the gesture—were never modified. These are the central parts to the mask so as to communicate the difference and the strangeness of whites to Japanese.

The second source is the drawing of Commodore Perry illustrated in the 19th century. In arriving at the port of *Uraga* in 1853, Perry demanded Japan to cease the exclusive trade with Holland and open its doors to the United States. The incident brought Japan a significant influence in its commerce, politics, and culture. Perry's photographs and drawings were disseminated over all the country. One of those drawings is the one that I am analyzing in this section. This drawing of Perry is known as '*tengu*' Perry because of the long nose that is being drawn. '*Tengu*' is a Japanese long-nosed goblin that is said to be half human and half monster and appears in Japanese traditional folklores and arts. The fact that his facial feature is centered around the long prominent nose indicates the Japanese significant obsession with identifying difference through the nose. His nose was exaggerated in characterizing Perry as a foreign strange figure. In a similar way the eyes of the Europeans were seen to be the sign of their difference, here, his racial difference was depicted through the prominence of his nose. Likewise, this is also the case in the drawing of the German doctor Siebold. One cannot avoid noticing his distinct nose

compared to the other parts of his facial parts. It goes without saying that this trend of dramatization of the nose in foreign body is observed in the mask of ‘Hello, Mr. Gaijin.’ As the mask is often referred to as ‘the Gaijin nose’ in English²⁵, the prominent nose indeed holds significance in characterizing the Mr. Gaijin character.

Looking closely at the Gaijin mask, the significance of the rubbery nose to this product is unequivocal. It is certainly manifested in the drawing, but what is even more obvious to see are the size and the quality of the rubbery nose. The mask’s composition is very simple; it is made of only two entities: the paper eye-stickers and the rubbery nose. Yet again, one cannot help but notice that the nose is the central part to this product. In comparison to the material of the eyes that are made out of paper, the rubber material of the nose gives a more humanlike feel to it with its curvy flexible shapes. It is clear that a big part of the energy and money to make this product was used for the nose and not for the eyes. Analyzing the nose as a sign of racial difference, Gilman (1999) summarizes that in the European societies since the 18th century, racial differences and its hierarchy had been marked and constructed by the shape and the size of the nose of different racial groups. For instance, the black nose and Jewish nose were each differentiated precisely from whites’ nose in its size and shape. And such differences have become the sign of racial deformity of non-whites while demarcating whites as a superior race. Here, however, in the Gaijin mask, the nose of whites is significantly distorted and ridiculed. The white nose does not equate with the sense of beauty and superiority. In fact, it is the sign of its Otherness and strangeness²⁶, and a crucial point where the global whiteness theory is further complicated.

²⁵ On the website Japan Probe, the mask is often referred to as the Gaijin nose or “Hello Gaijin-san nose.” (Refer to <http://www.japanprobe.com/2010/11/26/no-complaints-received-about-hello-gaijin-san-nose/>)

²⁶ Although the white nose is the sign of difference and Otherness, this does not mean its complete deformity. As it is discussed in the first chapter, the European aesthetics has been normalized in contemporary Japan. What is manifested in the mask is not simply the degradation of the European beauty but it is rather the contradictory sentiment towards white body. In citing Franz Fanon, W. J. T Mitchell (1996) calls this ambivalent force “abomination and adoration” (75). In today’s Japan, white body is the target of adoration in cases where white models are frequently employed to be on big-scale billboards, but simultaneously it is the target of abomination as it is seen in the distorted nose of the Gaijin mask. The aim of the thesis is to capture this contradictory, but coinciding, sense of Otherness that is prevalent in the

Whites are rendered racialized/Othered by their very nose which has historically constructed themselves as the superior race.

Going back to the images that I retrieved from the Google Image website, along with the Gaijin mask's figure, these defining characteristics of whites—the eyes, the gesture, and the nose—are still prevalent in visualizing whites in today's Japan. It confirms that these visualizing tactics have been in use for more than three centuries. What these analyses indicate is the ways in which whites have been visualized in a certain way to signify their Otherness. Such visualization has historically accompanied the Japanese persistent gaze toward whites. This gaze was not always one of worship, but it was often one of despicement. Borrowing the words of Frantz Fanon, W. J. T. Mitchell (1996) illustrates the most dramatic power of the visual as this ambivalent force of “abomination and adoration” (75). The visual images of whites that were analyzed here show the ambiguous nature of such visualizing act. The white body is the source of attraction, while at the same time it is the source of strangeness and Otherness. What this persistent visual representation of whites illuminates is the fact that whites are still repeatedly re-discovered as Other just as they were discovered on the street of Japan in the 18th centuries. By being repeated over the past few centuries, the particular way of visualization of whites has become normalized and stabilized. As the images that came out on Google Image website, the consistent particular representations of whites are continually produced.

The continual (re)production of whiteness in Japan is also reinforced by the mass production of the gaijin mask. The materials used for the production of the mask affirm that its purpose is to produce the mask with an extremely low cost and to widely disseminate it. The simple design with the limited amount of colours used for the mask's package—the same shade of purple is used for multiple parts such as half of the title and the music notes right beside the ‘Party Joke’ line—makes it easy to massively produce and reinforces this product to be

representation of whites in Japan. The gaijin mask, in this sense, provides the unique opportunity to complicate the nature of racial studies.

interpreted as ‘innocent’ or ‘a silly joke,’ masking its political nature. Whites are presented as a mere character (of Mr. Gaijin) and through its widely targeted production the collective way of imagining whites as *gaijin*—as opposed to individuals—is further facilitated.

This visual re-discovery of whites in today’s Japan is the continuation of the way whites have been visualized since the 18th century. When the Edo shogunate demanded that all the foreigners—mostly Europeans²⁷—who landed in Japan to walk across the country to pay him a visit, one of his aims was to let his citizens see the visitors from the Europe with their own eyes and impress them with the global fame and power of the great shogunate (Screech, 1995). From the beginning of Japan’s encounter, whites were something to be witnessed. As the drawings of Siebold and Perry also indicate, their eyes are downcast looking to the side; they are to be gazed at by the audience. Interestingly enough, the drawing of Mr. Gaijin also looks away from the audience. Berland (2008) compares the functionality of photography with zoos in which it captures the intimate moment of encounter with the objects that are in reality impossible to realize. The particular visualization of whites manifested in the mask of Hello Mr. Gaijin, along with the other two drawings I analyzed here, continually “represent both the desire for and impossibility of intimate connection” with whites in Japan (Berland, 2008: 447). Furthermore, this process of visualization of whites is kept to be imaginative and not actual. As one can observe from the cartoonish drawings, the eyes, and the rubbery nose of the mask, a certain degree of unreality is maintained. The eyes made of paper stickers are not the prints of photographed real person’s eyes, but they are the prints of either the eyes of a doll or the graphically modified real eyes to make the irises (unrealistically) blue. In other words, they represent the *idea* of whites and not the actuality of whites. As Mirzoeff (2011) writes, “(Visuality) must be imaginary, rather than perceptual, because what is being visualized is too

²⁷ Rarely, the Dutch visitors accompanied one or two Indonesian servants with them (Screech, 1995).

substantial for any one person to see and is created from information, images, and ideas” (474). The mask of Hello Mr. Gaijin visualizes the particular image and perception of whites in Japan that have historically been cultivated since the popularized encounter of whites in the 18th century Japan.



Figure 2. Gaijin Illustrations from Google Images²⁸.

²⁸ (From top left)

Steve the American http://www.illustr365.net/illustr/01_05.html

American brother <http://illustr-cafe.net/human/pump022.html>

Johnny Depp <http://asicre.ti-da.net/c114582.html>

A foreigner who does not understand Japanese well.

http://www.city.hamamatsu.shizuoka.jp/lifeindex/life/disaster/bousai/engosya/engosya_13.html

Overseas home-stay program http://blog.livedoor.jp/su_cocoroe/archives/51743137.html



Figure 3. A Portrait of Philipp Franz von Siebold²⁹.



Figure 4. A Portrait of Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, a.k.a. *Tengū Perry*³⁰.

²⁹ Retrieved from Screech (1995), *Oedo Ijin Orai* [Foreign Residences in Edo Japan], translated by Hiroshi Takayama, Tokyo: Maruzen Books.

³⁰ Retrieved from <http://www.izu.co.jp/~ryosenji/14collection.htm> on the 14th, August 2012.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In critically responding to the ways in which Western social theory has projected a kind of global history that marginalizes others, Bonnett (2002) accounts for a crucial need of study that sheds light on the dynamic ways Western ideas and knowledge become deconstructed in various different contexts. He writes;

It is only when we turn our attention to the employment and deployment of the idea of the West ... that we can begin to discern the West, not simply as yet another Western invention imposed upon the world, but as a political tool that has been put together and put to work in a number of different ways around the globe (166).

With the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' as a site of analysis, the thesis conducted a critical research that cautiously questions the Western theoretical claim of race being its own cultural invention and further examined ways to complicate this claim. The process of deconstructing Western racial theory entailed a reflective investigation of the particular ways in which the notion of race is theorized by the significant racial studies scholars in the European and North American academia. Uncovering the theoretical underpinnings consequently led to an articulation of the points in which the Western racial theory fails to account for the specific culture of racisms manifested in the Gaijin mask. In this sense, the analysis of the Gaijin mask opened up an intellectual space where the 'original' notion of Western race is negotiated and further complicated. Such an analysis is vital, for it brings back a certain racial history that was once forgotten during the process of privileging the Western race discourse.

In the second chapter the thesis reviewed literatures on race that have been developed by the Western academia, and articulated the theoretical claims that put forth the Western centric racial discourse. Largely drawing on the works of Goldberg (1993), Mills (1997) and Garner (2007), the thesis identified generally three key theoretical underpinnings that ground their

theorization of race. Firstly, it is the idea that race is a Western modern cultural invention. That is to say, that the origin of the contemporary culture around issues of race can all ultimately be traced back to the late 15th century in the Western Europe. Secondly, this Western racist culture consisted itself on the discourse of white supremacy in which the white race is positioned as the superior racial Self. Furthermore, the identities of other racial groups are constructed through the measured differences from the central white race. In this sense, a hierarchy among racial groups was built around the idea that non-white racial groups signify physical and social deformity. The third idea that shapes the Western racial discourse is the claim that the culture of racisms put forward by the Western modern project is now a global matter. Through the past five hundred years of European invasions and colonization of global areas, it suggests that the world has now been constructed upon this racial hierarchy. Unfolding these theoretical grounds helps to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms of the ways in which the discourse on race is constructed in the West. The thesis, however, takes it further to propose that the culture of racisms that is now globalized cannot fully be understood by Western racial discourse that claims to have invented this culture. More specifically, in analyzing the culture of racisms in the particular context of Japan through the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin,’ the thesis identified a crucial problem that the Western racial discourse fails to address, which is the possibility that there are other forms of race-thinking around the globe.

The analysis of the Gaijin mask, in fact, demonstrated a particular form of race-thinking that does not conform to the theoretical underpinnings that the existing literature indicated. What was seen in the mask was the racialization of whites as Other/gaijin, and this is a critical moment where the ‘superior white self’ theorized in the Western racial discourse becomes unstable and complicated. In understanding the particular example of the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ produced and sold in Japan, the thesis carefully contextualized the specific form of race-thinking that manifests in contemporary Japan in the third chapter. Particularly, the chapter examined the ways

in which whites had historically been represented in Japan since the early encounters in the late 16th century. By looking at the different labels used to refer to whites in different time periods in Japan, the chapter provided the contexts in which the word ‘gaijin’ used in the title of the Gaijin mask is to be analyzed. This process was also to demonstrate the particular history of the ways in which the white race was perceived to signify a difference: a difference that simultaneously constructs a collective identity of the ‘Japanese’. These historical accounts of the way whites were ‘discovered’ as Other are tremendously important to the thesis, for it sheds critical light on the hegemonic nature of the Western racial discourse that marginalizes other ways of race-thinking. They provide the points of analysis where the dominant racial accounts fail to address. The mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ is one of those examples that enable one to witness the critical moments where racial theories become further complicated.

Chapter 4 was devoted to delineating the methodological approach for the analysis of the Gaijin mask. The analysis is methodologically informed by the emerging field of visual culture of which the thesis draws its understanding from the works of Mirzoeff. Mirzoeff (1998, 2011) theorizes the postmodern visual culture as a culture best imagined and understood visually. The concept of visibility is a vital one to the thesis’s analysis of the mask, for it allows one to examine the ways in which power manifests itself through the visualized forms. The visual components are indeed the central part of the Gaijin mask; Mr. Gaijin is visualized and characterized not only through the label ‘gaijin’ but more significantly through the cartoonish drawing, blue-eye stickers, and the rubbery nose. The idea of visibility allows one to see the ways in which these visualized forms embodies the operations of power. It elicited critical questions such as: why is a form of drawing used in the package instead of a photograph? Why is the white man drawn in this specific way in terms of its colours and the pose/gesture? What are the implications of the use of certain materials for the mask’s facial parts? These questions informed by the idea of visibility led the thesis to engage with the Gaijin mask in a critical manner.

The analysis part of the thesis looked at the three transformative aspects of the mask: The discursive transformation of whites into Gaijin; the temporal physical transformation of the user into Mr. Gaijin; and the visual/material transformation of whites into the toy-mask. The mask is designed and composed by realizing these three types of transformation. The analysis of the first transformative aspect, developed in Chapter 5, entailed a close investigation of the title ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ with which whites are transformed into the single identity of ‘gaijin.’ The analysis explored questions such as; why is the product named so? What is the politics behind this persistent labeling of whites? To answer these questions led to a probe of the ways in which whiteness theory becomes further complicated. What the word ‘gaijin’ signified was the binary distinction of the Japanese Self and the white Other, in which whites are confined to the space of eternal outsider as the label literally indicates. And this binary distinction simultaneously renders non-white Others—such as Korean and Chinese residents in Japan—invisible and keeps them marginalized. Being labeled as ‘gaijin,’ whites are visible in the Japanese society nonetheless. This visibility, as opposed to the invisibility of the non-white Others, suggests the particular kind of whiteness that is desired and aspired while simultaneously being placed on the outside (gai) of what constitutes ‘the Japanese’ in today’s Japan. It was this point of analysis that the Western centric theory of global white supremacy failed to address and that the thesis attempted to further complicate.

The second part of the analysis focused on the physical (mis-)transformation of the user into Mr. Gaijin. Here, the chapter looked at the technical ways the mask’s visuality is realized with its material support, and further examined the way they construct particular meanings. Particularly, the chapter posited questions regarding the mask’s entertainment function and how the mask becomes a joke, generating a pleasurable reaction, through materializing an ambivalent act of mimicry, and how these particular effects are inscribed in the technical structure of the mask. For instance, certain behaviors can be expected to be performed when the user uses the

mask, for the mask's material designs only allows particular movements and usage. How is the mask designed to generate laughter, then? What makes the mask a 'party joke' as its package indicates? The chapter suggested in responding to these questions that the mask realized the ambivalence and impossibility of the user's transformation into the character Mr. Gaijin who could be identified as an American. The transformation that the mask proposes to offer the user is in fact set to be a failure. What the user transforms into in the end is neither a white man nor Mr. Gaijin. This mimetic incompleteness—or what Bhabha (1984) described as the state of "almost but not quite"—is what the mask is designed to produce, which results in generating laughter. The chapter further analyzed this point and concluded, by drawing from Yoshimi (2007) who conceptualized American global hegemony as being achieved by rendering itself the object of capitalistic desire, that whites in Japan are transformed into a humorous, pleasurable, and innocent toy-mask to be consumed. Mr. Gaijin's white race is indeed what makes his body desirable to be consumed. It is this point of analysis that is stressed; the mask embodies the significantly contradictory nature of whiteness in Japan where whites are racialized to be objectified while their white body continues to be desired. And this ambiguous force of whiteness is what the simple accounts of global white supremacy theory may fail to account.

Finally, the last section of analysis engaged with the ways in which the mask was transformed into a visualized reality that was much more imaginative than actual. Mirzoeff (2011) explained that the visualized reality is composed of acquired information, images, and ideas about what is visualized. The mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin' is indeed an example of such visualized reality in the sense that whites are metaphorically realized in this mask through the label 'gaijin,' the cartoonish drawing, and the materialized facial parts. They are more or less explicitly distorted reality. Here, the chapter specifically demonstrated how the power of visuality was operated in the mask through uncovering the ways in which whites were visually and materially transformed in the toy-mask. First it looked at the visualizing process of whites

manifested in the mask, which entailed a close analysis of the cartoonish drawing of the character Mr. Gaijin and to further inquire the historical background of the particular characterization of whites. Having identified the persistently representation of whites seen in the mask that had been repeated since the late 18th century to the present day, the thesis suggested that this particular way of visualizing whites had always signified their foreignness and Otherness. As the first part of the analysis looked at the label ‘gaijin’ and how it worked to construct whites as the external (*soto*) Other, the drawings of whites similarly work to construct a certain reality of whites: a kind of reality that is kept imaginative and not actual. This is the critical moment where whites were repeatedly re-discovered as Other just as they were discovered on the street of Japan in the 18th centuries, and furthermore, the moment where the global whiteness is theorized with a more complexity.

In analyzing the mask of ‘Hello Mr. Gaijin’ through the three aspects of transformation as the analytical points, the thesis demonstrated the ways in which the Western racial discourse posited by scholars such as Goldberg and Mills can be further complicated. Their three theoretical underpinnings identified in the introduction chapter were all proved to be in need of re-examination. Particularly, the first claim of race as the Western modern invention was challenged by the analysis of other forms of race-thinking that even predated the Japanese encounter with the Western knowledge of the scientific racism. The last part of analysis on the visual and material transformation of whites into the mask especially investigated the ways in which whites are still discovered as racialized Other in today’s Japan as they were in the late 18th century, and how this particular racialization of whites have been marginalized from the Western hegemonic theorization of race. Furthermore, it was only through this marginalization of other race-thinking that the dominant racial discourse was enabled to announce the second claim, which was that the global racist culture constructs whites as the only superior racial Self. In responding to this second claim, the analysis suggested the critical possibility that the white race can be constructed

as Other vis-à-vis the Japanese Self. The third claim of the global dissemination of the Western racial invention was also demonstrated to be naïve, for it inevitably assumed that racial issues in the various global areas can be fully understood with the Western framework and moreover suggested that the only history to be remembered was that of the Western colonization/racialization. Through the analysis of the mask of 'Hello Mr. Gaijin,' the thesis complicated these theoretical claims and carefully documented the kind of racial history that has been neglected.

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