

Yew, Leong, National University of Singapore, Singapore

Asianism: Toward a Theory of Subaltern Orientalism

In this era of increasing Asian self-identification bolstered by a post-financial crisis confidence and an increasing propensity to commoditize Asia, how applicable is Said's notion of Orientalism in explaining Asians' imagination, representation, and construction of their regional Others? Do they appropriate colonial mindsets or do they adopt more empathetic forms of engagement? In this paper I argue that while Orientalism continues to be structured through colonial experiences and modernization, two new forces need to be factored in as well: global capitalism, which induces cultural commoditization and differentiation, and postcolonial disjuncture, which leads to an ambivalence in the perceptions of West and East. Collectively these ideas suggest a different process of Asianism is at work, taking into consideration more complex forces of our global present.