

THE RHETORICAL MAKING OF THE ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN FACE:
READING AND WRITING ASIAN EYELIDS

By

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ABSTRACT

THE RHETORICAL MAKING OF THE ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN FACE: READING AND WRITING ASIAN EYELIDS

By

Jennifer Lee Sano-Franchini

In *The Rhetorical Making of the Asian/Asian American Face: Reading and Writing Asian Eyelids*, I examine representations of East Asian blepharoplasty in online video in order to gain a sense of how cultural values change over time. Drawing on scholarship in and around rhetorical theory, cultural rhetorics, Asian American rhetoric, cultural studies, Asian American studies, and postcolonial theory alongside qualitative data analysis of approximately fifty videos and the numerous viewer comments that accompany them, this study is a rhetorical analysis of the discourse on East Asian blepharoplasty in online video. These videos--ranging from mass media excerpts and news reports, to journals of healing and recovery, to short lectures on surgeon techniques, to audience commentary--offer insight into how social time is negotiated in the cross-cultural public sphere of *YouTube*. I do my analysis in two steps, first looking at how rhetors rationalize the decision to get blepharoplasty, and second, examining the temporal logics that ground these rationalizations. As result, I've identified five tropes through which people rationalize double eyelid surgery: racialization, emotionologization, pragmatization, the split between nature and technology, and agency. Moreover, I've identified at least five temporal logics that ground these tropes: progress, hybridization, timelessness, efficiency, and desire. Using these two sets of findings I build a framework for the analysis, production and organization of multimodal representations of bodies.

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DEDICATION

For Mom, Dad, Nick, and Miya

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: EAST ASIAN BLEPHAROPLASTY ON YOUTUBE AS AN ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN RHETORIC

For more than the last decade, U.S. popular media has discussed the pervasiveness of cosmetic surgery among Koreans and Korean Americans, labeling South Korea “the country most obsessed with plastic surgery” (Stewart, 2013). News reports on *CNN* and the *New York Times*, magazine articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Time*, and *Marie Claire*, talk shows like *Tyra*, *Montel*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, as well as other kinds of blogs and online commentary such as on *Jezebel* and *This American Life* have attempted to make sense of why so many Koreans, Korean Americans, and others of East Asian ancestry are getting cosmetic surgery for reasons most other Americans have never had to consider: the most popular procedure both in practice and as discussed in the media is East Asian blepharoplasty, more commonly known as double eyelid surgery, a cosmetic surgical procedure in which the surgeon makes an incision and/or stitches in the eyelid so that a fold forms, making the eye appear larger and rounder.

This study is an examination of representations of East Asian blepharoplasty on YouTube. Working at the intersection of time, technology, and the mediated body, I explore the changing nature of East Asian eyelids and the discourse surrounding these eyelids as they are mediated through YouTube, and through a number of temporal logics. In so doing, I extend on the work of John Jordan (2004), who argued that “[The] plastic body is a rhetorically contested substance, with a variety of social agents engaged in efforts to shape its public meaning, and, by extension,

its corporeal form” (p. 328). At the same time, these bodies themselves are also rhetorical as they are a site of meaning production, visual and affective, shaping social norms and cultural values.

Jordan has elaborated on this idea, explaining that:

The plastic body emerges as an influential, contested, and evolving configuration of meanings that circulate through the public sphere and are the impetus behind many body alteration desires. Public discourse about elective surgical alteration comprises rhetorical texts that shape public understanding about bodies as symbolic and material sites of expression. (p. 329)

That said, I am interested in these representations for what they can tell us about how cultural values change across time and space. In other words, I am interested in how rhetoric works to shape what we understand to be good, bad, beautiful, ugly, moral, immoral, and so on, particularly as these values shift through constellated moments of cross-cultural contact. More importantly, attached to these values are implications for power, privilege, and the rhetorics of racism. I believe East Asian blepharoplasty is a compelling topic for gaining insight into these questions for two reasons: first, cosmetic surgery is a physical and observable example of the moldability of the human body that is perhaps always attached to cultural values of some kind, whether they be with regards to beauty or something else. As Balsamo has explained, “cosmetic surgery enacts a form of cultural signification where we can examine the literal and material reproduction of ideals of beauty” (p. 58). Secondly, I also find it compelling how this highly racialized surgery is read so very differently across cultural lines, whether those lines are racial, generational, national, political, or something else. Furthermore, YouTube is a powerful site for examining such processes at work because of how the site facilitates dialogue about these

modified, raced, bodies in new ways, bringing together users of diverse backgrounds with a variety of cultural perspectives. Through these technologies, we are able to see how cultural values are articulated, negotiated, and sometimes re-aligned. I will come back to these issues of temporality, cosmetic surgery, rhetoric, cultural values, and YouTube in a bit, but first I think it important to provide some background information about East Asian blepharoplasty, situating this practice as I understand it within this study.

Background: East Asian Blepharoplasty

It is difficult to provide accurate numbers to show how common double eyelid surgery is because surveys vary significantly depending on time, place, and population, and because people do not always want to disclose that they have gotten the surgery. But to provide a few statistics to give a sense of what these numbers look like: *The Economist* (2012) reported that “A 2009 survey by Trend Monitor, a market-research firm, suggested that one in five women in Seoul had gone under the knife.” According to the *BBC* (2005), “By conservative estimates, 50% of South Korean women in their 20s have had some form of cosmetic surgery [...] 70% of men said they would also consider surgical improvements.”¹ In a 2005 Gallup Korea poll of 1507 people over 20, 5.4% had previously had plastic surgery; 11.7% of females in their 20s and 30s had previously had plastic surgery; 16.5% of the entire group had considered it; 38.3% of females in their 20s and 30s, said they had thought about it (“90% of Korean Women,” 2009). A 2009 *Chosun Ilbo* survey of 232 people on a dating site² showed that 86.6% of Korean women in their

¹ It is worth noting here that double eyelid surgery is indeed not limited to just women, and there are interesting gender dynamics and issues worth discussing, as Holliday and Elfvig-Hwang (2012) have observed, as Woo (2012) has reported, and as I will discuss.

² And this will, of course, shape these number as well.

20s and 30s said that they would get plastic surgery to feel better about themselves. Only 1.7 % said that they did not wish to undergo plastic surgery, and 58.2% had already had plastic surgery. None said personality rather than looks is what matters. Finally, according to some surveys, only 25% of Koreans are born with double eyelids. On the other hand, a significantly higher percentage of celebrities--and practically all female celebrities--in Korea have double eyelids.

Again, these numbers vary, but it remains quite clear that cosmetic surgery is an accepted norm in Korean and Korean American culture, and double eyelid surgery is compared by some to breast implants, tanning, or teeth whitening in the U.S. Double eyelid surgery is not only very commonplace, but it is generally also considered noninvasive, safe, and therefore not a “plastic” surgery per se. As Holliday and Elfvig-Hwang (2012) described, “Cosmetic surgery and skin treatment clinics are now commonplace in urban shopping malls, viewed much like nail and beauty salons in the UK, and providing procedures such as laser removal of blemishes to ‘walk-in’ customers” (p. 59). Even the late South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun, had the procedure done, explaining that his eyelashes were protruding into his eyes. In my own experience as an Asian American born and raised in Hawai‘i, double eyelids and double eyelid surgery were normal topics of discussion during my high school years; many people I knew had gotten double eyelid surgery, and I, too, was often encouraged to get the procedure done. In other words, even though the decision and act of getting double eyelid surgery may indeed be considered a major turning point in a person’s life, it is also an ordinary event for many people of East Asian descent, a stark contrast to the experience of others who have never even noticed that there are folds in some people’s eyelids and not in others. In fact, it is likely surprising to some that cosmetic surgery is an industry that has been subsidized and promoted by the South Korean

government. As Fifield (2008) described, “The government [...] has made [plastic] surgery tax deductible [and] is allocating [\$1.3 million] to market Korea as a cosmetic surgery destination.”³

This is not to say that there aren't Asian people both in the continent of Asia and elsewhere who morally disagree with the surgery, or who prefer the look of “monolids” (eyelids without the supratarsal fold). For instance, Director Kim Ki-duk's (2006) thriller *Time* provided a perspective that is critical of Korean society's widespread acceptance of cosmetic surgery. At the same time, Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) said that “feminist organizations represent practically the only opposition to cosmetic surgery in Korea, but their opposition has in practice been limited to prosecuting cosmetic surgery clinics for illegal advertising in women's magazines” (p. 62).

“Double eyelid” is the colloquial term for the supratarsal fold, the crease in the eyelid that folds in as a person opens his/her eyes. The supratarsal fold is common among people of many different racial backgrounds, including those of South and Southeast Asian descent, but it is significantly less common among people of East Asian ancestry, including those who are

³ While East Asian blepharoplasty is done by people across East Asia, as well as in the United States, and other places where East Asians have settled, I occasionally focus on South Korea and people of Korean ancestry. This is in part because South Korea is most often represented as a cosmetic surgery “capital” and destination for cosmetic surgery tourism while Koreans are often portrayed as “obsessed” with cosmetic surgery. For instance, Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) reported that “South Koreans' alleged ‘obsession’ with cosmetic surgery regularly hits headlines both in Asian and the ‘West’ because of its reportedly high take-up rate by both women and men” (p. 58). It also helps that as someone who is ethnically and culturally Korean, I am personally more familiar with Korean culture than other Asian cultures. But again, East Asian blepharoplasty cannot be pinned down to any one ethnic group, country, or culture.

ethnically Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.⁴ That said, double eyelids are a physical trait that people do or do not have. At the same time, it is not really as simple as having or not having double eyelids--some people naturally have a double eyelid on one eye and not the other; some people are born without double eyelids, but naturally acquire them with age; and the appearance, shape, and placement of double eyelids vary, and some get double eyelid surgery to adjust the height of the fold. More specifically, double eyelids tend to look different on Asian faces versus on white faces: generally, the supratarsal fold is lower and closer to the eyelid among people of Asian descent than among white people, for whom the fold is higher, and Asians tend to have more fat in the eyelids--hence, why Asians with the supratarsal fold “still look Asian.” Cho and Glavas (2009) did a study comparing anatomic properties of Chinese American and Korean American upper eyelids, and they argued that “eyelid anatomies vary greatly in Asian Americans.” They concluded that “Surgeons need to be mindful of these particularities of Asian eyelid anatomies to achieve the most natural-looking results” (p. 1739). Furthermore, East Asian blepharoplasty, or, double eyelid surgery, is distinct from blepharoplasty marketed for a white audience, which is generally intended to turn back signs of aging, reduce wrinkles, and lift sagging eyelids, thus providing a more “youthful” appearance.

Methodology

Yesterday, a Facebook friend of mine announced that she wants to have another name that people in the United States can “pronounce more easily.” She’s an international student from

⁴ It is worth noting that the specificities of the occurrence of double eyelids in these ethnic groups vary; for instance, Leabert R. Hernandez (1959) reported that “In the Japanese, the fold is present in about 90 per cent of the Okinawan (descendants of those who originally came from Okinawa), and in only about 30 per cent of the Naichi (descendants of those who came from the island of Japan proper)” (p. 257).

Korea, living in the Midwestern United States. I remember, in a graduate seminar I took with her, how everyone but the two other ethnically Korean women (I was one of them) mispronounced her name throughout the entire semester.

Anna, Sarah, Alice, or Jeanine? she ponders, asking, “What would be me?”

“I think you you should keep your name and make people here learn to pronounce it!” I suggest, wondering if I should add, “Easy for me to say, with a name like Jennifer, huh?”

I decide against it.

She responds, explaining that there are many English words that she cannot pronounce, and she thinks that her name is the same for English speakers. And besides, she’s a bit bored with her name.

“I just think some people in the U.S. have the expectation that foreigners or people who are different adjust themselves for their (people in U.S.) sake rather than the other way around. Even if they can't pronounce your name the same way as native Korean speakers, it is not too hard to learn and try [...] I think broadening U.S. understanding of what is ‘normal’ or ‘everyday’ is important to do. Of course, if you are just bored with your name that is up to you. :)”

She clarifies that she wants another name entirely for her own sake--to be remembered more easily, as she herself has trouble pronouncing and remembering her own Chinese students’ names.

“Then maybe you should have a name that’s not too typical--otherwise you might get lost in a sea of Annas.”

Even as this conversation is taking place, I think, “Well, how very Asian American of me.” I cling to the idea that people of Asian descent should be assertive, and stand up for ourselves rather than cater to the needs of (particular kinds of) white people. I want to reject the “model minority” myth and I want people of Asian ancestry to push back at the kinds of hegemonic practices that “keep us in our place.” I believe that many people in the Midwest could learn a thing or two about respecting cultural differences and that there are things we can do--as individuals among a larger collective--to make a difference.

Somewhere within me is the idea that our names shape our identities, and that there’s something special about our names that makes us who we are.

At the same time, I understand that Koreans understand names and naming very differently from people in the U.S. I realize that it is quite common for a person perceived to be down on his/her luck to change his/her name as a way of changing his/her destiny.

I hope that I’m not being offensive, that I don’t come off as condescending, even as I question another person’s desires and the motivations behind them. I think I have good intentions, somewhere, but I’m not entirely sure what good I’m doing engaging in this conversation at all.

I begin with this story because it illustrates my orientation to this larger project, highlighting some of the difficulties I’ve experienced engaging and thinking about something that *feels* both culturally mine and yet not mine. I’m part Korean ethnically, but I’m not Korean by nationality. Even though I can speak, read, and write Korean, even though I grew up eating Korean food and going to “Korean church” and playing with Korean friends, the Korean culture

I grew up with is distinct from the culture of Korean people in Korea. It may be surprising that there are times when I need to remind myself of this--that though I may identify with another person, though the way they speak is familiar to me, I have certain privileges in the U.S., as a fluent English-speaking citizen that they may not. I don't experience things the same way they do, I don't have deal with the same kinds of struggles, and I can't presume to fully understand things that I've never been through, or that I have been through from a position of relative privilege. I am also mindful that I am Japanese and I'm American,⁵ but I'm one of those hyphenated Americans, and how I American I feel varies, depending on where I am and who I'm with. Nonetheless, my Americanness colors my point of view, and on a personal level, I subconsciously buy into ideas that are culturally constructed. I'm Asian racially, but I've only ever been in Asia as a tourist. I'm told that I'm Asian American, but I've only recently sort of accepted this label for myself.^{6 7}

⁵ Here, I use American as it is used colloquially, to mean U.S. citizen.

⁶ The Pew Social and Demographic Trends (2013) reports that, "The Asian-American label itself doesn't hold much sway with Asian Americans. Only about one-in-five (19%) say they most often describe themselves as Asian American or Asian. A majority (62%) say they most often describe themselves by their country of origin (e.g., Chinese or Chinese American; Vietnamese or Vietnamese American, and so on), while just 14% say they most often simply call themselves American. Among U.S.-born Asians, the share who most often call themselves American rises to 28%."

⁷ In somewhat similar ways, the practice that I examine in this dissertation--East Asian blepharoplasty--transcends conventional, (seemingly) stable racial, ethnic, national and political categories as it is situated in multiple contexts, across Asia, in the U.S., in Australia, on the internet, and likely in other places where East Asians have settled. As Ding and Savage (2013) have remarked, "because of economic and cultural globalization, nation states lose much of their grip on cross-border capital flows, national imagination, communication media, and migration across borders" (p. 2). That said, this transnational study is not precisely situated in any one nation state.

In “Against the Lures of Diaspora: Minority Discourse, Chinese Women, and Intellectual Hegemony,” Rey Chow (2003) argued for an approach of self-reflexivity and a “declaration of self interest,” as a means to combat the tendency to conflate minority discourse with the voices and perspectives of privileged postcolonial, “third world” intellectuals (p. 603). As a cultural rhetorician, I understand the importance of being explicit about how the lens I bring as a researcher will shape what I see, and how I process my observations. As a second-generation-Korean-and-fourth-generation-Japanese-American-born-and-raised-in-Hawai‘i-but-living-in-the-Midwest, I bring particular cultural and political values to the research that I do, values that I need to interrogate if I am to examine the rhetorics of culture in a way that I feel comfortable doing. I research a practice that is common among Asian and Asian Americans including many of those close to me, yet one that I myself have not taken part in. Though the surgery was a common topic among my friends and me in high school, though others encouraged me to get the surgery, I chose not to do so for a variety of reasons. I realize that these experiences will inevitably color and limit the way I do my analysis, even as--or perhaps *because*--I want to be careful about how people, sometimes including my friends and family, are represented. And even while I know that it is important to me that I make this effort, I still feel just a bit anxious whenever I admit to other Asians the topic of my research. Mostly, I worry that I will be seen as playing the role of a “native informant,” sharing our “secrets” with outsiders who have no business knowing or caring about what we do with our bodies. At the same time, I do believe in the value--even the importance--of this work. I see the way people--who clearly have no clue--talk about those I love and care about. I notice the disproportionate number of white people in the Academy, and this concerns me not because this is a problem in and of itself, but because I

know that my perspective and the perspective of those who look like me, who share at least some of my cultural and discursive practices are not being included. When I first entered my PhD program, I was somewhat resistant to the idea of doing Asian American rhetoric. After all, I never thought of myself as “Asian American,” which really always felt like such a “mainland” term. I wanted to do work that the larger discipline might appreciate, which, tellingly, never seemed to be the case when it came to scholarship on/about people of color. Over time, though, and with some race-based frustrations in the U.S. Midwest, I realize that I’ve been given an opportunity here. Or perhaps I should say, I’ve earned an opportunity here, a seat at the table, where I have the potential to make a difference in the way people think about Others. As many others have observed and experienced before, being a hyphenated American--those “whose most conspicuous and constant members to this date have been those differentiated by race” (Palumbo-Liu, 1999, p. 1)--means grappling with an identity that is constantly shifting over time and space. As a hyphenated American researcher, the way I have positioned myself in relation to my scholarship seems to be constantly shifting as well.

In this section, I discuss my methodology. I began by locating myself as a researcher, reflecting on how my subjectivity exists in relation to this project. I will now go on to locate this work as an Asian American project, particularly as it is concerned with the “temporality of shifting identities,” defined below. I identify research practices central to the making of an Asian American rhetoric, and that, I believe, are exemplified in this study. Next, I describe my data including my data collection process, before I go on to describe my procedures and methods and modes of analysis. I conclude this discussion with some methodological limitations.

Asian American Rhetoric: Processes of Becoming, Memory, Historiography

This is an Asian American rhetoric project.

Asian American rhetoric has long been concerned with the temporality of shifting identities. By “temporality of shifting identities,” I refer to how identities move and change across time and space, particularly as they meet, engage, and conflict with other identities, and the implications of how we articulate and measure these shifts. Through such notions as “process of becoming,” and through a focus on concepts like memory and historiography, the temporalities of cultural and racial identity have been central to the making of an Asian/American rhetoric (Hoang, 2008; Mao, 2006; Monberg, 2008; Wang, 2010; Wu, 2002). This work has been particularly pertinent as Asians and Asian Americans have been and continue to be pigeonholed into a number of stock stereotypes. For instance, as LuMing Mao (2006) explained, Chinese American rhetoric “can never be unique, not only because there is no internal coherence to speak of, but also because it is *always in a state of adjusting and becoming*, both in relation to its ‘native’ (Chinese) identity and in relation to its ‘adopted’ (American) residency. And the *process of adjusting and becoming* is forever infused with its own tensions, struggles, and vulnerabilities, within the context of each and every borderland speech event [*my emphasis*]” (p. 17). Mao went on to say that:

Chinese American rhetoric [...] becomes viable and transformative not by securing a logical or unified order, but by participating in a process of becoming where meanings are situated and where significations are contingent upon each and every particular experience. Further, in this process of becoming, Chinese American rhetoric is not to be had either by abstraction or by us searching for fixed features of harmony or seamless

blending. Rather, the making of Chinese American rhetoric lies in the process of contestation, interrogation, and reflection--or in what I call 'heterogeneous resonance. (p. 5)

This quote has methodological importance for doing Asian American rhetoric in that it highlights a research practice of examining meanings as situated and contingent on experience, and of focusing on "[processes] of contestation, interrogation, and reflection" (Mao, 2006, p. 5).

A second example of the focus on temporalities of shifting identities in Asian American rhetoric is Haivan Hoang's (2008) work on rhetorical memory, which she described as "a process of participation in a wider cultural production" (p. 80). Describing memory as "central to Asian American rhetoric, a rejoinder to the persistent forgetfulness that displaces Asian Americans from commonplace understandings of what is American" (p. 63), Hoang focused on the processes by which dominant cultural narratives are constructed, particularly as they have implications for Asian American subjectivities. In other words, to do Asian American rhetoric is to interrogate how stories about Asians and Asian Americans are constructed, disseminated, and circulated over time, and the political implications that follow. These political implications go on to influence how individuals make sense of their personal experiences, and so on. In terms of methodology, Hoang identified, "Asian American rhetorical memory, then, has most often articulated *countermemories* that destabilize and then reconstitute the American subject" (p. 63). Moreover, Asian American rhetoric is constitutive of "not shifts to different memorial *objects*, but, more so, the epistemological shifts that guide the *practice* of how to remember" (p. 64).

In relation to the "wider cultural production" of memory, Terese Guinsatao Monberg (2008) has also been attentive to the temporalities of shifting memory as she worked toward a

“culturally contingent model of feminist historiography, [arguing that] certain methods of listening--because they are attentive to interdependencies among rhetorical space, memory, and history--are central to the makings of an Asian Pacific American ‘feminist’ rhetoric” (p. 86). Identifying the ways in which we tend to privilege seeing over hearing in the Academy and in our research practices, Monberg explored how this results in particular narratives and particular bodies being left out of the grand narratives we tell ourselves about who we are. In so doing, Monberg showed how some kinds of cultural memory are simply not accessible through traditional, alphabetic textual modes of analysis.

That said, this is an Asian American project, not because it aims to categorize rhetorical practices that are ostensibly Asian American, but because 1) it is, itself, an Asian American practice, interpreted through an Asian American lens (read: me); 2) it examines meaning as it is “situated” and contingent on experience; 3) it contributes to “wider cultural production” by deconstructing dominant, U.S.-based cultural narratives, particularly about Asian bodies as it examines and articulates “countermemories that destabilize and then reconstitute the American subject. In so doing, this dissertation explores the “temporality of shifting identities” by focusing specifically on the ways in which the temporal logics that ground the way we make arguments about Asian bodies shape subjectivity. My goal here is furthermore to create a discursive “space for Asian Americans where [we] can resist social and economic injustice and reassert [our] discursive agency and authority in the dominant culture” (Mao and Young, 2008, p. 3).

Data: YouTube Videos, Comments, and Interface Regarding Double Eyelid Surgery

The object of analysis of this research is online video, and YouTube videos in particular. While at the start of this project I set out to examine videos about double eyelid surgery available

on a range of websites including Google, Vimeo, DailyMotion, and blogs, I decided to focus on YouTube specifically for several reasons: 1) a vast majority of the videos I was able to find were hosted on YouTube anyway; 2) YouTube is a widely popular social video site, meaning that viewers know how to--and often do--make use of its commenting function in both alphabetic textual and video format, its tagging function, the ability to like and dislike videos--in other words, the variety of ways that YouTube facilitates the organization of videos by its users. This aspect of YouTube as an active, public space of cross-cultural interaction and negotiation was particularly important to me. In my mind, having grown up around conversations about double eyelid surgery, I had a sense, primarily from personal experience, of what Asian perspectives about the surgery were. On the other hand, I did not have a clear sense of what conversations about double eyelid surgery with people who were not Asian would be like, and I am particularly interested in how this type of cross-cultural negotiation happens. Moreover, by focusing on YouTube exclusively, I would have the potential to make some observations about its interface and how the site facilitates the organization of videos. YouTube provides a rich range of perspectives and insights on double eyelid surgery, spanning from mass media excerpts such as talk show segments and news reports, to before and after slideshows, to testimonials, to journals of healing and recovery, to short lectures on surgeon techniques, to documentary film, to audience commentary. In my analysis, I look not only at the videos themselves including their visual, aural, and alphabetic textual elements, but also the viewer comments that accompany them, as well as the interface of YouTube, meaning I am paying attention to things like titles, user handles, tags, likes, and dislikes, and other features, particularly as they frame the rhetoric of the videos, and, thus, the way users experience them.

These videos were accessed in the same way that I believe many users access them. I began by using several search terms, including: double eyelid surgery; Asian blepharoplasty; Asian plastic surgery; Asian cosmetic surgery; race plastic surgery; and ethnic plastic surgery. I also watched related videos and YouTube recommended videos that seemed to pertain to double eyelid surgery. At the start of this project in June 2011, I watched all of the videos that fit these criteria as, at the time, I considered the number of videos that came up in my search manageable. Over time, however, videos about double eyelid surgery were posted in increasing numbers and I did not continue to watch all of the videos about the surgery. In this research, I watched approximately 50 online videos posted between 2007 and 2013, with most of my initial viewing of videos taking place between June 2011 and March 2012. For a list of the videos, see Table 1, below. Note that this list is not comprehensive as the table was intended for functional purposes, to facilitate collection and analysis, rather than to present findings.

Table 1

Data: Videos Pertaining to East Asian Blepharoplasty on YouTube

Title	Author	Date	URL
Asian plastic surgery on CNN	surgeryvideo99	May 3, 2007	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWOUyFOYR2E
NEVER PERFECT trailer	fightingfilms	Jul 20, 2007	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzV15eUEXcE
K tells Montel about asian nose eyelid plastic surgery	surgeryvideo99	Dec 6, 2007	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUIAvGfT0CY
Tyra Banks-Asian Eyelid Surgery	Flaw3dBeauty	Jan 9, 2008	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OOcSJSJWD60
Japanese Double Eyelid Glue	timtak1	Mar 11, 2008	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJXpEoQS318

Table 1 (cont'd)

Title	Author	Date	URL
Re: Tyra Banks on Asian Eyelid Surgery	LoWang99	Jun 8, 2008	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXhd5HGzI18
Rant: Asian Eyelids!	ThuyTBird	Jul 10, 2008	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iS1IFYD9TDg
Re: Tyra Banks on Asian Eyelid Surgery	EZserenity	Aug 26, 2008	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FT3ml5HkcOs
DALLAS ASIAN DOUBLE EYELID BLEPHAROPLASTY DIARY	samlammd	Apr 22, 2009	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SlE7BxfMfl
Lid Differences Can Affect Asian Eye Surgery	plasticsurgerychan	Jun 8, 2009	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vRoLVwZmQM
The double standard of cosmetic surgery	RoxStew5	Oct 10, 2009	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMh1AJzjOU
Dr. Phil discussing the upper eyelid surgery	mikaonake	Oct 16, 2009	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsKGV9ib0xk
double happiness	jinknoddyPRODUCTIONS	Feb 11, 2010	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7WGVp5e2sE
Why are Koreans so into their Looks? [Arirang Today]	arirangnews	Apr 28, 2010	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIV_OnBnGmI
Asian Double Eyelid Blepharoplasty 33 News (Dallas, Texas)	samlammd	Jul 20, 2010	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yGjr4IAhXp8
review: double eyelid tape	lechatn0ir	Sep 15, 2010	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uhd6fJWszKA
Asian Double Eyelid Surgery (Blepharoplasty) - Why?	DocShopVid	Sep 20, 2010	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfd23LF8l_M
Modern Asian Internalize racism	asianamericanissues	Jan 31, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXVC_h5-Dg4

Table 1 (cont'd)

Title	Author	Date	URL
The Mental Illness of White Identification Part 8	cowsclips	Feb 12, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrVutw_nDhQ
double eyelid surgery blog 1	jinyjinjin	Feb 20, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQHSM7YyZiI
WesternEyes	Fathom Film Group	Feb 24, 2011	<i>No longer available.</i>
Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRY BEAST)	abchungrybeast	Apr 6, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZy_2-3tD-A
WTF - Double Eyelid Tape	simonandmartina	Apr 6, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oF-Bnz5sAEQ
Asian Eyelid Surgery	DrCharlesLee	Apr 7, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dAZ4UmHLYk0
Part 1: Plastic surgery questions answered!	TheXiaxue	May 11, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VQW8mOyMJ0
Part 2: Plastic surgery questions answered!	TheXiaxue	May 12, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vUXidWrouZ8
Korean Fashion (Cosmetic Surgery)	pattie0071	May 15, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ceVGpNt2bRI
Part 1: Double Eyelid Surgery	lovechi7	May 18, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhGmdRebkk8
Asians Have Surgery To Look Caucasian	TheYoungTurks	May 27, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJ5kfRCreUE
WTF VIDEO - Young Korean Girls Have Surgery To Look More White!!!	SirGrowalott	Jun 1, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3yKqOSpDDp4
Incisional vs. Non-Incisional Double Eyelid Surgery - Dr. Kenneth Kim	drkennethkim	Jun 10, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fy3TnbXcNmA

Table 1 (cont'd)

Title	Author	Date	URL
Advantages of Suture Technique Double Eyelid Surgery	drkennethkim	Jun 22, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUn_Qv4Bcis
Problems of Suture Technique Double Eyelid Surgery	drkennethkim	Jul 7, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4QzwrLeYFNs
Single to Permanent Double Eyelid Girl	esthyAnn729	Jul 11, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSxJMfLAApw
Double Eyelid Tape	RetardedxDinosaur	Jul 18, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Y6Lxv1ZcKA
Documentary on High School in South Korea (part 1 of 2)	kelleykatz	Aug 4, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jvHgNB4HM0
Korean vs North American Beauty Standards	simonandmartinabonus	Aug 18, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7zW9KjSzOQ
Why I Got Double Eyelid Surgery/ FAQ	shutupjunie	Aug 22, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCMR3-T08U
Part 2: Double Eyelid Surgery Q&A	lovechi7	Aug 26, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dmZimK0Prc
Beauty Race	InsightSBS	Aug 28, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ONtGn5fF_SU
My Double Eyelid Surgery and post surgery pictures! 8D	chicky96734	Aug 28, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vOPtTqueI2o
Asian Eyelid Surgery	DrCharlesLee	Oct 6, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ju8unS4TgJw
Liz: Asian Eyelid Surgery	DrCharlesLee	Oct 6, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt5IVFGHzI0
How successful is DST surgery?	DrCharlesLee	Oct 6, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0tDe-ZrUaM

Table 1 (cont'd)

Title	Author	Date	URL
Asian Eyelid Surgery : Erase Your Race? on The Doctors	channelapa	Oct 12, 2011	<i>No longer available.</i>
Asian Double Eyelids 101	11x11PM	Nov 26, 2011	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsOPBoRDp2k
5 Months later...	chicky96734	Jan 29, 2012	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7FXYnexX4k
My Double Eyelid Surgery 쌍꺼풀 성형수술 (Asian blepharoplasty)	Wang Pyeong Seon	Feb 16, 2012	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B1-Ij_JmeFU
Seoul Fashion Week - K- Pop to Double Eyelid Surgery	vice	Oct 23, 2012	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wWKjxxM6q8
Plastic Surgery in Korea: Double Eyelids, Rhinoplasty, Jawlines & Beauty Tourism (KWOW #68)	sweetandtasty	Dec 6, 2012	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8jvHgNB4HM0

Tropes vs. Azns IRL: Analysis

The title of this section is a play on Anita Sarkeesian's (2013) "Tropes vs. Women in Video Games" video series, in which Sarkeesian examines "the plot devices and patterns most often associated with female characters in gaming from a systemic, big picture perspective." In somewhat similar ways, this project explores the tropes through which people rationalize the decision to get (or not get) East Asian double eyelid surgery. These tropes function as rhetorical devices, or strategies, that are not only loaded with, but also *used* to communicate particular values across cultures. These values might include what it means to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly, moral or immoral. As such, these tropes function to compose, or write, the body. The use of

the term tropes is also significant in that the tropes are also rhetorical *topoi*--topics of invention upon which people draw when attempting to persuade. These tropes serve to help illuminate some of the relationships among different ideas such as race, beauty, and the like. The five tropes that I discuss in this dissertation are: racialization, emotionologization, pragmatization, the split between nature and technology, and agency. I would also like to note that each of these tropes, nouns that describe processes, are meant to highlight these rhetorical devices as *active* and temporal; that is, they are not static or stable ideas at rest, but rather, the tropes describe things happening--incremental moments of change. That said, the two primary analytical moves I make in this research are as follows: first, I seek out the rationalizations that people give as to why people should, or should not, get double eyelid surgery; secondly, I explore the temporal logics that ground these tropes.

So, how did I access these tropes? My analysis took place in multiple layers, generally beginning with a descriptive analysis before moving to inferential. First, I watched the videos, listening specifically for the reasons people gave as to why they believe people (sometimes themselves) should or should not get double eyelid surgery. When I heard a rationalization, I transcribed that portion of the video into a spreadsheet (see Table 2 for an excerpt). I also cut and pasted excerpts from comments into the spreadsheet, whenever I saw a commenter rationalizing the surgery. If I noticed anything about the video that I considered notable but that was not transcribable, I made a note of it in the spreadsheet (see Table 3 for an example). I then re-watched several of the videos, making sure to be attentive to its visual and audio elements. After this, I employed Miles and Huberman's (1994) "descriptive coding" method in which I attributed a class of phenomena to a segment of text," looking specifically for the different ways that

people rationalized the surgery. After I had a general coding scheme of five tropes, I used an inferential coding technique, “looking for good explanatory exemplars, not for all instances” (p. 65). Thus, this research is not intended to provide any kind of exhaustive account of what double eyelid surgery is, or any kind of quantifiable trends. Next, I did interpretive work, as I examined each trope and the various ways that it took shape across the data, before extrapolating what I saw to be key temporal logics grounding the tropes. Finally, my analysis draws on scholarship across disciplines, in rhetorical theory, cultural studies, Asian American studies, and postcolonial theory for interpreting and discussing the tropes. In my discussion of these tropes and the temporal logics that ground them, I don’t limit my thinking to how the tropes apply to the rationalizations of the surgery. Rather, I occasionally use the tropes to think about how they apply to the discourse surrounding the surgery in a range of ways.

Table 2

Sample of Data Collection/Coding. For interpretation of the references to color in this and all figures, the reader is referred to the electronic version of this dissertation.

Quotes from videos	Quotes from comments
<p>Dr. Charles Lee, Liz; “we are known for...a non-cutting method called a DST” (double suture technique) “You will be able to return to work in a very short period of time, probably about 4 days as opposed to 1 or 2 weeks that you usually have to wait for when you’re doing an incisional type of procedure” (Lee). “I went into surgery, it was painless, I came out, three days later I continued working, and no one really noticed a difference. I got a lot of compliments, but no one even questioned surgery, and that was my main concern.”</p>	<p>Well if those ladies feel good about themselves after the surgery then that's what matters. (scorchedcandy) the music -.-" ctinacho 5 months ago // all political corectness aside; They just want to look more western. Being it unconsciously or not. Even anime characters have huge eyes, not something which asian people naturally have TheScoutingSniper in reply to helenprd (Show the comment) 2 months ago Wtf? Where does it indicate that they do not want to look asian? Alot of asians are naturally born with double eyelids you know. So maybe the single-lidded asians just want to emulate their look? helenprd in reply to dulcelamiavita (Show the comment) 5 months ago Wow. Even Asians don't like looking Asian... weird. dulcelamiavita 8 months ago pathetic really denshaotoko89 1 year ago</p>

Table 2 (cont'd)

Quotes from videos	Quotes from comments
<p>“most often times when children are moving onto adulthood or going into college, when they’re transitioning to a different life, it’s a time where they are changing their career paths, I find that to be the most common impetus to do this procedure” “many Asian women overseas have cosmetic surgery to attain a more western look. But that’s not the case for Jennifer; her reason was much more practical.” “it was always kind of hard being a little teenage girl wanting to go and try on make up and stuff like that, it was always difficult to find somebody who can actually apply it correctly and make it look nice” “I think for whatever procedure you do, for whatever race you do it for, you want to make them look natural, and make them look appropriate...” “As for Jennifer, she’s still the same person before and after.”</p>	<p>i hate how so many people think that asians are doing this because the "western look" is more desirable. that's not the reason. a number of asians are born with double lids, therefore double lid isn't a "nonasian" feature. it's just something that not everyone has. it's not like you'll see an asian girl after the surgery and be all like, "is she asian? i can't tell because her eyes aren't tiny." NO. just no. they'll just look like an asian with double lids. (thatscaraful)</p>

Note. Orange=racialization; blue=emotionologization; purple=pragmatization; green=split between nature and technology; pink=agency.

Table 3

Sample Notes

Notes
<p>Many surgeons themselves have double eyelid surgery</p>
<p>Compares to breast augmentation. Mentions make up. Tailoring to specific needs of Asians. Turnaround time. Stereotypical Asian music in intro and background.</p>
<p>No sound, slideshow of before/after</p>
<p>Tracks journey of healing. Ends with speaker speaking Deutsch/German</p>

Table 3 (cont'd)

Notes
<i>Comment removed</i> Author withheld <i>This has been flagged as spam</i> show babYKittyization 1 month ago
CNN report cited a couple times.
2:53-5:03 Larger segment of plasticsurgerychan clip above.
Description: I just watched the vid and got straight pissed off...and since i have the opportunity to state how i feel i took it...this is what happens when i press record without first really thinkin about what im gunna say...kinda like tyra does when she talks...makes us look uneducated :p Let me further clairify, i made this vid as a response to the way that tyra responded to her guest. it was unprofessional, and quite rude. despite what the guest's reasoning was, there was no need to attack her the way that tyra did. i didnt analyze the guest's response, however i did breifly describe my feelings in the comments. this was just another "i-think-tyra-is-a-dumb-talkshow-host" vid. enjoy!
Description: Often, when a person of color has cosmetic surgery particularly when they are altering their features to have more of a Caucasian look, people judge that person and say they must hate their race or want to be white. However when a white or Caucasian person has a similar surgery to make their physical features more "exotic" or of another ethnicity, nothing is said and no one thinks of them as being embarrassed of their race. This video just looks at the degree white plastic surgery patients go to have more of an ethnic look with none of the backlash that comes with changing their features.
Documentary. Offers multiple perspectives.
Rant about not having double eyelids. Limitations of make up looks.
“fix”; how to tell natural from surgically modified. “How painful is it?” Cost benefit analysis. “Is plastic surgery addictive?”
Being called plastic/fake vs. being called a liar. Think everything else about you is plastic. How to know if someone got a nose job. Is it reasonable to ask for a celebrity nose? No. “I can never have a white person’s nose...because I have thick ‘alars.’” Not realistic.
See extensive comments in description. Poster often responds to comments.
Goal of increased critical media literacy

Importantly, I am less interested in observing this data as static, stable texts, but rather, I am interested in the processes through which these texts mobilize meanings, circulating and

disseminating cultural values across bodies. I focus on how people rationalize the decision to get double eyelid surgery because I believe these rationalizations are a way to access deeply held cultural values and beliefs that ground the way people understand others. To be clear, my goal here is not to seek out *why* people get double-eyelid surgery, nor is it to discern the most viable rationalizations that people give, or to critique Korean or East Asian culture as one that is ostensibly plastic; rather, I am interested in exploring these rationalizations in order to gain a sense of the different ways these bodies are publicly represented by and for subjects from across a range of cultural backgrounds.

Limitations

It is also important to note that these methods of accessing cultural values about raced bodies have limitations. For example, observations that are found and discussions that are had on YouTube cannot be used to make overarching statements about views held by the larger population of Americans, Asian Americans, or any other group of people other than that of YouTube users, because who uses YouTube to make, post, and watch videos is limited by a variety of factors related to issues of access--to technology, and to language, for instance. The data and methods used in this study therefore could not be used to make any kind of wider, general observations about who gets double eyelid surgery. For example, a majority of the vernacular videos included feature females who have gotten the surgery. While one may assume that this is because double eyelid surgery tends to be done by females, we must also take into account how social norms and gender roles affect who is willing to disclose particular kinds of information about themselves, for example, that they've gotten a cosmetic surgical procedure. Furthermore, neither the data nor the coding of this data was comprehensive or exhaustive. Thus,

as mentioned above, this data cannot be used to provide any kind of exhaustive account defining double eyelid surgery in any kind of “objective” or historical way, nor can it be used to identify overarching trends, or to make quantitative observations. Nonetheless, I believe the methods used yield rich and reliable observations about how people rationalize double eyelid surgery on YouTube, how users negotiate and understand these rationalizations, and the temporal logics that ground those rationalizations.

Furthermore, all of the videos included in this study are in English. I have been asked why I didn’t watch Korea-based videos as well, and, besides limitations of time, I decided to focus on English language videos for a couple of reasons, the primary of which is that I felt it was important for me to first gain an understanding of my own positionality as an Asian American researcher first, before attempting to understand the perspectives of people in another country who would have a vast array of cultural, social, political, and linguistic differences.

What’s To Come

This dissertation outlines five tropes that I have identified in the discourse on East Asian blepharoplasty in online video, based on the range of data collected. The tropes outlined are: racialization, emotionologization, the split between nature and technology, pragmatization, and agency.⁸ These tropes are rhetorical strategies through which people make arguments about why

⁸ While this particular study focuses on these five tropes, they are not intended to be exhaustive or exclusionary. As Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) described, the reasons people get the surgery are complex: “the meanings and practices of aesthetic surgery represent a process of negotiation between multiple discourses concerning national identity, globalized and regionalized standards of beauty, official and non-official religion, traditional beliefs and practices (in some instances historically imported from some other place), as well as the symbolic practices of coming of age, caring for the self, marking social status and seeking success. All these considerations frequently intersect with and occasionally contradict each other” (p. 59).

a person should, or should not, get double eyelid surgery. By extension, such arguments have implications about when body modification is and isn't appropriate and what bodies are or are not appropriate. Thus, in my discussion of each trope, I will also discuss some of the the *temporal logics* embedded within these tropes. By temporal logics, I mean the epistemological frames through which we structure, feel, and live time. Understanding these logics is crucial for understanding rhetoric because they ground the way meaning is produced.

In the chapter that follows, "Beyond Westernization: Temporal Logics in the Racialization of Double Eyelid Surgery," I discuss the trope of racialization, particularly as it can be found in YouTube videos about double eyelid surgery. I then go on to describe two primary temporal logics that ground racialized discourse: Eurocentrism as a logic of progress, and hybridization. In Chapter 3, "Wake up!: Emotionologizing and (De)naturalizing the Asian/American Body," I present the tropes of emotionologization and the split between nature and technology, as well as a temporal logic of timelessness, connecting this logic to the history of colonizing practices in the West. I furthermore argue that emotionologization, (de)naturalization, and timelessness are constitutive of what Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2012) referred to as "high-tech Orientalism" via the stereotype of the Asian American robot. In Chapter 4, "Pragmatization and Agency, Efficiency and Desire" I discuss the tropes of pragmatization and agency, and the temporal logics of efficiency and desire, arguing for greater attention to desire as a rhetorical category within rhetoric and composition. In the fifth and final chapter, "What Asian Eyelids Can Teach us About Rhetoric and Writing: Implications for Multimodal Analysis, Production, and Organization of Bodies," I take the tropes and temporal logics discussed throughout this dissertation and use them to build a framework for the analysis, production, and organization of

multimodal representations of bodies. I conclude with some possible future directions for this research.

Through my analysis of tropes embedded in the discourse on East Asian blepharoplasty, I will consider the following question that is important not only to cultural and digital rhetorical study, but rhetorical study more broadly: How do people use (digital) rhetoric to publicly represent bodies by and for subjects across a range of cultural backgrounds? An analysis of these videos in terms of tropes is intended to provide more nuanced and complex understandings of how faces and cultural practices are and can be read by different audiences, as well as in terms of how we engage in rhetorical analysis of representations and interpretations of these faces and practices.

CHAPTER 2

BEYOND WESTERNIZATION:

TEMPORAL LOGICS IN THE RACIALIZATION OF DOUBLE EYELID SURGERY

In our present moment, it is an understanding of *race* not as a fixed singular essence, but as the *locus* in which economic, gender, sex, and race contradictions converge, that organizes current struggles for immigrant rights, prisoner's rights, affirmative action, racialized women's labor, and AIDS and HIV patients in communities of color. Both the 'successes' and the 'failures' of struggles over the last thirty years demonstrate the degree to which *race* remains, after citizenship, the material trace of history and thus the site of struggle through which contradictions are heightened and brought into relief.

-- Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (1996, p. 26)

The first known published work referencing East Asian blepharoplasty was written by K. Mikamo (1896). Historically, this takes place after the opening of Japan with the Kanagawa Treaty in 1854, and the Meiji period that brought wide scale reformation and modernization throughout Japan. As Lam (2002) reported, "Japanese women became enamored of Western beauty and ached to emulate their Western counterparts" (p. 201). Despite this larger cultural shift, though, Lam suggested that, "Perhaps it would be erroneous to claim that Mikamo strove simply to westernize the Japanese eyelid. Although influenced by Western ideals, he sought to define a Japanese aesthetic and then attempted to meet the standard with his innovative surgery.

Mikamo worked squarely within Japanese physical characteristics to achieve his objective without wholesale import of European ideals” (p. 201). Sergile and Obata (1996) furthermore described:

After these initial case reports by Mikamo, little was published until the 1920s, when increased Western presence introduced new concepts of beauty and changed the Asian attitude toward aesthetic surgery [...] Over time, a greater Western influence was clearly seen and reflected in the procedures that followed. Hata described creating a higher crease at 10 mm in 1933, and in the 1940s to 1950s, multiple authors including Hayashi, Inoue, Sayoc, Mitsui, Fernandez, and Boo-Chai described techniques including excision of muscle and fat to create a deeper-set eye in addition to creating a double eyelid. (p. 667)

Fernandez (1959) described one of the later waves of double eyelid surgery: after World War II, “The Oriental probably became more fold conscious because of the influx of Caucasians, with intermarriages, and because approximately one-half of the Orientals normally have these folds” (p. 257). In my reading, it is notable that even relatively early in the scholarship on double eyelid surgery, Fernandez attributed the growing popularity of double eyelid surgery after World War II with mixed race people and Asians who naturally have double eyelids rather than white bodies or standards of beauty per se.¹ This very brief historical background provides a glimpse of the complex and dynamic relationship between race and double eyelid surgery--a relationship that is often oversimplified in Western popular media and reduced to Asians wanting to look or

¹ David Palumbo-Liu (1999) argued that “no attention has been paid to the fact that the high point of such surgery began as a public relations program of United States occupational forces in Korea” (p. 95).

be white. Double eyelid surgery is not just a matter of creating a crease in the eyelid, but where that crease appears has certain linkages with general trends among people of particular races, as well as with historical trends, and how that fold is read as being in relation to race is contingent on place and time.

In this chapter, I present the first of five tropes through which people rationalize the decision to get, or not get, double eyelid surgery on YouTube: racialization. In using the term racialization, I invoke Omi and Winant's (1994), definition as, "the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group...an ideological process, an historically specific one" (p. 14). In other words, I use "racialization" to highlight and literalize the rhetorical making of race--the process by which racial categories and race-based connotations are attached to bodies, practices, and ideas through language and other signifiers. In so doing, I examine race as a "site of struggle through which contradictions are heightened and brought into relief" (Lowe, 1996, p. 26). To access this making, this process, I examine everyday utterances about race online that both highlight historically-rooted race contradictions and work--in rhetorical and material ways--to shape future iterations of race. I begin with the trope of racialization, because it is the most common trope that can be found in the discourse surrounding videos about double eyelid surgery, and also because I build upon this trope in the chapters that follow. I examine a few examples of racialization in representations of East Asian double eyelid surgery in online video, before I go on to discuss the range of responses to such rationalizations as found in response videos and viewer commentary. I then go on to describe the temporal logics that ground the racialization of double eyelid surgery, focusing on two: progress and hybridization, but also touching on timelessness as a precondition for the possibility of progress.

Through my analysis and as I will show, it becomes clear that the racialization of double eyelid surgery is based on several assumptions about Asian bodies: first, that Asians “all look same” with small, monolidded eyes; second that Asians desire to look white, as per the model minority myth via assimilation; third, that Asians are not aware that they want to be white and are thus “behind” in terms of not being race conscious; and fourth, racialization is contingent on several U.S.-centric assumptions about race, beauty, and cosmetic surgery. As Heyes (2006) has argued, “Individuals who undergo cosmetic procedures have diverse rationales, and it is perhaps a conceit--or a projection--of a white interpretive stance to think that all body modifications undertaken by people of color are motivated exclusively by a desire to look white” (p. 145). Ultimately, I argue that racialization and temporal logics of progress rely on the notion that Asians are morally underdeveloped from a Western lens. Furthermore, the linearity of progress is made possible by creating a stable start point and end point; when bodies are placed on a trajectory of progress, at the starting point and at the end goal, they oftentimes become essentialized--what it means to be Asian is made timeless, static, and unchanging, as it is mired in old stereotypes of “all look same,” slant eyed, morally oblivious, unenlightened, and subservient to whites, a move that goes on to reinforce how Asians are racialized in the same way over and over again.

Racializing Double Eyelid Surgery on YouTube

In a CNN news segment posted by SirGrowalott (2011) titled, “WTF VIDEO - Young Korean Girls Have Surgery To Look More White!!!” reporter Kyung Lah interviewed Lee Min Kyong, a twelve year old Korean girl who, with her mother’s permission, planned to get double-eyelid surgery for what Lah describes as “more Westernized eyes.” Lah explained, “Lee Min

Kyong is a picture of childhood grace and poise, but, she says, not beauty. What she sees are her small Asian eyes.” Later in the video, Lah asked Dr. Kim Byung Gun, a cosmetic surgeon in Seoul, Korea, “When patients come in and talk about why they want these types of surgeries, what do they tell you?” Gun explained, “The Chinese and Korean patients tell me that they want to have some face like Americans.”² Both the title of this video as well as the narrative and dialogue within it are examples of how double eyelid surgery is understood and articulated through notions of race. Through a multimodal delivery, YouTube viewers are able to see that the bodies included in this video--the ones who speak and the ones who are spoken about--are visibly Asian. We are able to see the young girl’s face that renders notions of innocence and victimhood, through which Lah, or CNN, or SirGrowalott, makes the implicit argument that this girl doesn’t *need* the surgery (see Figure 1). The video’s audience is able to hear that Lah has an American English accent, while Lee Min Kyong speaks Korean and Dr. Kim Byung Gun speaks English with a Korean accent. The video is furthermore framed in very specific ways that attach race to double eyelid surgery. This framing takes place through a series of interactions between YouTube’s interface and the metadata entered by the user SirGrowalott, via its title, description, and tags. The video is described: “Young women all across Asia are getting plastic surgery on their faces and eyes in order to look less Asian!, but rather to look more white and westernized instead. (what a crying shame) [*sic*].” Among the tags SirGrowalott used to categorize this video are “strange,” “weird,” “crazy,” and “sad,” indicating his personal opinion of eyelid surgery as it

² In this context it is clear that Dr. Kim Byung Gun is not referring to Native Americans or American nationals, leading one would have to ask: What do “Americans” look like? Rather, Gun seems to be referring to “Americans” in terms of its usage to refer to the racial majority of Caucasians in the U.S. A more detailed discussion of how terms like “race,” “white,” “American,” and “Western” are deployed appears later in this chapter.

is understood as a racialized practice. These tags will also be used to organize the video on YouTube, providing access to potential viewers who are seeking out the strange, the weird, and the crazy. With 149,760 views as of October 30, 2012, the video has 168 likes and 239 dislikes, indicating that many viewers have taken issue with the content and/or its framing in some way, and asserted their “dislike” for the video on the site (see Figure 2). Subsequent viewers are then able to see that this video has more dislikes than it does likes--which will also shape how they will interpret the video. Through the phrases “more Westernized eyes,” “to look more white,” and “to look less Asian,” both Lah and SirGrowalott’s characterizations of double eyelid surgery are examples of the way the surgery is commonly racialized. Moreover, Lah and SirGrowalott rationalized double eyelid surgery in terms of a transformation through notions of race and nationalism. The intermingling of phrases like “to look more white,” “more Westernized eyes,” and “to have some face like Americans,” reveal the complex interplay and associations across race, nationalism, modernization, and cosmopolitanism.



Figure 1. Screenshot from “WTF VIDEO - Young Korean Girls Have Surgery To Look More White!!!”: Lee Min Kyong, Plastic Surgery Patient.³ The caption in the above screenshot reads, “Lee Min Kyong, Plastic Surgery Patient, CNN.”

³ Through its multimodal representation of Lee Min Kyong doing ballet at the start of the clip, the video juxtaposes this embodiment of childhood innocence with the invasiveness of cosmetic surgery. As such, the video’s audience is furthermore able to see that from Western standards, little Korean Lee Min Kyong does not “need” cosmetic surgery. In this way, multimodality makes possible a particular kind of influence via a “seeing is believing,” or, “see this for yourself” rhetoric. This rhetoric is effective, at least if 1235ack has anything to say about it: “holy crap, that little girl is one of the most adorable things I have ever seen, there is no no no reason to change anything! Too bad we didn't see if she went through with it.”



Figure 2. YouTube Panel for “WTF VIDEO - Young Korean Girls Have Surgery To Look More White!!!” The above screenshot reads, “Uploaded by SirGrowthlott on Jun 1, 2011; 83,896, 117 likes, 120 dislikes, Young women all across Asia are getting plastic surgery on their faces and eyes in order to look less Asian!, but rather to look more white and westernized instead. (what a crying shame); Category: News and Politics; Tags: Young, Korean, Girls, Have, Surgery, To, Look, More, White, plastic, surgery, face, eyes, strange, weird, crazy, sad, Korea, Asia, China, Japan, Seoul, sirgrowalott, taiwan, beijing, shanghai, news; Standard YouTube License.

As mentioned above, racialization is by far the most common trope through which people rationalize double eyelid surgery in online video and the comments that surround these videos. Oftentimes, this is where people interpret the decision to get double eyelid surgery as a means to “look more White,” and as a kind of internalized racism and self-hate on part of Asians and Asian Americans. That is, double eyelid surgery becomes a means for Asians and Asian Americans to “erase the race.” Racialization in the discourse on East Asian double eyelid surgery takes place on YouTube through multiple modalities, simultaneously textually, visually, and aurally. Some examples of this are as blatant as a video titled, “Modern Asian Internalize racism” (2011), which is described:

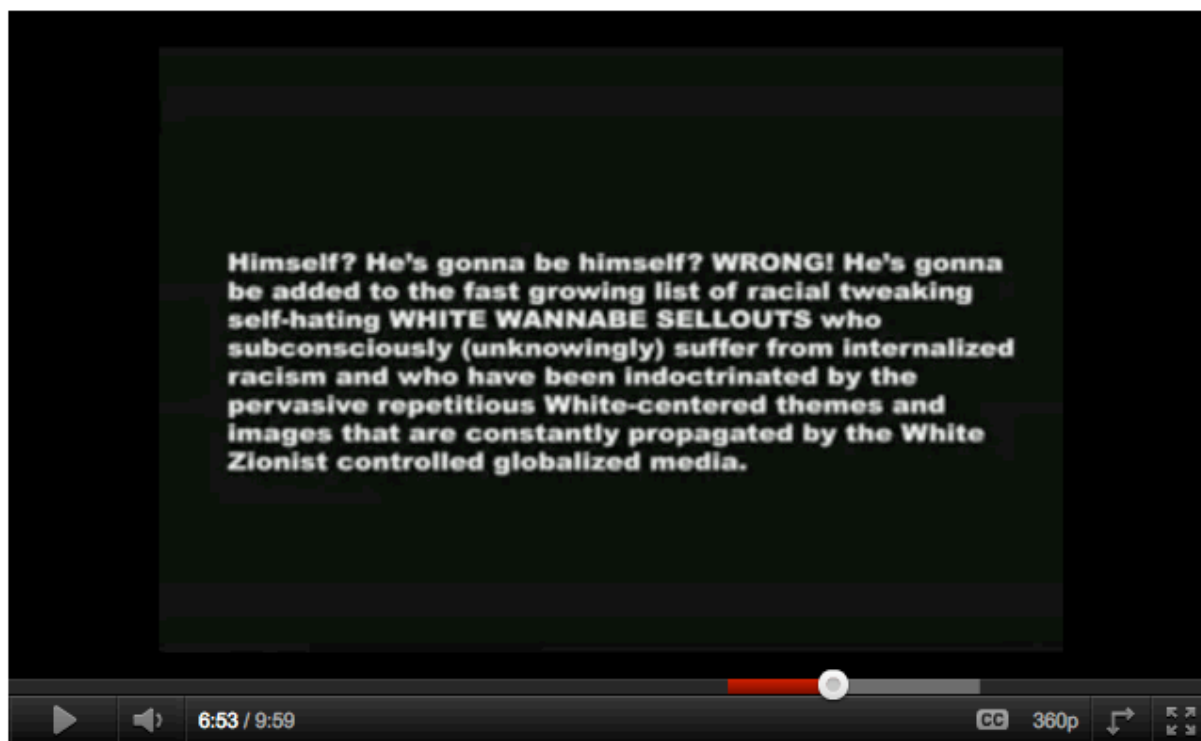
A lot of Asians today, especially the ones who grew up in western societies develop a self hate, internalize racism amongst themselves and onto other asians. From eyelid surgery to





nose surgery, people are trying to look more westernized to fit in societies standard [*sic*]
(see Figure 3).

We also see this in the above example where Lah, in her reporting, as well as SirGrowalott, in his framing of the *YouTube* video, interpretively attached race to double eyelid surgery. The implication is that any Asian person who would change his or her appearance in order to get larger and rounder eyes simply wants to look more White. Other common cosmetic surgery procedures among people of East Asian ancestry like nose bridge raising and chin defining are commonly interpreted in similar ways--as being racially motivated.

Modern Asian Internalize racism

asianamericanissues 4 videos  



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3,309 

Uploaded by [asianamericanissues](#) on Jan 31, 2011

25 likes, 5 dislikes

A close look at the modern asian's we know today. A lot of Asians today, especially ones who grew up in western societies develop a self hate, internalize racism amongst themselves and onto other asians. From eyelid surgery to nose surgery, people are trying to look more westernized to fit in societies standard.

Category:

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Tags:

[asian internalize racism](#) [eyelid surgery](#) [monolid](#) [double eyelid surgery](#) [rhinoplastic nose surgery](#) [asian racism](#) [asian self hate](#) [asian oppression](#) [paradigm](#) [asian girls](#) [asian females](#) [asian girl self hate](#) [asian men self hate](#) [chinese southeast asians](#) [east asians](#) [self hate](#)

Figure 3. Screenshot from “Modern Asian Internalize racism.” The above screenshot reads, “Modern Asian Internalize racism; asianamericanissues; Himself? He’s gonna be himself? WRONG! He’s gonna be added to the fast growing list of racial tweaking self-hating WHITE WANNABE SELLOUTS who subconsciously (unknowingly) suffer from internalized racism and who have been indoctrinated by the pervasive repetitious White-centered themes and images that are constantly propagated by the White Zionist controlled globalized media; Uploaded by asianamericanissues on Jan 31, 2011; 3,309; 25 likes, 5 dislikes; A close look at the modern

Figure 3 (cont'd)

asian's we know today, especially ones who grew up in western societies develop a self hate, internalize racism amongst themselves and onto other asians. From eyelid surgery to nose surgery, people are trying to look more westernized to fit in societies standard; Category: Education; Tags: asian internalize racism, eyelid surgery, monolid, double eyelid surgery, rhinoplastic; nose surgery; asian racism; asian self hate; asian oppression; paradigm; asian girls; asian females; asian girl self hate; asian men self hate; chinese; southeast asians; east asians; self hate.”

Racialization is particularly prominent in cross-cultural contexts, where non-Asian Westerners attempt to make sense of why anyone would want to get cosmetic surgery for something that they themselves have never had to consider. Examples of such contexts include mass media excerpts of news reports and daytime talk shows in the West, including *The Tyra Banks Show*, *Montel*, and *Dr. Phil*, a genre and space where a variety of perspectives and oftentimes conflicting ideas come together. These representations are furthermore indicative of the dominant public discourse about double eyelid surgery, especially as such conversations take place in the West. For example, in “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRY BEAST)”⁴ by abchungrybeast (2011), the YouTube account for “a weekly, half-hour, [Australian] TV show on ABC television combining journalism, comedy and the reportage of weird” (Hungry Beast, 2011), Sam Jae Wook Kim, a 14 year old male of Korean ancestry who is about to get double eyelid surgery, explained, “I want to try to be included. So, I want to try to be similar, I guess, like Australian? It’s good if you look similar like them.” Like several others who have gotten double eyelid surgery and who have spoken on Western (in these examples, Australian and U.S.) mass media television shows such as *Insight*, *Tyra*, and *Montel*, Kim mentioned having

⁴ This video is titled “Racial Facial: Asian Eyelid Surgery” on the Hungry Beast website and is included in Episode 23, which, notably, is titled “Faking It.” Included is the following tagline: “Asian eyelid surgery to look more western.” I’d argue that the way the video presents its topic is more nuanced than this description indicates.

“experienced racism [a] couple of times.” Commenters also echoed such sentiments; for example, “Yeah for those who are hatin' and complaining on why asians shouldn't get them and should accept how they look like well try being asian with monoeyelids for a while. you'll see how it feels. shit” (PakuLeee, 2012); and “Also its white ppl who always says shit like dont loose [sic] your ethnic identity...you have never been racially discriminated upon. Anything to alleviate any pressure why the fuck not” (nismofury, 2012). On an episode of *The Tyra Banks Show*, Tyra explained to her guest, Liz, a 25-year-old Korean American woman, that her decision to get double eyelid surgery is “not so much about necessarily just a droopy eye, it’s also about wanting to look more Caucasian” (Flaw3dBeauty, 2008). When Liz resisted this idea, Tyra pushed her to come to terms with this “reality,” and to support this claim, Tyra read from her notes, “You say that when you were little, you wanted a different family to fit in, you wanted blonde hair and blue eyes like everybody else, kids used to tease you.” Such statements imply that experiences of racism and/or bullying based on race is a major impetus for getting this procedure, at least for Asians living in places where whites are the racial majority. What remains to be seen, however, is whether such surgery would even address issues of racism. What’s more, Tyra, in her analysis, committed the logical fallacy of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*--even though Liz was teased as a child, that in itself is not evidence that Liz got the surgery to “look more Caucasian.”

Besides issues of experienced racism, the trope of racialization also takes shape in comments that critique representations of beauty in mass media and the implications of such representations for those (Asians) who do not fit into those beauty standards. For instance, Joy Ng explained:

They probably think Caucasian eyes are better looking because it's what they don't have and because it's what they see on screen. The celebrities that they idolize, or the models, what is portrayed--all that's represented is Caucasians so they would obviously want to emulate what they see. (abchungrybeast, 2011)

This observation would not precisely fit most parts of East Asia, where one would predominantly see not Caucasian, but Asian faces in the media. At the same time, these Asian faces do often have double eyelids. In another CNN excerpt, reporter Alina Cho describes Annie Cheng, saying, "She wants to look a little like the Asian actresses she sees on TV and on the Internet" (surgeryvideo99, 2007). As commenter dongtian00 has put it, "It's not their fault the media has conjured up this unrealistic image of beauty that every woman now feels obligated to look like! [...] Wanna stop it? Change the media, end of story" (Comment on surgeryvideo99, 2012).

In thinking about how knowledge about East Asian double eyelid surgery is shaped over YouTube, we must also take into account YouTube's policy on hate speech, as well as other capabilities within the interface that shape the discussion and framing of videos. YouTube's policy on hate speech is posted as follows:

We encourage free speech and defend everyone's right to express unpopular points of view. But we don't permit hate speech (speech which attacks or demeans a group based on race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, age, veteran status, and sexual orientation/gender identity).

Moreover, YouTube defines hate speech as:

content that promotes hatred against members of a protected group. For instance, racist or sexist content may be considered hate speech. Sometimes there is a fine line between what is and what is not considered hate speech. For instance, it is generally okay to criticize a nation, but not okay to make insulting generalizations about people of a particular nationality.

In perusing the comments to videos about East Asian double eyelid surgery, it is notable that in particular threads, many comments have been hidden, removed, or flagged as spam, actions that are made possible through built in functions within YouTube's interface.

It is also worth interrogating distinctions between Caucasian or white, American or Australian, and Western, as such terms are used in contradistinction to Asian. In several examples, such terms co-mingle, signifying a relationship that expands across race, nationalism, modernization, and cosmopolitanism. Generally speaking, while Asian can indicate a person of (East, Southeast, and South) Asian ancestry as well as a person who is from an Asian nation, American, Australian, or Canadian as national categories may also include Asians. Terms like American and Australian are oftentimes linked with such cultural values as individualism and scientific rationality. Western, which is used to signify predominantly European American nations, and is used in opposition to the East, or Asian countries, is generally attached to similar values--modern, cosmopolitan, liberal thinking--and includes not only "American," but other parts of the "developed" world ("developed" itself based on a temporal logic of progress). Western is furthermore linked to European American history and colonizing practices, and both Western and American are terms that are oftentimes conflated with white, or Caucasian. That said, it is important to keep in mind that the West, including the U.S. has since changed shape in

a variety of ways, and we should thus keep this complexity in mind. When Sam Jae Wook Kim said, “I like being Korean, and I would like to stand tall, but I would also like to be like Australian” (abchungrybeast), it is not exactly clear how Kim is understanding Korean in relation to Australian, and whether these identity categories overlap, or are placed are in opposition to one another. However, within the same video, he also said, “I want to try to be included. So, I want to try to be similar, I guess, like Australian? It’s good if you look similar like them,” indicating that he is not currently included in the category of “Australian” and that he did not consider himself to “look similar like [Australians],” thus implying that Australian means white.⁵

Eurocentrism as a Temporal Logic of Progress

In “Lessons from ‘Around the World with Oprah’: Neoliberalism, Race, and the (Geo)politics of Beauty,” Sharon Heijin Lee (2008) analyzed a 2004 segment from *The Oprah Winfrey Show* in which Oprah and Lisa Ling provided viewers “a rare glimpse inside the lives of 30-year-old women from 17 different countries” (p. 25). Lee explained that when “Around the World with Oprah” came to South Korea, the show highlighted the women’s penchant for cosmetic surgery, and Lee mentioned how double-eyelid surgery is often racialized in “Western discourse surrounding South Korean women’s plastic surgery consumption” (p. 26). Oprah received a lot of backlash for this portrayal of Korean women, and it seems that this segment is nowhere to be found on her website. In Lee’s critique, it is reported that, “In the segment dedicated to Korea, Korean women were portrayed to have an inferiority complex with many

⁵ Ahluwalia (2005) explained that particular exclusionary Australian policies have historically limited citizenship to white people, to the point where white settlers are considered “natives” by virtue of local birth or by fulfilling “certain minimum requirements after which citizenship was granted,” while indigenous Australian people are called Aboriginal, but never native (p. 504).

turning to plastic surgery for more Western features.” Lee goes on to use Chandra Mohanty’s notion of the Third World/First World divide in discourses of racialization; in other words, criticism of double eyelid surgery is often based on a framework that places Western standards at the normalized center against which Others are measured.⁶ While I would argue that it is problematic to either locate East Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, China or Taiwan as part of the the third world, another, perhaps more useful way of understanding the practice of racialization is through the lens of Eurocentrism. We can see an example of this in the video titled, “Young Korean Girls Have Surgery To Look More White!!!” (2011).

To put it another way, racialized criticisms of internalized racism and self-hate among surgical patients, viewed through the lens of Eurocentrism, are contingent on the idea that Koreans and Korean Americans are morally underdeveloped from a Western lens. That is, because Korean culture is different from U.S. culture, which, generally speaking, idealizes notions of originality, individuality, naturalness, and authenticity, it seems that Westerners may feel that they have the moral prerogative to correct the immoral behavior of Koreans who must really just hate themselves when judging from a Western lens. We also saw an example of this on *The Tyra Banks Show*, where Liz, a Korean American who’d gotten double eyelid surgery is *informed* that her decision to get the surgery is “also about wanting to look more Caucasian.” When Tyra pushes Liz to come to terms with this “reality,” she implies that Liz is delusional to think that her decision to get double eyelid surgery is not about whitification. No no, Tyra is only the one who is in touch with “reality,” and she has the authority to tell Liz what her *real* reasons

⁶ This is a common critique in rhetoric and composition, particularly among scholars who do cultural rhetorics and cross-cultural rhetorics in instances where Greco-Roman lenses are used to understand non-Western and indigenous modes of knowledge production. (Mao, 2006, et al.)

were, despite having a different cultural background with different cultural values. Such perspectives furthermore imply that Asians are not racially conscious--that they do not understand how the dynamics of race work. Furthermore, what undergirds such arguments are the West's idealized notions of individual identity and naturalness (more on this trope in the following chapter), along with a sense of moral superiority in the West. In other words, as an established, first world, developed, and democratic nation, the U.S. and its citizens are able to responsibly distinguish between right and wrong (as it is oftentimes understood in a universal sense). In this particular situation, the notion that there are right and wrong reasons to get double eyelid surgery often undergirds arguments of racialization. For instance, the "right" reasons for getting surgery might include reasons of health or bodily functionality.⁷ Furthermore, Koreans and other East Asians who get double-eyelid surgery for purely cosmetic reasons don't value themselves as individuals, as "God made them." In other words, Koreans are superficial because they are clearly not satisfied with who they are "on the inside," never mind the long history of racism against Koreans and others of Asian ancestry within and outside of the U.S. In the West, there are right reasons and wrong reasons to get cosmetic surgery, and Western culture has the moral authority to say which is which.

Racialization, ideological Eurocentrism, and moral superiority can also be seen in "K tells Montel about asian nose eyelid plastic surgery" (2007) a clip from *The Montel Show*, themed, "Embarrassed by My Race." In this clip, Kyounga, who appears with the caption, "underwent plastic surgery to look more white," described her decision to get double eyelid surgery and a nose job. At one point in the video, Montel bends down, looks into Kyounga's

⁷ Some have argued that such ideas are grounded in medical rhetoric (Jordan, 2004; Kaw, 1993).

eyes, and attempts to teach her what beauty *is*--because clearly she herself has no clue:

emphatically, he says:

The beauty in the fact that we're so *different* is what beauty is. Just because one portion of this society hasn't gotten to it yet, don't let us get brainwashed into believing that the rest of us have to follow along in suit.

He might as well have just shook her by the shoulders and said, "You're BRAINWASHED! Now snap out of it!" Kyounga simply smiles in response. Montel Williams additionally explained what his issue with the surgery is (because it is for him to judge): "if you're going out to [get cosmetic surgery] because you don't like who you are, you disdain your race, you wanna somehow camouflage and be something else, *I got a problem [my emphasis]*." Finally, Montel informed Kyounga's surgeon Dr. Charles Lee:

In Korea, and in your culture, most women don't get jobs in the media role unless they have their eyes open, because we in the West have pressed the standard on the world that's about as ignorant as anybody could possibly think is!

This, of course, before Montel cuts to a commercial break, denying the possibility for any kind of response. Furthermore, this point of view clearly positions "the West" as the prime influence of the world over. These attitudes are well represented in popular media; for instance, in a Jezebel post titled, "Men in South Korea Aren't Shy About Getting Oodles of Cosmetic Surgery," Doug Barry (2012) knowingly asserted, "The procedure, which creates a crease above each eye, is popular among South Koreans who want to approximate a 'Caucasian look,' which is trendy in South Korea right now *because American pop culture is a ravenous monster that craves homogeneity [my emphasis]*."

A similar kind of thing happens in a video called “WTF - Double Eyelid Tape,” in which a white Canadian couple living in Korea has fun with double eyelid tape. After several minutes of the couple goofing off with the tape, they conclude by trying to persuade Koreans that they don’t need double eyelid surgery, that it’s ridiculous, and that anyone who wants to marry a person because of the shape of his or her eyes is not worth marrying at all (simonandmartina, 2011). There are different kinds of privilege visible in this rhetorical act, where the rhetors are speaking based on the Western value of individual empowerment. They also come from a different place with different cultural experiences and different societal and/or family pressures. For example, Joy Ng of the Hungry Beast video (2011) described how she was basically forced to get the surgery by her mother, even though she herself did not want it: “I never really took her seriously until she flew me overseas and made me do it [...] All the years leading up to that I’d said to her I wasn’t really interested in having it done because I don’t like surgery, and also I really liked my eyes, but I was being obedient and, you know, it meant a lot to her, so I had it done.” At the same time, racialized discourse is not limited to those who are not of Asian ancestry. For instance, there are people who have gotten the surgery who said that they did it because they wanted to look more white. In addition, there are people of Asian ancestry who are critical of double eyelid surgery. All this is a reminder that Asians and Asian Americans are a diverse group and cannot be reduced to singular perspectives. For example, in the aforementioned clip of *The Tyra Banks Show*, Tyra calls on Martin Wong, editor of *Giant Robot*, a magazine of Asian and Asian American popular culture, who opined:

I think there’s nothing wrong with getting eye surgery. If you’re a guy or a woman who wants to get that crease, that’s great. If it makes you happy, perfect. It’s done all the time,

it's pretty safe, and it's a personal choice. But that being said, I think you have to realize that beauty, it's not in a vacuum; there's a context to it. And the look you're going for is something that has been shaped as you said, to kind of a Eurocentric point of view.

In this video, an Asian American man agreed with Tyra as he informs those who have gotten double eyelid surgery that “they have to realize” that their desired look is based on a Eurocentric conception of beauty.

In analyzing racialization in these videos and how race and notions of whiteness are composed through them, it is crucial to note how the visual rhetoric of raced bodies function rhetorically. Several of the talk show hosts mentioned above--Tyra, Oprah, and Montel--are black. As such, it is worth noting that racialization is a discursive strategy taken up by the racialized as well. When we pay attention to how Asian, black, and white interact in this situation, it becomes visible how particular racial hierarchies are reproduced; whiteness is always a mediating factor in these clips. In making Eurocentric accusations, the hosts prop up whiteness in the background, dispersing Eurocentric ideals not only of beauty, but also about values and what is considered moral and immoral. In *The Tyra Show*, Banks calls attention to the fact that she herself is wearing a hair weave, and that she would not have been able to be a model and celebrity with her natural hair--yet she does so in an attempt to get Liz to admit that she truly got double eyelid surgery to look more white. The Eurocentric ideals that are presumed to have shaped these bodies of color are not problematized. Through these interactions, particular racial hierarchies are reinforced, as Asians continue to fit the model minority narrative of assimilation. And yet through this so-called attempt to assimilate via cosmetic surgery, those Asians are

deemed immoral, and inclusion is deferred once more. What seems to be always left out are the range of ways that blacks and Asians have worked in alliance with one another.

There are at least two temporal logics at play in the narratives presented above. Eurocentrism as a temporal logic can be understood using Eviatar Zerubavel's (2004) notion of the "progress narrative," which he explains is visible in rags-to-riches narratives and stories of humble origins. The progress narrative is grounded in the idea that later is better. In other words, to understand Eurocentrism as a kind of temporal logic is to understand it as occurring on a timescape, or via temporal flows. Thus, Eurocentrism is contingent on particular understandings of time, and is one temporal logic that can be extrapolated through these videos and this discussion. The racialization of double eyelid surgery relies on a notion of progress toward a Western moral ideal, and treats globalization and modernization as linear processes of Westernization positioning the U.S. American view as the goal and the standard by which other cultural practices are measured. Thus, associated with Westernization are also movements toward morality, and civilizedness--and there is a long history of this kind of discourse rooted in a range of EuroAmerican colonizing practices (Pearce, 1988). Moreover, for progress to become a feasible reality, certain categories, including what it means to be White, or Asian, need to be stabilized and essentialized (see Figure 4). It is through this move that the discourse of race has traction--because it erases the temporal, de-historicizing, de-contextualizing.

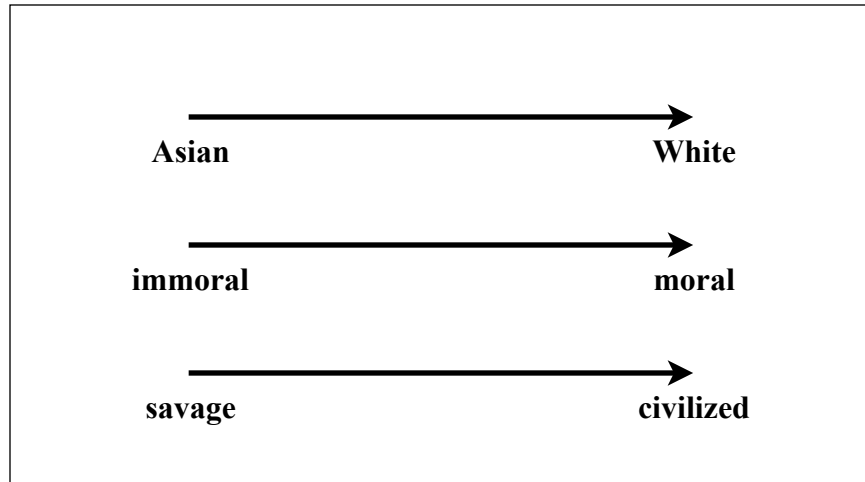


Figure 4. Eurocentrism as a Temporal Logic of Progress

How Users Problematize Racialization

Representations of double eyelid surgery as a racialized practice has clearly been circulated in U.S. and other Western mass media. However, through YouTube, these media representations can be reframed--through video descriptions, commentary, and video responses, both direct and indirect. Several speakers and commenters have problematized racialized views of the surgery, pointing out the kinds of Eurocentrism that ground such rationalizations. For example, some have commented on the influence of Asian popular media/drama, and have talked about the “Korean wave” and how more people in other parts of Asia as well as in the U.S. have been getting cosmetic surgery according to features of their favorite Korean celebrities--in other words, when people come in to get their surgery, they are oftentimes bringing in a picture of an Asian face--not a white face as a frame of reference.⁸ Furthermore, many non-whites, including East Asians and many of other racial backgrounds, are born with double-eyelids. And, finally, racialization essentializes race as static and unchanging--there’s an essential kind of stereotypical

⁸ Medical studies have shown how white double eyelids are different from Asian double eyelids, and the these details inform surgeon procedures.

Asian, and then there's white, and people sort of need to fit into one or the other. These arguments show how it is an oversimplification to rationalize the practice as a linear progress toward whitification.

For instance, as some of the examples above show, the videos are sometimes framed, through YouTube's interface, in ways that prepare viewers to experience the videos in particular ways, not only attempting to get viewers to *see* double eyelid surgery as Asian self hate, but also in an effort to get viewers to critique such views. For example, the excerpt from *The Tyra Banks Show*, which has more than 855,000 views, 1582 likes and 2737 dislikes, is posted with the following description:

Tyra Banks being ignorant/racist-like on Asian Eyelid Surgery. Asians get surgery to enhance their looks, just like everyone else who gets (PS) Plastic Surgery. Whites, Blacks, etc. POINT BEING, NOT EVERYONE HAS THE SAME REASONS. NO ONE WANTS TO LOOK WHITE, END OF STORY. FYI, those who make up assumptions or attack a certain colored race, you guys are just Jealous Haters. BYE. [*sic*] (Flaw3dBeauty, 2008)

In this description, Flaw3dBeauty clearly frames the video in a way that prepares viewers to watch for *how* Tyra Banks is about to be “ignorant/racist-like.” Furthermore, it is clearly visible that this video has more dislikes than likes, indicating for viewers that it is problematic in some way. These features work to reframe the video and how it would have been originally depicted on popular mass media for viewers, and the comments certainly portray as much, as many commenters discuss how double eyelid surgery is racialized and how Tyra Banks is “being ignorant/racist-like.”

In “Why I Got Double Eyelid Surgery/FAQ” (2011) shutupjunie explained, “I did not get double eyelid surgery because I wanted to be white. Just wanted to clear that up because I think that’s *so weird*...It’s not like white people are the only people with double eyelids.” Such responses are also quite common in the YouTube comments to videos about double-eyelid surgery. In response to “Asian plastic surgery on CNN,” freeqwerqwer said:

Asians doing Eyelid surgery in general want to improve their appearance. It has been erroneously viewed as trying to copy the Western look. Not so. Asians prefer the almond shaped eyes, which in fact, many asians have it already. This is not to be confused w/ the double crease type of Westerners, which, depending on some people, can be boring.

In a separate comment, freeqwerqwer went on to say, “This is the biggest misconception of Western people: that Asians want to copy western looks. While some, Asians, esp. those actually living isolated lives in Western countries, do want to copy caucasian looks, most don’t; they just want to improve their looks [*sic*].” In response to another news clip, “Asian Double Eyelid Blepharoplasty 33 News (Dallas, Texas),” thatscaraful commented, “i hate how so many people think that asians are doing this because the ‘western look’ is more desirable. that’s not the reason. a number of asians are born with double lids, therefore double lid isn’t a ‘nonasian’ feature. it’s just something that not everyone has.” Finally, helenprd replied to dulcelamiavita, saying, “Wtf? Where does it indicate that they do not want to look asian? Alot of asians are naturally born with double eyelids you know. So maybe the single-lidded asians just want to emulate their look?” Such explanations acknowledge that many Asians are born with double eyelids take into account the diversity of Asian as a racial category that expands across numerous countries and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, it points to the way that people of Asian descent are so often viewed

as always already raced; because people of Asian ancestry are marked off as “other” through a the visual rhetoric of race,--that race becomes a primary category of identification. As the examples above lay out, many non-whites, including Asians and some Koreans, are born with double eyelid surgery. So why is white the default?

People in videos including people who have gotten the surgery and cosmetic surgeons often say that they are well aware that they will never look white regardless of surgery--thus while perhaps definitions of beauty may have been influenced by the West, it's not as simple as wanting to look more white. As thatscaraful pointed out, “it's not like you'll see an asian girl after the surgery and be all like, ‘is she asian? i can't tell because her eyes aren't tiny.’ NO. just no. they'll just look like an asian with double lids.” Likewise, we see a similar perspective refuting racialization in one of the “Top Comments” for the *Tyra* segment by pikapikachuau, who stated,

I love Tyra but watching this really upset me because it seemed to me that she just kept on trying to shove words down her throat, by saying she's trying to be more white.

Getting double eyelids does not mean you are trying to be more white because I know full Asians that have natural double eyelids and I am a full Chinese with double eyelids too. Double eyelids are just known to make your eyes bigger, so I don't understand why Tyra keeps on associating it with being white. I am disappointed.

Another way that people refute the racialization of double eyelid surgery is by pointing out the contradiction and hypocrisy where other kinds of cosmetic surgery and body modification are not read in the same race-based way. For example, in a video response to the *Tyra* segment by RoxStew5 titled “The double standard of cosmetic surgery,” the narrator explained,

...it seems that it is okay for a white person to perm their hair to get it curly, to implant their but to get it bigger, to plump up their lips to get it thicker, and to tan their skin to get it darker, [all of which the narrator describes as characteristically black traits,] and no one is saying anything to them. But when a person of another race does it, an Asian person or a black person or somebody like that does it, it's all of a sudden "morally wrong," it's "racial tweaking."

As this quote makes clear, racialization of double eyelid surgery exclusively--while other kinds of body modification are not racialized in the same way--is based on a Eurocentric view of body modification. As this example furthermore shows, a Eurocentric perspective essentializes race as something static and unchanging, where Asians are viewed as having essentially small eyes, flat noses, and desiring assimilation. For instance, when Alina Cho explained on CNN, "Annie's features are *typically* Asian. Her eyelids are very small, almost nonexistent. And that makes her eyes look small [*my emphasis*]" (surgeryvideo99, 2007), she reified the idea that "typical" Asian eyelids are "very small, almost nonexistent." In contrast, in the trailer for *Never Perfect*, a women's voice asked, "Some critics might say, 'You're abandoning your Asian heritage.' But what Asian heritage is it that I'm abandoning?" (fighting films, 2007)⁹ Racialization likewise essentializes beauty as something static and unchanging--in other words, something Western, or white.¹⁰

⁹ As Heyes (2009) has put it, "a language of fidelity to one's heritage vies with popular insistence on individual autonomy, which, in turn, mystifies conformity to norms of racialized beauty" (p. 150).

¹⁰ Timelessness and essentialized bodies are further discussed in the following chapter.

Hybridization as Temporal Logic

Another way to understand racialization can be extrapolated from ideas in cross-cultural rhetorics and postcolonial studies, areas of inquiry that have described processes of cultural change in colonial and other contexts that have taken place over time via concepts like hybridity, mimicry, mestiza consciousness, mixed-blood rhetoric, “togetherness-in-difference,” and “process of becoming.” These temporal schemes take more of the complexities of the process of globalization and transnational flow into account. By hybridization, I draw on Lisa Lowe’s (1996) definition as follows:

the formation of cultural objects and practices that are produced by the histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relation; for example, the racial and linguistic mixings in the Philippines and among Filipinos in the United States are the material trace of the history of Spanish colonialism, U.S. colonialism, and U.S. neocolonialism. Hybridity, in this sense, does not suggest the assimilation of Asian or immigrant practices to dominant forms but instead marks the history of survival within relationships of unequal power and domination. (p. 67)

In reading this definition in terms of temporal logics, hybridization suggests that the progression of time is marked, perhaps even propelled, by “histories of uneven and unsynthetic power relation,” rather than by nanoseconds, minutes, or hours. In other words, shifts in power mark moments through which we measure the progression of experience. Moreover, Ien Ang (2001) said,

“Hybridity” captures in a shorthand fashion the complexities and ambiguities of any politics in an increasingly globalized, postcolonial and multicultural world, a world in

which heroic, utopian ideas of revolutionary transformation seem seriously out of touch even as sites of social struggle and political conflict have multiplied [...] Hybridity, here, should not be dismissed pejoratively as the merely contingent and ephemeral, equated with lack of commitment and political resoluteness, but should be valued in James Clifford's words, "as a pragmatic response, making the best of given (often bad) situations [...] in limited historical conjunctures." (p. 3)

Ang went on to explain that "Hybridity is a necessary concept to hold onto in this condition, because unlike other key concepts in the contemporary politics of difference--such as diaspora and multiculturalism--it foregrounds complicated entanglement rather than identity, togetherness-in-difference rather than virtual apartheid" (p. 3). In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha (2005) described a similar process in colonial contexts via the notions of mimicry and ambivalence. Bhabha explains that mimicry is "the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power" (p. 266). He further explained, "the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (p. 266). In other words, Bhabha was describing a process by which cultural colonization happens through rhetorical means. In order for mimicry, and in effect, colonization, to take place, the colonizer localizes the cultural practices they want to enforce. Thus, mimicry is ambivalent--it has dual functions and there exists a kind of push/pull effect whereby change can happen. In this way, mimicry may be conceived as a rhetorical strategy of inducing change via partial appropriation.

These ideas are applicable to the discourse on double eyelid surgery if we think about hybridity as another temporal logic through which we can understand the racialization of double eyelid surgery. When taking commenters' observations into account, it becomes difficult to say that these people are getting plastic surgery simply to look more white--while EuroAmericans have historically influenced ideas of beauty in different places around the world, it's not only an oversimplification, but also in some ways a racist move to make that the answer. As Palumbo-Liu (1999) has put it, "the desire to alter the eyelid is not undertaken necessarily to 'be white,' but to partake of whiteness in a selective fashion" (p.94). Hybridity suggests that time is not simply linear, and that imagined notions of "progress" need to be complicated. And, as we move through lived time, definitions of what it means to be Korean, or East Asian, change. Perhaps this is what makes the fluidness of race such a threat for the dominant ideology--the idea that these racial categories that fundamentally shape the way we see the world will break down. As Heidi Liow said, "It's not to look more Caucasian, it's just to look more... maybe I guess in some way more Eurasian, sort of..." (abchungrybeast, 2011).

To understand the situation in terms of globalization is also to take place as an organizing factor into account; place matters greatly in interpretations of double eyelid surgery and affects the way Asians tend to talk about double eyelid surgery. Asians in the West, for example, often talk about experiences of racism and how their eyes are targeted. For example, Heidi Liow said, "They say chinky eyes, or slit eyes, or they pull their eyes and go 'ching chong wah' or something like that." Excerpts from talk shows like *Tyra* and *Montel* portrayed women who grew up in parts of the U.S. that were predominantly white, and they highlight how these women were teased as children. These videos furthermore don't represent the possibility that the experience

might be very different for the billions of Asians who did not experience these circumstances. The situation is very different in places where Asians are part of the majority, for instance, in Asia, or in the state of Hawai‘i and such portrayals do not represent this. Through a global lens, it furthermore becomes clear how whiteness, too, is a shifting signifier: that is, many of these perspectives do not take into account the complexity of whiteness, how it means different things in different places and at different times. More specifically, whiteness has different connotations in Asia versus in the U.S. In several of the videos, it seemed that Asians who were situated in Asia were more willing to say that people got double eyelid surgery to look more white, versus Asians situated in the West, who were more likely to deny that this is true, most likely because in the West, there is more of a stigma to wanting to look white as it signifies that one is “selling out.” There is a different power dynamic in places where whites are the racial majority versus in places where whites are the minority. Furthermore, this raises the question: What, if anything does the refusal to want to look more white say about whiteness as a dominant standard? Moreover, how is essentializing whiteness a colonizing move in itself?

“Beauty Race,” posted by InsightSBS (2011), an Australian daytime talk show, examined a variety of racialized cosmetic procedures including double-eyelid surgery, rhinoplasty, skin lightening, and skin darkening. Throughout the show, the host offered an array of theories about beauty and how it is determined, at one point suggesting that there is a kind of universally defined beauty that crosses racial boundaries, and at another point suggesting that the way we process beauty is subconscious in that we like or find attractive what is familiar and easier for the brain to process. The video ended with a woman in the crowd says,

I'm wondering if maybe we're all going toward some average of everyone, and I find that actually a really beautiful thing when we live in a world with so much racism that somewhere, maybe psychologically, we find an amalgamation of everyone the most beautiful. And everyone's heading towards that. I think that's a beautiful thing.

This statement is somewhat representative of one way people refute the racialization argument-- by asserting that there is a kind of universal beauty, and that cosmetic surgery patients are oftentimes actually seeking "balance" rather than to look like a particular race. At the same time, such statements are similar to cultural relativist arguments, as they are based on mythical ideas of "universal balance" and "universal beauty." In desiring some kind of universal harmony, such perspectives erase the rich cultural differences among us, thereby reifying what is essentially one definition of beauty.

Conclusion

To examine the trope of racialization is to pay attention to the fluid nature of race, a historically informed category that takes shape over time. Racialization as it occurs in the current study furthermore attaches a technological medical procedure to raced bodies and racial identities. Through this discussion I ask, What can be found when we pay attention to the process of racialization, and what are the rhetorical implications in this shift in interpretive lens? Ultimately, I argue that we should re-examine this tendency to racialize double eyelid surgery. While European American values have shaped contemporary notions of beauty and other values across cultures via processes of colonialism and cultural imperialism, many scholars in postcolonial theory have argued that it is a vast over-simplification to understand such processes through linear notions of whitification or through a white/raced binary (Ang, 2001; Bhabha,

2004; Mao, 2006, et al.). Moreover, it is problematic to reduce the evolution of beauty to a whitification of beauty; as the discourse surrounding double eyelid surgery shows, while white bodies have certainly shaped notions of beauty so have Asian, black, and Latino/a bodies and standards of beauty. As Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) argued, “Such claims [of whitification] position western cultural borrowings as appropriation and non-western ones as colonization while ignoring the fact that *all* modern nations actively appropriate, reject, hybridize or acquiesce in elements of transcultural influences that circulate through the globalized media, cheap travel and migrations [*my emphasis*]” (p. 75).

Double eyelid surgery is a racialized practice that is often understood very differently across cultural lines. Just as with other kinds of body modification, people of East Asian ancestry get double eyelid surgery for a wide range of reasons--several of which are outlined in this dissertation. That being said, it is indeed the case that some who have gotten the surgery explain in these videos that they did so because they wanted to look more white, while others vehemently deny that this is the case for them. Yet the contrast in the two temporal logics described above can furthermore be understood as working rhetorically through Zerubavel’s (2004) notion of mnemonic communities, wherein people “internaliz[e] ‘social *norms of remembrance*’” (p. 233).

The discussion here furthermore shows how discourses of racialization reinforce the progress narrative in harmful ways--for instance, by implying that Asian is subordinate morally and aesthetically to White. As such, a temporal logic of progress grounds the possibility for particular kinds of racism, as well as the possibility for racist beliefs to move across cultures. At the same time, I would also like to make clear that I am not arguing that rhetorics of progress are

simply damaging, but rather that it is all too often left uninterrogated. Drawing on Susan Bordo's work on "anorexic reproductions of femininity," Kathleen Zane (2003) suggested that "Asian women's elective eyelid surgery can be motivated, not simply by the desire to simulate Caucasian looks, but rather as a response to the values of the new woman" via such values as "self-control and mastery" (p. 361). Zane also created a new way of measuring time through the following description of the surgery as it takes place over the course of individual lives: "as social ritual or rites of passage rather than having anything to do with personal self esteem, marking changes in "social status, such as graduation, coming of age, or first full-time employment" (p. 360) Zane described the rhetorical consequences of racialization as follows:

The totalizing and dismissive assumption that Asian women who elect such surgery obviously desire to look/be Western has seemed too readily to essentialize Asians as degraded imitations and mimics. Labeling Asian surgical clients as mere victims of internalized racism resulting from their enthrallment with the patriarchal gaze of Western cultural imperialism seems to further a divide between enlightened or true feminists and these 'other' less privileged 'natives.' [...]mutterings about hegemony's efficacy in internalized racism. (p. 355)

In a dialogue across commenters, Applebaum responded to saruki1217, saying, "you say... 'not because they wanna look white but bcuz they think it will make them look prettier' Haven't you ever wondered why most Oriental people think big eyes are prettier than the eyes they have? if so ...why do you think many asians think eyes tht do not look like theirs are prettier?

Globalisation is a Colonisation of the mind led by people of european descent [*sic*]." Yet as Zane has shown, this point of view that "Globalisation is a Colonisation of the mind led by people

European descent” disenfranchises those who are not of European descent, and fails to take into account the ways that diverse cultures have shaped not only the way we define beauty, but also a range of values that people share. People across races desire to be “prettier” or more attractive, and this is oftentimes an impetus for anyone pursuing cosmetic surgery as a means of reshaping their body.

This chapter sets up the problem with regards to the ways people represent and discuss double eyelid surgery in terms of race, a theme that will continue throughout the dissertation. Chapter 3 continues to engage issues of racialization, particularly as it takes shape within the tropes of emotionologization and the split between nature and technology. As I discuss these two tropes, I also further explore timelessness as a temporal logic.

CHAPTER 3

“WAKE UP!”: (DE)EMOTIONOLOGIZING AND (DE)NATURALIZING

THE ASIAN/ASIAN AMERICAN BODY

In “Year Zero: Faciality,” Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explored the face as a politicized locus of “significance and subjectification”; that is, the meanings ascribed to the face are socially and politically informed:

Faces are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations. Similarly, the form of subjectivity, whether consciousness or passion, would remain absolutely empty if faces did not form loci of resonance that select the sensed or mental reality and make it conform in advance to a dominant reality. (p. 168)

They additionally said, “The face is not a universal. It is not even that of the whiteman; it is White Man himself, with his broad white cheeks and the black hole of his eyes. The face is Christ. The face is the typical European, what Ezra Pound called the average sensual man, in short, the ordinary everyday Erotomaniac” (p. 176). Moreover:

Very specific assemblages of power impose significance and subjectification as their determinate form of expression, in reciprocal presupposition with new contents: there is no significance without a despotic assemblage, no subjectification without an authoritarian assemblage, and no mixture between the two without assemblages of power that act through signifiers and act upon souls and subjects. It is these assemblages, these despotic

or authoritarian formations, that give the new semiotic system the means of its imperialism. (p. 180)

As such, Deleuze and Guattari disrupted dominant views of the eyes as “the portal to one’s soul,” but rather positioned the face as an imperial machine. Furthermore, when the appearance of particular eyes are stigmatized through a set of negative associations, they become set apart from the general, “universal” understanding of facial cues. Scholars of Asian/Asian American American studies and Asian/Asian American rhetoric have discussed the face as a locus of interpretation and articulation as well. As LuMing Mao (2006) wrote, “Face is a regularly invoked discursive construct in Chinese rhetorical repertoire” (p. 37). Yet Mao described how that interpretation and articulation looks differently with Chinese American rhetoric versus EuroAmerican rhetoric, for example, describing Chinese face as something public rather than private, as it is in the West. This discussion of faciality and the notion of the face as a locus of signification that shifts across time, place, and culture is applicable to Korean society, too: as Holliday and Elfving-Hwang described (2012), “Around half of all Koreans believe that one can ‘read’ a person’s character by looking at their face (Kim, 2005). With the growing affluence of Korean society, the ‘inauspicious’ face, previously having doomed its bearer to a lifetime of bad luck, can now be fixed.” Moreover, “The common practice of seeking approval from strangers of the results of surgical procedures highlights the importance of having the ‘right face’” (p. 70).

Extending on my discussion of racialization and temporal logics in the previous chapter, this chapter lays out two additional tropes in how people rationalize double eyelid surgery on YouTube: emotionologization, and the split between nature and technology. These tropes continue to engage issues of race, yet they do so in ways that are more implicit, buried under

notions of emotionalism and naturalness; for instance, through emotionologization, particular emotional states become tied to particular racialized bodies in similar ways that through the split between nature and technology, particular ideas about what is (un)natural are attached to particular racialized bodies. I go on to explore timelessness as a temporal logic that grounds these tropes. Moreover, I argue that the kinds of Othering that take place through emotionologization and the split between nature and technology, in tandem with temporal logics of timelessness, work to reinforce the stereotype of the Asian American robot, or what Chun (2012) referred to as “high-tech Orientalism” (p. 49), and the model minority myth: bodies that are de-emotionologized and de-naturalized become robots. Finally, I explore the implications of this argument.

“Wake up!”--the title of this chapter--has multiple layers of meaning for the discussion at hand. A command that is generally associated with the opening of one’s eyes, “Wake up!” can be understood in the physical sense, of being awoken from slumber, or drowsiness. In relation to the discourse on double eyelid surgery in online video, monolids--those without double eyelids--are sometimes described as appearing sleepy. Double eyelid surgery, then, helps patients to “Wake up!” as it is said to “open up the eyes.” In a sense, it is as if dominant standards of beauty are commanding Asian bodies to “Wake up!” At times, the data shows Asian bodies asserting that the West “Wake up!” in their views about Asians. In this way, “Wake up!” can also be understood metaphorically, as this dissertation likewise suggests readers “Wake up!” consciously, politically, and socially. “Wake up!” also highlights the face--and the eyes specifically--as a locus of interpretation. In this chapter, I explore how such interpretations are shaped by racialized bodies.

Emotionologization, Beauty, and Race

In “Learning Asian American Affect,” K. Hyoejin Yoon (2008) described Asian American affect as learned behavior, arguing that the “discourses [of white patriarchy] play a key role in developing Asian American women’s subjectivity and their internalized ideals, goals, and self-perceptions that intervene with projections of western, masculinist cultural fantasies” (p. 300). In this section, I extend on Yoon’s work, exploring how the discourse on East Asian blepharoplasty make visible how affect is shaped by and through Asian eyelids. In deploying the term emotionologization, I refer to Stearns and Stearns’ (1985) definition as:

the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression; ways that institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes in human conduct, e.g. courtship practices as expressing the valuation of affect in marriage, or personnel workshops as reflecting the valuation of anger in job relations. (p. 813)

In other words, this section explores the expression of emotion as normative and both culturally defined and socially learned. They furthermore define emotion as:

a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated through neural and/or hormonal systems, which give rise to feelings (affective experiences as of pleasure or displeasure) and also general cognitive processes toward appraising the experience; emotions in this sense lead to physiological adjustments to the conditions that aroused response, and often to expressive and adaptive behavior (p. 813).

In similar ways, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun (2009), has described how “race, like one’s face, is not simply a private possession or technology--it is not a usually hidden ‘card’ that one can choose to

‘play’ publicly, but rather exists at the cusp between the public and the private, the visible and the invisible” (p. 23). In this way, this chapter explores where race, face, and affect intersect. Stearns and Stearns (1985) furthermore suggested that “emotionology” may be useful to “distinguish the collective emotional standards of a society from the emotional experiences of individuals and groups,” especially as these emotional standards and emotional experiences at times find themselves at odds with one another (p. 813). This is particularly interesting for rhetoric and composition scholarship because emotion and the way we read emotion is oftentimes taken for granted as something universal and not cultural informed. Moreover, Stearns and Stearns said that use of the term

will focus our attention on the social factors that determine and delimit, either implicitly or explicitly, the manner in which emotions are expressed. Such a study will, we hope, illuminate how and why social agencies and institutions either promote or prohibit some kinds of emotions, while remaining neutral or indifferent to others. (p. 813)

In discussions of rhetoric and pathos, emotion is often flattened to something that can be imagined with a target audience in mind, yet generalizable and without much consideration of cultural difference, and thus--when taking this work into account--problematic, as it reinscribes particular ways of understanding Othered faces in ways that continue to marginalize Others. As such, this work speaks to the kinds of work that have been done about bodies in feminisms and composition, i.e., the scholarship on affective pedagogy and Asian women (Hirata-Knight, 2009), and it adds to the list of longstanding stereotypes that attach particular emotional states and character traits to Asian bodies, such as the demure lotus flower, the fiery dragon lady, the obedient and complacent model minority, or the scheming yellow peril.

Emotionologization in this particular project refers to how the body is composed as particular emotions and character traits are attached to particular racial features and its implications for the rhetorical construction of beauty. In this section, I explore the different ways that double eyelid surgery is emotionologized in online video; for example, many who get the surgery, as well as surgeons, talk about how the surgery makes them appear more lively, less sleepy, more expressive, and thus prettier. For instance, in “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRY BEAST)” (2011) Heidi Liow explained, “I look angry and frowny all the time, or I look worried or something like that, and I think by opening my eyes up a bit more it makes me look happier, easily approachable” (see Figure 5). As in this example, emotionologization, is the tendency to interpret emotion, or a person’s emotional state of being, through visual cues via the face. Many who get the surgery, as well as surgeons who practice the surgery, talk about how double-eyelid surgery makes patients appear more lively, less sleepy, more expressive, and thus prettier, or more attractive. For instance, the video description for “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity” explained, “Fans of the surgery say it makes them look prettier, less angry and more awake” (abchungrybeast, 2011). More specifically, and as the following examples illustrate, double eyelid surgery is emotionologized in two primary ways across the data: 1) through the idea that monolids are “sleepy” looking¹; and 2) through the idea that monolids look angry.² Through these interpretations, the exterior appearance of Asian eyelids are linked to interior thoughts, emotions, personalities, and character traits. David Palumbo-Liu (1999) described this

¹ While sleepiness is not an emotion per se, I am perhaps understanding it more in terms of affect.

² Funnily enough, I have been told that I look like Droopy (tired) and Daria (well, angsty more than angry, but close enough).

process in terms of “internalization of aesthetic judgments and values,” which then go on to extend “‘beauty’ into morality, social engagement, and mental structures” (p. 93).



Figure 5. Screenshot from “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRY BEAST)”: Heidi Liow. The captions in the above screenshots read, “BEFORE SURGERY,” and “1 WEEK AFTER SURGERY.”

Several users discuss the association with monolids, as having a “tired” appearance, likely because of how much and what parts of the pupil are visible through eyes with and without double eyelids. As Figure 5 shows, even though Liow had double eyelids prior to the surgery, her eyelids were lifted with blepharoplasty and a larger portion of the top of her eyelid becomes visible in the “after” picture, creating a more “awake” appearance. As commenter Laurel Villanueva attested, “This stuff [double eyelid surgery] actually works really well for droopy eyelids. It helps open the eyes more and makes you look more *well rested*. When the eyelids sag it makes you look tired (that goes for asians or westerners) [*sic; my emphasis*].” loonettez additionally explained, “Also, monolids can make a person look tired or angry (I have a problem with the latter).” Others have talked about their own emotional responses to such assumptions: shutupjunie (2011) admitted that “the only time it hurt” when someone made a comment related to the size of her eyes was when, “My religion teacher thought I was sleeping when I wasn’t sleeping,” and commenter YoWhatUpMike (2011) explained,

And also, teachers, friends, co-workers, supervisors always asked and comment: Are you high? Are you tired? Slept late didn't you? You must be stoned. Are you drunk? You don't look so good. You've been blazing it haven't you? In my head I imagine myself screaming at them: No, mother eff'er. My eyes are like that!

In addition, this tiredness is sometimes associated with the appearance of aging, an interesting link as blepharoplasty (as well as what appears to be double-eyelid tape) has been marketed to white people as a solution to the “sagging” of the eyes that come with aging: on the *Tyra Banks Show*, Liz explained that she wanted to get double eyelid surgery because “...my eyes were starting to sag and I was looking tired, and I didn't have that youthful look that I used to have.” Finally, at times, emotionologization becomes a way to refute racialized arguments about double eyelid surgery: “I'm chinese and I would like a crease because it makes you look more awake [...] and it gives you a cute look, no ethnic stuff involved!!” (Ice273273 commented on plasticsurgerychan, 2009). Through these rationalizations, particular emotionologized states are linked to particular racialized features.

Furthermore, these modes of reading Asian eyelids as “tired” are easily translatable to character traits that are generally considered undesirable by dominant, mainstream U.S. standards: dullness and passivity both in appearance and personality, having “no personality,” lacking character, awkwardness. On *Dr. Phil*, Dr. Peter Newen explained that double eyelids make people look “more awake and more alert,” attributes that are generally linked to intelligence as he goes on to explain that people who are considered “more attractive” are not only assumed to have more desirable personality traits, but they also receive educational and professional opportunities that those who are “less attractive” do not (mikaoonake, 2009).

Through such assumptions, affect is linked to labor, and Asian bodies are linked with character traits like boring, unintelligent, passive, and dull.

Women have additionally talked about how the surgery makes them look more feminine, perhaps in part because the length of a person's eyelashes become more visible with the supratarsal fold--monolids have skin that fold over eyelashes, concealing some of the length.³ With the surgery, the skin is lifted up and away from the lash line. In the West, there are conventions that define femininity, beauty, and sexuality via visibly long eyelashes.⁴ And while femininity is generally understood in terms of gender norms rather than emotions per se, visualizations of femininity are attached to emotionologized states of being--depictions of women, particularly in popular media, are embodiments of public understandings of coyness, innocence, eroticism, hysteria, and other such emotional states.

Other ways that commenters emotionologize double eyelid surgery included: "My Korean friend has monolids with lots of natural eyelashes so she looks really pretty and innocent," wherein monolids are associated with innocence; and "Asians prefer the almond shaped eyes, which in fact, many asians have it already. This is not to be confused w/ the double crease type of Westerners, which, depending on some people, can be boring" (freeqwerqwer), wherein perhaps the more common crease of Westerners are considered "boring."

³ In "Ethnic characteristics of eyelashes: A comparative analysis in Asian and Caucasian females," Na, et al. (2006) reported that "Compared with Caucasians, Asian eyelashes revealed lower lift-up and curl-up angles, fewer numbers and a thicker transverse diameter. However, no statistical difference was observed in length or growth rate. [...] Moreover, eyelash characteristics were not influenced by eye makeup in either race" (p. 1170).

⁴ In cartoon drawings, for instance, one conventional method of showing that a character is female is by drawing long eyelashes.

I think it also worth thinking about “monolid,” the term that was quite possibly invented on YouTube for those who “lack” a supratarsal fold. In my mind, “monolid” also has emotionologized connotations, as it prompts terms like monotone, monotonous, monosyllabic, one-noted--following in suit with metaphorical terms for boring, uninteresting, tedious, dull. Other terms for describing the lack of a supratarsal fold include: “single lid,” or “hooded eye,” which also has connotations of something hidden or shrouded, lending to an air of mystery--falling in line with a long history of Orientalist depictions of “the East” (Said, 1978).

Affect also becomes possible to a greater degree through multimodality. In the videos, the visual element of people’s faces can definitely be read through emotion--viewers can see, on popular talk show segments, when Asian patients and cosmetic surgeons disagree with something even though they are not verbalizing that disagreement. Audiences can see the horror on the faces of those who are shocked and appalled to learn of the surgery, the conviction with which those who are purportedly trying to “help” speak, the tears that fall from the eyes of those who pity those who have gotten the surgery. “Seoul Fashion Week - K-Pop to Double Eyelid Surgery” (2012) by *vice*, at times includes background music that sounds like it could have come from a horror film, framing its content as eerie, strange, weird.

In a sense, double eyelid surgery gives patients what they perceive as agency because it enables emotivity according to the normative code. Thus, besides intersections with racialization, issues of emotionologization and beauty also link clearly to issues of agency and desire (discussed in Chapter 4), wherein certain personalities are considered desirable in various romantic and career situations. As such, through the articulations of emotion and raced bodies in and around these videos, particular emotions and emotional affects are linked to desire. For

instance, confidence is one such trait to which shutupjunie (2011) spoke: “...now people are like, oh, you look nice and you look happy and you look confident and you look nice.” Therefore, in talking about emotions related to double eyelid surgery, I’m also inclined to think about how people feel upon getting the surgery: “Well if those ladies feel good about themselves after the surgery then that’s what matters.” (scorchedcandy); and “i understand why asians get this done. im not asian but i do have swollen looking eyes and it is uncomfortable feeling the skin under ur eyebrows hang over and people think u look tired or like u just *cried*. i would like to get surgery done just to *feel better* about my eyes [*my emphasis*]” (samlammd, 2009). This confidence, as well as other emotions, are portrayed and experienced multimodally in online video, as the visuals and aural features allow for the expression of embodied emotions. For instance, viewers are able to experience the excitement felt in the grand unveiling of one’s new eyes--we can see them smiling as they talk, we can hear them laugh, sometimes nervously, and we can see the satisfaction as they examine their surgery results (see Figure 6).⁵

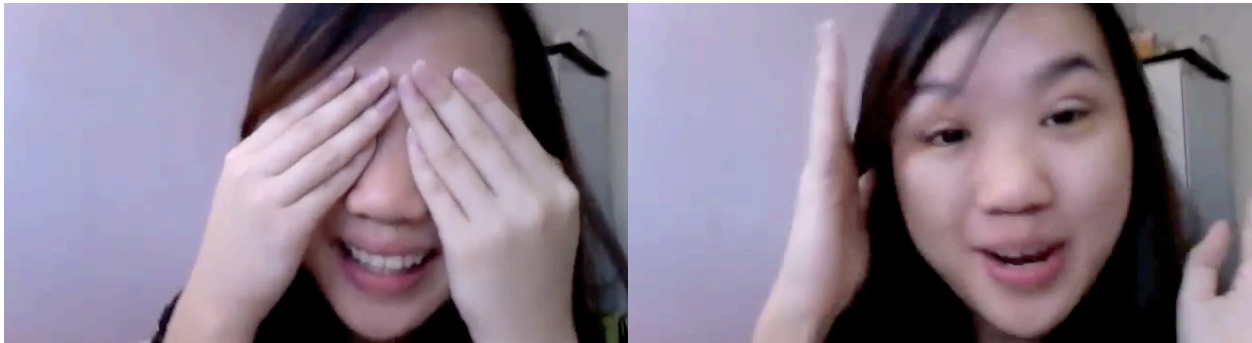


Figure 6. Screenshot from “Single to Permanent Double Eyelid Girl”: esthyAnn729’s new eyes, the grand unveiling.

⁵ It may be worth further exploring how speakers embody particular emotions at different phases of the process: before surgery, during healing, afterward.

It's Just Not Natural!: The Body and the Split Between Nature and Technology

In response to “Beauty Race,” (2011) Gene asked, “Why have we created so many weak, insecure people with low self esteem? What did we do wrong and how we can change this trend? These should be the real discussion topics. We need *natural* human beings who are strong and confident leading us to a better future. Not some *plastic fake* livings who can barely show basic emotion” [*my emphases*]. In this particular quote, Gene draws a distinction between “natural human beings” and those who are “plastic” and “fake.” Furthermore, one embodied trait that helps people make this distinction is the ability of a person to “show basic emotion.” As seen in these examples, a second trope in the discourse on East Asian double-eyelid surgery in online video, which I call the split between nature and technology, is the tendency for people to rationalize the decision to get double eyelid surgery and the morality of that decision based on a separation between the “natural” body and the technologically modified body. Oftentimes, what is “natural” is distinguished from what is “unnatural,” which is also unacceptable, or inappropriate. Such ideas are based on values such as originality and individuality, and the idea that all people are and should be unique individuals, who love and respect themselves for who they are. Moreover, people should not change themselves because of what other people think. Through a rhetorical lens, this point of view becomes contested via the understanding that we are constantly situated in rhetorical situations wherein we take generalized audiences into account in delivering messages and ideas.

Another example of the split between nature and technology in the data comes through via the notion that there exists an essential individual identity, or essential self that is distinguished from the moldability of the embodied self. Several people who have gotten the

surgery, as well as reporters who interview them, have felt the need to explain that they still feel like themselves--that their essential identities haven't changed as result of modifying their bodies. For instance, in "Why I Got Double Eyelid Surgery/ FAQ," shutupjunie (2011) explained that she still feels like herself, despite having gotten double eyelid surgery:

...I feel like myself. Like I don't look in the mirror, I'm like, [*does a double-take*] 'Who the hell is that??' I'm like, 'Oh, it's still Junie,' you know? [...] I don't feel like a different person at all, I just feel like myself except more confident, and like, slightly prettier (laugh).

In "Asian plastic surgery on CNN," the news reporter explained, "Annie says she's still the same person she was before the surgery" (surgeryvideo99). In another news clip, "Asian Double Eyelid Blepharoplasty 33 News (Dallas, Texas)," the reporter explained, "As for Jennifer, [an Asian woman who got double eyelid surgery,] she's still the same person before and after." For whatever reason, there exists a need to explain that despite this slight change in the appearance of their eyes, these people themselves have not changed as people.

Both emotionologization as well as the split between nature and technology are contingent upon a separation but co-dependency of the external and the internal, or, the eyes and the person. In "Written on the Face: Race, Nation, Migrancy, and Sex," Palumbo-Liu (1999) destabilized "the liberal notion that racial markings are less significant than the individual interiority--the former being permanent but insignificant, the latter being essential but changeable" (p. 89). He goes on to explain, "the shaping of the exterior is taken to effect a modification of the interior: as appearances change, the projection of the psychic interiority is

assumed to be altered by dint of the fact that a different ‘spirit’ is seen to lie beneath that surface,” as a means of *reconstituting* subjectivity (p. 93). As Palumbo-Liu has put it:

The display of the Asian face suggests a particular zone of contact, which in turn implies the contact of certain contents and elements. Appearances are not everything, but they are assumed to correlate with that which they are not. If the ‘narrow’ eyelid betrays ‘dullness,’ ‘stupidity,’ ‘passivity,’ it is futile to try to posit a causality (are they read such because they belong to an Asian face?). Rather, the key point is the correlation of the exterior with the interior, which signals a set of behaviors readable on the face and permanently ensconced in the psyche. (p. 94)

Viewers have also noted that there is a tendency to raise questions about how double eyelid surgery changes individual identities in ways that are not raised with other forms of body modification. For instance, chris commented on “Beauty Race,” “I find it hypocritical, especially for western women who wear make up, to criticize the decisions made by people such as Heidi to have surgery to change the way they look! The reason women put on make up (or braid their hair!) is obviously... to change their appearance. The reason women have plastic surgery is obviously... to change their appearance! Is there any fundamental difference??? I think not!” Others have compared the procedure to other forms of body modification like teeth whitening, make-up, tanning, braces, fashion, and other technologies available and commonly used for altering one’s appearance. At the same time, it seems that the implied permanence of cosmetic surgical modifications are issues for those who see it as a problem.

Moreover, others have observed how people associate technologically mediated, “fake” bodies with “fake” personalities. In “Part 2: Plastic surgery questions answered!” TheXiaxue

answered a series of questions in relation to her experiences with plastic surgery. In this particular video, TheXiixue made an observation about how people link a plasticity of the body with a plasticity of identity: in response to the question, “Should I lie about my surgery? What are the consequences either way?” TheXiixue explained that even though she doesn’t approve of lying about one’s surgeries, the consequences of telling the truth are that “people will start calling you fake, and plastic, and thinking that everything else about you is [*indiscernible*]” She ultimately explained, “Personally I think being called plastic and fake is better than being called a liar.”

TheXiixue also talked about “fixing” her nose, another example of the split between nature and technology, that is common in other instances of medical discourse is a rhetoric of “healing” or “fixing.” By using a word like “fix,” it is implied that there is some flaw that needs to be amended with a person’s body. The Korean word (*gochida, gocheossuh*) that is commonly used in the context of plastic surgery also has the same kind of definition.

Furthermore, several videos also talk about the importance of “looking natural” when making decisions about things like the size and shape of the fold when getting double eyelid surgery. As Holliday and Elfvig-Hwang (2012) put it, “Successful surgery with no expense spared should look ‘natural’, where natural is importantly defined as enhancing *Korean* features” (p. 62). “Naturalness” is sometimes measured according to how “subtle” the change is, how deep or high the fold is, and any surgical changes should be made based on the appearance and measurements of that specific face. In “Asian Double Eyelid Blepharoplasty 33 News (Dallas, Texas)” (2010), Dr. Sam Lam explained, “I think for whatever procedure you do, for whatever race you do it for, you want to make them look natural, and make them look

appropriate.” TheXiaxue also spoke about how to tell the difference between a face that is “natural” from a face that has been surgically modified, showing a concern over how and whether or not one can tell if another person has been surgically enhanced. For instance, she explains that you can tell that someone has gotten a nose job if they can’t push his/her nose up to mimic a pig’s snout. TheXiaxue also responded to the question “Is it reasonable to ask for a celebrity nose?” saying, “No.” “I can never have a white person’s nose...because I have thick ‘alars [cartilage making up the tip of those nose and walls of the nostrils].” In other words, her “thick ‘alars’ would make a white person’s nose look unnatural on her face.

This concern of achieving a “natural” look is also appealed to by the businesses that profit from cosmetic surgery. For example, drkennethkim (2011) has a few videos in which he discussed how particular surgical techniques allow for more “natural” looking results in certain individuals:

the advantage of a non-incision suture technique double eyelid surgery is that it follows the natural curvature of the orbicularis muscle in that it follows the path where the fold naturally wants to go; therefore, the fold creation is a natural fold and it’s a fold that one would’ve had if they were born with a double eyelid fold.

In this quote, the surgeon defines the goal of a “natural” fold as one that a person would have had if they were born with double eyelids, a sort of odd impossibility assuming that the possibility of a fold is tied to a variety of physical traits, for instance, eye muscle strength. In another video, he explained:

We need to look at what a natural fold is. A person with a natural fold, is a crease--it really is a fold in that it is a concavity in that there is a depression, whereas an open

technique relies on scar formation so there is a convexity. So you're creating a mass versus creating a, almost an empty space where a skin can invaginate in.

In this quote, he defines a natural fold through the physical attributes through which a fold takes place. Furthermore, Kim supports the sophistication and reliability of this newer technology by historicizing double eyelid surgery techniques, relying on a temporal logic of progress:

I think we have to understand the evolution of surgery, of double eyelid surgery, and Asian eyelid surgery in that the double eyelid surgery, the fold formation, initially started with an open technique because the suture technique didn't exist, and when the suture technique did come about in Korea, the first generation of suture technique was not sophisticated enough and it had complications of fold loosening. However, with better understanding of fold formation, with better sutures, and better techniques, essentially, the techniques basically changed what suture technique can do, and it gave so much more power to it. So therefore, a modern suture technique will far out compete and will far outperform any of the open techniques and any of the older suture techniques.

The “naturalness” of the results of surgery is a key indicator both for determining whether or not audiences find the post-surgery face attractive, as well as for whether or not they find the act of the surgery acceptable: “I really like the results! They suit the patients' faces and look very natural!” (xPrinceJunx); “I have never been one for cosmetic surgeries but these look modest and purposeful. Nothing crazy. Very natural” (laceypennies). Likely for these reasons among others, patients consider it important that it is not apparent that they have gotten the surgery: “I got a lot of compliments, but no one even questioned surgery, and that was my main concern” (DocShopVid, 2010).

This concern for the natural has existed since first published account of double eyelid surgery in the late 1800s, in which K. Mikamo “estimated the incidence of the single eyelid in Japanese women to be approximately 17 to 18% and thus concluded that the double eyelid was the physiologically *normal* appearance” (Nguyen, Hsu, and Dinh, 2009). Furthermore, “Besides aesthetic considerations, [Mikamo] commented on the functional limitations imparted by the single lid that can result in “narrowed vision.” He thus “viewed the anatomic derivation of the single lid to be a true defect and observed that the conversion of a double to a single eyelid may arise after an infectious event.” Such conclusions indicated a kind of de-naturalization of the natural, making the features people were born with abnormal, dysfunctional, and defected. Much like the cosmetic surgeons on YouTube, Mikamo’s “concluding remarks indicated that his objective was to achieve ‘natural looking’ eyes without any direct reference to Western standards.” As Nguyen, Hsu, and Dinh (2009) observed, “This again highlights the fact that the initial operation was not intended to Westernize the eyelid but to create an overall *more expressive* look [*my emphasis*]”.

Finally, the split between nature and technology is also often deployed in critiques of the surgery that have religious undertones; for instance, “if God wanted things/us to be this way he would have made it/us that way,” an argument made in other instances where technology is used to modify what’s “natural,” i.e. cloning, abortion. Houdaloth Ali implored, “ACCEPT YOUR ASIAN FEATURES,,GOD MAKES US ALL DIFFERENT,BE PROUD OF YOUR ASIAN FEATURES AND ORIENTAL EYES,,,,, [*sic*],” and hoboocouch567 said, “God made everyone how HE wanted to be. So you shouldn’t change that.” Grounding such statements is the Christian tenet, “God’s will be done.” Moreover, the temporal logics of such statements are based on the

idea that God, or some higher power, whether that be fate or destiny, is guiding the progression of time.

Timelessness as Temporal Logic

The temporal logics implied in such modes of seeing and interpreting bodies point to continued Othering as we have seen in the colonial narrative, wherein particular bodies are caught within particular timeframes. As Edward Said (1978) described, for example, the figures of speech associated with the Orient “are all declarative and self-evident; the tense they employ is the *timeless* eternal; they convey an impression of repetition and strength; they are always symmetrical to, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent, which is sometimes specified, sometimes not [*my emphasis*]” (p. 72). Moreover, Orientalism:

shares with magic and with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are *because* they are what they are, for once, *for all time*, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter. (p. 70)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, another example of bodies made timeless through colonialism is Pearce’s (1988) discussion of savagism and civilization, and along with other analyses of the “primitive,” the “tribal,” each rooted in colonial narratives of progress. Through such narratives, Othered bodies exist in a timeless state wherein they do not “develop” with the rest of “civilization.” Through such a temporal logic undergirding issues of emotionologization, we might be able to understand the Othered, non-surgically enhanced, monolidded Asian body as one that has been deemed “stuck” in a particular interpretation. Such essentialized views of Asian bodies are made timeless through stable images and associations that traverse across time.

As such, colonization inserts or refuses a temporal logic on the basis of certain logics (i.e., of progress) and not on the basis of others. In this way, it creates timelessness for particular races.

Furthermore, nations like South Korea and Japan have historically drawn on Western embodiment in efforts to break out of the trap of the timeless and backward Oriental--“progress,” or modernize--via dress, physical motions, etc. For example, in “Embodiment of American Modernity in Colonial Korea,” Yoo Sun-Young (2007) described how the body became a marker of modernity in post-World War II Korea: “The individual modernization under colonial circumstance was confined to, and carried on, the body level” (p. 225) through heterosexual relationships, individual speech manners, and walking style and bodily movements. In the context of the modernization of the school system in Korea, students “were required to have short hair, formerly a strong taboo in Korea, as well as to replace traditional clothing and footwear with western-style uniforms, hats and shoes. In this context, bodily changes either preceded or concurred with changes in consciousness, rather than the other way around” (p. 227). Such bodily changes are not unlike double eyelid surgery, in the sense that an outer appearance is presumed to effect inner change of some kind.

To think about these rationalizations through a temporal lens also helps us see that some of the arguments being used in these discussions are based on an idea that while cultures and technologies may change, human beings, at a fundamental level, as well as individual identities do, or should, not. As such, nature via identity is separated from technology. The epistemological division between what’s natural and what’s man-made, whether understood as technical or cultural, is a longstanding trope in Western discourse. In *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, Bernard Stiegler (1998) provided a compelling way of understanding this distinction

and the relationship between culture and technology within a temporal framework. Stiegler challenged the traditional and predominant philosophical distinction between *tekhnē* and *ēpistēmē*, a distinction that he dates back to Ancient Greece. Instead, Stiegler argued that humans are fundamentally technical beings and that the industrialization of civilization led to a disequilibrium in the evolution of culture and technics. With industrialization, *technics*—which Stiegler defined broadly as the “domain of tools, of instruments if not only machines... first and foremost all the domains of skill” (p. 93)—began to evolve more quickly than culture. Stiegler further posited that the origins of technics corresponded with the origins of humanity as well as the origins of time, thereby complicating the separation between natural and artificial, organic and synthetic.⁶ In other words, Stiegler asserted that humans are fundamentally technical beings, but that technics began to evolve more quickly than culture with the Industrial Revolution. Stiegler’s ideas about culture and technics is a useful way for thinking about how cultural values shift with technical/technological development.

Implications: De-emotionologization + De-naturalization = The Asian American Robot

There are a few strands of conversation here, that, I believe, add up to a stereotype of the Asian American robot. This idea of the Asian American robot falls in line with Wendy Hui Kyong Chun’s (2012) discussion of “high-tech Orientalism--the high-tech abjection of the Asian/Asian America other” (p. 49). As Chun put it, high-tech orientalism “literally figures the raced other *as* technology [*my emphasis*]” (p. 49). Stemming from 1980s’ anxiety over rising Japanese dominance, its most dominant strain figures the Asian other as a robotic menace so that s/he literally becomes the technology s/he produces” (p. 49-50). That said, “High-tech Orientalism is

⁶ Parts of this section are drawn from “Intellectual Property and the Cultures of BitTorrent Communities,” published in *Computers and Composition* in September 2010.

not colonialism, but rather a paranoid reaction to global economic and data flows. High-tech Orientalism promises intimate knowledge, sexual concourse with the ‘other,’ which it reduces to data, to a standing resource” (p. 51). Chun illustrates this idea of high-tech Orientalism with a film by Greg Pak called *Robot Stories*. This film “explores the parallel between robots and Asians that lies at the core of high-tech Orientalism” by exploring “stereotypes of Asian Americans as relentless, robotic workers, as looking all the same (can’t tell them apart), as dragon ladies” (p. 52). This set of stereotypes is evocative of the recent conversations surrounding Amy Chua and the “Tiger Mom” controversy, which uncovered the ways in which many Americans read Asians and Asian Americans as dull, robotic, apt at memorization and rote learning, but severely lacking in creativity, charisma, socialization, or personality.

As Chun (2012) has put it, “The human is constantly created through the jettisoning of the Asian/Asian American other as robotic, as machine-like and not quite human, as not quite lived. And also, I would add, the African American other as primitive, as too human” (p. 51). Perhaps aside from the stereotype of the yellow peril, the stereotype of the Asian American robot is positioned in contrast to stereotypes of “laziness” in other ethnic and racial groups, as well as of Asians in the past through such racist stereotypes as that of the “lazy Indian,” “lazy Hawaiian,” “lazy Chinaman,” or the “welfare queen” who does not want to work. Instead, Asian Americans, like Hispanic immigrant laborers, are going to steal white American jobs. This, too, echos the ways in which technologies are also often labeled a threat that will put certain people out of work. In the case of double eyelid surgery, the links made between beauty and labor become even more pernicious as it continues to fuel the model minority myth, and as it pits people of color against one another, along with Asians against working class whites. Yet in

thinking about the simultaneous, co-existing temporal logics of progress and timelessness in the context of double eyelid surgery and beyond, it almost seems as though there is a system at work that positions Asian bodies so that they are unable to negotiate the split.

Definitions of beauty as they shape and are shaped by facial norms vary across time and space. The tropes of emotionologization and the split between nature and technology discussed in this chapter are informed by racist stereotypes that attach particular racialized appearances to undesirable character traits. The implied audience for cosmetic surgical procedures like double eyelid surgery, then, is a society that has held these stereotypes that link emotion, appearance, intelligence, and personality, to racialized features, as well as to beauty. In the first published description of double eyelid surgery, “[K. Mikamo] contended that the single lid contributed to a ‘monotonous and impassive’ countenance and ran counter to what ‘writers and painters have regarded as an indicator of beauty,’” (Lam, 2002) though who these artists and painters are are unclear. Yet through so-called emotionless, unnatural eyes, that ostensibly shroud the interior self, Asian bodies become a threat, continuing depictions of Asians as “shifty motherfuckers” via Orientalism and the notion of the yellow peril. This sentiment is visible in Dodai Stewart’s (2012) recent Jezebel headline: “I Can’t Stop Looking at These South Korean Women Who’ve Had Plastic Surgery: Unnerving Push Toward *Uniformity*.” Underlying this discussion, then, is perhaps a desire to be truthful, based on the idea that under and through emotion, we find a true sense of the person and emotivity is accessible, for monolids, through double eyelid surgery. Is it because of emotionologization of faciality that Asians are not seen as having essential selves beyond their ethnic heritages, that they are not viewed as individuals with distinct personalities and interests?

The following chapter focuses on two more tropes: pragmatization and agency, as well as efficiency and desire as temporal logics that ground these tropes.

CHAPTER 4

PRAGMATIZATION AND AGENCY, EFFICIENCY AND DESIRE

Ann duCille makes this point with regard to a black child's imaging of self in relation to whiteness: 'A child's dreaming in the color scheme privileged by the world around her is not necessarily the same as wanting *to be* that color... What guides my fantasy life, I believe, was less a wish to flee my own black flesh than a desire to escape the limitations that went with such bodies.' Similarly, Asian Americans interviewed as to why they wanted to change their appearance pointed to economic benefits as much as 'self-image' benefits.

-- David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier* (1999, p. 94)

"What is the desire of this repeated demand to modernize?"

-- Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994, p. 350)

In this chapter, I explore the final two tropes through which users rationalize double eyelid surgery on YouTube: pragmatization and agency. I see these two tropes as working hand in hand with one another as they are directly contingent on our contemporary capitalist context, emphasizing such values as saving time--efficiency--and (consumer) desire. Indeed, agency may very well be an example of pragmatization based on Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca's (1991) definition of the "pragmatic argument," which they said "permits the evaluation of an act or

event in terms of its favorable or unfavorable consequences”; however, I discuss them separately because they are often distinguished from one another in arguments about double eyelid surgery as they are found on YouTube.

An Appeal to Logic: Pragmatizing the Issue

In an episode of the *Tyra* show, Dr. Charles Lee explained, “[Patients] usually come in because they get tired of [applying double-eyelid tape] everyday.” This is one example of how double-eyelid surgery is rationalized through a trope of pragmatization. By pragmatization, I mean the ways in which people rationalize decisions to get double eyelid surgery by highlighting its practical benefits. In other words, Dr. Lee is explaining that patients will save the time and money that is expended when one needs to apply double-eyelid tape or use double-eyelid glue, two non-permanent methods of attaining double eyelid surgery, on a daily basis. This example is not unlike the way people have explained that East Asians get nose enhancement because it makes it easier to wear sunglasses that would otherwise slide down their flat nose bridges, thus pointing out how the naturally lower nose bridge (as compared to many non-Asians) of many of East Asian ancestry does not fit the mold of contemporary sunglass design.

Lee also described how it is easier to apply make-up with double-eyelids, and several other videos speak to this point. For instance, in “Asian plastic surgery on CNN” (2007) the reporter explains, “many Asian women overseas have cosmetic surgery to attain a more western look. But that’s not the case for Jennifer; her reason was much more practical.” We then hear from Jennifer herself: “it was always kind of hard being a little teenage girl wanting to go and try on make up and stuff like that, it was always difficult to find somebody who can actually apply it correctly and make it look nice.” Later in the video, the reporter described Annie: “[Annie’s]

eyelids are clearly bigger, and with her new eyes, she's doing things she couldn't before, like experiment with make up." Annie excitedly exclaimed, "but now you can see two [eyeshadow] colors [on my eyelids]. I can even put three colors if I want! (laugh)" (see Figure 7). Dr. Charles Lee was also a guest speaker on the *Montel Show*, where he explained, "With a crease in her eye she can put make up on without it smudging." Finally, in a *YouTube* video called "Rant: Asian Eyelids!" ThuyTBird (2008) ranted about the limitations of make-up looks as someone with monolids.



Figure 7. Screenshot from "Asian plastic surgery on CNN": Annie's Eyelid, Pre-Surgery. This figure shows how with monolids, eyelid make-up is barely visible when the eye is open.

Such statements raise questions about current make-up application practices and how they differ between differently raced faces. And in response, there are a number *YouTube* videos that show how to apply make-up on "monolids," including how to give the illusion of a double-eyelid appearance. One *YouTube* channel, *frmheadtotoe*, created by a Korean American woman named Jen, provides several tutorials for applying make up on monolid eyes, with titles like "How to Enhance Monolid Eyes!" "Everyday Monolid Makeup Tutorial," and "Natural Beach Summer Monolid Tutorial" (see Figure 8). These videos appeal to an audience that have not been included in the pages of *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, or *Allure*. Moreover, *YouTube*--with Jen-- provides a space where people with monolids come together to not only find helpful videos with

them in mind, but also to identify with one another with regards to the hassles of essentially not being a part of group. For instance, Figure 8. “How to Enhance Monolid Eyes!” shows that the top comment, “I hate my monolid eyes” has received 76 thumbs up to date. The top comment in Figure 9. “monolidders should check often to see how it looks with eyes fully open,” which states “I hate how us monolidders have to use so much eyeliner...” has 370 thumbs up. In another video, Jen shared that the success of her channel has led to her being contacted by Wong Fu Productions, and relocating to Los Angeles, to work on her beauty tutorials and blogs full time.

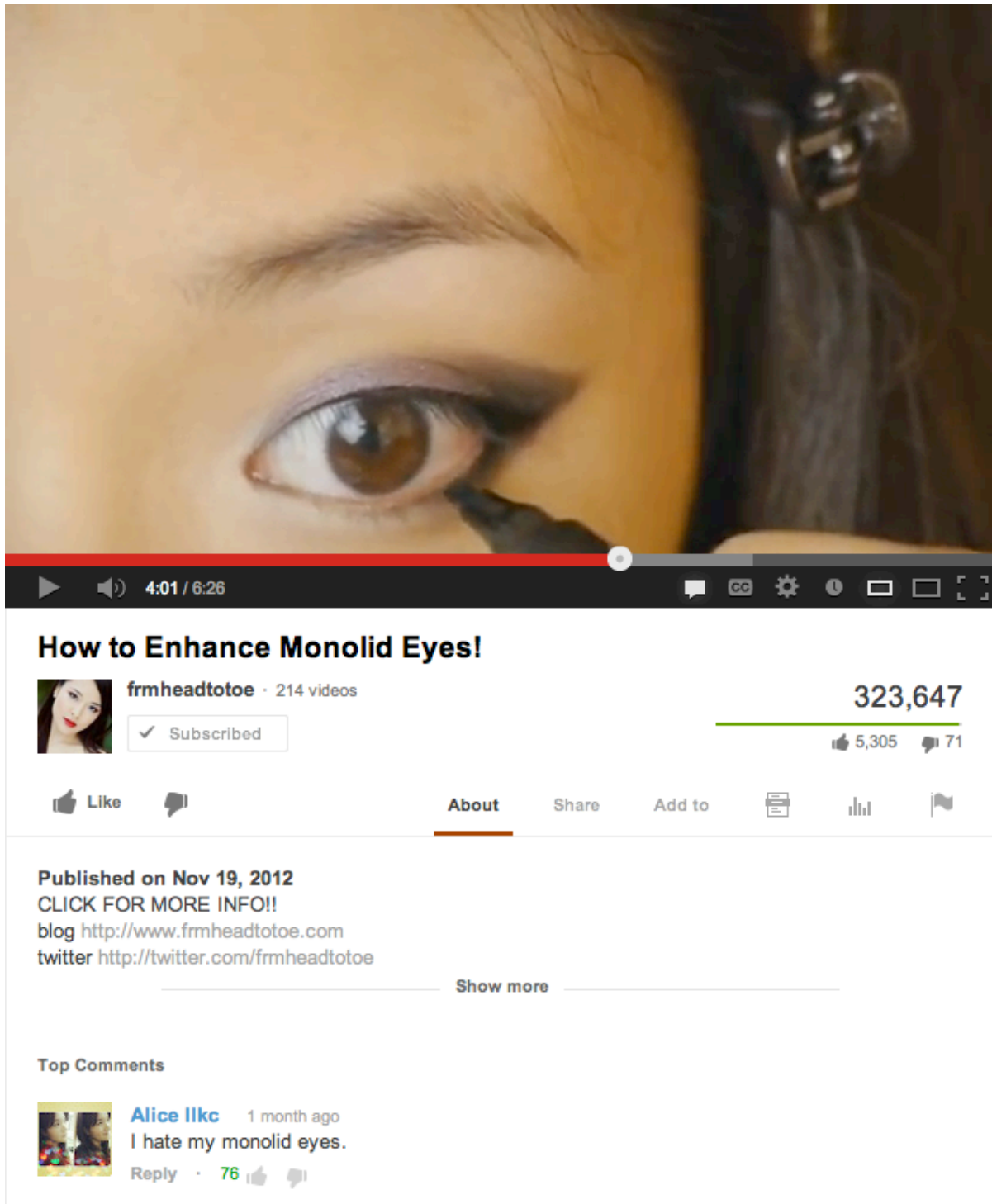


Figure 8. Screenshot from “How to Enhance Monolid Eyes!” The above screenshot reads, “How to Enhance Monolid Eyes!; frmheadtotoe; 214 videos; 323,647; 5,305 likes, 71 dislikes; Published on Nov 19, 2012; Top Comments, Alice Ilkc, 1 month ago, I hate my monolid eyes, 76 likes.”

monoliders should check often to see how it looks with eyes fully open

just eyeliner + mascara monolid tutorial

frmheadtotoe · 214 videos **290,066**


Subscribed 👍 943 🗑️ 33

👍 Like 🗑️ About Share Add to 📊 🚩

Uploaded on Sep 14, 2009
This is a very quick and easy look using just eyeliner and mascara for brighter eyes.
Check out my blog at www.frmheadtotoe.com!

[Show more](#)

Top Comments

 **LockHerHeart** · 1 year ago
I hate how us monoliders have to use so much eyeliner...

Reply · 370 👍 🗑️

Figure 9. Screenshot from “just eyeliner + mascara monolid tutorial”: A tip for “monoliders.” The above screenshot reads, “monoliders should check often to see how it looks with eyes fully open; just eyeliner + mascara monolid tutorial; frmheadtotoe; 214 videos; 290,066; 943 likes, 33 dislikes; Uploaded on Sep 14, 2009; This is a very quick and easy look using just eyeliner and

Figure 9 (cont'd)

mascara for brighter eyes; Top Comments, LockHerHeart, 1 year ago, I hate how us monolidders have to use so much eyeliner...; 370 likes.”

Through such arguments about the convenience of not having to take the time to apply double eyelid glue or tape, or overcoming the limitations of make up looks and fitting into dominant makeup conventions, subjects move to adjust, or modify the self to fit dominant standards, rather than other way around, where standards are adjusted, arguably a much more efficient (in the short-term) way of overcoming obstacles to meet potential goals. Through such videos, rhetors account for differences in bodies, but oftentimes it is to meet the same beauty standards. Such practices thus also speak to the next trope of the split between nature and technology.

The trope of pragmatization from a temporal lens also clearly links to agency and desire, as well as emotionologization in that openness and alertness is linked to efficiency, a desirable trait in an industrialized, capitalist, and technology and information-driven economy. For instance, in “The Participatory Meme Chronotope: Fixity of Space/Rapture of Time,” Lynn C. Lewis (forthcoming) discussed the “cultural passion for speed” in relation to memes. In “Part 1: Plastic surgery questions answered!” TheXiaxe also does a cost-benefit analysis when she responded to the question, “Is plastic surgery addictive?”

Through this brief discussion, we see a clear example of how logics are not universal, but culturally located.

From Agency to Desire: Individual Empowerment or Subjectification?

In “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRYBEAST)” (2011)¹, 20-year-old Heidi Liow confessed, “I feel insecure when I go into an interview. I think, ‘Oh, maybe they won’t pick me because I’m Asian. Maybe if I looked less Asian I’d feel more confident or something like that”” (see Figure 10). Liow admitted, in a video framed through its title as being about altering one’s ethnicity, that she views her appearance as it is linked to race as a professional hindrance. Moreover, the video frames this statement to make it seem that Liow was explaining *why* she intended to get double eyelid surgery.² Such issues of professional and personal success are commonly offered as a way of rationalizing why people get double eyelid surgery. Through such rationalizations, people assert that they, or, others, achieve agency, or the means for success, through cosmetic surgery. For instance, In “Lessons from ‘Around the World with Oprah,’” Lee (2008) explained that the discourse on double-eyelid surgery often justifies this practice as a form of individual choice, and thus, agency by which subjects achieve social mobility and status. Through the trope of agency, subjects ask, “If a person can take advantage of the

¹ “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRY BEAST)” is posted by abchungrybeast (2011), the YouTube account for “a weekly, half-hour, TV show on ABC television combining journalism, comedy and the reportage of weird” (Hungry Beast). This video is titled “Racial Facial: Asian Eyelid Surgery” on the Hungry Beast website and is included in Episode 23, which, notably, is titled “Faking It.” Included is the tagline: “Asian eyelid surgery to look more western”; however, I would argue that the way the video presents its topic is more nuanced than this description indicates.

² This clip is preceded with Joy Ng talking about how race has factored into young people’s decisions to get double eyelid surgery, followed by Sam Jae Wook Kim talking about his own personal experiences with racism. It is not apparent what the interviewers asked Liow to get the response she gave.

technologies available that allow him or her to change his or her destiny, why shouldn't they take those opportunities?"



Figure 10. Screenshot from “Surgery to Alter Your Ethnicity (HUNGRYBEAST)”: Heidi Liow, Pre-Surgery

This section continues my transnational examination of double eyelid surgery in online video and the discussions surrounding these videos through the fifth trope: agency. This section delves into questions of how subjects use articulations of agency, as well as how subjects exercise agency to justify the cultural practice of double eyelid surgery in online space, and how desire motivates the need for agency. Furthermore, this fifth trope builds upon the tropes laid out in previous chapters as agency is linked to issues of race, emotion, efficiency, and ideas about what is natural. Through agency, I point to the tendency for people to explain that they (or others) are getting double eyelid surgery as a means of economic success, whether through career advancement, marriage, and/or other similar means by which people attain social mobility and status. This rationalization is based on the notion that more attractive people are privileged in a

visually-motivated society and therefore awarded more opportunities in such situations, and that being less Asian means being more attractive. In a sense, these subjects are being open in identifying how society works in this way, while also being complicit to the idea that beauty, especially at it is defined to a particular type of eyelid, is a kind of symbolic capital. Indeed, “NEVER PERFECT trailer” posted by fighting films (2007), featured a collage of voices from the documentary film, including one that stated, “Beauty is currency.” In “Why I Got Double Eyelid Surgery/ FAQ,” commenter bubbleIU (2012) responded to luckystarryful, saying, “Plastic surgery can give a person confidence, and its unfair how some people are just born naturally gorgeous. Others not so *fortunate* want to feel pretty and good [...]” [*my emphasis*] This notion of beauty as a kind of symbolic capital is an undercurrent for ideas about how beauty can be used as a means for agency. Indeed, JuciShockwave (2008) commented under this video:

I can't hate, at lease [*sic*] she got the money to get this surgery. If it'll make her feel better about herself why not. [...] Too many idiots on the net saying shit like ‘Looks don't matter’ can kiss my ass, because it does. Looks for the most part will give you the job/ man you want.

In the analysis that follows, I discuss how articulations of agency in online space are rhetorical strategies and moments of cross-cultural translation wherein people justify, for others, what motivates their--or other East Asians’--decisions to get double eyelid surgery. I begin this chapter by exploring agency as a temporal construct by dialoguing the literature on agency with agency as it can be found in the videos on East Asian double eyelid surgery. In doing so, I also pay specific attention to how the interface of YouTube lends to moments of agency. I furthermore present moments of agency in these videos in four categories: 1) in terms of professional

success; 2) as a matter of personal choice; 3) as contingent on outcome; 4) and as implied through explanations that the surgery will make the patient “prettier,” “happier,” or “more confident.” I go on to examine the complex relationship between agency and desire, which is an impetus that creates the conditions for agency. That is to say, desire is a precursor that shapes the conditions that make agency both necessary and possible. Ultimately, I argue that to better understand issues of agency, we must also consider desire as a rhetorical form. I show the complexities of agency and desire as they interact with issues of race, emotions, and the split between nature and culture. Finally, I discuss two temporalized concepts that speak to rhetorics of desire: neoliberalism and Berlant’s (2006) notion of cruel optimism.

Agency is a category that is itself as temporal. In “Agency and the Rhetoric of Medicine: Biomedical Brain Scans and the Ontology of Fibromyalgia,” S. Scott Graham (2009) cited Carolyn R. Miller, who “described agency not as a capacity, not as a potential, but rather as rhetorical motion through time” (p. 381). Graham (2009) more specifically argued that “Agency is the *process of instantiating change* in the status quo” [*my emphasis*] (p. 379), wherein subjects create for themselves an improved situation. Various scholarly works including those in Asian American rhetoric and other rhetorics involving historically marginalized groups have illuminated this point, as they have often pointed to agency as a way of showing that these groups do indeed have the means for influencing knowledge or reasserting identity, particularly in moments of oppression, and especially because they are so often mistaken for powerless subjects.

The postmodern critique of agency because of the impossibility of the autonomous agent has also fueled interesting observations about the details of agency that lend to conversations

about agency as a temporal category. For instance, Michael C. Leff (2012) has argued that agency has a fundamental relationship to the temporal category of tradition, and furthermore, that “Traditions are always embedded in the contingencies of history” (p. 218). Leff went on to explain that, “As applied to agency, this means that whoever thinks or acts in terms of tradition cannot pass the test for autonomous judgment required by Enlightenment epistemology” (p. 218). Likewise, in “How Ought We to Understand the Concept of Rhetorical Agency? Report from the ARS,” Cheryl Geisler (2004) cited John Logie, who said that “agency is ‘the complex process by which a communicative act materializes out of a combination of individual will and social circumstances’” (p. 14). As such, agency is bound by tradition and contingent on history, therefore animating the bodily relationship between the individual to larger histories and cultural practices. To be sure, a voiceover in “NEVER PERFECT trailer” (2007) explained, “It is a personal choice, but that choice is tied in to a chain of larger issues, that ultimately are historical and also geopolitical.”

Moreover, such critiques with regards to the autonomous agent make intelligible how the notion of desire functions in moments of agency. However, much of the literature in the discipline of rhetoric and composition that addresses agency does not explicitly discuss desire as a rhetorical form. Indeed, we often think of desire as a-rhetorical--as something based on some kind of animal attraction or want, even despite the fact that we often do rhetorical analyses of ads using sex appeal in our classrooms. Likewise, JuciShockwave (2008) explained to aPandaHead:

people who are symmetrical are more likely to get the job or a promotion than those who aren't. It has nothing to do what's in a magazines as much as it does biological impulses of the greedy, vain, BS beast known as the superficial humans.

Rather, I suggest that we examine desire beyond its status as an implicit category within conversations about *pathos* or context. Instead, I ask, how is desire itself rhetorical? In other words, I suggest that we think about desire as an emotion that is rhetorically informed, rather than a carnal instinct. Furthermore, to acknowledge desire is not to say that agency does not exist. While I certainly agree that the notion of an autonomous agent is indeed impossible, agency is nonetheless used, articulated, and exercised in rhetorical situations.

Agency Articulated, Agency Exercised

I also draw a distinction between instances where individuals *articulate* agency versus instances where individuals *exercise* agency; in other words, there is a difference between explaining, in so many words, “this practice gives me the agency to do such-and-such,” versus what Grabill and Pigg (2012) called “identity leveraged as agency” (p. 101), or more implicit statements such as “I am Korean,” “I have had double-eyelid surgery,” or “I am a resident of Korea,” which give the speaker a certain amount of ethos and thus the agency to persuade. I am therefore making a distinction between moments in which agency is something that is articulated explicitly and deliberately in a moment of cross-cultural translation versus moments in which agency is exercised, or leveraged, across a level cultural ground. In other words, articulations of agency involve the step of making clearer, for someone with different cultural beliefs, where one’s own beliefs come from, providing the warrant, or the logical rationale, i.e. “If I do this, then this will happen.” Such statements are based on unarticulated patterns and observations, and imply a kind of critical social critique. On the other hand, exercises of agency are based on an implicit cultural understanding of the audience’s values that requires no translation: “According to our shared cultural beliefs, people of particular racial backgrounds are more reliable speakers

with regards to the experience of that race.” That is to say, the speaker needs only to say, “I am Asian,” to persuade and establish ethos. Of course, such presumptions are not entirely true, and it may be said that articulations of agency may be in certain ways more rhetorically savvy because it provides a warrant rather than a claim.

The relationship between digital technology and agency is also worth investigating further. Agency, as it is articulated and exercised online, on YouTube, and other social media sites looks differently from agency as it exists in more alphabetic text-based forms. YouTube’s visual element of video in particular makes particular acts of agency possible, particularly through visual rhetoric of the body and of embodied performance. More specifically, the visual representation that is possible on YouTube supports acts of agency exercised. For instance, many of the daytime talk show clips on YouTube include guests who are visibly of Asian ancestry, including those who are against the practice of double eyelid surgery. In “Dr. Phil discussing the upper eyelid surgery” posted by mikaoonake (2009)³, we see four guests of Asian ancestry, including two who are for the practice of double eyelid surgery, and two who are against the practice. These guests are furthermore carefully arranged on either side of Dr. Phil, facing each other (see Figure 11). This representation of Asians talking about double eyelid surgery is an example of agency exercised through visual means. In “Part 1: Plastic surgery questions answered!” TheXiaxe (2011) used visuals in rhetorically robust ways throughout the video, establishing a kind of ethos by laying out what surgeries she’s had, as she gestures to her own face to illustrate. She also includes drawings that help her explain how--in this particular case--

³ This episode originally aired in Finland.

nose surgery works, and images of her own nose at various phases before and between her two nose jobs (see Figure 12).



Figure 11. Screenshot from “Dr. Phil discussing the upper eyelid surgery”: On the Set of *Dr. Phil*, four guests of Asian ancestry.



Figure 12. Screenshot from “Part 1: Plastic surgery questions answered!”: TheXiaXue uses visual to illustrate rhinoplasty procedures. The above screenshot reads, “What did you do for your 1st and 2nd nose job?”

Moreover, agency is leveraged through such aspects of the YouTube interface including user handles, which accompany each video and each comment. Many user handles indicate race or ethnicity, thereby making identity known and identifiable to viewers. For instance, some handles include transliterated Asian language, e.g., TheXiaXue; others include actual ethnic background, e.g., laobitube, and still others use actual surnames that can be linked to race or ethnicity, e.g., Victor_Tsai. Some commenters also used Asian language in their comments; for example CristineeJ responds to shutupjunie’s video, “Why I Got Double Eyelid Surgery/ FAQ”: “한국에서 하셨어요? 저두 하고싶은데 아는 병원이 없어서 ㅠㅠ 다들 좋다곤 하는데 병원 어디서하셨는데 여쭙봐도 될까요?”⁴

⁴ CristineeJ asked shutupjunie if she got her surgery in Korea, explaining that she, too, wants to get the surgery, but does not have a hospital that she knows to go to. She asked shutupjunie if she can ask which hospital she went to.

The audio aspect of video also has implications for how agency and identity is leveraged. For instance, people’s speech patterns and regional accents come through via audio, and all the more so with a transnational topic.⁵ In these videos, we hear a wide range of English language speech patterns and regional accents, including accents from Australia, Singapore, and the U.S. Agency through the audio aspect of YouTube videos is also occasionally extended to the soundtrack. For example, “Asian Double Eyelid Surgery (Blepharoplasty) - Why?” (2010) opened with stereotypically Orientalist music, sparsely plucked notes from the strings of a Japanese koto (see Figure 13).



Figure 13. Screenshot from “Asian Double Eyelid Surgery (Blepharoplasty) - Why?”: Opening Shot. The above screenshot reads, “Asian BLEPHAROPLASTY.”

⁵ Many who do work on African American Vernacular English and World Englishes have articulated the rhetorical implications with regards to how different people perceive various English language speech patterns and regional accents.

Agency appears in these videos and their comments in several ways, both as something that is articulated and something that is exercised: first, some subjects communicated explicitly that cosmetic surgery serves patients the benefit of social mobility through career and job prospects, i.e., “people who are symmetrical are more likely to get the job or promotion than those who aren’t” (“NEVER PERFECT trailer”: JuciShockwave, in response to aPandaHead, 2008). Secondly, some speakers explained that cosmetic surgery is a matter of personal and individual choice; in other words, the neoliberal logic of consumer choice allows for individual agency as it grounds such statements as, “Personally I think people should do whatever they want, it’s their money/problem not mine” [*sic*] (“NEVER PERFECT trailer”: JuciShockwave, in response to aPandaHead, 2008). In other instances, agency is contingent on outcome and the happiness of the individual “Well if those ladies feel good about themselves after the surgery then that's what matters” (“Asian Double Eyelid Surgery (Blepharoplasty) - Why?”: scorchedcandy, 2011). For instance, if double eyelid surgery is what makes a person happy, then they should be allowed to do it. Conversely, then, it is implied that if a person is not any happier as result of the surgery, then there is something wrong with that. Finally, agency is sometimes simply left implied when speakers explain that getting double eyelid surgery will make them “prettier,” “happier,” or “more confident.”

One example in which agency is articulated explicitly appears in a clip titled, “Dr. Phil discussing the upper eyelid surgery,” posted by mikaoonake (2009). In this video, guest to the show and cosmetic surgeon Dr. Peter Newen explained:

Everybody wants to see a pretty face. They found that college students who are more attractive get better grades, people who are more attractive have higher salaries.

Characteristics such as reliable, trustworthy, friendly, [are attributed to people who are attractive] and the people who are unattractive get unfriendly, hostile, mean (see Figure 14).

In other words, Dr. Newen shows, in this video, the link that society places between particular beauty standards and professional success, while the producers of the Dr. Phil show also take advantage of the visual and textual aspect of video.



Figure 14. Screenshot from “Dr. Phil discussing the upper eyelid surgery”: Dr. Peter Newen describes link between beauty and associated personality traits. The above screenshot reads, “UNATTRACTIVE, Unfriendly, Hostile, Mean.”

Two more examples can be found in a clip from the *Tyra Banks Show*, titled, “Tyra Banks-Asian Eyelid Surgery,” posted by Flaw3dBeauty (2008). In this excerpt, guest to the show and cosmetic surgeon Dr. Charles Lee discussed why patients opt for double eyelid surgery, explaining, “When you have an extreme ethnic feature [...] it’s harder to get a job, there is discrimination.” There is also a moment when Tyra herself, in an attempt to make a point about

how double eyelid surgery is a racialized act, compares her guest Liz getting double eyelid surgery to her wearing a hair weave through a connection between body modification, beauty standards, and professional success: “Actually my whole career, 14, 15 years of being a model, [I couldn’t have] actually done that with my natural hair, and they say, ‘Oh Tyra’s a sexy, Victoria Secret...’ That just wouldn’t happen. And I know that. And I own up to that.” Furthermore, in a video response to “Tyra Banks-Asian Eyelid Surgery,” EZserenity (2008) interprets Tyra’s statement about her hair weave as her “selling out”: “Now Tyra Banks, the sellout that I think she is, she admitted that she puts weave in her hair because, you know, if she didn’t, white America wouldn’t accept her and she wouldn’t be where she is.”

Other videos have linked double eyelid surgery to professional success by advertising particular surgical methods: for example, in “Asian Double Eyelid Surgery (Blepharoplasty) - Why?” Dr. Charles Lee advocated the durable suture technique (DST)--as opposed to the incisional method--because of the quick heal time, explaining that a patient can go back to work quickly, in comparison with the incisional method: “You will be able to return to work in a very short period of time, probably about four days as opposed to one or two weeks that you usually have to wait for when you’re doing an incisional type of procedure” (see Figure 15). In this same video, Liz, a woman who got the surgery, explained that when she went back to work, no one noticed a difference, noting that this “was [her] main concern”: “I went into surgery, it was painless, I came out, three days later I continued working, and no one really noticed a difference. I got a lot of compliments, but no one even questioned surgery, and that was my main concern.” In both instances, the speakers locate the value of this particular method in relation to work situations.



Figure 15. Screenshot from “Asian Double Eyelid Surgery (Blepharoplasty) - Why?": Asian Man at the Workplace. The above screenshot reads, “ASIAN BLEPHAROPLASTY.”

In “Asian Double Eyelid Blepharoplasty 33 News (Dallas, Texas),” Dr. Sam Lam (2010) explained, “Most often times when children are moving onto adulthood or going into college, when they’re transitioning to a different life, it’s a time where they are changing their career paths, I find that to be the most common impetus to do this procedure” (see Figure 16).

Decisions to get the surgery between transition periods are also made for practical reasons--when patients enter a new environment, be it college or a new job, with the surgery already done and their eyes already healed, they are then able to sort of “start fresh” in a place where no one has seen their eyes prior to the surgery.



Figure 16. Screenshot from “Asian Double Eyelid Blepharoplasty 33 News (Dallas, Texas).” The above screenshot reads, “EYELID SURGERY, DR. Sam Lam, Lam Facial Plastics; THE 33, TV.COM.”

Double Eyelid Surgery as Individual (Consumer) Choice

Besides linking the surgery to notions of professional success, others have argued that “Plastic surgery is an individual choice and it is whether you’re Asian or not” (“Asian plastic surgery on CNN”). Such arguments are grounded on cultural notions of individual agency and neoliberal notions of consumer choice. Martin Wong, editor of *Giant Robot*, was also a guest on the *Tyra Show*, where he mentioned that plastic surgery is “a personal choice.” Likewise, in “Part 1: Plastic surgery questions answered!” TheXiaxue said, “If you want to [get plastic surgery], that’s your *business* [my emphasis].” In a video titled “Part 1: Double Eyelid Surgery,” a woman who had gotten the surgery done described acceptable reasons for getting double-eyelids, explaining that one must be confident in him/herself, and one needs to be doing it for him/herself, and not for someone else. Another way that the notion of individual choice shows up as a

rationalization for double eyelid surgery in these videos is therefore through the idea that it is important to be getting the surgery for oneself, and not to please anybody else: “I understand. I think the important part is that this makes me happy and I'm doing it for me, nobody else [...]” (chicky96734 in reply to tuffyardanos, 2012). Beyond the implication for reinforcing the value of the individual and self-confidence, such statements also effectually detach individual desires of the self from desires of others or ideas about desires of society more generally, even while these individual desires are deeply related to the rhetorics of desire within society at large.

Instances where agency is contingent on outcome and the happiness of the individual include a response from esthyAnn729 (2012), who shared her experience getting double eyelid surgery in a video titled, “Single to Permanent Double Eyelid Girl.” She replied to commenter neopong13, saying, “HAHAHA thanks... Well, some of my friends think I look better now. [...] Lotsa comments I gotta handle but oh well, whats done is done and i'm happy with the results (: [...]” In “Part 1: Plastic surgery questions answered!” TheXiaxue, in answering some frequently asked questions about plastic surgery, provided a kind of cost benefit analysis, often focusing on the results of getting, in this instance, two nose jobs. For instance, she talks about scarring, how her nose feels, whether it feels hard and artificial, how painful the procedure was, whether or not plastic surgery is addictive, and the length of recovery time. Finally, viewers, in providing feedback to those who have gotten the surgery have said things like, “you were beautiful before. (: the thing that makes you more beautiful now is that you're more confident and you like yourself more now. ~ it doesn't matter what you had to do to feel better about yourself” (neehcheeStriped commented on shutupjunie, 2011). In other words, it was worth it and

acceptable that shutupjunie got surgery because she is visibly more confident as result (see Figure 17).



Figure 17. Screenshot from “Why I Got Double Eyelid Surgery/ FAQ”: shutupjunie

Finally, agency is sometimes simply left implied when speakers explain that getting double eyelid surgery will make them “prettier” or “more confident,” qualities that are also linked to professional and personal success, as discussed above: “be confident *because* you are very pretty :) [*my emphasis*] (zanahoria2500 commented on shutupjunie, 2012); and “I think you look very pretty. More important, you are confident in yourself and who you want to be which comes across in this video [...]” (Home Works33 commented on chicky96734, 2012). What is left unsaid is *why* these qualities are of value. In other words, why should this person feel confident about being pretty?

Another factor to keep in mind is how place matters. At times, the location of these videos or their speakers are not known; however, among those that are stated, the videos span

across countries, as they are located in Australia, South Korea, and different parts of the U.S., yet made accessible via the Internet. While key aspects of these shared experiences remain the same across countries, other details of place and pertaining to East Asian peoples' varied subjectivities--contingent on things like gender, country of origin, where they grew up, place of residence, etc.--inform agency in a variety of ways. Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) described how in Korea, a

photograph is a requirement of all job applications, and physiognomy is often used to evaluate candidates where qualifications and experience are equal, an employee with 'friendly' (*insang'i choun*) facial features will always be preferred, given the importance of social bonding in the workplace. Cosmetic surgery is thus a practical issue in an extremely competitive (and in some occupations ageist) job market, *chig'öp sönghyöng* making the difference between success and failure in getting a job.

Such practices magnify the emphasis on an individual's appearance as well as candidates' and societal concerns about beauty (see Figure 18). The videos I analyzed furthermore included patients who were adopted from Asia now residing in the U.S. (surgeryvideo99, 2007), Asians who grew up or currently live in places where they are part of a racial minority (Flaw3dBeauty, 2008; abchungrybeast, 2011), as well as Asians who have always lived in places where they were part of the majority, for instance, in Asia or in certain parts of the U.S. (surgeryvideo99, 2007). In "5 Months later..." chicky96734 (2012) responds to commenters of her previous video, "My Double Eyelid Surgery and post surgery pictures! 8D" (2011), explaining that she is from Hawai'i, where race is understood in very different ways from many parts of the U.S. continent (see Figure 19).

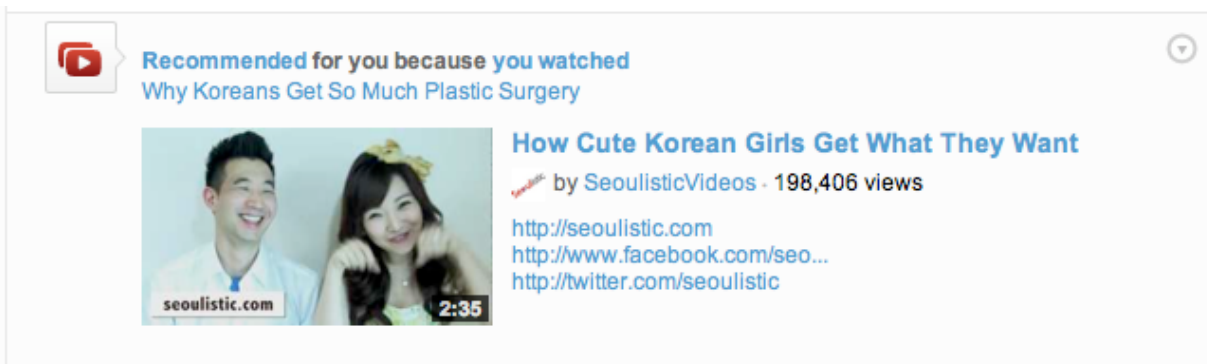


Figure 18. YouTube Screenshot. The above screenshot reads, “Recommended for you because you watched, Why Koreans Get So Much Plastic Surgery; How Cute Korean Girls Get What They Want, by SeoulisticVideos, 198,406 views, seoulistic.com.”



Figure 19. Screenshot from “My Double Eyelid Surgery and post surgery pictures! 8D,” Confidence Embodied

Rhetoric and Desire

In all of these locations, however, histories of (neo)colonial desire and race relations have played a key role, and the scholarship in cultural studies and colonial desire are useful for making clear how desire is rhetorical. More specifically, discussions of colonial desire speak to

the ways that race, power, and privilege inform agency and desire, drawing connections between ideas and bodies, intangible and animate. The trope of agency as a rationalization of double eyelid surgery in some ways contrasts with how the practice is commonly represented in U.S. popular media, which perhaps most often frames double-eyelid surgery as a means of “erasing the race,” situating those who get the surgery as victims of racial self-hate; rather than positioning subjects as agent-less victims, subjects are depicted as agents taking advantage of the technologies available to them in order to succeed in a competitive society.

Desire becomes intelligible immediately when we are paying attention to it. It is easy to overlook how many of the commenters respond with what they think about the individual in the video’s eyes or Asian eyes in general. Besides comments about whether or not the results look “natural,” many users comment on the beauty of the individual’s eyes or their idea of the Asian eye. For example, comments like “You look gorgeous” (kryhappy96 commented on esthyAnn729, 2012), or, “I dont know why asians do this i personally like asian eyes i think they are badass” [*sic*] (CoastalFlange commented on shutupjunie, 2012) illustrate this point. In “Dr. Phil discussing the upper eyelid surgery” (2009) Dr. Newen described a patient’s before and after surgery pictures: “I look at her face [prior to the surgery], my impression is that she is not that popular in the looks department. You look at her eyes before, and her eyes look sexy after the surgery.” Such statements are examples of the rhetoric of desire, as these statements inform what people understand to be desirable--they shape social and individual definitions of desire. Other commenters have made similar remarks yet portraying desire more explicitly through Orientalist notions of Asians as exotic, different, and mysterious, i.e., “I have huge eyes. Perks of being American... There is nothing about me that is exotic. Asian eyes are so mysterious and

beautiful” (ArtistikAddiction commented on shutupjunie, 2012). Still others have commented on how they find “monolids” desirable: “I still think asian eyes (single lidded eyes)are sexy [...]” (zanahoria2500 commented on shutupjunie, 2012); “Monolid eyes can look VERY cute lol :) My Korean friend has monolids with lots of natural eyelashes so she looks really pretty and innocent” (MyAura commented on shutupjunie, 2012). It is also worth noting that such articulations are not linked to desire in the purely sexualized sense, but rather desire as an abstraction of what patients perceive as society’s standards based on what people find attractive. For instance, many offered encouragement, i.e., “youre cute either way ^__^” [*sic*] (Aspenfash899 commented on shutupjunie, 2012). Finally, discussions of racialization linked, and sometimes critiqued the link between desire and race: “i [*sic*] hate how so many people think that asians are doing this because the ‘western look’ is more *desirable*” [*my emphasis*] (thatscaraful commented on samlammd, 2010).

Desire, Neoliberalism, and Cruel Optimism

In the scholarship on colonial desire, the relationship between racialized bodies, power, language, and desire has been much discussed. For instance, Joseph Massad’s (2007) *Desiring Arabs* examined the politics of desire by exploring the relationship between sexual desire and civilizational worth. In *The Empire of Love*, Elizabeth A. Povinelli (2006) offered a compelling look at how “Love is a political event” (p. 175), by examining how

discourses of individual freedom and social constraint--what I refer to as *autological* and *genealogical* imaginaries--animate and en flesh love, sociality and bodies; how they operate as strategic maneuvers of power whose purpose--or result--is to distribute life,

goods, and values across social space; and how they contribute to the hardness of liberalism as a normative horizon. (pp. 3-4)

In this quote, Povinelli also articulated the temporality of love, as she explores how it moves dynamically through time, across “discourses of individual freedom and social constraint.” More importantly, however, she examined how love operates through power, and how it, in both purpose and result, “distribute[s] life, goods, and values across social space.” Moreover, Povinelli’s claim is that “the intimate couple is a key transfer point between, on the one hand, liberal imaginaries of contractual economics, politics, and sociality and, on the other, liberal forms of power in the contemporary world [...] If you want to locate the hegemonic home of liberal logics and aspirations, look to love in settler colonies” (p. 17). One way she explained this relationship is by articulating how “Empire created and circulated poverty, trauma, and death globally while claiming to create and foster wealth, happiness, and life [...] (p. 18), a rhetorical tactic that has been used time and time again throughout the history of (neo)colonization. And Nicole Constable (2003) discussed how technological development has had implications for transnational desire in *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and “Mail Order” Marriages*. In this text, Constable talked about desire as it circulates in online space through a discussion of a research study of “mail-order” marriages between Asian women, primarily from China and the Philippines, and white men from the U.S. Through her virtual ethnography, Constable traced a series of reframing and identity re-negotiated through the processes that take place in these contexts of transnational marriage. In each of these texts, we see a rhetorical unfolding through which desire is substantiated, articulated, and sustained as an ideology.

Two temporalized concepts that speak to rhetorics of desire are neoliberalism and Berlant's notion of cruel optimism. According to Wendy Brown (2003), "neoliberal political rationality" emerged as "a mode of governance encompassing but not limited to the state, and one that produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social" (p. 37). She went on to say, "Neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; it involves *extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player" (p. 39-40). In "Lessons from 'Around the World with Oprah,'" Lee (2008) examined the television show through a neoliberal frame, explaining that neoliberal logics of consumer choice ground the argument that a person should be able to get the surgery if s/he wants to; it's an individual's choice. We see many similar statements in the data set analyzed here, particularly those where people argue that one should be able to do what he or she wants, and/or that plastic surgery is an individual's decision. Such articulations of agency as those analyzed above are grounded in a free market logic that pervades the way people value bodies. Furthermore, to think about neoliberal thought as a temporal category means to understand time as marked by moments of individual choice. Through a neoliberal frame, we can also understand desire as a driving force of capitalism, and moments that desire is rhetorically conjured as markers of time.

Lauren Berlant (2011) defined cruel optimism as a "cluster of promises" that "names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility" (p. 20, 21). Moreover, "At the center of the project, though, is that moral-intimate-economic thing called 'the good life'" (p. 2). Chad Shomura interpreted cruel optimism, explaining, "whatever the content of the attachment, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of

what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (p. 21). I understand cruel optimism as a way of interpreting the progression of time, as it is a logic based on a temporal structure that is also rhetorical. Berlant laid out the temporality of cruel optimism as follows: “the present is perceived, first, affectively: the present is what makes itself present to us before it becomes anything else, such as an orchestrated collective event or an epoch on which we can look back” (Berlant, 2011, p. 4). According to Berlant, then, affect is the initial means by which we experience the present. Moreover,

If the present is not at first an object but a mediated affect, it is also a thing that is sensed and under constant revision, a temporal genre whose conventions emerge from the personal and public filtering of the situations and events that are happening in an extended now whose very parameters (when did ‘the present’ begin?) are also always there for debate. (p. 4)

Berlant went on to explain that “One might point out that all objects/scenes of desire are problematic, in that investments in them and projections onto them are less about them than about the cluster of desires and affects we manage to keep magnetized to them” (p. 21). In the context of East Asian double eyelid surgery, the “compromised conditions of possibility” might be understood as how goals or objects of desire are shifted as more people get cosmetic surgery. As the median of what’s considered attractive shifts over time as more and more people get cosmetic surgery, this likewise impacts the ability of subjects to obtain their objects of desire--that high-paying job or that wealth spouse--as competition is redefined. As such, the very cultural phenomena of East Asian double eyelid surgery, in its rapid growth, pushes the attainment of these ideals further and further away over time, thus raising questions about the impossibility of

agency in this particular context. Berlant furthermore clarified the political and rhetorical nature of cruel optimism:

Discussions about the contours and contents of the shared historical present are therefore always profoundly political ones, insofar as they are about what forces should be considered responsible and what crises urgent in our adjudication of survival strategies and conceptions of a better life than what the metric of survival can supply. (p. 4)

In other words, these decisions about what crises and urges to privilege are rhetorical in nature.

Intersection Across Tropes

To read these texts on East Asian double eyelid surgery through the lens of cruel optimism also suggests that we must account for affect, as well as how emotionologization functions in discussions of agency and desire. As Berlant (2011) noted, “Because optimism is ambitious, at any moment it might feel like anything, including nothing: dread, anxiety, hunger, curiosity, the whole gamut from the sly neutrality of browsing the aisles to excitement at the prospect of ‘the change that’s gonna come’” (p. 2). Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 3, through the process of emotionologization, emotions are attached to appearances and ways of reading emotions through raced bodies become normalized across subjectivities so that certain modes of being are privileged in the contemporary timescape. Both agency and desire in this context are fundamentally embodied categories and they are rooted in emotive states, as agency requires an agent, and desire requires a desirer--while the desired may or may not exist within a body. As such, the trope of agency/desire cannot be separated from emotion as it works through affect, an embodied response. Among the emotions linked to agency/desire include confidence, empowerment, and fulfillment, not to mention desire itself. Moreover, the implied ideal

appearance of looking more alert, more awake, more approachable, and more confident is tied to characteristics that are valued in the contemporary workplace for their implied efficiency and networking effectiveness. From here, we might think about how emotions are normalized across subjectivities so that certain modes of being are privileged in ways that inform the possibility for agency. In other words, we must raise questions about how normalizing particular appearances in conditions that are highly correlated to race has implications for the rhetorics of racism.

Also embedded within discussions of agency and desire is the split between nature and technology, as laid out in Chapter 3, wherein some oppose double eyelid and other kinds of cosmetic surgery because it's "not natural." Such beliefs are epistemological in nature and they inform one's ability to have agency, to desire, to be desired. That is to say, agency is limited by particular conceptions of nature; if a person holds moral convictions against cosmetic surgery as a practice because s/he understands it to be unnatural, this can augment desire. For instance, if Person A hired Person B who had gotten double eyelid surgery unbeknownst to Person A, this information, were it to ever reveal itself, may very well influence Person B's experience in the workplace, including how Person A and/or Person B's coworkers respond to such a revelation. In addition while class seems to be less of a factor, relatively speaking, as to whether or not people get double eyelid surgery than other types of cosmetic surgery (running at \$1000 to \$1500 in Asia, the surgery is relatively inexpensive considering how it is both seen as a normal life event and, in some situations, almost a necessary investment into a person's future that will affect his/her quality of life down the road), Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) explained that "Only the well-off can afford the services of the best clinics, hence the '*natural* (Korean) look' emerges as a sign of affluence and middle-class status [*my emphasis*]."

Furthermore, the body, and consequently, identifications are rhetorically reframed through technology and across cultures via the practice of double-eyelid surgery. As result, this reframing helps us to examine how identity is rhetorically shaped over time in transnational, online space. In the set of YouTube videos on East Asian double eyelid surgery analyzed above, there is a distinction between agency and desire via the YouTube videos as a genre, and agency and desire in the content of the argument themselves, leaving more room to talk in further depth about how YouTube as a public space might be interpreted through a lens of agency and desire: what does YouTube enable, and how does it create or disseminate desire in new ways? Through such a discussion, we gain a better understanding of not only the rhetorical nature of identity construction, but also the intricate and complex processes through which these constructions take place. Furthermore, it is worth investigating how identification as a rhetorical concept is complicated when it takes place cross-culturally. I would also like to think more about how double eyelid surgery may or may not be interpreted using Malea Powell's (2002) notion of a "rhetoric of survivance." In a sense, double eyelid surgery highlights how subjects who are subject to a live in conditions (i.e., a competitive labor market) wherein they are both surviving and resisting the idea that white bodies are beautiful and that Asian bodies are meek, robotic, dull, flat, what have you. Agency is a way that subjects "write back" and through metaphorical acts of writing the body via modification. At the same time, I want to be careful of comparing aesthetic surgery to the long history of genocide and disenfranchisement through which American Indians have suffered and persevered. Making cultural comparisons in this way tricky and something that should be explored further. In this way, rhetorics of survivance may have much to offer theories of agency as S. Scott Graham (2009) has synthesized, "Although the

overall agentive program resists authoritative forces, the constitutive rhetorical events frequently rely on those same authoritative forces” (p. 381). In other words, “agentive events often rely on the very authoritarian structures they seek to depose” and, furthermore, “agentive action can be most effective when it garners authority from preexisting power structures” (p. 381).

In sum, I argue that desire is a dominant rhetorical motive that deserves more attention and research and through my analysis, I show how the heuristic of time, as well as desire as a rhetorical category, can help us to better understand the contours of agency. As Berlant (2011) explicated, “We understand nothing about impasses of the political without having an account of the *production* of the present” (*my emphasis*, p. 4). This, for me, is an argument for further theorization of time as a political and rhetorical construct. I end this chapter by reiterating: If a person can take advantage of the technologies available that allow him/her to change his/her destiny, why should he or she not take those opportunities? In the frequently asked questions section of her website, TheXiaxue answered the question, “Why do you do so much plastic surgery? You must be really insecure,” with a willful response reminiscent of the way we talk about computer technologies: “I fuckin' love myself; that's why I'm constantly *upgrading* myself” (Cheng Yan Yan, 2011).

In the fifth and final chapter, I conclude by bringing the five tropes and the five temporal logics together in order to build a framework that I imagine will facilitate the analysis, production, and organization of multimodal representations of bodies. Such a framework would benefit the discipline of rhetoric and composition, as well as the areas of digital and visual rhetoric, computers and writing, technical and professional writing, and intercultural communication. Moreover, I show how this work bears implications for more nuanced

understandings of cross-cultural communication, the rhetorical effects of globalization and technological development, and agency. I conclude by discussing some future directions for this work.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT ASIAN EYELIDS CAN TEACH US ABOUT RHETORIC AND WRITING: IMPLICATIONS FOR MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS, PRODUCTION, AND ORGANIZATION OF BODIES

As this dissertation has shown, the way that we “write” about double eyelid surgery (on YouTube), and especially the ways in which we rationalize the decision to get the surgery, has significant implications for the the way we read and write Asian bodies. Moreover, I have shown how an analysis of the temporal logics through which double eyelid surgery is rationalized is a way of accessing the cultural values that ground the different judgements we make--about double eyelid surgery, and about Asians/Asian Americans. That is, these cultural values inform the ways in which identities and the meanings surrounding them are rhetorically constructed. Though the focus of this dissertation has thus far been on Asian bodies, here, I ask: What can Asian eyelids teach us about rhetoric and writing? What can rhetoric and writing scholars learn from the kinds of complex cultural negotiation being done on the internet? How might social media and technology users more generally help us do our job better? In this fifth and final chapter, I use the findings and analysis laid out in previous chapters to build a culturally reflexive framework for the analysis, production, and organization of multimodal representations of bodies. I briefly discuss how such a framework might be used and in what contexts, before going on to discuss some areas for future research.

A Culturally Reflexive Framework for Multimodal Representations of Bodies

Even as rhetoric and writing teachers are paying increased attention to multimodal composing in their research and in the classroom, we continue to need useful frameworks that guide students, writers, and researchers through thinking deeply about the rhetorical composition of race and bodies. By multimodal composing, I refer to the range of composing practices that take place across a variety of technologies that incorporate multiple modalities--visual images, sound, alphabetic text, and materiality. Furthermore, such frameworks that are attentive to race--among other identifiers--in representing bodies is particularly needed at this point in time, as we find ourselves in a moment of “post-racial” thinking, and at a point when access to the means of production have exponentially increased, though not evenly across race and class based difference. As many others have observed, it is commonplace now for both individuals and organizations small and large to use digital and social media to promote products, services, and ideas. Yet while access may have brought about greater digital literacy to an extent, it has not brought about greater literacy about the representation of people. From Alexandra Wallace ranting about Asians in the UCLA library on YouTube, to Twitter accounts like @OxfordAsians, MSU’s Token Asian (@MSU_Asian_), and @OSU_Asian, to *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit spreads wherein people of color are featured as exotic props, it is clear that both individuals and organizations alike are not thinking about race in reflexive or sophisticated ways. From university departments and research initiatives to non-profit organizations to commercial businesses to presidential campaigns, organizations need writers who are prepared to do this kind of thinking when speaking on behalf of the organization. That said, Ding and Savage (2013) have identified the importance of exploring “alternative conceptualization[s] of cultures and the

‘intercultural’ that moves beyond the nation-centric mindset and to investigate alternative approaches to straightforward application of cultural heuristics and cultural dimensions” (p. 1). Moreover, they argue that “critical cultural theories and postcolonial theories can help map discourses, technologies, institutions, power relations, knowledge (de)legitimation, and different types of cultures,” and I believe previous chapters of this dissertation have illustrated as much.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, I’ve extrapolated five tropes through which people rationalize the decision to get double eyelid surgery: racialization, emotionologization, pragmatization, the split between nature and technology, and agency. As the previous chapters have shown, each of these tropes have important implications for power, privilege, and the rhetorics of racism.

Furthermore, I’ve identified five temporal logics on which these tropes are grounded: progress, hybridization, timelessness, efficiency and desire. Given that these two sets of findings, together, represent rhetorical strategies that articulate cultural values and the temporal grounds on which they are based, I hypothesized that at their intersection we might find a useful framework that will aid in future contexts wherein multimodal representations of bodies are analyzed, produced, and organized (See Table 4. A Culturally Reflexive Framework for Multimodal Representations of Bodies). I thus used these two sets of findings to develop questions that would help facilitate cultural reflexivity among writers when in situations where they need to make decisions about how bodies are going to be represented. In the table below, then, I cross analyze the five tropes with the five temporal logics, building questions that help us to see how and where tropes and temporal logics intersect.

Table 4

A Culturally Reflexive Framework for Multimodal Representations of Bodies

	progress	hybridization	timelessness	efficiency	desire
<i>racialization</i> Is race being attached to particular bodies?	Are particular races tied to particular goals? Are particular races positioned as more/less moral than others?	In what ways are stereotypes of particular races being exploited/broken down?	Are racialized bodies essentialized or depicted as unchanging?	Are particular races positioned as more or less efficient than others?	Are particular races positioned as desirable?
<i>emotionologization</i> Are particular emotions and/or characteristics being tied to bodies?	Are particular emotions tied to particular goals?	In what ways are pre-conceived notions about particular emotional states being problematized?	Are particular emotional states tied to particular bodies?	Are particular emotional states depicted as a more efficient means toward particular goals?	Are particular emotions cast as desirable?
<i>pragmatization</i> Are particular bodies positioned as more or less practical than others?	Are particular bodies positioned as more practical or useful than others? And are these bodies positioned as better?	In what ways are stereotypes about practicality and use-value being exploited/broken down?	In what ways are particular practical states being essentialized?	Are practical bodies depicted as a more efficient means toward particular goals?	Is the use-value of a person or persons depicted as desirable?



Table 4 (cont'd)

	progress	hybridization	timelessness	efficiency	desire
<i>nature/technology</i> What (if any) distinction being made between the natural body and the technologically modified body?	Are either natural or technological bodies positioned as better than the other?	In what ways are stereotypes about natural-ness and technological development being exploited/broken down?	In what ways are natural (or unnatural) bodies being essentialized?	Are natural (or technologically modified) bodies depicted as a more efficient means toward particular goals?	Are natural/unnatural bodies cast as desirable? Are technologically modified bodies positioned as more/less desirable?
<i>agency</i> Are particular bodies cast as agents of change?	How are these bodies positioned in relation to other bodies?	In what ways are stereotypes about bodies as agents of change being exploited/broken down?	In what ways are agentive bodies being essentialized?	Are agentive bodies depicted as a more efficient means toward particular goals?	Are bodies that have agency cast as powerful and thus desirable?

Table 4. A Culturally Reflexive Framework for Multimodal Representations of Bodies, is thus designed for a variety of writing contexts, including classroom and professional writing, and particularly in moments when writers engage in the acts of analyzing, producing, and organizing (whether via YouTube tags or other kinds of metadata) multimodal representations of bodies. I imagine it working this way: writers should first identify, if they notice any of the tropes or the temporal logics existing in a piece of writing wherein bodies are represented, whether that be video, image, or alphabetic text. Upon identifying one such starting point, the writer should then move in the direction of the arrows, asking the questions represented in each of the boxes in that

row or column. For example, if the writer notices that a text represents emotions, or bodies in emotional states, s/he would reflect on the following set of questions, working across the row on emotionologization:

1. Are particular emotions [within this representation] and/or characteristics being tied to bodies?
2. Are particular emotions tied to particular goals?
3. In what ways are pre-conceived notions about particular emotional states being problematized?
4. Are particular emotions tied to particular bodies?
5. Are particular emotional states depicted as a more efficient means toward particular goals??
6. Are particular emotions cast as desirable?

I chose this set of questions because they have such clear implications for thinking critically about how we read and write particular emotions in a variety of places, especially mass media and corporate advertising. This may be a crucial step if we are going to interrogate how cruel optimisms operate--how is happiness constructed and how is this emotional state tied to objects, materialities, events, and goals. And, what are the implications of these representations on people? As I'm reflecting on these questions, I would also consider the implications of this representation with these questions in mind. And I would be thinking about how my responses to the questions help me re-assess how well the representation fits a particular context, how well it does or does not support a particular purpose, and how effectively that representation would speak to my target audience.

On the other hand, if the writer notices that a text seems to be grounded on notions of desire--as consumer capitalism is--s/he would ask the following set of questions, working down the column on desire:

1. Are particular races positioned as desirable?
2. Are particular emotions cast as desirable?
3. Is the use-value of a person or persons depicted as desirable?
4. Are natural or unnatural bodies cast as desirable? For instance, are technologically modified bodies positioned as more or less desirable than “natural” bodies?
5. Are bodies that have agency cast as powerful and thus desirable?

I imagine this framework being useful in a variety of writing contexts--and further research is needed to explore how and to what degree. For instance, the table above could be used in a classroom context for having students do analyses of a variety of texts in which bodies are represented. It could also be used in a technical and professional writing context in which a professional writer is asked to develop a piece of communication in which bodies are represented. The table could also be used in a digital humanities contexts, for discussing how data in which bodies are represented will be organized and made organizable on a given project.

Ultimately, the goal should be not only to produce more culturally sensitive representations and texts, but also more culturally cognizant writers and readers who are aware of and deliberate with the rhetorical strategies they are using. It is an understandable concern that a framework for analyzing race would risk problematic oversimplification, and I understand that this is a risk here; however it is my hope that such a framework should work to *complicate* rather than *simplify* race, the way we understand bodies, and how we then construct meaning based on

those understandings. To be clear, this framework is intended to show that representing bodies is difficult work, and that we should be thoughtful and reflexive if we are to do it well. It is therefore not useful to look to the framework and simply say, “yes, race is being attached to bodies, therefore there is a problem with this representation.” In fact, such an approach may simply work to silence racist thinking. Rather, the point of this framework is to get people talking about race and the various ways it is rhetorically constructed in a way that is reflexive and productive. In other words, the questions laid out in the table above should not be reduced to easy yes/no, good/bad binaries, but should be used as starting points for reflecting on the implications of how bodies are being represented, while also thinking about questions of context, purpose, and audience. To treat culture reflexively means to understand that, when it comes to representing culture, there are no simple and easy answers of this is always “right” and that is always “wrong.” Rather, representations come with multiple and sometimes conflicting implications for many different groups of people--people who are complicated, and whose identities are entangled in webs of meaning.

Future Directions

There are many possible future directions for this work. For starters, the framework presented above should be tested in classroom, professional writing, and other contexts, to see if an evidence-based claim can be made that such a framework is indeed useful for getting writers to reflexively approach issues of race and bodies in representation. It would furthermore be useful to re-examine the framework and see if and how it applies in other contexts of body modification and/or representation. For instance, can we use the framework to analyze the discourse on situations as diverse as tattoos, exercise, anorexia, or sex affirmation surgery, and is

it useful to do so? What are its limitations and how might it be revised when taking other contexts into account? What tropes and temporal logics exist that are not included in this framework and which tropes and temporal logics are more relevant in which contexts? Does this framework help us think about what we need to take into account when considering the embodied representation of difference via gender, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, age, and other identity markers of difference?

In addition, the data I examine here--videos about East Asian blepharoplasty on YouTube--could be studied in several different ways, using different analytical frames; for instance, gender is one aspect that I feel that I have not had the chance to fully explore and that has interesting implications across cultures. A recent Jezebel (2012) post titled “Men in South Korea Aren’t Shy About Getting Oodles of Cosmetic Surgery” about a *Wall Street Journal* report described how it is not only common for men in Korea to get surgery nowadays, but it is also socially acceptable for them to talk about it--and YouTube supports this claim, with clips of Korean male celebrities on variety and other talk shows discussing, and sometimes joking about, their cosmetic surgery:

Though, according to Mr. Kang, patients initially wanted to be hush-hush about their surgery (and, therefore, keep it minimally invasive), South Korean culture has become more accepting of cosmetic surgery, meaning that patients are feeling more emboldened to change their faces [...] (Barry, 2012)

With social acceptance, there are fewer limitations for those who want a visibly different look. Interestingly, there are also YouTube videos that reflect on the different constructions of beauty in Korea versus in North America in relation to gender, namely that “While in North America,

there seem to be different standards for what's a beautiful guy and what's a beautiful girl, [in Korea,] the mold seems to be similar" (simonandmartina, 2011). This unified definition of beauty that crosses over gender is defined by such features as large eyes, v-shaped face, high nose bridge, and fair skin--encompassed by the term *ulzzang*, meaning "ideal face"--and there are many videos on YouTube and across the internet about *ulzzang*. Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) reflected on this unified beauty standard that crosses over gender through the *kkominam*, which means, pretty boys, or literally, "beautiful flower boys":

The growing popularity of the *kkonminam* in popular culture certainly seems to reflect a desire to break with earlier idealized masculinities which relied on traditional militarized images. Korean women's increasing economic self-sufficiency and reluctance to marry early, as well as a skewed gender ratio are perhaps making women more choosy when selecting a partner. Young men appear to be acquiescing in feminine desire for a more caring and not 'hard' masculinity. The beautiful *kkonminam*'s 'softer' features signify a break from the cool, detached businessman – men who are more interested in satisfying their colleagues than their partners and whose self-worth is associated with long working hours (Korean men work some of the longest hours in the developed world). (p. 74)

Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) went on to explain that "cosmetic treatments and caring for one's appearance are becoming increasingly associated with a new kind of contemporary masculinity that is gaining in value across East Asia, popularized by boy bands and popular actors with a pan-Asian fan base," creating associations between beauty and transnational flow, capitalist consumption, modernization, and contemporary cosmopolitanism.

As a scholar I have been particularly interested in the rhetorical processes through which cultural values change over time and through technology, while also being committed to the inclusion of culturally diverse perspectives in rhetoric and composition research. I see these dual concerns as making sense together because I believe differences in culture, cultural values and ideas about technology are critical sources of political and ideological conflict and misunderstanding among different groups of people. For me, these concerns also provide a way of dismantling systems that position particular groups of people to be marginalized. Moreover, I understand differences in cultural to be highly contingent on the way people conceptualize the passing of time, i.e. via temporal logics as this project has shown. That said, I believe this project also opens up avenues for talking and thinking about time and its relevance to rhetoric and how meaning is constructed. Cosmetic surgery is additionally an interesting lens through which we are able to examine how technology, the body, temporality, and rhetoric intersect: there is a clear physical change, motivated by and made possible through technology, that is visible and undeniable. With ideas about particular kinds of technological body modification are significations of the future--of cyberbodies and prosthetics. Moreover, these shifts in time are captured in pre- and post- surgery slideshows, and in the temporality of the videos themselves.

My methodology has been guided by my seeking out the temporal logics upon which people rationalize double eyelid surgery. In addition, I have focused on a variety of different processes by which identities and the discourse surrounding bodies are constructed. At this point, I believe there are opportunities for more fully developing the rhetorics of time and for exploring the implications of time as a heuristic. That is, what happens if think about time as a “metaphor we live by”? As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued, “The concepts that govern our thought are

not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people” (p. 3).

Such an approach of exploring time as a metaphor might therefore have interesting implications for cultural rhetorics research and rhetorics of the everyday. It is my sense that through time, we might be able to start with change as a unit of understanding, as opposed to stable entities such as agents or objects. Moreover, while time is often viewed as a neutral measurement of some abstraction, I am interested in exploring time as a rhetorical construct that is entangled with power and privilege. As Raúl Sánchez (2005) argued, “If we understand culture and writing in temporal terms, as do Bhabha and Spivak to some extent, then we take a first step in” “develop[ing] a new kind of composition theory, one that understands its objects of study very broadly and is conscious of its methodologies” (p. 72). Furthermore, Judith Halberstam (2005) has explained that “queer temporality disrupts the normative narratives of time that form the base of nearly every definition of the human in almost all of our modes of understanding, from the professions of psychoanalysis and medicine, to socioeconomic and demographic studies on which every sort of state policy is based, to our understandings of the affective and the aesthetic.” And Elizabeth Freeman (2007) argued, “Manipulations of time also convert historically specific regimes of asymmetrical power into seemingly ordinary bodily tempos and routines” (p. 159). Over the course of doing this research I have encountered some of the scholarship on queer temporalities, and I am interested in exploring this area of inquiry further.

More empirical research can also be done to supplement this study. For instance, the analysis of the videos represented here can be supplemented through other empirical methods,

for example, surveys might provide a picture of people's attitudes toward the surgery or about their perceptions of Asian eyelids, both double eyelids and monolids, particularly as they inform people'. Participants might be asked to look at images of different eyes, and then to respond with regards to beauty or other associative character traits. Such a study would help give a sense of how Asian eyelids are actually read, by actual readers. Interviews with people who have gotten the surgery across different spaces would also give a fuller and deeper understanding of people's reasons for getting the surgery, how this might vary over space and time, how their backgrounds may or may not influence their interpretations and desires, and the actual outcomes of having had the surgery. Interviews might also provide a way of hearing some first hand accounts of how they've perceived peoples responses, and what kinds of comments people have had about their eyes.

Among the next immediate steps I intend to take with this work is to produce a webtext that incorporates some kind of video mash-up, because the videos are so robust and add such a crucial dimension to how people understand the culture and discourse surrounding double eyelid surgery. I have a couple of ideas for focusing such a digital article. One idea might be to present the five tropes as rhetorical strategies that are used in the discourse on double eyelid surgery, with implications for intercultural rhetoric and how bodies and body modification is represented more generally in multimodal contexts.

Second, this project begins to examine how the aural features of video impact the way cultures are read. As I watched Jezebel's posted Vice (2012) video, "New Documentary Explores Eyelid Surgery in Korea," it occurred to me that it may be interesting to further investigate how aurality and the rhetoric of sound informs the way we read cultures, particularly in online video

perhaps beyond at the level of regional accent and racialized music. How can particular soundtracks that conjure feelings of suspense or mystery, for instance, dark ambient space music, frame depictions of culture so that they seem weird or especially foreign in contrast to soundtracks that frame other cultures as (technologically) “advanced”? A question like this might be investigated by surveying participants after they watch videos with different kinds of aural backgrounds. Furthermore, such a study may yield interesting insights for cultural reflexivity in multimodal composition.

In the Chapter 3, we saw one example of how cosmetic surgery clinics promote themselves, by marketing and educating potential patients about particular techniques in which they specialize. In addition, Holliday and Elfving-Hwang (2012) noted that, “While there is broad acknowledgement in both media reporting and clinical research that surgery is a painful practice, clinic websites play down the negative after-effects, and play up the positive benefits with ‘before and after’ photos.” Such “before and after” slideshows furthermore arrange time in specific ways that would be interesting to explore further. More research can therefore be done focusing on the range of ways that clinics market themselves, and the rhetorical implications of these communicative practices, particularly as it may provide insights for the scholarship on medical rhetorics and technical and professional writing.

Finally, there is truly a lot of space for further exploration, and I will briefly list a couple more possibilities in closing: Chapter 4 argues that rhetoric and composition ought to consider desire as a future oriented rhetorical category, and this is an idea that clearly needs to be elaborated upon. The current study could be re-examined through desire as a heuristic, but there are many other possibilities for researching this idea. An added component that might enhance

the current study might be a mapping or measuring of desire among surgery patients as well as the general public. I am also interested in the application of this work to professional and technical writing--and I believe I have *begun* to do this in this chapter--as well as medical rhetorics. Finally, as Nakamura and Chow-White (2012) explained, and as this dissertation has illustrated, “the digital is altering our understandings of what race is as well as nurturing new types of inequality along racial lines” (p. 2), and as a scholar, I would like to pay even more focused attention to the relationship between race and the internet, as well as technology more generally.

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