

Vr293SU20 Chinese American Literature

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Core Concepts

- Ethnicity
- Orientalism / Occidentalism
- History
- Activism

foundation
(1965-)

critique of
way of
thinking

evaluating
history
knowledge
quality/
credibility

familiar?

~~common sense~~ / practice

1. What does Maya learn about Chinese American identity over time? How does her concept of ChAm identity change?

beginning: ~~X~~ believing in spirit of ancestors

didn't change, but made peace she also lives, accepts concept of ancestor

learns from Haichen: "Ch" part of ChAm, dating, clothes, perspectives
but doesn't submit, but learns to respect

H/C learns from Maya: be more daring? Instruct ancestry? New fashions

2. Contrast Maya and the Auntie. Why is she afraid of the Auntie at first? What does it mean for the Auntie to be a ghost?

M (A)

scary: afraid of Auntie
influence is daunting, always around

q: character personality	\$
✓ nonprofit	X nonprofit
romantic "M"	frank. idea of ♀
children less imp.	children imp.
clothing	few/no clothes - doesn't like diff. fashions.
19e fashions	many clothes

Indonesian This hat

that ordinary
could wear it
be any

before
is

Are better to Thailand
in their history after we

most
famous
dress



every country has trad.
but not worn on street
dress "normally" majority

Most in
travel spot
sell up on
street

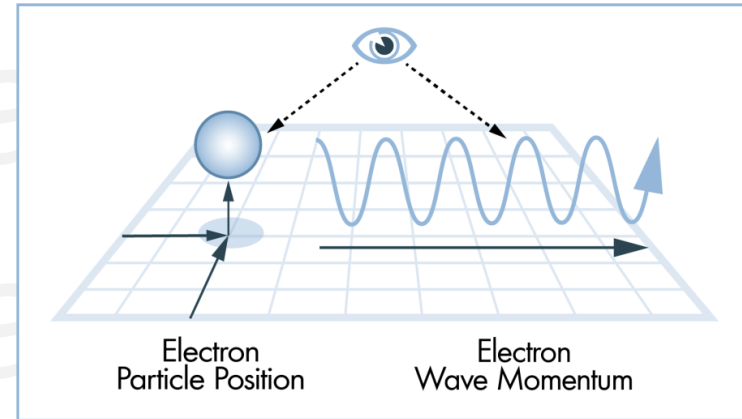


Said, *Orientalism*

- Like other identities, the Orient is a mental construct, an idea
 - not a people, place, or things
 - has effects, visible outcomes on people, things
 - concept rooted in European colonialism
- This idea itself has:
 - A history
 - An ideology, or will
 - Not simply a collection of facts
 - “Facts” are power; power to make you believe

Said, *Orientalism*

- A key dimension of Orientalism is the idea of “East” and “West” as opposites
 - Not “instead of the real”
 - Rather, idea itself shapes reality; ideas *are* reality
 - The idea of “opposition,” drastic difference
 - Leads to tension, contrast, exaggeration





Said, *Orientalism*

- “The Orient is marked by the exotic – a place, people, and way of knowing and behaving that is distinctly Other: ‘a sort of surrogate and even underground self’ that can never be completely known or familiar” (3).
- Orientalism is less about the objects observed, and (indirectly) more about the *observer*
- The Other as shadow, a floating, unknown signifier



To what degree do you
consider this image a
representation of Chinese?

Said, *Orientalism*

- The “otherness” between East and West mean that talking about either identity is a statement of **power**.
 - By claiming to know a people, place, culture, etc., you claim to have dominance over it
 - Dominance: effects in creating institutions (schools, churches, government offices, media, etc.)
 - Also modes of thought (classes, research, artistic tastes, public opinion, standards of beauty, etc.)

Said, *Orientalism*

- Orientalism is a mental construct rooted in European colonialism
- It may have little to do with the material realities or individual perspectives of people in / from these places
- It is not just an idea, but “a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment” (6)
 - An institution of governance, legitimacy, **hegemony**



Scarlett Johansson as Makoto Kusanagi, *Ghost in the Shell* (2017)

“as an actor I should be allowed to play any person, or any tree, or any animal ... I feel art should be free of restrictions” – on (almost) playing a transgender woman in *Rub & Tug*

<https://screenrant.com/ghost-shell-movie-2017-scarlett-johansson-whitewashing-plot/>
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/arts-entertainment/2019/07/14/scarlett-johansson-who-has-history-casting-controversies-says-i-should-be-allowed-play-any-person/>