

Alex Kang  
Senior Thesis I  
12/13/2021

## Orientalism and the Evolution of Asian Roles in American Film

### **Orientalism**

According to Edward Said, Orientalism was ‘almost a European invention’. The intention of Orientalism was to have Western ideals and cultures dominate the East and have control over it. The East was looked at as an uncivilized society, as Said states in his book *Orientalism* (1978) “in short, Orientalism as a Western-style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 3). This was the way for the Occident, the West, to completely dominate the Orient, the East. This made the East seem inferior to the West, which made the West seem like a society where everything is righteous. The West would represent the East, rather than the East representing itself. This is something that’s called Infantilization, a term that is used in Meghana Nayak’s article *Orientalism and ‘saving’ US state identity after 9/11*. In short, Infantilization is treating a community like a helpless child, making sure that it follows a certain path. As Nayak states a quote from Hoganson.

“They were bolstered in this mission by the strongly gendered overtones of Social Darwinism, the perceived duty to teach Others how to live in a political society and the desire to ‘prove’ US power and strength through the assertion of American men’s military might, sexual prowess and ability to protect Other women from ‘their’ men.”  
(Nayak, 48)

Essentially, it’s explaining that the American man will save you from a barbaric society and that the American man will be there as a savior. When reading about Orientalism Said mentions that the Orient itself was an integral part of European material in art, culture and was

the complete opposite of the Occident. This is odd because the Occident depended on the Orient so that it could have this particular status.

### **The “Other”**

Said explains Balfour’s perspective of Orientals, “The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, ‘different’; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, ‘normal.’” (Said, 40). Therefore, putting the East at a disadvantage when it comes to things like worldly power positions. In Anna Triandafyllidou’s article titled “*National Identity and the ‘other’*” (1998), Anna says that

“In other words, the members of one community have a number of features in common, for example, language or dress code, which constitute the markers of their identity.

'Others' differ from the members of the community precisely in these features, they speak a different language for instance or they have a different dress style” (Triandafyllidou, 593).

This falls into Edward Said’s idea of how Orientalism creates this divide between the East and the West and adds stereotypes with the associated sides. It’s a social construction of interpreted implications that may or may not be true. Nayak also talks about the Other stating the fact that if one is considered as the Other there is no voice for yourself. Therefore your representation is taken from you.

### **Orientalism in American Society**

A prime example of Orientalism in the United States would be the representation of the Asian diaspora. Throughout the years, the representation of Asians has changed drastically, from the beginning of immigration to the United States to the K-Pop boy bands that influence many people all over the world. When the Asian diaspora first immigrated to the U.S they were

employed for a lot of labor in building train tracks and construction. Then came along the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which gave a lot of Americans fear of the Oriental diaspora in America. Putting many in concentration camps to keep others “safe”. While this is of the past, nowadays many of the diaspora have 1st world problems rather than the survival mindset. Today the social construct of the “other”, are along the lines of Asian males not being sought out due to the stereotypes that were pushed by films and other mediums of media. Asian males had the stereotype of knowing kung fu/martial arts or being the smartest kid in school and were expected to be great at anything academic. While this may sound great, these stereotypes put a negative connotation on those who did not fit that stereotype. In recent years, the success of K-Pop has taken over the U.S having new stereotypes that apply to the Oriental diaspora. The representation of Asian males nowadays is all about K-Pop: being able to sing, dance, and look a certain way otherwise you’re sidelined. This doesn’t just apply to the bigger well-known Asian countries, this also applies to countries, such as the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and so on. The diaspora from those countries do not resemble the so-called “standard” look of countries like South Korea, China, and Japan.

### **Other Scholar Perspective of Orientalism**

While Edward Said is one of the biggest academics known for Orientalism, there are other scholars that have contributed to Orientalism and its expansion of knowledge over the years. In his book, *Orientalism*, published in 1999, Ziauddin Sardar talks about the history of Orientalism, its concepts, the theory and criticism, the modern practice, and its postmodern future, very similar to Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*. Instead of going into the nitty and gritty details straight away, he rather reels the audience in with a story. The story is about the basic narrative of *M. Butterfly* (1993), a play written by David Henry Hwang, which according to

Sardar is “a complete discourse on Orientalism.” He continues to mention how Orientalism “serves as both the external individual and collective desire to possess the Orient and the internal desire to appropriate the Orient,” (Sardar, 2) which derives from Said’s interpretation of Orientalism as to how it was originally used to domesticate the East. Sardar then mentions a summary of the origins of Orientalism explaining how the West’s original site was Islam itself due to Christendom and from then on the origins of Orientalism could be traced back to Islam. He writes, “It was in its encounter with Islam that the West first developed its vision of the Orient as unfathomable, exotic and erotic place where mysteries dwell and cruel and barbaric scenes are staged” (2, Sardar). This also derives from Said’s interpretation of how the West perceives the East, as an untamed, wild part of the world that needs to be controlled by the West.

In his article *Orientalism Now*, published in 1995, Gyan Prakash talks about the effects that Edward Said had on Western scholarship, but with real-world applications such as “the festering Arab-Israeli conflict” or the “resurgent third-worldism” (200, Prakash). While talking about Said’s effect on Western scholarship, he looked at all sides of the discussion. He mentions Bernard Lewis, a British-American Historian, who criticized Said’s take on the theory and said that he deviated from Orientalism’s true form. He goes on to say that, “the course of Western pursuit of truth, crisscrossed with racist power and cultural supremacism, licensed the pillage of Other cultures in the name of disinterested scholarship”. This is what Said mentions over and over again in his book, talking about how the East is constantly clashing with Western ideals.

### **Model Minority**

In short terms, the model minority stereotype derives from judgments that other communities have on the Asian-American community and I mention this because of how impactful this stereotype is toward the Asian community or to someone who is considered

“oriental”. It ties into Saids’ idea of the “Other” as well, as it isolates and outcasts the community within another community. In their collaborative journal, *Asian American Journal of Psychology* (2017) Yoshikawa explains the isolation that Asian-Americans receive from other minority groups in America. If Asian-Americans can become successful then the “complaining” that other minority groups are expressing becomes meaningless. These actions could, according to Yoshikawa’s journal, “impair intragroup relations and foster tension between Asian Americans and their non-Asian ethnic minority peers.” Over the years in America, Asians in this country are thought of as different, smarter than your average Joe, and foreign.

In Frieda Wong and Richard Halgin’s journal, *The “Model Minority”: Bane or Blessing for Asian Americans?*, they express that Asian-Americans are viewed as standup citizens, bothering nobody, and are portrayed as “geniuses or science/math wizards,” (1, Wong & Halgin). As the journal continues they talk about how the Model Minority affects Asian Americans in many different ways such as in academic performance and socially with other groups of ethnicities. The label of Model Minority has been around in America since the 1960s when William Petersen debuted the term in a New York Times article in 1966 to “describe Japanese Americans with the intention of praising the accomplishments of Japanese Americans and the suggestion that other racial/ethnic minority groups should follow their example.” (1, Wong) Obviously, this did not work as well as Petersen thought it would, as this would not just affect the other ethnicity groups, but heavily more towards the Asian-American community.

In his journal, *Are Asian American Employees a Model Minority or Just a Minority* (1997), he explains a study, that was conducted in 1997, that showed the personal characteristics of the stereotype of the “Model Minority”.

“This high-achiever stereotype was viewed by 80% of 162 Asian American respondents taking an introduction to psychology course at a large Midwestern university as including the following personal characteristics: smart, genius, intelligent, overachiever, nerdy, majoring in law or math or science, 4.0 GPA, competitive and diligent, not having fun, short, wears glasses, speaking English poorly or not at all, having an accent, and an inability to communicate. (Oyserman & Sakamoto, 1997)” (2, Cheng)

While these are the characteristics that many see in these students, Cheng also mentions “This overachiever stereotype is attributed to an ethic of hard work and a serious attitude that values education” (2, Cheng). This can lead to how Asian Americans are raised in America. Many Asian American children learn the idea that “if you can make a lot of money, you’ll be fine” and this comes from their parents. This idea forces the children to pursue fields of education that may or may not even work well with their children.

### **Asians in American Film**

Asian roles in American film(s) have changed drastically over the 40 or so years, from being the comic relief to the main character in a huge box-office film. These films have constructed many different stereotypes due to the influence of the films in America. With this analysis, I will analyze Edward Saids’ idea of the “Other”, socially isolating diaspora from the majority, from the films, and also its impact on the Asian American experience.

#### ***16 Candles (1984)***

This film in specific isolated the character Long Duk Dong because, in the film, he is a foreign exchange student living with the main characters’ grandparents. As a character, he is very quirky, rolls with the flow, weird kind of guy. More specifically, in the dinner scene when

everyone meets Long Duk Dong, everyone is just staring at him. He is introduced with a gong sound and it even stretches out to comic “Asian” music soundtrack. Analyzing his every move, listening to the way he incorrectly pronounces something and laughing at him. Even the way he dressed was a nod towards the stereotype of looking like a bookworm and very academic, his hair was parted in the middle and slicked with oil. In another scene, Long Duk Dong was holding a spoon and fork backwards to use the long body as chopsticks. Although, the character itself is a comic relief character and was used for the purpose of comedy, at the same time, this character misrepresented the Asian community during the '80s in America.

Throughout the film, he is seen as a loser to all of the characters except a select few, he was also treated almost like a slave when he explains that he does a lot of tasks around the grandparents' house. In the middle of the film, he meets Marlene, the love interest for Long Duk Dong, who is the complete opposite of him. Marlene is very tall, athletic, and strong while Long is short, skinny, and weak. In the scenes that they are together, it shows that they were an interesting couple, Long Duk Dong being a lot shorter and weaker made a lot of stereotypes about Asians in America. Claiming that all Asian males were all like Long Duk Dong, saying that Asian men could not get the “pretty” girl, but instead gets the “odd” girl. In the scene where they are at a party, Marlene is shown to be lifting heavy weights, which broke through two stories, while Long Duk Dong is on the cycle struggling to keep himself on the bike, therefore, stating that Asian men are very weak when it comes to physique. In the scenes where Long Duk Dong is driving, you can see that this is a signal to the stereotype that Asians cannot drive correctly. You can see that he is driving at high speed, cutting people off, parking in wrong spaces, crashing a car while parking. And while all of this is happening the song that is playing in the car is a stereotypical soundtrack that is played by many shows that have been produced

throughout American film/TV. A great example of this would be in *How I Met Your Mother* (2005), and *Aristocats* (1970). In her article in May 2009, *Orientalism in American Popular Culture*, Naomi Rosenblatt explains

“Asian men have been the butt of many jokes (especially in the U.S.) when it comes to their personalities (i.e., they are too nerdy or act “too Asian”; “foreign” or “uncivilized”) and other physical attributes (i.e., being constantly told they have “chinky” eyes and have a small penis from outside groups).” (Le, 15)

Supporting the fact that these stereotypes have been around for a long time, her article continues on about others who have actually tried to completely take out a lot of Asian traditions in their lives. This is due to the fact that during WWII there were Japanese concentration camps, and it wasn't even particularly towards Japanese diaspora, but even those who would look similar or just Asian in general would be put in these concentration camps. So in order to avoid this and hate crimes, many of the diasporas would just leave their culture and adjust to being “whitewashed”.

Towards the end of the film when Long Duk Dong is heavily intoxicated, he is treated as if he was a dog, as one of the characters says about the situation “Canine cologne.” In this scene, Long Duk Dong is on the ground laying flat while everyone else is standing. This can be seen as the purpose of Orientalism, which was to put the East in an inferior position. So Long laying on the floor while the family is standing shows that Long is inferior. The grandfather starts to clap and call his name as if he was an unmannered dog, not listening to the owner, the grandparents. While this film did not solidify the stereotypes of Asians that are in America, but it definitely highlighted what a lot of people thought about Asians in America.



And while all of these stereotypes came along with the character, he also had scenes of him not being that stereotype as well. He had some moments of being the anomaly for his character alone, such as getting a love interest, getting flat out drunk, being obnoxious. But other than that the character itself is a walking stereotype, he's an alien in the film and that is how a lot of people thought about Asians in America. The film didn't do a great thing for the representation of Asians in America, it isolated the community more rather than uniting. And while during the production of the film it wasn't seen as offensive or racist, and it was, it's just during that time it just seemed ridiculous that an Asian male would act like this.

### ***Joy Luck Club (1993)***

This film is completely different from the role that *16 Candles* (1984) gave the Asian community in '84. This film talks about the Asian/Asian American experience, the total experience of parents who immigrated to the U.S, and children who grew up here in the U.S. This film was ahead of its own time when it was produced. This film had a full cast of Asian/Asian American actors/actresses, it had many different topics that made a huge representation of what Asian/Asian Americans had to deal with while growing up. It was a representation of the diaspora and those who came from the mother country. Which in fact, is why a lot of Asian Americans had a lot of backlash against this film. It represented the huge generational gap between parents and children. There were a lot of situations where many Asian children could relate to the problems that were highlighted in the film, which is why I say it's ahead of its' time. I would say that even 'til this day, a lot of children of immigrant parents could relate to this film big time and the parents as well as it talks about the problems that are in Asian culture back then and how things progressed in those times. Now, this film showcases the differences between eastern culture and western culture, orientalism vs occidentalism. When it

comes to the “Other” it’s intertwined throughout the whole film, the children do not understand their mothers, who come from a very different background than they did. Throughout the film, it explains each mothers’ story and each child’s story as well and there’s a certain theme that flows with each relationship. That theme is miscommunication between one another and that would be not being able to completely be vulnerable with one another. Now, most parents would want to be able to talk about anything with their children but, not so much in Asian culture way back then. This is where the generational gap begins, where there are two ways of communicating. The western way of communication is talking about the situation and expressing oneself, the eastern way of communication is not so much talking, but just knowing what one has to do. Instead of having a two-way physical conversation about the situation, it’s sort of brushed under the rug and also taken care of at the same time. This isn’t how all eastern families communicate but, in the film that is how it’s shown up until the western way of communication pops in to pry out any underlying communication. And it slightly sinks into the relationships that some of the daughters have with their own spouses and how there is that miscommunication between them because of how they grew up as well. And it’s sort of ironic how the mothers actually start the conversation and expressing how they feel towards their own daughters and how they can see the miscommunication between them and their mothers as well. The mothers can see themselves in their daughters and don’t want to have them make similar mistakes that they made when they were younger. The conversation between An-Mei and her daughter Rose was a great example of how the mothers expressed themselves. An-Mei expresses “I was raised the Chinese way. I was taught to desire nothing, to swallow other people’s misery and to eat my own bitterness. And even though I taught my daughter the opposite, but still she came out the same way.” (1:46:02, 1993) From this scene, she expresses her own thoughts, and seeing through the ways of her own

mother and her daughter, she made the choice to voice her opinion and show her vulnerability to her daughter.

### ***GOOK (2017)***

Not only is this film shown in old black and white film but, it is also very different from the other films that I have discussed in the paper. This film shows the audience a different perspective of the 1992 L.A. riots. Along with that, talks about the different cultural groups that were and still are in L.A. to this day. While this film wasn't particularly highly popularized, like *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), due to budget and other marketing factors, but it was successful the film was highlighted at the Sundance Film Festival in 2017. Now what's different about this film is the diaspora that is represented in the film. The general plot is two Korean American boys trying to survive with the shoe store that their deceased father left them with during the 1992 L.A. riots. The film hyper-focused on two different families that had to deal with the same exact tragedy: losing a parent in a dangerous and horrible situation. Now with Edward Said's idea of the 'Other', throughout the film, the audience can clearly see that all of the communities that are shown throughout the film are in that category of the 'Other'. And if we go even further in, the film shows that the Korean/Asian community is very ostracized. As the character, Kamilla says "No one in this neighborhood likes you. They're all like, "Look at those Chinese people coming into our neighborhood and ripping us off. All them gooks, they be selling shoes that they be getting from the swap meet." (00:23:00) Through this, it made more situations that have led the community fit the idea of the 'Other' in the film. Now outside the film, it showed a specific circumstance that a lot of the Korean diaspora could relate to. Many people from different countries move to America to try to live a better life than where they originated from. "Eli. Your father and I came here to give you kids a better life." (1:07:24) The film speaks out to the

diaspora who are in the same situation as many others were at the same time. The film showed a side of the Asian community and how they were treated throughout the duration of the riots. They were isolated twice, by the Black community and the Latino community. Essentially this film showed a very real representation of what it was like to live during the L.A. riots and how chaotic and deserted life can be during difficult times. The film showed what it is like to be exiled by an entire country, to know what it's like to be at an unfair disadvantage. And not only does it show from the perspective of Asian people, but also the perspective of Black people as well, how each community puts that label of 'Other' on each community. And not only that, but the film also shows the differences between those who were born in the U.S and those who immigrated to the U.S In the film, Mr. Kim has an intense conversation with Eli that leads up to an erratic interaction. Mr. Kim says "This disrespectful kid. Where'd you learn to talk like that to an elder? If your father could see you right now, he'd be really proud of you! Why have you only been speaking English all this time? From now on, speak to me in Korean." Eli replies with "Because this is America, motherfucker." (00:40:02) This scene expresses the differences between two different generations from the same culture, and how the mentality of thinking changes throughout generations. It puts Asians in the "Other" from the perspective of the Asian American community. In Asian culture, more specifically in Japanese and Korean culture, there is a certain hierarchy when it comes to family and how you treat those who are your elders. So that is why Mr. Kim says what he says because of that hierarchy.

### ***Crazy Rich Asians (2018)***

Continuing on the conversation of Eastern diaspora against Eastern thought, this film does a great job at showing the fight of different ideals that is very prevalent in Asian American

culture. This film, while re-sparking the Asian American movement in the Hollywood industry, was one of the only films that had an all-Asian cast. (i.e. *Joy Luck Club* and *Shang-Chi*) This film is a love story that splits two different ideologies of family, even from the beginning of the film we see Rachel Chu and Nick Young talk about spring break and how Nick wants to go to Asia. The conversation begins “So what about us taking an adventure east? You wanna get pork buns in the East Village. That’s what it is, isn’t it? I was actually thinking of further East. Like, Queens? Like Singapore. For Spring break.” (00:05:27) The way that the conversation progresses shows that Asia itself is something that is out of the ordinary, something unheard of. Putting that original intention of Orientalism as a way to have the East inferior compared to the West, in this case, the U.S and Singapore. As the story progresses over 2 hours there are multiple mentions of how there are cultural differences even though the people come from the same ethnicity. In this scene, Rachel is talking to her mom about going to Singapore to meet Nick’s family and his grandmother, which in Asian culture is a very important part when meeting a significant other’s family. A good example of this would be picking what to wear when meeting the family and more specifically what color that family sees you in. In the scene, Rachel’s mother says that wearing a red dress, which is worn for good luck and fertility, is better compared to a blue and white dress, which is worn for funerals. Their conversation goes on about the differences between Rachel and Nick's family, stating “They’re different from us. How are they different? They’re Chinese, I’m Chinese. I’m so Chinese. I’m an economics professor with lactose intolerance. Yeah, but you grew up here. Your face is Chinese. You speak Chinese. But here, and here... You’re different.” (00:11:02) When her mother mentions “But here, and here...” she points to her mind and heart, how growing up in a Western country and having Western ideals is completely different from the Eastern mindset. Also in this scene, when Rachel

mentions that she is an economics professor this also talks about the model minority myth. In Ngan Thi Kim Nguyen's journal, he explains that "Rachel, our protagonist, and the epitome of the made-in-America model minority." (13, Nguyen) and this also applies to her mother which he also explains "Her upbringing reflects the typical 'American dream' narrative, with her mother a "self-made woman" in Eleanor's bitter remarks, immigrated to the U.S. even without knowing the language, yet still worked hard and managed a comfortable life for the family." (13, Nguyen) When Nick and Rachel fly out to Singapore it's something that is different and somewhat similar to New York and Los Angeles. While New York and Los Angeles are considered huge hubs for different cultures, for this film it shows that Singapore is hugely different from those cities. For example, when Nick and Rachel reach an area that is filled with food vendors, all of the vendors speak different languages. Such as Mandarin, English, and Malay. The scene definitely has the audience on a roller coaster, entering a new and unknown world that not many people would be able to travel to. And even the way that Nick and his friends from Singapore all talk, they all have accents derived from a British boarding school they all attended while growing up. As soon as Rachel meets Nick's mother, there is a certain mood that is trickled in, that there is a certain awkwardness when Rachel hugs Nick's mother and the conversation they have as they try to converse. This is where the two ideologies clash, American ideology, and Asian ideology. "Pursuing one's passion. How American. Well, your mother's very open-minded. Not like here, where parents are obsessed with shaping the life of their children." (00:40:20) And this conversation doesn't end here, it continues later in the film. Stating "I withdrew from university when we got married. I chose to help my husband run a business and to raise a family. For me, it was a privilege. But, for you, you may think it's old-fashioned. It's nice you appreciate this house and us being here together wrapping dumplings. But all this

doesn't just happen. It's because we know to put family first instead of chasing one's passion."

(01:10:12) This scene literally rips open the conversation of the two different ideologies of Western (American) culture and of Eastern (Asian) culture. And this theme of individuality against family is consistent through multiple scenes of the film. For example, when Rachel goes to Araminta's bachelorette party, she is bullied by mostly everyone on the island that they go to celebrate. Rachel is the lone American while everyone else is from Singapore. Even in the conversation between Nick and Colin they start talking about how Nick wants to marry Rachel, there are slight mentions of the feud. Colin says to Nick, "Okay your family aside, have you ever thought about what your relationship with Rachel will be like if you got married? I mean, okay, you're Nicholas Young. You're untouchable. You always have been, but Rachel's not."

(01:01:10) This goes on to the Eastern way of thinking, how everything is about representation and how families come together based on social classes, compared to the American way of thinking, it doesn't really matter what family you marry into as long as you love your partner it doesn't matter. Overall, this film made huge strides for the Asian American community and it's because of this film, that there are many Asian American actors and actresses moving up in the film industry. It had set a precedent for many films to be produced such as the next film I'm going to talk about.

### ***Shang-Chi (2021)***

This film is the most recent motion picture that has the representation of Asians in American film. This film was an all-Asian cast that discusses family issues and miscommunication between different generations as well. At the start of the film, the audience is already in a different time and in a different country which leads us into the 'Other'. The story

goes on to talk about the main character's father, Wenwu, and how he wanted to go to the village where people learn the martial arts of the gods. Even the dialogue that is presented in the first 8 minutes of the film is in a different language which leads the audience into an unknown place, something that is unfamiliar to American audiences. With the foreshadow precedent, obviously, the film would go to that magical village, which is called Ta Lo, and that is also another example of Edward Said's idea of the 'Other'. When reaching the location, the village is surrounded by bamboo that blocks any of those who try to get into the village. Once reaching the entrance, the entrance is represented by a marvelous stream with astounding red trees. It's something that comes out of a fairy tale. Even the costume that the mother, Ying Li, is wearing is something that is out of the ordinary. You wouldn't see that type of fashion, just anywhere but the magical place of Ta Lo.

When Shang-Chi travels to Macau with Katy the place looks familiar, like New York, but it is completely different. There are brightly different colored lights, with street food vendors on every corner, dance clubs straight on the streets, and no formal lines that dictate driving etiquette. When reaching the underground fighting ring, we are shown that it isn't an ordinary fight club. There are rows of different tiers of fights, starting from low-level fights that are in tiny rooms to high-level fights that are in the ring. We are shown a big fight between a man and a huge monster, which in different theories say is the Abomination from the Hulk. The man uses magic while the other is using superhuman strength to break barriers and such. It's all sorts of crazy in Marvel films, but this doesn't deviate from Edward Said's idea of the 'Other'. Shang-Chi traveling towards the East and having Katy look around in awe exemplifies it, them going to the underground fight club and seeing all different and weird creatures also shows a huge example of the 'Other'. As I have mentioned before, Said mentions Balfour's perspective "The Oriental is



irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”; (Said, 40). This film is a pure example of that, showing different fashion styles, creatures, powers, and lifestyles.

Fast-forward towards when Shang-Chi reunites with his father, he shows them something that is extremely unforeseen. When his father takes the pendant that his mother gave him and his sister, it showed the audience the map of the village. But when it was presented, it was shown through a real-life “magic” such as water moving and freezing at the same time. And that water changing into crystals and those crystals glowing to show a certain path to the village. Later on, there is a scene where the film presents a creature that only was believed to be a myth. “You can see Morris? Morris? Oh, Morris! They can see you! You’re real! All this time I thought I was hallucinating him.” (00:58:40) Even the act of going to the village, Ta Lo, puts Edward Said’s idea of the ‘Other’ into place. It goes even further due to the fact that the characters are in Asia and have to go to a place that is magical, which makes it even more specific and “different”, this is a way of having the East become more “exotic” rather than a norm. Trevor translates Morris and says that “Morris says that he can guide you there right now. You can get through the maze without waiting for the path to open. But, and it’s a big “but,” it’s very dangerous. How dangerous? No one’s ever made it out alive. But Morris is 90% confident he can guide us through safely. 19%.” (00:59:41)

Towards the end of the film, the characters tell about their story and everything that has happened within a couple of days to a normal, American couple. When they hear this complicated and irrational story their response was “Are you done mocking me? So where is this sister of yours? Two weeks ago, you were parking cars for tips, and you want me to believe you’re now saving the world from soul sucking monsters?” (01:58:26) That conversation alone shows the idea of the ‘Other’, the fact that something unbelievable took place, and those who

have not been exposed to that idea are now questioning every little thing. Belittling context, criticizing their stories, anything to put that experience in an inferior place, just like how orientalism was originally used to put the East in an inferior position.

## **Conclusion**

In the end, all of these films, are examples of how the roles of Asian/Asian Americans have changed throughout American film history. Starting from being a complete comic relief and stereotyped to now a lead role in a huge film company. And how Edward Said's idea of the 'Other' is prevalent in each of these films. *16 Candles (1984)* made Long Duk Dong the representation of Asian stereotypes that were present before the film was released, *Joy Luck Club (1993)* represented the relationships between two generations and the misconceptions that immigrant parents had, *Gook (2017)* showcased the isolation within other minority groups which leads to stereotypes and the 'Other', *Crazy Rich Asians (2018)* which was another example of relationships between two generations but had a modernized story about it. This idea also goes along with *Shang-Chi (2021)* with a completely different story.

## Works Cited

Triandafyllidou, A. (1998). National identity and the 'other.'. *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, 21(4), 593. <https://doi-org.arcadia.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/014198798329784>

Donzé--Magnier, Mahault. (2017). *Edward Saïd: Orientalism*.

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. First Vintage Books.

Nayak, M. (2006). Orientalism and 'saving' US state identity after 9/11. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8(1), 42–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616740500415458>

Le, K. (2019). *Hollywood Media and the Model Minority Myth: the Representation of Asian American Masculinity and Its Effects*.

<https://doi.org/https://repository.usfca.edu/capstone/1019/>

Sardar, Z. (1999). *Orientalism*. United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Prakash, G. (1995). Orientalism Now. *History and Theory*, 34(3), 199–212. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505621>

Kiang, L., Huynh, V. W., Cheah, C. S., Wang, Y., & Yoshikawa, H. (2017). Moving beyond the model minority. *Asian American Journal of Psychology*, 8(1), 1–6.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/aap0000070>

Wong, F., & Halgin, R. (2006). The “model minority”: Bane or Blessing for Asian Americans? *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 34(1), 38–49.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2006.tb00025.x>

Nguyen, N. T. K. (2021). *Adopting Stereotypes: The Yellow Peril, the Model Minority and Crazy Rich Asians*, 8-2.

Cheng, C. (1997). Are Asian American employees a model minority or just a minority?  
*The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 33(3), 277–290.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886397333002>