

EAST–WEST INTERSECTIONS

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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In the first issue of *ACCESS* for 2007 writers from USA, Australia and China address the theme of *East–West Intersections* through a range of different and intersecting discourses in the humanities: education, policy, philosophy, technology, architecture and cultural studies. It becomes apparent that although these discourses might have lineages of practice that have been categorised through university frameworks (courses, departments, faculties, research centres and institutes) their co-presence here highlights their discursivity. When the call for papers was posted, the remit was wide enough to include a diverse field of enquiry on East/West intersections in educational and cultural lives. In particular it was seeking responses to questions of how intersections of East and West (however they might be identified) might be apparent in a globalised economy and where may lie the influences and effects of these interactive states. After the lengthy refereeing process it was particularly gratifying to find that the final selection of papers included concerns as diverse as the call for a new humanities in the post-colonial university, the conditions of knowledge and identity through mobile phone technologies, performative identifications of urban and theoretical spaces, representations of Japanese culture through art and its intersections with global marketing, and historical analyses of higher education in the global marketisation of the People's Republic of China and New Zealand. On reading these papers it soon becomes apparent that they take us well beyond any pragmatic pre-determinations of internationalising impulses of East and West, into the realms of the problematisation of knowledge and culture in and through global practices of transfer and exchange.

In the first paper Michael Peters pulls the collection's focus to the articulations and political manifestations of a new humanities for the twenty-first century. In many ways this paper sets the philosophical groundwork for the subsequent papers in which the various intellectual trajectories that such a humanities might discursively exercise are brought sharply into relief. Working through Derrida's reconceptualisations of the humanities as a profoundly human and ethical space, Peters poses some important issues for the contemporary post-colonial university. Peters reveals how urgent it is to shed light on the dominance of new fundamentalisms and literalisms that have come to mark the intellectual, institutional and public sphere in the disappearance of a critical mode of address in the humanities. In light of the growth of political conservatism he reminds us of the work of both Jacques Derrida and Edward Said on the politics of representation – that there are ethical and political stakes in representing an argument, an idea, an image, a text, a people, and one's relation to the texts of others. Thus, and ultimately, Peters engages with Derrida in calling for a university without conditions, which does not exist but presupposes a place of critical resistance.

Such a condition of critical resistance calls for a space for critical writing as a form of cultural production in education, design, architecture, literature and philosophy that goes beyond the conventional modes of categorisation and representational functions of the text. It calls for a performative disposition and attitude in one's engagement with the texts of others, as much as in one's identification with the spaces of self and environment. Seeking these new kinds of engagement, Patrick Fong Chan works through the writings of the Singaporean theorist, Rajeev Patke, whose montaged-text references Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, to bring our attention to the need to resist those harmonising perspectives or unified strategies, practices and solutions in intellectual and social spheres. With Singapore as the external space of attention, Chan explains, "it is this move from a function of representation toward a function of incitation that allows a theoretical text to become coextensive with its field of inquiry". The practice of theory is thus an embodied practice that carries traces of the emergence of writer/reader. Ultimately Chan leaves us with the realisation that one's process of "becoming" is through the performative productions of new texts, concepts, subjectivities and sense of space. This discussion has important implications for educators in the humanities as it presents a challenge to the conventional wisdom about representation, writing and reading that comprise the dominant textual encounters in education. Chan, through Patke and Benjamin, poses a new task for 'knowledge workers' in the humanities by activating new and viable forms of reading/writing in our intellectual and cultural work.

New forms of communication and identification come to light in Larissa Hjorth's interrogation of mobile-media practices and contesting East/West "imaging communities" in the Asia-Pacific region – in particular Japan, China, South Korea, Hong Kong and Australia. Multiplicities of East and West are presented through new technologies of mobile communication that have given rise to changed identifications of what place and identity might mean in the technologically connected communities of the twenty-first century. This discussion has significant implications for the humanities. As mobile technologies are reshaping educational and social spaces new questions must be asked about the forms of humanisation that might characterise the new humanities. There is the shift from participatory modes of communication and sharing to mediated 'fast-forwarding' of the present, so that the present moment is placed on hold for the future and the notion of experience thus alters from a perceptual condition to one of technological derivation. Hjorth's research on the customising of mobile communication, gaming and virtual communities in the Asia-Pacific region informs her interrogations of the mobile-media phenomenon as she brings our attention to new and emerging forms of place, locality and identity. Mediated modes of interpersonal contact and intimacy are bound to a sense of place and community, albeit technologically located. Setting the nineteenth century *flâneur* alongside the twenty-first century *phoneur*, Hjorth demonstrates that the older rights of entitlement to 'humanities knowledge' are now meeting radical challenges through these mediated conditions of digitalisation in the everyday. Increasingly ubiquitous realms of interconnected, co-present, mobile communities are marking and masking a new form of 'the real'. These conditions are now being critically examined in educational programmes in Melbourne as Hjorth engages directly with new mobile technologies that are discursively challenging and transforming the dominant Eurocentric lineages and philosophical milieu of Western Enlightenment thinking.

Modes of representation continue in the work of Kristen Sharp who brings readers into the world of cultural practice and enquiry through her discussion of art as a site of communication

shifting between binary positioning of East and West. Her case study is based on contemporary Japanese artist Takashi Murakami and his theory of Superflat art, which moves easily from Japanese to Western aesthetics, and local to global positioning. Here we see the strategies of a contemporary artist negotiating the tensions between local and global as he engages with wider concerns about identity in a globalised context. Murakami proposes a world of the future, which he envisages to be like Japan today, two-dimensional and “Superflat”. He developed his theory of Superflat as a way of negotiating and drawing attention to the cultural and capitalist dynamics that structure global encounters, and that certainly underpin global knowledge exchanges. Profiling the complex and fluid dynamics of globalised culture, capital and art, Sharp shows how Murakami quite intentionally uses the market profile generated from his public success in the United States and Europe to create a space for equal success of Superflat in Japan. Of her work Sharp explains, “Ultimately the paper examines the tensions between the presentation of Superflat as a specifically Japanese expression and the deterritorialising impulses generated by its global circulation”. In this Sharp is profiling the cultural work of art as a global phenomenon that is opening market spaces for new events, strategies and political transformations of knowledge, communication and cultural identity.

From mediated communications of mobile telephones and art as sites of knowledge exchange, the next paper deals with forms of mediation situated in the political economies of higher education and globalisation. Xiaoping Jiang of Guangzhou University presents a comparative case study of the moves towards marketisation of higher education in the People’s Republic of China and New Zealand. Acknowledging that these are two very different countries historically, geographically, socially, politically, and certainly in size and population numbers, Jiang proceeds to outline four stages of change in higher education policies and practices in response to the external forces of globalisation. She demonstrates that both countries have shifted from mainly state-controlled, state-funded and elite systems to state-supervised, diversely-funded mass systems based on a market model, and that no country’s higher education system, be it large or small, Eastern or Western, can be immune from powerful external forces. Ultimately this paper reveals that as the moves towards new forms of internationalisation and global mobility increase in the West, so the East mobilises and responds to global challenges with new political structures and strategies. Jiang uses the examples of China and New Zealand to show that higher education is increasingly viewed as a private good and individual investment in keeping with the moves of world trade and knowledge marketisation, and as such the public good and public investment underpinning of higher education is diminishing in both democratic and socialist states. Herein lies a demand and a challenge to the new humanities, as we witness different sorts of internationalisation that will inevitably change the way the university has positioned itself as the keeper of knowledge for a set of conventions that paved the enlightened paths of the West.

There is much to think about in these papers in the way they deal with cultural mediations in the humanities, where identity and knowledge become anchored to the political moves of the marketplace. Throughout there is a sense that the innovations of enterprise as much as changes of policy and political governance are producing new forms of practice in educational and social lives, and these in turn are transforming the notion of the humanities. The question is whether or not these changes are, or can be, marked by forms of resistance in the post-colonial university. It is to be hoped that contemporary education can take account of these necessities as a way of transforming the normativities that dominate the educational landscapes whether they be East

or West, somewhere between or somewhere else, in order to open spaces for the possibilities of difference that our global world demands. These are our social, cultural, philosophical, intellectual, political and pedagogical challenges in the field of education in the twenty-first century.

As always *ACCESS* thanks the generosity of reviewers whose responses have provided much food for thought to the writers of these papers and to those whose papers were not published this time around. The protocols of the refereeing process ensure a consistently high standard of publication to meet the aim of *ACCESS* journal, which is to engage critically with the terrain of knowledge in educational and cultural spheres. In this way the journal is contributing to the discursive process of articulating a new humanities of which Michael Peters speaks and to which Derrida dedicated much of his scholarly work. As editor I thank those contributors and subscribers who continue to support the critical and philosophical approaches of *ACCESS*, and welcome new readers, contributors and subscribers to this issue of *East–West Intersections*.

One final note is that there is a name change for the publisher of *ACCESS*. The Centre of Communication Research at AUT is now known as the Institute of Culture, Discourse & Communication (ICDC). Please see the new website address below. Also *ACCESS* is now searchable through the online database of Informit e-Library thus increasing its visibility to a wider sphere of influence.

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