

**Asia and the Victorians (EN277)**  
**Second Assessed Essay Questions**  
**Due on 3 May 2016 (Tuesday, Week 2, Term 3)**

(5,000 words)

Answer **ONE** of the following questions. *Feel free to formulate your own question in consultation with Dr Forman.* As you need a minimum of one text from Term 2 for this essay, you may write a comparative essay with a text from term 1, provided you do not repeat content.

PLEASE READ THE RULES BELOW AND AFTER THE ESSAY TITLES BEFORE STARTING YOUR ESSAY.

You are expected to do some degree of independent research for this assignment, which may include primary materials from the period (historical materials, contemporary criticism from journals or newspapers, other relevant literature, etc.) and/or criticism and theory. The module webpage contains a bibliography of useful research materials. Via the library portal, you can access useful databases such as Empire Online, Gale New Vault, Nineteenth-Century British Library Newspapers, the Times Digital Archives, Project Muse, the MLA International Bibliography, Empire Online, and Literature Online. *Remember that recent articles are normally embargoed for several years and will not appear in JSTOR.*

*All essays must be double spaced and in a font size of 12 point.*

***PLEASE CONSULT THE ESSAY TIPS DOCUMENT ON THE WEBSITE FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO WRITE AND FORMAT YOUR ESSAY APPROPRIATELY.***

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1. Elleke Boehmer notes, “Europe colonized foreign stories as well as foreign lands. Thus, far from excluding interaction with other cultures, self-iteration, in fact, incorporated foreign influences.”

Analyze the appropriation of “foreign stories” in any TWO of the works from this module.

2. “Everything about China was immense: its area, its population, its variety, the problem and opportunities it seemed to contain. Even its degradations were outsize. And the magnificent recession of Chinese history stretched back through the millennia in a way that made Europeans, and Americans, seem mere newcomers, encouraging them — and this becomes an important theme in Western travel writing — to think of themselves by contrast as specialists in modernity” [Douglas Kerr and Julia Kuehn, Introduction, *A Century of Travels in China: Critical Essays on Travel Writing from the 1840s to the 1940s* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2007) 1-2.]

Explore the contrasts between notions of tradition and modernity in the description of East Asia and Southeast Asia.

3. Write an essay on how one or more of the writers from Term 2 compare British imperialism with Dutch and/or French and/or Spanish imperialism.

4. How does the imperial archive figure in one or more of the works from Term 2?
5. How do one or more of the works from Term 2 undercut and/or reinforce the stability of empire and notions of white superiority?
6. Write an essay about femininity in the imperial/extra-imperial environment, using one or more of the texts from Term 2. Among the issues you may wish to consider are: the projection of normative values of femininity and separate spheres onto “Oriental” women; the way in which the sexual economy functions among expatriates in East and Southeast Asia; the politics of miscegenation; the relationship between women and domesticity and hygiene in the imperial environment; the figure of the concubine, “fallen woman,” or prostitute.
7. Write an essay about masculinity in the imperial/extra-imperial environment, using one or more of the texts from Term 2. Among the issues you may wish to consider are: the representation of boyhood; the imperial/extra-imperial setting as a site for “sexual license”; the failed imperial officer (e.g. Max Havelaar); the discussion of warriors and martial behaviours.
8. Consider the role of the island in one or more of the texts read during Term 2.
9. Discuss the development of what Benedict Anderson calls a “new, restless double-consciousness” (229) in José Rizal’s *Noli Me Tangere*. How does the “spectre of comparisons” function here?
10. How do one or more of the authors from Term 2 manipulate tropes of disgust—and to what ends?
11. Discuss how execution and/or torture are deployed in one or more of the narratives read in Term 2.
12. Explore the function of commodities in one or more of the texts from Term 2. Among the issues you may wish to consider are: how do these commodities circulate; how do Asian bodies function as commodities; what role does tea play in the text(s)?
13. Examine the representation of mestizo/“half-caste” characters in one or more of the texts from Term 2.
14. Explore the use of “pidgin English” in one or more of the texts from Term 2.
15. Explore the depiction of anti-Western sentiment/xenophobia in one or more of the texts from Term 2. How do writers use this idea of xenophobia to demonize Asian groups as “barbaric,” “uncivilized,” etc. (or, in Ng’s novel, to give the Chinese side of the Hundred Days’ Reform and the Boxer Rebellion)?

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Your essay must have a strong central argument/thesis statement, which should appear towards the start. I will be expecting you to do close reading/textual analysis during the essay, commenting on issues such as narrative voice, style, etc. and the way in which these elements contribute to the title you have chosen.

The essay should use parenthetical citations for quotations and have a bibliography, which preferably

conforms to the MLA style. Do not include a “Works Consulted” section in your essay, as your research should be evident from the essay itself.

Information on the MLA style can be found at [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org), or you can consult the MLA Handbook in the library. The Online Writing Lab at Purdue, <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>, offers good guidance on the MLA format and on how to formulate a thesis statement. I also recommend *The Craft of Research*, edited by Wayne Booth et al.