

# Orientalism and the last emperor

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Edward Said identifies Orientalism as that what we know about other cultures is like a story or myths. There is a division the East and the West and in this the West is a more superior culture than the East. This superiority also helped the West politically wise. This also leads to how when the West attempts to study the East's culture they don't really take the truth into account and they continue to see themselves to be more superior and different. In the movie The Last Emperor there are evidences that support's Said's definition of Orientalism. In this movie Johnston portrays the superiority the West have over the East. One of the things that shocked me the most during this movie is when Johnston first met the emperor not only did he only bow but they took a take two of the entrance and they shook hands. Throughout the movie everyone in the movie either bows or looks away from the emperor. It doesn't seem to be acceptable to have any contact with the emperor but Johnston's contact with the emperor in some ways shows that he has an upper hand even over the emperor. When Johnston first appears he seems superior to everyone else when he gets out of the car with his tall hat and straight posture. He is told " Remember you are one of the first foreigners with an official post in the Forbidden City since Marco Polo" he responds " It makes me very nervous". The tone when Johnson says it makes me very nervous seems very nonchalant and he was not worried about entering a foreign place. When the emperor gets his eyes checked it is confirmed that he needs glasses or he might go blind. Once Johnston realizes that the emperor needs glasses he threatens to resign if the emperor doesn't get them. He also implies that if he does not get things his way he has the power to publish information in the newspapers in China. Johnston has the power to tell the world how the Chinese culture is through <https://assignbuster.com/orientalism-and-the-last-emperor/>

his eyes and it is not wise to go against his word in this situation. Johnston not only has superiority (as he representing the West) over other people with posts in the Forbidden City, but he is also representing the political power he has over the emperor. As the emperor's new teacher it is Johnston's job to educate the emperor of western ideas. We have only seen Johnston talk to the emperor about western material type of things and play tennis with him. Johnston is not only encouraging the emperor's materialism, but he is also keeping the emperor ignorant of the current situation the emperor is in. The irony in this whole situation is that this movie is produced by a Westerner so this only strengthens what Said says. We are watching a movie about the East but through a Westerner's eye, so how much of the culture that is portrayed is true? As Said says the culture we see is like a story or myth told by Westerners.