



ASIA-PACIFIC AND LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Asian English

Histories, Texts, Institutions

Edited by
Myles Chilton
Steve Clark
Yukari Yoshihara

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Asia-Pacific and Literature in English

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Introduction: Redefining English in Asia for the Twenty-First Century

Myles Chilton, Steve Clark, and Yukari Yoshihara

Anglophone literary studies have a long though not at all straightforward history in Asia. A well-established post-colonial critique holds that English literary study was introduced first in India and then throughout the British Empire as a form of indirect control, and at times open coercion, with the ultimate aim of producing a collaborationist elite who identified with the imperial regime. In her contribution to this volume, Parimala Rao tempers this view, observing that in the colonial period, many Indians didn't need to be coerced because learning "English" promised both

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language study and an education in science and mathematics. In Japan during the Meiji period, reformers realized that learning not just English but other subjects *in* English would be key to resisting British and American colonial pressures. Thus it was that the foundation of Cambridge English Tripos was predated by study of the English at the University of Tokyo by forty years.¹ Rui Yang observes that after over 150 years of absorption, “Western-styled modern higher education systems have become well established throughout East Asia,”² indicating how a similar pattern played out in several Asian sites, with English language, literature, and the humanities as a collective discipline spreading and establishing themselves in modernizing colonial and post-colonial nation states. The imposition of English in Asia brought with it Euro-American versions of humanistic learning that have developed into a multivalent discourse of institutional formation and identity.

All of which is to say that the idea that the discipline is simply a recent foreign import in Asia can be contested. Our choice of title—*Asian English* rather than “English in Asia,” or a phrase like “the spread of English into and throughout Asia”—is meant to provoke (1) acceptance of English as an Asian language, (2) recognition that English literary study currently enjoys a relatively healthy presence in Asian universities, and (3) acknowledgment that English serves in many Asian university systems as a partner to or even lynchpin of the humanities. We also seek to call the attention of the Anglo-American “center” of the discipline to the fact of Asian English, to give weight to James F. English’s recent observation that the “future expansion of English studies will mostly occur outside the discipline’s traditional Anglophone and European base,” therefore “it is time for those of us at the presumptive center of things to begin paying more attention to the forms our discipline is taking at these sites of rapid expansion.”³ Amid Anglo-American academics’ fears for the health of the discipline there is a perplexingly persistent blind spot covering a vast expanse of the planet. Taking the trouble to peer into this neglected immensity one sees not only the well-known truth that the numbers of English language and literature learners in the traditional Anglophone regions (Britain, the US, Canada, Australia, and so on) have already become a minority, but also that the global economic and demographic balance is undeniably tilting toward Asia, not least because approximately half the population of India are English-speakers, while the estimated figure of 100 million Chinese speakers of English will rise exponentially over coming decades.

In our subtitle *Histories, Texts, Institutions* the middle term holds the first and third in a balance: texts represent time and are present in time; the institutions of English consecrate its history as a discipline and regulate which texts best represent it. This book in part takes a cue from Jeffrey J. Williams's edited volume *The Institution of Literature* in focusing on what people do in English literature departments, and on their self-defining strategies. We also assume that the institution "generates what we call literature, or more modestly, that the question of literature is inseparable from our institutional practices and locations."⁴ We also take a cue from Sarah Brouillette's analysis of the history of UNESCO's support for literature. By focusing on specific institutions, she argues, critical discourse can be grounded in the political economies of nation states, meaning it can account for the "the foundational structures of our societies" beyond the Bourdieusian field of cultural production and "the relations internal to a restricted literary field."⁵ The focus on institutions thus allows us to consider the main audience for Anglophone literature: students, and their teachers, and their often competing interests and motivations in pursuit of education in response to layered and mingled socio-economic pressures. To take an example, particular Asian localities may not share the dissenting, progressive counter-cultural views that tend to be prized in Anglo-American English departments. This presents faculty educated in the Anglosphere with a challenge, as Firas Al-Jubouri's chapter shows. How then, to teach it? What may appear radical in a Western context can appear irresponsible in a local Asian context. The history of English in Asia is in many ways a history of adjustments made in the classroom and at the departmental level.

From this perspective, each chapter contributes to a common framework of debate, ranging from the genealogies of textual critique and institutionalized forms of teaching of English language and literature in Asia from the nineteenth century to the present, to examinations of how its present options and possible future directions relate to these historical contexts. Rather than assume that Asian English and Anglo-American English are stand-alone conceptual entities, we conceive of both as disciplinary formations that could, and perhaps should be pluralized. And yet, we also want to shift the Anglo-American gaze—in the material and affective senses, as they manifest themselves in any region of the world—to Asia, to see the discipline of Anglophone literary studies from an alternative Asian point of view, while remaining conscious of the extent to which Anglo-American disciplinary histories subtend the globalization of

English studies. Assuming a unitary Asian perspective is indeed problematic, as along with flattening and totalizing the continent's limitless variety, it runs the Orientalizing risk of casting "the Asian perspective" as that of a receiver, an acceptor of flows from outside. Alas, the latter has become something of a truism. Many accept that the core of English as an academic discipline lies in certain prominent Anglo-American universities. Rui Yang notes how "The Western models of the university and the accompanying Eurocentric knowledge development have long been only in one direction as far as East Asia is concerned, that is, from the West to the East. Indigenous knowledge... has been largely absent in East Asia's higher education curriculum."⁶ Accepting this situation means adopting a kind of cultural amnesia with regard to certain stubborn historical facts, including—to take but two examples—that the Confucian tradition is the world's oldest humanities tradition, and that India's educational institutions long predate those of Europe or America. As Steve Clark's chapter points out, Nalanda's foundation in the fifth century comes at least 500 years before that of Oxford. A more productive approach is to trouble the West–East flow by following cross-currents and sudden disruptive change. Yang argues that policies based on this "antiquated" divide of knowledge "are doomed to be ineffective, even misleading,"⁷ an argument Michael O'Sullivan takes up in his chapter in this volume. Such anachronistic divisions prevent us from seeing that globalization presents liberal arts educational projects in both East Asia and the West with similar challenges; as Insung Jung argues, these include "lack of understanding of the concepts of liberal arts education on the part of policy-makers, parents and students, the long-standing preference for specialized vocational and professional education, a perceived mismatch between the aims of liberal education and the expectations of graduates by employers, and, as a consequence of these, a lack of coherence in policy-making and limited funding and political support."⁸ It is encouraging to note, however, that despite these negative assumptions, liberal arts programs are still being established in Asia.

This volume's central argument is that the establishment of Anglo-phone literature in Asia did not simply "happen": there were extra-literary and-academic forces at work, inserting and domesticating in Asian universities both the English language and Anglo-American literature, and their attendant cultural and political values. Examining the various kinds of political intervention—US government agencies, funding bodies, university administrations, for instance—which have influenced the Asian spread

of Anglophone literature has heretofore been relatively untouched scholarly territory, in contrast to the extensive scholarship on the institutional development of the discipline in British and American universities, or on the activities of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Europe.

In many ways, *Asian English* takes its inspiration and direction from *English Studies in Asia*, edited by Masazumi Araki, Chee Seng Lim, Ryuta Minami, and Yukari Yoshihara (and to which Hajime Saito also contributed a chapter). As Yoshihara observes in her introduction, *English Studies in Asia* is perhaps the first volume to attempt to understand the varied histories of the discipline in the region. That book itself an extension of and response to Araki's project of the same name which focused on the institutional marginalization of English literary studies in Japan in the face of pressures to teach more "practical" English. This pedagogical turn revealed to Araki a need to open up dialogues with other Asian English literature scholars. What he found was salutary: a keen interest in "re-examining the meaning and future possible directions of English studies in its relation to our own positionality and situatedness... [because] English literature studies as an institutionalized discipline of higher education has not been established in all Asian countries in the same way."⁹ Yoshihara, for instance, argues for analysis of Japan "alongside the colonial and perhaps neo-colonial contexts of other Asian countries,"¹⁰ rather than comparing the Japanese situation with that of the Anglophone countries. This inter-Asian perspective allows for dialogues between monolingual and multilingual Asian sites, as well as considerations of the differing colonial legacies and contemporary statuses of English. This perspective is shared both by Asian nations with a history of direct colonial rule and others that have experienced modes of neo-colonial influence (such as Japan's post-WWII occupation by the US). India would obviously be an example of the former, and as Svati Joshi writes in the introduction to *Rethinking English*, pedagogical activity in Indian English departments assumes for English literature a set of liberal universalisms and a reflexive normativity, while its critical methods become an orthodoxy denying "any possibility of connecting the English text with our material world."¹¹ Thus, rather than formulating an account of English studies in India, Joshi argues for the need to "understand and analyze the role of English in our history and cultural formation, for we believe it that it has an importance not only for our academic activity but also for an understanding of the present moment."¹²

In the decade and a half since the publication of *English Studies in Asia*, the intensified globalization of English studies forces a reckoning with a broader geo-historical context, necessitating the recalibration of the Anglo-American tradition, along with consideration of the increasing commodification and “branding” of higher education. In other words, the prestige of US and UK universities, rather than waning in a wider field of educational opportunity, has only become stronger (increasingly dependent though they are on income from foreign students). As Michael O’Sullivan, David Huddart, and Carmen Lee observe in their introduction to *The Future of English in Asia*, economic globalization strengthens the association of the English language with “power, prestige and the perpetuation of elitism in Asian contexts.”¹³ O’Sullivan, Huddart, and Lee seek to “examine the deeper cultural, psychological and emotional effects of the newly styled globalized English in the various multilingual Asian contexts,” in the recognition of the geographical distance of Asia from the ‘home’ of English.”¹⁴ This is echoed by Mukul Saxena and Tope Omoniyi, who note that along with asymmetrical relations of capital in globalization, various kinds of prestige remain attached to various languages, with World or Global Englishes centered in the US. While America’s economic dominance may be waning, global English continues in its trek across frontiers to evoke its Anglo-American origins.¹⁵ The same could be said for the choice of which Anglophone literature to teach, and how to teach it.

But while Saxena and Omoniyi believe that the spread of World or Global Englishes may never completely escape some sort of developmental relationship with British or American Englishes, O’Sullivan, Huddart, and Lee assert—in echo of James English—“whatever future English has will inevitably be shaped by its fate in Asia.”¹⁶ The indigenization of several strains of English in Asia (in India, Singapore, and the Philippines, for instance) indicates to them that “the future of English in Asia seems likely to break free of its past.”¹⁷ Guiding this future, they believe, is the growing power of China, a factor which surely must be taken into account now and into the future.

While *Asian English* follows a rough chronology, the structure is otherwise purposely loose. As we focus on Asian reception and interplay with the circulation of Anglo-American outflows, we make no attempt to “cover” all of Asia, or to notions of geographical or historical “completeness” or to constituting a unified “Asian” perspective. In fact, one of our

underlying positions is to treat any such project with suspicion—just as it is to think of a unified Western or Anglo-American or national perspective.

In “British Romanticism in China: Received, Revised, and Resurrected,” Ou Li’s focus on twentieth-century China’s dynamic assimilation of British Romanticism illustrates the complexities of Asian reception of English texts and aesthetic movements. By examining several key aspects of British Romanticism, namely, radicalism, self-expressiveness, and naturalism, Li then explores how each had been treated with drastically contradictory stances in China, along with the conflicting ideologies that took turns dominating the Chinese stage. Li’s chapter also discusses the significance of the intermediary of Japanese, German, and Soviet sources in the Chinese reception of British Romanticism, and how being twice removed from the original might have contributed to the emphasis on what is without instead of what is within British Romantic poetry. Despite the instrumentalist approach China took to British Romanticism, Li’s chapter concludes with a discussion of the profound legacy British Romanticism has left in China.

As mentioned earlier, the introduction of English education into Asia is taken to be a tool of British imperial coercion, or as Gauri Viswanathan’s *Masks of Conquest* suggests (in the Indian context), as a way to mask economic and social exploitation. Viswanathan’s view (along with similar claims by Edward Said) has been criticized for overlooking the role Indians played in both resisting *and demanding* English education; indeed, as Ania Loomba points out, reformers and nationalists opposed to the Raj nevertheless supported English education for Indians.¹⁸ Parimala Rao’s essay, “Teaching and Learning English Language during the Early British Rule in India,” takes up this challenge to the assertion that British colonial rule imposed English language and literature upon Indians as a means of controlling the subject population as well as to demonstrate its superiority as a ruling class. Also, as mentioned earlier, in the Indian context the term “English education” meant a curriculum comprised of English literature along with sciences, social sciences and mathematics, through English as a medium of instruction. Even when these modern subjects were taught through the medium of Indian vernaculars, along with English as a second language, it was referred to as “English education.” Rao’s chapter offers an intimate and thorough historical tracing of India’s “English education” from its informal origins at the hands of British officers and colonial administrators to the more politically, socially,

and culturally complex developments occasioned by its establishment in more formal, institutionalized settings.

In “The Crisis and the Challenge: South Korean English Studies in the Age of Digital Transformation,” Jihee Han addresses the changes South Korean English literature faculty face inside and outside academia. Amid government pressures to teach practical English and a student body made up of digital nomads reluctant to read “difficult” literary texts—namely, those of T. S. Eliot—Han wonders if the changes heralded by these developments can be construed as potentially positive rather than negative. Through tracing the rise and fall of T. S. Eliot’s literary status as part of a survey of the history of South Korean English studies as a story of the decline of Anglocentric aesthetic values, then watching the subsequent rise of Global English and distinctively Korean perspectives in an age of digital technology, Han offers the “transmutable imagination” of “the nomadic minority” as a strategy for reinventing Asian English.

The next four chapters reposition the analytical lens to trace the expansion of English texts and English studies from the US to Asia, demonstrating that Anglophone texts did not simply drift around the globe to be picked up by chance by interested Asian readers. These essays can be read as case studies of how cultural patronage, particularly that bestowed by the US State Department, was deployed in the establishment of American literary studies in Asia at the beginning of the Cold War. So rapid and effective was this effort that it obscures the relative newness of the discipline of American studies.

In “Seminar in the Ruins: The Salzburg Seminar and its Significance in Cold War Cultural Diplomacy in East Asia,” Hiromi Ochi, contextualizing the role of American studies in the larger scheme of Cold War cultural diplomacy of the US State Department, sets the scene by tracing the effects of the inaugural School for American Studies in Salzburg, Austria, in 1947. Crucial to the US strategy of disseminating American culture and values abroad was the formation of American studies as a legitimate academic subject. The first Seminar in 1947 was a model for this dissemination, inspiring seminars and lectures first in Japan, then similar projects in South Korea and Taiwan. Ochi’s chapter focuses on how American studies circulated in areas devastated by World War II, how it was expected to contribute to the intellectual redevelopment of post-war Japan and other East Asian countries, and how it played a part in constituting the “Cold War consensus.”

In “Cultural Diplomacy, Literature(s) in English and Creative Writing in Cold War Asia,” Yukari Yoshihara, while analyzing how Anglophone literature and Creative Writing programs were weapons of the cultural Cold War in Asia, demonstrates that they also created and produced dissident voices directed against American cultural hegemony. Charles Burton Fahs (1908–1980), the Rockefeller Foundation director of Humanities Division (1946–1961), was one of the central figures involved in Stanford-Tokyo University American Studies Seminars (discussed in Ochi’s chapter) and Creative Writing programs in Asia. The latter, launched with Wallace Stegner’s lecture tour to Asia (1950–51) during the Korean War, was part of a larger project aimed at containing anti-Americanism. Yoshihara examines N.V.M. Gonzalez, a main aide of Stegner’s lecture tour in South East Asia, and founder of the Creative Writing Program at the University of the Philippines, as a case of the fissured response to the hegemony of American English in Cold War Asia, particularly the increasing dominance of English in world literature.

In “Stephen Spender and Japanese Atomic Bomb Poetry in the 1950s,” Hajime Saito focuses on English poet Stephen Spender’s writings on the Hiroshima atomic bombing and his interactions with Japanese poets’ opposition to nuclear weapons. Spender (1909–1995), once better known for his poems engaged with social injustice and class struggle in the 1930s, is now remembered primarily as an anti-communist cultural agent during the Cold War, and for his commitment to a literary magazine, *Encounter* (1953–1991), subsidized by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, a front organization of the CIA. However, his responses to Japanese atomic bomb literature have received minimal scrutiny. Also unacknowledged are reactions to his views from Japanese poets and Japanese scholars of English literature. This chapter investigates the ways in which Spender attempts to de-politicize issues surrounding nuclear weapons when he asks Japanese poets to “withhold utterance” against nuclear weapon experimentation—such as the Bikini Incident—and to “care about” things “*poetically*,” to engage with the “social disease” through “a renewal of creativeness.”

In “Unfree Association: On Philippine Creative Writing and US Cultural Diplomacy,” Conchitina Cruz, in order to address the question “Does cultural diplomacy work?”, examines the International Writing Program (IWP) based in the University of Iowa as a site where US cultural diplomacy and Philippine Creative Writing converge. Cruz studies the IWP in relation to the oldest writers’ workshop in the Philippines, the

Silliman University Writers Workshop (SUNWW), which was patterned by its founders after the Iowa Writers' Workshop (IWW). Demonstrating how SUNWW's institutional history, particularly its ties to the IWP and IWW, tends to be written in the language of cultural diplomacy and apart from the history of the Philippines under US colonization, this chapter draws connections between this decontextualized view of US-Philippine literary relations and the de-historicized creative writing pedagogy undergirded by American New Criticism that the SUNWW is known for. The impact of the IWP on Philippine creative writing shows how a program of cultural diplomacy aids in cultivating cultural climates predisposed to advancing geopolitical relations favorable to the US, especially when cultural diplomacy is regarded as an extended project whose outcomes manifest over time.

The programmatic creation of American literary studies in Asia also manifested itself in the creation of regional universities based upon the American model. Whether in such institutions as American University in Beirut or Northwestern University's Qatar campus, the expansion of English is explicitly tied to the broader project of US expansionism—with many of its problems intact. In "The Crisis in the Humanities: A Perspective from the Middle East," James Hodapp notes that the widely acknowledged "crisis" in the humanities extends beyond the US to many understudied, and arguably misunderstood, regions. Hodapp relates his first-hand experience at the two aforementioned Anglophone universities, buttressed with curricular analyses, enrollment figures, faculty hiring, and extant data on the region's humanities programs, to provide a glimpse of US influence and local conditions in the Middle East. Mediated by the ever-present specter of colonial history, recent Western military and economic projects in the region, and the implications of English's role in globalization, Hodapp argues that in many ways the crisis now being reckoned with in the West has been a reality in the Middle East for decades, yet is also deflected by newer and wealthier humanities programs in English (and other languages) tailored to meet the local education market.

In "De-, and Re-Centering: Teaching Dystopian Texts to Emirati Students," Firas A. J. Al-Jubouri examines the tensions inherent in teaching dystopian texts (in this case, Yevgeny Zamyatin's *We* and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*) while considering the significance of tradition and culture in the Arab world. English literature teachers in the Gulf Cooperation Council often feel pressured to follow curricula set by

the Ministry of Education, avoiding the potential for controversy in favor of canonical stability. Others, however, seek to provoke, or in Al-Jubouri's formulation, de- and/or re-center certain ideas, themes, plots, or meanings to address the cultural politics to meet the learner's needs in the non-Anglophone setting. Al-Jubouri's larger point is that English literature can be received in ways that "distort" or "destabilize" Anglocentric ideas, a thorny and pressing endeavor that necessitates striding worlds and bridging cultural divides for both students *and* teachers.

In another take on Anglophone textual reception, L. Ashley Squires's "The Canon Zoomed Out: Big Data and the Literary Canon," addresses the role digital analysis can play in understanding the circulation and reception of world literature, particularly in the Asian context, where a sizable Asian Anglophone readership offers a potential audience for world literature as a pedagogical framework in Asian institutions. Squires argues that reconfiguring our understanding of a literary canon around patterns and histories of reception, rather than production, runs almost immediately into immense problems of scale and specificity. Scholars around the world may understand how the canon is understood and taught in their particular locale, but academic gestures toward a shared global canon are necessarily speculative and provisional. Squires's chapter demonstrates how big data analytics can help with this problem. Using Google Trends, Squires look at patterns of searchership for texts represented in major Anglophone literature anthologies, enabling comparisons of the way the Anglophone canon is represented elsewhere around the world. While many canonical Anglophone works can be truly considered "worldly," the data also reveals "migratory texts" whose readership seems to have moved from its original site of production to another location. But because this data cannot tell us why the readership for these texts has moved, such cases stand as provocative calls for further research. Squires's ultimate argument is that while big data produces what Franco Moretti calls "Distant Reading" or Matthew Jockers calls "Macroanalysis," it must be supplemented by more traditional methods.

In "The New 'Westernism' in the Intercultural Humanities," Michael O'Sullivan asks how we are to understand the humanities—a field that more than any other must be mindful of differences—within global university strategies and systems of evaluation that rank universities according to criteria that lead to ever greater homogeneity. The process requires an openness to the difference of Asian humanities, a field that for

Leo Ou-Fan Lee must have “Asian humanistic scholars” and “all humanistic scholars interested in Asia” re-examining and redefining Western philosophical theory (2010). Jana S. Rošker (2016) argues that intercultural research that includes Chinese philosophy must involve the “intercultural relativization of the contents based on specific requirements of research in the Chinese philosophical tradition.” With these arguments in mind, O’Sullivan’s chapter argues that non-Asian scholars educated in “Western” pedagogic systems can help re-center the conceptual frames of the intercultural humanities through exploring such notions as weakness, individualism, and loneliness. The increasing economic and political power of China has not been matched by redefinition of Asian academic institutions and practices in terms of the intellectual and pedagogic traditions of the historically dominant culture of the region.

In “Global English’s Centers of Consecration,” Myles Chilton draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) to address how the global spread of Anglophone literary studies compels an accounting for who consecrates what and why. Bourdieu’s model of consecration involves the reciprocal validation of intellectual elites and aesthetic canons, a model which has been adopted in such recent influential works as Pascale Casanova’s *The Republic of Letters* (2004) and Brouillette’s *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary* (mentioned earlier). Asian institutions, even as they turn their critical gaze inward, continue to seek validation from Anglo-center conferences, journals and publishers. While the discipline’s roots cannot be ripped out, and a discipline needs consecratory institutions to referee, control, approve, and set standards, it is important to account for the consecratory tensions that arise in re-orienting the discipline toward Asia. Chilton’s chapter considers whether the consecratory power of Asian English centers can avoid merely reproducing Anglocentric colonial, post-colonial, or neo-colonial hierarchies of aesthetic value, canonical durability, and institutional practice.

Steve Clark’s “Asian English in Arnold, Mill and Newman” opens by considering the project to renovate the ancient Indian university of Nalanda, as a case-study in the difficulty of returning to a purely indigenous “longer heritage.” The institution and its practices in its modern form are necessarily reliant on models imported from Britain, Germany and the US. Clark re-examines the Victorian genealogy offered by the writings of Matthew Arnold, John Stuart Mill, and John Henry Newman. Their justifications of culture as disinterested self-development would appear to invite post-colonial critique, if not indictment, for complicity

with the class, nationalist and racial ideologies within which they are necessarily embedded. However, it is argued that they may also possess a prospective and utopian dimension which may be restored by the application of symptomatic reading, on the model of Louis Althusser. Such analysis can reveal Asia as already present, if elided and displaced, at the margins of the founding texts of the discipline. It will finally be suggested that in the twenty-first century, not only Asian English but also of the humanities themselves, should be regarded as a continuously renegotiated heritage, not as the burden of an increasingly redundant past, but as open to future applications and expanded possibilities.

Moving from nineteenth-century genealogies to the post-Covid challenges of the twenty-first century, John Phillips addresses current options for the Asian university in “Literature and the Humanities in the Age of Technological Disruption.” If the recent shift to online teaching at the National University of Singapore (and elsewhere in Asia) was executed rapidly and without resistance, then the establishment of the integrated virtual learning environment [IVLE] earlier in the millennium, after the SARS epidemic of 2003, helps to account for it. Online teaching and virtual learning were in principle and in practice already in place. If the crisis eventually subsides then the new conditions under which the university currently operates are likely to continue in many respects. Phillips identifies two connected trends: defensive strategies against the threat of future technical disruption; and relocation of funding from the humanities. He argues that in Asia the latter, rather than enduring continual crisis, been renewed by the idea of lifelong learning, as future preparedness for the rapidly changing job-market, and the introduction of liberal arts-based programs. Beyond the primarily archival capacity of the so-called digital humanities, a critical media theory marked by historical understanding of languages and algorithms can take up the challenge typically assigned to the university, especially when called upon to re-center itself in an Asian context. Phillips closes by reading Arthur Yap’s “Paraphrase” as exemplifying not just the complexly syncretic heritage of Singapore itself but also future directions for the Asian university.

The question remains of what form Asian English might take in a post-Covid age uniquely dominated by potentially authoritarian technologies and unsettling economic exigencies. Certainly it seems probable that dependence on imported Western models may be substantially reduced. Initiatives already taken even in their early stages suggest removing the existing spatiotemporal boundaries from the idea of a university degree:

the campus is no longer a place. Many of the traditional structures of higher education are likely to be eroded or even disappear, including autonomous departments, to be replaced by continually updating interdisciplinary modules. It is an open question whether what will emerge will be a distinctively Asian institution. It is noteworthy, however, that Singapore, often portrayed as a hyper-conservative government controlling an acquiescent population, has proven itself capable of implementing policies of radical destruction (evident from its continual architectural self-renovation) where deemed necessary for national prosperity.

It remains to be seen if the initially ineffectual Anglo-American response to the pandemic, in contrast to the more collectivist approach generally adopted by Asian nations, will result in a more general loss of cultural prestige. Additionally, the neoliberal orthodoxies promoted by the economics department of major Anglo-American universities could be seen as particularly culpable for preaching abstention from the forms of state intervention that have proved most effective in dealing with Covid. This argument can be extended to the humanities, where a comparable de-centering may occur simply as a consequence of changes to international mobility through visa and quarantine restrictions. The high casualty rates in Britain and the US may make them less attractive education destinations; reductions in overseas students have already had near-disastrous financial consequences for all but the wealthiest and most elite institutions. It remains to be seen how this might redefine Asian English, perhaps producing enhanced cooperation among regional universities, the ideal aspired to if unfulfilled in Nalanda; but one might confidently predict less reflex deference to the “centers of consecration” of Western academia.

NOTES

1. The Cambridge English Tripos dates from 1917. The English department at the University of Tokyo was established in 1877.
2. Yang, Rui. “The East–West Axis? Liberal Arts Education in East Asian Universities.” *Liberal Arts Education and Colleges in East Asia: Possibilities and Challenges in the Global Age*. Insung Jung, Mikiko Nishimura, and Toshiaki Sasao (Eds.). Singapore: Springer, 2016. 30.
3. English, James F. *The Global Future of English Studies*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012. 191.

4. Williams, Jeffrey J. "Introduction: Institutionally Speaking." *The Institution of Literature*. Jeffrey J. Williams (Ed.). Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. 1.
5. Brouillette, Sarah. *UNESCO and the Fate of the Literary*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. 2.
6. Yang, 27.
7. Ibid., 27.
8. Jung, Insung. "Introduction." *Liberal Arts Education and Colleges in East Asia: Possibilities and Challenges in the Global Age*. Insung Jung, Mikiko Nishimura, and Toshiaki Sasao (Eds.). Singapore: Springer, 2016. 5.
9. Araki, quoted in Yukari Yoshihara. "The Past, the Present and the Future of the Project, 'English Studies in Asia.'" *English Studies in Asia*. Masazumi Araki, Chee Seng Lim, Ryuta Minami, and Yukari Yoshihara (Eds.). Kuala Lumpur: Silverfish, 2007. 17–18.
10. Yoshihara, 18.
11. Joshi, Svati. "Rethinking English: An Introduction." *Rethinking English: Essays in Literature, Language, History*. Svati Joshi (Ed.). Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1994. 1.
12. Ibid., 1.
13. O'Sullivan, Michael, David Huddart and Carmen Lee. "General Introduction." *The Future of English in Asia: Perspectives on Language and Literature*. Michael O'Sullivan, David Huddart and Carmen Lee (Eds.). Abingdon: Routledge, 2015. xvi.
14. Ibid., xvii.
15. Tope, Omoniyi and Mukul Saxena. "Introduction." *Contending with Globalization in World Englishes*. Mukul Saxena and Tope Omoniyi (Eds.). Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2010. 11.
16. O'Sullivan, Michael, David Huddart and Carmen Lee, xviii.
17. Ibid., xviii.
18. Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 2015. 96.

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